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PRACTICAL TIPS FOR

LIVING *out the*
JUBILEE YEAR



DIGITAL BOOK COMPANION

Ideas for Living Out the Jubilee Year

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The Vatican has released a wonderful document on the jubilee year describing how Catholics can gain the jubilee indulgence in different ways.¹ The document suggests many things that Catholics can do to live out the jubilee year more fully.

Here are a few ideas drawn from the Vatican's document for gaining the jubilee indulgence, as well as some ideas of my own.

- Frequent the Sacraments* _____ **1**
- Go on a Pilgrimage* _____ **2**
- Perform a Work of Mercy* _____ **3**
- Fast for a Day* _____ **4**
- Give to the Poor* _____ **5**
- Forgive Someone* _____ **6**
- Foster Hope* _____ **7**

1. Holy See Press Office, "Decree on the Granting of the Indulgence During the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 Called by His Holiness Pope Francis," bulletin, May 13, 2024, available here: <https://bit.ly/JubileeIndulgences>.

Frequent *the Sacraments*

1

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of a supernatural temple built on multiples of fifty, the jubilee number (Ezek 40–48). From that temple flowed a river that brought life everywhere (Ezek 47). In the Gospel of John, we learn that Jesus’s body *is* that temple (John 2:21), and that from his body flows a river of blood and water (John 19:34).

Blood stands for the Eucharist and water for Baptism, so the stream from Jesus’s side is the river of the sacraments, a river through time and space—flowing from Calvary—that brings life and liberty wherever it goes.

Drink deeply from this river that flows from our jubilee temple of Jesus’s Body this jubilee year! I encourage everyone to increase their sacramental participation. If you are going to Mass regularly on Sundays, add a weekday Mass or two into your schedule. If you are confessing monthly, start confessing biweekly. Whatever you are doing, try to “up your game” or do that little bit of extra that will help you grow spiritually.



Go on *a Pilgrimage*

2

Make a pilgrimage—the biggest one your resources permit. If possible, go to Rome and walk through the Holy Door at one (or all!) of the four major basilicas: St. Peter’s in the Vatican, St. John Lateran (the cathedral of Rome), St. Mary Major, or St. Paul Outside the Walls.

To gain the jubilee indulgence, you should stay long enough in the church to do one of the following:

1. *Attend Mass*
2. *Pray the Liturgy of the Hours*
3. *Pray the Stations of the Cross or*
4. *Pray the Rosary*

The Vatican decree gives other suggestions for additional devotions.

Remember also the usual conditions for gaining an indulgence: in addition to the prescribed work (like making a pilgrimage, in this case), one must

1. *Receive Communion in Mass within 20 days on either side of the work*
2. *Go to Confession within 20 days on either side of the work*
3. *Pray for the intentions of the pope (usually an Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be) and*
4. *Be free in your heart from all affection for or attachment to sin.*

When you finish the prescribed work and have met the other conditions, you should make an additional prayer intentionally requesting the indulgence from God and that it be applied to yourself or to one of the faithful departed (perhaps a specific loved one you have in mind or one of the most forgotten souls in purgatory).

If the Holy Land opens up, the jubilee indulgence is attached to the three basilicas there: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

If you can’t afford a pilgrimage to Rome or the Holy Land, *do one in the United States* (or your home country). All the national shrines have been designated as jubilee pilgrimage sites, so any church that has the title “National Shrine of the . . .” would count.

Every bishop has designated jubilee pilgrimage sites within his own diocese, so you can check your diocesan website and make your pilgrimage to one of the local shrines or churches.

Even shut-ins can receive the jubilee pilgrimage indulgence if they “[*unite themselves*] in spirit with the faithful taking part in person” in the pilgrimage, offer up the sufferings of their confinement in reparation for their sins, and “*recite the Our Father, the Profession of Faith in any approved form, and other prayers in conformity with the objectives of the Holy Year, in their homes or wherever they are confined*” (prison, hospital, institution, etc.).



Perform *a Work of Mercy*

3

The jubilee indulgence can be gained by performing one of the corporal (bodily) or spiritual works of mercy during the jubilee year. Some easy ones would be:

- a. Feeding the hungry.* Online meal chain organizers like MealTrain have become a regular part of Catholic life in many places in the country. If you bring a meal to a family with a newborn or a sick or recently deceased loved one, that would fulfill the requirement for the indulgence, provided you do so out of charity (i.e., Christian love) and not merely social obligation, together with the usual conditions.
- b. Visiting the sick.* Know a sick, disabled, imprisoned, or lonely family member, loved one, or friend? Go visit them “for an appropriate amount of time”—probably at least a half hour. This, too, will gain a plenary indulgence, with the usual conditions.



Fast *for a Day*

4

Several kinds of fasts will fulfill the condition. First, one must have a “spirit of penance” (sorrow for sins and a desire to make reparation).

Then one can do a “water fast”—no food, just water. Or a “bread-and-water fast”—self-explanatory. Or a “canonical fast”—one meal and two snacks which do not equal a meal.

In addition, the Vatican recommends a “media fast” from all “media and/or social networks,” so abstaining from all forms of electronic media (TV, radio, internet) for a day also gains the indulgence!



Give to *the Poor*

5

The Vatican says that “donating a proportionate sum of money to the poor” can gain the jubilee indulgence. There are many ways to donate to the poor, of course, either directly or through religious orders or other groups that do direct service and care for the poor.

Let me also make a recommendation in this regard. The ancient jubilee year (Lev 25) was all about erasing debt. Therefore, helping people get out of debt, either materially (money) or spiritually (purgatory), is very much in keeping with the jubilee spirit.

Debt in our society is often concentrated on young parents, who are struggling to pay off a car, a house, and student loans while raising children. Resources,

on the other hand, are concentrated with older people, “empty nesters” who have paid off their debt and acquired wealth during their career.

If you find yourself with resources, try to help the indebted during this jubilee year. Pay off something for a younger person or couple, or make a contribution to reducing their debt. Depending on the circumstances, you may want to do so anonymously. But a generous gift toward helping someone pay off debt would definitely gain the jubilee indulgence, and you will feel a joyful satisfaction in doing so!



Forgive *Someone*

6

The jubilee was (and is!) all about forgiveness of sins. During the jubilee year, we want to make frequent recourse to the Sacrament of Reconciliation so that our sins may be forgiven. Jesus solemnly warns us:

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt 6:14–15, RSV2CE)

That's actually a bit scary—but gives us an incentive. The Lord is very clear: if we give mercy, we will receive mercy!

The Our Father is a jubilee prayer about the forgiveness of spiritual debt, and to pray it with a clear conscience, we need to practice forgiving others. So, a good exercise for the jubilee year would be to make an examination of conscience:

Is there anyone against whom I am holding a grudge? Any family member, friend, colleague, acquaintance, neighbor, etc., whom I have not forgiven for an offense?

If so, jot their name down on a list. Then, in prayer, make an act of forgiveness for each person. Say in your heart,

"I forgive [Name] for their offense against me, and entrust them to the mercy of Jesus."

If appropriate, you may want to send a note or card of reconciliation to the person, or call them to try to reconcile.

Forgiveness is like a check that you send to someone. Repentance is cashing the check. It may be that we will have to send some checks that may never be cashed—in other words, forgive people who are not repentant. Whether people repent is not in your hands. You have to give that to God. In cases of serious past offenses, like abuse, it's a good idea to seek out a spiritual director or counselor to help you through the process of forgiveness.



Foster *Hope*

7

This suggestion is not about gaining the jubilee indulgence, but about cultivating the theological virtue of hope, which Pope Francis has chosen as the thematic virtue for this holy year. What can we do practically to cultivate hope in our lives?

One suggestion is to pray optimistically rather than defensively. Often we pray to God that certain things *not* happen, but perhaps instead we can conceive positive visions for the outcome of various situations we deal with, and pray for God's grace and guidance to bring the visions about.

A jubilee year is a year to believe big and pray big, especially for those involved in church work, evangelism, and various apostolates. God is honored when we believe in his power and step out boldly, like confident children who know their Father "has their back."

Another practical exercise to cultivate hope involves a daily habit: at the end of the day, after you do your nightly examination of conscience,

take a look at your calendar for the following day, or call to mind what you have to do tomorrow. Pray over each engagement, and rather than giving in to dread or fear about challenges on the next day's agenda, imagine all the positive outcomes that God could bring about through your appointments or events the following day.

Let's speak good things to ourselves about the coming day's events in our internal dialogue: "*This will go well*," "*This will be an opportunity to make friends*," "*This will give me a chance to exercise faith*." Close with a prayer that your guardian angel will go ahead of you to "*prepare a way*" for your day. Then get ready for bed, putting everything in God's hands. While it's a simple little exercise, it's a very practical way to cultivate an attitude and a disposition of hope.



JESUS AND THE JUBILEE

The Biblical Roots of the Year of God's Favor

JOHN BERGSMA



In biblical times, a jubilee was a time to rejoice. And this is still the case when the Church announces a jubilee.

In *Jesus and the Jubilee*, biblical scholar John Bergsma gets to the roots of the jubilee, showing how this practice was established in order to preserve freedom, family, and the fullness of God's blessing for the ancient Israelites. But what the Israelites were promised by God—and experienced partially—was truly fulfilled by Jesus. As *Jesus and the Jubilee* reveals, the Catholic Church is the perpetual jubilee, offering redemption, release from spiritual bondage, return to our true home and family, and rest in God's fullness.

Discover how the jubilee is the very center of Jesus's mission and how we can fully participate in this ongoing "year of favor."



To learn more, see *Jesus and the Jubilee*:
The Biblical Roots of the Year of God's Favor

Visit: StPaulCenter.com/Jubilee

