Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of St Peter's Basilica to mark the start of the Catholic Jubilee Year, at the Vatican, Dec. 24, 2024. (Alberto Pizzoli/Pool Photo via AP)



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Pope Francis on Dec. 24 officially launched the Vatican's 2025 Jubilee Year, encouraging Christians to use the milestone occasion to dream of a "new world where peace and justice reign."

"The Jubilee calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to the transformation of our world, so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation," said Francis during his Christmas Eve Mass.

The liturgy kicked off a monumental year ahead here at the Vatican that is likely to test the stamina of the 88-year-old pope. An intense schedule of events focused on bringing hope to the world through the forgiveness of sins, debts and other acts of mercy is expected to draw some 32 million pilgrims to Rome.

This is a moment, said the pontiff, "to recover lost hope, to renew that hope in our hearts, and to sow seeds of hope amid the bleakness of our time and our world."

Francis commenced the evening's celebration at 7 p.m., local time, arriving outside of St. Peter's to officially open the basilica's Holy Door. The extraordinary act is meant to symbolize conversion or entering into the presence of God.

The pope remained seated in his wheelchair as the bronze doors slowly opened and the pontiff crossed the threshold. He then made his way past Michelangelo's Pieta and was followed by 54 lay representatives from all over the globe and some 50 cardinals as they processed into the basilica for the start of Mass.

Pope Francis, after opening the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, gives his homi

Pope Francis, after opening the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, gives his homily during the Christmas Mass at Night Dec. 24, 2024. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

During his Christmas Eve homily, the pope said he hoped the year ahead would be "a jubilee for our Mother Earth, disfigured by profiteering; a time of jubilee for the poorer countries burdened beneath unfair debts; a time of jubilee for all those who are in bondage to forms of slavery old and new."

Jubilees trace their origins to the Old Testament tradition of a special year dedicated to forgiveness and renewal. Since the year 1300, the Catholic church has held jubilee years every 25 or 50 years and has also called special jubilee years from time to time, known as extraordinary jubilee years.

In 2016, Francis had an extraordinary global jubilee for a Holy Year of Mercy. Prior to that, the last ordinary jubilee was held in 2000 during the papacy of Pope John Paul II and was known as "the Great Jubilee."

During his homily, the pope made repeated references to this jubilee's theme, "Pilgrims of Hope."

Christians, he said, are called "to bring hope to the interminable, dreary days of prisoners, to the cold and dismal lodgings of the poor, and to all those places desecrated by war and violence."

"Hope," the pontiff continued, "is incompatible with the detachment of those who refuse to speak out against evil and the injustices perpetrated at the expense of the poor."

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Ahead of the official start of the jubilee, on Dec. 23, the Catholic Church's charitable arm launched a worldwide campaign in 160 countries focused on foreign debt cancellation to address poverty and climate concerns.

"If God can visit us, even when our hearts seem like a lowly manger, we can truly say: Hope is not dead; hope is alive and it embraces our lives forever!" said the pope.

Francis, who turned 88 on Dec. 17 and is recovering from a cold, spoke with ease as he presided over the liturgy.

On Sunday, Dec. 22, the pope opted to recite the weekly Sunday Angelus prayer from his private residence, rather than from the window of the Apostolic Palace. The Vatican said the move was taken as a precaution due to the cold weather in Rome, as well as the pope's own respiratory issues.

At noon on Christmas Day, Francis will offer his annual *urbi et orbi* ("to the city and the world") message and blessing. On Dec. 26, he will continue the Jubilee celebrations by opening a special holy door in Rome's Rebibbia Prison.

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This story appears in the **2025 Holy Year** feature series. View the full series.