What is the Jubilee?

The Jubilee, also known as the Holy Year, is an extraordinary and solemn event of the Catholic Church that **occurs every 25 years**. This special year is dedicated to reconciliation, conversion, and spiritual renewal, offering the faithful the opportunity to receive the **plenary indulgence**. It is a celebration that not only involves Catholics but also draws respect and interest from other religious communities and people of goodwill.

The Jubilee of 2025 will last from **December 24, 2024 - January 6, 2026**, and represents a moment of great significance for millions of the faithful from around the world. This is the second ordinary Jubilee presided over by **Pope Francis**, and it follows the extraordinary Jubilee of 2015 dedicated to mercy.

The Origins of the Jubilee

The Jubilee has deep roots that trace back to the Old Testament. According to biblical tradition, every fiftieth year was proclaimed as a special time of freedom and reconciliation during which debts were forgiven, slaves were freed, and land was returned to its original owners.

In the Christian context, **the Jubilee was officially established in 1300** by Pope Boniface VIII as a time of forgiveness and spiritual renewal. Since then, it has become a regular event in the Catholic Church – celebrated every 25 years with some exceptions for extraordinary Jubilees proclaimed for special occasions.

The Spiritual Meaning of the Jubilee

At the heart of the Jubilee lies the concept of the **plenary indulgence**, which represents the **complete remission of sins** for the faithful who fulfill certain conditions: sacramental confession, participation in the Eucharist, prayer according to the Pope's intentions, and performing a work of mercy or making a pilgrimage.

This time also serves as an invitation for **personal conversion** and reconciliation with God and others. The faithful are encouraged to renew their faith, deepen their prayer life, and engage in acts of charity towards those in need.

The Rite of Opening the Holy Door

One of the most significant moments of the Jubilee is the opening of the **Holy Door**, a rite rich in symbolism. This special door is located in each of the four papal basilicas of Rome:

- St. Peter's Basilica
- St. Paul Outside the Walls
- St. John Lateran Basilica
- St Mary Major Basilica

The Holy Door is sealed at the end of each Jubilee and reopened only for the next one. Passing through it represents a tangible sign of conversion and the journey toward salvation. The opening rite began with the Holy Door of St. Peter's, followed by the other basilicas on subsequent days.

Pilgrimages During the Jubilee

Pilgrimage is one of the most common practices during the Jubilee. Faithful from all over the world travel to Rome to **visit the papal basilicas** and pass through the Holy Door. This symbolic gesture is accompanied by prayer, reflection, and participation in the sacraments.

Beyond Rome, many dioceses worldwide will open Holy Doors in designated Cathedrals and shrines, allowing the faithful to experience the Jubilee within their local communities.

Main Events of the 2025 Jubilee

The Jubilee is filled with liturgical celebrations, prayer gatherings, and special events. Some of the main events planned in Rome include:

- **Solemn Masses** in the papal basilicas
- **Special Audiences with the Pope** in St. Peter's Square
- **Processions and Prayer Vigils**
- **Days Dedicated to Specific Groups** such as youth, families, clergy, and the sick

Weekly events will focus on specific themes, offering pilgrims numerous opportunities to participate.

Diocese of Belleville

The Diocese of Belleville is joining this great celebration. On January 12, 2025, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Bishop Michael McGovern issued the following Decree: *"I establish that for the entire duration of the Holy Year starting from December 29, 2024, to December 28, 2025, the Cathedral of Saint Peter and the following churches are to be considered Jubilee Churches for sacred pilgrimages within the Diocese of Belleville . . . ."*

Mary Help of Christians in Chester has been designated as one of the Jubilee Churches. This is truly a great honor for our parish and our Catholic Community!

Currently at **Mary Help of Christians** (St. Mary's) **Catholic Church**:

- **Holy Mass:** Saturday Evening at 4:00 P.M; Sunday Morning at 10:00 A.M.; Sunday Evening at 5:00 P.M. (*En Español*); Monday and Wednesday mornings at 8:15 A.M. with the school children
- **Sacrament of Reconciliation:** Saturday Evening from 3:15-3:45 and by appointment
- **Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament**: First Tuesday of each month at 7:00 P.M.; First Friday of each month with the school children; all are welcome
- **Stations of the Cross**: 45 minutes prior to each of the weekend Masses; as possible on Friday with the school children; times vary; all are welcome

For more information, please visit the Diocese of Belleville website: www.diobelle.org

The above document was adapted from a document found online on the St. George, New Baden website: https://www.stgeorgenewbaden.org/