



**September 1, 2015, Tuesday — Turning Point**

*Introductory note*

We have just come out with a special 132-page **Commemorative Edition** of *Inside the Vatican* magazine, welcoming Pope Francis to America. We would like you to receive and read this issue. All you have to do is click [here](#), order a subscription, and you will receive this issue as the first issue of your subscription. We have been passionate about keeping our publication in print, and we continue to be so. We think it is important. If you agree, why not consider a subscription? Call, in the US, to our fulfillment house toll-free: **1-800-789-9494**.

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### **Turning Point**

*"I establish that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Society of St. Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins." —Pope Francis today in Rome in a letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, who is in charge of the preparations for the Holy Year of Mercy (December 8, 2015-November 20, 2016)*

*"I have decided, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, to concede to all priests for the Jubilee Year the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it." —Pope Francis today, in the same letter*

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### **NEWSFLASH**

Today Pope Francis announced he is taking the unusual step of lifting the ban, in conjunction with his forthcoming Jubilee Year of Mercy, on Catholics receiving absolution for their sins from priests of the Society of St. Pius X, a "traditionalist" association which remains at odds with the larger Church on a number of issues ranging from the Church's liturgy to the proper way to engage in ecumenical initiatives.

At the same time, Francis also announced that during the upcoming Year of Mercy, set to begin on December 8, any priest would be empowered to absolve direct involvement with the sin of abortion; previously, such absolutions involved the permission of the local bishop, since this sin occurs the penalty of automatic excommunication.

These two decisions are in some ways astonishing. In announcing them, Francis is surprising, once again, both "conservatives" and "liberals."

At the very least, this suggests that many of the "narratives" about this Pope have been far too simplistic.

Francis, by the decision permitting Catholics to go to the priests of the Society of St. Pius X has made an eventual full reunion with the "Lefebvrists," as the members of the Society -- founded by the late French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre -- are sometimes called, much easier to envision.

In this way, Francis has made a decisive gesture of respect toward many of the world's more conservative Catholics.

Simultaneously, he is "reaching out" to many millions, particularly women but also in many cases men as well, who have been taken in by the false promises of liberal secularism — promises of "unlimited sexual freedom" and "radical personal autonomy" — and found themselves weighed down by the sorrow of having aborted a child who would have been their own.

Thus, Francis as the Bishop of Rome is trying to heal wounds of separation in the Church, and internal wounds of guilt, both of which are profoundly harming, to the Church and to individuals.

The profusion of words from so many of our media pundits and our glib politicians are superficial and vain in comparison to this type of approach to the most profound ruptures in human relations.

This opening to the Lefebvrists renews hope that the modern Church may grow in appreciation for her own tradition, which the Society of St. Pius X has sought to protect for 40 years.

It also means hope for people who have committed the terrible sin of abortion, a demoralizing tragedy that leaves so many people internally wounded, needing healing that only the forgiveness of Christ can give.

The Church — the Pope — is seeking to strike at the problem of lives ruined by sins that can't be forgiven by one's self, whose impact takes us far away from blessedness; there is only forgiveness in Christ, of whom the Scribes and Pharisees said, "This man must have a demon, because he claims to forgive sins."

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Here is the text of the letter of Pope Francis to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, released today in Rome.

***Pope Francis to Archbishop Rino Fisichella***

*To My Venerable Brother  
Archbishop Rino Fisichella  
President of the Pontifical Council  
for the Promotion of the New Evangelization,*

With the approach of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, I would like to focus on several points which I believe require attention to enable the celebration of the Holy Year to be for all believers a true moment of encounter with the mercy of God. It is indeed my wish that the Jubilee be a living experience of the closeness of the Father, whose tenderness is almost tangible, so that the faith of every believer may be strengthened and thus testimony to it be ever more effective.

My thought first of all goes to all the faithful who, whether in individual Dioceses or as pilgrims to Rome, will experience the grace of the Jubilee. I wish that the Jubilee Indulgence may reach each one as a genuine experience of God's mercy, which comes to meet each person in the Face of the Father who welcomes and forgives, forgetting completely the sin committed.

To experience and obtain the Indulgence, the faithful are called to make a brief pilgrimage to the Holy Door, open in every Cathedral or in the churches designated by the Diocesan Bishop, and in the four Papal Basilicas in Rome, as a sign of the deep desire for true conversion.

Likewise, I dispose that the Indulgence may be obtained in the Shrines in which the Door of Mercy is open and in the churches which traditionally are identified as Jubilee Churches.

It is important that this moment be linked, first and foremost, to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and to the celebration of the Holy Eucharist with a reflection on mercy.

It will be necessary to accompany these celebrations with the profession of faith and with prayer for me and for the intentions that I bear in my heart for the good of the Church and of the entire world.

Additionally, I am thinking of those for whom, for various reasons, it will be impossible to enter the Holy Door, particularly the sick and people who are elderly and alone, often confined to the home. For them it will be of great help to live their sickness and suffering as an experience of closeness to the Lord who in the mystery of his Passion, death and Resurrection indicates the royal road which gives meaning to pain and loneliness. Living with faith and joyful hope this moment of trial, receiving communion or attending Holy Mass and community prayer, even through the various means of communication, will be for them the means of obtaining the Jubilee Indulgence.

My thoughts also turn to those incarcerated, whose freedom is limited. The Jubilee Year has always constituted an opportunity for great amnesty, which is intended to include the many people who, despite deserving punishment, have become conscious of the injustice they worked and sincerely wish to re-enter society and make their honest contribution to it. May they all be touched in a tangible way by the mercy of the Father who wants to be close to those who have the greatest need of his forgiveness. They may obtain the Indulgence in the chapels of the prisons. May the gesture of directing their thought and prayer to the Father each time they cross the threshold of their cell signify for them their passage through the Holy Door, because the mercy of God is able to transform hearts, and is also able to transform bars into an experience of freedom.

I have asked the Church in this Jubilee Year to rediscover the richness encompassed by the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

The experience of mercy, indeed, becomes visible in the witness of concrete signs as Jesus himself taught us.

Each time that one of the faithful personally performs one or more of these actions, he or she shall surely obtain the Jubilee Indulgence. Hence the commitment to live by mercy so as to obtain the grace of complete and exhaustive forgiveness by the power of the love of the Father who excludes no one. The Jubilee Indulgence is thus full, the fruit of the very event which is to be celebrated and experienced with faith, hope and charity.

Furthermore, the Jubilee Indulgence can also be obtained for the deceased. We are bound to them by the witness of faith and charity that they have left us. Thus, as we remember them in the Eucharistic celebration, thus we can, in the great mystery of the Communion of Saints, pray for them, that the merciful Face of the Father free them of every remnant of fault and strongly embrace them in the unending beatitude.

One of the serious problems of our time is clearly the changed relationship with respect to life.

A widespread and insensitive mentality has led to the loss of the proper personal and social sensitivity to welcome new life.

The tragedy of abortion is experienced by some with a superficial awareness, as if not realizing the extreme harm that such an act entails.

Many others, on the other hand, although experiencing this moment as a defeat, believe that they have no other option.

I think in particular of all the women who have resorted to abortion. I am well aware of the pressure that has led them to this decision. I know that it is an existential and moral ordeal.

I have met so many women who bear in their heart the scar of this agonizing and painful decision. What has happened is profoundly unjust; yet only understanding the truth of it can enable one not to lose hope.

The forgiveness of God cannot be denied to one who has repented, especially when that person approaches the Sacrament of Confession with a sincere heart in order to obtain reconciliation with the Father.

For this reason too, I have decided, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, to concede to all priests for the Jubilee Year the discretion to absolve of the sin of abortion those who have procured it and who, with contrite heart, seek forgiveness for it.

May priests fulfill this great task by expressing words of genuine welcome combined with a reflection that explains the gravity of the sin committed, besides indicating a path of authentic conversion by which to obtain the true and generous forgiveness of the Father who renews all with his presence.

A final consideration concerns those faithful who for various reasons choose to attend churches officiated by priests of the Fraternity of St Pius X.

This Jubilee Year of Mercy excludes no one. From various quarters, several Brother Bishops have told me of their good faith and sacramental practice, combined however with an uneasy situation from the pastoral standpoint. I trust that in the near future solutions may be found to recover full communion with the priests and superiors of the Fraternity.

In the meantime, motivated by the need to respond to the good of these faithful, through my own disposition, I establish that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Fraternity of St Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins.

Trusting in the intercession of the Mother of Mercy, I entrust the preparations for this Extraordinary Jubilee Year to her protection.

*From the Vatican, 1 September 2015*

**+Pope Francis**

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And here is the communique of the Society of St. Pius X in response to this decision of the Pope:

### **Communiqué of the General House of the SSPX**

The Society of St. Pius X learned, through the press, of the provisions taken by Pope Francis on the occasion of the upcoming Holy Year. In the last paragraph of his letter addressed September 1, 2015, to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, president of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, the Holy Father writes:

"I establish that those who during the Holy Year of Mercy approach these priests of the Society of St Pius X to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation shall validly and licitly receive the absolution of their sins."

The Society of St. Pius X expresses its gratitude to the Sovereign Pontiff for this fatherly gesture. In the ministry of the sacrament of penance, we have always relied, with all certainty, on the extraordinary jurisdiction conferred by the *Normae generales* of the Code of Canon Law. On the occasion of this Holy Year, Pope Francis wants all the faithful who wish to confess to the priests of the Society of St. Pius X to be able to do so without being worried.

During this year of conversion, the priests of the Society of St. Pius X will have at heart to exercise with renewed generosity their ministry in the confessional, following the example of tireless dedication which the holy Curé of Ars gave to all priests.

*Menzingen,  
September 1, 2015*

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***Note: For those who would like to travel with us on pilgrimage:***

***On December 8, 2015, and again on November 20, 2016, we will be in Rome when Pope Francis opens the Holy Door to begin the Special Jubilee of Mercy, and when he closes the door to end the Jubilee Year. If you would like to join us, [email now](#) for more information...***

***We also often travel to Norcia, in central Italy, where there is a flourishing Benedictine monastery we visit.***

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***What is the glory of God?***

***"The glory of God is man alive; but the life of man is the vision of God." —St. Irenaeus of Lyons, in the territory of France, in his great work Against All Heresies, written c. 180 A.D.***