

The Solanus Casey Center Detroit, MI

Year of Mercy Study Guide

Capuchin Friar Dan Crosby Presenting:

Pope Francis & Mercy (Two sessions; 45 minutes each)

Father Solanus Casey & Mercy (Two sessions: 45 minutes each)

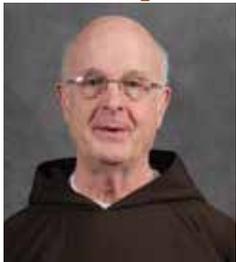
Proposed Audiences:

- High School Students (Seniors)
- Young Adults
- Adults

Suggested Uses:

A four week unit, featuring one session each week.
Suggested allotted time: 60 minutes per session.

Who is Capuchin Friar Dan Crosby:



Father Dan is a well-known presenter, traveling worldwide. Fr. Dan integrates Scripture as well as the Franciscan vision into his life and preaching. His life has been enriched by a variety of ministries and cultures...from college campus ministry and teaching... to pastoring inner city and Native American reservation parishes. Presently Father Dan resides at St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit, MI where he assists with the healing ministry at the Solanus Casey Center. Father Dan has been a well-received retreat master throughout the country for his entire priestly life.

What is the Solanus Casey Center:

The Solanus Casey Center is a world class spiritual center dedicated to the holiness of Venerable Solanus Casey. Inspired by the holy life of Father Solanus, the Solanus Casey Center opened its doors in 2002 in order to lead visitors on a spiritual journey. Thousands come to the Center each year for prayer, to nurture their spirit, and to visit Venerable Solanus' tomb.

In 1998, the Capuchin superiors recognized a need for a more hospitable way to receive the multitude of visitors who come to the tomb of Venerable Solanus each year. The result is the beautiful and enriching Solanus Casey Center where Venerable Casey's tomb is now located. It also facilitates the spiritual needs of visitors, drawing them into a pilgrimage of faith that inspires in all who visit an invitation to holiness in their own lives. Visit our virtual tour at SolanusCenter.org





Who is Venerable Solanus Casey:

Father Solanus was a beloved Capuchin Friar credited with miraculous cures and valued for his wise and compassionate counsel. Fr. Solanus spent his life in the service of people. As porter of the Detroit monastery door, he met thousands of people from every age and walk of life and earned recognition as “The Doorkeeper.” He was always ready to listen to anyone at any time, day or night. He faithfully served the people by providing soup for the hungry, kind words for the troubled, and a healing touch for the ill.

Because of his holiness, Pope John Paul II declared him Venerable in 1995.

Born Bernard Francis Casey on November 25, 1870 on a farm near Oak Grove, Wisconsin, he worked throughout Wisconsin and Minnesota as a logger, hospital orderly, prison guard, and street car operator.

At the age of 21, Bernard entered St. Francis High School Seminary in Milwaukee to study for the diocesan priesthood. In 1897, he joined the Capuchin Order at Detroit and received the religious name of Solanus.

After his ordination in 1904, Fr. Solanus spent 20 years in New York at Yonkers, New York City, and Harlem. In 1924, he was assigned to St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit where he worked for 21 years as the porter, endearing himself to thousands who would seek his compassionate counsel.

During his final illness, he remarked, “I’m offering my suffering that all might be one. If only I could see the conversion of the whole world.” His last conscious act was sitting up in bed and saying, “I give my soul to Jesus Christ.” He died at the age of 86 on July 31, 1957 at the same day and hour of his First Holy Mass 53 years earlier.

The Father Solanus Guild initiated the Cause of Solanus Casey for sainthood in 1966. Capuchin Friars Richard Merling and Larry Webber continue to gather documentation of healings attributed to Venerable Solanus Casey’s intercession. This documentation is then studied in Rome.

One miraculous cure approved by the Vatican to the prayers of Venerable Solanus will advance the Cause to Beatification and the title of “Blessed.” Another approved miracle after that will advance the Cause finally to sainthood.

The Father Solanus Guild, a Capuchin ministry, continues to keep alive the inspiring memory of Fr. Solanus; brings knowledge of his exemplary life to others; collects information about his life and work; provides prayer, support, and office services to the Vice Postulators for the Cause of Solanus Casey.

Learn More about the Solanus Casey Center and Father Solanus

www.SolanusCenter.org

www.SolanusCasey.org

Pope Francis & Mercy 1st Session

- Pope Francis' quest for this Year of Mercy is to experience God's mercy.
- We are all sinners in need of God's mercy.
- We are all chosen. We get what we don't deserve.

1) Fr. Dan suggests that when we open our hearts with humility and transparency, we can contemplate mercy in a concrete way. How can one become more humble? How can one become more transparent? Why do you think both are necessary in order to contemplate mercy?

2) Fr. Dan encourages us to examine the focus of our spiritual life and to be certain the focus is on God, not ourselves. "Only then are we able to be gazed upon by the tender face of Jesus." How can we move the focus off ourselves and onto God? How can we achieve this long-term?

3) Fr. Dan explains that Jesus never went against rules; he went beyond them because God's love demanded it. Provide examples of how in today's world that we might go beyond rules in order to do what's right; to go beyond because God's love demands it.

4) Fr. Dan suggests that if we make alive the experience of God's mercy that it will guarantee that the church cannot be ignored. "It will be a city on a hill that cannot be hidden." Do you agree with that statement? Why?



Prayer at the session's conclusion:

Loving Creator God, we thank you for our Holy Father Pope Francis and the many ways, by word and deed, that he mirrors to us the power and goodness of your divine mercy. In all these ways he urges us to enter more deeply into the vast ocean of your merciful love. Open our hearts to recognize our need for that mercy and through the example of Pope Francis, help us to bring you our wounds and brokenness so we too might know the joy and peace of your healing. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

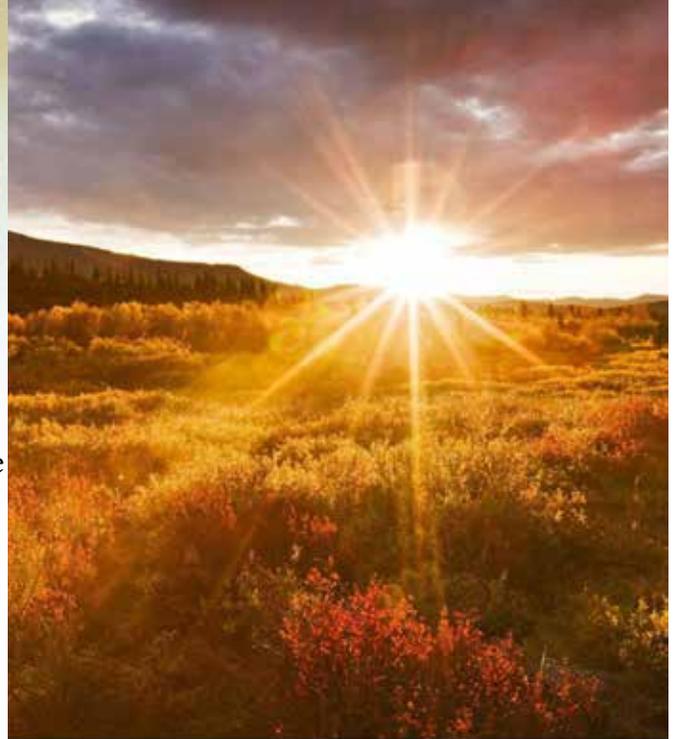
Pope Francis & Mercy 2nd Session

- Nothing is more important to Pope Francis than understanding mercy.
- Our mentality excludes the very idea of mercy. We believe in justice, not mercy.
- Mercy is the Lord's most powerful message.

1) We live in a judgmental world. It is easy to be concerned with being right vs. being loving. How can we react from a loving self vs. a judgmental self? How can we internalize that reaction (loving vs. judgmental) so the reaction becomes second nature? How can we live a life of hope? Of healing?

2) Pope Francis does not want us to waste time talking about mercy. He wants us to make alive the experience of mercy. "It is the heart of our faith. It is the mental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely in the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life." Create a roadmap that will make mercy alive in your life. What can you do tomorrow? What can you do next week? Next month? How can you be a mirror of mercy?

3) Pope Francis says "mercy is the bridge that connects God with human beings." Analyze the roadmap you just created. Is it the bridge that will connect you to God?



Prayer at the session's conclusion: Loving Creator God, the mercy you constantly bestow on us is not theory or an idea. It comes to us in the flesh and blood of your Son Jesus who lived and died for us sinners. We do not deserve such love. Your greatest desire is to melt our hearts so that through our own flesh and blood we will bring to others the never-ending, undeserved love we ourselves have received. We thank you for making us your instruments of mercy in our world which needs it so much. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Father Solanus & Mercy

1st Session

- The Lord is kind and merciful.
- God pardons and crowns us with kindness.
- Merciful = Slow to anger.

1) Father Solanus learned mercy through his difficulties. List your life difficulties. Contemplate if you have learned mercy through these experiences? How has God been at work IN your life through these experiences?

2) “Blessed be God in all His designs and in His mercy which is above all His works.”
Fr. Dan says this is the heart of the Gospel, spirituality, and theology. God has a plan. God is at work. God is here doing something; planning something. This was the bedrock of Fr. Solanus’ spirituality. This is how he viewed mercy. It was present every day through God’s love and guidance. What is the bedrock of your spirituality? How do you live that spirituality?



3) Fr. Solanus knew how to help people and how to grasp the essential. He also accepted his limitations. He would say, “We are wrapped in God’s mercy like the air around us that permeates us.” Fr. Solanus trusted God’s mercy. He did not worry or fear. Instead, he pondered God’s mercy. He was at peace. He praised God. How can we trust in God’s mercy so we achieve peace and lack fear? How can we wrap ourselves in mercy like the air we breathe? How can we recognize God is with us in the midst of our darkness? How can we praise God when we are in pain?

Prayer at the session’s conclusion: Loving Creator God, with Father Solanus we bless you for all the ways – too many to count – whereby you in your mercy have guided us, protected us and through our many weaknesses and limitations you have fashioned your loving plan and design. You are still at work within us, for your designs for us will not be complete until we die and rest in you. Like Father Solanus, help us to trust the ways you work within us, especially when we too face setbacks, pain and discouragement. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Father Solanus & Mercy 2nd Session

- Fr. Solanus' spirituality had a peaceful trust and confidence.
- Precious is the root of appreciation.
- There is no ego in appreciation.

1) Fr. Dan states that Fr. Solanus had an authentic spirituality which we all can achieve. Fr. Solanus said, "In my humble conviction, appreciation is as necessary for social order and harmony as the laws of gravity in the physical world." Provide examples of how the world would be better if we all appreciated more? If we recognized the preciousness of one another?

2) Fr. Dan states that in order to appreciate, we need to 'get ourselves out of the picture.' How is that accomplished? Does appreciation further develop by recognizing our limitations? How does appreciation lead to mercy?

3) Fr. Dan observes that both Pope Francis and Fr. Solanus reflect joy, peace, trust, confidence, and appreciation.... all because God's mercy is at work. How can we reflect these attributes in our lives? How can we mirror Pope Francis and Fr. Solanus? How can we serve God in the simplest of ways?



Prayer at the session's conclusion: Loving Creator God, to know you is to love you. We are nothing without you. Your merciful love has filled us with all the blessings we need to go forward on our journey as disciples of Jesus. Like Father Solanus, may we never take those blessings for granted. Fill us instead with his constant appreciation for your mercies so we too might know and bring to others his joy, his peace and his hope. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Following are the passages the audience read aloud during Pope Francis & Mercy, 2nd Session:

The necessary work of renewal of the Church's institutions and structures. . . must bring us to make alive the experience of God's mercy which alone can guarantee the Church will be a city upon a hill which cannot be hidden.

Today Christ's Bride prefers the balm of mercy to the arm of severity. She believes that present needs are best served by explaining more fully the purport of her doctrines rather than by publishing condemnations. The great desire of the Catholic Church is to show herself to the world as the loving mother of all mankind; gentle, patient and full of tenderness and sympathy.

The present day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy and in fact tends to exclude from life and remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and concept of mercy seem to cause uneasiness in human beings, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, have become the master of the earth and subdued and dominated it. This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to leave no room for mercy.

The mystery of mercy is the source of a life different than the life that is created by human beings. For this reason, the church professes and proclaims conversion. Conversion to God always depends upon discovering His mercy, that is, in discovering that love which is patient and kind (1 Co 13:4) as only the Creator and Father can be.

Jesus' attitude is striking: we do not hear words of scorn, we do not hear words of condemnation, but only words of love, of mercy, that invite us to conversion. Brothers and sisters, the face of God is that of a merciful Father, who always has patience. This is His mercy: He always has patience with us, He understands us, He waits for us, He does not weary of forgiving us if we know how to return to Him with a contrite heart. Great is the mercy of the Lord, the psalm says.

Mercy is the best word we can hear: it changes the world. A little mercy makes the world less cold and more just. The message of Jesus is mercy. For me, I say this humbly, it is the Lord's most powerful message!

The Synod experience made us better realize that the true defenders of doctrine are not those who uphold its letter but its spirit; not ideas but people, not formulas but the gratuitousness of God's love and forgiveness. This in no way detracts from the importance of formulas – they are necessary – or from the importance of laws and divine commandments, but rather to exalt the greatness of the true God who does not treat us according to our merits or even according to our works but solely according to the boundless generosity of his mercy. It does have to do with the recurring temptations of the elder brother and the jealous laborers.

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity and peace. Our salvation depends on it. MERCY: the very word reveals the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. MERCY: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. MERCY: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. MERCY: the bridge that connects god and human beings, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

How much I desire that the year to come will be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God. May the balm of mercy reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already in our midst!

God's mercy can make even the driest land become a garden, can restore life to dry bones. So this is the invitation I address to everyone: let us accept the grace of Christ's resurrection! Let us be renewed by God's mercy, let us be loved by Jesus, let us enable the power of his love to transform us – and let us be agents of this mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make joy and peace flourish.

Jesus tells us that the path to encountering him is to find his wounds. We find Jesus' wounds in carrying out the works of mercy, going to the body – the body, but soul too, but I stress – the body of your wounded brother or sister because they are hungry, thirsty, naked, because they are humiliated, enslaved, incarcerated, in the hospital. These are the wounds of Jesus today. And Jesus asks us to take a leap of faith, towards him, but through these wounds.

How many are the wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich. During this jubilee let us open our eyes and see the misery of our world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to hear their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship and fraternity. May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism.

We are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardoning offenses becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully.

Human beings, whenever they judge, look no further than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul. How much harm words do when they are motivated by feelings of jealousy and envy. To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgment and condemnation means in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him/her any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment, our presumption to know everything about him/her.

