



The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS *GENERAL AUDIENCE* Wednesday, 9 December 2015 [\[Multimedia\]](#)

1. Why have a Jubilee of Mercy?

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Good morning,

Yesterday [I opened here, in St Peter's Basilica, the Holy Door of the Jubilee of Mercy](#), after having previously opened it in the [Cathedral of Bangui, Central Africa](#). Today I would like to reflect together with you on the meaning of this Holy Year, responding to the question: *Why have a Jubilee of Mercy?* What does this mean?

The Church is in need of this extraordinary occasion. I am not saying: this extraordinary occasion is good for the Church. I am saying: the Church needs this extraordinary occasion. In this era of profound changes, the Church is called to offer her particular contribution, rendering visible the signs of the presence and closeness of God. The Jubilee is a favourable time for all of us, because by contemplating Divine Mercy, which overcomes all human limitations and shines in the darkness of sin, we are able to become more certain and effective witnesses.

Turning our gaze to God, merciful Father, and to our brothers and sisters in need of mercy, means focusing our attention on the *essential contents of the Gospel*: Jesus, Mercy made flesh, who renders the great mystery of the Trinitarian Love of God visible to our eyes. Celebrating a Jubilee of Mercy is equivalent to placing once again the specific nature of the Christian faith, namely Jesus Christ, the merciful God, at the centre of our personal life and that of our communities.

It is a Holy Year, therefore, so as to *live mercy*. Yes, dear brothers and sisters, this Holy Year is offered to us so that we may experience in our lives the sweet and gratifying touch of God's forgiveness, his presence beside us and his closeness especially in the moments of greatest need.

This Jubilee, in other words, is a privileged moment for the Church to learn to choose only "*what pleases God most*". What is it that "*pleases God most*"? Forgiving his children, having mercy on them, so that they may in turn forgive their brothers and sisters, shining as a flame of God's mercy in the world. This is what pleases God most. St Ambrose, in a theological book that he wrote

about Adam, takes up the story of the creation of the world and says that each day after God made something — the moon, the sun or the animals — [the Bible] says: “God saw that it was good”. But when he made man and woman, the Bible says: “He saw that it was very good”. St Ambrose asks himself: “Why does He say ‘very good’? Why is God so content after the creation of man and woman?”. Because finally he had someone to forgive. This is beautiful: God’s joy is forgiving, God’s being is mercy. This is why we must open our hearts this year so that this love, this joy of God may fill us all with this mercy. The Jubilee will be a “favourable time” for the Church if we learn to choose “*what pleases God most*”, without giving in to the temptation of thinking that something else is more important or primary. Nothing is more important than choosing “*what pleases God most*”, in other words, his mercy, his love, his tenderness, his embrace and his caresses!

The necessary work of renewing the institutions and structures of the Church is also a way that should lead us to make a living and vivifying experience of God’s mercy, which alone can guarantee that the Church is that city set on a hill that cannot be hid (cf. Mt 5:14). Only a merciful Church shines! Should we forget, for even just a moment, that mercy is “*what pleases God most*”, our every effort would be in vain, for we would become slaves to our institutions and our structures, inasmuch as they may be renewed. But we would always be slaves.

“To experience strongly within ourselves the joy of having been found by Jesus, the Good Shepherd who has come in search of us because we were lost” (*Homily of First Vespers of Divine Mercy Sunday, 11 April 2015*): this is the objective that the Church establishes for herself in this Holy Year. In this way we will strengthen in ourselves the certainty that mercy can truly help in the edification of a more human world. Especially in our time, in which forgiveness is a rare guest in the spheres of human life, the call to mercy is made more urgent, and this is so in every place: in society, in institutions, at work and even in the family.

Of course, someone could object: “Father, shouldn’t the Church do something more this Year? It is right to contemplate the mercy of God, but there are so many urgent needs!”. It is true, there is much to do, and I for one never tire of remembering this. However, we must bear in mind that whenever mercy is obliterated *self-love* is at the root. In the world, this takes the form of exclusively seeking one’s own interests, pleasures and honours joined with the desire to accumulate wealth, whereas in the life of a Christian it is often disguised in hypocrisy and worldliness. All of these things are contrary to mercy. Surges of self-love, which make mercy a stranger in the world, are so abundant and numerous that we are often unable to recognize them as limitations and as sin. This is why it is necessary to recognize ourselves as sinners, so as to strengthen within us the certainty of divine mercy. “Lord, I am a sinful man; Lord, I am a sinful woman: come with your mercy”. This is a beautiful prayer. It is an easy prayer to say every day: “Lord, I am a sinner: come with your mercy”.

Dear brothers and sisters, I hope that, in this Holy Year, each one of us may experience God’s

mercy, in order to be witnesses to “*what pleases God most*”. Is it naïve to believe that this can change the world? Yes, humanly speaking, it is foolish, but “the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor 1:25).

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors taking part in today’s Audience, including those from Scotland, Denmark, Indonesia, Japan, Canada and the United States of America. My special greeting goes to the international team of the Galileo space programme. Upon you and your families I invoke the Lord’s blessings of joy and peace. God bless you all!
