

“Doors of Mercy” in Alexandria-Cornwall

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

“Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s Mercy”. With these words Pope Francis invited everyone to take part in a special Jubilee Year of Mercy. It began last December 8, the Solemnity of Mary’s Immaculate Conception and will end on November 20 this year, the Solemnity of Christ the King.

Mercy is “the bridge that connects God and humanity, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness,” the Holy Father wrote in *Misericordiae Vultus* (The Face of Mercy) instituting the Year of Mercy.

I invite each Catholic to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation—to go to Confession—at least once during the Year of Mercy. Pope Francis continually reminds us that we may tire of asking God for pardon and mercy, but he never tires of showing us mercy.

Then, in gratitude for God’s forgiveness let us show mercy to those in need. I am inviting each Catholic of our Diocese of Alexandria-Cornwall who is able to do so to perform sometime during this special year one corporal work of mercy and one spiritual work of mercy.

Pope Francis has given each diocese the privilege of designating “Doors of Mercy” in the cathedral or other church. Traditionally such a sacred door represents the passage to salvation as well as the entryway to God’s mercy. There are seven permanent Holy Doors in the world, including the one at Notre Dame Basilica in Quebec City. These doors are normally sealed from the inside and are opened during jubilee years when those who travel to the Holy Door or Door of Mercy on a spiritual journey—known as “pilgrims”—can enter through them to gain a plenary indulgence connected with the jubilee.

After discussion with the priests who make up the College of Consultors, I have designated in the Alexandria-Cornwall Diocese two doors of Mercy in St. Finnan’s Cathedral, Alexandria and in Sainte-Croix Church in Cornwall.

Pilgrims are encouraged to pass through this special door during the Year of Mercy, thinking not only of God’s mercy for each of us but also of ways they can be charitable to those around them.

After passing through the designated door, pilgrims are called to complete their pilgrimage by receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Holy Communion, professing the faith by reciting the Creed and praying for the Holy Father’s intentions. They can do this to obtain a personal indulgence or in the name of one of the deceased. Shortly, information about indulgences and

how to share in these spiritual riches will be made available in each parish and details will be posted on the archdiocesan website (alexandria-cornwall.ca).

I hope that many Catholics, including those who have become distant from the church, will make a pilgrimage to pass through one of our Doors of Mercy. You are invited to do this individually or with fellow parishioners, members of a parish or Catholic association (prayer groups, Cursillo-Challenge, Knights of Columbus, Catholic Women's League, etc.)

Let us invoke Mary's intercession that many may come to know more deeply the joy of God's compassion and loving forgiveness and be able to pass it on to others in good works during this Year of Mercy.

✠ Terrence Prendergast, S.J.
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