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the Governorate tells its story

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PILGRIMS ON A JOURNEY

Dedicating an edition to the Jubilee is most timely, considering the time of grace that began on 24 December 2024. The 2025 Holy Year, "Pilgrims of Hope", is a unique opportunity to delve deeper into one's faith and one's relationship with God. To be conscious of our need for mercy is to acknowledge our weaknesses, which we should not fight against. Rather, our frailties should be accompanied and healed.

Pilgrims should learn to always feel loved as children of God, in their experience as a people on a journey, like in the meaningful parable of the Prodigal Son, also known as the Merciful Father (Lk 15, 11-32).

At the beginning of the parable, the son decides to leave his family home. Perhaps he felt the need for a change, or the need to build an identity far away from his family, experiencing different lifestyles. He asks his father for his part of the inheritance and leaves. His father gives him the freedom to go and choose his life's destiny. But he does not lose interest in his son and waits for him on the threshold, scanning the horizon for his return, ready to embrace and welcome him.

The Father behaves this way with each one of us. During this Jubilee, we are called to experience this with the trust of being welcomed with open arms, every time we return to him with a repentant heart.

Throughout the Holy Year, in addition to this experience, it will also be important to find the time for contemplation. In his ways and times, the Lord still speaks to each of our hearts and he will continue to do so throughout the events that will take place during the Jubilee.

This special edition is thus a way that can help prepare for this



experience. The Jubilee events that will take place in Rome will be marked by a personal encounter with the Living God, an encounter that continues to question each of our lives that calls for personal participation, a freely-given and trustful "yes". The Governorate of Vatican City State wishes to contribute to the Jubilee with this edition, in the hope that everyone can experience God's infinite goodness.

Jubilee 2025 can thus be a time of profound spiritual renewal and a call to rediscover faith and hope in God. Through these pages, we hope to accompany pilgrims, providing information and reflection, so that they may experience the richness of the Father's mercy, in a more complete way.

Nicola Gori



THE JUBILEE, A TIME OF CONSOLATION

"A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you; in it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field" (Lev 25:11-12). The Scriptures describe the Israelites' need for a Jubilee with these words. It was essentially a call to rest, filled with references to the Lord. It meant placing God above everything, affirming his primacy in life, above all else. It meant acknowledging that everything is a gift from him, from the fruits of the land, to life and nature.

In this context, the Jubilee refers to the Sabbath, the day dedicated to the Lord, to rest and to seeking a relationship with him. The Holy Year is thus an opportunity to experience "consolation", which can only come from the Lord, and to seek his mercy as a source of good for humanity.

"Consolation" can only be truly received by having a relationship with Jesus of Nazareth, thanks to whom, "rest" is possible -- experiencing "consolation", despite distress. Jesus' invitation in the Gospel is addressed to anyone in need: "Come to me, all

who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt 11:28-30).

The invitation is addressed to those who cannot rely on their own means, nor on important friendships, those who can only trust in him. He understands the conditions of the poor and the suffering because he too had experienced poverty and suffering. Going towards Jesus is thus an act of trust in his ability to offer a moment of rest, a break from daily matters and worries. Jesus himself promises and offers consolation, the real kind, that no one else can give. The Jubilee is an auspicious time, a favourable time to seek and find consolation and rest. Man's heart can only be fulfilled in Christ. With him, all fears subside. It is a unique time, a journey that each of us is invited to make during this Holy Year.

Cardinal Fernando Vérgez Alzaga
President of the Governorate of Vatican City State



A TIME OF GRACE AND MERCY

Pope Francis officially inaugurated the Jubilee when he opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica on Tuesday evening, 24 December. We have entered a time of grace and mercy, in which we can draw abundantly from the riches of the Heart of Christ. It is a unique opportunity for all the faithful to make the most of this precious moment that the Church offers our time.

The pilgrimage to Jubilee churches is a favourable time to rediscover intimacy with Christ, to reflect on one's life, and to put oneself back on a journey, after undergoing a process of conversion. The good news of the Jubilee is that it is a grace granted to all. Indeed, everyone is called to take advantage of God's forgiveness and his goodness, as he patiently waits for sinners to return to him.

It is a "year of mercy" that is not the result of a personal initiative, but rather a gift from the Lord. Everything is free and without conditions or ulterior motives. Anyone can say that they received the call to draw strength and mercy from God, because his call is universal.

Following in the footsteps of the millions of pilgrims who will cross the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica and the thousands of other Jubilee doors scattered throughout the world, we wished to make this resource available.

The Lord to free us from physical afflictions, inner wounds and conditions of slavery. He wants to free humanity, making people



capable of having a relationship with him that is not bound by oppressive power, least of all by sin.

This is why we join the entire Church in celebrating the Jubilee and we invite everyone to participate in this event of grace.

Sr. Raffaella Petrini
Secretary General



POPE FRANCIS OPENS THE HOLY DOOR OF SAINT PETER'S BASILICA, MARKING THE BEGINNING OF THE JUBILEE

Pope Francis was the first "Pilgrim of Hope" to pass through the Holy Door of the 2025 Jubilee. The Holy Father opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica on Tuesday evening, 24 December, and was followed across the threshold by a procession of cardinals, bishops, priests, and families representing the world's continents.

Celebrating Holy Mass in the Basilica on Christmas Eve, Pope Francis highlighted that the opening of the Holy Door officially inaugurated the new Jubilee: "Each of us can enter into the mystery of this extraordinary event. Tonight, the door of hope has opened wide to the world. Tonight, God speaks to each of us and says: there is hope also for you! There is hope for each of us. And do not forget, sisters and brothers, that God forgives everything, God always forgives. Do not forget this, which is a way of understanding hope in the Lord".

The Pope then added: "this is the Jubilee. This is the season of hope in which we are invited to rediscover the joy of meeting the Lord. The Jubilee calls us to spiritual renewal and commits



us to the transformation of our world, so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation. A jubilee for our mother Earth, disfigured by profiteering; a time of jubilee for the poorer countries burdened beneath unfair debts; a time of jubilee for all those who are in bondage to forms of slavery old and new". The Holy Father then explained that we have all received "the gift and task of bringing hope wherever hope has been lost, lives broken, promises unkept, dreams shattered and hearts overwhelmed by adversity. We are called to bring hope to the weary who have no strength to carry on, the lonely oppressed by the bitterness of failure, and all those who are broken-hearted. To bring hope to the interminable, dreary days of prisoners, to the cold and dismal lodgings of the poor, and to all those places desecrated by war and violence. To bring hope there, to sow hope there". Starting from 8:00 a.m. on Wednesday, 25 December, the Solemnity of Christmas, the first pilgrims passed through the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica. Over the following days, the Holy Doors of Rome's four Papal Basilicas were also opened. On Thursday, 26 December, for the first time in an ordinary Jubilee, Pope Francis opened a Holy Door in the Rome's Rebibbia prison. "I wanted to open the Door here today" in a prison, Pope Francis said, adding, that he wanted each of us, both those inside and outside, to have the opportunity of opening wide their hearts, understanding that hope does not disappoint.

The Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, the Cathedral of Rome, was opened on 29 December. At the same time, all the bishops of the world opened the Jubilee year with a celebration with their diocesan communities. The Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint Mary Major was opened on 1 January 2025, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and lastly, the Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls was opened on 5 January.

WHAT IS THE JUBILEE?

Jubilees are important religious events in Catholic tradition. They are years dedicated to the remission of sins, reconciliation, conversion, penance, solidarity, hope, justice, and to joyfully serving God and being peaceful with others. This special year places Christ at the centre, he who brings life and grace to humanity. The roots of the Jubilee go back to the Old Testament. The Law of Moses established a special year for Jews: the 50th year was to be proclaimed sacred and marked by the liberation of all the inhabitants of the land. It was to be a year of rest for the earth in which people returned to their properties and family. During this time, no agricultural work or harvesting was permitted, and people consumed the natural fruits of the land. In fact, the Jubilee was proclaimed a holy year. Under Mosaic law, throughout this time, the land, which was owned solely by God, had be returned to its original allotted owner, and slaves were to be freed. The word "Jubilee" comes from the Latin word, *Jubilaeum*, which in turn is derived from the Hebrew word, *yōbēl*, which refers to the ram's horn that was used to announce a holy year. In the New Testament, Jesus is presented as the one who fulfils the ancient Jubilee, by coming "to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord".

The first Christian Jubilee was proclaimed by Boniface VIII in

1300. The most recent ordinary Jubilee was in 2000, which was also the first one to take place at the end of a millennium and the beginning of the next. It was particularly significant because, since calculations of time in years are widely based on Christ's coming into the world, it also marked the celebration of the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's birth.

Jubilees are called "Holy Years" not only because of the solemn celebrations that take place, but also because they aim to promote holiness in life, to strengthen faith, encourage acts of solidarity and foster fraternal communion within the Church and society. Jubilees invite the faithful to have a more sincere and consistent profession of faith in Christ.

There are ordinary Jubilees, which are celebrated at established intervals, and extraordinary Jubilees, which are proclaimed for events of special importance. To date, there have been 25 ordinary Holy Years, with the Jubilee 2025 marking the 27th. The tradition of celebrating extraordinary Jubilees dates back to the 16th century. They can last from a few days to a year. The most recent extraordinary Jubilees were proclaimed by Pope Pius XI, in 1933, and by Pope John Paul II, in 1983. Pope Francis proclaimed the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2015 and the ordinary Jubilee of 2025.



HISTORY

The Jubilee: A Story of Spirituality and Renewal

The Jubilee is a tradition that has spanned centuries and has deep roots in Church history and in the lives of the faithful. It began in 1300, when Pope Boniface VIII, who was born into the noble Caetani family, proclaimed the first Holy Year with the Bull, *Antiquorum Habet Fida Relatio*. This extraordinary celebration was a time of forgiveness, reconciliation with God and spiritual renewal. It was a unique opportunity for reflection and solidarity. Ever since their institution in 1300, Jubilees have adapted to historical and cultural changes, at the same time, retaining their essence.

The Origins of Jubilees

The Pontiffs established an extraordinary event that would grant the “full remission of sins” to all pilgrims who visited Rome’s basilicas. This initiative emerged during a time that was marked by violence and division, in response to a deep yearning for spirituality and peace. Among the pilgrims who participated in the first Jubilee, were prominent figures such as Dante Alighieri and Giotto, whose works reflected the impact of their pilgrimage.

Jubilees were initially planned to take place every 100 years, but by 1350, Pope Clement VI had decided to celebrate them every 50 years in response to requests from the faithful. Since then, the frequency of Jubilees was further adjusted. Urban VI set them to every 33 years, recalling the years Christ spent on earth, and Pope Paul II changed the occurrence of Jubilees to every 25 years, in 1470, a tradition that continues to this day.

Celebrations and Innovations

Over the centuries, Jubilees became events that engaged not only the spiritual

world, but also the artistic and social spheres. Rome, the beating heart of the celebrations, went

through numerous transformations to welcome the pilgrims. In 1475, Pope Sixtus IV promoted major projects, including the construction of the Sistine Chapel and Ponte Sisto, marking a period of extraordinary artistic development. In 1500, Pope Alexander VI established that the Holy Doors of Rome’s four main Basilicas would be opened simultaneously.

Each Jubilee was an opportunity to address the challenges of the time. During the Pontificate of Julius III in 1550, Saint Philip Neri stood out for his dedication to assist the many pilgrims, through the “Confraternity of the Holy Trinity”. In 1750, Pope Benedict XIV instituted the pious practice of the Via Crucis, at the Colosseum, imbuing the Jubilee with profound devotional significance.

However, not all Jubilees took place without difficulties. The Jubilee of 1800 was not celebrated due to tensions linked to the Napoleonic era, and during the Jubilee of 1875, the traditional opening and closing ceremonies of the Holy Door did not take place because Victor Emmanuel II’s troops had occupied Rome.

The Jubilee in the Contemporary Era

With the beginning of the 20th century, Jubilees took on an even more universal significance, reflecting the aspirations and hopes of humanity in times of great change. In 1950, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the Holy Year with the aim of promoting world peace, social justice and the renewal of faith. The dogma of the Assumption of Mary into heaven was proclaimed during this Jubilee, a moment of great importance to the Church.



The Jubilee of 1975, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI, was dedicated to themes of “Renewal” and “Reconciliation”, inspired by Vatican Council II. Pope John Paul II’s Great Jubilee of 2000 marked the end of the second millennium with an extraordinary event, and an invitation to all the faithful to reflect on redemption and the mission of the Church in the contemporary world.

The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

The 2015 Jubilee of Mercy, proclaimed by Pope Francis, was an extraordinary Jubilee. Its message of compassion, forgiveness and hospitality put the value of mercy at the heart of Christian life, and promoted concrete acts of solidarity and attention towards the most vulnerable.

A Time for Universal Reflection

Today, Jubilees continue to be special moments for the faithful around the world and an opportunity to rediscover the fundamental values of fraternity, justice and hope. Throughout history, their celebration has united generations of men and women, inspiring them to build a more just and compassionate world.

The tradition of celebrating Jubilees is not just an event of the Church, but a heritage of all humanity. Jubilees are an invitation to reflect on the challenges of the present, and to respond to them with a renewed sense of commitment to the common good. Each Holy Year writes a new chapter in this millennial story, which continues to speak to the hearts of people and illuminate the path of humanity.

THE LOGO FOR THE JUBILEE

The official logo for the Jubilee depicts four stylized figures, representing humanity hailing from the four corners of the world. The figures embrace one another, symbolizing the solidarity and fraternity that should unite people. The first figure clings to a Cross, a symbol of faith and hope. The waves below the figures are choppy to indicate that life's pilgrimage does not always take place in calm waters. And to inspire hope in personal matters and when events in the world require it most urgently, the lower part of the Cross is extended and turns into an anchor, a metaphor for hope, which imposes itself over the movement of the waves.

The figures' colours express the message they convey: red is for love, action and sharing; yellow/orange is the colour of

human warmth; green is for peace and balance; blue is for safety and protection. The Cross/Anchor is black/grey for authority and the inner world.

The logo also shows that the pilgrim's journey is not a personal event alone, but rather it is a dynamic community that journeys towards the Cross, which is also dynamic, as it bends towards humanity, to encounter it and not leave it alone, instead offering the certainty of presence and safety of hope. The Jubilee 2025 Motto, *Peregrinantes in Spem* is written in green on the logo.

The logo is like a compass, one that expresses identity and the Jubilee's special spiritual nature, enclosing the theological meaning of the Jubilee.





THE PILGRIMAGE

A pilgrim is someone who sets out on a journey to seek God. A pilgrimage is, first and foremost, about setting out, leaving behind one's daily life and routines. More than a journey, it is a moment to take time for reflection, either alone or in groups. In the Bible, a pilgrimage is a symbolic journey that is deeply linked to another reality: the memory of the wonders performed by God, which is reflected in the act of journeying. Both body and spirit participate in this exercise of giving thanks and remembering the blessings granted by the Lord. This is also the significance behind the Torah's instructions to Israel, to keep alive from one generation to the next, the founding event when Israel was born as a people, including when God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, manifested in the crossing of the Red Sea and the journey through the desert.

With the unification of the tribes under David's rule and the centralization of worship, Jerusalem became a pilgrimage destination. Three pilgrimages had to be made in Israel by ascending the Temple in Jerusalem, to recall God's mighty intervention to free his people.

The first is the feast of Passover (Pesach, in Hebrew), which commemorates the Exodus from Egypt and the beginning of the journey. The second occurs 50 days later, that is, seven weeks later, starting from the second day of Passover, the 16th

of Nisan, recalling that seven is the number of God. This is the feast of Pentecost (Shavuot, in Hebrew, which means 50 in Greek). It is the feast of first fruits, of the harvest and of joy, as well as the commemoration of receiving the gift of the Torah at Sinai and the renewal of the covenant between God and the Israelites. During this feast, people from all over converge in Jerusalem.

Lastly, there is the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Sukkot in Hebrew), which lasts seven days and commemorates the 40 years in which the Israelites lived in "booths" or tabernacles in the Sinai desert, following their Exodus from Egypt under the guidance of the prophet Moses. Observant Jews use "four species" of branches -- date palm fronds, small branches of willow, myrtle and citrus fruit -- in rituals and prayers of thanksgiving throughout the seven days of the feast. It marks the entry into the Promised Land.

The Bible, thus, established the times and moments in which these "walkers" and nomads should set out, in order to experience God. There is no doubt, therefore, that the Bible asks mankind to be pilgrims in search of the Lord.

It is evident that seeking God takes place during the journey, but also through observance of the Law and the covenant.

An exemplary figure of this is Abraham, the father of the faith,

to whom God gave the vocation of “nomad” or “pilgrim”. Genesis states: “The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing’”. Abraham’s family at the time was nomadic, that is, the sustenance of its members came from the herds they moved from one place to the next in search of water and pastures. With God’s request to Abraham to leave his land, the reason

for moving was no longer dictated by the search for sustenance, but by the Lord’s will. Through this journey, God carried out his plan of love.

Christian tradition is rooted in the Jewish tradition of pilgrimages, that is, the act of setting out to encounter the Lord and hear his Word. This is why Christians set out on journeys to places where a manifestation of God or of Our Lady took place, or to places that are dedicated to a saint, such as Lourdes, Fatima, Jerusalem, Rome, and Compostela.



PLENARY INDULGENCES DURING THE JUBILEE

How can we obtain a plenary indulgence during the Jubilee? The Apostolic Penitentiary explains all the details in its document, Decree on the granting of the indulgence during the ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 called by His Holiness, Pope Francis, dated 13 May 2024.

1) By undertaking pilgrimages:

to any sacred Jubilee site by devoutly participating in Holy Mass; to a ritual Mass for the conferral of the sacraments of Christian Initiation or the Anointing of the Sick;

to a celebration of the Word of God; the Liturgy of the Hours (office of readings, lauds, vespers); the Via Crucis; the Marian Rosary;

to the recitation of the Akathist hymn; a penitential celebration, which ends with the individual confessions of the penitents, as established in the Rite of Penance (form II);

in Rome: by visiting at least one of the four Major Papal Basilicas: St. Peter's in the Vatican, the Archbasilica of the Holy Saviour (St John Lateran's), Saint Mary Major's, and St. Paul's Outside the Walls;

in the Holy Land: by visiting at least one of the three basilicas: the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, or the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth;

in other ecclesiastical areas: by visiting the Cathedral or other church or sacred place designated by the local Ordinary. Bishops will take into account the needs of the faithful as well as the opportunity to reinforce the concept of pilgrimage with all its symbolic significance, so as to manifest the great need for conversion and reconciliation.

2) Pious visits to sacred places

The faithful can obtain the Jubilee Indulgence if, individually or in a group, they devoutly visit any Jubilee site and there, for a suitable period of time, engage in Eucharistic adoration and meditation, concluding with the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any legitimate form, and invocations to Mary, the Mother of God.

During the Jubilee Year, in addition to the aforementioned places of pilgrimage, the following sacred places may also be visited under the same conditions:

in Rome: the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, the Basilica of St Lawrence at the Verano, the Basilica of St Sebastian, (the traditional visit to "the seven Churches of Rome", so close to the heart of St Philip Neri is also highly recommended), the Sanctuary of Divine Love (the 'Divino Amore'), the Church of the Holy



Spirit in Sassia, the Church of St Paul at the Tre Fontane, (the site of the Martyrdom of the Apostle), the Roman Catacombs; the churches of the Jubilee Pathways dedicated respectively to the Iter Europaeum and to the Female Patrons of Europe and Doctors of the Church (the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva, and the churches of St Brigid at Campo de' Fiori, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Trinità dei Monti, the Basilica of Saint Cecilia in Trastevere, and the Basilica of Saint Augustine in Campo Marzio);

in other places in the world: the two Minor Papal Basilicas in Assisi – those of St Francis and Our Lady of the Angels; the Pontifical Basilicas of Our Lady of Loreto, Our Lady of Pompeii, and St Anthony in Padua; any minor basilica, cathedral church, co-cathedral church, Marian sanctuary, any distinguished collegiate church or sanctuary designated by the diocesan bishop or Eparchy for the benefit of the faithful, and national or international sanctuaries, indicated by Episcopal Conferences.

The faithful who are truly repentant of sin but who cannot participate in the various solemn celebrations, pilgrimages and pious visits for serious reasons (especially cloistered nuns and monks, but also the elderly, the sick, prisoners, and those who, through their work in hospitals or other care facilities, provide continuous service to the sick), can obtain the Jubilee Indulgence, under the same conditions if, united in spirit with the faithful taking part in person, (especially when the words of the Supreme Pontiff or the diocesan Bishop are transmitted through the various means of communication), they recite the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any approved form, and other prayers in conformity with the objectives of the Holy Year, in their homes or wherever they are confined (e.g. in the chapel of the monastery, hospital, nursing home, prison...) offering up their sufferings or the hardships of their lives;

3) Another way to obtain the Indulgence is through works of mercy and penance

In addition, the faithful will be able to obtain the Jubilee Indulgence if, with a devout spirit, they participate in popular missions, spiritual exercises, or formation activities on the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, held in a church or other suitable place, according to the mind of the Holy Father.

Despite the rule that only one plenary indulgence can be obtained per day (cf. *Enchiridion Indulgentiarum*, IV ed., norm. 18, § 1), the faithful who have carried out an act of charity on behalf of the souls in Purgatory, if they receive Holy Communion a second time that day, can obtain the plenary indulgence twice on

the same day, applicable only to the deceased (this must take place within a Eucharistic celebration; see can. 917 and the Pontifical Commission for the authentic interpretation of the CIC, Responsa ad dubia, 1, 11 July 1984). Through this double act, a praiseworthy exercise of supernatural charity is carried out, through that bond by which the faithful still journeying on this earth are united in the mystical Body of Christ, with those who have already completed their journey.

Therefore, the Indulgence is also linked to certain works of mercy and penance, which bear witness to the conversion undertaken. In this way, the faithful will be able to obtain the Jubilee Indulgence if they visit, for an appropriate amount of time, their brothers and sisters who are in need or in difficulty (the sick, prisoners, lonely elderly people, disabled people...), in a sense making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them (cf. Mt 25, 34-36) according to the usual spiritual, sacramental and prayer conditions. The faithful can repeat these visits throughout the Holy Year, even daily, acquiring a plenary indulgence each time. The Jubilee Plenary Indulgence can also be obtained through ini-

tiatives that put into practice, in a concrete and generous way, the spirit of penance which is, in a sense, the soul of the Jubilee. In particular the penitential nature of Friday can be rediscovered through abstaining, in a spirit of penance, at least for one day of the week from futile distractions (real but also virtual distractions, for example, the use of the media and/or social networks), from superfluous consumption (for example by fasting or practising abstinence according to the general norms of the Church and the indications of the Bishops), as well as by donating a proportionate sum of money to the poor; by supporting works of a religious or social nature, especially in support of the defence and protection of life in all its phases, but also by supporting the quality of life of abandoned children, young people in difficulty, the needy or lonely elderly people, or migrants from various countries; it can also be obtained by dedicating a reasonable portion of one's free time to voluntary activities that are of service to the community or to other similar forms of personal commitment.



