

Office of the Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Calgary

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

Pope Francis has declared an Extraordinary Year of Mercy (December 2015 - November 2016) for us to focus on and deepen our gratitude for the loving mercy of God. An important symbol marking this Year of Mercy is the Holy Door.

Passing through a Holy Door is part of the pilgrimage that all Catholics are encouraged to make, whether during a trip to Rome or a trip to a cathedral or to specially designed sites. The following are pilgrimage churches/shrines for the Extraordinary Year of Mercy in our Diocese: St. Mary's Cathedral, Calgary; Corpus Christi Church, Calgary; Holy Cross Church, Fort McLeod; Holy Trinity Church in Siksika Nation; Mount St. Francis in Cochrane; and The Divine Mercy Centre in Balzac.

These pilgrimages come with special graces, and they allow each of us to share in the many blessings of the Holy Year.

Until 1975 the ritual of closing and opening of the Holy Door emphasized the wall that prevented access, in normal times, to the Holy Door. The opening ceremony consisted of the demolition of the wall, which further emphasized the exceptional side of the Jubilee. Thus, the symbolism attached to the rite used masonry tools: a hammer to knock the wall, a trowel for building, bricks bearing inscriptions and marks of the pontificate, holy water to bless the stones and bricks, papal coins. In 1975 the symbolism was changed by drawing attention to the Door and away from the wall.

A door in everyday life has several functions, all repeated by the symbol of the Holy Door: it marks the separation between inside and outside, between sin and the order of grace (Mt 7:18-19); it permits entry to a new place, in showing mercy and not condemnation (Mt 9:13); it provides protection, it provides salvation (Jn 10:7).

Jesus said: "I am the gate" (Jn 10:7). There is only one way that opens wide the entrance into the life of communion with God: this is Jesus, the one and absolute way to salvation. To him alone can the words of the Psalmist be applied in full truth: "This is the Lord's own gate: where the just may enter" (Ps 117:20).

The Holy Door reminds us of our responsibility when crossing the threshold: It is a decision which implies the freedom to choose, and at the same time the courage to abandon something, to leave something behind (cf. Mt 13, 44-46). Passing through this door means professing that Jesus Christ is Lord, in strengthening our faith in Him to embrace the new life He has given us. This is what Saint Pope John Paul II had announced to the world on the day of his election: "Open wide the doors to Christ".

I would like to call your attention to several specific items:

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1. Passing through a Holy Door is part of a longer process of sacrifice and conversion required for receiving and indulgence granted during a Holy Year. A plenary indulgence, the remission of temporal punishment due to sin, is offered to pilgrims who also fulfill certain other conditions: reception of the sacraments of penance (reconciliation) and Eucharist, visits and prayers for the intention of the Pope. and performing simple acts such as visiting the sick.

2. During the Jubilee year of Divine Mercy (December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016) the Diocese of Calgary (SAH), through a partnership with Calgary Catholic Immigration, will provide a grant of \$5,000.00 to parishes who sponsor a refugee family through private partnerships.

3. During the Jubilee year of Divine Mercy (December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016) the Diocese of Calgary will waive the fees normally requested re applications/granting of declarations of nullity re marriage cases (donations will be accepted).

4. Each of us, personally and as a parish, should to recommit to the practice of mercy. The Christian tradition has then fleshed out what mercy concretely means. It has distinguished and enumerated in detail seven corporal works and seven spiritual works of mercy.

The corporal works of mercy are: feed the hungry, give to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, ransom captives, and bury the dead.

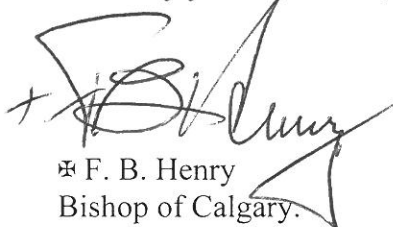
The spiritual works of mercy are: instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, admonish the sinner, gladly forgive injuries, bear wrongs patiently, pray for the living and the dead.

5. For more information on the Jubilee of Mercy please consult: <http://www.calgarydiocese.ca/>

In conclusion, I would like to quote Pope Francis once again: "I am convinced that the whole Church will find in this Jubilee the joy needed to rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God, with which all of us are called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time. From this moment, we entrust this Holy Year to the Mother of Mercy, that she might turn her gaze upon us and watch over our journey." (Homily, March 13, 2015).

Wishing you all the best, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,



✠ F. B. Henry
Bishop of Calgary.

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