

## WHAT IS A PILGRIMAGE?

In some ways, it is easier to define a pilgrimage by what it is not. A pilgrimage is not a holiday or simply a tour of a religious site. Rather a pilgrimage is an intentional sacred journey to a holy site; therefore, for a journey to be defined as a pilgrimage, it will have both an inward and outward aspect.

The outward aspect of a pilgrimage is easy to define. Pilgrimages are made to holy sites that have religious significance for the pilgrim. Today, there are many pilgrimage sites around the world visited by thousands of people annually. Jerusalem is a significant site for many; while, others make journeys to Rome, the tombs of Saints, Cathedrals and the many Marian sites around the world. To know if you are on a pilgrimage or a tour, the question to ask yourself is “Why am I going?”

The inward aspect is the key difference between the visit to the holy site being a holiday or a pilgrimage. There are as many intentions behind the making of a pilgrimage as there are pilgrims. However, the reasons for a pilgrimage can be divided into three general categories: seeking healing or forgiveness, seeking an answer to a particular prayer, and seeking a deeper relationship with God. What ever the reason a pilgrimage occurs, when the one making the journey is open to conversion, open to an interaction with God, which will change them and bring them closer to being more fully who they are in Christ.



## WHY THE EMPHASIS ON PILGRIMAGES DURING THIS JUBILEE OF MERCY?



In *Misericordiae Vultus The Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy*, Pope Francis made a special plea to each of us to consider making a pilgrimage as a sign of our openness to conversion, our openness to receive the Father's mercy and to becoming ambassadors of the Father's mercy to others.

From section 14 of *Misericordiae Vultus*, we read:

The practice of *pilgrimage* has a special place in the Holy Year, because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life. Life itself is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a *viator*, a pilgrim travelling along the road, making his way to the desired destination. ... May pilgrimage be an impetus to conversion: by crossing the threshold of the Holy Door, we will find the strength to embrace God's mercy and dedicate ourselves to being merciful with others as the Father has been with us.

In a Jubilee Year, there are seven particular Holy Doors opened as pilgrimage sites: four in Rome, one in France, one in Spain and one in Canada at the Basilica-Cathedral Notre-Dame de Québec. Pope Francis has authorized that Holy Doors of Mercy be dedicated and opened in dioceses through out the world. He desires that all have access to enter through the Holy Doors as a sign of their openness to receive “the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope” (3).

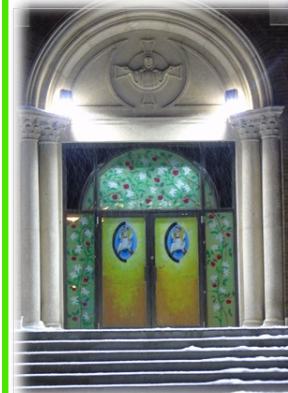
## THE INTENTION OF THE PILGRIM WHO JOURNEYS THROUGH THE HOLY DOOR OF MERCY

Entering through the Holy Doors during this Jubilee Year in a certain way is a simple act. It is also however an acknowledgement of one's need for conversion and an opening of oneself to the Father's mercy. It is also an acceptance of one's mission to share the Father's mercy that one receives with others.

As Pope Francis said in the *Misericordia Vultus*, “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church's life.” and “The Church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love” (10). We, the faithful, are the Church; our mission is to be witnesses of God's mercy to the world.

As a sign of our openness to conversion before or after going through the Holy Doors of Mercy, the pilgrim is to attend Eucharist, receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation and pray for the Pope's intention that everyone be open to receiving the Father's mercy.

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in



Holy Doors of Mercy  
Sacred Heart Cathedral  
Prince Albert, SK

offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: “Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old (*Ps 25:6*)” (25).

## THREE OTHER HOLY DOORS OF MERCY TO BE BLESSED AND DEDICATED IN THE DIOCESE

In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis encouraged the bishops of the world to bless and dedicate Holy Doors of Mercy at the cathedral, which “will be opened for the duration of the Holy Year. At the discretion of the local ordinary, a similar door may be opened at any shrine frequented by large groups of pilgrims, since visits to these holy sites are so often grace-filled moments, as people discover a path to conversion. Every Particular Church, therefore, will be directly involved in living out this Holy Year as an extraordinary moment of grace and spiritual renewal. Thus the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and in the Particular Churches as a visible sign of the Church's universal communion” (3).

In addition to the Holy Door of Mercy at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Prince Albert, Bishop Thévenot will be dedicating three additional Holy Doors of Mercy in the Diocese.



BLESSING OF THE  
HOLY DOOR OF MERCY  
NOTRE DAME PARISH,  
NORTH BATTLEFORD

SUNDAY, MAY 15 AT 5:00 P.M.



BLESSING OF THE  
HOLY DOOR OF MERCY  
AT THE SHRINE OF  
ST. THERESE, WAKAW

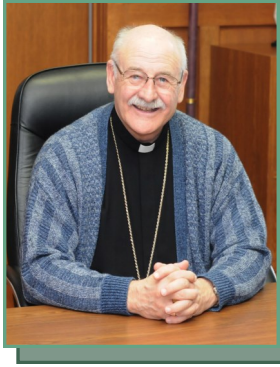
SUNDAY, JUNE 12 AT 3:00 P.M.

BLESSING OF THE  
HOLY DOOR OF MERCY  
AT THE SHRINE AT  
ST. LAURENT



FRIDAY, JULY 15 AT 6:00 P.M.

For more information about these events please go to  
<http://www.padiocese.ca/>



We have often compared the departure of the people of God from Egypt as a pilgrimage to the Promised Land. The bible tells us that this journey took forty years. Many of us have seen this portrayed in the movie *The Ten Commandments* starring Charlton Heston. Walking through the desert was a challenge for the people and many times they strayed from their faith in God.

Jesus during his lifetime did numerous pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the Holy City. We all remember the story of Mary and Joseph, while on a pilgrimage, finding Jesus in the temple when he was twelve years old. At that time, the Jewish people were invited to participate in the Passover in Jerusalem, the feast of the Pentecost, and in many others celebrations. The people would travel to Jerusalem praying the Psalms as they approached the Holy City. Jesus too was a pilgrim during his time on earth.

Looking back on our lives, we can say that we came into the world as a member of a family. Our parents, siblings, and grandparents helped us as we learned to talk, to walk, and to eat the right things. They introduced us to the faith community and together we journeyed through the different stages of our lives. It was as if we are on a continuous pilgrimage, walking toward the Promised Land of ours. At times, the journey seems good, peaceful, but at other times, the journey seems challenging, and decisions made are not always the best. We continue to do many activities together, taking care of one another as brothers and sisters along the way, in good times and in bad. Family is there to offer each other the support that is needed for the journey. We are all pilgrims on the Way.

Throughout the history of the Church, pilgrimages were organized and encouraged to remind us that life is a journey. Our Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, St. Anne, and many other saints had holy places dedicated to them enabling people to make pilgrimages to these holy places. We are attracted to the shrines for many reasons. Maybe, we search for a cure from an illness, for ourselves or for someone else. Perhaps, we want to experience a change of heart or a deepening of our faith. Consequently, we burn candles, do penance, or walk a distance towards the shrine; we have processions, anointing of the sick or wash in holy water. We do these things seeking the attention and the support of the patron of the shrine, which is very often Mary.

In our diocese, we have been blessed to have shrines that are available to us. One is Our Lady of Lourdes, the St. Laurent Shrine and another is the National Shrine of the Little Flower which is dedicated to St. Thérèse of Lisieux and is situated in Wakaw. This summer, we will be opening Holy Doors at both the St. Laurent and Wakaw Shrines. Come and join us for the celebrations. Details are included in this pamphlet.

Mary, the Mother of Mercy, and St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus lived with mercy in their hearts, in their lives, and in all their actions. In this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, let us look at their example to see how we can bring the Mercy of Christ to the world, especially to those around us. Since our journey of faith can be compared to a pilgrimage, let us join with others at these shrines, this year, and every year, gathering together with our brothers and sisters in Christ on our way home to the Father.

*Most Rev. Albert Thévenot M. Afr.  
Bishop of Prince Albert*

# PILGRIMAGES



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