



'MERCY HAS A FACE' IS THE OFFICIAL CAPTION OF THE DIOCESE OF PARRAMATTA'S RESPONSE TO THE JUBILEE YEAR OF MERCY.

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The hidden door at St Peter's Rome! And the boat in St. Patrick's Parramatta!

On 8th December the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica in Rome will be opened for the first time in fifteen years. Sealed from the inside and only opened in a time of jubilee, it represents an extraordinary/additional means, given to the faithful on the journey of salvation. The recent removal of a cover of bricks at St Peter's has once again revealed the special door in readiness. And similar doors will be opened between now and the end of January at Rome's three other major basilicas.

As well, holy doors are designated in dioceses, our main door being at St Patrick's Cathedral where it will be opened ritually at the 11am Mass on Sunday 13th December. Pilgrims are welcome to the Cathedral throughout the Jubilee Year. Once through the Door of Mercy, you will find a large symbol of a boat inside the Cathedral chapel! The scripture at the boat recalls the frightened disciples in the storm on the Sea of Galilee and links to the stormy seas of life for us today and for all of creation. The jubilee announces anew God's mercy with us and for us. Mercy is God's sea of love. It is the shape of God's unconditional love, reaching out to embrace every experience of suffering, shame, impoverishment and marginalisation.

When visiting the Cathedral it will be possible to take time to enter into a sequence of prayer and reflection, assisted by the texts and prompts placed around the chapel.

As Pope Francis said in his message ahead of Krakow WYD2016: *Jesus Christ came to proclaim and bring about the Lord's everlasting time of grace. He brought good news to the poor, freedom to prisoners, sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed (Lk 4:18-19).* The prayer suggestions for pilgrims around our Cathedral chapel join us to contemporary expressions of the scripture themes of mercy, happening and being yearned for, in our diocese and beyond.

Continuing from the message of Pope Francis: *When the Church proclaims a jubilee in the name of Christ, we are all invited to experience a wonderful time of grace. The Church must offer abundant signs of God's presence and closeness, and reawaken in people's hearts the ability to look to the essentials. In particular, this Holy Year of Mercy is a time for the Church to*



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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.

And so, this is to be a time for us all to receive God's merciful love anew. And blessed with such abundance, we are called as the Church to make mercy known; the mercy that is God's desire for the world and all creation to receive. Much more reflection and information about the Year of Mercy will be shared bit by bit in the time ahead, including the special focus activities available in our diocese. Once our Parramatta Door of Mercy is opened, an easy to use diocesan mercy website will launch, social media means will be made available and on-going access to relevant resources will commence.

With friendship in God's Mercy,

Fr Paul Roberts and team – Institute for Mission