



Opening of the Holy Door in Saint Mary Major

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Pope Francis has opened the Holy Door in the Basilica of Saint Mary Major. This completes the opening of the Holy Doors in the Papal Basilicas: on 8 December, the door of Saint Peter's was opened, followed by the Doors in Saint John Lateran and Saint Paul Outside the Walls on 13 December.

“It is most fitting that on this day we invoke the Blessed Virgin Mary above all as Mother of mercy. The door we have opened is, in fact, a Door of Mercy. Those who cross its threshold are called to enter into the merciful love of the Father with complete trust and freedom from fear; they can leave this Basilica knowing – truly knowing – that Mary is ever at their side,” Pope Francis stated. “She is the Mother of mercy, because she bore in her womb the very Face of divine mercy, Jesus, Emmanuel, the Expectation of the nations, the “Prince of Peace” (Is 9:5). The Son of God, made incarnate for our salvation, has given us his Mother, who joins us on our pilgrimage through this life, so that we may never be left alone, especially at times of trouble and uncertainty.”

He concluded, “Let us, then, pass through the Holy Door of Mercy knowing that at our side is the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Holy Mother of God, who intercedes for us. Let us allow her to lead us to the rediscovery of the beauty of an encounter with her Son Jesus. Let us open wide the doors of our heart to the joy of forgiveness, conscious that we have been given new confidence and hope, and thus make our daily lives a humble instrument of God's love.”

At the end of the Mass, the Holy Father venerated the icon of *Maria Salus Populi Romani*, which is displayed in one of the Basilica's side chapels.