

## **Pope brings in the Holy Year with a message of hope**

(ROME) - Pope Francis inaugurated his Holy Year by opening the Holy Door at St. Peter's basilica, officially kicking off the Jubilee year, a church tradition dating to 1300 that nowadays occurs every 25 years and involves the faithful coming to Rome on pilgrimages.

"I wanted each of us ... to have the possibility of throwing open the door of our hearts and understanding that hope doesn't disappoint."

Francis dedicated the 2025 Jubilee to hope. His message is always one of hope, believing that people who are serving prison sentences need something to look forward to more than most. That is especially true in Italy, where prison overcrowding and inmate suicides are at record highs, according to the Antigone Association, which tracks prison conditions.

In a statement Thursday, Antigone called on Italian authorities to hear Francis' appeal to give prisoners hope. It called for structural reforms that put into practice the constitutional principles of "a punishment that is dignified, humane and looks to the social reintegration of those who are in prison."

In his homily, Francis suggested, "Hold onto the rope of hope, hold onto the anchor. "Never let it go."

The 88-year-old pope, who often suffers from respiratory infections in winter, has a few days to rest before gearing up for the New Year's Eve vigil and Mass the following day.

With the St. Peter's Holy Door now open to the public, a steady stream of pilgrims was filing into the basilica, a pace that is expected to continue through next year until the door closes on Jan. 6, 2026.

Pope Francis' 2025 involves a dizzying calendar of Jubilee events that will sorely test his stamina, with special Jubilee Masses for all the main groups of pilgrims who are being celebrated during the year: Adolescents, migrants, teachers and law enforcement, among others. So far, he has only one foreign trip under study: A May visit to Turkey to commemorate the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, Christianity's first ecumenical council.

The 58th **World Day of Peace** will be celebrated on January 1, 2025, with the theme "**Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace**". The theme is inspired by the Jubilee Year, a time for conversion and reconciliation. Pope Francis' message for this day reflects on the importance of hope and forgiveness, and the need for a genuine conversion at all levels to bring about peace.

The World Day of Peace is marked annually on January 1 by the Holy Father with a special message. The tradition of these messages began in 1967 when Pope Paul VI announced that the world needs to be sensitized and oriented for peace and understanding. Inspired by the papal letters "Pacem in Terris" and "Populorum Progressio", the Pope recommended that the church play a greater role in our search for world peace. It has continued with St. John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis.

Separately, the World Day of Prayer International a 2025 theme based on Psalm 139:1-18, titled "I Made You Wonderful". The theme is intended to remind people that God created each person with care and love, and to encourage people to treat others in the same way.

World Day of Peace is primarily a Catholic feast day dedicated to universal peace on the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God. On this occasion, Popes generally make authoritative declarations on the Catholic Social Teachings (C.S.T.). The theme of the feast has always been about creating a culture of care. The Pope and the Vatican Church stress the need to care and share tolerance for each other, and to create a society that focuses on good moral values and does not yield to the temptation to disregard others. The benefits of a peaceful society have been the emphasis of every year's World Day of Peace.

According to the letters "Pacem in Terris" and "Populorum Progressio," the Church and the Pope would focus on working toward achieving peace by developing order in four major areas: The relationship of an individual with other human beings, the relationship of an individual with particular states, the relationship of states among states, and the relationship of individuals and states with the worldwide community. The church determined that in order to achieve actual peace, a culture of understanding and tolerance must be developed, beginning from the individual up to the state and then the global level.

Though the main theme of World Day of Peace does not change (creating a culture of care), Keeping the main theme around every year's observance of World Day of Peace fixated around the concept of creating a culture of care, the sub-themes changes every year to match the needs and rising issues of that year.