

# The Theological, Pastoral and Social Message of the Jubilee Year 2025

Teologiczne, pastoralne i społeczne przesłanie Roku  
Jubileuszowego 2025

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**Abstract:** The article examines the theological, pastoral, and social dimensions of the *Jubilee Year 2025*. On the basis of the official sources (the bull *Spes non confundit* and the liturgical and biblical texts of the Mass formularies for the Jubilee), principal motives for celebrating the Jubilee of Hope are identified: a renewed discovery of hope and its significance in human life; the opportunity to encounter the God of mercy; and the social and ethical dimension of the celebration. Hope arises from the encounter with God, who loves every person, and finds its confirmation in the saving work of Jesus Christ. Through baptism, unfailing hope is implanted in the heart of the Christian, for God's love itself is poured into human hearts. Christian hope is oriented primarily toward the gift of eternal life. The Jubilee is a time of grace and salvation, enabling the faithful to experience divine mercy. Among the most important manifestations of God's love for humanity is the grace of indulgences, which open the way to eternal life. The Jubilee also has pastoral, social, and ethical dimensions: it restores hope to those affected by war, persecution, suffering, migration, and poverty. Believers are encouraged to embody hope through concrete actions such as debt remission, environmental responsibility, and works of corporal and spiritual mercy.

**Keywords:** jubilee, Holy Year, hope, holy places, forgiveness, mercy, pilgrimage, indulgence, purgatory, eternal life, poverty, social justice, ecumenism

**Abstrakt:** Artykuł przedstawia teologiczne, pastoralne i społeczne treści Roku Świętego 2025. Na podstawie źródeł, którymi są bulla *Spes non confundit* oraz teksty liturgiczne i biblijne formularzy

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mszalnych przeznaczonych do celebracji obchodów jubileuszowych, ukazano trzy główne motywy świętowania Jubileuszu Nadziei: nowe odkrycie nadziei i jej znaczenie w życiu człowieka, możliwość doświadczenia spotkania z Bogiem bogatym w miłosierdzie oraz społeczny i etyczny wymiar tegoż świętowania. Nadzieja rodzi się ze spotkania z Bogiem, który kocha każdego człowieka. Potwierdzeniem Jego miłości jest zbawcze dzieło Jezusa Chrystusa. Przez sakrament chrztu w serce chrześcijanina zostaje wlana nadzieja, która zawieść nie może, gdyż w ludzkich sercach rozdana jest miłość Boża. Chrześcijańska nadzieja jest ukierunkowana przede wszystkim na dar życia wiecznego. Jubileusz jest czasem łaski i zbawienia i dlatego otwiera przed człowiekiem drogi do doświadczenia Bożego miłosierdzia. Jednym z najważniejszych darów miłości Boga do człowieka jest łaska odpustów, które otwierają drogę do życia wiecznego. Przeżywanie Jubileuszu ma także wymiar pastoralny, społeczny i etyczny. Ma to być czas przywracania nadziei ludziom dotkniętym wojnami, prześladowaniami, cierpieniem, migrantom i ubogim. Wszyscy są zachęcani do tego, aby dawać nadzieję przez konkretne działania: umorzenie długów, sprawiedliwość ekologiczną, uczynki miłosierdzia co do duszy i ciała.

**Slowa kluczowe:** jubileusz, Rok Święty, nadzieja, miejsca święte, przebaczenie, miłosierdzie, pielgrzymowanie, odpust, czyściec, życie wieczne, ubóstwo, sprawiedliwość społeczna, ekumenizm

## Introduction

On the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, 9 May 2024, Pope Francis issued the bull *Spes non confundit*, solemnly proclaiming the next Ordinary Jubilee to be celebrated from 24 December 2025 to 6 January 2026.<sup>2</sup> The title of the papal document indicates that the theme of this Holy Year will be hope. In announcing another Ordinary Jubilee Year,<sup>3</sup> the Pope continues the Church's tradition of celebrating jubilees, which dates back to Pope Boniface VIII of 1300.<sup>4</sup>

The celebration of jubilee years, however, does not originate in the medieval Church. Its roots are found in the Old Testament. The Chosen People were commanded to observe a jubilee every seven years, known as a 'sabbatical year' or

<sup>2</sup> Franciszek, Bulla ogłasza ją Jubileusz Zwyczajny Roku 2025, *Spes non confundit*, Poznań 2024 (hereinafter: SnC).

<sup>3</sup> With regard to the use of upper- and lower-case letters, the article follows the principles of religious vocabulary developed by R. Przybylska and W. Przyczyna. According to them, the terms 'Jubilee Year', 'Holy Year' should be capitalized when used as proper names, that is when referring to a specific jubilee; in other cases, lowercase letters are employed (see R. Przybylska, W. Przyczyna, *Pisownia słownictwa religijnego*, Tarnów 2018, p. 24).

<sup>4</sup> It should be added, however, that the Church had occasionally already practiced the so-called 'great pardon'. First, Pope Calixtus II in 1122 permitted the celebration of a jubilee for those making a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela whenever the feast of the Apostle James occurred on a Sunday. Later, in 1216, Pope Honorius III granted St. Francis' request for an indulgence for visitors to the Portiuncula during the first two days of August. Pope Celestine V subsequently granted the grace of pardon to pilgrims visiting the Basilica of Santa Maria di Collemaggio in L'Aquila on 28 and 29 August, 1294 (cf. SnC, no. 5).

a ‘year of rest’. The latter name recalls the account of creation in Genesis, which states that God worked for six days and rested on the seventh (cf. Gen 2:23). In keeping with their covenant with God, the Israelites were required to rest and celebrate every seventh year. The most solemn Jubilee, however, was observed every forty-nine years ( $7 \times 7$ ). Its central elements included rest from labour, the remission of, and the forgiveness of offences among brothers (cf. Deut 15:1–11; Lev 25:9–13.23–39–43). In this year the land was to lie fallow; rightful owners recovered the fields and houses that had been taken from them; slaves were set free; and insolvent debtors were released from their obligations. The Old Testament jubilee finds its fulfilment in Jesus Christ, who at Nazareth declared: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour’ Lk 4:18–19).<sup>5</sup>

History shows that every holy year has a central theme, usually defined by the popes in the documents announcing the jubilee. The title of the papal bull announcing the Jubilee of 2025 indicates clearly that its principal motif will be hope. The purpose of this article is to present the theological, pastoral, and social content of the Jubilee Year of Hope. The primary sources for this study are the bull *Spes non confundit* and the liturgical and biblical texts of the Mass formularies prepared for the Jubilee. Analysis of these sources identifies three main aspects: the multifaceted understanding of Christian hope; the possibility of experiencing God’s mercy; and the social and ethical dimensions of the Holy Year 2025.

## 1. Hope That Cannot Fail

Hope, the second of the theological virtues, enables the Christian to desire the Kingdom of God and eternal life as the highest form of happiness.<sup>6</sup> This desire is not founded on human strength or ability, but on confidence in the promises of

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. E.M. Jung-Inglessis, *Rok Święty w Rzymie*, tłum. E. Osiecki, Warszawa 2000, pp. 26–29; D. Brzeziński, *Rok jubileuszowy w Kościele. Podstawy biblijne i chrześcijański sens teologiczny*, in: Komisja Duszpasterstwa Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, *Pielgrzymi nadziei. Program duszpasterski Kościoła w Polsce na rok 2024/2025*, Zeszyt teologiczno-pastoralny, Opole 2024, pp. 52–59 (hereinafter: *Pielgrzymi nadziei*).

<sup>6</sup> The topic of hope was frequently addressed the teaching of Pope Francis’ predecessors. John Paul II discussed hope in the apostolic letters *Novo millenio ineunte* (2001) and *Tertio millennio adveniente* (1994), in the apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa* (2003); Benedict XVI in the encyclical *Spe salvi* (2007) (cf. M. Tatar, *Chrześcijańska nadzieja jako czynnik rozwoju człowieka i świata w encyklice „Spe salvi” Benedykta XVI*. ‘Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne’ 22 (2009), no. 2, pp. 121–132).

Christ and through the assistance of the Holy Spirit. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches:

The virtue of hope corresponds to the pursuit of happiness, deposited by God in the heart of each person; it takes up those expectations that inspire human action; it purifies them to direct them toward the Kingdom of Heaven; it protects from doubt; it sustains in every abandonment; it broadens the heart in the expectation of eternal happiness. Living hope protects against selfishness and leads to the happiness of love.<sup>7</sup>

In this perspective, hope is presented in the context of awaiting the fullness of salvation. Hope inspires concrete actions that guide a person toward eternal life, protects them from doubt, and purifies them from selfishness, which obstructs the path to the happiness of love.<sup>8</sup>

The Catechism's conception of Christian hope carries profound implications for human life. Living hope is a sure and lasting 'anchor of the soul, which penetrates beyond the veil, where Jesus, the forerunner, entered for us' (Heb 6:19–20). Moreover, in times of temptation it serves as the armour that safeguards the believer in the struggle for salvation, providing joy amid life's trials and tests.<sup>9</sup>

The proclamation of the 2025 Jubilee as the Year of Hope was deliberate. Pope Francis intended to draw attention to this virtue within the context of contemporary life and global phenomena. There is, undeniably, a crisis of hope caused by atheism, secularization, postmodern ideas, globalisation, widespread poverty, social injustice, and war. Despite these challenges, Francis asserts at the outset of *Spes non confundit*: 'Everyone has hope. Hope is present in the heart of every person as a desire and expectation of the good, even if he does not know what tomorrow will bring'.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the Holy Father presents the Jubilee as an opportunity for all to renew hope. He extends this invitation particularly to those who, faced with an unpredictable and difficult future, experience fear, discouragement, or pessimism.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego*, Poznań 1994, no. 1818 (hereinafter: CCC).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ł. Delewski, *Teologiczne rozumienie nadziei*, 'Studia Pelplińskie' 49 (2016), pp. 44–46 (43–55).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. CCC, no. 1820.

<sup>10</sup> SnC, no. 1.

<sup>11</sup> Pope Francis, in a letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, dated 11 February 2022, wrote: 'We must keep alive the flame of hope that has been given to us, and do everything so that everyone regains the strength and confidence to look to the future with an open soul, a trusting heart, and forward thinking. The upcoming Jubilee will be able to make a significant contribution to restoring the climate of hope and confidence as a sign of the new revival that we all urgently need. For this reason I have cho-

Pope Francis discusses hope primarily on the basis of the teaching of St Paul. The apostle of faith and hope writes in his *Letter to the Romans*: ‘Hope cannot fail, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us’ (Rom 5:5).<sup>12</sup> According to the Pope, the source of hope is the experience of the love of the crucified and risen Christ. In *Spes non confundit*, he states:

Hope is born of love and is based on the love that flows from the Heart of Jesus pierced on the Cross. For if, being enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son, all the more, being already reconciled, we shall obtain salvation through His life (Rom 5:10).<sup>13</sup>

A personal encounter with Christ and the experience of His love becomes a source of hope for every person. Sometimes God’s love is tested, particularly when a person experiences suffering and adversity. In this context, it is important to recall the teaching of the Apostle of the Nations: ‘We also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance, and perseverance produces tried virtue, and tried virtue produces hope’ (Rom 5:3–4). Hardships can thus become a starting point for developing the virtue of patience, which in turn builds and strengthens hope.<sup>14</sup> In the final part of the bull, Francis cites a passage from the *Letter to the Hebrews*: ‘We who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner on our behalf’ (Heb 6:18–20). He emphasizes that these words are ‘a strong exhortation never to lose the hope we have received, to cling to it, finding refuge in God’.<sup>15</sup> Hope placed in God never fades; hence no storm in life can defeat or overcome a person.

Referring to the Christian principle of *lex credenda lex orandi*, the sources of hope should be sought in prayer, especially in liturgical prayer, as presented by the Mass formularies prepared for the Jubilee years. The Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, together with the Dicastery for

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sen the motto: *Pilgrims of Hope*’, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/pl/letters/2022/documents/20220211-fisichella-giubileo2025.html> [accessed 10 June 2025].

<sup>12</sup> According to A. Malina, two books of the New Testament are particularly representative for understanding the concept of hope: the *Letter to the Romans* and the *Letter to the Hebrews*. The term ‘hope’ (Gr. *elpis*) occurs 36 times in the Pauline epistles, appearing 13 times in the *Epistle to the Romans* and 5 times in the *Epistle to the Hebrews* (see A. Malina, *Moc i wartość chrześcijańskiej nadziei*, in *Pielgrzymi nadziei*, pp. 100–101).

<sup>13</sup> SnC, no. 3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., no. 4; cf. D. Kwiatkowski, *Znaki nadziei w Roku Jubileuszowym 2025 według bulli papieża Franciszka „Spes non confundit”*, ‘Pedagogika Katolicka’ 35 (2024), no. 2, p. 47.

<sup>15</sup> SnC, no. 25.

Evangelization, Section for Institutes of Evangelization in the World, has issued three Mass forms for the Holy Year 2025, along with suggested biblical readings.<sup>16</sup> The collect of form A<sup>17</sup> invokes God as almighty, eternal, and the earnest desire of the human heart. In the anamnetic part of the prayer, Christ is presented as the rock of salvation. The petition expresses the desire that the pilgrim people in this year of grace may attain the fullness of hope in the heavenly kingdom with joy.<sup>18</sup> The notion of the eschatological fulfilment of hope is continued in the embolism of the preface of the same form. The Church gives thanks to God for Jesus Christ, whose Paschal mystery is made present in the Eucharist. He is the ever-cited and awaited salvation of humanity. It is Christ who ‘draws all to His altar, heals the wounds of body and soul, and gives joy to the oppressed’. These signs of Christ’s goodness cause the people of God, ‘with a living faith to be born again to a more certain hope, and with active love to offer themselves to their brothers and sisters, awaiting the Savior’s second coming’.<sup>19</sup>

Mass form B presents Christ’s Paschal mystery as the source of humanity’s true hope in anticipation of eternal life. The entrance and communion antiphons contain verses from Psalm 90:1–2 and a passage from Titus 2:12–13. The form includes its own preface, in which Christ is proclaimed as the true hope: ‘For He is the one and true hope, which surpasses all human expectations and enlightens all the ages’.<sup>20</sup> The presidential prayers (the collect, the prayer over the gifts, and the prayer after Communion) indicate the mystery of Jesus’ passion, death, and resurrection as the source of hope. The prayer over the people in the second form contains a petition for necessary graces for those descending from the kingdom of heaven.<sup>21</sup> It is noteworthy that the prayers of this form emphasize the relationship between the Paschal mystery of Jesus Christ and the entire world. In this way, they express the plea that as many as possible may be among the ‘many’ who will receive justification.<sup>22</sup> This form, with the prayer over the people, is new and intended specifically for the celebration of the Holy Year 2025.

Pope Francis’ *Prayer of the Jubilee* harmonizes with the content the bull *Spes non confundit* and the first two Mass forms for the 2025 Jubilee:

<sup>16</sup> Dykasteria ds. Kultu Bożego i Dyscypliny Sakramentów, Dykasteria ds. Ewangelizacji Sekcja ds. Instytutów Ewangelizacji w Świecie, *Teksty liturgiczne*, Watykan 2024, pp. 10–20 (hereinafter: *Liturgical Texts*).

<sup>17</sup> This form, which includes the entrance and communion antiphons, the Prayer over the Gifts, and the Blessing Formula, is new and was prepared specifically for the celebration of Jubilee 2025.

<sup>18</sup> *Liturgical Texts*, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, pp. 11–12; cf. D. Makowski, *Formularze Mszy świętych na Rok Jubileuszowym — teologia modlitw*, ‘Liturgia Sacra’ 30 (2024), no. 2, pp. 26–27.

<sup>20</sup> *Liturgical texts*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, pp. 12–17.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. J. Froniewski, *Teologia anamnezy eucharystycznej jako pamiątki uobecniającej ofiarę Chrystusa i jej implikacje ekumeniczne*, Wrocław 2011, pp. 105–106.

Father, who art in heaven, may the faith you have given us in your Son Jesus Christ, our Brother, and the flame of love poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, awaken in us a blessed hope for the coming of your Kingdom. [...] May the grace of the Jubilee revive in us, Pilgrims of hope, the desire for heavenly goods and spread throughout the earth the joy and peace of our Redeemer.<sup>23</sup>

During the Jubilee Year, the Holy Door is opened to all pilgrims so that every person may experience God's merciful love. Passing through the open Holy Door signifies a transition from death to life, and a hope is reborn that cannot fail.<sup>24</sup>

## 2. Experiencing God's Mercy

The Holy Father Francis repeatedly addresses the theme of God's mercy in his teaching. According to him, mercy in Scripture is the key concept by which God's action toward humanity is expressed. In the bull proclaiming the Extraordinary *Jubilee of Mercy*, *Misericordiae vultus*, he wrote: 'By its very nature, it [God's love] is concrete life: it is the intentions, behaviours, and attitudes that one adopts in daily life. God's love is His responsibility for us. He feels responsible, that is, He desires our good and wants to see us happy, filled with joy and peace'.<sup>25</sup> The entrance antiphon of the third Mass form for the celebration of the Holy Year 2025, taken from the Letter to Titus, reads: 'Out of His mercy God has saved us by a regenerating and renewing washing in the Holy Spirit, so that, justified by His grace, we may become heirs of eternal life in hope' (Tit 3:5.7).<sup>26</sup> In the preface of this form it is strongly emphasized that the fullness of mercy is revealed in the salvation that Christ merited for humankind: 'Sacrificing Himself once on the cross, [He] wished to gather into one the scattered children; the Firstborn among brothers drew all to Himself when He was exalted above the earth, opening to us the hope of everlasting joy'.<sup>27</sup> The liturgical texts insistently underline that Christian hope, grounded in God's mercy, is eschatological in orientation.

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<sup>23</sup> *Pilgrims of Hope. Liturgical Notebook*, p. 141.

<sup>24</sup> A special sign of experiencing the Holy Years is passing through the Holy Door, which is opened only during this period. Its crossing constitutes an important part of the pilgrimage to the holy places (cf. A. Bottino, *Il simbolo della porta nella Scrittura*, 'Rivista Liturgica' 5–6 [1999], pp. 603–621; A. Catella, *Apertura della "Porta": le origini di un rito*, 'Rivista Liturgica' 5–6 [1999], pp. 623–635).

<sup>25</sup> Franciszek, Bulla o Nadzwyczajnym Jubileuszu Miłosierdzia *Misericordiae vultus*, Wrocław 2015, no. 9.

<sup>26</sup> *Liturgical texts*, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

The themes of hope and mercy are also present in the prayer formulas accompanying the opening of the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican. In his introduction to the prayer, the Pope declared:

Our path is the path of the whole Church, a pilgrim in the world and a witness to peace. Anchored in Christ, the rock of our salvation, enlightened by His word and strengthened by His grace, we cross the threshold of this temple and enter a time of mercy and forgiveness, as a path of hope that does not disappoint opens before every man and woman.<sup>28</sup>

Francis then invoked the Saviour:

Christ, rising star of the morning, incarnation of infinite love, always called and awaited salvation, the only hope of the world, enlighten our hearts with the radiance of your glory. We ask that in this time of grace and reconciliation, turning our hearts solely to Your mercy, we may find the way that leads to the Father.<sup>29</sup>

An eschatological view of hope, based on the mercy of God revealed in Jesus Christ, provides the opportunity to rediscover the Christian vocation to eternal life, the pledge of which is given in the sacrament of baptism. Modern humanity lives almost entirely immersed in temporality. Absorbed in the enjoyment and use of temporal goods, and captivated by the achievements of modern technology, it has ceased to reflect on eternity. The subject and reality of death are relegated to the margins of human consideration. To the question of what will happen after death, Francis responds:

With Jesus beyond this threshold is eternal life, which consists in full communion with God, in contemplation and participation in His infinite love. What we now live in hope, we will see in reality. [-] What, then, will characterize such fullness of communion? Being happy. Happiness is the vocation of the human being, a goal that concerns everyone.<sup>30</sup>

The Christian lives in the hope of attaining the fullness of happiness, which finds its source in definitive and complete union with God who is Love. In this context it is necessary to recall the words of St Paul addressed to the Christians of Rome: 'I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor things that are high, nor things

<sup>28</sup> Opening Prayer of the Holy Door, <https://liturgia.wiara.pl/doc/9091558.Jubileusz-2025-Obrzec-otwarcia-Drzwi-Swietych> [accessed 15 June 2025].

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> SnC, no. 21.

that are deep, nor any other creature, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8:38–39).

During the Jubilee years one of the most important means of experiencing God's mercy is the grace of plenary indulgences. The Church teaches that 'An indulgence is God's extra-sacramental remission of temporal punishment when the guilt has already been forgiven by the sacrament of penance'.<sup>31</sup> The grace of indulgences is most often linked to the Church's belief in the existence of purgatory. On the subject of purgatory and indulgences, the Church officially pronounced at the Council of Florence in 1439, in the *Bull of Union with the Greeks*:

We also decree that if the sincerely penitent should die in the love of God, before the worthy fruits of penance have atoned for their trespasses and negligence, their souls after death are purified by purgatorial punishments. They are aided in mitigating such punishments by the intercession of the faithful, namely the offerings of Masses, prayers and almsgiving, and other works of piety, which, according to the Church's stipulations, the faithful used to undertake for other faithful.<sup>32</sup>

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: 'Those who die in God's grace and friendship, but are not yet purified, although already certain of their eternal salvation, undergo purification after death in order to obtain the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven'.<sup>33</sup> It can thus be said that purgatory is the action of God purifying the baptised both on earth and after death. Belief in a purifying God is an expression of the hope placed in Him.<sup>34</sup>

The celebration of the Jubilee provides an opportunity to consider human life in a vertical orientation toward God and eternity. In *Spes non confundit* the Pope writes: 'We are assured that the history of humanity and of each of us does not run toward a dead end or a dark abyss, but is oriented toward an encounter with the Lord of glory. Let us live, therefore, in expectation of His return and in hope of eternal life in Him'.<sup>35</sup> This expectation and hope are firmly founded on the mystery of God's mercy.

The doctrine of purgatory belongs to the so-called ultimate things, which include belief in heaven, hell, and God's judgment. Today, it appears that people are more apprehensive about God's judgment than about hell. Hardly anyone believes in hell, and it is often depicted in a grotesque way. Meanwhile, the con-

<sup>31</sup> Paolo VI, *Manuale delle indulgenze*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1999<sup>4</sup>, p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> Sobór Florencki, *Bulla unii z Grecami*, in: *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych*, red. A. Baran, H. Pietras, t. III, Kraków 2003, pp. 471–472.

<sup>33</sup> CCC, no. 1030.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. B. de Margerie, *Tajemnica odpustów*, Kraków 2008, pp. 24–25.

<sup>35</sup> SnC, no. 19.

scious awareness of one's own weakness frequently arouses fear of God's judgment. This arises from the tendency to conceive of God's judgment in terms of human justice. Pope Francis teaches that God is guided by other criteria:

The judgment of God, who is love (cf. 1Jn 4:8–16), cannot fail to be based on love, especially whether we have practiced it toward those most in need, in whom Christ, the Judge Himself, is present (cf. Matt 25:31–46). It goes, therefore, to a judgment different from the judgment of men and earthly courts; it is to be understood as a relationship of truth with God—love—and with oneself in the unfathomable mystery of God's mercy.<sup>36</sup>

Here the teaching of Benedict XVI was recalled: 'At the moment of the Last Judgment, we experience and accept that His love surpasses all the evil of the world and the evil in us. The pain of love becomes our salvation and our joy'.<sup>37</sup>

The prerequisites for obtaining an indulgence are: detachment from sin; a state of sanctifying grace; reception of Holy Communion; and prayer for the intentions of the Holy Father. The doctrine of purgatory and indulgences is therefore closely linked to the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, also known as the sacrament of divine mercy.<sup>38</sup> This sacrament enables a penitent, by confessing sins and repenting, to obtain forgiveness, which is the work of God, rich in mercy. The task of leading to God, who is rich in mercy, also involves the papally appointed M i s s i o n a r i e s o f M e r c y, who, through the ministry of reconciliation with God, are called to restore hope and forgiveness whenever a contrite heart confesses sins.<sup>39</sup> It is worth recalling at this point a brief excerpt from Pope Francis' catechesis delivered during the *Angelus*, shortly after his election to the See of Peter: 'God never tires of forgiving us. The problem is that we get tired of asking Him to forgive us. Don't forget that!'.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, no. 22.

<sup>37</sup> Benedykt XVI, Encyklika o nadziciu chrześcijańskiej *Spe salvi*, Poznań 2007, no. 47.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. L. Siwecki, *Dar odpustu w Roku Jubileuszowym 2025*, Sandomierz 2025, pp. 45–47; B. de. Margerie, *Tajemnica...*; Penitencjaria Apostolska, *Dekret o uzyskaniu odpustu podczas Zwyczajnego Jubileuszu Roku 2025 ogłoszonego przez Jego Świątobliwość papieża Franciszka*, in: *Pilgrims of Hope*, pp. 33–39. The document, issued on 13 May 2024, the memorial of Our Lady of Fatima, outlines a wide range of opportunities to obtain indulgences during this the Jubilee Year. It lists pilgrimage to holy places, visits to holy sites (Rome's major basilicas and other basilicas designated by the Pope, as well as churches designated in individual dioceses by diocesan bishops), and works of mercy and penance (rediscovering the works of mercy toward body and spirit). A novelty is the possibility of obtaining two indulgences offered for the dead on one day. On the subject of pilgrimage to holy places over the centuries, see J. Chéline, H. Branthonne, *Drogi Boże. Historia pielgrzymek chrześcijańskich*, Warszawa 1996.

<sup>39</sup> SnC, no. 23.

<sup>40</sup> Franciszek, Rozważanie podczas modlitwy „Anioł Pański” (17 March 2013), <https://www.gosc.pl/doc/1489028.Bog-nigdy-sie-nie-meczy-przebaczaniem> [accessed 24 June 2025].

### 3. Social and Ethical Dimensions of the Jubilee

Faith does not belong to the private sphere of a Christian. A baptised person is called to bear witness and to transform the world so that the Kingdom of God may grow ever more fully. Each Jubilee year brings believers many graces and enables them to draw closer to God and to experience His infinite love. The gifts received cannot, however, be kept for oneself, and the greatness of God's endowment cannot be hidden under the veil of privacy. Hence Jubilee years present Christians with many challenges, most often related to the era in which they live.

It is first important to recognize how the principle of *lex orandi, lex vivendi* is expressed in the Mass forms of Jubilee 2025. The Jubilee preface of Form C presents Christ as the one in whom God's eternal promises are fulfilled: 'Darkness gives way to light, the world is renewed, and every person becomes a new creation. Sacrificing Himself once on the cross, He willed to gather into one the scattered children; the Firstborn among brothers drew all to Himself when He was exalted above the earth'.<sup>41</sup> The preface emphasises that every person becomes a new creation, and Christ crucified draws all people to Himself.<sup>42</sup> Believers therefore have the duty to proclaim the Good News which resounds in the above preface and in the prayer after Communion of this form: 'Nourished by the heavenly food, we beseech You, O God, that loving the Gospel of life, we may become for the human community an enlivening ferment and instrument of salvation'.<sup>43</sup>

In the Extraordinary Jubilee of Hope, Pope Francis identifies concrete problems whose solutions should serve as an inspiration for social justice. Among the many tasks designated as 'signs of hope' is peace on earth. This constitutes one of the most urgent problems to be addressed by the modern world. The Pope strongly affirms that 'the need for peace is a challenge for all and requires the implementation of concrete projects'. The 'new order' should be inspired by international peace initiatives and by the authentic commitment of diplomacy to 'courageously and creatively build spaces of negotiation aimed at lasting peace'.<sup>44</sup>

The second challenge for the entire world is the problem of losing the desire for life, which has led to a drastic decline in the birth rate, particularly in affluent societies. Consumerism, fears about the future, unemployment, lack of social protection, the pursuit of profit, and contemporary social models have resulted in

<sup>41</sup> *Liturgical texts*, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. R. Rubinkiewicz, *Zmartwychwstanie Chrystusa — zmartwychwstanie nasze*, 'Roczniki Teologiczne' 42 (1995), no. 1, p. 87.

<sup>43</sup> *Liturgical texts*, p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> SnC, no. 8; cf. E. Kozerska, T. Scheffler, *Wojna w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka. Czy zmiana nauczania katolickiego?*, 'Krakowskie Studia z Historii Państwa i Prawa' 16 (2023), no. 3, pp. 373–398.

the absence of a vision of life full of enthusiasm and hope in many parts of the world. This reality necessitates openness to life in the spirit of responsible parenthood, inscribed in the nature of humanity by God the Creator. Legislative support to defend life and the family is also necessary in this regard. The Pope emphasises that such a climate must be fostered among young people so that ‘the desire of young people to give birth to new sons and daughters is the fruit of fertility and their love for each other’.<sup>45</sup>

The Year of Grace is awaited by prisoners, who experience not only the restriction of freedom but also the harshness of incarceration, emotional deprivation, imposed limitations, and lack of respect. The Pope urges that, during the Jubilee Year, national governments should implement initiatives to restore hope to these individuals. These could include forms of amnesty, remission of sentences, and the creation and implementation of plans to reintegrate inmates into local communities. Francis expects the Church’s shepherds to advocate courageously for dignified conditions for the imprisoned, respect for human rights, and the abolition of the death penalty where it still exists.<sup>46</sup>

Another group awaiting a time of grace comprises the sick and the lonely. Support in enduring suffering is to be provided by the proximity of family members and others who visit them. Regarding the care of the disabled, the Pope writes: ‘Caring for them is a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope that calls for a concerted chorus from all of society’.<sup>47</sup>

The Jubilee also represents an opportunity for young people, who today are often deprived of their dreams and ideals and descend into discouragement, sadness, and despair. Their inner emptiness gives rise to melancholy and boredom, which then is obscured by stimulants, crime, or the pursuit of transient pleasures. Such actions bring confusion to their lives and can lead to self-destructive behaviour. The Jubilee Year provides an opportunity for them to discover true joy and meaning in life through the preaching of the Gospel and the awakening of hope.<sup>48</sup>

The bull announcing the Jubilee Year 2025 could not fail to address the problem of migration. Francis urges: ‘May the many exiles and refugees who are compelled by international disputes to flee from war, violence, and discrimination, be granted security and access to work and education, which are indispensable for

<sup>45</sup> SnC, no. 9; cf. Franciszek, Encyklika o braterstwie i przyjaźni społecznej *Fratelli tutti*, Wrocław 2020, nos 12–14.

<sup>46</sup> SnC, no. 10.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., no. 11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., no. 12; cf. M. Fiałkowski, *Papieża Franciszka inspiracje dla duszpasterstwa młodzieży*, ‘Polonia Sacra’ 20 (2016), no. 4(45), pp. 87–99.

their integration into a new social context'.<sup>49</sup> The task of every Christian community is to help defend the rights of the most vulnerable and those in urgent need. Genuine Christian hospitality can restore hope.

The Holy Father makes significant appeals to world leaders regarding hunger and poverty. He observes that it is 'scandalous that in a world endowed with enormous resources, most of which are devoted to armaments, the poor constitute the majority',<sup>50</sup> and further adds, 'Hunger is a scandalous scourge in the body of our humanity'.<sup>51</sup> In this context, the Pope urges that resources allocated to armaments be redirected to the hungry and proposes the establishment of a global fund aimed at eradicating hunger and supporting the development of the poorest countries. In reference to the essence of the Jubilee years, Francis encourages the world's wealthiest nations to decide to forgive debts owed by countries that are incapable of repayment. He stresses that this is a matter not only of generosity but above all of justice. In this regard, he quotes his encyclical *Laudato si*: 'For there is a real ecological debt between North and South in particular, related to trade imbalances with ecological consequences and the disproportionate use of natural resources that some countries have perpetrated in the past'.<sup>52</sup>

In conclusion, regarding the social challenges addressed by Jubilee 2025, it is important to remember that the earth belongs to God, not to any individual or worldly power. Those who live upon it are only 'sojourners and settlers' (Lev 25:23). Francis stresses that 'if we genuinely wish to prepare the way for peace in the world, let us commit ourselves to removing the underlying causes of injustice, to settling unjust insolvent debts, and to alleviating hunger'.<sup>53</sup>

The liturgical texts of the Mass formularies for the Year of Hope emphasise the universal dimension of salvation. Through his death and resurrection, Christ redeemed all humanity. In this context, Jubilee 2025 also addresses the issues of interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year is intended to have an ecumenical character.<sup>54</sup> In this regard, the Holy Father especially invites the faithful of the Eastern Churches participate in the Holy Year. These communities, already in full communion with the Pope, hold a privileged place

<sup>49</sup> SnC, no. 13; cf. W. Przyczyna, *Nauczanie papieża Franciszka o uchodźcach podczas Światowych Dni Młodzieży w Krakowie w relacjach dziennikarzy katolickich portali internetowych*, 'Polonia Sacra' 21 (2017), no. 4(49), pp. 5–16.

<sup>50</sup> SnC, no. 15.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., no. 16; cf. Francis, Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, no. 114–116.

<sup>52</sup> Franciszek, Encyklika poświęcona trosce o wspólny dom *Laudato si*', Wrocław 2015, no. 51.

<sup>53</sup> SnC, no. 5.

<sup>54</sup> For a synthesis of the doctrine of ecumenism in the perspective of hope, see W. Hanc, *Dialog ekumeniczny — znaki nadziei dla chrześcijaństwa*, 'Pedagogia Christiana' 26 (2010), no. 2, pp. 81–105.

and are particularly encouraged to undertake together a pilgrimage of hope. The Christian communities of the East have suffered deeply for their fidelity to Christ.

The Catholic Church, enriched by their ancient liturgies, and by the theology and spirituality of the Fathers, monks and theologians, wishes symbolically to express hospitality to them and to their Orthodox brothers and sisters, at a time when they are already enduring the pilgrimage of the Way of the Cross, which often compels them to leave their homelands, their sacred lands, driven by violence and instability toward safer countries. For them, the experience of being loved by the Church, which will not abandon them but will accompany them wherever they go, makes the sign of the Jubilee even stronger.<sup>55</sup>

This invitation to share a common pilgrimage and celebrate the Holy Year together is intended to strengthen the hope of the suffering and war-torn faithful of the Eastern Churches.

An occasion for shared pilgrimage in an ecumenical spirit is to be found on the so-called trails of faith. Francis proposes that, in addition to the traditional pilgrimage to Roman holy places (basilicas, catacombs, and churches), such trails should be established to include designated holy sites within the particular Churches. The Pope explains their significance:

Passing from one country to another, as if borders had been overcome, journeying from one city to another in contemplation of creation and works of art, will enable appreciation of different experiences and cultures, to carry beauty, which, harmonized with prayer, leads to thanksgiving to God for the wonders He has accomplished. The Jubilee churches, along these routes and in the Eternal City, will be oases of spirituality where the journey of faith may be renewed and the springs of hope drawn from, above all through participation in the sacrament of reconciliation, the irreplaceable starting point of the true path of conversion.<sup>56</sup>

Understood in this sense, trails of faith are not to exclude holy places of the Eastern Churches.

The spirit of ecumenical dialogue likewise embraces the appeal for a common date for the celebration of Easter.<sup>57</sup> This appeal is linked to the commemoration of the 1,700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council, held in Nicaea in 325. The principal task of that Council of Nicaea was to consolidate the unity of within the Church. It was there that the Creed was proclaimed as binding for

<sup>55</sup> SnC, no. 5.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Disputes over the determination of the date of Easter have their origins in ancient times and are related to the traditions of various churches (see J. Naumowicz, *Trzy spory o datę Wielkanocy*, 'Vox Patrum' 49 (2006), pp. 453–470).

the whole Church, and it continued to be professed at every Sunday Eucharist.<sup>58</sup> The Pope affirms that

Nicaea also constitutes an invitation to all Churches and ecclesial communities to pursue the path toward visible unity, tirelessly seeking forms that correspond most fully to the prayer of Jesus: ‘that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they may also be one in Us, so that the world may believe that You have sent Me’ (Jn 17:21).<sup>59</sup>

## Conclusion

Each Holy Year is a great gift to the Church and the world, arising from God’s gratuitous and selfless love for every person. The Jubilee of Hope represents a particular summons to rediscover and strengthen the Christian virtue of hope. In a contemporary world marked by secularism, atheism, postmodernity, social injustice, poverty, violence, and wars, hope is urgently sought by billions across the globe. Those affected by these realities yearn to improve their condition and to envision their future in more positive terms. Pope Francis emphasises that the renewal of human destiny begins with the discovery of authentic hope, which springs from the personal encounter with Christ. His mystery of salvation encompasses all humanity, so that no one is without hope. It only needs to be discovered and recognised as the foundation of life. The hope that emerges from the encounter with Christ cannot fail, for God’s love is poured into the heart of every person.

Those immersed in the darkness of sin and adversities of life require light to build their lives on firm foundations. In this perspective, the Jubilee offers an occasion to experience the mystery of divine mercy. This may be encountered in the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, but also through the works of corporal and spiritual mercy. In the light of the vocation to eternal life, indulgences granted during the Holy Year constitute the sign of God’s mercy.

The Jubilee Year must not be understood as directed solely toward personal benefit. Christians who experience God’s love are called to share it with those most in need: the hopeless, the impoverished, the displaced, the suffering, and those afflicted by war. The Pope urges that the Year of Hope be a time for forgiveness of guilt and debt, and for overcoming barriers and prejudice.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. G. Ryś, 325 r. — *Sobór w Nicei — 2025 r. Ku wspólnemu celebrowaniu 1700. rocznicy ważnej dla wszystkich chrześcijańskich Kościołów*, in: *Pielgrzymi nadziei*, pp. 122–127; V. Peri, *La data comune della Pasqua: un ‘test’ ecumenico maggiore per il terzo millennio*, ‘Rivista liturgica’ 1–2 (2001), pp. 103–124; D. Heller, *Le Chiese della Riforma e il problema della data comune per la Pasqua. Considerazioni teologiche*, ‘Rivista liturgica’ 1–2 (2001), pp. 125–133; B. Petrà, *L’Ordodossia tra vecchio e nuovo calendario. Il rischio di una Pasqua di divisione*, ‘Rivista liturgica’ 1–2 (2001), pp. 135–155.

<sup>59</sup> SnC, no. 17.

The richness of the Jubilee entails concrete challenges and responsibilities for the entire Church. From a pastoral perspective, it is essential to communicate the central themes of the Holy Year through preaching and catechesis. Equally important is the effort to ensure that not only regular churchgoers, but all people, may benefit from the graces of the Jubilee. The Church must recognise the necessity of reaching those living on the margins of parish life, as well as newcomers to the community, and together with them share the joy of encountering the Risen Christ, thus giving them renewed hope for a better future.

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