

EDITORIAL: THE JUBILEE YEAR 2025 AND THE THEOLOGY OF HOPE

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Abstract

*The Holy Father Pope Francis, on 9 May 2024, issued the Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 entitled, *Spes non confundit* ('Hope does not disappoint' Romans 5:5). With this document, the Holy Father invites the whole world to a new impetus for renewal. It also presents the Church with a profound opportunity for introspection and renewed commitment to its mission. It serves as a rallying call for renewed catechesis, scriptural literacy, and authentic Christian witnessing, ensuring that the Church remains a beacon of light to the society (cf. Matthew 5:14-16). In spite of the numerous challenges of the modern times, there is still a firm basis for hope. We are invited to embrace the virtue of hope with the certainty that it does not disappoint. This is the quintessence of the theology of hope.*

Keywords: Jubilee Year 2025, Theology of Hope, Pilgrims, *Spes non confundit*

The Jubilee Year 2025

A Jubilee Year is usually proclaimed by the Universal Church every 25 years. It is a particular year set apart to encourage the faithful to embark on pilgrimages, to repent of their sins and forgive the sins of others, and to renew a focus on their spiritual life. In the Hebrew tradition, as recorded in Leviticus, a Jubilee was celebrated every 50 years with the freeing of slaves and the forgiveness of debts. In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII instituted the first Christian Jubilee, and since then, the Church has designated each new Jubilee as a special year of grace and forgiveness, offering the faithful an opportunity to obtain a plenary indulgence.

This year, 2025, is yet another Jubilee year. With *Spes non confundit*, the Holy Father, Pope Francis, invites the whole Church to reflect on and embrace the virtue of Hope. In his words: 'Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the Cross' (*Spes non confundit*, 3). The Jubilee Year commenced with the traditional opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica on 24 December 2024 by the Holy Father and will continue until the closing of the Holy Door on 6 January 2026, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. The Jubilee is focussed on the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope.' The Pope exhorts everyone thus: 'We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to

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gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision.’ During the Jubilee Year, the Pope invites all to embark on a pilgrimage of hope, so that, ‘through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it.’ Given the impact of war, poverty, climate change, and COVID-19, to say the least, the Holy Father enjoins Catholics and indeed all Christians to be sign of hope for those who are suffering. This can be done by sharing hope with others, and by reigniting the flame of faith in their own hearts and share the faith with others. It is an invitation to look to the future with hope and an open spirit, engaging in acts of charity. The three theological virtues of faith, hope and love coalesce. Thus, Jubilee year is a time for reconciliation with God and neighbor.

The Theology of Hope

The Jubilee Year of Hope affords an opportunity to reflect, albeit in brief, on the ‘theology of hope.’ Hope theology has been championed by many theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann. Moltmann’s experiences as a prisoner-of-war at the end of World War II led him to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in which hope played a great part. This subsequently shaped his theological enterprise. Moltmann believed that God’s promise to work in the future is more important than what he has done in the past. The implication of this focus on the future is not withdrawal from the world in hope that a better world will somehow evolve. Rather, the theology of hope advocates active participation in the world in order to speed the coming of that better world. According to this theology, the Christian is to be impatient and dissatisfied with current status of the world: ‘Faith, whenever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience’.²

Theology of hope makes eschatology its pivotal concept. Yet, the eschatology is of an advent view rather than dispensational. Theology of hope starts not with creation, but with the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1: 3). Hence, the future events as promised in the scriptures become current events, not coming events. This does not mean that the events have already taken place already, but that these events are in process right now. A believer’s hope cannot rely upon a future which at some point merely becomes present and then past, but rather on advent in which all events are animatedly in process. The gamut of the ‘theology of hope’ is actually the hope of the believer. It is hope which sustains and carries each believer through life. Accordingly, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his great mercy, has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead’ (1 Peter 1: 3). It is hope that changes us, hope that changes the world. It is an expectation that the promises of God are already in the process of fulfillment.

Action: We are to be Pilgrims

Keeping hope alive in every circumstance is essential to the Church’s mandate and mission. Jesus commanded his followers to sustain hope in adversity when he said, ‘In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world’ (Jn. 16:33). The Holy Father, with the Jubilee Year of Hope, just restated the imperative of hope. We are called to become pilgrims of hope, sowing hope in a world suffering from the impacts of war, insurgency, the climate crisis, poverty and other vices. We are called to hold on to that hope which never disappoints us (Romans 5:5) and to believe that God will have the final say by living holy lives.

² Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope for the 21st Century*, SCM Press, 2021, p. 21.