

The Jubilee: Its Spiritual, Ecclesial, and Social Significance in the Life of the Church

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Abstract

This paper explores the significance of 2025 Jubilee Year from the deductive starting point of view in an attempt to engage in theological discourse. In the process, it examines Jubilee and Holy Year from the Old Testament in the pre-exilic and post-exilic epochs; illustrates the mode of operation of the Holy Year; highlights the essence of the previous Jubilee Years; demonstrates the Ecclesial, Spiritual, and social significances of 2025 Jubilee Year; enumerates the fruits of the Jubilee and draws conclusion. The piece of work views the 2025 Jubilee Year as symbol of hope for the entire world; permeating great expectations and assuring God's presence in our world. The article affirms that we plant the seeds of hope in another person's life when we have a genuine encounter with others. In addition, everyone participates in this Jubilee Year when individuals embark on personal inward pilgrimage for transformation and conversion and by going on external pilgrimage to encounter God in holy places of worship and in one another by offering good deeds to alleviate sufferings of others and by showing love and offering

happiness to others. These good actions we take upon ourselves in joyful hope as we expect to receive happiness in eternity by the power of Christ who loved us and empowered us and offered himself for us in the unity of the Holy Trinity.

Introduction

The 2025 Jubilee Year, as Pope Francis declares, is a Jubilee of hope. The Pontiff accentuates that we need to recognize, and even claim, the enormous goodness which exists in the contemporary times, reminding ourselves to have a positive outlook of the present-day because in the midst of violence and miseries of this present times, there are signs of hope as our hearts desire God, panting for His saving succour. The Jubilee's essence is to emphasize that hope does not disappoint us. The fulcrum of this hope is Jesus Christ as we await his second coming with great expectation of hope. With the grace of baptism, Christians receive a new life and when they die in Christ, the baptized Christians make entry into heaven at a point where hope breaks down the power of death and earns them a passage to eternity with the saving power of our Lord Jesus Christ in whom they placed their hope.

Thus, the Jubilee Year is offering the contemporary times the opportunity to appreciate, with gratitude, the gift of new life at baptism, a life that transfigures death's saga ¹ into a life of happiness where we will live forever a life of love that does not disappoint and which nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ.²

¹ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, "Bull for Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025", (9 May, 2024), 20. www.vatican.va . Accessed 01/08/2024.

² *Spes Non Confundit*, 21.

Moreover, the pontiff deems it fit to pronounce a Jubilee of hope in 2025 because hope, with faith and charity, gives inward direction and purpose to the life of believers; enabling them to bear credible witness to the faith and love that dwell in their hearts, propelling the faith to be joyful and charity be enthusiastic. With hope set in motion in individual hearts, the believers are empowered to offer smiles, gesture of friendship, kind look, and a ready listening ear in the Spirit of Jesus to one another in these precarious times; so that the good deeds shown to others become rich seeds of hope for those who receive them.³

Jubilee Year

In the pre-exilic Judaism, the Jubilee Year was called יִבְיָבֵל *hayyobel* (the Yobel).⁴ As recorded in the Old Testament in Leviticus 25:9-13, *hayyobel*, stands for the ram's horn which was blown as a trumpet (sopar) in the Day of Atonement for sins. In history, among the Hebrew, the Jubilee Year was inaugurated by the blowing of a ram's horn trumpet. Thus, *hayyobel*, is connected with Latin word, *Jubilaus*, meaning joyous shouting.

According to R. North, who testifies to what was handed over to the progeny of the Jews, the Jubilee Year was to be celebrated on every seventh sabbath year which indicated the ending of a cycle of 49 years which is the 50th year.⁵ The legislation for this year aims at protecting the small farmers against monopolizing landholders and as a scheme so that all land shall remain ultimately in the same

³ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 18.

⁴ Lev. 25:1-55.

⁵ Lev. 25:8.

family forever.⁶ Thus, the Jubilee Year's institution was to be kept on every seventh sabbath year by restoring alienated lands; freeing Hebrew slaves; and abstaining from sowing and harvesting.⁷ The theological value, however, is to emphasize that God is the only true owner of all the land and God decreed that the land be utilized as private property and be managed sorely so that all the world's population may have reasonable access to its resources.⁸

The Holy Year

In the post-exilic narrative and up to A D 70, the Jews continued to hold the sabbatical, *hayyobel*, in which debts of the fellow Jews were remitted. Nevertheless, *the popes in the Middle Ages (A D 500-1600) applied the concept of the Jubilee Year spiritually by proclaiming a Holy Year beginning and ending the year with sacred ceremonies to improve the spiritual, ecclesial and social life of the faithful*. Holy Year is ordinary when it occurs at regular intervals of every 25 years in modern times but the intervals had been adjusted over the centuries according to the reigning pontiffs, and it is extra-ordinary when holy year is proclaimed by the Roman Pontiff for some very special reason⁹ like Marian Year declared by St. John Paul II between June 7, 1987 and August 15, 1988 in preparation for the forthcoming Millennium and the Year of Mercy declared by Pope Francis between December 8, 2015 and November 20, 2016 to re-

⁶ Lev. 27:24.

⁷ Lev. 25:23-38.

⁸ R. North. "Jubilee Year" in Berard L. Marthaler (ed), *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 7. Second Edition, (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), p. 1062-1063.

⁹ Gavigan J.J. (eds) "Holy Year" in Bernard Marthaler (ed), *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 7. Second Edition, (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), p. 56-57.

encounter the Merciful Heavenly Father and be renewed by His gift of love and share His love with those entrusted to us each day.

Mode of operation

An ordinary Jubilee Year begins on December 24 with first Vespers of Christmas. On this day, the Holy Doors of the Ancient Four Basilicas of Rome are Opened (the Basilica of St. Peter, the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, the Basilica of St. Mary Major and the Arch-Basilica of St. John Lateran. The purpose is for the people to make pilgrimage to these holy places and pass through the Holy Doors in order to gain Jubilee indulgence.¹⁰ In order to gain the full benefits, one must go for confession, receive the Holy Communion at the celebration of Mass, and visit the four Major Basilicas for those who have the opportunity to be in the City of Rome or those who visit the Churches designated by the local ordinary in particular Churches.¹¹

Thus, a Holy Year is one in which a solemn *plenary indulgence* is granted to the faithful under certain conditions.¹² The objective is to

¹⁰ Indulgence in the Roman Catholic Church is granted by the Pope for the remission (lessening, a decrease) of the temporal punishment due for sins after absolution.

¹¹ Gavigan J.J. (eds) "Holy Year" in Bernard Marthaler (ed), *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 7. Second Edition, (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2003), p. 56-57.

¹² A plenary means "Full". A plenary indulgence is a special type of indulgence that if all the requirements are met, it removes all temporal punishment due to one's sin. The conditions are – visit the Blessed Sacrament for adoration for continuous 30 minutes; devotedly participate in a Eucharistic Procession, spend three days in retreat; devotedly participate in the adoration of the Cross at the Good Friday Liturgy, pray for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff, have sacramentally confessed sins, receive the Holy Eucharist at the celebration of Mass. This is different from a partial indulgence which covers part of the punishment due for sins. Both kinds of indulgence come from the merits of Jesus, the Blessed Mother Mary and the saints. Those

garner the original meaning of the Year of Jubilee which is to make a joyful shout unto the Lord for his magnificent spiritual and material resources bestowed on humanity and encourage a sharing of faith, hope and charity by empowering one another with such gifts and most especially by cancelling debts of sins and monetary debts.

Previous Jubilee Years

According to a Vatican document¹³ and another research,¹⁴ before the Jubilee 2025, there had been 26 previous ordinary Jubilee in the History of the Church from first one declared by Pope Boniface VII in the year 1300 and the twenty-sixth Jubilee Year in 2000 declared by Pope John Paul II. The Jubilee in various years were determined for various intentions but the main purposes were the emphases on holiness of life and ongoing conversion of the people, and renewal of faith and love of God in peoples' hearts. Each of the popes issued Bull¹⁵ to inform the whole world of the significance of each Jubilee Year. A researcher deemed it fit to collate the Year of the Jubilee.¹⁶

impeded by age or illness or other grave cause will also be able to obtain plenary indulgence. They must do three essential conditions (Confession, Holy Communion, and prayer for the pope's intentions).

¹³ History-Vatican, History of the Jubilees, "The Holy See", www.vatican.va/jubilee_2000/documents/ Accessed: 08/08/2024.

¹⁴ Giubileo 2025, "Jubilees throughout History". The Holy See, Dicastery of Evangelization, www.vatican.va. Accessed 02/08/2024.

¹⁵ A Papal Bull is a type of public decree, letter patent, of charter issued by the Pope of Catholic Church. It carries significant authority and often deals with matters of great importance of the Church. The name is derived from the lead seal (bulla) traditionally affixed to such documents.

¹⁶ GCatholic.org "Celebrations and Documents tagged with Jubilee", 2024 GCatholic.org. www.gcatholic.org/documents/tag/jubilee.htm Accessed:26/06/2024.

The First

The 1st Holy Year was declared opened by Pope Boniface VIII (d. 1303) in the year 1300 for gaining of indulgences. He issued the Bull *Antiquorum Habet Digna fide Relatio*. At this time, Jubilee was determined to be celebrated every 100 years. A universal Jubilee was celebrated. It was decreed that under the condition of contrition and confession, the faithful could gain plenary indulgence by making visits to the Basilicas.

The Second

The 2nd was celebrated in 1350. Pope Clement VI (d. 1352) ascended the throne and decreed a jubilee every 50 years. He issued the Bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius*. This was occasioned by the people of Rome who sent delegation to the Pope and asked him to bring the Apostolic See to the city of Rome and hold a Jubilee before the distinctive 100 years period.

The Third

The 3rd, in 1389, Pope Urban VI (d. 1389) established that the celebration of the Jubilee should take place every 33 years because of the belief that our Saviour Jesus Christ lived 33 years on earth. He issued the Bull *Salvator Noster Unigenitus Dei*. However, Pope Urban VI (d. 1389) died before the opening of the Holy Doors. Pope Boniface IX (d. 1404) celebrated the Holy Year in 1390.

The Fourth

The 4th, in the year 1400, the Holy Year was celebrated by Pope Boniface IX (d. 1404) with a Bull *Dudum Felicis* because of the many crowds that came in 1390. He decided to have another Jubilee Year earlier than the scheduled time. The 1400s were the unsettled times in the life of the Church due to plagues and schisms.

The Fifth

The 5th Jubilee Year was in 1425 which was declared by Pope Martin V (d. 1431) with two novelties of a special commemorative Jubilee Medal and opening of a Holy Door in the Cathedral of St. John in the Lateran.

The Sixth

The 6th Jubilee Year was proclaimed by Pope Nicholas V (d. 1455) in 1450 with a Bull *Immensa et Innumerabilia*. Pope Paul II (d. 1471) issued a Bull in 1470 to fix the Jubilee for every 25 years.

The Seventh

The 7th Holy Year was proclaimed by Sixtus IV (d. 1484) in 1475 with the Bull *Salvator Noster*. He wished to adorn Rome with works of art and ordered the building of Sistine Chapel and the Ponte Sisto with many renowned artists working in Rome at that time.

The Eighth

The 8th Jubilee Year was in 1500 declared by Pope Alexander VI (d. 1503) with the Bull issue in 1499 as *Inter Causa Multiplices*. He established the opening and closing of Holy Year with ceremonies and specific liturgical rites which were not there before that time. The Pope legislated that the opening Door refers to the Gospel of John: *I am the Door. Whoever passes through me will be saved (John 10:9)*. The opening of the St. Peter's Door was to be done by the reigning Pontiff while the other Doors of the three Basilicas ((St. John Lateran, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul Outside Walls) were to be opened by 3 appointed Cardinals. The Holy Doors were to be remained opened and guarded by 4 clerics taking turns throughout the Jubilee Year.

The Ninth

The 9th Jubilee was established by Pope Clement VII (d. 1534) in 1525 with the Bull *Inter Sollicitudines et Coram Nobis*. It was a critical moment of war, schisms, Protestant Reformation, and Plagues.

The Tenth

The 10th Jubilee Year was proclaimed by pope Paul III (d. 1549) with a Bull *Si Pastores Ovium* but the Holy Door of the Jubilee was opened by Julius III (d. 1555) in 1550. There was influx of pilgrims into the City of Rome.

The Eleventh

The 11th Jubilee Year was celebrated by Pope Gregory XIII (d. 1585) in 1575 with the Bull *Dominus ac Redemptor Noster Jesus*. The Jubilee was celebrated after the turmoil of the protestant reformation to renew Catholicism with the decision of the Council of Trent. There were many pilgrims who came to Rome from all over Europe and other parts of the world.

The Twelfth

The 12th Jubilee Year was celebrated in 1600 by Pope Clement VIII (d. 1605) with the Bull *Annus Domini Placabilis*. The pope heard the confessions and served meals to the pilgrims who came to Rome. Many more pilgrims came to Rome in that year.

The Thirteenth

The 13th Jubilee Year was celebrated in 1625 and was proclaimed by Pope Urban VIII (d. 1644) with a Bull *Omnes Gentes Plaudite Manibus*. The novelty to this Jubilee was the indulgence which was extended to the Belgium Provinces and West Indies. Numerous protestants also converted to Catholicism during the Year.

The Fourteenth

The 14th Jubilee Year was in 1650 which was proclaimed by Pope Innocent X (d. 1655) with the Bull *Appropinquat Dilectissimi Filii*. He extended the Jubilee indulgence to those who were unable to travel to Rome and to prisoners and the sick because of the plague of that year. He dispensed people from traditional visits to Basilica of St. Paul Outside Walls and replaced it with visit to the Central Church of Santa Maria and San Lorenzo. Lesser people went to Rome that year.

The Fifteenth

The 15th Jubilee Year was in 1675 and was proclaimed by Pope Clement X (d. 1676) with the Bull *Ad Apostolicae Vocis Oraculum*. The Jubilee stopped the fights which erstwhile was staged in Colosseum. He reconstructed the ancient building and many more pilgrims visited City of Rome that year.

The Sixteenth

The 16th Jubilee Year was opened in 1700 by Pope Innocent XII (d. 1700) with the Bull *Regi Saeculorum*. He established charitable institutions in Rome. The Jubilee was concluded by Clement XI (d. 1721).

The Seventeenth

The 17th Jubilee Year was in 1725 with the bull *Redemptor et Dominus Noster Jesus Christus* by Pope Benedict XIII (d. 1730).

The Eighteenth

The 18th Jubilee was proclaimed by Pope Benedict XIV (d. 1758) in 1750 with the Bull *Peregrinantes a Domino*. In this year, for the first time, St. Peter's Dome and Bernini's Colonnade were illuminated by thousands of flaming torches; 3000 crosses were built all over the

City of Rome. The Pontiff instituted the Good Friday *Via Crucis*¹⁷ at the Colosseum and consecrated the Iconic amphitheatre as a sacred space set aside to honour the memory of the martyrs of the early Christians. There were many pilgrims in Rome and was so large that charitable homes in Rome and hospitals were forced to rent royal places to cope with the number of pilgrims.

The Nineteenth

The 19th Jubilee Year was in the year 1775. Pope Clement XIV (d. 1774) proclaimed the year in 1774 but died shortly afterwards with a Bull *Salutis Nostrae Acutorr*. The opening of the Jubilee Door was done by Pius VI (d. 1799) Nothing was done at this time of the Jubilee.

The Twentieth

The French invasion prevented the celebration of the Jubilee in the Year 1800. However,

The 20th Jubilee was celebrated by Pope Leo XII (d. 1829) in the year 1825 with the Bull *Quod Hoc Ineunte*. The Jubilee was to establish a bond between the Pope and the Christian people through a programme that involved all the resources of the Church Curia in the struggles against errors that threatened the faith.

The Twenty-first

In 1850, which was to be the next Jubilee Year but there was Napoleonic war and there was no Jubilee. The 21st Jubilee was proclaimed by Pope Pius IX (d. 1878) in 1875 with the Bull *Gravibus Ecclesiae sed saeculi Calamantis* which he proclaimed after his return from exile and resumed the government of the Papal State.

¹⁷ 14 Stations of the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But because of the troops of King Victor Emmanuel II that occupied the City of Rome at this time, it was impossible to have ceremonies of opening and closing of Holy Doors.

The Twenty-second

The 22nd Holy Year was celebrated in the year 1900 by Pope Leo XIII (d. 1903) with the Bull *Properante ad Exitum Saeculo*. The Jubilee was called the Christian Jubilee because there was the unification of Italy with the Church and it was the king who announced the Jubilee in his speech of the crown. The Pope sent out an awakening of faith in the people. The main intention was to challenges the modernization of Christian life and promote Christianization of modern life. It was the Italian authorities who welcomed the pilgrims at that Jubilee Year celebration. Monuments to commemorate the Jubilee were erected from the North to the South of Sicily in order to pay homage to Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.

The Twenty-third

The 23rd Jubilee Year was celebrated by Pope Pius XI (d. 1939) in the year 1925 with the Bull *Infinita Dei Misericordia*. He directed the attention of the faithful to the work of the missions. He banned political symbols in the Vatican and bless the unified Italian State. He inaugurated the extra-ordinary Jubilee year in 1933 with the Bull *Quod Nuper* to mark 1900th anniversary of the death of Jesus. Many pilgrims visited Rome that year.

The Twenty-fourth

24th Jubilee Year was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII (d. 1958) in the year 1950 with the Bull *Jubilaeum Maximum*. The Pope defines the Dogma of Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. He transformed the college of Cardinals into universal representation of the Catholic

world and increase the number of the cardinals from other nations. There was new national anthem for the Vatican. There was religious tourism. The Italian Government issued a “pilgrim Card” which was recognized as having the same validity as passport within Italy in order to permit more pilgrims.

The Twenty-fifth

The 25th Jubilee Year was celebrated in 1975 by Pope Paul VI (d. 1978) with the Bull *Apostolorum Limina*. He decided that the year should be dedicated to reconciliation and renewal. It was the first Jubilee to have worldwide broadcast and there was lifting of historic excommunication with the Church of Byzantium and also involved the participation of the Patriarch of Alexandria Melitone. Many pilgrims observed the year to the point of rationing water in the City of Rome.

The Twenty-sixth

The 26th Jubilee Year was celebrated by Pope John Paul II (d. 2005) in the year 2000 with the Bull *Incarnationis Mysterium*. The Pope included public request for forgiveness of sins committed in history. There was publication of a martyrology of Christians killed in the 20th century. The main event of the Jubilee was World Youth Day in Rome. He also encouraged dialogue between the Catholic Church, Islam and Judaism. This was to mark the transition to the third Christian millennium. Many pilgrims participated in the Jubilee in the City of Rome.

The Twenty-seventh

The 27th ordinary Jubilee would be celebrated in 2025. Pope Francis had issued the Bull *Spes Non Confundit* (*Hope does not disappoint*). One of the aims is to make 2025 Jubilee Year a moment of genuine,

personal encounter with the Lord Jesus who is the *Door* and proclaim him as the Hope of all the Nations.¹⁸ The Jubilee is also identified as a way of renewing confident trust in God in these turbulent times of 21 century.

The 2025 Jubilee is a Holy Year of hope in God as we await with confidence the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. By this Jubilee, the Pontiff intends to rekindle the required confident trust in the Church, in the societies, in the interpersonal relationships, in international relations, in the task of promoting the dignity of all persons and respect for God's gifts of creation. When all is fulfilled, after the Jubilee, the world will be infused with authentic hope, heralding a new heaven and a new earth where everyone lives in justice and harmony in joyful expectation of the accomplishment of the Lord's promises.¹⁹

Pope Francis stated in his Letter to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, for the Jubilee 2025 that the Jubilee has always been an event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church.²⁰ The significances are larded in the Bull of Indiction of the ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025 known as *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope does not disappoint).

¹⁸ 1 Tim. 1:1.

¹⁹ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 25.

²⁰ Jubilee 2025, Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, 11 February, 2022. www.vatican.va,

The Spiritual Significance of the Jubilee

1. *Conversion:* The foremost reason for the celebration of the Jubilee is to foment the ongoing conversion of the children of God. The Pontiff anticipates the Jubilee to serve as oases of spirituality and proposes the pilgrimage centres as places of rest; spaces to drink from the wellsprings of hope. In order to gain the spiritual benefits abundantly, individuals are enjoined to approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation judiciously at the different places of pilgrimage.²¹ The pilgrims are called to contemplate the beauty of creation and the care of our common home.
2. *Love of God poured out:* with the opening of the Holy Door of different Basilicas and designated Holy Doors in Particular Churches, everyone is invited to experience the love of God intensely with an ample influx of grace which precedes and accompanies his people.²²
3. *Forgiveness:* the Jubilee brings the grace of forgiveness which is poured upon God's people. The pontiff reasons that the power of God's forgiveness supports and accompanies communities and individuals in their journeys of life and frees them from hopelessness of the ephemeral entities.
4. *Prayer for the dead:* common mode of prayer for the dead through the means of the Jubilee indulgences is intended to be offered up for those who have died in order to plead for the mercy of God on their behalf. "Mercy" and indulgence

²¹ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 5.

²² Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 6.

are used interchangeably by the pontiff as an expression of the fullness of God's forgiveness which is limitless.²³

5. *Marian Shrines*: the Marian shrines are sacred places of welcome and privilege places for the rebirth of hope. The pilgrims are encouraged to spend time in the Marian Shrines in order to venerate the Blessed Mother and seek her intercession for protection.²⁴
6. *Reading the Scripture*: reading of the scriptures especially during the Jubilee is to foster hope and affirm that this hope is a given.²⁵ It is a gift to embrace and discover that God is the sure refuge and strength.²⁶

The Ecclesia Significance of the Jubilee

1. *Form of Synodality*: the 2025 Jubilee Year serves as an important occasion for giving concrete expression to the form of synodality (journeying together and listening to one another as the people of God). This form of collaboration within the entire Church is increasingly necessary for responding to the urgent need for evangelization in the modern time. More importantly, the year 2025 marks the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in AD 325. With the celebration, everyone is invited to collaborate with one another and be co-responsible for

²³ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 22.

²⁴ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 24.

²⁵ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 25.

²⁶ Heb. 6:18-20.

implanting unity, communion, and signs of hope into our world.²⁷

2. *Pilgrimage*: pilgrimage is a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. By passing through one city to the other in contemplating the beauty of creation, one learns to treasure the richness of different culture and surrender the beauty to God in thanksgiving. The Eastern Churches are invited to take part in the pilgrimage to City of Rome and feel welcomed by the Mother Church and cherish the memories of their presence afterwards.²⁸
3. *Opening the Doors of Grace*: The Jubilee is for the entire Church a lively experience of grace and hope wherein the Holy Door of the Basilica of St. Peter will be opened on 24 December 2024 to inaugurate the Jubilee Year; the Holy Door of St. John Lateran will be opened on 29 December 2024 to celebrate the 1700th anniversary of its dedication; on 1 January 2025, the Holy Door of the Basilica of St. Mary Major will be opened; the Basilica of St. Paul Outside Walls' Holy Door will be opened on 5 January 2025.

On Sunday 29 December 2024, in every Cathedral and co-cathedral, diocesan bishops are to celebrate the Holy Mass as the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year with the rituals pertaining to the celebration.

To conclude the ordinary Jubilee Year, three of the Basilica Holy Doors (St. John, St. Mary Major, and St. Paul) will be

²⁷ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 17.

²⁸ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 5.

closed on Sunday 29 December 2025 and the Holy Door in the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican will close on 6 January 2026 on the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.²⁹

4. *Hymns of Praise and Thanksgiving and appeal:* the celebration of the anniversary of the Council of Nicaea summons the Christians to join in the hymns of praise and thanksgiving to the Blessed Trinity because the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea represents a beckon to all churches and Ecclesial communities to persevere on the path to visible unity as Christ prayed.³⁰ In this Jubilee Year of 2025, a common celebration of Easter will take place which to this day different methods of celebration prevent the celebration of Easter on the same day among all Christians all over the world. This celebration is an appeal and serves as an entreaty to all Christians, East and West, to take concrete steps towards unity around a common date for Easter.³¹

The Social Significance of the Jubilee

The social significance of the Jubilee indicates certain actions to embark upon in the Society and some communal impartial activities to one another to demonstrate that God is present among us. The activities are what Pope Francis referred to as signs of hope desired in the world.

²⁹ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 6.

³⁰ John 17: 21.

³¹ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 17.

The social positive ions for the Jubilee are projected by the pontiff as follows:

1. *Negotiation for Peace*: the need for peace in our world demands that each person takes concrete steps with diplomacy; commitment; courage; and creativity in generating harmony in the world. Every opportunity is to be sought to negotiate for lasting peace.³²
2. *Inclusive future*: the desire for the young people to give birth to new children in many countries is a sign of the fruitfulness of their love for one another that ensure a future for every society. Thus, everyone is expected to be at the forefront to foster hope that is inclusive and recover the joy of living rather than settling for and seeking fulfilment in material realities alone.³³
3. *The Prisoners*: we are called to be signs of hope to our brothers and sisters who are experiencing hardships of any kind such as prisoners who are feeling the harshness of detention and restrictions, lacking affecting and respect for their persons. The pontiff calls on the government to take certain initiatives that restores hope and formulate amnesty meant to help individuals to regain confidence in themselves and in the society; design programmes of integration into the community with concrete commitment to respect the rule of law in their policies. To demonstrate this sign of hope, the pontiff intends to open a Holy Door in a prison as a sign of

³² Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 8.

³³ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 9.

invitation to the prisoners to look to the future with hope and renewed sense of confidence.³⁴

4. *The Sick*: the signs of hope are shown to the sick at homes or in the hospitals through the closeness and affection of those who nurse and visit them. Special care should be given to those who are affected by illness and disabilities that severely restrict their personal independence. Care for these ones is a song of hope that calls for choral participation of the whole society.³⁵
5. *The Youth*: signs of hope are needed by the young without which their dreams may not be achieved. They may grow discouraged and listless; they will go into drugs and momentary pleasure and sink into deep depression which might lead them into self-destructive behaviours. The pontiff calls on the Church to reach out to them specially in this Jubilee Year to demonstrate care and concern for the adolescent, students and the young couples.³⁶
6. *The Migrants*: as a way of celebrating the Jubilee, sign of hope is presented to the migrants who leave their homelands in search of better life for their family. There is a call not to frustrate their efforts by rejection and prejudice but to welcome them with respect and dignity and accompany them with a sense of responsibility while maintaining their inalienable Rights. In the same way of attending to the migrants, the Exiles, the displaced persons and refugees

³⁴ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 10.

³⁵ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 11.

³⁶ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 12.

whom in the international tensions force to emigrate ought to be guaranteed security and enable them to have access to employment and education. They are not to be robbed of the hope for a better life.³⁷

7. *The Elderly*: the elderly and the grandparents who frequently feel lonely and abandoned deserve signs of hope. This is demonstrated by holding them in high esteem and treasure their life experiences, acknowledging their accumulated wisdom and the contributions they can still offer the society. The Christian communities are enjoined to cooperate in strengthening the synergy between the generations.³⁸
8. *The Poor*: signs of hope is to be extended to the poor and the homeless who lack the essentials of life. They suffer from exclusion and indifference. They are always the victims in need of care and hope.³⁹
9. *The Common Good*: the pontiff affirms that the Jubilee reminds the world of the prophetic message that the goods of the earth are not destined for a privilege few, but are meant for everyone. The rich must be generous to those in need especially those who lack water and food. Pope Francis declares the appeal to launch a Global Fund which is able to put an end to hunger and develop the impoverish countries rather than spending on weapons and other military accessories.⁴⁰ This intention of Global Find is in the

³⁷ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 13.

³⁸ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 14.

³⁹ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 15.

⁴⁰ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 16.

tradition of the Church. Pope John Paul II took the decisive action in the Jubilee Year 2000. The action was a practical sign of charity whereby the Catholic Church gives the sign of commitment to charity by initiating an endowment fund for the poor which is the outgrowth and seal of love ignited by the Year of Jubilee. The endowment was established so as to become a small stream flowing into the great river of Christian charity. It was meant to flow back to the world in remembrance of the communion experienced during the Jubilee Year.⁴¹

10. *The Debts of Countries*: for the Jubilee, the pontiff is calling on the affluent nations to forgive and cancel the debts of countries that will never be able to repay them. This forgiveness is more than a question of generosity, rather it is an act of justice, the art of forgiveness that prepares the path to peace in the world.⁴²

Our Responses to the Celebration of the Jubilee

1. *Individual*: there is a tendency on the individuals to just move with the flow of the crowd without living and praying through the Year of Jubilee. That is not the intention of Pope Francis. At the heart of this Jubilee 2025 is a call to *metanoia* (*conversion*). It means turning away from hopelessness which is a filtrate of the present condition and situation of the modern time. At this present time, cold and hot wars exist

⁴¹ John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, (At the Beginning of the New Millennium) Apostolic Letter, Jan. 6, 2001. <https://www.vatican.va>, AAS 93 (2001), 42-47, Accessed: 22/08/2024.

⁴² Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 16.

in different parts of the world. In order to cease fire of wars, it calls for personal conversion from the heart of the perpetrators and protagonists of war to give up selfishness and control of powers that do not belong to the individual's domain. It is a conviction that God owns the world and human beings and are just stewards to maintain and uphold equilibrium of what God had created.

2. *On the Nations:* the pontiff has called on the nations to make policies based on the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity. It is believed that leaders are on the seat because God permits them to manage and harness the natural resources of the different domains and not to exploit the general masses to whom resources belong. The governing spirit and the wisdom come from God and the wise leaders seek the wisdom from God. When leadership power is utilized effectively, it gives signs of hope to the citizenry and make the world a better place. When the home country is better, there is no need to flee in search of greener pasture elsewhere. When people are seeking for all sorts of securities, they are prone to all kinds of miseries on daily basis. Safer environment is expected from the public authorities in fulfilment of the political mandate which are obligated by the public office holders to the citizens.
3. *The Church:* particular churches have the obligations to celebrate the Jubilee Year canonically and judiciously. It is common place that majority of the faithful might not travel to the City of Rome on pilgrimage. However, those in the home countries are made to gather round the ordinary to be a sign of hope of the world redeemed. St. Cyprian taught that

the Universal Church is in the particular Church and the particular Church is in the Universal Church.⁴³ Hence, when the Jubilee is well celebrated in the particular Churches, the faithful feel they are celebrating with all the faithful all over the world and this experience foreshadows the heavenly banquet in joyful expectation.

The Fruits of the Jubilee

Fruit is the part of a flowering plant that contains the seeds; it is a products of plant growth. The celebration of the Jubilee Year encompasses series of seed which are planted and is expected to grow and bear fruits in its own seasons. The Jubilee Year 2025 will bear fruits such as:

1. People finding hope in God's grace
2. A deepened understanding of the virtue of hope
3. The ability to view the passage of time with the certainty that the history of humanity and the modern time are not doomed to a dead end or dark abys, but are directed as an encounter with the Lord of glory who redeems all things and directs all things for his glory.⁴⁴
4. In the testimony of St Paul, the apostle, he affirms that if the people continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which was heard; then everyone may be reconciled in Christ Jesus and

⁴³ Cyprian of Carthage, Church Fathers: *Treatise 1: 5-7* in *The New Advent*, www.newadvent.org 2023. Accessed 22/08/2024.

⁴⁴ Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, 21.

be presented perfect, holy and blameless above all reproach in the sight of the Lord Christ Jesus.⁴⁵

Conclusion

When the Jubilee Year 2025 is well celebrated according to the will of the Holy Spirit that moves the heart and mind and in the fullness of the grace of God, the faithful are moved to live their lives in the expectation of the return and hope of living forever in Christ Jesus. Thus, people of God are transformed into a life of happiness that is founded in love, the love of Christ from which nothing can separate his people from Him.⁴⁶ Living in that kind of aura of faith, hope and charity and sharing it with one another is the goal of the Year of jubilee.

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⁴⁵ Col. 1: 19-29.

⁴⁶ Rom. 8:38-39.

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