



# THE COURIER

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## PLANS MOVE FORWARD FOR DIOCESAN JUBILEE CELEBRATION

*Why a Jubilee of Mercy today? Simply because the church, in this time of great historical change, is called to offer more evident signs of God's presence and closeness. This is not the time to be distracted; on the contrary, we need to be vigilant and to reawaken in ourselves the capacity to see what is essential. This is a time for the church to rediscover the meaning of the mission entrusted to her by the Lord on the day of Easter: to be a sign and an instrument of the Father's mercy. (Pope Francis)*

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, Pope Francis announced his plans for the Church to celebrate an "Extraordinary Jubilee which has at its center the mercy of God. It will be a Holy Year of Mercy. We want to live in the light of the word of the Lord: 'Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful' (cf. Lk 6:36).... This Holy Year will commence on the next Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception and will conclude on Sunday, 20 November 2016, the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe and living face of the Father's mercy."

The Jubilee of Mercy will be celebrated both by the Universal Church, with a calendar of major events to be held in Rome each month of the Holy Year, and also in each of the local dioceses throughout the world. As our Holy Father has indicated, "Every Particular Church, therefore, will be directly involved in living out this Holy Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal. Thus the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and in the Particular Churches as a visible sign of the Church's universal communion."

The planning for our diocese's celebration of the Jubilee Year is underway, and various events and activities will be held throughout the year. Some highlights of the diocesan jubilee celebration will include the following:

❖ The **Opening Mass** for the Jubilee Year will be held at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on **Sunday, December 13<sup>th</sup>**, the Third Sunday of Advent. At the Mass, there will be a formal **opening of the Holy Door** for the Jubilee Year at the Cathedral. The Holy Door offers a ritual expression of conversion, as one seeks to pass from sin to grace in moving through this sacred



door. The Holy Door will serve, in the words of Pope Francis, as “a *Door of Mercy* through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope.”

On that same Sunday, **Doors of Mercy** will also be opened at other sites across the diocese. These will include parishes named after the “Sacred Heart” (as this devotion flows from God’s merciful love), and the chapel of the Franciscan Sisters at Assisi Heights, in Rochester. These will also serve as pilgrimage sites in the diocese for the Holy Year.

❖ Local “**24 Hours for the Lord**” observances offering special opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation in parishes of the diocese **during the Lenten season**. Pope Francis reminds us that “God *forgives all*, and God *forgives always*.” He exhorts us to “never tire of asking forgiveness.”

A major focus for the Jubilee Year will be on **celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation**. To have the courage and the humility to confess our sins is, in the Pope’s words, a “gift from God.” “Being touched with tenderness by his hand and molded by his grace allows us to draw near to the priest without fear for our sins, but with the certainty that we will be accepted by him in the name of God.... After confession we are reborn.”

❖ Special diocesan “**Jubilee of Mercy**” **Days** will be held in early June, with gatherings:

- ♦ for our priests and seminarians on **Friday, June 3rd**
- ♦ for deacons, and their wives and pastors, on **Sunday, June 5th**
- ♦ for all laity, religious, and clergy at regional sites across the diocese on **Wednesday, June 8th -- Friday, June 10th**.

The three days on June 8, 9, and 10 will feature morning, afternoon, and evening programs offering time for worship and liturgy, education and enrichment, and service and charity. More details on all of these gatherings will be forthcoming.

❖ Other **Jubilee events and activities** – for families, for youth, for catechists, for those who are ill and persons with disabilities, for prisoners, etc. – **will be held throughout the year**, as Pope Francis has directed.

More information on our diocesan plans will be provided in the coming weeks. There is also a Vatican web page for the Jubilee of Mercy, under the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization: <http://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/en.html>.

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*Here, then, is the reason for the Jubilee: because this is the time for mercy. It is the favorable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, everyone, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation.*

(Pope Francis)