



What Makes Us Catholic?

The Holy Door

When is a Door Not Just a Door? When It's a "Holy Door"

A Porta Sancta (Holy Door) is a special door in a cathedral or basilica that is only opened during Jubilee Years. It's a specially designated entrance that has spiritual and symbolic meaning. The tradition of opening a Holy Door during a jubilee symbolizes bringing the world into the realm of mercy and salvation, just as Jesus opened the gates to Paradise for us by virtue of his life, death and resurrection. Anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope. Customarily, the Holy Door is the one at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

When is a Holy Door opened?

The Holy Door is typically opened every 25 years, during a Jubilee Year, in order to allow each generation to experience at least one during their lifetime. It's then sealed with brick and mortar and not opened until the next Jubilee Year. It may also be opened during "extraordinary" years. Pope Francis declared 2016 an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy and opened the Holy Door in St. Peter's on December 8th, 2015 -- the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, and 50 year anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. In following weeks, the Holy Doors of the three other Papal Basilicas in Rome were opened. In addition, for this Jubilee, other holy doors around the world were opened for the first time as a visible sign of the Church's universal communion.

Dioceses have declared a main cathedral or historical churches with a designated Holy Door. The Holy Doors will remain open for the duration of the Holy Year, closing on November 20, 2016. See <http://www.dmdiocese.org/pilgrimages.cfm> for more information on the Holy Doors in the Des Moines Diocese.

Want to read more about this topic?

Sources:

- The Face of Mercy, Papal Letter Introducing the Jubilee of Mercy
- <http://www.dmdiocese.org/jubilee.cfm>
- <http://aleteia.org/2015/11/30/when-is-a-door-not-a-door-when-its-a-holy-door/#sthash.NvgFYHmD.dpuf>
- <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/indulgc.php>

Do you have questions on this topic, or other topics you would like to learn more about?
Please complete the back side of this sheet and leave it in the box on the "What Makes Us Catholic?" stand.

Please note your question on this topic, or other topics you would like to learn more about below and leave it in the box on the "What Makes Us Catholic?" stand.

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