



What is a Jubilee Year?

A jubilee year is a time for forgiveness and renewal in our relationship with God and others. In the Biblical world of Israel, the jubilee year would occur every 50 years and be treated “as sacred” (Leviticus 25:11). It would “redeem” property: families would regain or rebuy land they sold, people would free indentured servants, debts would be forgiven, and the land would lay fallow for a year (cf. Leviticus 25:8-55). Pope Boniface VIII declared the first Christian Jubilee in 1300. In modern times, the Church celebrates jubilee years every 25 years. The last “ordinary” Jubilee Year was in 2000 though Pope Francis declared an extraordinary jubilee in 2015 with a theme of Mercy.

THIS JUBILEE YEAR

This Jubilee Year began December 29, 2024 in the Archdiocese of Boston and ends on December 28, 2025. The theme is “Pilgrims of Hope” because we are called to renew our own Christian hope and then be signs of hope to others in our daily life. Pope Francis desires that this “Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the ‘door’ (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as ‘our hope’ (1 Tim 1:1)” (*Spes Non Confundit*, 1). After encountering Jesus we are then called to be signs of hope to others who share knowledge and experiences of God’s mercy. We are encouraged to invite those at the margins of our society (prisoners, elderly, sick, poor) and the margins of our parish (those who do not have a relationship with Jesus).

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JUBILEE YEAR

During Jubilee Years, Popes allow for more opportunities to gain grace and encourage the faithful to participate in the sacraments more often to receive more graces. These graces will help us grow in holiness and strengthen us to follow Jesus.

You can participate in the Jubilee Year by fostering your own faith:

- visit the pilgrimage sites
- join jubilee events around the archdiocese
- revisit the fundamentals of our faith (Who is Jesus?, What did he do?, and Why does it matter?)
- study the teachings of the faith within the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- be a sign of hope to others
- practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy
- share signs of hope on social media (tag @BostonCatholic and use the hashtag #JubileeYear),
- talk with an acquaintance and get to know him or her better; if a friendship develops, share the reason for your hope in Jesus with him or her





What is an Indulgence?

An indulgence indulges us. It is a gift which remits the temporal punishment of sins which have already been forgiven by applying the merits of Jesus Christ and the saints on our behalf.

LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND SIN FIRST

When we sin we reject God and his law. Because we reject God, a sinful act hurts our relationship with God and can also affect others directly and indirectly. Since the baptized are all united through the Mystical Body of Christ, the growth or decline in one person's relationship with God affects the whole body. Sorrow for sin may lead to repentance and forgiveness but the effect of the sin remains. Consider this example: two children are playing and one wants to play with the toys of another. The first child pushes the other child away from his or her toys. The pushed child falls and breaks his or her arm. Because of this event, their afternoon visit to the park must be canceled and the hurt child brought to a doctor. The children are upset that the trip to the park cannot happen and the child with the broken arm will need time to recover. The child who pushed is sorry for causing the injury and asks for forgiveness, but the other child is still injured and both experience the "evil" repercussions of the action.

Justice requires a mitigation of the evil effects of the act; an attempt to "make up" for the evil caused. In our justice system, people are sometimes sentenced to community service to do good for the community they harmed by their actions. The penance we receive in confession helps to right the wrong with those we offend and with God. But harm has still been done to God's order. Temporal punishment, a consequence of sin, purifies our souls and restores, as possible, God's order. In the example with the children, the child who pushed another can share his or her toys with the other child to make the hurt child a little happier and for the pusher to learn how to share.

NOW, INDULGENCES

Indulgences apply the merits of Jesus and the saints to account for our temporal punishment. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus merited the graces for our salvation. As Christians, we are invited to "add" to this pool of merited graces through our own good works. (But even our good works are preceded by God's grace!) When we offer sacrifices, acts of love, and other Christian actions, we "build up" the Body of Christ and add to this pool of graces (cf. *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, 6-8).

During the Jubilee Year, the Pope has granted extra opportunities to receive indulgences and has declared that two indulgences can be obtained each day.* To receive a plenary indulgence, you must have contrition and repentance for sins along with a sacramental confession, a desire to amend our lives to follow Christ more closely, acts of charity, and the reception of the Eucharist. In addition, the baptized must perform one of the following acts specific to the Holy Year to be granted an indulgence:

- Visit a jubilee site and participate in Mass, a major hour from the Liturgy of the Hours, devotional prayers, a penance service with sacramental confession, or Eucharistic adoration
- Participate in a mission or a study the documents of Vatican II or the Catechism of the Catholic Church
- Perform spiritual or corporal works of mercy
- Keep a penitential practice in the spirit of the Jubilee such as abstinence from meat or fasting on Fridays, donations to the poor, giving one's free time to the service of others, and avoiding unnecessary distractions or consumption of goods

*The requirements for the second indulgence are receiving Holy Communion a second time at a second Mass, performing an act of charity, and offering the indulgence for souls in purgatory.





What is a Pilgrimage?

The Jubilee Year is a time to set out on a personal journey of conversion and to reconcile with God and others. Pilgrimages are a beautiful tool in the Church to facilitate this. “Pilgrimages evoke our earthly journey toward heaven and are traditionally very special occasions for renewal in prayer. For pilgrims seeking living water, shrines are special places for living the forms of Christian prayer “in Church” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2691). When we prayerfully travel to a place of grace to receive God’s mercy we experience change.

Going on a pilgrimage is part of a Jubilee Year because it shows God our desire to seek him and to find spiritual renewal. It also requires us to set aside time to spiritually prepare for the visit to the pilgrimage site and time for the visit itself where we will encounter him.

“Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life. A pilgrimage on foot is a great aid for rediscovering the value of silence, effort and simplicity of life . . . In the coming year, pilgrims of hope will . . . drink from the wellsprings of hope, above all by approaching the sacrament of Reconciliation, the essential starting-point of any true journey of conversion” (*Spes Non Confundit*, 11).

During Jubilee years, popes open doors for people to pass through to receive the gift of an indulgence (if all the prerequisites are met). Passing through a “holy door” has traditionally been a sign of conversion, passing away from one’s old life and into a life of renewed zeal and faith. People make pilgrimages to pass through holy doors and recommit to following Jesus. Sometimes, the pope permits holy doors to be located in different parts of the world. This year, the only holy doors are in Rome.

You can travel to Rome along a designated pilgrimage route to walk through a holy door. You can also make a pilgrimage right here in the Archdiocese of Boston! Archbishop Henning has designated 11 pilgrimage sites through the five regions of the archdiocese. These sites are:

- Holy Cross Cathedral, Boston
- Most Holy Redeemer, Boston
- St. Clement Eucharistic Shrine, Boston
- Holy Rosary Shrine, Lawrence
- St. Joseph the Worker Shrine, Lowell
- Divine Mercy Shrine, Salem
- Blessed Andrew Phu Yen, Medford
- Missionary Shrine of Our Lady of Fatima, Holliston
- Immaculate Conception Parish, Marlborough
- St. Paul’s Parish, Hingham
- St. Patrick’s Parish, Brockton

