



Seek the Lord

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On the evening of Tuesday, December 24, Pope Francis will preside over the celebration of Holy Mass in St. Peter's Square to officially open the Holy Jubilee Year of 2025, the theme of which is Pilgrims of Hope. The Holy Father begins his solemn *Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025* quoting from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans: "Hope does not disappoint" (Rom. 5:5). With these words, the pope emphasizes the importance of hope as an integral part of Christian life. He writes, "Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring" (*Spes non confundit*, 1).

Hope is the virtue, given to us by God at our baptism, which sustains us in this world as we progress towards the fullness of life in eternity. It is fitting to set aside the coming year as a time when we not only thank God for the gift of hope but, through an increase of prayer and devotion, ask Him to strengthen that virtue in our hearts. Only then can we offer the hope of fullness of life with God in Heaven to a world deeply in need of healing and grace.

The tradition of the jubilee celebration traces its roots to the ancient Israelites. In the Book of Leviticus, God instructed His people that every 50 years they were to celebrate a jubilee. It was a year in which property was restored to its hereditary owners, slaves were freed, and the land was left to rest without any formal farming of crops. These measures were included in the Law as a means of maintaining equilibrium among the peoples, such that no one would become too rich or too poor. All would be reminded that they are entirely dependent on God for everything.

Now, millennia later, we still need to be reminded that we are

dependent on God in all things, that He alone is the source of our hope. This is especially important for us to consider given that we live in a culture which places the importance of self above all else. Before us is a year set aside, in a particular way, to prayerfully contemplate all that we have received from God. The Jubilee Year is a time of thanksgiving. It is also a time in which we can implore God's mercy, reflecting on those occasions when we have placed ourselves above God and neighbor.

Seeking forgiveness and growing in repentance, then, are special fruits we should cultivate during the Jubilee Year. Of great importance in this regard is the Jubilee Indulgence. An indulgence is a special grant of divine mercy, through the ministry of the Church, which removes the temporal punishment due to our sins. There are many ways that this spiritual gift can be obtained during the Jubilee Year. The normal conditions for receiving an indulgence apply (being truly repentant and unattached to sin, receiving Holy Communion and the sacrament of penance, and praying for the Holy Father's intentions). In addition to those pious practices, a particular act of devotion, such as a pilgrimage, is to be done.

Here in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, three locations will be established as Jubilee Pilgrimage Sites: the Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter in Chains, the Shrine of the Holy Relics at Maria Stein, and Emmanuel Catholic Church, Dayton. A pilgrimage visit to any of these sites can apply to the reception of the Jubilee Indulgence. Please join me in praying that many of the faithful will take advantage of this opportunity. And may we all pray together, as Pilgrims of Hope, for openness to receiving the graces God is prepared to pour out upon us during this Holy Year 2025.