



JUBILEE OF MERCY MERCIFUL LIKE THE FATHER

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE NEW EVANGELIZATION



Press Conference

Holy See Press Office, December 4, 2015



Presentation by Archbishop Rino Fisichella

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Pope Francis, in the Bull of Indiction for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, *Misericordiae vultus*, wrote that “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy” (n. 10). It is with these sentiments in mind that we begin to live the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which will commence on December 8th with the simple but richly significant ceremony for the opening of the Holy Door.

A first note of information pertains to a few of the immediately important aspects of the organization of the Jubilee. There is a *Pilgrimage Information Center* at Via della Conciliazione, 7 that opened on December 1st. This is a place to find information about the schedule of events for the Jubilee; to register for the reserved walkway to the Holy Door; to pick up the requested free access tickets for the various celebrations which are required for pilgrims; and to pick up the *testimonium* of participation in the Jubilee. It is important for me to stress that only the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, through the Information Center, has been given the responsibility of certifying a pilgrim's presence at the Jubilee, as well as the journey made on foot. Any other attestation issued by other organizations should not be considered authentic. The Information Center will be open every day from 7:30 to 18:30, including Saturdays and Sundays.

An important role will be played by the *Volunteers* who will be of service in welcoming and assisting all pilgrims, in particular at Via della Conciliazione and Saint Peter's Square, in the other Basilicas, and at the Jubilee Churches. In the past months, many have responded to our invitation, and although we are still waiting for further registrations, we now have approximately 100 volunteers every day in service for the Holy Year. This number, obviously, is intended to reach 800-1000 for the Major Events.

The series of *Pastoral Resources* prepared by the Pontifical Council is already complete. These publications will be of assistance in living the Jubilee Year in a profound way. We have been pleased to see that the series has already reach top sales rankings, a concrete sign of the attention being given to the event, but also of a sincere willingness to live it in a most spiritual way. The series of *Pastoral Resources* is presently available in 10 languages; of these the publications in Ukrainian and Korean are forthcoming.

With that, we arrive at the *celebration of the opening of the Holy Door* in Saint Peter's Basilica. The celebration will take place in Saint Peter's Square beginning at 9:30 a.m. It will be introduced by readings taken from the four Conciliar Constitutions (*Dei Verbum, Lumen gentium, Sacrosanctum concilium* e *Gaudium et spes*), along with two passages taken from, *Unitatis redintegratio* on ecumenism and *Dignitatis humanae* on religious liberty. As is well known, this day will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. The reading of these passages is intended to recall the profound teaching which came forth from that event, and its continued significant importance for the life of the Church. It was an event that we cannot forget and was reflected upon and achieved over the course of three intense years, in the light of mercy, as Pope Francis himself reminded us in the Bull, citing Saint John XXIII and Blessed Paul VI. In the procession for the Eucharistic celebration will be carried the Book of the Gospels prepared specifically for the Jubilee by P. Rupnik and published by San Paolo editions. It is a work of art on whose cover is a mosaic reproduction of the Jubilee logo. This Book of the Gospels will be set on the same podium which stood by the altar of Saint Peter's Basilica during all the sessions of the Council to make evident to everyone the primacy of the Word of God.

Regarding the opening of the Holy Door: the ceremony, which is very simple, will be broadcast on television worldwide. The Holy Father will request the opening of the Door, and he will then pass through it. After him, the Cardinals, Bishops, and representatives of priests, religious men and women, and laity will cross its threshold, and will continue in procession to the tomb of the Apostle Peter, where the concluding rite of the Holy Mass will take place. The Pope will then lead the *Angelus* as usual from the window of the Apostolic Palace.

The evening of December 8th will conclude in Saint Peter's Piazza with a meaningful and unique presentation entitled "Fiat lux: Illuminating Our Common Home". It will be a projection of photographs onto the façade and cupola of Saint Peter's, taken from a repertoire of some of the world's great photographers. These illuminations will present images inspired of Mercy, of humanity, of the natural world, and of climate changes. The show is sponsored by the World Bank Group (Connect4Climate), by Paul G. Allen's Vulcan Productions, by the Li Ka-shing Foundation and by Okeanos. This event, inspired by the most recent encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, is intended to present the beauty of creation, especially on the occasion of the Twenty-first United Nations Climate Change Conference (Cop 21), which began in Paris last Monday, November 30, and ends on December 11. The show will begin at 19:00. I can assure everyone that it is a unique event for its genre and for the fact that it is being displayed for the first time on such a significant backdrop.

On Sunday, December 13, for the first time in the history of the Jubilee Years, there will be *Holy Doors opened in all the cathedrals of the world*. Pope Francis has desired that the Jubilee of Mercy unfold above all in the Particular Churches, and it is precisely for this reason that he wanted to open

the Holy Door in the Cathedral of Bangui in the Central African Republic last Sunday, November 29, making it become a world capital of peace and an instrument of mercy. It is a highly significant gesture that makes one understand how much value the Extraordinary Jubilee will have for the life of the Church when it is lived within the context of the daily events of our communities.

Pope Francis will open the Holy Door of his Cathedral of Rome, Saint John Lateran, with the liturgy beginning at 9:30 a.m. It is worth noting the enthusiasm with which the churches throughout the world are preparing for this event. We have received hundreds of communications about this, but would like to make special mention of the Cathedrals of the Holy Spirit in Istanbul; of Saints Peter and Paul in Ratnapura, Sri Lanka; of Christ the King in Mushasha in Gitega, Burundi; of Saint Joseph in Dunedin, New Zealand; of Our Lady of the Presentation in Natal, Brasil; of Myeogdong in Seoul, South Korea; and of Saint George in the Maronite Archdiocese of Beirut.

The following Friday, December 18, the Holy Father will perform a symbolic gesture as he opens the Door of Mercy at the Hostel "Don Luigi Di Liegro", run by Caritas of Rome, located on Via Marsala.

For 25 years, persons in grave need, who require our help, have been received at this hostel. With this first gesture the Holy Father will begin a series of symbolic actions that will take place on one Friday of the month, and which he intends as concrete expressions of the works of mercy. It is important to be mindful that these gestures will have the character of private visits from the Holy Father, in order to maintain, as much as possible, a personal rapport of closeness and solidarity with the persons or institutions visited. They will be a testimony through which Pope Francis intends to highlight the major forms of need, marginalization, and poverty that are present in society, although these forms of poverty are nevertheless united with a strong solidarity on the part of many people who dedicate their time and energy to consoling and giving daily support to those in need.

Beginning on the day of the opening of the Holy Door and throughout the entire Jubilee, the Rosary will be recited daily in Saint Peter's Square in front of the statue of Saint Peter. Various parishes in Rome dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and Religious Institutes present in Rome with a particular consecration to the Mother of God, along with various Institutes of formation, will take turns leading this Rosary.

I would also like to mention the healthcare services available for pilgrims. In each of the four Papal Basilicas there will be a First Aid Station (Pronto Soccorso). Through the generosity of the Onlus Foundation "Giorgio Castelli", every center will be furnished with a defibrillator. Medical and nursing services are being provided by the Order of Malta, which has the competency and expertise for the management of the First Aid services. It is important to remember that the healthcare structures of the Region of Lazio will also be involved. The Region has organized a structural plan for the entire city, and guarantees, among other services, the permanent placement of a P.M.A. (Posto Medico Avanzato/Advance Medical Post) at Castel Sant'Angelo, along with the new Emergency Room at Santo Spirito Hospital, which will be inaugurated in the coming weeks. In this context, I am also pleased to remind you that we have planned multiple means of communication for the deaf and blind.

In particular, for the former, there will be video-tutorials with Italian and International Sign Language (LIS); while for the latter, there will be audio files that can be downloaded from the Jubilee website that describe the paths, pilgrimages to the Holy Door, and much else. In addition, in Saint Peter's Basilica and in other Churches, confessionals have been set up without structural barriers, and with other considerations that will facilitate confessions for the deaf. Furthermore, there is also a touch book planned in A3 format that will permit the blind to be guided through the Pilgrimage to the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica. Finally, the internet site has also been equipped with a facilitated navigation.

The Holy Year of Mercy, will in fact be the first in the era of internet and of social media. In this regards, I would like to draw your attention to the importance of the official website of the Jubilee (www.im.va). This site, translated into seven languages, will permit those who cannot be physically present to follow the Major Jubilee events that will take place in Rome. To register for the passage

through the Holy Door, and likewise to become a volunteer, it is necessary to enroll on the indicated sections of the site. In addition, I believe it opportune here to say a few words about the Portal “vatimecum”, endorsed by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, by means of which pilgrims may obtain services relating to room and board in Rome at controlled prices, along with a great deal of other information about living the Jubilee.

A Holy Year to place mercy at the center. The initiatives already planned for within the Church are many, but there are also others who are seeking to reflect on this theme, unfortunately too-often forgotten. Among these, I would like to point out that of CENSIS, “Mercy 2016, The Peripheries at the Center”, which will be concerned with promoting an organized program on the theme of Mercy, seeking to understand today, in society, in the economy and in the reception of the other, what it means to be merciful, to take on oneself the difficulties of others, bringing back to the center that which the contemporary world marginalizes and pushes to the peripheries.

The initiative of the “Missionaries of Mercy” merits a final consideration. We have closed registration for the Missionaries because the number of priests has already reached more than 800 requests.

The Missionaries are priests who come from various parts of the world, and who were proposed by their own bishops to carry out this special service. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, they will receive the mandate from the Holy Father to be preachers of mercy and confessors full of mercy. They will receive from the Holy Father the faculty to forgive sins reserved to the Holy See, and will be the sign of the closeness and pardon of God for all. It is important for me to underscore that the Missionaries of Mercy are appointed exclusively by the Holy Father, and that the faculty of forgiving reserved sins will be given to each one of them personally. No bishop in his own diocese may appoint these Missionaries, nor may he confer faculties that he does not possess. Anyone wishing to invite the Missionaries for a liturgy, a retreat, or a special event can do so by accessing the list that will be made available to bishops.

The Jubilee is already at hand. We are certain that it will be lived intensely by pilgrims who, whether it be in their own Particular Churches or in Rome, will cross through the Holy Door. For this occasion the Holy Father has granted all the Bishops of the world the power to give the Papal Blessing at the Holy Mass for the opening of the Holy Door, and for the closure of the door at the end of the Holy Year. This Jubilee will be an experience of mercy for each person to feel more intimately the love of God, who like a Father welcomes everyone and excludes no one. It will be a significant time for all the Church to remember that mercy is the essence of her proclamation to the world, and to render every believer a tangible instrument of the tenderness of God. As Pope Francis wrote: “In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy” (n. 12).