

From the Pastor's Desk:

It is difficult for me to believe that the Year of Jubilee, 2025, has finally arrived. It is a time I have been anxiously awaiting for more than a year seeing that I have been co-chairing the committee for its preparation and execution for the diocese for more than one year. Here in Altoona-Johnstown, we began our celebration a few days prior to the beginning of the calendar year, on December 29th, as we gathered with the bishop at the Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament to celebrate the Solemnity of the Holy Family and our local commencement of the Year of Jubilee. It was an outstanding liturgy. Thirteen members of our parish family traveled with me to this celebration, and all were amazed at the power and beauty of this Eucharistic celebration. They were very happy that they participated in this memorable event that occurs only every 25 years.

Pilgrim's Passport: With regard to the Jubilee, there are a number of things to which I would like to draw your attention. The first revolved around the **Pilgrim's Passport**. As you discovered in the main portion of the bulletin, the passport is an opportunity to make pilgrimage to the 13 Holy Sites (Churches) of the diocese to fulfill some of the requirements for a plenary indulgence during the Jubilee Year. In order to facilitate travel to the various locations, one of our Jubilee Committee Members, **Evelyn Haggerty**, has offered to organize a carpool to travel to certain of the named Churches on certain dates for specific Masses. The Churches, dates, and times for January through April are as follows:

January 12, 2025	St. John Gualbert Cathedral Johnstown	11:00 AM (Sun)
February 23, 2025	Our Lady of the Alleghenies Lily	10:00 AM (Sun)
March 30, 2025	Our Lady, Queen of Angels Central City	10:30 AM (Sun)
April, 26, 2025	St Mary Shade Gap	7:00 PM (Sat)

If you are interested in joining in one of these mini pilgrimages, please contact Evelyn either after the 9:00 AM Mass or at (814) 243-2570. For the morning pilgrimages, we will be stopping at a local restaurant for a modest brunch ("dutch treat"). Please consider traveling with us to visit other churches in our diocese.

The Meaning of Jubilee and Conditions for Plenary Indulgences (in short):

The concept of the Jubilee Year has its roots in the Old Testament, where it was a time of restitution and liberation, held every fifty years. In Christian tradition, it was Pope Boniface VIII who instituted the first Christian Jubilee in 1300, marking it as a time for special blessings, forgiveness, and a call to repentance. Over the centuries, this tradition evolved into a global pilgrimage, attracting millions of faithful to Rome, where they seek spiritual renewal.

The Jubilee 2025, themed "Pilgrims of Hope," is no different. It's a celebration not just of faith but also of hope, renewal, and unity in the Catholic Church. For many, this is a once-in-a-lifetime event that connects them deeply with their spirituality and offers a unique opportunity to receive a plenary indulgence.

A **plenary indulgence** is one of the most profound spiritual benefits granted during the Jubilee. An indulgence is "eased purgation from sin." Plenary Indulgence refers to the complete remission of all temporal punishment due to sin, essentially a fresh start for the soul. The Church teaches that while sins may be forgiven through confession, temporal punishment remains, which can be purified either in this life or in purgatory. The indulgence offered during the Jubilee year provides a unique opportunity to erase this temporal punishment entirely.

To gain this indulgence, pilgrims are required to fulfill specific conditions: **sacramental confession, Eucharistic communion, and prayers for the intentions of the Pope.** Additionally, they must perform **the Jubilee pilgrimage** to one of the four major basilicas in Rome or other designated churches worldwide (**13 are named in our diocese – see the pilgrim's passport**¹), making it an act of devotion and commitment through spending time in **adoration before the blessed sacrament (whether exposed or not) ending with the profession of faith (praying the Nicene Creed / Apostles' Creed).**

Parish Pilgrimage to The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Emmitsburg, MD. As part of the festivities of the Jubilee Year, the parish will be sponsoring a bus trip to the National Shrine of Elizabeth Ann Seton on Saturday, **May 17th**. Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton (August 28, 1774 – January 4, 1821), was the first native-born citizen of the United States to be canonized by the Roman Catholic Church. She is an important figure in the life of Visitation Parish for she was the foundress of the Sisters of Charity who served Visitation Elementary School since its inception until its last class graduated in 1983. I was taught by the Sisters of Charity who I believe are in part responsible for my vocation to the priesthood. The Sisters were a reason of hope for many and their historical presence in our parish should be honored during the Jubilee Year. More details are forthcoming in the bulletin in the next several weeks. For now, mark your calendars if you have any interest in this wonderful and very doable day trip.

¹ Visitation Parish is one of the named sites and it a valid site for gaining the plenary indulgence; however, to be a "true" pilgrimage, one *should* make some effort to travel to one of the other named 12 sites.