

Holy Doors open across arch/dioceses to celebrate Jubilee year

KOTA KINABALU (CS) - "As you enter through the Door of Mercy, be conscious of the desire to enter into the "logic" of God," proposed Archbishop John Wong at a special Eucharistic Celebration, in conjunction with the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception Dec 8, to launch the Year of Mercy at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, which was concelebrated by the entire clergy of the archdiocese in communion with the prelate. The Cathedral was packed to overflowing.

On the same day the Jubilee was inaugurated by Pope Francis as he opened the Holy Door after he celebrated Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in St Peter's Square (see separate story).

In celebrating the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, the archbishop exclaimed "How fitting that this year of Grace, the Holy Year of Mercy should start on the day when we celebrate God's mercy towards Mary: a 'mercy' that opened the gate of grace for all of us. God is opening His arms and saying to us 'I want you to come home and live with me (now and forever)'".

For the Archdiocese of Kota Kinabalu, Archbishop John Wong opened the 'Holy Door' at the Sacred Heart Cathedral Dec 12 in a ceremony beginning from the foyer of the Parish Center and culminating at the Entrance to the Cathedral which was designated as the 'Holy Door', and passing through the Holy Door the prelate bowed his head and remained still for several minutes in silent prayer.

The Jubilee continued the following Sunday on December 13, when priests at the designated parishes of Holy Rosary Limbahau, St Peter's Church Kudat and St Peter Claver's Church Ranau opened the Holy Doors in their own Churches (pics on following page).

Meanwhile Bishop Julius Gitom opened the 'Holy Door' at St Mary's Cathedral in the Sandakan Diocese on December 14 (pic). For the Keningau Diocese, Bishop Cornelius Piong would open the 'Holy Door' at St Patrick's Church Membakut on January 22, 2016.

In his speech inaugurating the Year of Mercy after Mass, Archbishop John Wong revealed Pope Francis' mind in announcing the Jubilee of Mercy on the eve of the 4th Sunday of Lent this year of "*how the Church could make clearer her mission to be a witness to mercy, and after reading the 'signs of the times' both inside and outside the Church, that it was as if it was the Lord's wish to show His mercy to humanity.* To do that, the Pontiff said "*the Church has to make the journey of spiritual conversion*", hence the announcement of an Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its centre the mercy of God. Merciful like the Father (Lk 6:36), therefore is the "motto" of this Holy Year.

Referring to the Bull *Misericordiae Vultus*, the document that determines the Jubilee of Mercy, the prelate highlighted the three goals proposed by Pope Francis to rediscover the joy of God's tenderness in this special time of grace. Firstly, that all of us would experience strongly within ourselves the joy of being found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd who has come in search of us because we are 'lost', and to awaken within us (me) the awareness that God has first loved us (me) and redeemed us (me) through His mercy.

Secondly, that we become witnesses of mercy in a more evident way as a people of mercy, a Church of mercy in demonstrating the mercy of God through the spiritual exercises undertaken during this Extraordinary Holy Year: in the meditation of the Sacred Scriptures, the practice of pilgrimage, the practice of corporal and spiritual works of mercy, in living Lent with more intensity in prayer and fasting. In living so, that others would find authentic signs of the Father's mercy.

Thirdly, that we enter into the "logic" of God by transforming our mindset, our way of reasoning life's events, our way of looking at things, the way we behave, from a human perspective to God's perspective; by recalling the parables in the Gospel which clearly show that God has a very different way of looking at life's events in "seeking the marginalized and reinstating them back into the household of the Lord". This is the very logic of God which forms the basis of the Jubilee Year of Mercy.

The Pontiff, confident that the whole Church will be able to find in this Jubilee the joy of rediscovering and rendering fruitful God's mercy, has reminded the Church not to forget that God *forgives all*, and God *forgives always*. He therefore called on the Church to never tire of asking forgiveness.

Archbishop John Wong concluded by inviting the entire local Church to be in communion with the Holy Father and the Universal Church, to make this journey of spiritual conversion, to become a people of mercy, a Church of mercy. He also invited them to participate in the various activities that will be organized throughout the Holy Year, particularly local pilgrimages to the designated "Holy Doors". Leaflets for reflection and prayer on the icons on the Holy Door will be provided. A special notice board at the church entrance has been set up for the announcements of these activities.