

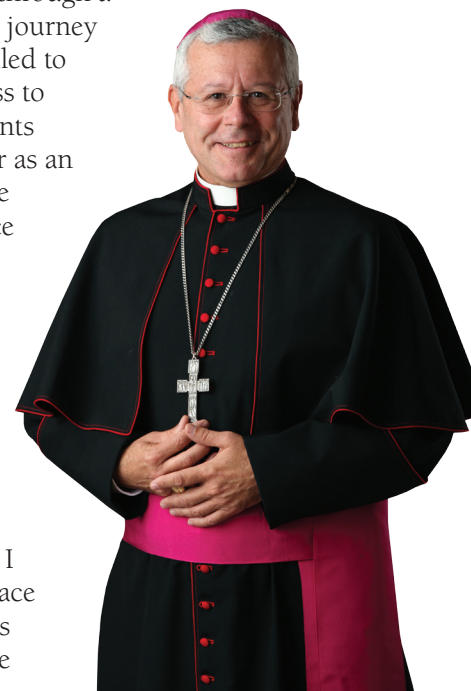
On Dec. 8, this Holy Door at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome was opened for pilgrims to walk through.

(churches of special significance) and each has its own Holy Door. These doors are normally walled up from the inside and could not be opened every day. During jubilee years, the walls are broken down and the doors are opened so pilgrims can walk through and gain the plenary indulgence connected with the jubilee year.

The symbolism of the Holy Door becomes apparent when one considers what happens at the door of a church: it is where we pass from this world into the holy presence of God. Here, the priest or deacon welcomes the parents of the baby brought to be baptized into the Church; here, too, he greets the bride and groom at the beginning of their wedding liturgy; and finally, the church door is where the priest meets the casket of the deceased at the beginning of his or her funeral. In the words of our Holy Father Francis, "There is only one way that opens wide the entrance into the life of communion with God: this is Jesus, the one and absolute way to salvation. To Him alone can the words of the Psalmist be applied in full truth: 'This is the door of the Lord where the just may enter.'" (Psalm 118:20) The church door is, literally and figuratively, the way to Christ.

The Holy Door takes this symbolism one step further. To pass through a Holy Door is to make the journey that every Christian is called to make, to go from darkness to light. Pilgrims and penitents pass through a Holy Door as an indication that they desire to begin again to renounce sin and come to grace; they have left behind the regrets of the past and crossed the threshold of hope for life in the Kingdom of God. It makes me think of the words of the old hymn: "Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home."

Since the year 1300, when Pope Boniface VIII declared the first



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HOLY DOORS

In my last *Bishop's Message*, we talked about our preparations for the Jubilee Year of Mercy that began on Dec. 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. Among other activities, I've asked each of the nine deaneries throughout our state to designate one church to house a Holy Door, which pilgrims may pass through this Jubilee Year. This month I'd like to talk a bit more about those Holy Doors, both their symbolism and the spiritual graces that come from passing through them.

First, a bit of background: Holy Doors are mentioned in accounts of jubilee years going back at least as far as the 15th century. In Rome, there are five major basilicas

HOLY DOORS IN THE DIOCESE OF MANCHESTER

For more information on these churches and their locations, visit catholicnh.org.

Amoskeag Deanery:

Saint Joseph Cathedral, Manchester

Capital Deanery:

Carmelite Monastery, Concord

Lakes Region Deanery:

Sacred Heart Church, Laconia

Monadnock Deanery:

Divine Mercy Parish, Peterborough

Rockingham Deanery:

Saint Matthew Church, Windham

Seacoast Deanery:

Immaculate Conception Church, Portsmouth

Souhegan Deanery:

Saint Patrick Church, Nashua

Upper Valley Deanery:

Saint Mary Church, Claremont

White Mountain Deanery:

All Saints Church, Lancaster

Holy Year, pilgrimages to Rome have had a powerful effect. As a part of the diocesan celebration of the Year of Mercy, I will lead a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi (you can find details at catholicnh.org/Italy), but of course not everyone has the time or resources to go on such a journey. It is for that reason Pope Francis has asked every diocese to open a Holy Door at its cathedral or at another church of special significance, so that throughout the world the Jubilee will be celebrated both in Rome and locally, as a sign of the Church's universal communion.

In accordance with Pope Francis' wishes, here in the Diocese of Manchester we will have nine Holy Doors throughout the state (see sidebar). I invite you to make a pilgrimage to one or more of these churches, to confess with firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Lord and our Savior who suffered, died, and rose again for our salvation. During this Year of Mercy, Christ our Lord is knocking at the door of our hearts. Let us open our hearts to Him and together cross the threshold of hope. ■

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