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A cloth barricade reading "Rome Jubilee 2025" surrounds a construction site at the beginning of the broad boulevard leading to St. Peter's Square and St. Peter's Basilica Dec. 4, 2024. The city of Rome is preparing for the Holy Year with hundreds of roadworks and restoration projects. (CNS/Lola Gomez)



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More than half a million pilgrims crossed the threshold of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in the first two weeks after Pope Francis opened it.

From Dec. 24, when the pope inaugurated the Holy Year, to Jan. 7, the Vatican said, 545,532 people from around the world have made the journey along the lengthy boulevard leading to St. Peter's Square and crossed through the basilica's Holy Door.

"This is a very significant beginning," Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the chief Vatican organizer of the Jubilee Year, said in a statement. "The groups crowding Via della Conciliazione are giving an important testimony, and this is also a sign of the great perception of safety and security that pilgrims experience in the city of Rome and around the four papal basilicas."

A tunnel diverting vehicle traffic underground at the beginning of Via Della Conciliazione — the street leading to the Vatican — was completed just before the start of the Holy Year. A pathway extending from the new pedestrian square at the start of the street to the Holy Door also was set up exclusively for pilgrims walking individually or in groups to St. Peter's Basilica.

Fisichella acknowledged, however, that there were some "difficulties" in managing the flow of pilgrims and tourists through St. Peter's Basilica, a problem that would be studied.

The city of Rome has estimated that more than 30 million people will travel to the city during the Jubilee.

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Based on the number of pilgrims that crossed the Holy Door in the first days of the Holy Year, "a steady increase in pilgrim turnout is expected," the Vatican said in its statement, noting also the many children, youth, adults and elderly who participated in Jubilee celebrations at the diocesan level Dec. 29.

The Vatican said that the "great desire to participate in the Jubilee was also visible in the thousands of people who filled the four papal basilicas on the days celebrating the opening of the Holy Doors, often filling the squares in front of them."

While Francis opened the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica and another at a Rome prison complex, he did not attend the opening of the holy doors at the other three papal basilicas in Rome: St. Mary Major, St. John Lateran and St. Paul Outside the Walls.

The first major event of the Holy Year is the Jubilee of the World of Communications Jan. 24-26, which will bring to Rome "thousands of journalists, experts and communications workers from all over the world," the Vatican said.

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