



Called to the Ministry of Mercy: Prayer for the Opening of Local Doors of Mercy

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Prepared by Sheila Carney rsm (Americas) © Mercy International Association 2015

Please “decorate” the prayer with bell and banners and whatever other celebratory sounds and sights you choose. You might also decorate the door or create some other indication that this is a Holy Door.

The ceremony begins with a **welcome** which may include some remarks about the significance of the ritual of opening the Holy Door. Some points that may be included are:

- There is a holy door at each of the four major basilicas in Rome and also at Santiago de Compostella in Spain, The Cathedral of Notre Dame in Quebec and at the Sanctuary of St. John Vianney in Ars-Sur-Formans in France.
- They are opened during jubilee years which occur every fifty years or at the discretion of the Pope. The pope knocks three times on the door with a silver hammer, at which the door opens and the pope enters.
- Pilgrims enter through the doors in order to gain indulgences connected with the Jubilee.
- The earliest account of this tradition seems to be that of the Spanish pilgrim, Pero Tafur, c. 1437. He connects the Jubilee indulgence with the right of sanctuary.
- To go through the holy door is to pass from this world into the presence of God, just as in the old Temple of Jerusalem, the High Priest on the Feast of Yom Kippur passed through the veil covering the doorway of the Holy of Holies to enter into the presence of God to offer the sacrifice of atonement. A person decides to cross the threshold leaving behind the kingdom of this world so as to enter the new life of grace of the Kingdom of God.
- Moreover, when the door opens, the obstacles of passage to our Lord are removed. During the Holy Year, we hope and pray that the obstacles of personal weakness, temptation, and sin will be removed so that we will have a holy union with our Lord.

- As we consider the holy door, our Lord stands at the door of our hearts knocking. We must open our hearts to Him and cross the threshold of hope, striving for holiness.

Taken from Wikipedia and Catholic Straight Answers

Sing “What Mercy May Yet Be” Verses 1 and 2

Text and Music Cynthia Serjak rsm 2003

A Reading from Pope Francis’ *Misericordiae Vultus* – Proclaiming the Jubilee Year of Mercy

We need to constantly contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of ... brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and [humankind], opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever...

With sentiments of gratitude for everything the Church has received, and with a sense of responsibility for the task that lies ahead, we shall cross the threshold of the Holy Door fully confident that the strength of the Risen Lord, who constantly supports us on our pilgrim way, will sustain us. May the Holy Spirit, who guides the steps of believers... lead the way and support the People of God so that they may contemplate the face of mercy.

[Today this Holy Door] will become a Door of Mercy through which anyone who enters will experience the love of God who consoles, pardons, and instills hope.



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Sing "I Stand at the Door and Knock"

Someone knocks firmly on the door three times.

Leader: Invite the assembly to name persons who are in need of the mercy of God and of our Mercy by asking "Who knocks at this Door of Mercy?"

The song, the knocking and the question are repeated three times. If necessary, organise beforehand for three members of the assembly to respond to the question.

The assembly enters the space and sits.

A **Reading** from Matthew

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by the angels, then he will take his seat on the throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the King will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me."

(Matt 25: 31 - 40)

Reflection/Homily

The leader engages the participants in a question like "What door do we hope Mercy will open in the coming year? What threshold does Mercy need to cross? What door of Mercy can you open?"

In places where the group is small enough, that would give some opportunity for more personal involvement.

The video of Elizabeth Davis rsm 'Doorkeepers of Mercy' could be played here or the text read.



Intercessions:

Leader and readers

In the words of Pope Francis, "It is time for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters." Ready to respond to this call to mercy, we pray for the needs of our world.

Our response will be: May we be signs of your Mercy.

Your people hunger for food and love, for education and adequate health care, for freedom and safety. Your people thirst for justice, for clean water, and so we pray...

Your people long to be known, they long for a homeland, for right relationships, for welcome. They long to see your face. Your people suffer from ills of body, mind and spirit. Your Earth suffers from pollution and degradation and so we pray...

Your people are imprisoned in unjust structures and political regimes, in dangerous relationships, in demeaning work environments. Your people seek compassion, comfort, companionship and counsel and so we pray...

You have called us Mercy, to be responsive to the needs of Earth and of all people and so we pray...

Concluding Prayer:

Each time we cross the threshold of this Holy Door, our God, may we be reminded that we are indeed called to the ministry of Mercy. We ask for the grace to live lives worthy of this call – to be signs, in active and practical ways, of the tender love with which you embrace us all. In this Holy Year strengthen our resolve to work for the transformation of our world to a place where all know themselves to be blessed and welcomed as you welcome us to this holy place and time. Amen.

Sing "What Mercy May Yet Be" Verses 3, 4 and this additional verse.

This year of Jubilee is calling us to be

A witness to God's mercy at our time in history.

May Mercy now abound wherever we are found

With joy we claim this Mercy name, so let our thanks resound!