

Leading the FLOCK

BY BISHOP DANIEL E. THOMAS



“Hope does not disappoint!”

“Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5). These are the first words of the official announcement of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 entitled “Pilgrims of Hope.” Quoting Saint Paul’s Letter to the Romans, our Holy Father Pope Francis follows the ancient tradition of announcing a periodic Jubilee Year for the Universal Church, offering this encouragement: “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)”. The Pope will formally initiate the Jubilee year with the opening of the Holy Year Door at St. Peter’s Basilica on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2024, and conclude it on January 6, 2026.

At Christmas we celebrate Hope! And Hope has come to us in a person! That person is Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh, true God and true Man, who comes anew as our Hope! And hope is much different than a wish, isn’t they? Some may

remember as children paging through the Sears Catalogue and making their Christmas wish list! Today, parents may receive texts with photos as hints of what their children are wishing to receive at Christmas. We are familiar with offering good wishes for someone’s graduation or birthday, wishing someone well when they are ill or wishing a couple many years of happiness as they marry.



But hope is different. Our Catholic faith teaches us that hope is the theological virtue by which we desire and expect from God both eternal life and the grace we need to attain it! (CCC). “The virtue of Hope responds to the aspiration to

happiness which God has placed in the heart of every person, it takes up the hope that inspire our activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps us from discouragement; it sustains us during times of abandonment; it opens up our hearts in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, we are preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity” (CCC 1818).



With its origins in Biblical texts and dating back to 1300, in the Roman Catholic tradition, a Holy Year, or Jubilee is a great religious event. It is a year of forgiveness of sins and also the punishment due to sin, it is a year of reconciliation between

adversaries, of conversion and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and consequently of solidarity, hope, justice, commitment to serve God with joy and in peace with our brothers and sisters. A Jubilee year is above all the year of Christ, who brings life and grace to humanity.

“The Jubilee is called Holy Year, not only because its beginning and end is marked with solemn holy acts, but also because its purpose is to encourage holiness of life. It is convoked to strengthen faith, encourage works of charity and brotherly communion within the Church and in society and to call Christians to be more sincere and coherent in their faith in Christ, the only Saviour” (vat.va).

Hope! Who of us in these days and at this time, with the reality of the situation in the world and in our nation, doesn't need to be reminded that Christ is our Hope! Who of us cannot admit that we are often weary, burdened, anxious, troubled, experiencing feelings of hopelessness? There's a great phrase in Italian: “C'e' sempre Speranza,” There is always hope! No matter what, there is always hope! For us, that hope is a person, whose coming we celebrate at Christmas. As we enter the Jubilee Year, I invite you to pray with me the Jubilee Prayer, so that as fellow pilgrims, we might not only experience and rejoice in that hope ourselves, but we might live and radiate that hope for all!

Father in heaven,
may the **faith** you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of **charity** enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed **hope**
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the
Gospel.

May those seeds transform from within both
humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, **Pilgrims of Hope**,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

It is the wish of Pope Francis that “the Holy Year be planned and celebrated with deep faith, lively hope and active charity.” Please do keep abreast of how we will be observing this Jubilee Year, “Pilgrims of Hope,” here in the Diocese of Toledo. It is my sincere hope that individuals, families, parishes, our Catholic schools and organizations, will find worthy ways to promote and participate in this Jubilee. Almost every week throughout 2025 we will share through our Diocese of Toledo Facebook and website, events and prayer intentions for various groups, including families, young people, priests, deacons, seminarians, consecrated religious, students, the sick and so many others. I ask that you take time to pray for these intentions and feel emboldened to speak with your family, friends, coworkers and schoolmates about your Catholic faith and about the hope you have found in Christ Jesus, who is our Hope!

As the Holy Father encourages us: “Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: ‘Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart, hope in the Lord!’” (Psalm 27:14).

Most Rev. Daniel E. Thomas
Bishop of Toledo
December 14, 2024

