Summary in Plain English

1. In Jesus we see the mercy of the Father. This mercy is rich and everlasting. Jesus is the sacrament of this: the visible, tangible, and audible manifestation of God’s endless love, forgiveness, and mercy. When we see Jesus, we see the Father; Jesus thus reveals the mercy of God to us.

2. We should think deeply about mercy because mercy is what leads to a true and deep sense of well-being. When we understand mercy, we understand the Blessed Trinity – the community of love which is God.

3. There are times in our lives when we think and pray about mercy more so that we can ourselves become agents of God’s love for others.

For this reason, I hereby proclaim a Jubilee of Mercy. The Jubilee will open on December 8, 2015, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. I chose this feast because it holds a unique place in our history. We humans are a sinful lot: selfish, greedy, lustful, and mean. But despite this, God responds to us with love. Mercy me. Mercy is always greater than our sin and, as if to prove it, God called Mary to bear Jesus and he gave Mary freedom from this sinful nature.

On December 8 I will open the Holy Door which will thereby become a Door of Mercy. Anyone who passes through this door will experience God’s mercy.

Soon after this, other doors will be opened, first in the Church of St John Lateran in Rome, then in other basilicas, at local shrines throughout the world, and even in local parish churches, as the bishop directs. This will be a world-wide Jubilee.

In your own words, what is mercy?
The ready willingness to help anyone in time of need.

Mercy is an attitude on our part that leads us to look deep into the human heart to seek the circumstance that caused an offense.

In Judaism and Christianity, the concept of the Jubilee is a special year of remission of sins and universal pardon.

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception celebrates Mary’s conception in the womb of her mother, St Ann. We celebrate the birth of Mary nine months later on September 8th.

Is there a door within your parish that can be designated for this Holy Year?
4. I chose December 8 as the opening of the Jubilee because it is also the 50th Anniversary of the closing of Vatican II. I want to keep Vatican II alive in the Church because at the Council, our fortress-like walls came tumbling down and a new age of mercy was inaugurated.

Saint John XXIII himself proclaimed this in his opening speech at the Council, “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity,” he said. The medicine of mercy, indeed. And Blessed Paul VI likewise echoed this sentiment in his closing remarks.

We trust now that the Holy Spirit will guide us as a Church to observe this Jubilee faithfully.

5. The Jubilee year will close on November 20, 2016. I can’t tell you how much I hope this year will create a Church of mercy, steeped in love and forgiveness, ready to be like Jesus in every way. This is how the world is being saved!

6. As we think about mercy we will come to see that it is not merely an abstract idea. Throughout history, God has been “merciful in practice.” Mercy is not a mere theology but a way we see and understand God. God is mercy and love.

He has touched real people’s lives: securing justice for the oppressed, giving food to the hungry, letting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, loves the just, watches over travelers, supports widows and orphans, and brings the wicked to ruin. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds and lifts up the downtrodden.

This is our agenda for the Jubilee year. God acts toward us like a father or mother who loves their child deeply and profoundly. It is a visceral love, gushing forth. So, too, this year, must our love gush forth to give mercy to the people of the world.

7. In our long religious tradition, we have sung over and over again from Psalm 136. Jesus may have prayed this very psalm before his trial and death. In it, after every verse, we proclaim, “For his mercy endures forever.” Other translations say, “For his love never quits.” They mean the same. Jesus’ self-giving journey to Calvary was an act of supreme mercy toward us.