

# Jubilee of 2025

On Christmas Eve, Pope Francis will open the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica to mark the beginning of the Jubilee Year of 2025 – the Jubilee of Hope – that celebrates the theme Pilgrims of Hope.

The Holy Door represents Jesus, the Good Shepherd and the gate of the sheep pen: "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me, will be safe. He will go in and out, and find pasture." (Jn 10:9) It symbolises the passage to salvation, the path to a new and eternal life, which was opened to humanity by Jesus; an entryway to God's mercy, the ultimate and supreme act by which He comes to meet people.

A Jubilee Year is traditionally proclaimed by the Universal Church every 25 years. It is set aside to encourage the faithful to embark on pilgrimages, to repent of their sins and forgive the sins of others, and to renew a focus on spiritual life.

Following the opening of the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis will then open the Holy Doors at the other three papal basilicas of St John Lateran on 29 December (the Cathedral of the Diocese of Rome), St Mary Major on 1 January (the only basilica in Rome to have preserved the primitive early Christian structure), and St Paul Outside the Walls on 5 January (the largest basilica after St Peter's in the Vatican).

Pope Francis will also go to Rebibbia prison on the outskirts of Rome on 26 December, the feast of St Stephen, to open a Holy Door "as a tangible sign of the message of hope and God's forgiveness" for people in prisons around the world.

The first evidence of the opening of the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica was in 1500 during the papacy of Alexander VI.

However the Jubilee has Jewish origins, when every 50 years a year



Huge crowds are expected to visit Rome next year.

of rest of the earth was celebrated to make crops stronger, and liberate slaves to restore equality and reduce the gap between rich and poor. The beginning of the Jewish Jubilee was marked by the sound of a ram's horn, in Hebrew Yobel, from which the Christian name Jubilee derives.

The Catholic Church began the tradition of the Holy Year in 1300 with Pope Boniface VIII who had foreseen a Jubilee every century. Subsequently it was reduced to 33 years (Jesus' earthly life) and from 1450 it was further reduced to every 25 years to allow each generation to experience at least one Holy Year.

An extraordinary jubilee is celebrated on the occasion of events of particular importance. There have been two extraordinary jubilees this century prior to Pope Francis' pontificate: 1933 proclaimed by Pope Pius XI to mark the 1900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Redemption and 1983 proclaimed by Pope John Paul II to mark 1950 years since the Redemption carried out by Christ through his Death and Resurrection in the year 33.

Pope Francis announced an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy for

the period 8 December 2015 to 20 November 2016.

The last ordinary jubilee was celebrated in the year 2000. Pope John Paul II proclaimed this the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

The Holy Door, or Porta Sancta, at St Peter's features 16 rectangular bronze panels symmetrically lined in four rows of four panels each. They are divided by the coat of arms of 36 popes who have celebrated the ordinary Holy Years. The panels depict a series of scenes from the Bible: The Angel at the Gates of Paradise, the Fall, Mary at the Annunciation, the Angel of the Annunciation, Christ's Baptism in the Jordan, the Lost Sheep, the Merciful Father, the Cure of a Paralytic, the Woman Washing Jesus' Feet, the Need for Forgiveness, Peter's Denial, the Good Thief, Jesus' Appearance to Thomas, Christ's Appearance to the Disciples, the Conversion of Saul, and Opening the Holy Door.

Jubilee 2025 will run until Epiphany, 6 January 2026, when the Holy Doors will be closed by the Holy Father and once more the back of the doors bricked up and sealed until the next Holy Year.