

Catholic Mission/Identity

2025 marks a special year in the life of the Catholic Church worldwide. Pope Francis declared a Year of Jubilee beginning at Christmas of 2024. This was symbolized by a special set of doors into St. Peter's Basilica in Rome – usually closed – being opened.

Jubilee is an ancient practice from the Hebrew people, long before the Christian era. Depending on the reading of the calendar, a Jubilee year was proclaimed every 7 years. Or sometimes it was every 50 years. The last Jubilee Year declared by the Church was in 2015, and before that, in 2000. It is meant as a time not to do business as usual and to re-evaluate relationships, especially with regard to the poor. A Jubilee Year was intended as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. It involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields. Everyone gets a break from the usual toil, even the fields.

Somewhere I read of an archeological dig that was believed to show proof of this concept. As archeologists dug down through the layers of sediment in a Middle Eastern site, they mapped out the sizes of the homes they uncovered. In most of the layers, the footprints of homes were of very different sizes. It was clear that some were much larger than others, indicating greater wealth. But then, every so often in the layers, they would come across a point in historic time when the homes were all of more equal size. The idea was that the poor were lifted up and divisions in society were not so great, at least for a time.

In the same way that the seasons of Christmas and Easter are set aside from the rest of the year to help us focus on our relationship to God in a different way, a Jubilee Year carves out the entire year, asking us to think about all of our relationships in a different way. Not business as usual. The curious can learn more here: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025/segni-del-giubileo.html>.

Happy Jubilee Year 2025!

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