



THE ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC ORDINARIES OF THE HOLY LAND
Latins, Melkites, Maronites, Syrians, Armenians, Chaldeans, Custody of the Holy Land

Prot. N. 38 (3)/2024

Message to the faithful of the Holy Land from the ACOHL
Hope does not disappoint

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Church who lives “as a pilgrim and guest” (1 Pt. 2:11; Heb. 11:13) in the Holy Land,
may the Lord give you peace!

Pope Francis, in keeping with an age-old tradition, proclaimed 2025 a Holy Year, a year of special forgiveness and mercy from God, and December 24 last he opened the Holy Door at St. Peter’s in Rome to begin this Jubilee.

As Ordinaries of the Holy Land, December 29 next, we too will open the Jubilee with a solemn celebration at the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, at the very place where the Virgin Mary opened her heart to the angel’s announcement and her womb to the Son of God so that He could be incarnate by the working of the Holy Spirit. With this act, both in Rome and Jerusalem the doors of divine mercy and reconciliation will be thrown wide open to all men and women who wish to experience divine forgiveness and its effects in a profound way.

Hope does not disappoint (Rm. 5:5)

The theme chosen by Pope Francis is: *Pilgrims of Hope*. For us, Catholics of the Holy Land, hope, precisely in these times, is especially necessary, and the Holy Father, in the Bull of Indiction for the Ordinary Jubilee, reminded us that hope does not disappoint. The verb used by the Apostle Paul stands to show that the solid foundation of Christian hope is the fact that God has accepted and justified us by giving His Son for us and has poured into our hearts His love, which is absolute and undeserved gratuitousness, through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, our Christian hope should not be confused with the vague desire for a better future rooted in an optimistic view of life but should be understood as the fruit of Jesus’ passion, death and resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit that the Risen One has given us. Hope that does not disappoint



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is the very hope that springs forth from the empty tomb, that is, from Jesus' Passover, from His resurrection.

To hope against all hope (Rm. 4:18)

The situation of our Christian community in the Holy Land is, in many ways, similar to that of Abraham, who experienced having to “hope against all hope” (Rm. 4:18). It is also similar to that of St. Paul himself, who reminds us that “we boast even in tribulation, knowing full well that tribulation produces patience, patience a tried virtue and tried virtue, hope” (Rm. 5:3-4).

Over the past decades, and particularly over the past few years, we too have gone through a prolonged time of trial and tribulation. We think of the difficulties due to the inability to give a political solution to the Palestinian question and to the instability in the region. We think of the pandemic and war which have added to the economic difficulties that of coexistence. We think again of the endemic and growing violence in Israeli but also Palestinian Arab society, which produces discouragement in so many of our faithful and the temptation to leave the land of their fathers. We think again of the difficulties of the many migrants, displaced persons and refugees, political prisoners and hostages of war.

If we look at this time of trial and tribulation from a purely human point of view this inevitably leads us to discouragement, to a cynical view of the present and the future, to the very loss of faith and the consequent abandonment of the Church. It is precisely in this context that God's word and the Jubilee year itself invite us to rediscover hope.

In fact, the biblical tradition itself presents the Jubilee year as a special year in which prisoners are set free, debts are forgiven, reconciliation with God and neighbor is experienced, peace is lived with all and justice is promoted, property is restored and even the land rests; there is personal and communal spiritual renewal (Lev. 25; Is. 61:1-2). At the beginning of His public ministry, precisely in Nazareth, Jesus said that the true Jubilee is realized in the today of meeting Him and hearing His word (Lk. 4:18-19)



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Signs of Hope in the Holy Land

Pope Francis, in the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee reminds us of how important it is to recognize the signs of hope that are nonetheless present in such a difficult historical period and context of life.

The first and most important is the yearning for peace. In our communities tried by endemic conflicts and the scourge of war, the yearning for peace is deep. And it is a sign of hope that the Christians of the small Christian community in Gaza have not been infected by the logic of hatred and enmity, but have actively cultivated, especially through prayer, a merciful heart open to reconciliation, sustained by a faith they have witnessed to the whole world.

It is a sign of hope that even in such difficult economic and social times, so many young couples in our communities have chosen to form a family, get married and stay in this land of ours.

It is a sign of hope that we have been able to live out our welcome to migrants, displaced persons and refugees in such a way as to show the welcoming and caring face of the Christian community that knows how to overcome the horizons of religious nationalism in order to live out openness to catholicity, that is, universality.

Also to be recognized as a sign of hope is the witness of priests and religious who shared the sufferings of the people, remaining close to their own people.

The solidarity that the universal Church manifested toward the Church living in the Holy Land, with prayer and concrete material gestures, was also a sign of hope for us.

Similarly, the closeness of Pope Francis toward all the peoples involved in the conflict and particularly toward the Christians of the Holy Land was a sign of encouragement to hope. Through many gestures, including the letter he wrote on March 27, 2024 for Holy Week and the one sent last October 7, in which he compared Catholics of the Holy Land to a seed of hope that, although covered by the earth and shrouded by darkness, bears fruit.



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We have also been sustained in hope by the many appeals that both the Holy See and also Bishops' conferences and Sister Churches have constantly raised to call for the cessation of wars and the peaceful resolution of conflicts through negotiation and the instruments of diplomacy.

We think that each one of us can look at the reality in which we live and see it with the eyes of faith, which can grasp the good through which God makes Himself present in our history. We can also recognize and witness many other signs of hope present in our ecclesial context. We therefore invite each and every one of you to have the eyes of faith to recognize these signs within your families and communities, in the contexts in which you live and in daily environment.

A pilgrimage of hope

In order to live the experience of the Jubilee in its fullness, as an experience of reconciliation and indulgence, that is, as an experience of a mercy that heals us not only from our sins (forgiveness of sins), but also from the consequences they produce in our lives in its eternal perspective (forgiveness of punishments), we Christians of the Holy Land are offered a pilgrimage to three special places. They are the places from which the hope of Christians around the world originates and is nourished: Nazareth (Basilica of the Annunciation), Bethlehem (Basilica of the Nativity) and Jerusalem (Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher-Anastasis). Throughout the year, let us try to be ourselves pilgrims to these places, as a community, as families and also in a personal way.

In Nazareth, Christ our hope became flesh in Mary's womb, and Mary teaches us that we need to believe that nothing is impossible for God. Like Mary be open to the fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit, so that God can work in our lives and in our history and transform it into salvation history.

In Bethlehem, hope has the face of a child and reminds us that God does not save with weapons and armies, nor with powerful means, but with the unarmed strength of a child in whom all the fullness of divinity dwells bodily,



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a child who is Emmanuel that is God with us and is Jesus that is God Himself who saves us by sharing our lives.

In Jerusalem, on Calvary, we realize the hope that comes from feeling loved gratuitously and infinitely, because there it is revealed to us that the Son of God loves us in a personal way and gives Himself for each of us. There we discover that reconciliation between peoples is possible because Jesus demolished the wall of enmity by dying for us on the cross. Finally, in passing through the empty tomb we discover the deepest content of our hope, which is the promise of the Risen One to take us with him into the glory of the Father, to bring us through the experience of death so that we can participate in the very life of the triune God, a communion of life and love.

To these we can also add the place of Jesus' Baptism, in Jordan, where the new Latin church will be consecrated January 10 next. It is a place that, by its nature, recalls John the Baptist's invitation to conversion to prepare the way for the encounter with Jesus, to be welcomed as the Christ and as the Lord of our lives. The invitation to conversion, according to the Precursor, touches our mentality, our affections, our life choices and our everyday life (cf. Lk. 3:10-18).

It is certainly part of our mission to proclaim and offer hope to all people, but especially to the smallest, the frailest and the poorest, whether they are young people struggling to find a job, a home and start a family, or elderly people left alone and marginalized by society, or migrant workers, displaced persons and refugees who are looking for a better future for themselves and their families: if it is by giving that we receive, it is true that by sustaining the hope of others, our own is also strengthened.

Attached please find a brief fact sheet explaining what a Jubilee indulgence is, what conditions the Church sets for obtaining it and for whom it can be invoked. This will make it easier for the faithful to understand the meaning of the general indulgence linked to the Jubilee. An indulgence that is obtained through sincere repentance of sins and a deep commitment to conversion, the sacrament of reconciliation, participation in the Eucharist, profession of faith and prayer for the Roman Pontiff, with the addition of some works of



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charity, and that can be obtained for oneself but also for one's deceased loved ones.

Grant us o Lord, the capacity to keep alive

After briefly reflecting on the meaning of this Jubilee that reopens our hearts to the hope that does not confuse, deceive or disappoint, we want to invite all of you, brothers and sisters of the Holy Land, to live intensely this Jubilee year, to participate in the pastoral and spiritual initiatives that will be proposed in your respective communities.

We ask the Lord for the ability to hope again, precisely because the times in which we find ourselves living demand a supplement of hope in order to be lived in fidelity to the Lord and in love for our brothers and sisters.

We entrust to you a much-loved traditional prayer, the Act of Hope. It is an ancient prayer, but its content is always new and makes us realize that having obtained mercy, we can go through the earthly pilgrimage with the prospect of eternal happiness.

O Lord God,

I hope by your grace for the pardon of all my sins

and after life here to gain eternal happiness

because you have promised it

who are infinitely powerful, faithful, kind, and merciful.

In this hope I intend to live and die. Amen.

Jerusalem, December 27, 2024

†**Pierbattista Card. Pizzaballa**

Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem

President of the A.O.C.H.L.



Pierbattista Pizzaballa

DECREE ON THE GRANTING OF THE INDULGENCE DURING THE ORDINARY
JUBILEE YEAR 2025 CALLED BY HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS



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The Grace of the Indulgence

By Monsignor Vincenzo Peroni

Note: A plenary indulgence may be obtained for oneself only once per day and a second time applicable only for the deceased (Provisions for the acquisition of the Jubilee Indulgence for the Year 2025).

To obtain it, the following are required:

1. Performing the work to which the indulgence is attached*
2. Detachment from all sin, even venial sin
3. Fulfilling the three conditions:
 1. Individual and complete sacramental confession**
 2. Eucharistic communion***
 3. Prayer for the intentions of the Supreme Pontiff as a testimony of communion with the Church.

*The act to which the indulgence is attached often consists of visiting a sacred place (a sanctuary, church, etc.). In such cases, the faithful must make a devout visit to these sacred sites, reciting the Lord's Prayer and the profession of faith (that is, the Our Father and the Creed).

**The faithful may receive or apply the gift of a plenary indulgence daily for a reasonable period without needing to repeat confession (Provisions for the acquisition of the Jubilee Indulgence for the Year 2000).

***Participation in the Eucharist—required for each indulgence—should ideally take place on the same day the prescribed works are performed (Provisions for the acquisition of the Jubilee Indulgence for the Year 2000).