

The Catholic Church's Jubilee Year 2025 is a time of celebration, an expression of praise to God.

Rite & Reason: Pope Francis situates the need for hope in the challenging world of 'gloomy discouragement and ill-concealed cynicism'

Pope Francis recently published *Hope is A Light in The Night*, in which he states that hope is a gift from God and task for every Christian.

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On occasion, the Catholic Church can be unfairly pilloried as a faith group that demands of its adherents to simply "pay, pray and obey". Such a dour and cruel comment, as well as being laden with cynicism, ignores the reality of the beauty of the Church, and that she offers so much to all who are part of her life and mission, generation after generation.

This joy that we hold for the gospel manifests in the universal Church every 25 years in a worldwide celebration where we come together to rejoice in our Christianity. This year-long initiative is referred to as a "Jubilee Year".

Jubilee 2025 will begin in a few days' time on the theme conferred by Pope Francis: "Pilgrims of Hope"/"Spes non Confundit – Hope Does Not Disappoint" (Romans 5:5). Each Jubilee at its core commemorates and celebrates the great event of the birth of Jesus Christ, and the 2025 theme of hope encourages each of us to be a messenger of hope in our very troubled world.

Everyone is invited to participate in this special year of faith through prayer, by supporting liturgies and events locally in dioceses, and/or in Rome for the global celebrations.

The concept of jubilee has deep roots in our biblical tradition. It is a time of giving thanks for the providence of the Lord and the fruits of the harvest. Jubilee is a time of celebration, a time of singing, sounding of trumpets, an expression of praise to God. It is a time of looking back in gratitude and anticipation of more from a God who is close to us and provides through all seasons

Jubilee is associated with rest, relaxation, reviving the spirit, a period of taking stock and planning ahead with renewed resources, rejuvenated by that celebratory time of

sabbatical. It is a special time to avail of what the Church calls a plenary indulgence, an assurance of grace or favour from the Lord in response to that faith assent.

So why will Jubilee 2025 be the most significant for humanity of all of the jubilee years held to date?

Well, look at the world around us at this time, at home and abroad. Jubilee is a time associated with mercy and forgiveness. It is a time of amnesty, forgetting past wrongs, wiping the slate clean, giving those in debt a second chance, a time to start afresh. So many of our neighbours deserve such mercy in 2025.

Jubilee is also a time of pilgrimage. As “pilgrims of hope” we embark on ritual and real journeys to sacred places in search of that hope that we long for. For Jubilee Year 2025, each diocese in Ireland will nominate a local pilgrimage site, and the bishops of Ireland have designated the following three as national pilgrimage sites: Our Lady’s Shrine, Knock, Co Mayo; Croagh Patrick, Co Mayo; and St Patrick’s Purgatory, Lough Derg, Co Donegal.

So, how can we put our best foot forward and prepare for Jubilee 2025? In the last few weeks Pope Francis has published a book on the theme pilgrims of hope called *Hope is A Light in The Night*.

Hope, of course, is the second of the three theological virtues, the others being faith and love. The book contains a series of excerpts from homilies and speeches of Pope Francis on the theme of hope.

Helpfully, the pontiff situates the need for hope in the challenging world in which we live, with so much conflict, darkness and sadness – the antithesis to hope, a world of what he calls “gloomy discouragement and ill-concealed cynicism”.

Hope, he tells us, is both a gift and task for every Christian. It is more than what the secular world might wish for, an ideal or a sense of optimism, eg; hoping for fine weather or success in passing an exam. It is very real, concrete and present to us because it has been infused into our soul at Baptism, gifting us the pathway to eternal salvation.

Pope Francis says: “To hope, then, is to welcome this gift that God offers us every day. To hope is to savour the wonder of being loved, sought, desired by a God who has not shut

Himself away in His impenetrable heavens but has made Himself flesh and blood, history and days, to share our lot.”

I encourage everyone to read this inspiring publication, especially at this time of volatility for humanity.

Finally, Jubilee 2025 will be a time of transition. This movement from old to new is captured symbolically with the ritual of opening of “Holy Doors”. Holy doors are liminal spaces in sacred spaces; cathedrals, basilicas, places of pilgrimage. In continuity with that great tradition, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in St Peter’s Basilica on Christmas Eve, and every diocese in Ireland and around the world is encouraged to launch their own Jubilee of Hope this Sunday, December 29th, inaugurating the great year of Hope.

The purpose of Jubilee Year 2025 is to allow pilgrims to share our faith as well as opportunities for reconciliation, indulgences, prayer and reception of the sacraments. All of these activities will strengthen our personal relationship with Jesus Christ and enrich our faith journey.

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https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/2024/12/29/the-catholic-churchs-jubilee-year-2025-is-a-time-of-celebration-an-expression-of-praise-to-god/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR2oBcUYtLLDATOOZwS0jT6G5Gj2hSFCh03aDyMxwkF6x2fNPRfd_fWpC4M_aem_0cSUuT_zEoEW_LyqlqZn6w