

THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY “THE CATHEDRAL”

As you have perhaps experienced in your years as a Catholic, there is always one church within a diocese or Archdiocese that stands apart from the others. They are given the distinct title of “Cathedral”, from the Latin word *catbedra* meaning seat or chair. These churches contain the seat of the bishop, always in a place of prominence within the church, raised above both clergy and the laity. This raised chair harkens back to the world of academia in which the chair of the “magister” or teacher was sit on a raised platform above the students. Thus, the cathedra symbolizes the role of the bishop as chief teacher of the diocese. We can also see in early Church architecture that a raise seat was also found for presiding magistrates, thus also giving a secondary symbolic meaning to the cathedra as the seat of governance of the bishop of his diocese.

There is a principle that applies to cathedrals – “Only a bishop makes a Cathedral”. In other words, the chair itself, sitting empty, has no authority to teach or govern the people – it is the bishop who sits in the chair who has been given this *munus* (Latin for “office” or “duty”). If you have attended an ordination at which our Archbishop presides, you will notice that he preaches from the chair when acting in a capacity in which he exercises his authority as bishop. This is in keeping with the mandate given to him by Pope Benedict XVI to be the chief shepherd of this local church, the Archdiocese of Omaha.

Because of its unique status as “the Bishop’s church”, and because the seat of his authority as bishop rests there, all liturgies at which he exercises his authority as Bishop should be held there. His authority is most greatly expressed when he acts in communion with Rome for the express purpose of handing on the mandation to “preach, teach and govern” through the laying on of hands and anointing at the ordination of priests to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. These men, upon being ordained, become sharers in the ministry of the Bishop and thus the bishop ministers vicariously (thus the term old term for priests, “vicar”) through the priests entrusted to the care of the parishes for which the Bishop is responsible. In this Jubilee Year of Mercy, it is the priest whose privilege it will be to be the face of Christ for you, so that the grace of the sacraments may be given in abundance and with great joy.

It is only fitting, therefore, that the Cathedral church should stand as the point of pilgrimage for all members of the Archdiocese, for we seek the face of Jesus Christ who is the Face of the Father’s mercy. It is our Archbishop, as our shepherd, who, after unsealing the Holy Doors, leads his flock through to encounter our Lord.

Throughout this year, all are invited to make pilgrimage to visit St. Cecilia’s Cathedral to pray and to find mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the grace of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. Dates and times for events at the Cathedral will be posted on the Archdiocesan website, www.archomaha.org, as well as times for reconciliation throughout this Holy Year at all parishes.

Fr. James Netusil, 2015

“On the following Sunday, the Third Sunday of Advent, the Holy Door of the Cathedral of Rome – that is, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran – will be opened. On the same Sunday, I will announce that in every local church, at the cathedral– the mother church of the faithful in any particular area – or, alternatively, at the co-cathedral or another church of special significance, a Door of Mercy will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year.”

Pope Francis, Misericordiae Vultus, 2015