

Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy

December 8, 2015 – November 20, 2016

■ What is a Jubilee Year?

In the ancient Jewish tradition, a Jubilee Year was celebrated every 50 years, and dedicated to coming back into right relationship with God and one another—in particular, through the forgiveness of debts, as well as the return of lost property and restoring slaves and captives to freedom (see Leviticus 25). It served as a special reminder of God's providence and mercy. The Catholic tradition of a Holy Year began in 1300. From 1475 onwards, ordinary Jubilees have been celebrated every 25 years in order to allow each new generation to experience it at least once. Extraordinary Jubilees may be announced on the occasion of a significant event or anniversary. A Catholic Jubilee Year emphasizes the forgiveness of sins, an indulgence offered to all, and the renewal of one's relationships with God and neighbor. With the Jubilee of Mercy, Pope Francis focuses attention on the merciful Father who calls all people to return to him—an encounter that then inspires them to live with mercy.



■ Why a Jubilee of Mercy now?

Pope Francis himself answered this question on the eve of Divine Mercy Sunday: "Here, then, is the reason for the Jubilee: because this is the time for mercy. It is the favorable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, everyone, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation. May the Mother of God open our eyes, so that we may comprehend the task to which we have been called; and may she obtain for us the grace to experience this Jubilee of Mercy as faithful and fruitful witnesses of Christ." (April 11, 2015)

■ What should I be doing during the Year of Mercy?

Here are a few suggestions for experiencing and extending God's mercy this year:

- Regularly receive the Sacrament of Penance ("go to confession").
- Forgive someone who has hurt you.
- Pray Pope Francis' *Prayer for the Year of Mercy*.
- Go to Eucharistic Adoration or spend time studying the Bible.
- Read a great Catholic book (or two!), especially about mercy.
- Learn—and practice—the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy:

Corporal Works of Mercy

- Feed the hungry
- Give drink to the thirsty
- Clothe the naked
- Welcome the stranger
- Heal the sick
- Visit the imprisoned
- Bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

- Counsel the doubtful
- Instruct the ignorant
- Admonish sinners
- Comfort the afflicted
- Forgive offenses
- Bear patiently those who do us ill
- Pray for the living and the dead

- Participate in a pilgrimage or pass through the Holy Doors.
- Pray the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy or make the Divine Mercy Novena (starts Good Friday).
- Watch the bulletin and the *North Country Catholic* for special parish and diocesan events.

■ What are the Holy Doors?

One of the central symbols of a Jubilee Year is the ceremonial opening of the Holy Doors at the four major basilicas in Rome. Since not everyone is able to travel to Rome, each diocese may also designate a Holy Door. The opening of these doors represents the love and compassion of God, whose mercy is open to all. Those who make a pilgrimage and pass through the Holy Doors do so that they may experience God's loving mercy—the mercy proclaimed by Christ—which consoles, pardons, and gives us hope. Going out on pilgrimage is meant to be a journey of walking closer with God. In the Diocese of Ogdensburg, Bishop LaValley has designated a Holy Door at St. Mary's Cathedral (to be opened December 13, 2015), as well as several other pilgrimage sites where the faithful can obtain the Jubilee indulgence:

- Precious Blood Monastery Chapel, Watertown
- St. John the Baptist Church, Plattsburgh
- St. Patrick's Church, Port Henry
- St. Bartholomew's Church, Old Forge
- Sacred Heart Church, Massena
- St. James Church, Carthage
- St. Agnes Church, Lake Placid
- St. Peter's Church, Lowville
- Divine Mercy Chapel at St. Mary's Church, Canton
- Notre Dame Church in St. André Bessette Parish, Malone

■ What is an indulgence?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (#1471) tells us that an indulgence is "a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the actions of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints." Even after our sins have been forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance, there are natural consequences that remain which must be satisfied (either in this life or in purgatory) before one can stand before God in heaven. Through an indulgence, God answers the Church's prayer that the remaining penalty due to a person's sins be reduced (a partial indulgence) or completely eliminated (a plenary indulgence). By God's grace, participation in a certain prayer or action to which the Church has attached an indulgence brings about the necessary restoration and reparation without the suffering that would normally accompany it. An indulgence is a gift of immense mercy!

■ How do I gain the Jubilee indulgence?

To gain the Jubilee indulgence, one must make a pilgrimage to pass through a designated Holy Door or visit a designated church or shrine (*see the list above*) as a sign of their desire for deep conversion. One may also gain the indulgence by faithfully performing one of the Corporal or Spiritual Works of Mercy (*see the lists on the other side of this sheet*). Special provisions have also been made for those who are sick or imprisoned. Besides the requirements mentioned above, the faithful must fulfill the "usual conditions" to receive a plenary indulgence: (1) go to confession; (2) receive Holy Communion; (3) make a profession of faith (that is, recite the Creed); (4) pray for the Pope and his intentions (for example, say the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary); (5) be in a state of grace when the indulgenced work is completed, and have the interior disposition of complete detachment from all sin. A plenary indulgence can only be received once each day. Indulgences can be applied to oneself or to the souls of the faithful departed.



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