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## INAUGURATION OF THE HOLY YEAR.

### IMPOSING CEREMONIES AT ST. PETERS

A ROME correspondent gives the following interesting account of the ceremony of the opening of the Holy Door by his Holiness the Pope on December 24, a brief report of which appeared in a recent issue of the N.Z. TABLET:—

On Sunday morning, at 11 o'clock, the Pope formally inaugurated the Anno Santo or Holy Year by performing the ceremony of opening the Holy Door in the Basilica of St. Peter. This solemn function took place in the vestibule of the Cathedral, from which the public were excluded, but in which were assembled the members of the diplomatic body, the Roman nobility, and a number of distinguished persons who had received invitations from the Pope. At half-past ten his Holiness, accompanied by the Pontifical Court, was carried from his apartments to the Roving Hall, where the Cardinals, patriarchs, bishops, and all the dignitaries of the Pontifical Court were gathered. Having put on the pontifical vestments, Leo XIII. mounted the *Sedia Gestatoria*, and, preceded by a long train of Cardinals and ecclesiastics, was borne to the Sistine Chapel, where were assembled the representatives of all the religious Orders and the clergy of the confraternities in Rome.

After a short prayer before the Holy Sacrament, which was exposed on the altar, the Pope left the *Sedia Gestatoria* and intoned the 'Veni Creator.' The procession was then resumed, with the addition of the religious Orders, who carried lighted candles. Near the portico at the side of the Holy Door the Papal Throne was erected. Here the Pope was received by the Chapter of the Vatican, and he then took his seat on the throne, surrounded by all the princes of the Church.

At the signal given by the great bell of St. Peter's, his Holiness approached the Holy Door with two Cardinal deacons and Cardinal Serafino Vannutelli, who handed to the Pontiff the beautiful golden hammer, which is the gift of the Italian bishops. With this the Pope, who was wearing the mitre, struck three forcible strokes on the door, which had previously been sawn through, and which only needed a little additional pressure from the workmen to give way. The threshold of the door having been washed, the Pope, meanwhile, intoning the first words of a psalm which was taken up by the pontifical choir, his Holiness, holding in his right hand the cross and in the left a candle, knelt down at the now open door while the 'Te Deum' was sung. Then rising, he entered the Cathedral alone, followed, after a certain interval, by the Cardinals and the Bishops.

At the moment all the church bells in Rome were set pealing. The Pope, on passing into the basilica, stopped at the Altar of Pity, and here, in accordance with ancient usage, the Guards of the Arch-confraternities of Rome, whose office it is to keep the Holy Door during the Anno Santo, were allowed to kiss the foot of the Supreme Pontiff. After a brief discourse on the significance of the ceremony which had just been performed, the Pope proceeded to the Altar of the Holy Sacrament, where he offered a short prayer, and was then carried to the High Altar, from which he pronounced the Benediction.

The public who thronged the Cathedral at this point broke into loud cheers for the Pope. After a short interval his Holiness took off his vestments, and was carried back to his apartments. All was over by one o'clock. During the two hours and a-half that the ceremony lasted the Holy Father kept up wonderfully well, though he looked very pale and worn. The aged Pontiff smiled constantly on the people and the attendant ecclesiastics, and his voice, which was weak at the beginning, gradually gained in strength towards the end.

### THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE CEREMONY.

The preparations for the opening of the Holy Door began on December 19, when stone portals that had remained undisturbed since they were sealed by Pope Leo XII., in 1825, were removed. In their place were erected light frames of wood and iron, which, on Christmas Eve swung inward, responsive to the knock of the Pontiff.

The coincidence of this Holy Year with the end of the century and the beginning of another has raised the belief in many that some relationship exists between these circumstances, while in reality it is the faculty of the Pontiff to proclaim the intervals by which Holy Years shall be divided. And now, while Rome is preparing to solemnise with elaborate festivities the industry of the world at the beginning of the century, from the Eternal City the

voice of Leo XIII. summons the faithful to reunite themselves for the solemnities of the Holy Year in a grand and universal jubilee, when greater favours and indulgences will be granted.

### PAST JUBILEES.

The last Holy Year—when, however, the ceremony of the opening of the Holy Doorway was not performed—was proclaimed in 1875 by the preceding Pontiff—Pius IX.—and many remember still the great assembly of foreigners, which was marked by the arrival in Rome of the international deputations from Italy, Austria, Hungary, Russia, the United States, and Australia.

The Holy Year, or Jubilee, derives its origin from the custom instituted by Moses, when the elect people every fiftieth year were called to sanctify themselves with works of piety. The first Holy Year was proclaimed in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII.

The Pontiff did not live then in the Vatican, but at the patriarchal palace of St. John in Lateran, and it was from the pontifical residence that the famous bull was issued whereby he assigned the Basilica of St. Peter as the goal of reunion for the pilgrimage. To the appeal of the Pontiff there was immediate response, with great enthusiasm, and to Rome began to flock in thousands the devotees from France, Spain, England, and Germany. It was estimated that about 2,000,000 of foreigners came to Rome on that occasion, and among these were such illustrious persons as Carlo Martello, the King of Hungary, and Charles of Valois, brother to Philip the Fair, in company with his wife, Catherine, niece to the Empress Baldwin, besides his sons and a suite of about 500 French knights.

Rome was then inclosed with a wall broken here and there by towers. The Church of St. Peter's was far different from what it is now, being entered by means of small marble steps that the faithful ascended kneeling and kissing them one by one. Ingress to the church was through five large doors, of which that in the middle was called the silver doorway and was almost always closed, since it was destined for monarchs: in more recent ages another was called 'Holy,' and reserved for jubilee years.

It was Pope Alexander VI. of the Borgia house who, after having personally directed researches for the purpose of discovering the position of the holy doorway which had been opened on the fourth jubilee of Boniface IX., not succeeding in his attempt, ordered a new one to be made, and that this might afterwards be recognised he adorned it with marble and sculpture.

### THE GOLDEN HAMMER.

The golden hammer which the Pope uses is a precious piece of goldsmith's work, and, besides a work of art, is a manifestation of symbolical talent that the Italian episcopacy offers to the Pontiff. But besides this there are three other hammers offered him for the opening of the doorways in the other churches. The French Catholics have given that for St. John Lateran, the work of a celebrated goldsmith of Lyons; the clergy and Catholic laity of Italy that for St. Mary the Greater, made on the design of the architect Collamarini; and the Catholic laity of the German Empire that for St. Paul's. The last opening of the holy doorway was celebrated, as we have said, in 1825 and a copperplate engraving of the ceremony of that year exhibits the Pontiff, Leo XII., in the act of striking with his golden hammer the fragile wall which closed up the doorway. Some old people now living, who were then in Rome, remember the ceremony of that year, when the Pontiff, in penitence, proceeded barefoot to the tomb of St. Philip Neri, and went also to wash the feet of the poor in the hospital of Trinita dei Pellegrini, and to perform other works of charity and humiliation.

### THE HOLY YEAR OF 1825.

Among those who were present at the opening of the holy doorway in 1825 was Joachim Pecci, the present Pontiff.

It is too early yet to know all that is contained in the various documents that may be found hidden by the door closed by Pope Leo XII. at the end of the year 1825, but it is believed that they will be found to contain many things which, when fully disclosed, will verge upon the prophetic.

A peculiar coincidence marks the ceremonies of 1825 and of the present year in that Pope Leo XII. almost a year before the time for the ceremony of 1825 was not expected to live, and, in fact, had taken the last sacraments on December 23, 1825, and prepared for death. He recovered, however, and lived until 1829. At the end of the jubilee year he closed the portals and sealed them up, anticipating that within a quarter, or at the latest half, of a century some succeeding Pope would open them and find the relics and tokens deposited within.