



YEAR OF MERCY

An invitation to receive and proclaim God's Mercy

On 8 December 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, Pope Francis will open a Holy Year of Mercy. Pope Francis desires that the year '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 present in our midst!' (Bull of Indiction 5) The Year will close with the liturgical Solemnity of Christ the King on 20 November 2016.

Pope Francis announced the opening of the Year by making a Bull of Indiction.

Extracts from the Bull: *Misericordiae Vultus*

Jesus, is the face of Mercy

'Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him.' (1)

Holy Door

'I will open the Holy Door on the fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way.' (4)

Mercy is concrete

'...the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a "visceral" love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.' (6)

Never gives up

'In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy.' (9)

For the full text: http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html

Please see our [compilation of resources and links](#) for the Holy Year. Included in the pdf provided:

1. What is a Holy Year?
2. How is it being celebrated in England and Wales?
3. Diocesan Year of Mercy website links
4. What is a Holy Door?
5. What are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?
6. Sacrament of Reconciliation
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8. Mercy Stories
9. Links
10. Holy Year Prayer
11. Evangelisation
12. Jubilee Indulgence

1) What is a Holy or Jubilee Year?

The origin of the word 'Jubilee' is disputed, but if we look to the Old Testament part of the Bible, we see that the Israelites associated it with a time of joy and pardon. "Thou shalt sanctify the fiftieth year," we read in the Book of Leviticus 25:10, "and shalt proclaim remission to all the inhabitants of thy land: for it is the year of jubilee." Every seventh year, like every seventh day, was always accounted holy and set aside for rest, but the year which followed seven complete cycles was to be kept as a sabbatical year of special solemnity.

Jubilee Years' have also been celebrated over the centuries by Christians. Pope Boniface VIII is thought to have instituted the first Christian Jubilee in the year 1300 and the number fifty was specially associated in the early thirteenth century with the idea of remission of sin.

Adapted from: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08531c.htm>

Why now?

Pope Francis explains: 'I have chosen the date of 8 December because of its rich meaning in the recent history of the Church. In fact, I will open the Holy Door on the **fiftieth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council**. The Church feels a great need to keep this event alive. With the Council, the Church entered a new phase of her history. The Council Fathers strongly perceived, as a true breath of the Holy Spirit, a need to talk about God to men and women of their time in a more accessible way. The walls which for too long had made the Church a kind of fortress were torn down and the time had come to proclaim the Gospel in a new way. It was a new phase of the same evangelisation that had existed from the beginning. It was a fresh undertaking for all Christians to bear witness to their faith with greater enthusiasm and conviction. The Church sensed a responsibility to be a living sign of the Father's love in the world.'

(Bull of Indiction 4)

Jubilee dates for your diary: 8 December 2015 - 20 November 2016.

PROCLAIM God's Mercy

8 December 2015 - 20 November 2016



2) How is it being celebrated in England and Wales?

In April 2015, the Bishops of England and Wales met in Rome for a week of reflection and discussion. The Year of Mercy was discussed and the bishops wholeheartedly welcomed the initiative of Pope Francis in announcing the Jubilee Year, the “beating heart of the gospel”. (See *Misericordiae Vultus*, 12)

It was agreed that dioceses would seek to give practical expression to the Jubilee Year in the following ways:

- To have a **Holy Door** at the Cathedral and at designated shrines
- To encourage people to go on **pilgrimage** as a sign of the ongoing journey of conversion and renewal to which we are all called, and invite others to join us on pilgrimage
- To recognise and promote the **Sacrament of Reconciliation** as the Sacrament of the New Evangelisation with particular celebrations for this on 4 – 5 March 2016 involving Eucharistic adoration and opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament
- To look at practical ways to encourage local **missions of mercy** (see MV, 18)
- To see the **Catholic school** as an important threshold for proclaiming God’s mercy
- To have a special attention for **priests** who show the merciful face of the Father through the sacramental ministry to people in their care
- To explore creatively our outreach to others through the **corporal and spiritual works of mercy**, especially those most in need.
- To recognise that mercy provides a fruitful avenue of **dialogue** with other Christians, other religions and non-believers and that the practice of mercy teaches us tenderness for the world God has created
- It agrees that **Proclaim ’15** constitutes a significant moment in the development of local evangelisation initiatives and in encouraging dioceses to prepare for this Jubilee of Mercy (www.catholicnews.org.uk/proclaim15)
- It agrees that this work be directed in the Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis through the Standing Committee of the Conference.

3) Year of Mercy Diocesan Website Links

A snapshot of diocesan web pages about the Year of Mercy (1 December 2015):

Arundel and Brighton Diocese

<http://www.dabnet.org/News/View/31>

Birmingham Archdiocese

<http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk/year-of-mercy/>

Cardiff Archdiocese

<http://www.rcadc.co.uk/year-of-mercy.html>

Clifton Diocese

<http://www.cliftondiocese.com/category/year-of-mercy/>

East Anglia

<http://rcdea.org.uk/holy-doors-opening-the-year-of-mercy/>

Hexham and Newcastle Diocese

http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/spirituality/spirituality_daysrecollection.php

Lancaster Diocese

<http://www.lancasterdiocese.org.uk/the-catholic-faith/the-jubilee-year-of-mercy/>

Liverpool Archdiocese

<http://yearofmercyliverpool.org.uk/>

Northampton Diocese

<http://www.northamptondiocese.org/FAITH/YearofMercy201516/tabid/513/Default.aspx> and
<http://www.nores.org.uk/yearoffaith/tabid/166/default.aspx>

Nottingham Diocese

<http://www.bemerciful.co.uk/>

Plymouth Diocese

<http://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/index.php/8-events/news/255-bishop-mark-talks-to-the-westminster-clergy-on-the-year-of-mercy>

Salford Diocese

<http://www.salforddiocese.net/#!year-of-mercy/c1t2i>

Shrewsbury Diocese

<http://www.dioceseofshrewsbury.org/about-us/a-pastoral-letter-for-the-first-sunday-of-advent-2015-on-opening-the-door-to-christ-at-the-beginning-of-the-holy-year-of-mercy>

Westminster Archdiocese

<http://rcdow.org.uk/year-of-mercy/>

Wrexham Diocese

<http://www.wrexhamdiocese.org.uk/jubilee-of-mercy.html>

4) What is a Holy Door?

The most distinctive feature in the ceremonial of the Jubilee is the unwalling and the final walling up of the holy door.

‘The Holy Door is opened to evoke the concept of forgiveness. According to “Mondo Vaticano,” a mini-encyclopedia published by the Vatican, the designation of a Holy Door may trace back to the ancient Christian practice of public penitence when sinners were given public penances to perform before receiving absolution.

The penitents were not allowed to enter a church before completing the penance, but they were solemnly welcomed back in when their penance was fulfilled. Still today, Holy Year pilgrims enter the basilicas in Rome through the Holy Door as a sign of their repentance and re-commitment to a life of faith.

The ritual for opening the Holy Door at St. Peter’s Basilica goes back to 1499 when Pope Alexander VI opened the door on Christmas Eve to inaugurate the Holy Year 1500. This was when the door was wooden. The bronze door panels that stand at St. Peter’s today, made by Vico Consorti, were consecrated and first opened Dec. 24, 1949, by Pius XII in proclamation of the 1950 Jubilee, a scene represented in the bottom right panel.’

Text from: <https://cnsblog.wordpress.com/2015/04/09/proclaiming-the-holy-year-at-the-holy-door/>

What does it mean to go through a Holy Door?

A very important symbolic act performed by each pilgrim has been to pass through the Holy Door. Christ identified Himself as "the door." In his bull *Incarnationis Misterium* proclaiming this Holy Year, Pope John Paul II stated that the Holy Door "... evokes the passage from sin to grace which every Christian is called to accomplish. Jesus said, 'I am the door' (Jn 10:7) in order to make it clear that no one can come to the Father except through Him. This designation, which Jesus applies to Himself, testifies to the fact that He alone is the Saviour sent by the Father. There is only one way that opens wide the entrance into this life of communion with God: This is Jesus, the one and absolute way to salvation. To Him alone can the words of the psalmist be applied in full truth: 'This is the door of the Lord where the just may enter' (Ps 118:20).’

Therefore to pass through a Holy Door is to pass from this world into the presence of God, just as in the old Temple of Jerusalem, the High Priest on the Feast of Yom Kippur passed through the door of the Holy of Holies to enter into the presence of God to offer the sacrifice of atonement. Moreover, to pass through the door is to confess with firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Lord and the Saviour who suffered, died, and rose for our salvation. With great courage, **a person freely decides to cross the threshold leaving behind the kingdom of this world so as to enter the new life of grace of the Kingdom of God.** The Holy Year is a time when God pours forth abundant graces to quench the thirst of our souls. It is a time when the people seek to grow in their personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Text sourced from: <http://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-holy-year-door.html>

To consider doing: Find out where your nearest Holy Door is. Cathedrals and designated shrines will have them. Make time to visit and take a friend to share the experience.

**‘The Church’s first duty is not to hand down condemnations or anathemas, but to proclaim God’s mercy, to call to conversion, and to lead all men and women to salvation in the Lord.’
Pope Francis, Vatican City, 24 October 2015**

5) What are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy?

The Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy are actions we can perform that extend God's compassion and mercy to those in need.

Corporal Works of Mercy

The Corporal Works of Mercy are these kind acts by which we help our neighbours with their material and physical needs.

- feed the hungry
- give drink to the thirsty
- clothe the naked
- shelter the homeless
- visit the sick
- visit the imprisoned
- bury the dead

Spiritual Works of Mercy

The Spiritual Works of Mercy are acts of compassion, as listed below, by which we help our neighbours with their emotional and spiritual needs.

- counsel the doubtful
- instruct the ignorant
- admonish sinners
- comfort the afflicted
- forgive offenses
- bear wrongs patiently
- pray for the living and the dead

Source: <http://www.loyolapress.com/corporal-and-spiritual-works-of-mercy.htm>

Catechism of the Catholic Church

2447 The *works of mercy* are charitable actions by which we come to the aid of our neighbour in his spiritual and bodily necessities. Instructing, advising, consoling, comforting are spiritual works of mercy, as are forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently. The corporal works of mercy consist especially in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead. Among all these, giving alms to the poor is one of the chief witnesses to fraternal charity: it is also a work of justice pleasing to God:

He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none and he who has food must do likewise. But give for alms those things which are within; and behold, everything is clean for you. If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?

Source: <http://www.scborromeo.org/>

Reflect: In what ways might you give expression to the spiritual and corporal works of mercy during the Jubilee Year?

6) Sacrament of Reconciliation

It is hoped that during the Jubilee Year many people will receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Confession as it's better known, offers us an important way of getting closer to God - to be forgiven for our sins. As Pope Francis puts it 'it's an encounter with the Lord's mercy which spurs us on to do our best'. Visit our [online area](#) that offers insights about the Popes have said about the Sacrament, read excerpts from Church documents, download a useful resource for parishes and watch a two-part video in which one of our Bishops, the Rt Rev John Arnold, offers a talk on Confession and God's mercy.

<http://www.catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Featured/Features-2014/Jan-March-2014/Confession/What-s-Confession>

We've also provided an online area that answers some [frequently asked questions](#) about the Sacrament; e.g. how often should I go to Confession? How do I deal with nerves? We also highlight what's involved in Confession and how you can prepare properly.

<http://www.catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Featured/Features-2014/Jan-March-2014/Confession/The-Basics>

24 Hours for the Lord

For 24 hours on 4 – 5 March 2016, people will be offered the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to spend time in Eucharistic Adoration in parishes designated by Bishops in their respective dioceses. Pope Francis said in February 2014: 'Do not be afraid of Confession! ... [W]hen one finishes Confession one leaves free, grand, beautiful, forgiven, candid, happy. This is the beauty of Confession! ... Jesus is there, and Jesus is more benevolent than priests. Jesus receives you; He receives you with so much love. Be courageous and go to Confession!'

<http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/roma/grandi-eventi/2016-03-04-24ore.html>



7) Snapshot of Resources

The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation is recommending a number of materials for use during the Jubilee Year: <http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/sussidi.html>

Hymn

www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/dam/gdm/documenti/inno/Inglese%20-%20Tutto%20lo%20spartito.pdf

Official logos

http://www.rcadc.co.uk/admin/user_files/YoMLogo.jpg

Banners

<http://yearofmercy liverpool.org.uk/banners-resources/>

Also: <https://www.paulineuk.org/browse/item/Jubilee-of-Mercy-Roller-banner/5031446734964>

A Pilgrimage Companion for the Year of Mercy

<http://shop.alivepublishing.co.uk/new-products/1041-a-pilgrimage-companion-for-the-year-of-mercy-2015-16>

Materials for schools and young people

<http://yearofmercy liverpool.org.uk/schools/>

The Gospel of Mercy: Twelve Steps To The Love Of God

<http://www.ctsbooks.org/gospels-of-mercy-1>

The Gospel of Luke

<http://www.ctsbooks.org/the-gospel-according-to-luke-year-of-mercy-1>

The Year of Mercy: Companion to the Sunday Gospels

<http://www.ctsbooks.org/companion-to-the-sunday-gospels-1>

Walk with Me

<http://www.alivepublishing.co.uk/publications/walk-with-me/>

Advent 2015 resources

<http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/spirituality/spiritadvent15.php>

Holy Door materials

www.davenportdiocese.org/.../litYearofMercyPart II-HolyDoor-FDLC.pdf

Publishers

A number of Catholic publishers are providing materials in support of the celebration of the Jubilee Year. Some include:

- Catholic Truth Society: <http://www.ctsbooks.org/yearofmercy>
- Redemptorists: <http://www.rpbooks.co.uk/categories/386/year-of-mercy>
- St Pauls: <http://www.stpauls.org.uk/>
- McCrimmons: <http://www.mccrimmons.com/shop/year-of-mercy-2/>

8) Mercy Stories

The Bible has some beautiful and moving passages about God's Mercy:

<http://www.catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Featured/Features-2014/Jan-March-2014/Confession/Forgiveness/Bible-Passages>

See too some of the parables (stories) that Jesus told about Mercy:

<http://www.catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Featured/Features-2014/Jan-March-2014/Confession/Forgiveness/Jesus-Parables>

9) Links

Jubilee of Mercy Official Website

<http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en.html>

Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation

<http://www.novaevangelizatio.va/content/nvev/en.html>

Catholic News Service: Explanation of the Holy Year

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbw1aSz165Q>

Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis according to which an indulgence is granted to the faithful on the occasion of the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2015/documents/papa-francesco_20150901_lettera-indulgenza-giubileo-misericordia.html

National Shrine to Our Lady of Walsingham (England)

<http://www.walsingham.org.uk/>

National Shrine of Our Lady of the Taper (Wales)

<http://www.ourladyofthetaper.org.uk/>

Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

<http://www.cam.org.au/evangelisation/Resources/Year-of-Mercy.aspx>

Archdiocese of Los Angeles

<http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/ore/Pages/Year-of-Mercy.aspx>

Word on Fire

<http://www.wordonfire.org/resources/browse/topic/mercy/>

National Office for Evangelisation – Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference

<http://www.evangeliseaustralia.com/year-of-mercy/year-of-mercy.html>

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

<http://usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/year-of-mercy/index.cfm>

Orlando Diocese

<http://www.orlandodiocese.org/yearofmercy>

Syracuse Diocese

<http://www.syracusediocese.org/about-us/jubilee-year-of-mercy/resources/>

10) Holy Year Prayer

Pope Francis' Prayer for the Jubilee Year of Mercy

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 through the intercession of Mary, Mother of Mercy,
you who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

11) Evangelisation

Pope Francis has expressed that the Year of Mercy has an evangelising intention. His desire is that the year '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 present in our midst!' (Bull of Indiction 5)

Every parish, Catholic family and individual is invited to consider how they might participate in this task of sharing the 'balm of mercy'. Some questions for reflection:

- In what ways can you offer new opportunities for people in your local area to encounter God's mercy?
- Are there people in your life, parish or school community, that have become distant in some way, that you could reach out to during the Jubilee Year?
- Who might you personally invite to pass through a Holy Door with you? A non-churchgoing Catholic or someone of no faith?
- For Cathedrals and designated shrines: What might you gift to those passing through a Holy Door? The Gospel of Luke, a prayer card, rosary, holy picture?
- When might you go on pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year and who might you invite – who has never been on a pilgrimage before - to join you?
- When might you receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation? Is there someone you might also invite to accompany you?
- How might your parish, deanery or school offer '24 Hours for the Lord' on 4 – 5 March 2016? <http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/roma/grandi-eventi/2016-03-04-24ore.html>
- In which ways might you, your family, school or parish give expression to the corporal and spiritual works of Mercy during the Jubilee Year?
- How might you celebrate the Jubilee Year as a family in your home?
- What might a mission of mercy look like in your area?
- How might you use the Proclaim '15 materials to proclaim God's Mercy? www.catholicnews.org.uk/proclaim15
- When and how might you pray for your local priests in support of their ministry?
- How might you enter into dialogue with other Christians, those who are members of other religions and non-believers, about the practice of mercy?

12) Indulgences

The conditions for receiving the indulgence are delineated by the Holy Father in his published letter of September 1 to Archbishop Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation, which you can access from the link below.
<http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/giubileo/lettera.html>

“With the approach of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy I would like to focus on several points which I believe require attention to enable the celebration of the Holy Year to be for all believers a true moment of encounter with the mercy of God. It is indeed my 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.”

Jubilee of Mercy Indulgence

To experience and obtain the Jubilee of Mercy Indulgence, the faithful are called to:

1. Make a brief pilgrimage to the Holy Door as a sign of the deep desire for true conversion.
2. Receive the Sacrament of Penance
3. Participate in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy
4. Make a profession of faith
5. Pray for the Holy Father and the intentions that he bears in his heart for the good of the Church and of the entire world.

Source: <http://www.orlandodiocese.org/yearofmercy>

Additional Information

Additional information is available in two booklets on The Vatican’s website for the Jubilee Year:
<http://www.im.va/content/gdm/en/mondo/documenti.html>

Having Crossed the Doorway

“Once they have crossed through the Holy Door or Door of Mercy, or have fulfilled one of the other conditions under which Pope Francis has granted the Jubilee Indulgence (for example, for the sick, for the imprisoned, or for anyone who carries out in person a work of mercy), 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” – the prayer in which Jesus himself taught us to turn as children to the Father – but it could possibly be more. In particular, taking into consideration the spirit of this Holy Year, it is suggested that pilgrims recite the lovely 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”).

Indulgence and Conditions

“The season of grace which is the Jubilee of Mercy, will naturally be characterized by the possibility of obtaining the plenary indulgence through certain pious exercises culminating in entering through the Holy Door, the Door of Mercy. These pious exercises will accompany the **prayer and celebration of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist** as concrete signs of conversion and “immersion” in the Mercy of the Father. The conditions for receiving the indulgence will be announced in a Decree by the Apostolic Penitentiary which the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization will help to circulate as widely as possible by sending it directly to the diocesan liaisons who will have registered on the Jubilee website www.im.va”

The Decree from the Apostolic Penitentiary has not yet been published. (1 December 2015)



Resource collation:
Department for Evangelisation and Catechesis, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and
Wales
Contact: Clare Ward: Home Mission Advisor and Secretary
Tel. 020 7 901 4818
Email: clare.ward@cbcew.org.uk