



Pilgrimage to Mercy

The Year of Mercy has begun. Holy Doors at the Cathedral in Baker City and at the Retreat Center Chapel in Powell Butte await the arrival of pilgrims from throughout the Diocese.

“The practice of pilgrimage has a special place in the Holy Year,” Pope Francis tells us, “because it represents the journey each of us makes in this life.” From its earliest days the Church was called “The Way” (Acts 9:2). You and I set out on The Way of the Church when we were carried to the baptismal font as infants or deliberately walked toward it as adults, when we step into the procession to Communion, when we will be carried to our grave. Christians have always understood the journey of life to be “a great pilgrimage to the House of the Father,” in the words of St. John Paul II. This year the Holy Door of Jubilee invites us to see ourselves clearly as the pilgrims we are and can ever more willingly become.

For centuries of Christian history teach an unmistakable lesson: those who make themselves pilgrims return home different from when they left. Deliberately removing themselves from the times and places of the ordinary day with all its accustomed routines, they set out for up-close companionship with Him Who *is* the Way, and their lives took entirely unforeseeable turns for the better.

Traveling with Jesus the Way, we fellow pilgrims come to know Him as the Truth that sets us free to share His Life. For He gives us courage to face the truth of *our* lives in the light of True Life and to take a decision about what we see and who we shall be as we follow the Way home to the Father.

Pilgrimage gives us time to recall the false paths down which our serious sins have led us, and the Holy Door of Mercy invites repentant self-recognition, contrition, and conversion: “I myself, and not another, have done what is wrong; I myself, and not another, have not done what is right. I am sorry I am not the person God made me to be. May God give me the grace to change my life and do unto others what is pleasing to Him.”

During this Year of Mercy I hope that many of us, old and young, will go on pilgrimage to the Holy Door and cross the threshold of pardon and peace. There are many ways to get there: as individuals, as families, as small groups. But I particularly encourage each parish to organize a representative group to make the journey. Just let Father Greiner know when your parish will be at the Cathedral or contact the Diocesan Office here in Bend to “reserve” a date at Powell Butte. Many of you alongside the Idaho border have never laid eyes on the beautiful Retreat Center in Powell Butte; many of you from Central Oregon have never visited our jewel of a Cathedral in Baker City. Let those who live east go west and those who live west go east!

But whichever direction you take, go in peace.