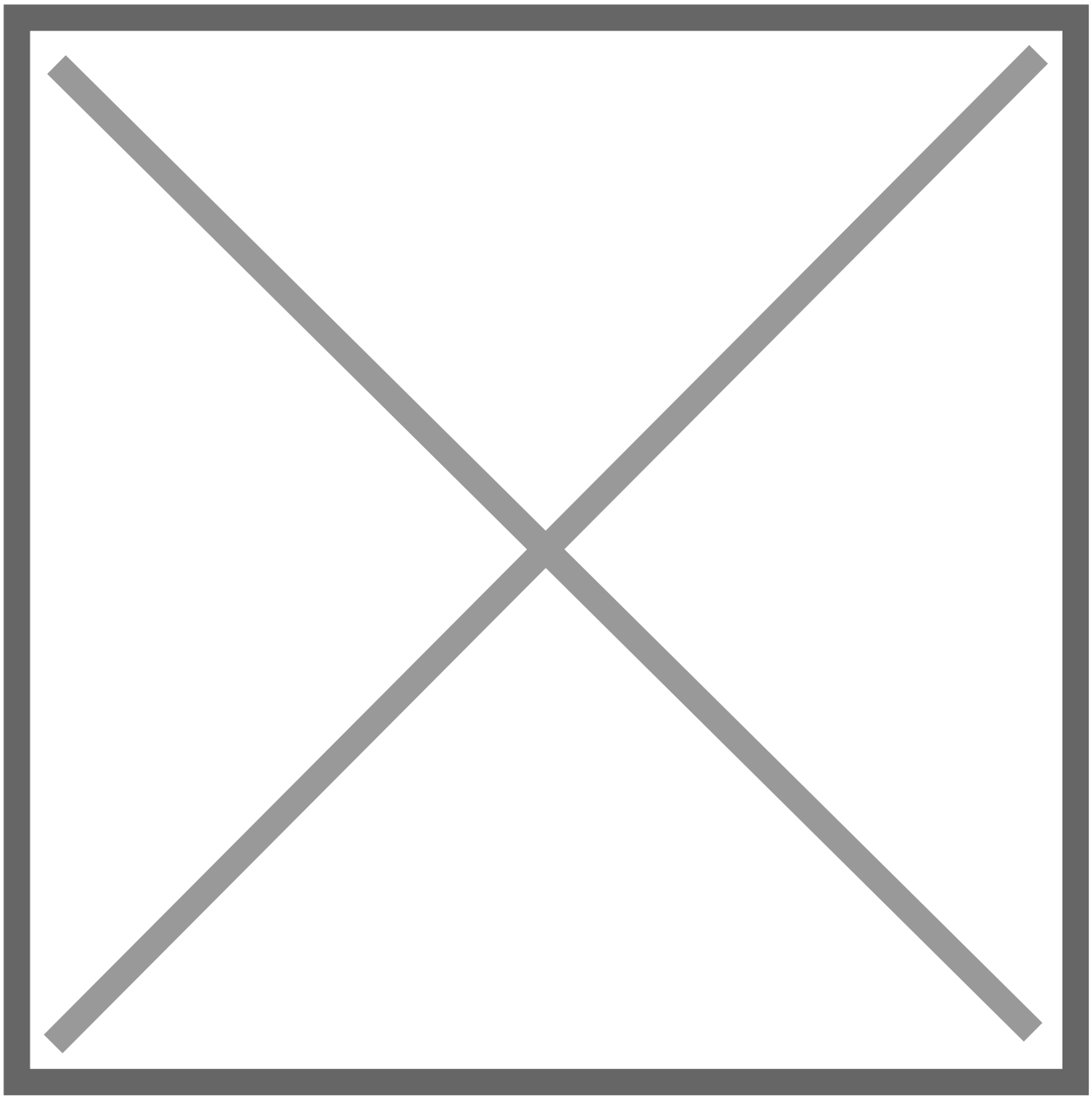
News



Cardinal Rolandas Makrickas, archpriest of Rome's Basilica of St. Mary Major, kneels in prayer on the threshold of the basilica's Holy Door before solemnly closing it Dec. 25, 2025, as the Jubilee Year was ending. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

by Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

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Rome — December 29, 2025
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The path to conversion, the door to God's mercy and the call to live in Christian hope all continue beyond the Jubilee Year, said the three cardinals who closed the Holy Doors at three major basilicas in Rome.

On the feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 6, Pope Leo will solemnly close the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, formally concluding the Holy Year 2025, which Pope Francis opened on Christmas Eve 2024. But diocesan and other local celebrations of the Jubilee concluded Dec. 28.

Cardinal Rolandas Makrickas, archpriest of Rome's Basilica of St. Mary Major, presided over the rite of closing the basilica's Holy Door at dusk Dec. 25 before celebrating a special Mass. Cardinal Baldassare Reina, papal vicar of Rome and archpriest of the Basilica of St. John Lateran, did the same there Dec. 27. And U.S. Cardinal James M. Harvey, archpriest of the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, presided over the closing of its Holy Door and the celebration of Mass Dec. 28.

The Holy Doors are bricked up between Jubilee Years, which usually occur every 25 years. Leo has indicated, however, that an extraordinary Holy Year will be celebrated in 2033, to mark the 2,000th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

"What is closing is not divine grace, but a special time of the church, and what remains open forever is the heart of the merciful God," Makrickas said in his homily Dec. 25. While the Holy Door is closed, "the door that truly matters remains that of our heart: it opens when it listens to the word of God, it widens when it welcomes our brother or sister, it is strengthened when it forgives and asks for forgiveness," he said.

"In this basilica, precisely during this Holy Year, we have been granted the grace of a very special task: to safeguard a memory that becomes prophecy," he said, drawing attention to the late Francis, who is buried at St. Mary Major "and honored by thousands of faithful every day."

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According to SIR, the news agency of the Italian bishops' conference, an estimated 20 million pilgrims passed through the Holy Door at the basilica in the past year.

Hope, the theme of the Jubilee Year, "moved the countless pilgrims who left on our roads the footprints of steps weighed down by the burdens pressing upon their hearts," Reina told people during the Mass at St. John Lateran. "They passed through the Holy Door in order to find the One they were seeking. The door of our cathedral bears the imprints of the caresses of all those who passed through it in search of mercy."

Though the Holy Door is closed, he said, "we know that the Risen One passes through closed doors and never tires of knocking on our closed doors, in order to offer and to find mercy. Yes, to find it — because he too seeks it."

"Indeed, he has told us of the final surprise: that in the end we will be judged on love, on mercy, on the glass of water given to the thirsty; on the morsel of bread to the hungry; on closeness to those who are imprisoned or ill; on clothing the naked; on welcoming the stranger," Reina said.

At St. Paul Outside the Walls, the burial place of the Apostle Paul, Harvey noted that the Jubilee's theme, "Hope does not disappoint," was taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. "It is not only a motto, but is most of all a profession of faith," the cardinal said.

"In a world marked by war, crises, injustices and confusion, the church wanted to reaffirm that Christian hope is far different from trying to flee history," he said; rather, "it is expressed in the ability to pass through it with one's gaze fixed on Christ."

The Holy Door is not simply a material passageway, Harvey said, "it is a spiritual threshold, a call to each one of us to leave behind that which weighs on our hearts to enter the space of mercy. Crossing it means recognizing that salvation flows from humbly entrusting ourselves to the only One who can give us fullness of life."

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