



Jubilee of Mercy *“Merciful Like the Father”* December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016

The History and Meaning of the Holy Doors



As we enter through the Holy Doors on this Jubilee of Mercy, we might ask ourselves when did this tradition begin and what is its meaning?

A Holy Door or porta sancta has been used since the fifteenth century as a symbolic gesture of leaving the past behind and crossing from sin to grace, and from darkness to light. The Holy Door of the Jubilee of 1500 was opened on Christmas Eve 1499 and was closed on the Solemnity of Epiphany in 1501.

In the Bible, John 10:9 Jesus says “I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved.” Luke 11:9 says, “And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” Finally, Revelations 3:20 says, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me.”

In 1999, then Pope John Paul II formally announced the Jubilee of 2000 saying that the Holy Door “evokes the passage from sin to grace.” The Holy

Door represents “a ritual expression of conversion.”

“A Holy Door... is a visual symbol of internal renewal, which begins with the willing desire to make peace with God, reconcile with your neighbors, restore in yourself everything that has been damaged in the past, and reshape your heart through conversion.

While the Holy Doors of Rome and the Vatican are the best known, there are many “Holy Doors” throughout the world. The Holy Doors designated by the Holy See are in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, The Pontifical University Chapel in Manila, Philippines, the Sanctuary of the Cure of Ars, Ars, France & Notre Dame Basilica in Quebec, Canada.

A bit of history on the four Holy Doors you will enter at the four Major Basilicas in Rome and Vatican City during this Jubilee of Mercy.



BASILICA OF ST. PETER'S



After closing the Holy Year on Christmas day 1950 Pope Pius XII replaced the wooden doors installed by Pope Benedict XIV in 1748, which had begun to fall into disrepair, with the 16-panelled bronze doors (carved by Vico Consorti that are seen today. This "Holy Door" is also known as the "Door of the Great Pardon." Its panels portray scenes of man's sin and his redemption through the mercy of God.

BASILICA OF ST. PAUL'S OUTSIDE THE WALLS



The Holy Door we enter was created by Enrico Manfrini and was erected for the year 2000 Jubilee. It illustrates the theme of the Trinity. A Latin inscription at the bottom of the door reads: *Ad sacram Pauli cunctis venientibus aedem – sit pacis donum perpetuoquoque salus*. It is a beautiful couplet wishing: the gift of peace and eternal salvation to be granted to all those visiting Paul's Holy Temple.

BASILICA OF ST. JOHN LATERAN



The church we see today dates back to 1646-1666 when pope Innocent X commissioned the architect Francesco Borromini to restore the basilica which was about to collapse. This huge ancient bronze Holy Door was removed from the Curia in the Roman Forum in 1660 by Borromini along with four other bronze doors that also sit in the Narthex (large porch) of the Basilica.

BASILICA OF ST. MARY MAJOR



The new Holy Door was blessed by the Pope John Paul II on December 8, 2001. It was completed by the sculptor Luigi Mattei and donated to the basilica by the Order of the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

The right panel of the Holy Door shows the Resurrected Christ modelled after the image on the Shroud of Turin, who appears to Mary, represented here as *Salus Populi Romani*. In the upper left corner lies a representation of the Annunciation at the Well, a story drawn from apocryphal Gospels, while on the right there is an image of Pentecost. The lower corners display on the left, the Council of Ephesus which proclaimed Mary as *THEOTOKOS*, Mother of God and on the right, the Second Vatican Council which declared Mary *Mater Ecclesiae* or Mother of the Church. The Papal coat-of-arms of John Paul II, as well as his motto *Totus Tuus*, lies above the door, while the two emblems further down are those of Cardinal Carlo Furno, archpriest of the Basilica in 2001.



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