

## **Pope Francis opens Holy Door inaugurating 2025 Jubilee.**

Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica thereby officially inaugurating the 2025 Jubilee of Hope. He reassures during his Christmas evening Mass that the Christ Child of Bethlehem offers the world infinite hope and joy.

By Deborah Castellano Lubov

As Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica, the evening of 24 December 2024, he ushered in the widely anticipated 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope.

With the liturgical gesture of the Door's opening at the start of the Christmas Mass during the Night, as explained in the papal bull for the Jubilee *Spes non confundit*, the Pope inaugurated the Ordinary Jubilee, a historic event taking place every 25 years.

The Ordinary Jubilee will conclude with the closing of the same Holy Door on 6 January 2026, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

### **The significance of the Holy Door .**

The Holy Door is deemed 'Holy' since it calls all those who enter through it to walk in holiness of life. In the footsteps of the Pope, during the singing of the Jubilee hymn, representatives of the entire People of God crossed its threshold, as a prelude to the countless pilgrims of hope from every country and language who will visit St. Peter's Basilica and celebrate the mysteries of salvation during the Holy Year.

The origin of the custom goes back to Pope Martin V who, for the Extraordinary Jubilee of 1423, opened a Holy Door to enter the Lateran Basilica. In St. Peter's, it was first used for the Jubilee of 1450.

Its location, the rear wall of the chapel dedicated by Pope John VII to the Mother of God, corresponds to a place where it is found today. Pope Alexander VI, in 1500, endowed this symbol of the opening of the Jubilee with a ritual that remained virtually unchanged over the centuries, until the turn of the millennium, when in the year 2000, the removal of the former brick wall was replaced by the ceremonial opening of the bronze Door already in 1983.

The last opening of the Holy Door for an Ordinary Jubilee was when Pope St. John Paul II had done so in the Year 2000. Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in 2015 for his 2016 Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

**Jubilee to strengthen faith and recognize Christ in our midst.**

"During the Holy Year," the Pope has prayed, "may the light of Christian hope illumine every man and woman, as a message of God's love addressed to all! And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!"

**Christmas Mass during the Night in Saint Peter's Basilica.**

The Holy Father invited us to pray, to prepare ourselves throughout this year, so that this Jubilee may "strengthen us in our faith, helping us to recognize the Risen Christ in the midst of our lives, transforming us into pilgrims of Christian hope."

**Restoring us to Our Father's embrace.**

The Pope picked up the Jubilee theme of hope in his homily. He began recalling the Gospel passage according to St. Luke which recounts when the angel of the Lord, bathed in light, illumines the night and brings glad tidings to the shepherds: 'I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord' (Lk 2:10-11).

At that moment, the Holy Father reflected on how Heaven breaks forth upon earth amid the wonder of the poor and the singing of angels. "God," he highlighted, "has become one of us to make us like Himself; He has come down to us to lift us up and restore us to the embrace of the Father."

**Little Child offers hope for the world.**

In Emmanuel, 'God with us,' the Pope reiterated, we find our hope.

"The infinitely great," he marvelled, "made Himself tiny" and "the glory of heaven appeared on earth as a little child."

"If God can visit us, even when our hearts seem like a lowly manger," the Pope continued, "we can truly say: Hope is not dead; hope is alive, and it embraces our lives forever!"

### **'There is hope for you'**

The Pope reminded that with the opening of the Holy Door, the new Jubilee was inaugurated, which exhorts each one of us to enter into the mystery of this extraordinary event.

"Tonight, the door of hope has opened wide to the world" and "God speaks to each of us and says: 'there is hope also for you!'" he said.

"With haste," therefore, he said, "let us set out to behold the Lord who is born for us, our hearts joyful and attentive, ready to meet him and then to bring hope to the way we live our daily lives. For Christian hope is not a 'happy ending' which we passively await, but rather, a promise, the Lord's promise, to be welcomed here and now in our world of suffering and sighs."

### **The end to wallowing in mediocrity.**

Significantly, Pope Francis underscored, the Jubilee "is a summons not to tarry, to be kept back by our old habits, or to wallow in mediocrity or laziness."

The Pope recalled Doctor of the Church Saint Augustine's having suggested that hope calls us to be upset with things that are wrong and to find the courage to change them.

With this in mind, as disciples of the Lord, the Holy Father encouraged, "we are called to find our greater hope in Him, and then, without delay, carry that hope with us, as pilgrims of light amid the darkness of this world."

### **Rediscovering joy of encounter with the Lord.**

"Brothers and sisters," the Pope reminded, "this is the Jubilee."

"This is the season of hope in which we are invited to rediscover the joy of meeting the Lord," he stressed, adding how the Jubilee "calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to the transformation of our world, so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation."

Pope Francis concluded by offering some food for thought.

"Dear sister, dear brother, on this night the 'holy door' of God's heart lies open before you. Jesus, God-with-us, is born for you, for us, for every man and woman. With him, joy flourishes; with Him, life changes; with Him, hope does not disappoint."

### **Opening of Holy Doors.**

On Christmas Day, Pope Francis delivered his Urbi et Orbi message to the people of the city of Rome and the world from the central loggia of St. Peter's Basilica at noon.

On 26 December, for the first time in the Jubilee tradition, Pope Francis opened a fifth sacred portal in a Roman prison, a gesture of hope that shows his ongoing closeness to detainees.

On Sunday, 29 December, the Pope opened the Holy Door of his cathedral, Saint John Lateran, which on 9 November this year celebrated the 1700th anniversary of its dedication.

Then, on 1 January 2025, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of Saint Mary Major was opened.

Lastly, Sunday, 5 January 2025, marked the opening of the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls.

These last three Holy Doors will be closed on Sunday, 28 December 2025.