

## **Francis opens second Holy Door with message of hope to Rome's main prison.**

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The Pope's opening of the Holy Door was part of major events in the Catholic Church's once-every-quarter-century celebration that is expected to attract about 32 million pilgrims to Rome.

Pope Francis inaugurated his Holy Year at Rome's main prison on Thursday, with a message of hope to inmates whom he vowed would be an important part of the 2025 jubilee year.

The inauguration was part of landmark events in the Catholic Church's once-every-quarter-century celebration, which is expected to attract about 32 million pilgrims to Rome.

Francis stood up from his wheelchair, knocked on the door to the chapel at Rebibbia prison, and walked across the threshold, reenacting the gesture he performed at the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica two nights earlier on Christmas Eve.

"The first Holy Door I opened at Christmas was in St. Peter's. I wanted the second one to be here, in a prison," Francis told the inmates before he entered. "I wanted each of us here, inside and out, to have the possibility of throwing open the door of our hearts and understanding that hope doesn't disappoint."

The opening of the Holy Door at the basilica officially kicked off the church tradition of the Jubilee year, which dates back to 1300.

The final grand event of the Jubilee is a special Mass for inmates at St. Peter's on 14 December 2025. Francis has long made prison ministry an important part of his priestly vocation and has visited Rebibbia several times since becoming pope in 2013, while also including prison visits in many of his foreign trips.

His message is always one of hope, believing that people who are serving prison sentences need something to look forward to more than most, the Vatican said.

According to a 2024 report by Antigone, an organisation which tracks prison conditions, 88 prisoners killed themselves in Italian lockups this year - more than any other year.

In his homily, Francis suggested the prisoners think of hope as an anchor that is fixed on the ground and that they try to hold tight to the rope that is attached to it, even if it sometimes hurts their hands.

“Hold onto the rope of hope; hold onto the anchor,” Francis said. “Never let it go.”

Francis’ outing to Rebibbia was his final big event of the week after he celebrated Christmas Eve Mass on Tuesday evening at St. Peter’s Basilica and delivered his Christmas Day blessing from the loggia overlooking the square.

The 88-year-old pope, who often suffers from respiratory infections in winter, has a few days to rest before gearing up for New Year’s Eve vigil and Mass the following day.