



Invest time each week to expand your vocabulary and deepen your faith.

29 December 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Jubilee Year *\ˈjü-bə-ˈlē ˈyir*

Derived from the Hebrew for a year of freedom from enslavement, since 1300, the term for a Holy Year to grant spiritual benefits to pilgrims to Rome and other faithful participants around the world. In recent times, **Jubilees** have been celebrated every 25 years unless circumstances warrant a special observance. **Jubilees** begin in December with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's and other major basilicas in Rome.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-jubilee-year>

CONTEXT

The build-up of personal and collective debt . . . should have sent warning signals to anyone familiar with the biblical institutions of the Sabbatical and **Jubilee** years, created specifically because of the danger of people being trapped by debt.

—*Rabbi Jonathan Sacks*

Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every **Jubilee** event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life.

—*Pope Francis*

WHY IT MATTERS

Jubilee years are opportunities for conversion to a deeper journey in faith. The six themes of **Jubilee** 2025—care for creation, food poverty, modern slavery, managing debt, forgiveness, and rest—provide critical avenues for our participation as "Pilgrims of Hope" for our world, which can use our compassionate care.

From the **Jubilee** 2025 papal bull *Spes non confundit*: "The **Jubilee** reminds us that the goods of the earth are not destined for a privileged few, but for everyone. The rich must be generous and not avert their eyes from the faces of their brothers and sisters in need."

RELATED WORDS

Holy Year | Holy Door | Basilica | Pilgrimage

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

What is a Jubilee Year and a Holy Year?

The **Jubilee** is a product of Jewish biblical law. Every 50th year, the land was to "rest," or lie unused for planting. Debts were forgiven and slaves were set free. These practices had a theological agenda: to acknowledge that land, property, and life belong ultimately to God, not to the human user. The spirit of **Jubilee** was adopted by Catholics when the first Holy Year was inaugurated in 1300. It too is a time of liberation. The pope offers spiritual indulgences for pilgrims to Rome. Other religious activities are assigned similar benefits for those unable to travel. The Holy Year begins on Christmas Eve with the opening of the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Other Roman basilicas have doors opened to encourage pilgrimage. Bishops worldwide are invited to designate similar doors through which pilgrims can walk. Religious educators may ritually open a door for their students to instruct them about the purpose of the Holy Year. All of us should eagerly seek the occasion to walk through such a door and to become ourselves pilgrims of hope.

—*Alice Camille, from Questions Catholics Ask <http://tinyurl.com/QCA-Jubilee-Year>*

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

OCTAVE DAY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD; SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD (JANUARY 1)

Ring in the news

The birth of a much-awaited child is a joyous occasion. Such was the case when the shepherds found that Mary had given birth to a baby, who was to change the world! The shepherds were the bearers of the exciting news. Meanwhile for Mary, the birth was another step in a very personal journey with God. She was the bearer of God's Word—Love—made flesh for the sake of the world.

READINGS: Numbers 6:22-27; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21 (18 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010125.cfm>). "*The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem.*"

FAITH IN ACTION

As we move into the New Year, how will we, like the shepherds and Mary, be bearers of the Good News?