



## Press Release Regarding the Jubilee for Prisoners (6 November) and the Jubilee for Persons on the Margins of Society (13 November)

Vatican Press Office, 3 November, 2016



The *Jubilee of Mercy* is already approaching its conclusion, but some particularly important events will punctuate this last phase of its celebration. We have lived an intense Year, full of new experiences and points of great significance for the life of the Church. Anyone who frequently visits the area around Saint Peter's will certainly have noted the constant presence of pilgrims in procession towards the Holy Door. One cannot forget, moreover, the audience of 22 October, that recorded the highest number of participants in a Jubilee Audience: more than 93,000, between those on Via della Conciliazione and those in Saint Peter's Square. There will be the opportunity over the next few weeks to take some time for concluding reflections about the Jubilee: to see whether the goals and hopes for it were reached, as well as what were possible limitations that may have impeded its complete success.

For the moment, it is good to concentrate on two events coming up in the next weeks. The first is the *Jubilee for Prisoners*, to be celebrated on Saturday the 5th and Sunday the 6th of November.

As is already known, this will be the first time that a large number of detainees from various parts of Italy and from other countries will be able to be present in Saint Peter's Basilica for a Jubilee with Pope Francis especially for them. We know that the Holy Father is very concerned about prisoners; during his apostolic visits, he has repeatedly desired to visit prisons and to leave a message of closeness and hope with the prisoners. It would also suffice to recall his first celebration of the *Mass of the Lord's Supper* in the juvenile detention center of Casal del Marmo, and then to call to mind his numerous visits to prisons in many countries: at Poggioreale (Naples) in March of 2015, where he shared the midday meal with the prisoners; at Philadelphia in September of 2015; at Palmasole (Bolivia) in July of 2015 and at Ciudad Juarez (Mexico) in February of 2016. After the promulgation of the Bull of Indiction for the beginning of the Jubilee, *Misericordiae vultus*, Pope Francis wrote in his next Letter regarding the implementation of the plan for the Jubilee: "My thoughts also turn to those incarcerated, whose freedom is limited. The Jubilee Year has always constituted an opportunity for great amnesty, which is intended to include the many people who, despite deserving punishment,

have become conscious of the injustice they worked and sincerely wish to re-enter society and make their honest contribution to it. May they all be touched in a tangible way by the mercy of the Father who wants to be close to those who have the greatest need of his forgiveness. They may obtain the Indulgence in the chapels of the prisons. May the gesture of directing their thought and prayer to the Father each time they cross the threshold of their cell signify for them their passage through the Holy Door, because the mercy of God is able to transform hearts, and is also able to transform bars into an experience of freedom”.

As a result, the schedule for the Jubilee would not have been complete without an event reserved for those incarcerated. It is good mention right away that what will be experienced next Sunday in Saint Peter’s Basilica will be echoed in many dioceses of the world who will unite with the Holy Father for a solemn celebration of this day with the imprisoned. During the past months, we have written to all the Episcopal Conferences in the world, inviting the Bishops to take part in this Sunday by visiting prisons and celebrating the Jubilee with the prisoners. We received many positive responses, and we can truly anticipate that the impact of this celebration will be felt throughout the world.

Those invited to participate in the Jubilee in Rome are prisoners with their families, officers of the Penitentiary Police and other prison employees, prison chaplains and associations that offer assistance either within or outside of prisons. At the moment there are 4,000 registrants, of which more than a thousand are prisoners, coming from 12 countries in the world: England, Italy, Latvia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Holland, Spain, USA, South Africa, Sweden and Portugal. An additional highlight is the presence of a Lutheran delegation coming from Sweden.

The most numerous group is from Italy where, since the first months of the Jubilee, there has been an active collaboration with the Department for Penitentiary Administration of the Ministry of Pardon and Justice, working closely with the Inspectorate General of Chaplains. This effective cooperation has permitted prisoners from all categories to be represented in Saint Peter’s. There will therefore be minors, persons in alternative types of imprisonment, persons in domicile detention, and permanent prisoners with various sentences...in sum, a true presence that indicates a real effort to offer a future and a hope that go beyond their conviction and the length of their punishment. It is also worth noting that in these months the collaboration with the Ministry for Justice has allowed six prisoners to serve their court sentence as volunteers for the Jubilee. It has been an intense experience lived by all with a genuine spirit of diligence and responsibility.

The schedule for these two days is very simple, and does not stray from the spirit with which we have wanted to live the Jubilee. On Saturday, therefore, participants will have the option of going to confession in the Jubilee Churches and making the Jubilee Pilgrimage along Via della Conciliazione to the Holy Door of Saint Peter’s, in preparation for the Liturgical Celebration on the following day.

Admission to the Basilica will begin at 7:30 on Sunday, with the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by the Holy Father beginning at 10:00. There will be an intense period of testimonies beginning at 9:00.

As a preparation for the celebration of the Eucharist, there will be 4 people giving their testimonies, who come from across the spectrum of the prison world. One, a *prisoner* who experienced a conversion in jail, and who will talk together with his *victim* with whom he has been reconciled.

Another, the *brother of a person who was killed*, who has become an instrument of mercy. Third, a *juvenile* who is serving his sentence; and finally, an *officer* of the Penitentiary Police who has daily contact with prisoners. We will hear their experiences, and we will understand how much the ‘mercy’ is not just a theoretical word, but a genuine daily action that frequently represents a true existential challenge. Interspersed among the testimonies will be music and songs performed by the choir *Papageno*, composed of volunteers and prisoners from the district prison “Dozza” in Bologna.

A few special details will also add to the meaningfulness of these days. Above all, the serving at the liturgy will be done by prisoners. The hosts that will be used for the Mass were produced by some of the prisoners in the Opera di Milano prison, as part of the “Meaning of Bread” project, conceived

of and organized for the Jubilee, and developed in collaboration with the “House of the Spirit and of the Arts Onlus Foundation”. For the celebration, the Crucifix recently restored by the Chapter of the Basilica will be displayed. It is a wooden Crucifix from the 14th century that, with the exception of the first Jubilee of Pope Boniface VIII in 1300, has been part of every Jubilee in the Church. In the past few days, Cardinal Comastri explained the artistic value of the Crucifix and the restoration work that has been done to it in recent months. Beside the cross, the Statue of Our Lady of Mercy, the protectress of prisoners, will be displayed; in it the Baby Jesus holds open shackles in his hands as a sign of liberation and trust. Before the Mass, the Pope will greet a few of the prisoners and other notable persons present. The Sunday *Angelus* will be recited as usual from the Apostolic Palace, and the prisoners will participate from a designated section of the Square.

The following weekend will already welcome another Jubilee event: the *Jubilee for Socially Excluded Persons* on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (November 11-13). These are persons who, for different reasons ranging from precarious economic situations to various pathologies, from aloneness to the lack of family connections, have difficulties inserting themselves into the fabric of society, and often end up remaining on the margins of society, without a house or a place to live. These are people whom we encounter every day, and whom our eyes often do not want to see, from whom we try to look away. The estimated six thousand participants are coming from multiple countries: France, Germany, Portugal, England, Spain, Poland, Holland, Italy, Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, and Switzerland. The organization of this weekend has been under the direction of the French association *Lazare*, founded by Étienne Villemain, which took on the responsibility for the Jubilee with an initiative called *Brother (Fratello)*. The participants will have a full Jubilee schedule: at 11:30 on Friday, November 11 they will meet Pope Francis in the Paul VI Hall, who will hear some of their testimonies and then speak with them. In some of the churches in Rome, in addition, there will be the opportunity to listen to testimonies on Saturday, November 12 at 10:00. The churches are the following: San Salvatore in Lauro for English speakers; Santa Monica for the Dutch, San Luigi dei Francesi for the Portuguese; Santi XII Apostoli for the French; San Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini for the Polish; Santa Maria in Vallicella (Chiesa Nuova) for the German speakers; Santa Maria sopra Minerva for the Italian; Sant’Andrea della Valle for the Spanish and Santa Maria Maddalena in Campo Marzio for those who speak Slovak. On Saturday afternoon at 17:00 there will be a Vigil of Mercy in the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. It will be preceded by a short pilgrimage through the Holy Door of Saint Paul’s, which will begin in the nearby park area. Finally, on Sunday, the Holy Father will celebrate the Eucharist in Saint Peter’s Basilica at 10:00. Following the Mass, *Angelus* will be prayed as usual from the Apostolic Palace at noon.

On Sunday, 13 November, as is well known, the Doors of Mercy in all the Churches and Shrines of the world will be closed. The Jubilee celebration in Saint Peter’s Basilica that day is meant to remind the Church of the words of Jesus: “The poor you will always have with you” (Mk 14:7). The closing of the Doors of Mercy, therefore, do not end the Church’s task, but reinforce it in the light of the Jubilee just lived.

On the same day, the Holy Doors in the three Papal Basilicas will be closed: at 17:30 in Saint John Lateran; at 17:00 in Saint Paul Outside the Walls; and at 18:00 in Saint Mary Major.

We are certain that these two Jubilee Events will be lived with the same intensity and prayerfulness with which we have seen the entire Jubilee celebrated. They provide a meaningful backdrop to the end of the Jubilee Year, as our focus turns toward November 20th with serenity and confidence.