



## Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

Press Conference, May 5, 2015



The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, which continues to be the programmatic outline for the pontificate of Pope Francis, offers a meaningful expression of the very essence of the Extraordinary Jubilee announced on April 11: “Such a community [the Church] has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved” (EG 24). It is with this desire in mind that we should re-read the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee, *Misericordiae vultus*, in which Pope Francis details the aims of the Holy Year. As you know, the two dates already marked out are **December 8**, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception – the day of the opening of the Holy Door of Saint Peter’s Basilica – and **November 20, 2016**, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe, which will conclude the Holy Year. Between these two dates a calendar of various events is being developed.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, it is important to reiterate that this Jubilee of Mercy is not and does not intend to be the Great Jubilee Year of 2000. Therefore, any comparisons lack validity, for every Holy Year possesses its own unique nature and aims. It is the Pope’s desire that this Jubilee be celebrated in Rome as well as in the local Churches; this will give due focus to the life of individual Churches and their needs, in such a way that the initiatives will not place an extra burden on local Churches, but will blend into their calendars and usual activities very naturally. Also, for the first time in the history of the Jubilee tradition, there will be an opportunity for individual dioceses to open a Holy Door – *The Door of Mercy* – either in the Cathedral or in a church of special meaning or a shrine of particular importance for pilgrimages. Similarly, it is easy to cull other characteristics from the Bull of Indiction that will make this Jubilee unique. From the very beginning, however, the call to mercy breaks with the traditional pattern. The history of Jubilees has been marked by their occurrence every 50 or 25 years. The two Extraordinary Jubilees fell on anniversaries of Christ’s redemptive act (1933, 1983). This Jubilee, however, is based upon a theme. It will build upon the central content of the faith and intends to call the Church once again to its missionary priority of being a sign and witness in every aspect of its pastoral life. I also have in mind Pope Francis’s appeal to Judaism and Islam as *loci* in which to contextualize the theme of mercy in order to foster dialogue and a way of overcoming difficulties in the public realm. We must also not forget another original characteristic of this Jubilee, namely, the designation of *Missionaries of Mercy*. Pope Francis will give them their

mandate on Ash Wednesday during the celebration in Saint Peter's Basilica. The Missionaries must be patient priests, possessing an understanding of human frailty but ready to express the loving kindness of the Good Shepherd in their preaching and in the Sacrament of Confession. However, I would rather not spend too much time on these general questions, because it is important now to explain some of the specifics pertaining to the organization of the Holy Year.

We begin with the *logo* which represents a *summa theologiae* of the theme of mercy and the *motto* which accompanies it. The motto *Merciful Like the Father* (taken from the Gospel of Luke, 6:36) serves as an invitation to follow the merciful example of the Father who asks us not to judge or condemn but to forgive and to give love and forgiveness without measure (cfr. Lk 6:37-38). The logo is the work of Father Marko I. Rupnik. It shows an image quite important to the early Church: that of the Son having taken upon his shoulders the lost soul, demonstrating that it is the love of Christ that brings to completion the mystery of his incarnation culminating in redemption. The logo has been designed in such a way so as to express the profound way in which the Good Shepherd touches the flesh of humanity and does so with a love that has the power to change one's life. One particular feature worthy of note is that while the Good Shepherd, in his great mercy, takes humanity upon himself, his eyes are merged with those of man. Christ sees with the eyes of Adam, and Adam with the eyes of Christ. Every person discovers in Christ, the new Adam, his or her own humanity and the future that lies ahead. The three concentric ovals, with colors progressively lighter as we move outward, suggest the movement of Christ who carries humanity out of the darkness of sin and death. Conversely, the depth of the darker color suggests the impenetrability of the love of the Father who forgives all.

The logo has been registered in the international forum in order to safeguard its rights and to prevent any inappropriate use. It is obvious that permission must be granted by the Pontifical Council for any non-religious use of the logo and that any abuses will be duly dealt with.

The calendar of celebrations is to be read from three perspectives. First, some events are being organized which most likely will involve large crowds of people. We wanted the first event, which will be held from **January 19-21**, to be dedicated to all those involved with the organization of pilgrimages. It will symbolically emphasize that the Holy Year is a true pilgrimage and should be lived as such. We will ask pilgrims to make a journey on foot, preparing themselves to pass through the Holy Door in a spirit of faith and devotion. It will be essential to prepare those working in the travel industry sector to go beyond the sphere of tourism, because they will be the first to provide assistance to pilgrims.

We thought it would be important to gather together believers who live in a particular way the experience of mercy. It is for this reason that, on **April 3**, we will have a celebration for those who in various ways are inspired by a charism of mercy (movements, associations, and religious institutes). On **September 4**, charitable volunteers will gather from all over the world. A volunteer is a dynamic witness of someone who lives the works of mercy in its various expressions and deserves to be celebrated in this special way. Similarly, for those who are inspired in a particular way by Mary, there will be a special day on **October 9** to celebrate her as the Mother of Mercy. There will be a number of events dedicated particularly to youth, who upon receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation are called to profess their faith. For those between the ages of 13 and 16, for whom there are few opportunities for involvement within the ordinary pastoral life of the Church, we have reserved the date of **April 24**, as World Youth Day, which will be held in Krakow from **July 26-31**, is geared toward youth of an older age bracket.

Another event will be for deacons who by their vocation and ministry are called to preside in works of charity in the life of the Christian community. Their Jubilee will be held on **May 29**. On **June 3**, which marks the 160th anniversary of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, there will be a Jubilee celebration for priests. On **September 25** there will be the Jubilee of catechists who, in transmitting

the life of faith, support Christian communities and, in particular, our parishes in a decisive way. On **June 12**, we will have a large gathering for the sick and disabled, as well as for those who care for them with such love and dedication. On **November 6**, we will celebrate the Jubilee for those in prison. This will be held not only in prisons but we have been studying the possibility of giving many of those in prison the opportunity to celebrate their own Holy Year with Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica.

Secondly, there will significant efforts to enact Pope Francis's vision and witness of reaching out to those on the existential "peripheries" of society, in order to give a direct testimony to the Church's affinity and care for the poor, the suffering, the marginalized, and all those who need a sign of tenderness. These moments will have a symbolic meaning, but we will also ask bishops and priests to perform in their own dioceses similar symbolic gestures of communion with Pope Francis so that everyone may receive a concrete sign of the Church's ministry of mercy and closeness. As a concrete sign of the Pope's charitable love, which is an essential component of this Jubilee, effective measures will be taken to meet real needs in the world that will express mercy through tangible assistance.

Thirdly, we must meet the needs of the many pilgrims who will come alone to Rome apart from any organized tour or tour group. For these individuals, there will be a number of churches in the historic center of Rome where they will feel welcome, where they can have moments of reflective prayer and prepare themselves thoroughly to walk through the Holy Door in an atmosphere of genuine spiritual devotion. All the pilgrims who will come to Rome, however, will have a privileged route through which to walk through the Holy Door. This is necessary in order to ensure that the event is lived in a religious way, safe from any climate of abuse that can easily confront millions of people making a pilgrimage to Christian holy sites.

The official website for the Jubilee has already been launched: [www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va](http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va), and can be accessed also at [www.im.va](http://www.im.va). The site is available in seven languages: Italian, English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, German, and Polish. On the site you will find official information regarding the calendar of the major public events, information for participating in the events with the Holy Father, and all of the official communications regarding the Jubilee. Also, through the site, dioceses will be able to receive information and pastoral suggestions, register pilgrimage groups, and relay to us their local diocesan projects. The website uses a number of social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google Plus and Flickr) through which we will be able to provide updates on the Holy Father's initiative and follow in real time the major events as they take place. We have also been studying the possibility of an app with which to better integrate all this information.

We are convinced that the path of Mercy on which Pope Francis has placed the Church in this journey of the Jubilee will be a moment of true grace for all Christians and a reawakening to the path of the new evangelization and the pastoral conversion the Pope has indicated. As Pope Francis wrote: "In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: 'Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old'" (MV 25).