

Proclamation of the Jubilee Year 2025

On 9th May, Solemnity of the Ascension, the Holy Father formally proclaimed the Jubilee Year, the upcoming Holy Year of 2025, that will commence on Christmas Eve this year. The Church has celebrated ‘Jubilee Years’ or ‘Holy Years’ ever since 1300; every 25 years has become the general rule. Pope Francis made the proclamation in the Bull of Indiction *Spes non confundit*: ‘Francis, Bishop of Rome, Servant of the Servants of God – To all who read this letter, may hope fill your hearts.’ The Bull then opens with the words, *Spes non confundit* – a quote from St Paul’s Letter to the Romans: ‘Hope does not disappoint.’ (*Rom 5:5*)

Hope, the Holy Father writes, is ‘the central message of the coming Jubilee’. ‘My thoughts’, he says, ‘turn to all those *pilgrims of hope* who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches. For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the “door” (cf. *Jn 10:7, 9*) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as “our hope” (*1 Tim 1:1*).’ (1)

Pope Francis recalls the Jubilees of the recent past – the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, when, as he says, ‘we crossed the threshold of two millennia from the birth of Jesus Christ’; and the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy that he proclaimed for 2016. The upcoming Holy Year, he says, ‘will also guide our steps towards yet another fundamental celebration for all Christians: 2033 will mark the two thousandth anniversary of the redemption won by the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.’ (6)

‘Sustained by this great tradition’, he declares, ‘and certain that the Jubilee Year will be for the entire Church a lively experience of grace and hope, I hereby decree that the Holy Door of the Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican will be opened on 24 December 2024, thus inaugurating the Ordinary Jubilee...I further decree that on Sunday, 29 December 2024, in every cathedral...diocesan bishops are to celebrate Holy Mass as the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year...A pilgrimage that sets out from a church chosen for the *collectio* and then proceeds to the cathedral can serve to symbolise the journey of hope that, illumined by the word of God, unites all the faithful.’ (6) So that might be something we are able to take part in locally, especially if we are unable to travel to Rome as pilgrims ourselves.

The Pope continues: ‘The Holy Year will conclude in the particular Churches on Sunday, 28 December 2025...The Ordinary Jubilee will conclude with the closing of the Holy Door in the Papal Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican on 6 January 2026, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.’ (6)

We are already in the Year of Prayer of 2024, which the Holy Father has proclaimed as a preparation for the Jubilee Year. As legionaries we are always intent on inflaming in others the practice of prayer, such as the Rosary, so we might use the Year of Prayer as a new opportunity to help us in that mission.

It can also be a time to examine our own prayer life, in Our Lady’s company, and see where we might grow further. That might be in the *amount and regularity* of our prayer – legionaries who are faithful already have a solid foundation – but we can also look at the *attention and quality* of our prayer. We know well enough that our prayer must be true recollection and encounter

with God, not just external words with little concentration. Still, the danger of slipping backwards is always present. Involuntary distractions will always be with us to some extent – we are human – so we avoid excessive self-criticism or perfectionism, which themselves end up focusing on self rather than God. But we can examine ourselves in a balanced way on how well we place ourselves in God’s presence and remain there.

Looking ahead to the Jubilee Year itself, the Holy Father writes: ‘*Pilgrimage* [is] a fundamental element of every Jubilee event...The Jubilee Churches along the pilgrimage routes and in the city of Rome can serve as oases of spirituality and places of rest on the pilgrimage of faith, where we can drink from the wellsprings of hope, above all by approaching the sacrament of Reconciliation, the essential starting-point of any true journey of conversion. In the particular Churches, special care should be taken to prepare priests and the faithful to celebrate the sacrament of Confession and to make it readily available in its individual form.’ (5)

Pope Francis identifies different situations in our world and people in difficulty in special need of proclamations of hope: war; the ‘loss of the desire to transmit life’; prisoners; the sick; the young; migrants and refugees; the elderly; the ‘billions of the poor’; the need of poor countries for debt forgiveness. (7-16)

He also highlights that 2025 will be, he writes, ‘the 1700th anniversary of the celebration of the first great Ecumenical Council, that of Nicaea’ [in the year 325]. ‘[This] sought to preserve the Church’s unity, which was seriously threatened by the denial of the full divinity of Jesus Christ and hence his consubstantiality with the Father. Some three hundred bishops took part...After various debates, by the grace of the Spirit they unanimously approved the Creed that we still recite each Sunday at the celebration of the Eucharist...The Council of Nicaea was a milestone in the Church’s history. The celebration of its anniversary invites Christians to join in a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity and in particular to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, “consubstantial with the Father”, who revealed to us that mystery of love.’ (17)

After speaking of the hope for eternal life (19-21) and the reality of God’s judgement, (22) Pope Francis explains the Jubilee Indulgence – a standard feature of Jubilee Years. ‘The sacrament of Penance assures us that God wipes away our sins’, he writes, yet ‘...certain residual effects of sin remain.’ (23) ‘Every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death, in the state called Purgatory.’ (23, quoting *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 1472)

These residual effects ‘are removed by the indulgence, always by the grace of Christ, who, as Saint Paul VI wrote, “is himself our ‘indulgence’”.’ (23) The Apostolic Penitentiary has issued norms for the Jubilee Indulgence, which can be gained by pilgrimage and by various visits to sacred sites as well as being made abundantly available for works of mercy and penance: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/tribunals/apost_penit/documents/rc_penitenzieria-ap_20240513_norme-indulgenza-giubileo2025_en.html

‘Hope’, the Holy Father affirms, ‘finds its supreme witness in the Mother of God...Popular piety continues to invoke the Blessed Virgin as *Stella Maris*, a title that bespeaks the sure hope that, amid the tempests of this life, the Mother of God comes to our aid, sustains us and encourages us to persevere in hope and trust.’ (24) ‘The storms that buffet us will never prevail, for we are firmly anchored in the hope born of grace, which enables us to live in Christ and to overcome sin, fear and death...May the power of hope fill our days, as we await with confidence the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever.’ (25)