

Holy Year

Official text of the Papal Bull issued May 26, 1949.

Pius Bishop

Servant of the Servants of God

To All the Faithful Viewing this Letter

Health and the Apostolic Benediction

The great Jubilee, which will be celebrated in this beloved city during the coming year, has as its special purpose to summon all the faithful not only to expiate their faults and amend their lives but also to lead them to acquire virtue and holiness according to the words of Holy Scripture: "Sanctify yourselves and be ye holy, because I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 20,7: cf. I Pet. 1,16). From this the nature and the importance of the advantages which derive from this very ancient institution can be easily seen. For, if men will only listen to this call of the Church and turn from the fleeting things of this world to those that are eternal, then, assuredly, a most desirable spiritual renewal will take place and not only private but public morality will be in harmony with the teaching and spirit of the Gospel. When righteousness guides the convictions of individuals and directs their conduct, it must necessarily follow that new life and vigor will be infused into the whole of human society and that a better and happier state of things will ensue. Today, as never before, there is a most urgent need that all things be refashioned in the truth and power of the Gospel. Human efforts, even when they are laudable and not inspired by motives that are fallacious, are unequal to this great undertaking; it is august religion, alone, aided by divine grace, that can prove equal to the greatness of the task and, with the active cooperation of all, bring it to a happy conclusion.

Hence it is Our earnest desire that the Bishops all over the world together with their clergy should instruct with great diligence the flock entrusted to their care on the subject of the coming Jubilee: let the faithful be urged to participate in the Jubilee in the best possible way, whether they come to Rome or remain in their own country; let them offer more fervent prayers to God, multiply their works of penance and charity and put into practice all that we have already recommended as fitting for the Holy Year.

Foreseeing abundant and salutary results, which We implore from Our Divine Redeemer, and following closely the tradition of the Roman Pontiffs who have gone before Us, and after taking counsel of Our Venerable Brothers their Eminences the Cardinals, by the authority of Almighty God and of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul and by our own authority, We proclaim and desire to have promulgated by this letter a great and universal Jubilee to be held in this beloved City from Christmas 1949 to Christmas 1950, according to the provisions of canon 923.

JUBILEE INDULGENCE

During this year of expiation, to all the faithful who duly confess their sins in the Sacrament of Penance, who receive Holy Communion and visit once on that day, or on different days and in the order of their choice, the Basilicas of St. John Lateran, St. Peter's in the Vatican, St. Paul's on the Ostian Way and St. Mary Major's on the Esquiline, and recite in each Basilica thrice the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary" and the "Glory be to the Father," as well as one "Our Father," "Hail Mary" and "Glory be to the Father," for Our intentions and in addition the Creed, We grant and bestow mercifully in the Lord a full indulgence and pardon of all the punishment due to sin.

In favor of those who, when in Rome or on the way to Rome, through illness or death or some other just cause, are prevented from finishing or even beginning these visits, We reduce the aforesaid conditions so that, provided they go to Confession and Holy Communion, they may gain the Jubilee indulgence, just as those who visit the four above mentioned Basilicas. We also declare that the

faithful can gain the Jubilee indulgence either for themselves or for the faithful departed as often as they fulfill the prescribed conditions.

Beloved children, you are certainly not unaware of the general intentions of the Roman Pontiffs. We desire, nevertheless, to lay before you with greater clearness and precision Our particular intentions regarding the coming Holy Year.

Let petition be made to God in the first place that all by prayer and penance may expiate their sins and strive to reform their lives and acquire Christian virtue so that this great Jubilee may happily prepare a general and universal return to Christ. Besides, the following petitions should be humbly made to God: that the loyalty due to the Divine Redeemer and to the Church which He founded may be maintained by all with an unshaken spirit and a vigorous determination to combat the intrigues, deceits and attacks of the enemy; that all those who are still outside the Catholic Church, those who have wandered from the right path, and even those who deny or hate God, may be illumined by divine light and, under the influence of grace, be brought to obey the precepts of the Gospel; that everywhere, but especially in the Holy Places of Palestine, the tranquility of order, founded on a just settlement, may be restored as soon as possible; that the various social classes, with hatred banished and differences settled, may be united together in justice and fraternal agreement; and that finally the great number of those in want may be given work to earn an honest living and may receive necessary and opportune aid from those who are in better circumstances.

May peace, the object of Our ardent yearning, return at long last to the hearts of all: to families, to individual countries and to the community of nations; may "those who suffer persecution for justice's sake" (Matt. 5, 10) be blessed with that dauntless fortitude which adorned the Church with the blood of martyrs from the very beginning; may refugees, prisoners, homeless exiles be enabled as soon as possible to find their way back to the fatherland they cherish; and may the consolations of divine grace lighten the pain and anguish of those who are suffering. Let Christian modesty be the shining badge of our strong-hearted youth, as they grow and develop in Christian virtue; let their elders show them the way by their example; to all, finally, may it be given to enjoy that heavenly grace which is the harbinger of the reward of eternal happiness in Heaven.

INVITES THE FAITHFUL

And now, beloved children, there remains but to invite you, with paternal affection, to come to Rome in throngs during the Jubilee Year of expiation; We invite you to Rome which is a kind of second fatherland to the faithful of Christ in every nation. Here they may venerate the place where the Prince of the Apostles was buried after his martyrdom. Here they may see the sacred catacombs of the martyrs, the historic churches, the monuments of their faith and age-old piety. Here they may visit their common Father, who awaits their coming with open arms and tenderly affectionate heart. We appreciate indeed the fact that the journey will not be convenient nor easy for all, especially for those of moderate means and who live in distant lands. But after all, if such strenuous efforts can be made to overcome difficulties of every sort when there is question of the interests of this earthly life, why shall the hope not be cherished that an immense multitude from every corner of the world, sparing no exertion and daunted by no inconvenience, may flock to this beloved City in quest of the riches of Heaven?

Yet this pilgrimage, beloved children, must not be undertaken after the fashion of pleasure-seeking tourists, but in that spirit of earnest piety which moved the faithful of Christ of every class and country in past ages to overcome numerous obstacles and hardships of a journey sometimes made on foot to Rome in order to wash away their sins by the tears of penance and implore pardon and peace from God. Revive this ancestral faith, this active fervor of divine charity; kindle it to a new flame, spread it to others; and the result must be, with the inspiration and the grace of God, that the coming Great Jubilee will yield most salutary fruits both for the pilgrims personally and for the whole of Christian society.

Now that this Letter of Ours may be brought more readily to the notice of all, We desire that

the same authority be accorded to copies of it, including printed versions—provided that they are countersigned by a notary public and bear the seal of an ecclesiastical dignitary—as would be accorded to this very Letter were it presented or displayed.

Let no one therefore be permitted to tamper with this notice of Our proclamation, promulgation, grant and desire, nor rashly dare to oppose it. And should anyone attempt deliberately to do so, let him know that he will incur the indignation of Almighty God and of His Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul.

Given at Rome, at St. Peter's, on the twenty-sixth day of the month of May, in the year one thousand nine hundred and forty-nine, the eleventh of Our Pontificate.

PIUS PP, XII.