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# SAGI: THE GREATEST *Experiment*

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Thematic Issue (Inspiring Faith)

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## The Jubilee Year of 2025: “Pilgrims of Hope”

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**Words of Wisdom:** On Christmas Eve 2024, following Vespers of the Lord's Nativity, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door (*Porta Sancta*), thereby officially inaugurating the Ordinary Holy Year or Jubilee of 2025. This Holy Year will extend until Epiphany 2026.

### A Jubilee Year

The idea of a Jubilee Year is found in the pages of the Old Testament, in the Book of Leviticus 25:8-55. At the very beginning of this chapter (25:1-7), God directs Moses to decree a “sabbatical year” or a “sabbath to the Lord.” According to this arrangement, every seventh year the land must be allowed to rest. This rest imitates the rest that the Lord God took upon completing the work of creation after six days.

The number seven signifies completion in Hebrew religion and culture. God further directs Moses (25:8-55) to mark the end of every seventh sabbatical year, that is, after 49 years, by a Jubilee Year.

On the Day of Atonement, close to the end of the 49<sup>th</sup> year, a trumpet is sounded, proclaiming the inauguration of the Jubilee. The whole people of Israel then enter the Jubilee of rest. Not only does the land rest, but debts are forgiven and Hebrew slaves are set free. Peace and reconciliation are to be established or restored where these have failed or diminished. Such a Jubilee Year is to be marked by the joy of fraternal love, forgiveness, and thanksgiving to God for favours received. The whole community is to share and rejoice in the blessings of the Jubilee Year.

The concept of the Jubilee Year and the expectation of its attendant benefits find full expression here and deserve a close reading. A condensed form of this arrangement of the seven sabbath years (49) followed by a

Jubilee is found in the Church's liturgical calendar where, each year, seven weeks of the Easter season (7x7=49) culminate on the fiftieth day in Pentecost, which marks the descent of the Holy Spirit.

## **The Church's First Holy Year**

The Church inaugurated the first Holy Year in 1300. At that time, Pope Boniface VIII considered that the Church would benefit from the observance of a Holy Year, based on the biblical Jubilee Year described in Leviticus 25, every century. Subsequent popes decided that one hundred years involved too long a wait. A policy therefore was adopted whereby a Jubilee would be observed, as in Leviticus, every mid-century. Eventually, by the fifteenth century, the policy was further modified so that a Holy Year would be celebrated ordinarily every quarter century. In this way, each generation (about twenty years in length) might aspire to observe such a momentous and joyous celebration.

## **The Holy Year Indulgence**

The four major basilicas of Rome play a significant role in a Jubilee or Holy Year. At first it was only the Basilicas of St Peter-in-the Vatican and St Paul's-outside-the-walls on the Ostian Way that counted, but later both St John Lateran (the pope's cathedral) and St Mary Major, Rome's premiere Marian basilica, were designated as churches to be visited by pilgrims in order to obtain indulgences by passing through the Holy Doors opened in each basilica. Having entered the basilica through the *porta sancta*, pilgrims pray the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, offering these prayers for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff.

The Ordinary or highest-ranking ecclesiastical authority of a local church (diocese) may announce specific churches within his jurisdiction which will serve as pilgrimage shrines, in imitation of the papal basilicas of Rome, where pilgrims unable to visit Rome physically may visit and gain the indulgences applicable for the Holy Year.

## **Indulgences**

An indulgence is the remission, in whole or in part, of the temporal punishment due to sin. A full remission is called a *plenary* indulgence. A partial remission is called a *partial* indulgence. It is required that the pilgrim seeking the indulgence go to confession and to Holy Communion either two

weeks *before* or *two weeks after* the visit to the designated church. One of the most daunting or exacting requirements for the obtaining of an indulgence remains that the pilgrim be free of all attachment to sin, even venial sin.

Some indulgences are applicable only to the souls of the faithful departed. Others are obtainable by the living. The Church publishes *The Handbook of Indulgences* [*Enchiridion indulgentiarum*], which was revised most recently in the pontificate of Pope Paul VI (1963-1978).

## **Extraordinary Holy Years**

In some eras, political or social turmoil prevented the Ordinary Holy Year from being declared and observed. Some Pontiffs, therefore, instituted an Extraordinary Holy Year to mark a particular occasion. In 1933, for instance, Pope Pius XI inaugurated an extraordinary Holy Year of Redemption to mark the 1900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Our Saviour's Paschal Mystery. Pope John Paul II echoed his predecessor by decreeing 1983 as an Extraordinary Year of Redemption.

## **The Ordinary Holy Year 2025**

The year 2025 is an Ordinary Holy Year or Jubilee. Catholics are encouraged to resolve in the freshness of this new year to take advantage of this remarkable occasion to obtain as many indulgences as we can. Moreover, we ought to treat the Jubilee Year as it fully deserves: to re-establish peace with God and with our neighbour, and to be willing to express our sincere gratitude to God by becoming an instrument of His peace in the world.

## **“Pilgrims of Hope”**

The theme chosen for the Jubilee Year 2025 is “Pilgrims of Hope.” Christians, called by baptism to eternal life with God, regard earthly life as a journey to the New and Eternal Jerusalem, which is the Kingdom of Heaven. Just as the Holy City of Jerusalem, whose name means “vision of peace” was the destination of much pilgrimage in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, so heaven, as Christ's Kingdom where eternal peace is the truest reality, remains the ultimate goal and destination of saints-in-the-making.

The *Lives* or biographies of the saints afford us abundant examples of heroic men and women who, down the ages and in multifarious places and

conditions, responded effectively to the vocation to holiness. The Blessed Virgin Mary, who is invoked in the Litany of Loreto as “Mirror of Justice,” remains the brightest star in the heavenly firmament whose guidance always leads to Christ.

The gift of holy hope, which, like faith and charity, has the Triune God as its source and its final end, is the *anchor of the soul*. (Heb 6:19) Such a divine help sustains lifelong pilgrims making their way through this “valley of tears.” May hope steady us on our course to our true homeland, where angels and saints now enjoy the ultimate Jubilee of rest and joy and peace in the Kingdom that has no end.

### **Prayer for Obtaining Indulgences** **(to be added to one's Morning Offering)**

*My Lord and my God, I humbly beseech Thee, that in consideration of the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thou wilt grant unto me all the indulgences attached to my prayers and works this day. I desire to enter into the dispositions necessary to gain these indulgences, that I may satisfy divine justice and assist the souls in Purgatory.*