

Living Faith

The Path to Hope



Daily Devotions for Lent

Jubilee: A Sacred Time

You shall treat this fiftieth year as sacred. You shall proclaim liberty in the land for all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to your own property, each of you to your own family. This fiftieth year is your year of jubilee... It shall be sacred for you. LEVITICUS 25:10-12

Setting aside time for prayer, reflection, repentance and renewal are time-honored practices in the life of a Christian. Doing so in a deliberate way, corporately, is also the way of the Church, the Body of Christ. We have liturgical seasons in the Church year. And we have Church years that celebrate themes or historical milestones. And this year, 2025, we have a Jubilee. Part of the gift of the Jubilee is the movement we make together in Christ, in union with the global Church and the Pope.

Rooted in the Old Testament, a Jubilee year observed a time of restoration, liberation, debt forgiveness and rest for the people and the land. The Catholic Church adapted this idea centuries ago, and in recent centuries, the interval became 25 years so that more generations might receive the spiritual benefits.

Our world suffers: wars, displacements and homelessness, health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic and too many tragedies to name. Pope Francis has invited us to live this year as “Pilgrims of Hope,” seeking graces that will bring recovery, renewal and hope in the wake of many challenges the people of the world face.

Whatever the question, the God of Hope has the answer.

Lord, we turn in hope to you as we come to Lent. Guide us on the path, as pilgrims, in this Jubilee.

■ PAT GOHN

Our True Hope

...*Christ Jesus our hope*... 1 TIMOTHY 1:1

St. Paul wrote the first of two letters to the young bishop, Timothy. He began by saying he is an apostle of Christ Jesus, who is our hope. Paul was Timothy's spiritual mentor, and he noted how they shared a close friendship and had a mutual understanding of the importance of bringing hope to the people.

Hope is that powerful theological virtue that enables us to overcome our gloom, depression and other spiritual and emotional weaknesses. Hope lifts our spirits from dark valleys to find a warmth of sunlight and calmness.

Hope lifts our
spirits from dark
valleys...

We may be troubled by our past sinful deeds and feel we are unforgiven, unworthy and unloved by God. Then, especially, we need to remember that Christ Jesus is our

hope for mercy and forgiveness. In this letter, Paul gives hope to all of us by saying he was a blasphemer, a notorious sinner and a persecutor of early Christians; but he was mercifully treated and forgiven. Hope gives that same assurance promised by Christ Jesus to receive a renewed inner peace.

Dear God, help us never to lose hope—never to lose Jesus—for Christ Jesus is our hope.

■ FR. JAMES MCKARNS

‘This Grace in Which We Stand’

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access [by faith] to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. ROMANS 5:1-2

We’re born into a competitive world of expectations. We do our best to prove we are worthy. To get good grades, students have to study. To qualify for teams, athletes must demonstrate skill. To be promoted, employees need to outshine colleagues. We question ourselves and worry if we have what it takes to be a good student, a good worker or, most of all, a good person. It’s sometimes hard to fathom God loving us just the way we are.

Our faith is our lifeline to God. We may not deserve his love, but that’s the true wonder of it all. And because God is love, we want to try our best to be loving people. I was listening to someone share about this recently, and allow me to paraphrase what I heard them say: I haven’t earned God’s love at all. Truly, God can’t love me any more than he does at this very moment. It is not about doing enough or being enough or even giving enough. When I choose to receive it, I experience God’s love, freely given, and it’s an ongoing, daily outpouring of his grace.

What an astonishing grace, so freely given. The only question is, can we embrace this glorious gift?

Thank you, Lord, for loving me as I am.

■ GAIL GOLEAS

‘Hope Does Not Disappoint’

Not only that, but we even boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us. ROMANS 5:3-5

“Hope does not disappoint” (Romans 5:5) is the opening phrase in Pope Francis’ bull of indiction that proclaimed the 2025 Jubilee year. And what a beautiful, bold opening it is! When Paul wrote those words, he was preparing to evangelize in Rome, the place where he later would be martyred. He was clear-eyed about the task Christians faced there; he was even more clear-eyed about his mission. Hope could not disappoint, for it had been won by trial and faith.

...cling to the Lord, who never disappoints.

In Paul’s time, and in ours, the world would love to wrest hope away from us. Poverty, hate and their attendant problems seem to face us everywhere we turn, and as Christians, we are asked why a loving God would allow these situations to exist. But like Paul, we know hope begins with affliction, and the belief that only through God will the answers ever become clear. When we fall prey to negativism and false promises, our hope is threatened. May we turn away from those who seek to rob us of hope—and cling to the Lord, who never disappoints.

Holy Spirit, please pour love into my heart.

■ MELANIE RIGNEY

Repentance and Grace

But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners

Christ died for us. ROMANS 5:8

My front door faces the east, putting my back deck in full shade each morning. One day, as the sun was making its way into my backyard, I saw an extremely large shadow pass over the trees. Back and forth it went, ominous and unsettling. When I went to investigate, I discovered a hawk circling overhead, presumably seeking its prey for lunch. Yes, that bird's wingspan was quite substantial, but it was nowhere near the size of its immense shadow that moved about my yard. It made me think of despair.

...hope fills and
fuels our souls...

When we focus solely on our sins and shortcomings, shadows expand, casting darkness over our lives. Conversely, when our focus becomes what Christ did for us, despite our sins, his light pierces that darkness, shattering despair and filling us with hope. As that hope fills and fuels our souls, we're inspired to repent of our sins. That act alone gives us the grace to change our thoughts and behavior for the better, lifting our spirits up so they soar in his light.

Source of Light and Hope, focus my heart and eyes firmly on you and all that you've done for me. Inspire me always to repent and draw more near to your light.

■ CLAIRE MCGARRY

Redeemed and Reconciled

Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life. Not only that, but we also boast of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. ROMANS 5:10-11

By the time Paul writes his Letter to the Romans, he's been preaching the Gospel for about 30 years. Yet, he's still astonished at the love of God: "...while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son..." This is the fulfillment of a promise, you might say, that, perhaps, we weren't even aware of, but it is a hope that, indeed, God always had for us!

As Pope Francis writes in *Spes Non Confundit*, his invitation to the 2025 Jubilee, "Hope is born of love and based on the love springing from the pierced heart of Jesus upon the cross" (para. 3).

Hope may seem to some to be a fleeting illusion, but for Paul, it's solid as a rock, a certainty of salvation, so much so that we can even "boast of God"! Paul traces a clear trajectory: from justification to reconciliation, and ultimately, to salvation!

It's a good program for Lent too. As "Pilgrims of Hope," the Pope invites us to a "personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the 'door' of our salvation" (para. 1). As the Pope opened that holy door in Rome last December, let us also keep walking through it, with Jesus, in the spiritual sense.

Jesus, our hope, draw us to yourself!

■ MIGUEL DULICK

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In Jubilee 2025, Pope Francis has invited the Church to embark as “Pilgrims of Hope.” This motto for the Jubilee invites every person to make a pilgrimage this year. Some will make physical pilgrimages, but most people will make spiritual ones. As readers journey through Lent and prepare their hearts for Easter, this devotional booklet takes a deep dive into God’s Word that is filled with hope and directs readers to Jesus, their Savior. He is the hope of the world and hope of every life on a pilgrimage to heaven.



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