

The Holy Year of Jubilee 2025

Pilgrims of hope



BY JOHAN VAN PARYS, PHD



Archbishop Hebda celebrated the Opening Mass for the Jubilee Year with the veneration of the Cross. December 28, 2024

On February 11, 2022, Pope Francis sent a letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, asking him to start the preparations for the 2025 Holy Year of Jubilee. In this letter the Holy Father referenced some of the many difficulties humanity has faced since the last ordinary Year of Jubilee celebrated in 2000. And he expressed his hope that this Year of Jubilee might “contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire.” Because

of this, Pope Francis chose as the motto of this Holy Year of Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope.

The Catholic Church has a long tradition of observing periodic Holy Years. The first documented Holy Year of Jubilee was called by Pope Boniface VIII in the year 1300. Between 1300 and 1475 successive Popes declared a Holy Year at different intervals. Since 1475 the Catholic Church has celebrated an ordinary Holy Year every 25 years unless prevented by external circumstances such as war. In addition, there have been several extraordinary Holy Years such as the Holy Year of Redemption

declared by Saint John Paul II in 1983 and the Holy Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis in 2016.

The spiritual practice of a Holy Year of Jubilee is rooted in Judaism. As described in Leviticus 25:8-13, a Holy Year of Jubilee is all about righting relationships. It is a time of righting one’s relationship with God, recognizing that everything comes from and belongs to God. It is also a time of righting relationships with others by striving for peace, justice, and equality. Lastly, it is an opportunity for introspection, to reflect on our lives and identify areas for improvement and personal growth.

In *Spes Non Confundit* or “Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5), the Papal Bull that officially established the Holy Year of Jubilee 2025, Pope Francis invites us on the one hand to discover signs of hope in our world and on the other hand to become beacons of hope to our world. Among the signs of hope to be discovered he points to the “desire for peace” that is in the hearts of so many people, especially those most at risk for war. Another sign of hope according to Pope Francis is the “enthusiasm for life and the readiness to share it.”

In turn Pope Francis implores all Catholics to be “tangible signs of hope for those brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind.” He specifically names those who are in prison; those who are sick, either at home or in a hospital; young people who often “see their dreams and aspirations frustrated;” migrants “who leave their homelands behind in search of a better life for themselves and their families;” elderly people “who frequently feel lonely and abandoned;” and poor people “who often lack the essentials of life.”

Pope Francis begs us not to “avert our eyes from the faces of our sisters and brothers in need” since “the goods of the earth are not destined for a privileged few, but for everyone,” while reminding us that “the earth is the Lord’s and all of us dwell in it as ‘aliens and tenants’ (Lev.25:23).”

No matter how dire or bleak our situation, Pope Francis writes, we are anchored in hope. By virtue of our faith in the Resurrection, we “view the passage of time with the certainty that the history of humanity and our individual history are not doomed to a dead end or dark abyss but directed to an encounter with the Lord of Glory.”

A Year of Jubilee is always marked by several spiritual exercises that avail special jubilee graces to those who participate in them. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important aspect of righting things in ourselves, with God, and with one another. It is in this sacrament that we “allow the Lord to erase our sins, to heal our hearts, to raise us up, to embrace us and to reveal to us his tender and compassionate countenance,” according to Pope Francis. Participation in the Eucharist and receiving Holy Communion is another important part of our spiritual exercises during the Jubilee Year of Hope because it is precisely in the Eucharist that we are anchored in hope, Sunday after Sunday. Praying for the needs of the Church and the intentions of the Holy Father is the third part of the jubilee exercises.



Historically and spiritually, the high point of a Holy Year has been the traditional pilgrimage to Rome with a prayerful walk through the Holy Doors at the four Papal Basilicas. For those unable to go to Rome, a pilgrimage to their local cathedral or to other important churches including Marian Shrines was suggested by Pope Francis as a valiant alternative.

The Year of Jubilee 2025 began with the opening of the Holy Doors at Saint Peter’s Basilica in Rome on December 24, 2024, and will end with the closing of the Holy Doors at Saint Peter’s Basilica on January 6, 2026. In our Archdiocese, Archbishop Hebda opened the Jubilee Year of Hope at The Basilica of Saint Mary on Saturday, December 28, and at The Cathedral of Saint Paul on Sunday, December 29. While at The Basilica, the Archbishop blessed the Jubilee Cross that is in The Basilica. It will remain in The Basilica through the Jubilee year, and this is the cross we will venerate on Good Friday.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, according to Pope Francis in *Spes Non Confundit*, is a “supreme witness of hope to whom so many people commend their cares, their sorrows, and their hopes.” Because of that, Marian Shrines are “privileged spaces for the rebirth of hope.” As a church dedicated

Indulgences, a Jubilee Grace

In his decree on the granting of indulgences during the Year of Jubilee 2025, Pope Francis states that “all the faithful, who are truly repentant and free from any affection for sin, who are moved by a spirit of charity and who, during the Holy Year, purified through the sacrament of penance and refreshed by Holy Communion, pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, will be able to obtain from the treasury of the Church a plenary indulgence.”

The word indulgence is derived from the Latin words *indulgentia*, which means remission, and from *indulgentum*, which means kind, tender, and fond. Thus an indulgence on the one hand is revelatory of God’s kindness, tenderness, and fondness for us. On the other hand, an indulgence is the assurance of the satisfaction of any temporal punishment incurred due to sin.

Indulgences are the celebration and affirmation of God’s mercy. This mercy can neither be bought nor sold. God’s mercy is totally gratuitous in the face of which we can do nothing but show gratitude and commit ourselves to show mercy in turn.

to the Blessed Virgin, may The Basilica of Saint Mary indeed be a “privileged space for the rebirth of hope” for the many people who will visit in 2025 and beyond. ✚

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