What is a Holy Year?

The Catholic tradition of practicing a Holy Year, or Jubilee, began with Pope Boniface VIII in 1300, and since 1475 an Ordinary Jubilee has been celebrated every 25 years in order to allow each generation to experience at least one during their lifetime.

The Holy Year is traditionally a year of forgiveness of sins and also the punishment merited by one’s sins. It is also a year for reconciliation between adversaries, conversion and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Until now there have only been 26 ordinary Jubilee celebrations, the last of which was the Jubilee of 2000.
What is an Extraordinary Jubilee Year?

Jubilee can be called for a special occasion or for an event that has a particular importance, as is the case with Pope Francis’ 2016 Holy Year of Mercy.

A Jubilee is ordinary when it falls after the set period of years and extraordinary when it is proclaimed for some outstanding event.
The Logo

The logo and the motto together provide a summary of what the Jubilee Year is all about.
Represents that the Son having taken upon his shoulders the lost soul demonstrating that it is the love of Christ that brings to completion the mystery of his incarnation culminating in redemption.

Designed to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity and does so with a love with the power to change one’s life.

Note that while the Good Shepherd, in his great mercy, takes humanity upon himself, his eyes are merged with those of man. Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam with the eyes of Christ.

Every person discovers in Christ, the new Adam, one’s own humanity and the future that lies ahead, contemplating, in his gaze, the love of the Father.
The Scene

The scene is captured within the *mandorla*, which is Italian for “almond” and has been used in Christian art, usually for the figure of Christ, since the 5th century.

The image calls to mind the two natures of Christ: divine and human.

There are three concentric ovals.

- The colors become lighter as we move outward which suggests the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the night of sin and death.
- The depth of the darker color suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives us.
The motto *Merciful like the Father* is taken from the Gospel of Luke, 6: 36-38:

- Serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us **not to judge or condemn but to forgive and give love and forgiveness without measure**
Luke 6: 36-38:

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”
What you should know

Highlights on the Year of Mercy
The Year of Mercy began on December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and marks the 50th anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council.
Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome opened on December 8, 2015. The Holy Door in Cathedrals around the world opened on December 13, 2015.
The Jubilee year will close with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on November 20, 2016.
Mother of Mercy

Entrusts the Year of Mercy to the protection of the Mother of Mercy.

Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.

At the foot of the cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone.

“Let us address her in the words of the *Salve Regina* so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her son Jesus.”

Pope Francis
Pope Francis has decided to concede to all priests for the Jubilee Year:

- “the discretion to absolve the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it.”
  
  https://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/abortio2.htm

- “…those faithful who for various reasons choose to attend churches officiated by priests of the Fraternity of St. Pius X…[Pope Francis] establish[es] that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Fraternity of St. Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins.”

  https://www.ewtn.com/expert/answers/sspx_fssp.htm
Pope Francis’ words on mercy

Taken from Misericordiae Vultus, Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.
“Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy.”

Mercy is “the beating heart of the Gospel…”

“Mercy is the foundation of the Church’s life.”

“God never tires of reaching out to us. He is always ready to listen…”

“When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive.”
As seen in sacred Scripture, “mercy is a key word that indicates God’s action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible.” “The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us.”

“The theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action” and the Church’s “language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.”
I present, therefore, this Extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to living out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us. In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of casting open the doors of his heart and of repeating that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. The Church feels the urgent need to proclaim God’s mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy. She knows that her primary task, especially at a moment full of great hopes and signs of contradiction, is to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God’s mercy by contemplating the face of Christ. The church is called above all to be a credible witness to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ. From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends. The profundity of the mystery surrounding it is as inexhaustible as the richness which springs up from it.

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: “Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from old” (Psalm 25: 6)
What we are called to do
WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO DO

† Constantly contemplate the mystery of mercy. Our salvation depends on it.

† Be patient and merciful.

† “We are called to show mercy because mercy has been shown to us.” (Matthew 18: 21-35). Just as God is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.

† “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy”: the beatitude to which we should particularly aspire in the Holy Year.

† Live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord’s words: Merciful like the Father. In order to be capable of mercy, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God’s mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.
“By crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God's mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.”

– Pope Francis, Misericordiae Vultus
Pilgrimage to the Holy Door

All the particular Churches will open their own Doors of Mercy in communion with the Church of Rome as part of the Eucharistic celebration of the Third Sunday of Advent.

In addition, the diocesan Ordinaries may also permit the opening of other Doors of Mercy at Shrines of particular importance.

Once they have crossed through the Holy Door, or have fulfilled one of the other conditions under which Pope Francis has granted the Jubilee Indulgence, in addition to the usual conditions which require a heart well-disposed for the grace to bring its desired fruits, the faithful should stop in prayer to fulfill the final actions asked for: the profession of faith, and prayer for the Holy Father and his intentions. The latter should be at least an “Our Father” but it could possibly be more. In the spirit of this Holy Year, it is suggested that pilgrims recite the prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee, and that they conclude the time of prayer with an invocation to the merciful Lord Jesus (for example, “Merciful Jesus, I trust in You”).

• The practice of pilgrimage represents the journey each of us makes in this life.

• Life itself is a pilgrimage and we are the pilgrim traveling along the road making our way to the desired destination.

• To reach the Holy Door, each person will have to make a pilgrimage. This will be a sign that mercy is also a goal to reach and requires dedication and sacrifice.

• By crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God’s mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.

The tradition of the Holy Door most likely originated during the time when sinners were given public penances that had to be performed before they could receive absolution. On completion of the penance, the penitent was then allowed through the “holy door” of the Church to confess and be reunited with the Church. Today pilgrims still enter through the Holy Door as a sign of repentance and the desire to renew and recommit to their faith. As Jesus said, “I am the door” (Jn 10:7), bringing to fruition the words of the psalmist, who said, “This is the door of the Lord where the just may enter” (see 118:20). Passing through the Holy Door symbolizes our leaving the world outside and entering into the realm of salvation. As Pope St. John Paul II said, the Holy Door “evokes the passage from sin to grace which every Christian is called to accomplish” (Incarnationis Mysterium).

http://www.archgh.org/yearofmercy/holydoors/
https://www.osv.com/Shop/PDFs/P1764.pdf
Holy Doors and Pilgrimage Sites in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

In accord with Misericordiae vultus, the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, paragraph 3, Cardinal DiNardo has decreed that a Holy Door be opened at the following churches, which will serve also as pilgrimage sites during the Holy Year:

- St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica (Holy Family Parish, 2011 Church St, Galveston TX 77550)
- Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart (1111 St. Joseph Parkway, Houston)
- St. Bernadette Church (15500 El Camino Real, Houston TX, 77062)
- Our Lady of Guadalupe Church (2405 Navigation Blvd, Houston TX 77003)
- Our Lady of Lavang Church (12320 Old Foltin Rd, Houston TX, 77086)
- St. Francis of Assisi Church (5100 Dabney St, Houston TX, 77026)
- St. Ignatius Church (7810 Cypresswood Dr, Spring TX, 77379)
- St. Theresa Church (705 St. Theresa Blvd, Sugar Land TX, 77498)

Pilgrims who pass through this ‘Door of Mercy’ at any of the above designated churches receive the Jubilee Indulgence. This Jubilee indulgence can be gained once a day for oneself or for someone who has died. The Holy Father has stated that, in order to receive this Jubilee Indulgence, this passage through a Holy Door must be linked with saying the Profession of Faith, praying for the Holy Father and his intentions, and going to a celebration of the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
A Holy Year provides an opportunity for each of us to participate in and experience the healing Sacrament of Reconciliation. After having confessed our sins and received absolution, we may also receive a “plenary indulgence,” which lessens the effects of our sin here on earth. Pope Francis explains: “To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows upon all the fruits of Christ’s redemption, so that God’s love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in his merciful ‘indulgence” (MV).

http://www.archgh.org/yearofmercy/holydoors/
“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 action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the saints”.

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1471
God’s forgiveness knows no bounds. Reconciliation with God is made possible through the paschal mystery and the mediation of the Church. Thus, God is always ready to forgive…he never tires of forgiving in ways that are continually new and surprising.

Despite being forgiven, the conflicting consequences of our sins remain. In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, God forgives our sins…yet sin leaves a negative effect on the way we think and act. But the mercy of God is stronger even than this. It becomes indulgence on the part of the Father who, through his church, reaches the pardoned sinner and frees him from every residue left by the consequence of sin, enabling him to act with charity, to grow in love rather than to fall back into sin.

To live the indulgence of the Holy Year means to approach the Father’s mercy with the certainty that his forgiveness extends to the entire life of the believer. To gain an indulgence is to experience the holiness of the Church, who bestows all the fruits of Christ’s redemption, so that God’s love and forgiveness may extend everywhere. Let us live this Jubilee intensely, begging the Father to forgive our sins and to bathe us in his merciful “indulgence.”
Pope Francis said it was his “wish that the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective.”

He has instructed that special indulgence be available for the faithful through the duration of the year.

- Take a pilgrimage (Holy Door)
- Go to confession
- Receive the Holy Eucharist “with a reflection of mercy”
- Make a profession of faith
  - Pray for the pope and for his intentions
- Perform a spiritual or corporal work of mercy – “rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.”

In addition to the above,

- **For the elderly, confined and the ill:**
  - They may obtain the indulgence by “living with faith and joyful hope this moment of trial”
  - Receiving the Eucharist
  - By attending Mass and community prayer “even through the various means of communication”

- **For the deceased:**
  - Through prayers of the faithful, indulgences may be obtained for the dead.
“It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.”

“It will be a way to reawaken our conscience...”
Prayer of Pope Francis for the Jubilee

Lord Jesus Christ, you have taught us to be merciful like the heavenly Father, and have told us that whoever sees you sees Him. Show us your face and we will be saved. Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew from being enslaved by money; the adulteress and Magdalene from seeking happiness only in created things; made Peter weep after his betrayal, and assured Paradise to the repentant thief. Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us, the words that you spoke to the Samaritan woman: “If you knew the gift of God!” You are the visible face of the invisible Father, of the God who manifests his power above all by forgiveness and mercy: let the Church be your visible face in the world, its Lord risen and glorified. You willed that your ministers would also be clothed in weakness in order that they may feel compassion for those in ignorance and error: let everyone who approaches them feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God. Send your Spirit and consecrate every one of us with its anointing, so that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord, and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm, may bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed, and restore sight to the blind. We ask this of you, Lord Jesus, through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.
Resources

Vatican
http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en.html

USCCB

USCCB Meditations on Mercy – monthly reflections based on Scripture used by Pope Francis in his Bull

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
http://www.archgh.org/yearofmercy/

Our Sunday Visitor Year of Mercy app (free)
Designed to accompany you on a spiritual journey during the Jubilee Year of Mercy proclaimed by Pope Francis.
Found on the App Store and Google Play

Our Sunday Visitor – Year of Mercy
Resources

**Magnificat’s Year of Mercy Companion**


*Note: the paper edition is in its third and final print run; it is also available as an eBook on Kindle, Kobo, Nook and iTunes)*

**Dynamic Catholic**


**Facebook**

[https://www.facebook.com/LubilaeumMisericordiae.en/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/LubilaeumMisericordiae.en/?fref=ts)

**Aleteia** (Catholic network of faith resources, articles)


**Books on Mercy**

- The Name of God is Mercy by Pope Francis (Author – Andrea Tornielli)
- A Year of Mercy with Pope Francis – Daily Reflections
- The Church of Mercy by Pope Francis

**The Pope Video** - [http://thepopevideo.org/](http://thepopevideo.org/)

Developed by the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network (Apostleship of Prayer) to assist in the dissemination of the Holy Father’s monthly intentions related to the challenges the humanity faces

**Corporal Works**
- Feeding the hungry - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/08/15/putting_mercy_to_work_feeding_the_hungry/1165252
- To give drink to the thirsty - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/08/21/putting_mercy_to_work_to_give_drink_to_the_thirsty/1166479
- To clothe the naked - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/08/26/putting_mercy_to_work_to_clothe_the_naked/1167544
- To shelter the homeless - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/05/putting_mercy_to_work_to_shelter_the_homeless/1169756
- Visiting the sick - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/12/putting_mercy_to_work_visiting_the_sick/1171345

**Spiritual Works**
- The spiritual works - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/30/putting_mercy_to_work_the_spiritual_works/1175813
- Counseling the doubtful - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/10/10/putting_mercy_to_work_counseling_the_doubtful/1178301
- Admonishing the sinner - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/10/16/putting_mercy_to_work_admonishing_the_sinner/1179656
- To comfort the sorrowful - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/11/07/putting_mercy_to_work_to_comfort_the_sorrowful/1185029
- To pray for the living and the dead - http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/11/12/putting_mercy_to_work_to_pray_for_the_living_and_the_dead/1186247
Calendar of Events

December 8, 2015
Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception
Opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica

December 13, 2015
Opening of Holy Door in Cathedrals of the world
11:00 a.m. at Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX

January 1, 2016
Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God
World Day of Peace

January 19-21, 2016
Jubilee for those engaged in pilgrimage work

April 1-3, 2016
Jubilee for those devoted to the Spirituality of Divine Mercy

April 23, 2016
Jubilee for Boys and Girls (to profess the faith and construct a culture of mercy)

May 27-29
The Solemnity of Corpus Christi in Italy
Jubilee for deacons

June 1-3, 2016
Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus
Jubilee for priests

June 12, 2015
Jubilee for those who are ill and for persons with disabilities

July 26-31, 2016
Jubilee for young people

September 4, 2016
Memorial of Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (September 5)
Jubilee for workers and volunteers of mercy

September 25, 2016
Jubilee for catechists

October 8 and 9, 2016
Marian Jubilee

November 13, 2016
Closing of the Holy Doors in the Basilicas of Rome and Dioceses of the world

“Jubilee” - sign of the Holy Father: witness of the works of mercy.
Why join our Facebook group?

If you’re interested in joining our Facebook group page, please send a member request. Our group is called St. Barts Sister to Sister.
“This is a time for the Church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord on the day of Easter: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father’s mercy.”

We should allow ourselves to be embraced by the mercy of God, who waits for us and forgives everything.
What can you do to be an outward sign and an instrument of God’s mercy?