



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE* Wednesday, 16 December 2015 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

2. The signs of the Jubilee

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning!

On Sunday [the Holy Door was opened in the Cathedral of Rome, the Basilica of St John Lateran](#), and a *Door of Mercy* was opened in the Cathedral of every diocese of the world, and also in shrines and churches indicated by bishops. The Jubilee is throughout the world, not only in Rome. I wanted this sign of the Holy Door to be present in every particular Church, so that the [Jubilee of Mercy](#) could be an experience shared by each person. The Holy Year, therefore, has begun in the entire Church and is being celebrated in every diocese as in Rome. Also, [the first Holy Door was opened in the very heart of Africa](#). Rome, of course, is the visible sign of universal communion. May this ecclesial communion become ever more intense, so that the Church may be the living sign of the Father's love and mercy in the world.

The date 8 December was also meant to highlight this need, by linking, separated by 50 years, the beginning of the Jubilee with the conclusion of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. In fact, the Council contemplated and introduced the Church to the light of the mystery of communion. Scattered throughout the world and articulated in many particular Churches, however, it is always and only the one Church of Jesus Christ, the one that he wanted and for which he offered himself. The "one" Church that lives of the very communion of God.

This mystery of communion, which makes the Church a sign of the Father's love, grows and matures in our heart, when the love, which we recognize in the Cross of Christ and in which we immerse ourselves, enables us to love as we are loved by Him. It is an unending Love, which has the face of forgiveness and mercy.

However, mercy and forgiveness must not remain as pleasant words, but must be made manifest in daily life. *Loving and forgiving are tangible and visible signs that faith has transformed our hearts* and allow us to express God's very life in ourselves. Loving and forgiving as God loves and forgives. This is a programme of life that can know no interruptions or exceptions, but it pushes us always to go farther without ever tiring, with the certainty of being sustained by the paternal

presence of God.

This great sign of Christian life is then transformed into many other signs that are characteristic of the Jubilee. I think of those who will pass through one of the Holy Doors, which this year are the true Doors of Mercy. The Door points to Jesus himself, who said: "I am the door; if anyone enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (Jn 10:9). *Passing through the Holy Door is the sign of our trust in the Lord Jesus who came not to judge but to save* (cf. Jn 12:47). Be careful that no one rather swift or too shrewd tells you that you have to pay: no! Salvation is not paid for. Salvation is not bought. The Door is Jesus, and Jesus is gratis! He himself speaks about those who do not enter as they should, and he simply says that they are thieves and robbers. Again, be mindful: salvation is free. Passing through the Holy Door is a sign of the true conversion of our heart. When we pass through that Door it is good to remember that we must also keep the door of our heart wide open. I am before the Holy Door and I ask: "Lord, help me to thrust open the door of my heart!". The Holy Year will not be very effective if the door of our heart does not allow the passage of Christ who urges us to go toward others, in order to bring him and his love. Thus, as the Holy Door stays open, because it is the sign of the welcome that God himself holds for us, may our door, that of the heart, also be always wide open so as to exclude no one. Not even he or she who bothers me: no one.

Another important sign of the Jubilee is *confession*. Approaching the Sacrament by which we reconcile ourselves with God is equal to directly experiencing his mercy. It is finding the Father who forgives: God forgives everything. God understands us even in our limitations, and he even understands us in our contradictions. Not only this, but He tells us with his love that precisely when we recognize our sins he is even closer and he spurs us to look forward. He says even more: that when we recognize our sins and we ask for forgiveness, there is a celebration in Heaven. Jesus celebrates: this is his mercy: let us not be discouraged. Onward, forward with this!

How often have I heard: "Father, I can't forgive my neighbour, a coworker, the lady next door, my mother-in-law, my sister-in-law". We have all heard this: "I can't forgive". But how can we ask God to forgive us, if we are unable to forgive? Forgiving is something great, yet forgiving is not easy, because our heart is poor and with its efforts alone we cannot do it. However, if we open ourselves up to welcome God's mercy for ourselves, in turn we become capable of forgiveness. So often I have heard: "I couldn't see that person: I hated her. But one day, I drew close to the Lord and I asked him to forgive my sins, and I forgave that person too". These are everyday matters. And this opportunity is close to us.

Therefore, take courage! Let us live out the Jubilee by beginning with these signs that carry the great power of love. The Lord will accompany us in order to lead us to experience other important signs for our life. Take courage and step forward!

Special greetings:

In the joyous climate of the vigilant expectation of the birth of Jesus, Face of the Father's mercy, I am pleased to warmly greet the Italian-speaking faithful. I am happy to welcome the new priests of the Legionaries of Christ and their family members; the delegation of the Municipality of Bolsena; the tango dancers and the soldiers from the aviation training centre and the commanders of the defence forces. I exhort everyone to intensify your prayer and good works in these days, so that your encounter with the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God may fill your hearts with that joy, which he alone can give.

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today's Audience, including those from England, Ukraine, Indonesia and the United States of America. With prayerful good wishes that the present Jubilee of Mercy will be a profound moment of spiritual renewal, I invoke upon all of you joy and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you all!

I address a special greeting to *young people*, to the *sick* and to *newlyweds*. Let us entrust ourselves to Mary, mistress of faith and model of obedience to the Lord. Dear *young people*, may you be able to experience Christmas with the same faith with which Mary received the announcement of the Angel Gabriel. Dear *sick people*, may you ask her to obtain the intimate peace that Jesus brought the world. Dear *newlyweds*, may you imitate the example of the Mother of Jesus with prayers and virtues.