



GRAND MAGISTERIUM – VATICAN
EQUESTRIAN ORDER OF
THE HOLY SEPULCHRE OF JERUSALEM

At the service of the living stones in the Holy Land

How to Prepare for the Pilgrimage



Dear Knights and Dames,

On the occasion of the Holy Year 2025, our Order's Jubilee Pilgrimage represents a unique experience to the heart of Christendom. This is not just a trip, but a spiritual journey to be undertaken with an open heart, a living faith, and a spirit of ecclesial communion.

This is an extraordinary opportunity, to be lived as a true act of faith.

We are going to the Papal Basilicas as pilgrims, not as tourists, and there - by our presence and our demeanour- we are called to bear witness to the spirituality and the seriousness of our commitment to the Order and within the Church.

I have prepared this brief guide to help us all make the most of this experience, which is unique in our Christian life. As you will see, it is a useful tool to help you prepare for your arrival in Rome, and being thus prepared, we may each experience every moment of the Jubilee event to the fullest.

Spiritual Preparation

It is very important for each of us to prepare ourselves spiritually for the events we will experience during the Pilgrimage. Below are a few simple suggestions to follow, preferably under the spiritual guidance of your local priest (for example, the Prior of the Section or of the Local Delegation):

1. Personal prayer
2. Sacrament of Confession

3. Eucharist and Holy Communion
4. Meditation on the Word of God

1) Personal Prayer

The role of our interior life will be very important. We need to experience our faith with emotion and gratitude, in silence and recollection, and with openness to fraternal communion.

2) Sacramental Confession

It is recommended you to go to confession before your departure. During the pilgrimage, some priests will be available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but it is advisable to do so before arriving in Rome.

3) Eucharist and Communion

Let us not forget to celebrate Our Lord in the Holy Masses and to enter into communion in both body and spirit.

4) Meditation on the Word of God

The Word of God is to be proclaimed, listened to, and understood. The Readers will be designated prior to each celebration from among those who meet specific requirements.

The Jubilee

The Jubilee is the year when there is a remission of sins and of the penalties due to them; it is the year of reconciliation, of conversion and sacramental penance, and, consequently, of solidarity, hope, justice, and dedication to the service of God in glory and in peace with our brothers and sisters.

To fully understand the meaning of the Jubilee, we must turn to the Lord Jesus. In fact, in the Gospel of Saint Luke we read that Jesus went “to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord’. And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing’”. (Lk 4:16-21).

In the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus reveals that He is the presence of God; He is the Word given to the Fathers made flesh. It is He who proclaims the Year of Grace, the Jubilee.

Jesus reveals that in Him, in Easter, God’s plan is fulfilled; that is, God accomplishes in Him all the good He wills for humanity, for all people, the poor and the oppressed on account of sin and liberated in the Resurrection of Christ, called to enter into God’s Promised Land.

This is the reason for joy in celebrating the Jubilee.

What does this mean for us, Knights and Dames?

For us, the Jubilee must be a “Year of Grace”.

The Church opens the doors of truth to us, of God the Father who, through the death and Resurrection of His Son and through the action of the Holy Spirit, calls and invites us to pass from sin to grace, from enduring our suffering to offering it for the salvation of the world.

Therefore, through meditation on the Word of God, on the Gospel of Christ, we want to rediscover those true values that comfort us and give us the courage to bear witness - with word and with life - to the renewing power of the Gospel.

Jesus says He has come to bring light to the blind; and we want to come out of our inner blindness. He has come to free the prisoners: we do not want to remain prisoners of our useless, dreary, monotonous days, but desire to make them ever more radiant with His truth and His sacrifice on the Cross.

Jesus also tells us that He has come to bring freedom to the oppressed: we do not want to be crushed by the burdens of the world but rather bring true joy to everyone.

The Pilgrimage: A Journey of Conversion and Hope

The Pilgrimage is one of the symbolic focal points of the Jubilee, all the more meaningful as it draws closer to that sense of a journey toward the grace of Mercy which is the primary purpose of the Holy Year. The effort, commitment, and difficulties of a pilgrimage echo and confirm the analogies with the hardships of life, which find refreshment in their destination, in God Himself.

To conceive life as a journey toward God expresses the deep human need to encounter Him. The journey to a sacred place reveals the unceasing human search for God and, today as in the past, is a sign of faith and devotion.

The Pilgrimage is a distinctive sign of the Holy Year because it is an icon of the journey that every person makes in their life. Life is a pilgrimage, and the human being is a *viator*, a pilgrim walking along a road toward the longed-for destination.

Even to reach the Holy Door in Rome and elsewhere, everyone must undertake, according to their strength, a pilgrimage. It is a sign that mercy, too, is a goal to be reached and that it requires commitment and sacrifice.

The Pilgrimage is a path of repentance and preparation for the inner renewal that the faithful undertake in the footsteps of Jesus. It is also a concrete itinerary; to obtain the Jubilee Indulgence one must go as a pilgrim to the places of pilgrimage connected with the Jubilee.

We Must Set Out on the Journey

Pilgrimage to one of the Jubilee Churches has a profound meaning. It seeks to place human beings in relation with God. Every person on pilgrimage is on the way to a destination, not a casual wanderer.

The Church asks us to be on the move, not to wait for God to come to us; we must be the ones actively seeking Him; first, within ourselves and then by going to His dwelling, which is the house of the community, the place where it recognizes itself as His flock.

A Journey of Faith

During the Pilgrimage, the pilgrim enacts a number of stages that become a paradigm of their life of faith:

- Departure manifests the decision to advance toward the goal and achieve the spiritual aims of one's baptismal vocation.
- The journey leads to solidarity with one's brothers and sisters and to the preparation needed for the encounter with the Lord.
- The visit to the sanctuary, for us Knights and Dames of the Holy Sepulchre, to the Papal Basilicas of Rome, to listen to the Word of God and to take part in sacramental celebration.
- The return finally recalls to them their mission in the world as a witness of Salvation and a builder of peace.

The destination toward which the pilgrim's itinerary tends is, above all, the encounter with God.

In the Sanctuary, the Pilgrim meets the mystery of God, and discovers His face of love and mercy. This experience is particularly realized in the Eucharistic Celebration.

The Pilgrimage also leads to the encounter with the Church, who designates the assembly of those whom the Word of God calls together to form the People of God and who, nourished by the Body of Christ, become themselves the Body of Christ (CCC 777).

The experience of living in common with fellow pilgrims also becomes an occasion to rediscover the People of God on the way toward the Jerusalem of Peace - in praise and song, in the one faith and the one love of a single body, the Body of Christ.

The pilgrim must feel part of the one family of God, surrounded by many brothers and sisters in faith. The Great Shepherd guides the sheep and who leads them along the right path for His name's sake, under the visible guidance of the shepherds to whom He has entrusted the mission of leading His people.

A Journey of Conversion

The Pilgrimage is a journey of conversion sustained by the firm hope in the infinite depth and strength of the forgiveness offered by God.

The Sanctuary is therefore the place of encounter in Reconciliation too. There, indeed, the pilgrim's conscience is shaken; there they confess their sins; there they are forgiven and forgives; there they become a new creature through the Sacrament of Penance; there they experience divine grace and mercy.

The Pilgrimage thus retraces the experience of the Prodigal Son in sin, who knows the hardship of trial and penance, undertaking the labours of the journey, fasting, sacrifice; but he also knows the joy of the embrace with the Father prodigal in mercy, who leads him from death to life: "for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found". (Lk 15:24).

The Holy Door

The opening of the Holy Door marked the beginning of the Jubilee, but for Christians it also represented a spiritual symbol.

From a purely material standpoint, the Holy Door is the door of the Papal Basilicas of Rome and of other Churches which the Pope has proclaimed as such, even outside the City of Rome itself.

The Holy Door of the Papal Basilicas is opened only on the occasion of a Holy Year, when it may be crossed in order to obtain the plenary Indulgence from all sins.

The Jubilee, in fact, is a period lasting one year during which the Church grants particular indulgences to those who make pilgrimages, engage in works of charity, devote themselves to prayer and penance, and pass through the Holy Door.

What This Means for Each of Us

With the opening of the Holy Door, the Church recalls the value of conversion and the responsibility of being Christians: "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep". (Jn 10:7, 9, 11).

Each of us must undertake a passage from the state of sin to that of grace, of valuing ourselves and our condition.

The Holy Door reveals itself as the figure of Christ through whom every person may come to the Father who is the truth. His teaching, His passion, death and resurrection guide us on this path of salvation. We must understand that, to be one of the "sheep", to be of the flock, we are called to commit ourselves deeply to discerning God's plan for us and for our suffering that unites us to Christ.

Let each one be ready to open wide their heart to Christ, who opened His arms on the Cross to offer Mary as the Mother of all people to the world. Let us invoke Mary so that she may give us the

strength to offer our whole selves in order to draw consciously near the Cross of Christ and become witnesses of hope for all whom we meet.

The Jubilee Indulgence

What is an indulgence?

Various documents, including the Catechism of the Catholic Church, state that: “An indulgence is the remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church, who, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the Treasury of the satisfactions of Christ and the Saints”.

This definition highlights some important points worth explaining.

The indulgence flows from the merciful love of God who, through Jesus the Good Shepherd, comes to seek us, shows us His merciful face, makes us aware of our sin, arouses repentance, offers us forgiveness which is the creation of a new heart.

Jesus Himself is the indulgence and the propitiation for our sins (cf. Jn 20:22–23).

Serious sin has a twofold consequence:

-eternal punishment, that is, the loss of communion with God, which is removed through the Sacrament of Confession;

-temporal punishment, that is, the disorder, contradictions, and damage that sinful behaviour leaves within us: bad habits, disordered affections, weakness of the will, inclination to fall again into sin.

Clearly, even after the repentant sinner has received God’s forgiveness, the negative imprint remains and, as far as possible, must be repaired through a journey of conversion.

The prayer, acts of penance, and good works we perform, the sufferings and trials of life borne with patience and faith, all contribute to purification which, if not fully accomplished on earth, will be completed in Purgatory.

To the repentant sinner, God in His mercy, ordinarily, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, grants the forgiveness of sins and the remission of eternal punishment.

With the Plenary Indulgence, divine Mercy goes so far as to remit the temporal punishment of sins that have been confessed, and removes the consequences left in us by sin.

This means that the faithful can obtain complete purification from these penalties, therefore avoiding Purgatory.

Indulgence does not remove the need for repentance and confession, but adds to them as a further sign of divine grace.

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(September 2025)