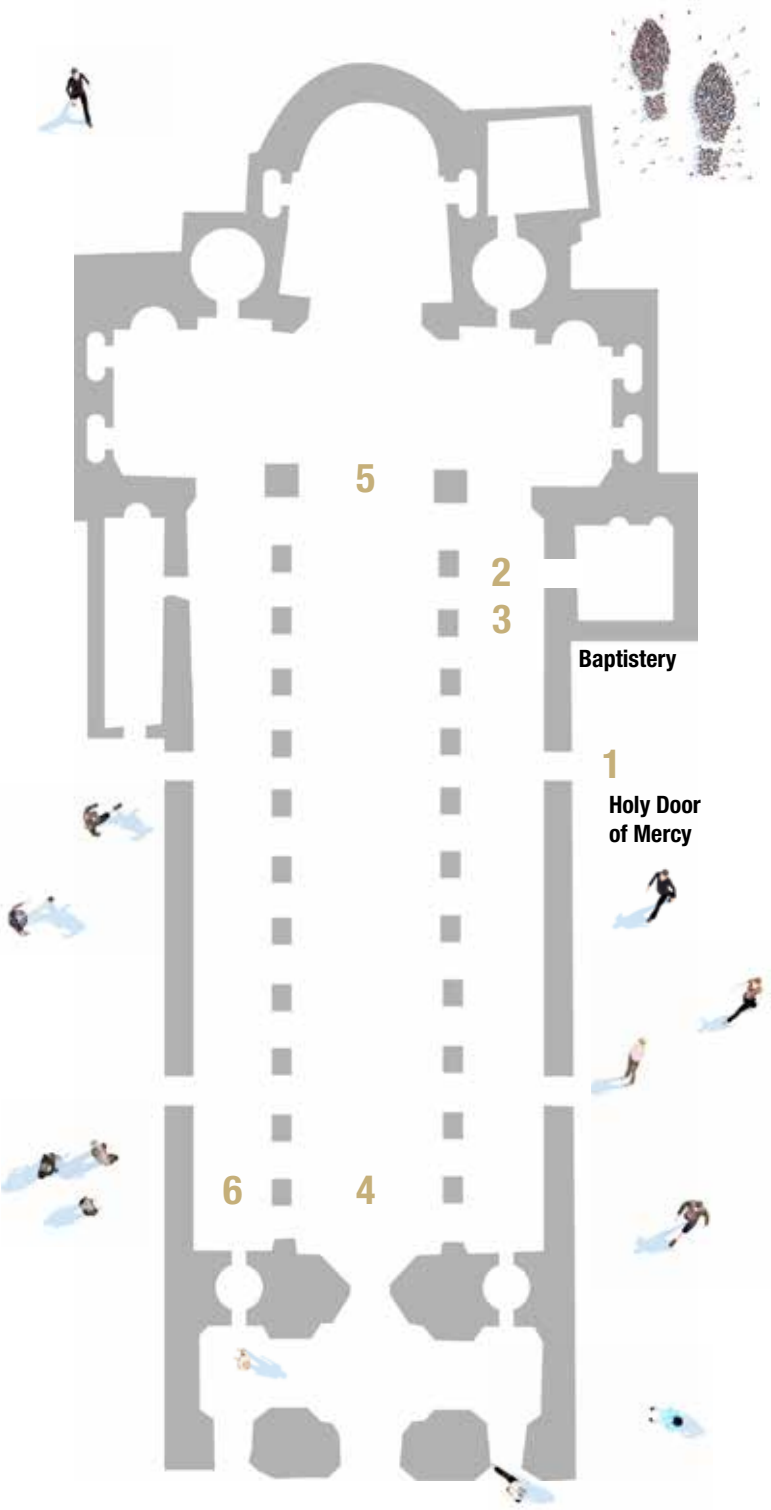


# THE PATH OF MERCY THROUGH THE SPEYER CATHEDRAL



A SPECIAL OFFER ON THE OCCASION  
OF THE HOLY YEAR OF MERCY

# The Path of Mercy through the Speyer Cathedral



## 1 At the “Holy Door of Mercy”

You have stepped through the Holy Door of Mercy.

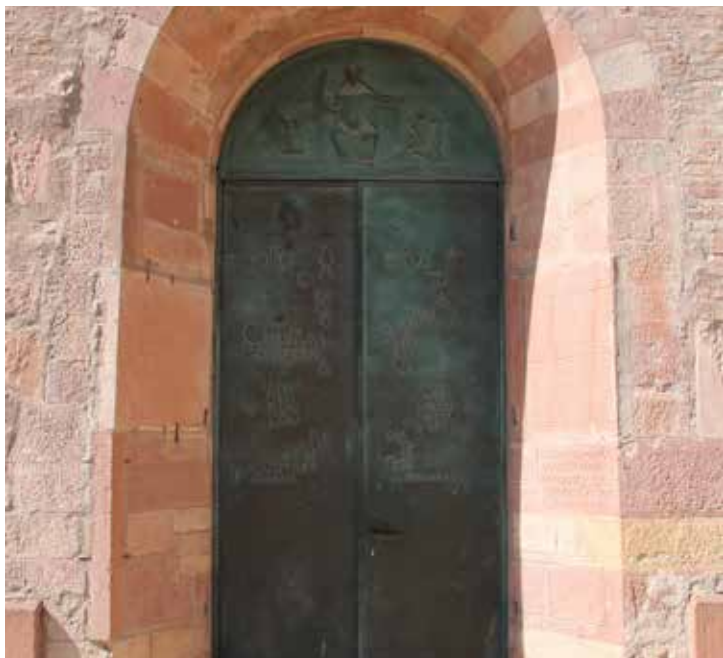
Together with many other gateways in this extraordinary Holy Year of Mercy, this entrance is an invitation to discover and contemplate the “mystery of the Christian faith” (Pope Francis).

Pope Francis has called for a “Holy Year of Mercy”.

This will start on the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2015 and end on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November 2016.

St. Peter’s Basilica and other important churches in Rome have their own “Holy Doors”; for the first time, every Episcopal church will feature such an element. This will also be the case at Speyer Cathedral. In the Diocese of Speyer, “Holy Doors” will be installed in three other locations: in Blieskastel, Ludwigshafen-Oggersheim and in Maria Rosenberg.

Allow yourself a little time to ponder as you now continue on. This contemplation can provide a pathway into yourself and towards God. Carry your life with you. Allow yourself to journey where your impulses lead you. Feel yourself led and called upon. Open the doors wide – open your eyes, your ears, and your heart. Discover something about God and his love. Experience the cathedral as a monument to the Christian faith.



➤ As you enter, softly say a prayer of trust, e.g. “Jesus, I trust in you ...” or “In the Lord I’ll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice. Look to God, do not be afraid. Lift up your voices, the Lord is near. Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.” If you know the melody of this song, you can sing it or hum it softly.

➤ Turn to the right and walk to the entrance of the baptistery.

## **2 In the Baptistery: God embraces you – unconditionally and full of Mercy**

You are standing at the threshold of the Cathedral’s Baptistery. Baptism is the passageway into the Church. It is a common rite that brings Christians from all denominations together, forming a global community of life and faith.

➤ Enter the baptistery, descend the few steps and take a seat.

If only the baptismal font could speak! For innumerable children and adults have received the sacrament of baptism through the centuries ...

When we speak of baptism, we are speaking essentially of God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Who is this God? What is he like? What does he do? What does he want? Does he exist at all? These are all questions that we will address.

According to the Apostle John, “God is Love”(John 4:16). God does nothing other than love, love, love. The individual needn’t do anything to receive this



love. All that is necessary is to open the inner doors to God. However, even in this respect, God is there, aiding you in finding and opening these doors.

A human being who wishes to be baptized or wants to actively experience his baptism, discovers traces of God's love all through his life. Over time, he discovers more and more. The love of God allows one's life to grow, blossom and ripen. This also holds true for the hard times.

- Perhaps the following questions will help encourage contemplation:  
What do you think of God? Do you feel his presence in your life?

### **3 At the Stoup**

If you have been baptized, take some time here to remember your baptism, fully aware and thankful. Remind yourself: I have been baptized in the name of God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

- You are welcome to take a small amount of holy water from the stoup with your fingertips and make a sign of the cross.
- Continue through the side aisles to the main entrance of the cathedral, and let yourself be moved by what moves you ... Contemplate alone and in silence, or in quiet conversation ...



➤ Pause for a moment at the main entrance and take in the cathedral in all its serenity and grandeur.

#### **4 At the Main Entrance: God provides you with space – unconditionally, full of mercy**

Simply put, the view into the cathedral is splendid. The majesty and serenity, the harmony of the architecture, the rhythm of the pillars and arches ... Just the simplicity of the cathedral itself has delighted many visitors.

The cathedral itself is a symbol. It is like a castle or a city, with its architecture imparting feelings of security and protection. When all is still and silent in this space, one can feel something of peace and security.

All of these qualities are referred to in the Bible. They permeate the tales and stories of those individuals who have encountered God.

In the final book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation, the image of a city at the end of time is rendered with bold strokes and intense colours. This city is adorned with precious stones, ready like a bride for her groom. The city is deemed holy because God makes it holy, residing at its centre. It is flooded with light, because God himself is light. The city is a beacon of light, attracting the many peoples of the world, from the North, South, East and West. In their lives they experience abundance, healing, solace and blessing.



The image of this Holy City is the envisioning of the world's aim: all mankind in safety huddled around God himself. This vision is all-inclusive, with each human being given their equal share. Each one of us carries the longing for this goal in their hearts: a world in the embrace of divine peace.

The vision of this heavenly city is the mysterious blueprint of the cathedral. All the elements of the cathedral reference this city, which descended from heaven to earth. Whoever enters this building has to a certain degree arrived in paradise, yet at the same time remains far from it, still on the path towards its lofty heights.

➤ From the back of the cathedral a path forwards in the direction of the altar is indicated. Please follow this path if you wish, and take a seat at one of the pews at the front.

➤ The following questions may guide you towards valuable insights: Deep down, what drives me in life? What yearning guides me? What have I already found in life?

## **5 The Madonna and the Cross: God's Mercy in human form**

What makes up the adventure of life, your life?

The Christian faith maintains that life is like a pilgrimage, made up of highs and lows, marked by times of effort and recovery.



The search for and discovery of God's presence – this is an essential part of this adventure. There are times of excitement and surprise, and always more and more questions to answer.

And God himself comes to meet you.

He asks questions regarding you.

He is also searching – for you.

In the singular and exemplary case of Mary, the search that God endeavoured found its goal.

An angel of God found Mary. With her consent, God grew inside her as a human being, and was born into the world. Christmas allows Christians to celebrate the mysterious human incarnation of God. Mary holds her son upon her arm as if to say “Behold – this is he. He is here and can open the doors to life for all.” And these doors he opens onto a new life. If you follow in Jesus' footsteps you will experience God's salvation.

And rightly you may ask, “But why is there still harm, strife, war, death ...?”

The Bible responds with an old tale: because the human being has been given the freedom to stray from God and his love. The Bible uses the word sin to describe this. Sin is not just the transgression of one of God's commandments. Sin functions in an even more negative sense, eroding the relationship between God and humankind, sowing mistrust, poisoning relations, replicating sin, growing from a bed of lies, falsehood, egoism and self-interest.





Jesus came to heal the wounds inflicted upon the world by sin. He came and, as the Christian prayer states, “takes away the sin of the world.” Jesus does this with the persistence of his love, to the point of the surrender of his own life.

For this reason the Christian faith maintains that Jesus’ death born of love defeated sin. Furthermore, his death on the cross was also a victory over death itself. Love rises from the darkness of death to reassemble all that has been destroyed. It brightens all darkness; it is the light of life.

Sin and death remain present and perceptible, and accompany the journey of each and every human being. Nevertheless, Christians believe that sin and death are vanquished by God’s love. This is salvation. This is freedom. This is the springing up of new life.

The cross is thus not revered as a symbol of death, but rather as a “tree of life”. The symbol of the cross is encountered often as you pass through the cathedral. It even provides the shape of its very floor plan: the longitudinal stretch from the main entrance to the apse intersects with the transepts right and left, and where they meet there is the upper altar.

The cross is the essential foundation of Christianity. The love of God streams forth like a light, emanating from the cross of Jesus Christ. God is love. He is compassion. He acts mercifully.

Jesus is the human face of divine love and mercy. It is he who is really the “Door of Mercy”.



- Next to the candles there are cards printed with a prayer; you may take one and speak the prayer before the cross. Pope Francis has written this prayer especially for the “Holy Year of Mercy”.
- At this time, feel free to light a small candle. It will continue burning even after you have left the cathedral, like a persistent, silent prayer.
- Now you can continue down the nave towards the main entrance. From there you can turn to the right into the northern side aisle.

## 6 The Side Aisles: Mercy goes on

Here you can see a table and two chairs. Sit down if you wish to linger for a few moments. Here, there are several possible activities open to you:

### **You can take a moment to get in touch with yourself once more.**

Write whatever comes to mind on a pre-prepared slip of paper. What do you wish to take away from this experience? What would you like to leave behind for others to read? If you wish, you can tack what you wrote to the pin board. There is still room enough for your message.

### **You can talk with a person who is happy to listen to you.**

Here you can see a list of times where you can speak to a pastor. If you are lucky enough, and someone is there right now, seize the opportunity to communicate



with a welcoming partner. If no one is around, perhaps you can find the time to come back another time to say what you need to say?

### **You can celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation (confession).**

You can also see a table of times when you can confess. To help you prepare yourself for your confession there is a chart posted where you can perhaps see a reflection of your state of conscience. Naturally, you also have the opportunity to receive this sacrament in other churches. Have faith and do not be afraid: God awaits you, full of love and mercy.

### **Your journey down the path of Mercy continues!**

At your disposal there are some helpful guides to lead you along the path of Mercy. You can continue down this path by performing acts of Mercy yourself.

And now we wish you well as you continue along this road. The love of God follows you on this journey. He sends down his blessings and may you pass them on to others.

**“Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.”**

(Pope Francis in his proclamation of the “Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy”)



## **Cathedral Opening Hours:**

Weekdays April until October: 9am – 7pm

Weekdays from November until March: 9am – 5pm

Sunday year-round: 12pm – 6pm

## **Church Services:**

Holy Mass on Sundays and Holidays: 7.30am, 10am, 6pm

Weekdays (at the St. Afra Chapel): Monday – Friday: 7am

Tuesday & Friday: 6pm

Saturday: 7.30am

## **Midday Prayer:**

Wednesday, Saturday  
and Sunday: 12.10pm

## **Confession:**

Saturday: 5pm – 6pm

## **For further pastoral offers:**

please check the information board  
or the cathedral's website



[www.dom-zu-speyer.de](http://www.dom-zu-speyer.de)

[info@dom-zu-speyer.de](mailto:info@dom-zu-speyer.de)



Further information pertaining to the  
Holy Year of Mercy can be found at:

[www.bistum-speyer.de](http://www.bistum-speyer.de)

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