



Opening of the Holy Door in Bangui

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Today in the Central African Republic, the third and last stop of his trip to Africa, Pope Francis anticipated the beginning of the Holy Year of Mercy: for the first time in the history of the Church, the Pontiff opened the first Holy Door of a Jubilee Year outside of Rome, not in Saint Peter's Basilica, but in Bangui, one of the peripheries of the world.

The archbishop of Bangui, His Excellency Dieudonné Nzapalainga, in an interview with TV2000, said that the opening of the Holy Door "is a new beginning for the Central African Republic. We have suffered much from tribulations, uncertainties, massacres, and all that has divided us. Pope Francis has come to open our hearts to tenderness, mercy and reconciliation. It is a way of telling us: it is time to forgive; it is time to rebuild our country".

The Pope opened the Holy Door in the Cathedral of Bangui at 17:15, proclaiming the city the "spiritual capital of the world". Before entering the Cathedral, Pope Francis paused in front of the closed door, and then, addressing the People of God, said in Italian: "Today Bangui has become the spiritual capital of the world. The Holy Year of Mercy has come in advance to this land. It is a land"—he added—"that has been suffering for a number of years because of hate, misunderstandings, and lack of peace".

Bangui, repeated the Pope, has become the spiritual capital of prayer for the mercy of the Father. All of us ask for peace, mercy, reconciliation, pardon, and love—for Bangui, for the Central African Republic, and for all countries that suffer from war, we ask for peace. "Let all of us together ask for love and peace," Pope Francis urged, and he asked the faithful to repeat these words together. "With this prayer, today, here, we begin the Holy Year in this spiritual capital of the world", he concluded, opening the door and walking toward the main altar of the Cathedral to celebrate the Mass.

