



RESOURCES FOR THE
YEAR OF MERCY

PART I:
AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE
YEAR OF MERCY

FEDERATION OF DIOCESAN
LITURGICAL COMMISSIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cover image by Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669). “The Return of the Prodigal Son” c. 1666. The Hermitage, St. Petersburg.

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RESOURCES FOR THE YEAR OF MERCY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE YEAR OF MERCY

This is an abridged version of two original texts prepared by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions.

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For the full texts of both documents, visit:
<http://www.la-archdiocese.org/org/worship/Pages/YOM.aspx>

FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. When does the Year of Mercy begin?

“The Holy Year will open on 8 December 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. This liturgical feast day recalls God’s action from the very beginning of the history of mankind. After the sin of Adam and Eve, God did not wish to leave humanity alone in the throes of evil. And so he turned his gaze to Mary, holy and immaculate in love (cf. *Eph 1:4*), choosing her to be the Mother of man’s Redeemer. When faced with the gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy. Mercy will always be greater than any sin, and no one can place limits on the love of God who is ever ready to forgive” (MV 3).

Q. When will Pope Francis open the Holy Door? Why did he choose this day?

He will open the Holy Door at St. Peter’s on Tuesday, December 8, 2015. “I will have the joy of opening the Holy Door on the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. On that day, the Holy Door will become a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope” (MV 3).

The day also has other significance. “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 evangelization 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” (MV 4).

Q. Will the Pope open any other Holy Doors?

On the following Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Rome – that is, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran – will be opened. In the following weeks, the Holy Doors of the other Papal Basilicas will be opened (MV 3).

Q. When should our diocese open a holy door at our cathedral?

Each diocese should open a “Door of Mercy” on December 13, the Third Sunday of Advent – the day the Pope opens the holy door at the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. “On the same Sunday, I will announce that in every local Church, at the cathedral – the mother church of the faithful in any particular area – or, alternatively, at the co-cathedral or another church of special significance, a Door of Mercy will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year” (MV 3) .

Q. May our diocese open more than one holy door?

“At the discretion of the local ordinary, a similar door may be opened at any shrine frequented by large groups of pilgrims, since visits to these holy sites are so often grace-filled moments, as people discover a path to conversion. Every Particular Church, therefore, will be directly involved in living out this Holy Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal. Thus the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and in the Particular Churches as a visible sign of the Church’s universal communion” (MV 3).

Q. When should we close the Holy Door at our cathedral?

The doors should be closed on the Sunday, November 13, 2016 – the same day that the holy doors will be closed in the basilicas in Rome. The holy door at St. Peter’s will be closed on November 20, 2016.

Q. When does the Year of Mercy conclude?

The Year of Mercy concludes on November 20, 2016 -- the Solemnity of Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe (cf. MV 5).

Q. Does the Year of Mercy have a theme?

“Merciful like the Father... is the ‘motto’ of this Holy Year. This is a shortened version of the verse in Scripture, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36). The Pope wrote, “In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us. He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him. What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words, “O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me” (Ps 70:2)! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God’s mercy toward us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others”(14).

Q. How is this Jubilee Year of Mercy different from other Jubilee Years?

Traditionally, a jubilee year is celebrated to mark twenty-five years or fifty years or an important anniversary, such as the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ in 2000. But Archbishop Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization, makes some important distinctions: “In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it is important to reiterate that this Jubilee of Mercy is not and does not intend to be the Great Jubilee Year of 2000. Therefore, any comparisons lack validity, for every Holy Year possesses its own unique nature and aims.

“It is the Pope’s desire that this Jubilee be celebrated in Rome as well as in the local Churches; this will give due focus to the life of individual Churches and their needs, in such a way that the initiatives will not place an extra burden on local Churches, but will blend into their calendars and usual activities very naturally.

“Also, for the first time in the history of the Jubilee tradition, there will be an opportunity for individual dioceses to open a Holy Door – the Door of Mercy – either in the Cathedral or in a church of special significance or a shrine of particular importance for pilgrimages.

“Similarly, it is easy to cull other characteristics from the Bull of Indiction that will make this Jubilee unique. From the very beginning, however, the call to mercy breaks with the traditional pattern. The history of Jubilees has been marked by their occurrence every 50 or 25 years. The two Extraordinary Jubilees fell on anniversaries of Christ’s redemptive act (1933, 1983). This Jubilee, however, is based upon a theme. It will build upon the central content of the faith and intends to call the Church once again to its missionary priority of being a sign and witness in every aspect of its pastoral life. I also have in mind Pope Francis’ appeal to Judaism and Islam as loci in which to contextualize the theme of mercy in order to foster dialogue and a way of overcoming difficulties in the public realm.

Q. Are there other special days which our diocese should celebrate?

Pope Francis has named special days of jubilee throughout the year – for youth, for workers and volunteers of mercy, for prisoners, for deacons, for priests, for the sick and persons with disabilities, etc. In addition, there are special events, e.g., “Twenty-four Hours for the Lord” on March 4-5, with special emphasis on the sacrament of reconciliation. Please see the calendar on pages 24-26.

It is the intention of the Holy Father that these be celebrated also in dioceses throughout the world.

Q. What are “Missionaries of Mercy”?

On Ash Wednesday, February 10, 2016, at St. Peter’s Basilica, the Pope will send out “Missionaries of Mercy,” i.e., selected priests who have been granted the authority to pardon even those sins reserved to the Holy See. The priests will be selected on the basis of their ability to preach well (especially on the theme of mercy) and on their ability to be “good confessors,” expressing God’s love in the confessional. Bishops can also recommend priests in their own dioceses to serve as missionaries of mercy.

Q. Does the Year of Mercy have an official hymn?

The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization has published on its ‘Jubilee of Mercy’ website the winning entry in an international competition for a hymn setting for the Holy Year of Mercy. The music has been written by Paul Inwood and the text was written by Eugenio Costa SJ. Monsignor Massimo Palombella, Director of the Sistine Chapel Choir, has recorded the new hymn with Vatican Radio.

Links to the score and audio recording are currently on the Pontifical Council’s Italian website at <http://www.iubilaemmisericordiae.va/content/gdm/it/giubileo/inno.html> and there is a YouTube video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-N0Dto5s9fg&feature=youtu.be&a>

Q. Does the Year of Mercy have an official website?

The official website for the Jubilee has already been launched: www.iubilaemmisericordiae.va, and can be accessed also at www.im.va. The site is available in seven languages: Italian, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and Polish. On the site you will find official information regarding the calendar of the major public events, information for participating in the events with the Holy Father, and all of the official communications regarding the Jubilee. Also, through the site, dioceses will be able to receive information and pastoral suggestions, register pilgrimage groups, and relay to us their local diocesan projects.

The website uses a number of social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google Plus and Flickr) through which we will be able to provide updates on the Holy Father’s initiative and follow in real time the major events as they take place.

www.iubilaemmisericordiae.va

OR

www.im.va

FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. *Misericordiae Vultus* has been called a “papal bull of indiction.” What is a “papal bull”?

According to the Vatican press office, "The term bull -- from the Latin 'bullā' meaning 'bubble' or, more generally, a rounded object -- originally indicated the metal capsule used to protect the wax seal attached with a cord to a document of particular importance to attest to its authenticity and, as a consequence, its authority.

"Over time, the term began to be used first to indicate the seal, then the document itself, so that nowadays it is used for all papal documents of special importance that bear, or at least traditionally would have borne, the pontiff's seal," the statement said.

The papal bull for a holy year indicates its opening and closing dates, the main ways in which it will be implemented, and “the intentions and the outcomes hoped for by the pontiff.”

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Q. How do we create a Holy Door?



Holy Door -- National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, DC

Each cathedral should designate a door as a Holy Door. It should be accessible to pilgrims, including those with disabilities. Preferably, use an interior door if the church has a vestibule. Most cathedrals have multiple doors for egress and exit. Choose a door that is one of several, that is, other doors may be used for crowds to go through, especially in case of emergency. Check with your local fire department for any local codes.

It may be “sealed” by locking it, by putting a velvet rope of either side of the door, or by stretching a ribbon across it (perhaps with the Year of Mercy logo). The door itself should be beautiful and in good repair. The door may be decorated with a cross. The Pope’s coat of arms may be placed above it to show solidarity with the Holy Father’s worldwide celebration of this Year of Mercy.

Q. When do we seal the Holy Door?

The door may be sealed between now and December 13. Some cathedrals and basilicas have already sealed their door, others are selecting September 8 (The Nativity of Mary), still others are sealing the Door forty days before December 13 (November 3). Choose a day of special significance to the diocese or the cathedral parish.

Q. How should we explain to the people the significance of the Holy Door?

Catechesis is always an important precedent to ritual. Consider posting a framed explanation on a wall near the door so that all visitors can read about it. You may wish to print brochures in multiple languages. In addition, draft a brief article which can be distributed to all the parish bulletin editors in the diocese. Encourage pilgrimages to the cathedral, December 13, 2015 to November 13, 2016.

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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...

Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, The Face of Mercy, 25

THE OFFICIAL LOGO FOR THE YEAR OF MERCY



*From the announcement by
Archbishop Salvatore Fisichella, President,
Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization*

“...The logo which represents a summa theologiae of the theme of mercy and the motto which accompanies it. The motto “Merciful Like the Father” (Luke 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn, but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure.

“It is an image quite important to the early Church: that of the Son having taken upon His shoulders the lost soul, demonstrating that it is Christ's love that brings to completion the mystery of His incarnation culminating in redemption. The logo has been designed in such a way so as to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity and does so with a love that has the power to change one's life.

“One particular feature worthy of note is 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, his or her own humanity and the future that lies ahead.

“The scene is enclosed in a mandorla, an element typical of ancient and medieval iconography. that recalls the coexistence of the two natures, divine and human, in Christ. The three concentric ovals, with colors progressively lighter as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ Who carries humanity out of the darkness of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker color suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father Who forgives all.

The logo is the work of Father Marko I. Rupnik.

“The logo has been registered in the international forum in order to safeguard its rights and to prevent any inappropriate use. It is obvious that permission must be granted by the Pontifical Council for any non-religious use of the logo and that any infringement will be duly prosecuted.”