

Faith in Five – Adults Jubilee Year and The Holy Doors



1. The word "**jubilee**" is derived from the Hebrew word *jobel*, which means "ram's horn"; a horn used as a trumpet, signaling a sound to everybody the beginning of the jubilee year. The book of Leviticus explains the significance of the jubilee year, a year of liberation "par excellence," which is at the end of seven weeks of years, the fiftieth year. (Leviticus 25, 8-10). ([Source](#))
2. A jubilee is a special year of remission of sins and universal pardon. In Leviticus, a jubilee year is mentioned to occur every 50th year; during which slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts would be forgiven, and the mercies of God would be open to all.
3. The prophet heralds a year of the Lord's favor by the Spirit of the Lord: it is a divine gift. One emphasis in the jubilee year is rest - the jubilee demonstrates the Lord's favor upon his people, offering them both liberation and consolation. Liberation from physical evils, from interior suffering, from the condition of slavery. Consolation is compassion given, the result of the transformation of the way one feels, or the way one exists - from mourning one passes to joy.
4. All good things come from God -from Him comes the gifts and mercy, demonstrating His loving relationship towards us. "A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you; in it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field. In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. And if you sell to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not wrong one another" (Leviticus 25:11-14). The time of jubilee allows God's people to get into right relationship with Him and with the community of believers.
5. Since 1490, jubilee year has been celebrated by the Church every 25 years, with few exceptions stemming from political unrest ([Source](#)). The practice of the jubilee year was adopted into the Catholic Church, because of the themes of mercy, forgiveness, and solidarity. Jubilee year is a reminder for Catholic Christians today that we can seek God's mercy, entering the sanctuary into His presence and rest.
6. **What are the Holy Doors?** A Holy Door is a special door in a cathedral, basilica, or other parish of special significance, open only during a Holy Year; it thus becomes a pilgrimage site. A Holy Door (Latin: *Porta Sancta*) is traditionally an entrance portal located within the Papal major basilicas in Rome. The four major basilicas are: Archbasilica of St. John Lateran, St. Peter's Basilica, St. Paul Outside the Walls, and the Papal Basilica of St. Mary Major. Each of the four major papal basilicas is united by its Holy Door which opens on Jubilee years designated by the pope.

The doors are normally sealed by mortar and cement from the inside so that they cannot be opened. They are ceremoniously opened during Jubilee years designated by the Pope, for pilgrims. Those who enter through those doors may piously gain the plenary indulgences attached with the Jubilee year celebrations.

7. "Each of the four basilicas has its holy door. That of St. Peter's is opened on the Christmas Eve preceding the anno santo by the pontiff in person, and it is closed by him on the Christmas Eve following. The pope knocks upon the door three times with a silver hammer, singing the versicle "Open unto me the gates of justice". The masonry, which has been loosened beforehand, is made to fall in at the third blow, and, after the threshold has been swept and washed by the Jubilee penitentiaries, the pope enters first. Each of the holy doors at the other basilicas is similarly opened by a cardinal specially deputed for the purpose. The symbolism of this ceremony is probably closely connected with the idea of the exclusion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, and the expulsion and reconciliation of penitents according to the ritual provided in the Pontifical. It may also have been influenced by the old idea of seeking sanctuary.
8. **The Meaning of St. Peter's Holy Door** - Passing through the Holy Door has symbolic meanings for Catholics. Walking through this set of doors during a jubilee year symbolizes the passing into the presence of God as well as a passage to salvation. This symbol was drawn from the Gospel of John when Jesus said, "I am the Gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved." It is believed that going through the Holy Door during a jubilee year means the forgiveness of the visitors' sins.
9. **The Opening and Closing of a Holy Door** - Although the meaning of the door has not changed, the opening and closing ceremonies of the Holy Door has been adjusted over the years. When the Catholic Church is not in a jubilee year, the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica is sealed by a stone wall placed behind the doorway. Between 1500 and 1974, for every jubilee year the sitting pope would symbolically start to break the stone, with masons finishing the job of removing the rest. Today, the opening and closing of the Holy Door is much more simplified ([Source](#)). The Holy Door is closed when the Jubilee ends.
10. The faithful who enter through a Holy Door may receive a Jubilee Indulgence. In confession, a penance is given to repair the harm (consequences) caused by one's sins. An indulgence is a way to lessen that penalty, the amount of punishment one shall undergo for sins. God forgives us when we are contrite, but there are still consequences to our sin. An indulgence is a way, a pardon, to lessen that penalty. An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven.
11. The Church regulates the granting of indulgences - there are certain conditions which must be met AND a certain indulgenced act(s) which must be performed. The conditions are to:
 1. Be in state of grace & disposed to receive the indulgence.
 2. Confess one's sins sacramentally.
 3. Receive Holy Communion.
 4. Offer prayers for the Holy Father and his intentions
12. Jubilee Indulgenced Acts
 - A. Passing through the Holy Door
 - B. Making a Profession of Faith (Nicene or Apostle's Creed)
 - C. Reflecting on the mercy of God.

13. **An Extraordinary Jubilee** was called by Pope Francis from December 8, 2015 – November 20, 2016. This designation of "Extraordinary Jubilee" set it apart from the ordinary cycle of jubilees, or holy years, which are called every 25 years in the Catholic Church.

By calling for a holy year outside of the normal cycle, a particular event or theme is emphasized. Pope Francis called it the **Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy** to direct the attention and actions "on mercy; [to] become a more effective sign of the Father's actions in our lives ..." (MV, 3) ([Source](#)). During the Extraordinary Jubilee of 2015, Pope Francis also granted cathedral churches around the world permission to establish and open a Holy Door. All members of the faithful were given the opportunity to make a pilgrimage to their local Holy Door during the Jubilee.



14. The next Jubilee in 2025 will be the second with Pope Francis. It will be the first jubilee of the Third Millennium. A [calendar of events can be found here](#).

At left is the logo image selected for the Holy Year. The theme, [Pilgrims of Hope](#) encourages us and in our work with others to have the strength and certainty to look courageously to the future. The color of red represents love, orange for human warmth, green for peace and balance, blue as the color of security. The four figures represent 4 cardinal points – north, south, east, west - embracing each other to show the brotherhood that should unite all peoples. The first figure clasps the cross, as a symbol of faith and hope. Everyone should be involved. Pilgrimage is a communal path oriented towards the cross. The choppy water indicates that our pilgrimage in life is not always on calm waters but Christ as our anchor, we are kept secure ([Source](#)).

15. We can reflect on the blessings of a Jubilee year, and the favor God gives us each day. "We rest because God rested. We forgive debts because God forgave ours. We tell others in spiritual bondage about God who freed us because he freed us" ([Source](#)). Thank God for His providence and mercy!

For further study: Leviticus, chapters 25-27

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