





# Called To Be Witnesses of Hope

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**T**he Vatican's Year of Jubilee, themed Pilgrims of Hope, began this past Christmas Eve and continues until the celebration of Epiphany on Jan. 6, 2026. This tradition of celebrating a jubilee year traces its roots to the Jewish custom of observing a jubilee every 50 years, during which enslaved people and prisoners would be freed, debts forgiven and God's mercy made manifest. Since the 1300s, popes have called jubilee years nearly every 25 or 50 years as a time for the Church to restore its relationship with God and one another. This year affords each of us, both as individuals and collectively as Catholic health care, an opportunity for renewal in our own journeys of faith and our important work of caring for the sick.

For this Year of Jubilee, the late Pope Francis invites each of us "to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind."<sup>1</sup> He specifically highlights the importance of showing hope to the sick, acknowledging that the "care given to them is a hymn to human dignity, a song of hope that calls for the choral participation of society as a whole."<sup>2</sup> In a particular way, Pope Francis extends an invitation to each of us, as health care workers, to become witnesses of hope so that through the ways that we care for the sick and suffering, hope may spread "to all those who anxiously seek it."<sup>3</sup>

## FANNING HOPE'S FLAME

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that hope "keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in the expectation of eternal beatitude."<sup>4</sup> Hope allows us to profess with St. Paul, "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present

things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

When we offer this gift of hope, we create a sense of aliveness through a shared connection with the sick and suffering, which provides them with the assurance that they are not alone in their illness while helping them to experience peace with themselves and others. In the face of sickness and suffering, we are called to "fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision."<sup>5</sup>

Since one cannot give what one does not have, this Year of Jubilee invites each of us to first open our own hearts to the hope offered by Christ before we can extend that hope to others. While most of us will not be able to travel to Rome to enter through the Holy Doors, each of our dioceses has designated jubilee sites where we can go on pilgrimage.

## **The Jubilee of Hope invites us to follow the path of Mother Teresa, by doing little things with great love. Those simple acts of charity, which reinforce the dignity of the person before us, can easily become the seeds of hope for those most in need.**

Making a small pilgrimage to one of the holy sites in our dioceses can be a powerful moment of conversion in our lives, inspiring us to be ministers of hope in the health care ministry. Yet, for those unable to make a pilgrimage to an official local site, we can designate a place of pilgrimage within our institutions where people can come to “rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer.” (Romans 12:12)

### **BECOMING MINISTERS OF HOPE**

For those of us who care, day in and day out, for Christ in the sick among us, becoming a minister of hope does not require any drastic changes to the way we minister. Rather, each of us becomes ministers of hope through small practical acts.

In his letter announcing the Year of Jubilee, Pope Francis offers us concrete examples of how we can be ministers of hope. He encourages us that “each of us may be able to offer a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed, in the knowledge that, in the Spirit of Jesus, these can become, for those who receive them, rich seeds of hope.”<sup>6</sup> The Jubilee of Hope invites us to follow the path of Mother Teresa, by doing little things with great love. Those simple acts of charity, which reinforce the dignity of the person before us, can easily become the seeds of hope for those most in need.

Summer is a time of growth and abundance. As the warmth of the season brings vitality to the world around us, we are reminded of the ultimate source of our hope: the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the words of Pope John Paul II, “We are an Easter People and Alleluia is our song!”<sup>7</sup> This jubilee year is our chance to proclaim that “Alleluia” by becoming witnesses of hope to all those we encounter. This summer, then, is the opportu-

nity for each of us to take up Pope Francis’ invitation to reflect on how we, both individually and as a community, can be witnesses of hope in our world today.

In calling for this Jubilee of Hope, Pope Francis exhorts, “All the baptized, with their respective charisms and ministries, are co-responsible for ensuring that manifold signs of hope bear witness to God’s presence in the world.”<sup>8</sup> How, then, are we manifesting the resurrection? How are we manifesting God’s signs of hope? How are we participating in the Jubilee Year of Hope?

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### **NOTES**

1. Pope Francis, “*Spes Non Confundit*, Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025,” The Holy See, section 10, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/20240509\\_spes-non-confundit\\_bolla-giubileo2025.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/20240509_spes-non-confundit_bolla-giubileo2025.html).
2. Francis, “*Spes Non Confundit*,” section 11.
3. Francis, “*Spes Non Confundit*,” section 25.
4. *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), section 1818.
5. Pope Francis, “Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, for the Jubilee 2025,” The Holy See, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/letters/2022/documents/20220211-fisichella-giubileo2025.html>.
6. Francis, “*Spes Non Confundit*,” section 18.
7. Pope John Paul II, “*Angelus*,” The Holy See, section 3, [https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/angelus/1986/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_ang\\_19861130.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/angelus/1986/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_19861130.html).
8. Francis, “*Spes Non Confundit*,” section 17.

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