

THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY “THE HOLY DOORS”

Since the early part of the 15th century, the Church has expressed the idea of conversion as a doorway through which one who seeks forgiveness enters in pilgrimage. This doorway, or *porta santa*, was traversed as a gesture of leaving behind the past with its darkness of sin and crossing a threshold whereby the penitent moves from sin to the light of grace and mercy, from slavery of temptation and deceit by the devil to freedom in the truth of God.

But rather than simply walking through a door made of wood or glass or metal, the pilgrim must envision and believe that it is Christ himself who is the gateway through which the sheep enter into right relationship with the Trinity. It is Jesus Christ, through his life, death and resurrection, who opens for us the doorway to everlasting life. Pope Francis said, “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 door of the Lord where the just may enter’ (Ps. 118:20)”.

For this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, proclaimed by Our Holy Father, Pope Francis, Archbishop Lucas has designated St. Cecilia’s Cathedral, the mother-church of the Archdiocese, as the local pilgrimage site. As such, on November 8, Fr. Michael Gutgsell, Rector of St. Cecilia’s Cathedral, delegated by Archbishop Lucas, will seal the doors of the Cathedral in a symbolic gesture of unity with Pope Francis and the Universal Church. As the doors of St. John Lateran, the Cathedral Church of the Bishop of Rome, are sealed, so too will our doors, awaiting the day of December 13, 2015 when Archbishop Lucas, joined by the faithful from throughout the Archdiocese, will join together in an evening service of Solemn Vespers and will unseal for this Archdiocese the Doors of Mercy, leading us to encounter the face of Jesus, who as Pope Francis declared in his announcement of the Holy Year, is the Face of the Father’s mercy. Thus will begin a unique year-long encounter with our Merciful Lord. The Archdiocese will offer many opportunities to encounter the mercy of the Father, most especially through expanded opportunities for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, catechetical offerings and other events throughout the Archdiocese.

As Jesus says to us in the Gospel of John, “Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep... Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:7-10). Jesus Christ, through his Holy Church, provides us many doorways through which we may encounter the living God in Christ Jesus. The Church, however, can never force us to enter – we must cross the threshold in faith, trusting in the divine love of our Creator, confessing at all moments that “Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” In doing so, we choose life, we leave the past behind, and we follow our Lord, secure in the knowledge that what we gain is nothing short of divine life.

Fr. James Netusil, 2015