

Pastoral Letter on the Jubilee Year 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

On Sunday, December 29, 2024, the Feast of the Holy Family, in union with the Holy Father, the bishops and the entire universal Church, we enter into the Jubilee Year of 2025! Harkening back to the Hebrew Scriptures and the Jewish practice of jubilee, the Catholic Church has embraced such a celebration every 25 years, calling all of us to spiritual renewal, a deeper practice of the faith, a richer experience of the mercy and love of God, and a growth in Christian discipleship. For the Jewish people, jubilee was a time to forgive debts, to heal broken relationships, and to renew fidelity to the Covenant. Think of this Jubilee as a spiritual reboot, to reinvigorate our understanding and embrace of Catholicism as we make our pilgrim way to the Father's house.

Pope Francis has chosen hope as the theological lens through which we can view this special time of grace. Utilizing a quote from St. Paul's letter to the Romans, "Hope does not disappoint," the Holy Father calls us to be signs of hope in a world which desperately needs it in this current moment! The human race is riven by ongoing bloody conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, and Syria; 500 million people suffer food inadequacy because of violence in places like the Sudan, Haiti, and Ethiopia. Increasing numbers of people are fleeing their homelands to escape poverty and violence. Our country is divided by profound political conflict and economic imbalance. Decreasing numbers of people practice religious faith and increasing numbers have lost their moral mooring in the transcendent order of God. Suicide rates and mental health challenges are at a record high, especially among our beloved young people. On top of this darkness, lie our own personal struggles, sufferings, and sorrows. We can easily fall into despair and sadness when we contemplate the tragedies before us. We need hope more than ever!

Hope is much more authentic and resilient than optimism. The latter is often simply a naïve sentiment that thinks things will somehow get better; one knows not how. Optimism is crushed in the face of tragedy and sorrow, for it is not rooted in anything beyond itself. Christian hope, on the other hand, finds its source in Christ Himself, in His victory over the power of sin and death, in the promise of eternal life, and the outflow of Divine Mercy into our hearts. Hope can realistically face all of the darkness and suffering of this world and not lose heart, because we know and believe in the One who has already gained the victory for us in His death and resurrection.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us: "The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity" (no. 1818).

In his bull of indiction announcing the Jubilee Year, *Spes non confundit*, Pope Francis writes, "By his perennial presence in the life of the Church, the Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light

burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives. Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God's love" (3). Placing all of our hope in Christ, who alone forgives, saves, and redeems us, we enter into this Jubilee Year with praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of life, our identity as beloved children of the Father, the promise of mercy and eternal life, and for the many blessings He has poured forth upon our diocese, our parishes, and our families. This time of Jubilee beautifully converges with Go Make Disciples, Into the Deep, and the National Eucharistic Revival. All of these efforts seek a deep renewal in Christ through evangelization, catechesis, prayer, Sacraments, and a life of virtue. The Lord is inviting us to fall in love with Him and to give our all to the service of His holy Church and the truth of the Gospel, even as He has given His all for us.

In light of the Holy Father's recent encyclical on the Sacred Heart of Jesus, *Dilexit nos*, I invite everyone in our diocese to embrace this Jubilee Year through deeper devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for it is in the Lord's Heart that we discover the extraordinary love of God and our own identity as His beloved children. In the Sacred Heart, we ponder both the gravity of our sins and the value of our souls to God. This flaming Heart, bleeding and crowned with both thorns and the Cross, shows forth the sorrow and death from which we have been saved by Christ's sacred Passion and manifests how precious each one of us is to God. In the Lord's Heart, beating for eternity in the glory of Heaven, we find our hope. When I was a child, a picture of the Sacred Heart hung above our television in the living room, a sign of my family's consecration to that Heart. Even before I fully realized who Jesus is, I instinctively knew that this man with the fiery Heart loved me in some absolute way and that He lived in our house, even though I could never see Him.

In *Dilexit nos*, the Holy Father writes, "It is essential to realize that our relationship to the Person of Jesus Christ is one of friendship and adoration, drawn by the love represented under the image of his heart. We venerate that image, yet our worship is directed solely to the living Christ, in his divinity and plenary humanity, so that we may be embraced by his human and divine love" (49).

As the Holy Father encourages all Catholics to draw closer to the Lord in hope, we seek to live the meaning and grace of this Jubilee Year in practical and specific ways. Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Monona, where I will celebrate the opening Mass of the Jubilee on Sunday, December 29, at 2:00 p.m., will serve as one of the pilgrimage sites in our diocese throughout the Jubilee Year. Additional sites will be announced and posted on the Jubilee webpage: madisondiocese.org/jubilee. There are several Jubilee indulgence options¹; information on these indulgences can also be found on the Jubilee webpage. The Church's practice of offering indulgences manifests the Lord's great desire to forgive our sins and to lead us to a life of extraordinary holiness in Christ. I encourage everyone this upcoming year to attend Mass more frequently, daily, if possible, to regularly Confess our sins in the Sacrament of Penance, and to spend more time in Eucharistic Adoration. In these sacred ways, we will enter more deeply into the Heart of Christ and discover the joyful hope which He shares with us in His union with our souls. Embracing the First Friday devotion with Mass, reception of Holy Communion, Confession, and praying the Litany of the Sacred Heart is a beautiful way to intensify our friendship with the Lord in this season of grace.

This Jubilee Year invites us to greater and more numerous acts of mercy, charity, and service. When we reach out to the poor, the sick, the elderly, and the suffering in the love of Jesus, God unleashes the mighty power of the Paschal Mystery to pour faith, hope, and joy in the hearts of those whose lives are often broken by a terrible loneliness and a crushing despair. Who are the people in our lives who are crying out to us for hope, meaning, and purpose? How can we bring them to Jesus through our compassionate attention and service? How can we be ministers of hope to them?


The Church turns our minds and hearts especially to the profound injustices suffered by millions of people around the globe who live in misery, poverty, and violence. I would like us to make a Jubilee gift to the bishop and people of the Diocese of Jacmel, Haiti, with whom we enjoy a sister relationship. Our celebration of this Holy Year would not be complete without such practical charity toward the suffering Lazarus who lies at our door, seeking hope and love.

This year of grace is also a time to seek peace and reconciliation in our relationships, to ask for forgiveness from those who we have wronged, and to forgive those who have hurt us. Are there long-standing wounds and fractures in our circles of family and friendship to which we can bring healing and peace? Reconciliation is the profound fruit of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross with God, with the Church, with each other, and within us. The Lord desires us to become ministers of His reconciliation as we seek to build peace and understanding among His beloved children.

I pray that this Jubilee Year be a sacred time of spiritual renewal and active charity for every Catholic in the Diocese of Madison. By living the teachings of Christ, proclaiming the Gospel by word and deed, making disciples and serving the mission of the Church, we will be witnesses to the hope that does not disappoint, and thus serve as instruments of the Lord's merciful salvation made manifest in Christ. The early Church was remarkably fruitful in its apostolate for three reasons. Those first Christians boldly proclaimed the Resurrection of Christ as the source of salvation and the meaning of human history. They sacrificially and devotedly loved each other, as well as the poor, the sick, and the outcast. They were willing to suffer torture and endure martyrdom rather than give up their faith in Christ. May the same be said of us, as we place all of our hope in the risen Lord!

Given on the Feast of the Holy Family, the 29th day of December in the year of Our Lord 2024.

In hope, I remain,



+Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Madison

¹ There are four general ways to obtain a plenary jubilee indulgence, each with multiple specific options, all subject to the usual conditions provided in Church law. 1. Make a pilgrimage to the church designated by the bishop and, while there, to take part in one of the following: Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours (Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, or Evening Prayer), the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, or a communal penance service with individual confession. 2. Make a pious visit to a shrine designated by the bishop and, while there, engage in Eucharistic adoration and meditation, finishing with an Our Father, a Creed, and a prayer to Mary that everyone will come to know her closeness during the Jubilee year. 3. Take part in some work of mercy or penance, for which there are several options: (a) by participating in a mission, spiritual exercise, or similar formation activity relating to the documents of Vatican II and the catechism, (b) by carrying out some act of charity on behalf of the souls in purgatory (in which case, exceptionally, a person who also receives Communion twice that day can receive a second plenary indulgence within the day, applicable to the dead), (c) by visiting the sick, imprisoned, elderly, disabled, etc., making a "pilgrimage" to Christ as present in them, and (d) by penitential practices such as abstaining weekly from distractions or excessive consumption, giving to the poor, supporting charitable or social initiatives, or giving from one's free time to do volunteer work. 4. Receive the papal blessing from the bishop, who can give it during the main Jubilee celebration at the designated Jubilee church.