

Consecrated Persons and the Jubilee: Embracing Hope, Conversion and Reconciliation

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Abstract

The past four years have constituted difficult moments for humanity. Notable is the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2019 leading to the tragedy of death and the uncertainty and fleetingness of existence. During this period, Christians and people of other faiths endured hardships and limitations. Churches remained closed, as did mosques, schools, factories, offices, shops, and venues for recreation. It generated feelings not only of grief, but also, at times, of doubt, fear and disorientation. Within the same period is the war between Ukraine and Russia, and between Israel and Palestine, alongside other conflicts around the world. Pope Francis has declared the year 2025 the Jubilee Year, and he intends that during this year, humanity will move away from a season of tragedy to an epoch of hope. This paper studies the Jubilee Year declared by Pope Francis alongside other jubilee years. While there are several papers on the 2025 Jubilee Year, this work distinguishes itself by focusing on the implications of

the Jubilee Year for Consecrated Persons. For the purpose of achieving the aim and objectives of the paper, it adopts the thematic, hermeneutic and historical approaches in research. It concludes that the 2025 Jubilee Year can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust, and a sense of universal fraternity as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that is so urgently desired by the world.

Keywords: Pope Francis, Consecrated Persons, Hope, Jubilee Year

Introduction

The priestly writers emphasize the Sabbath throughout Genesis, Exodus, and Leviticus. In Leviticus 23, the weekly Sabbath is given top priority among the appointed festivals and holy convocations. The Israelites are to rest on the seventh day, and even the land is granted a Sabbath rest every seventh year, during which it is to lie fallow, with no sowing or pruning allowed. This Sabbath year extends not only to the people of Israel, but also their servants, and livestock, with a promise of abundant food for all¹. In Leviticus 23, the year of Jubilee is discussed, which is the 50th year after counting off seven Sabbaths of years. The Jubilee year is proclaimed on the Day of Atonement with the blowing of the ram's horn.

The Jubilee, at this time, therefore, becomes a time for Sabbath rest, homecoming, and liberation in Israelite society. During this period, each Israelite returns to their ancestral land, debts are forgiven,

¹ Enter the Bible. 2024. *Leviticus 25 – The Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee*. <https://enterthebible.org/passage/leviticus-25-the-sabbatical-year-and-the-year-of-jubilee>

slaves are set free, and land is returned to its original owners². The Jubilee is based on the theological claims that the land and people belong to the LORD, and as a result, they are released from any other claims during this time. Leviticus 25 outlines the rules for land and people redemption between Jubilee years, emphasizing economic justice. It allows the nearest relative of a debtor to redeem the land or person sold to pay off debts. If there is no one to redeem the land or people, both are released in the Jubilee year³.

This vision of economic justice and liberation has inspired people for thousands of years and has echoes in later biblical texts. It is from this Biblical tradition of jubilees that the Church gave importance to the celebration of jubilees from 1300 to date. The Jubilee Year 2025 declared by Pope Francis, is unique in many ways. It is designed to be an event of great spiritual, ecclesial, and social significance in the life of the Church. It is hoped to be a year 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. While this paper does not ignore the general understanding of jubilee and the unique spirit of the 2025 jubilee year, it tries to drive an understanding in relation to the Consecrated Life.

² Enter the Bible. 2024. *Leviticus 25 – The Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee*.

³ Enter the Bible. 2024. *Leviticus 25 – The Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee*.

Understanding Consecrated Life

Lumen Gentium gave due consideration to the role and mission of consecrated life in the life of the Church. Although it speaks of the incorporation of the faithful into the Church, the grace of divine adoption, and the universal call to holiness⁴, it further explains how the vocation of the religious compares with and differs from the common one of the laity and how they express in the Church a type of Christian and evangelical life that is entirely unique⁵. It defined the identity of a religious is defined more in terms of *being* conformed to Christ than of *doing*⁶. The Council's argumentation takes baptism as its starting point, recognizing that with the profession of the evangelical counsels, those who consecrate themselves to the service of God in the Church can derive "more abundant fruit from this baptismal grace"⁷.

Consecrated life is understood as an ecclesial vocation and does not constitute a path of perfection marked by individualism but shows a clear ecclesial rooting. The choice of the evangelical counsels represents for the individual, and for the whole Church, an opportunity for enrichment and a privileged "place" where grace is manifested. It is a spiritual capital that profits not only "the entire

⁴ *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 10, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vatii_const_1964121_lumen-gentium_en.html, 11, 43, 47.

⁵ *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 39

⁶ Michael Czerny SJ. 2021. Religious Life from Vatican II to *Fratelli Tutti* . Review for Religious: New Series, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 87-106

⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 44

Body of Christ”⁸ but also those who embrace it⁹. The Consecrated life is a reality and also a sign. It is a sign because of the eschatological tension that runs through it¹⁰, given that the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience constitute an anticipation of the condition of perfect and definitive communion to which the “children of God” will be introduced in the last times. It is also a reality because the religious, by giving themselves to God without fleeing from the world (*fuga mundi*), also acquire a different freedom in the way they engage themselves, material goods, and others¹¹. It reflects the charismatic character of the church, constituting a special gift with which the Spirit has enriched the Church and characterized her charismatic structure, inasmuch as it “undeniably belongs to its life and holiness”¹².

In 1965, the words “a life consecrated by the profession of the counsels”¹³ appeared for the first time in an official Church document. *The document* makes explicit the Christological foundation of religious life¹⁴ and indicates the following of Christ as

⁸ *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 43

⁹ *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 43

¹⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 46; Kanu, I. A. 2011. “A Review of Consecrated: A Vision of the Religious Life from the Viewpoint of the Sacred”. Mary Sylvia Nwachukwu (Author). *African Journal of Contextual Theology*. 3: 161-163.

¹¹ *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 46

¹² *Lumen Gentium*, November 21, 1964, 44

¹³ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_perfectae-caritatis_en.html, 2; Kanu, I. A. 2015. “Consecrated Persons as Agents of Pastoral Care of the Family”. *JORAS: Nigerian Journal of Religion and Society*. 5: 74-84.

¹⁴ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 1.

the “highest rule” and the “ultimate norm”¹⁵ which governs it. The primary purpose of the consecrated Life is union with God, to which both contemplation and apostolic zeal must be directed¹⁶. The multiple forms of consecrated life—contemplative, active, monastic, and lay¹⁷, show with how great a “variety of gifts” the Spirit embellishes the Church, making her appear “like a spouse adorned for her husband”¹⁸.

For the purpose of constant renewal, the decree recommends that each institute acquire knowledge of its own origins and history, which will help to attune the original charismatic intuition to “the changed conditions of our time”¹⁹. It also calls for more respect towards the “common life.” It holds that what binds religious together is love for God, and this unity “is a visible pledge that Christ will return”²⁰. It holds that the very fruitfulness of religious life depends on the quality of life in common²¹, since fraternal unity is “a source of great apostolic energy”²².

¹⁵ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 2

¹⁶ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 5

¹⁷ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 7-11

¹⁸ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 1.

¹⁹ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 2

²⁰ *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 15.

²¹ Michael Czerny SJ. 2021., 87-106; Kanu, I. A. 2015. “*Africae Munus* and Consecrated Persons”. *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*. 11: 3-14.

²² *Perfectae Caritatis*, October 28, 1965, 15; Kanu, I. A. 2024. “The Inculturation of Consecrated Life in Africa: Towards a Logic for Promoting Indigenous Gifts of Fidelity”. *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*. 21(1) 245-265.

In the apostolic exhortation *Evangelica Testificatio* of 1971, Pope Paul VI sought to respond to the climate of “anxiety”, “the boldness of certain arbitrary transformations”²³, and those questioning the usefulness of consecrated life for the present time²⁴. The pope reiterates the importance of rediscovering the “charisms of your founders”²⁵, because on its identification depend those “fundamental options” which make it possible “continually . . . to revitalize external forms”²⁶. Paul VI chose to include, in relation to the vow of poverty, a reference to the preferential option for the poor made by the Council. This requires a constant call to love effectively and to shun selfishness, for conversion of mind and heart and “for liberation from all temporal encumbrances”²⁷.

²³ Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, June 29, 1971, 2, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19710629_evangelica-testificatio.html, 2; Kanu, I. A. (2019). “Collaboration within the Ecology of Mission: An African Cultural Perspective”. *The Catholic Voyage: Journal of Consecrated Life in Africa*. 15: 125-149.

²⁴ Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, June 29, 1971, 3 ; Kanu, I. A. 2018. “Obedience and Discernment in the Life of Consecrated Persons”. *IGWEBUIKE: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities* (IAAJAH). 4(5) 35-43.

²⁵ Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, June 29, 1971, 11; Kanu, I. A. 2018. “Consecrated Persons and Collaborative Ministry”. *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*. 14: 126-135.

²⁶ Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, June 29, 1971, 12; Kanu, I. A. 2016. “The Concept of Family as the Contribution of Africa to the Consecrated Life”. *The Catholic Voyage: African Journal of Consecrated Life*. 12: 31-40.

²⁷ Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, June 29, 1971, 17; Kanu, I. A. 2016. “*Miserando Atque Eligendo*: The Consecrated Life as a Mission of Mercy”. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*. 7(5) 92-100.

He observed that the Religious are called to live poverty as a choice, making their own the condition of the Son of Man who “has nowhere to rest his head” (Luke 9:58). The work of the religious, therefore, becomes a means to helping the poor and not for self-satisfaction. The duty to “help the poor through work” redefines common life and shows how poverty can be “really lived by pooling goods”²⁸. The preferential option for the poor ultimately sheds new light on the way of living the vow of poverty and informs common life²⁹.

Church and the Tradition of Jubilees

a. Jubilees From 1000-1500

On 22 February 1300, with the Bull *Antiquorum habet*, Boniface VIII proclaimed 1300 as a Jubilee year, decreeing that Romans who visit the basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul 30 times within the year would be granted a plenary indulgence, however, pilgrims arriving from outside Rome would only need 15 visits³⁰. In 1343, with the Bull *Unigenitus Dei Filius*, Clement VI, after having received a delegation representing the people of Rome asking him to bring the Apostolic See back to the city and to hold a Jubilee before the typical 100-year period, proclaimed a Holy Year for the year 1350³¹. Despite the scourge of the plague and a disastrous earthquake that struck

²⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelica Testificatio*, June 29, 1971, 21; Kanu, I. A. 2015. “*Quitte Ton Pays: On Consecrated Persons and the Challenges of Family Obligations in Contemporary Africa*”. *Jos Studies*. 23: 45-57.

²⁹ Michael Czerny SJ. 2021., 87-106

³⁰ Pope Boniface VIII. 1300. *Antiquorum habet*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³¹ Pope Clement VI. 1343. *Unigenitus Dei Filius*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Rome in 1349, more than one and a half million pilgrims poured into the city for the celebrations.

On 8 April 1389, the Bull *Salvator Noster Unigenitus* of Urban VI established that the celebration of the Jubilee should take place every 33 years, thus, bringing forward the celebrations to 1390³². Nicholas V proclaimed the next Holy Year in 1450 with the Bull *Immensa et Innumerabilia*, dated 19 January 1449³³. This brought the jubilee tradition back to celebrations every 50 years. Given the Pope's canonisation of the great Franciscan preacher, St Bernardine of Siena, the number of pilgrims to Rome increased dramatically.

On 19 April 1470, the Bull *Ineffabilis Providentia*, expressly established that the Jubilee pilgrimage should include visits to the basilicas of St. Peter's, St. Paul's, St. John Lateran, and St. Mary Major. It stated that from 1475 onwards, jubilees should be celebrated every 25 years at the behest of Pope Paul II³⁴. With the Bull of 29 August 1473 *Quemadmodum operosi*, Sixtus IV confirmed the Jubilee proclaimed earlier by Paul II, who had in the meantime died³⁵.

A special effort was made to mark the Jubilee Year of 1500, given the extra significance of the turning of the new century. On 12 April 1498, the Bull *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices* suspended all

³² Pope Urban VI. 1389. *Salvator noster Unigenitus*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³³ Pope Nicholas V. 1450. *Immensa et Innumerabilia*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³⁴ Pope Paul II. 1475. *Ineffabilis Providentia*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³⁵ Pope Sixtus IV. 1473. *Quemadmodum operosi*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

further indulgences for that year³⁶, and this was later confirmed by the Bull *Inter multiplices* of 28 March 1499. The Bull of 20 December 1499, *Pastores Aeterni Qui*, established that only the penitentiaries of St. Peter's Basilica were granted the faculty to absolve sins³⁷. In this year Alexander VI definitively established the complex ceremony of the opening and closing of Holy Years, which until then had not followed any specific liturgical rites. The Pope wanted the beginning to be marked by an event with a powerful impact and he thus implemented the tradition of the opening of a Holy Door. This ceremony is an explicit reference to the words of St John's Gospel: "I am the door. Whoever passes through me will be saved." (Jn 10:9)

b. Jubilees from 1501-2000

The Bull of proclamation, *Inter Sollucitudines*, issued by Clement VII, was published on 17 December 1524³⁸. It proclaimed a jubilee year to mark 150th anniversary of the traditional jubilee year, first proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300. A few days after his election, Pope Julius III opened the Holy Year promulgated by his predecessor Paul III, with the issuing of the Bull *Si Pastores Ovium*, dated 24 February 1550³⁹. He also announced the resumption of the Council of Trent for May of the following year. The Jubilee of 1575 was announced on 10 May 1574 with the Bull *Dominus ac*

³⁶ Pope Alexander VI. 1498. *Consueverunt Romani Pontifices Inter multiplices*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³⁷ Pope Alexander VI. 1499. *Pastores Aeterni Qui*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³⁸ Pope Clement VII. 1524. *Inter Sollucitudines*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

³⁹ Pope Julius III. 1550. *Si Pastores Ovium*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Redemptor. Celebrated after the turmoil of the Protestant reformation, it was an excellent opportunity for Gregory XIII to renew Catholicism in accordance with the decisions of the Council of Trent⁴⁰. This Holy Year gave the Pope the opportunity to highlight the renewed role of the Church in the modern world.

The Bull of 19 May 1599, *Annus Domini Placabilis* proclaimed a holy year. During this Jubilee, Clement VIII offered good example by hearing confessions during Holy Week, climbing the Scala Sancta on his knees, serving meals to pilgrims who had come to Rome, and eating with 12 of the city's poor each day⁴¹. Likewise, the cardinals renounced wearing their traditional red regalia as a sign of penitence. Many flocked to help the Pope's jubilee efforts.

On 29 April 1624, with the Bull *Omnes Gentes*, Urban VIII proclaimed the Jubilee of 1625. On 28 January 1625 he extended the Jubilee indulgence to those who were unable to travel to Rome, as well as to prisoners and the sick (Bull *Pontificia sollicitudo*)⁴². On 30 January, with the papal encyclical *Paterna dominici gregis cura*, given the danger of the plague that was threatening Rome, the traditional visit to the Basilica of St Paul was dispensed. A visit to the more central church of Santa Maria in Trastevere was done.

To mark this Holy Year proclaimed by the bull *Appropinquat Dilectissimi Filii* of 4 May 1649, Innocent X had the basilica of St.

⁴⁰ Pope Gregory XIII. 1574. *Dominus ac Redemptor*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁴¹ Pope Clement VIII. 1599. *Annus Domini Placabilis*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁴² Pope Urban VIII. 1624. *Omnes Gentes*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

John Lateran restored by the famous architect Borromini⁴³. A novelty was introduced for this Jubilee: The Jubilee indulgence was extended to the Belgian Provinces and the West Indies through the Bull *Salvator et Dominus* of 8 and 12 January 1654. About 700,000 pilgrims arrived Rome, and umerous Protestants converted to Catholicism.

On 16 April 1674, Clement X with the bull *Ad Apostolicae Vocis Oraculum* proclaimed a Holy Year. During this period, the Colosseum was reconsecrated, and the permission granted in 1671 to hold bull fights there was rescinded⁴⁴. One of the most prominent pilgrims was Queen Christina of Sweden, who had abdicated her throne in 1655, converted to Catholicism, and moved to Rome to take up residence at the Palazzo Farnese. About one and a half million pilgrims came to Rome this year.

Innocent XII on 18 May 1699, with the Bull *Regi Saeculorum* proclaimed a Holy Year. At the opening of the year, the Pope, due to his precarious state of health, was unable to preside personally⁴⁵. However, on Easter Sunday, despite being seriously ill, imparted the solemn blessing from the balcony of the Quirinale on account of the large number of pilgrims who had gathered. He died shortly afterwards on 27 September 1700 without being able to conclude the year. The conclusion of the Jubilee year was presided over by Clement XI (elected Pope in November 1700). It was the first time

⁴³ Pope Innocent X. 1649. *Appropinquat Dilectissimi Filii*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁴⁴ Pope Clement X. 1674. *Ad Apostolicae Vocis Oraculum*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁴⁵ Pope Innocent XII. 1699. *Regi Saeculorum*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

that the Holy Door had been opened by one Pope and then closed by another. The influx of pilgrims in the city was such that some writers of the time compared Rome to Paris in terms of visitor numbers.

During the Holy Year of 1725, proclaimed with the Bull *Redemptor et Dominus Noster* of 26 June 1724, Pope Benedict XIII regularly visited the Roman basilicas himself, travelling in modest carriages and taking part in the various practices required to obtain the indulgences⁴⁶. On 15 April 1725, he inaugurated the Roman Synod in St John Lateran's Basilica, whose deliberations ran to 32 volumes. During this year the steps at Piazza di Spagna (the Spanish Steps) were opened to connect the square with the Church of Santissima Trinità dei Monti (Holy Trinity of the Mountains).

On 5 May 1749, the Holy Year 1750 was proclaimed with the Bull *Peregrinantes a Domino*. More than a million pilgrims flocked to Rome, including several ambassadors, and groups from as far West Indies, Egypt and Armenia. The influx was so large that Roman charitable and hospital institutions were forced to rent royal palaces to cope with the number of pilgrims⁴⁷.

On 30 April 1774, with the Bull *Salutis Nostrae Auctor*, a jubilee was proclaimed by Pope Clement XIV, but unfortunately on 22 September that year he died. Pius VI was elected Pope on 15 February 1775 and a few days later, on 26 February, he solemnly inaugurated the Holy Year, which could not be opened as usual on

⁴⁶ Pope Benedict XIII. 1725. *Redemptor et Dominus Noster*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁴⁷ Pope Benedict XIII. 1750. *Peregrinantes a Domino*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Christmas Eve because the Papal See was vacant⁴⁸. The Jubilee of 1825 was proclaimed by Pope Leo XII on 24 May 1824 with the Bull *Quod Hoc Ineunte*. More than 325,000 pilgrims from all over Europe came to Rome⁴⁹.

After returning from exile and resuming the government of the Papal States, Pius IX proclaimed a Jubilee on 24 December 1874 with the Bull *Gravibus Ecclesiae*⁵⁰. The troops of King Victor Emmanuel II occupied Rome, and because of this it was not possible to hold the opening and closing ceremonies of the Holy Door. *Properante ad Exitum Saeculo* was the Bull with which, on 11 May 1899, Leo XIII proclaimed the universal Holy Year of 1900. For the first time since the unification of Italy, the King also announced the Jubilee in his ‘Speech of the Crown’⁵¹. The Pope sent out an appeal for a reawakening of faith in the Christian people throughout the world.

Pope Pius XI, emphasizing the commitment of the Church and all Christians to a better society, proclaimed the Jubilee of 1925 with the Bull *Infinita Dei Misericordia* on 29 May 1924⁵². He gave an impetus to missionary activity around the world, which earned him the title ‘Pope of the Missions’. Pius XI proclaimed an ‘extraordinary Jubilee’ on 6 January 1933, with the Bull *Quod Nuper*, to mark the 1900th anniversary of the death of Jesus⁵³. The

⁴⁸ Pope Clement XIV. 1774. *Salutis Nostrae Auctor*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁴⁹ Pope Leo XII. 1824. *Quod Hoc Ineunte*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁵⁰ Pope Pius IX. 1874. *Gravibus Ecclesiae*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁵¹ Pope Leo XIII. 1899. *Properante ad Exitum Saeculo*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁵² Pope Pius XI. 1924. *Infinita Dei Misericordia*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁵³ Pope Pius XI. 1933. *Quod Nuper*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

event was celebrated with particular grandeur. The Pope gave as many as 620 speeches and more than 2 million pilgrims poured into Rome.

On 26 May 1949, the Holy Year of 1950 was proclaimed with the Bull *Jubilaenum Maximum*⁵⁴. During the Jubilee celebrations, Pope Pius XII proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven and transformed the College of Cardinals into a sort of universal representation of the Catholic world, drastically reducing the Italian presence and increasing the number of cardinals from other nations.

Pope Paul VI decided that this Holy Year should be dedicated to reconciliation. He called it with the Bull *Apostolorum Limina* of 23 May 1974. At the opening of the Holy Door on Christmas night 1974, Buddhist monks were also present⁵⁵. It was the first Jubilee to be broadcast worldwide and saw the lifting of historic excommunications with the Church of Byzantium and the participation of the Patriarch of Alexandria Melitane.

With the Bull *Aperite Portas Redemptori*, dated 6 January 1983, John Paul II proclaimed a Jubilee to celebrate the 1950th anniversary of the death and resurrection of Jesus⁵⁶. The same Pope, on 29

⁵⁴ Pope Pius XII. 1949. *Jubilaenum Maximum*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁵⁵ Pope Paul VI. 1974 *Apostolorum Limina*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁵⁶ Pope John Paul II. 1983. *Aperite Portas Redemptori*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

November 1998, with the Bull *Incarnationis Mysterium*, proclaimed the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000⁵⁷.

c. Jubilees from 2001-2025

With the Bull *Misericordiae Vultus* of 11 April 2015, Pope Francis declared a Jubilee for the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second Vatican Council⁵⁸. The Jubilee was dedicated to mercy. Before the official opening, as a sign of the Church's closeness to the civil war-stricken Central African Republic, Pope Francis opened the holy door of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Bangui on 29 November, during his apostolic trip to Africa, anticipating the start of the Extraordinary Jubilee. The holy door of St Peter's Basilica was opened on 8 December 2015, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. For the first time a 'door of mercy' was opened in the world's cathedrals, sanctuaries, hospitals and prisons. For the occasion, the Pope established a group of priests known as Missionaries of Mercy to whom he entrusted the power to forgive sins usually reserved to the Holy Father.

Jubilee Year 2025

Since 1300, when Pope Boniface VIII instituted the Holy Year, it has always been a great spiritual, ecclesial, and social event for the Church. In the letter of the Holy Father, Pope Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of

⁵⁷ Pope John Paul II. 1998. *Incarnationis Mysterium*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

⁵⁸ Pope Francis. 2015. *Misericordiae Vultus*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana

the New Evangelization, in respect of the Jubilee 2025 on 11 February 2022, the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes, the Pope observed that in the history of the Church that the Jubilee year has always been a celebration serving as a special gift of grace:

Characterized by the forgiveness of sins and in particular by the indulgence, which is a full expression of the mercy of God. The faithful, frequently at the conclusion of a lengthy pilgrimage, draw from the spiritual treasury of the Church by passing through the Holy Door and venerating the relics of the Apostles Peter and Paul preserved in Roman basilicas⁵⁹.

The Jubilee Year of 2025 takes up a great significance when seen from the background of the happenings in the last two years, during which the world has been plagued by the sudden outbreak of Covid-19 leading to a retinue of tragedies. During this period of uncertainty and hardships, Pope Francis writes:

Together with all our brothers and sisters, we Christians endured those hardships and limitations. Our churches remained closed, as did our schools, factories, offices, shops, and venues for recreation. All of us saw certain freedoms

⁵⁹ Pope Francis. 2024. *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*. Rome, Saint John Lateran, 11 February 2022, Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Lourdes. <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/giubileo-2025/lettera-di-papa-francesco.html>

curtailed, while the pandemic generated feelings not only of grief, but also, at times, of doubt, fear and disorientation⁶⁰.

From the foregoing, Pope Francis thought that the time has come 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”⁶¹. It is in this sense that the Roman Pontiff believes that the forthcoming “Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, *Pilgrims of Hope*”⁶². This year will not only be a moment of hope but for “recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity”⁶³. This also involves a new approach towards the care of the earth- our common home, which the Lord has charged us to till and keep (Gen 2:15), given that the care for creation is an essential expression of our faith in God and our obedience to his will⁶⁴.

In preparation for the Jubilee Year, Pope Francis desires that the year 2024 be devoted to a great “symphony of prayer”⁶⁵. He writes:

⁶⁰ Pope Francis. 2024. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella*.

⁶¹ Pope Francis. 2024. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella*.

⁶² Pope Francis. 2024. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella*.

⁶³ Pope Francis. 2024. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella*.

⁶⁴ Pope Francis. 2024. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella*.

⁶⁵ Pope Francis. 2024. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella*.

Prayer, above all else, to renew our desire to be in the presence of the Lord, to listen to him and to adore him. Prayer, moreover, to thank God for the many gifts of his love for us and to praise his work in creation... Prayer that makes it possible for every man and woman in this world to turn to the one God and to reveal to him what lies hidden in the depths of their heart. Prayer as the royal road to holiness, which enables us to be contemplative even in the midst of activity⁶⁶.

The jubilee year of 2025 was proclaimed with the Bull *Spes Non Confundit*, which in English means “Hope Does Not Disappoint”.

Pope Francis’ *Spes Non Confundit*

Spes Non Confundit (Hope Does Not Disappoint) is a Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025 which was given in Rome, at Saint John Lateran, on 9 May, the Solemnity of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the year 2024, the twelfth year of the Pontificate of Pope Francis. In this bull, Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of hope in the face of challenges and difficulties⁶⁷. The major points in this document include:

1. *Hope as a theological virtue*: Pope Francis stresses that hope is rooted in faith and trust in God's love. By exploring hope as a

⁶⁶ Pope Francis. 2024. *Letter of the Holy Father Francis to Msgr. Rino Fisichella*.

⁶⁷ Pope Francis. 2024. *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint); a Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1-5.

theological virtue, he encourages believers to deepen their trust in God, cultivate communal support, and live with confidence in God's promises. He defines hope as a theological virtue that enables believers to trust in God's promises, goodness, and providence. It is rooted in God's promises, not human expectations⁶⁸; it is communal, therefore, shared among believers, inspires action, and motivates to work towards God's kingdom.

2. *The experience of hope*: Pope Francis shares personal experiences of hope from his own life and the lives of saints, emphasizing that hope is a personal, intimate experience with God rooted in concrete experiences of His presence; and that hope changes us, making us more like Christ. It has the following elements: it shines brightest in darkness; it sustains us through suffering, and trusts God's plan, even when uncertain. This is evident in the lives of saints, martyrs and ordinary people⁶⁹.
3. *Hope in the face of darkness*: The Pope encourages believers to hold onto hope even in the midst of suffering and adversity. He acknowledges that darkness is real, manifesting itself through suffering (Physical, emotional, or spiritual pain) and hardship (Social, economic, or environmental injustices). However, he also believes that hope shines brighter, and has the capacity to

⁶⁸ Pope Francis. 2024. *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint), 19-21

⁶⁹ Pope Francis. 2024. *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint), 5

illuminate any degree of darkness. He, therefore, calls for confidence in God's goodness and providence, resilience during enduring hardship, and supporting others in darkness. In this sense, hope does not become a denial of the reality of darkness, or an escape route from darkness⁷⁰. Rather hope is transformational, becoming an opportunity for growth.

4. *The community of hope*: Pope Francis emphasizes the importance of community in fostering and sustaining hope. This is based on the understanding that the community is a source of hope, as believers support one another; shared experience of hope helps the community to deepen understanding and inspire one another⁷¹; and communal support through prayer, witness and encouragement and solidarity is essential for hope to be kept alive.
5. *Hope and mission*: Pope Francis links hope to evangelization, encouraging believers to share the Gospel message. He explores the connection between hope and mission within the contexts of Hope inspiring mission, that is, compelling believers to share the Gospel, and also within the understanding of mission sustaining hope⁷². In the sense that evangelization renews and strengthens hope. Thus, while hope inspires mission, mission sustains hope.

⁷⁰ Pope Francis. 2024. *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint), 4

⁷¹ Pope Francis. 2024. *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint), 13-15

⁷² Pope Francis. 2024. *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint), 23

The major themes in this document include: Hope and faith, community and solidarity, evangelization and mission, trust in God's providence, and overcoming adversity and suffering. The implications of these perspectives is that it encourages believers to cultivate hope in their lives, emphasizes the importance of community support, it inspires evangelization efforts, provides guidance for navigating difficult situations and, reiterates the Pope's focus on mercy, compassion, and joy⁷³, and emphasis hope as a fundamental aspect of the Christian life, encouraging believers to trust in God's love and providence.

Consecrated Persons and the Jubilee Year

Despite the emphasis on hope, the jubilee year is a moment of holiness and renewal. The moment has, therefore, once again arisen to reflect on the value of the consecration of consecrated persons in a profound manner. The jubilee year is a moment for reflection on the vocation of the consecrated person within the context of a Christ-like existence, which the consecrated life already provides. Thus, Pope John Paul II teaches that this can be achieved “only on the basis of a special vocation and in virtue of a particular gift of the Spirit. For in such a life baptismal consecration develops into a radical response in the following of Christ through acceptance of the evangelical counsels”⁷⁴.

⁷³ Pope Francis. 2024. *Spes Non Confundit* (Hope Does Not Disappoint), 5-25.

⁷⁴ Pope John Paul II. 1996. *Vitae Consacrata*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 16

In this way the consecrated person is called to become, even in his frail humanity, a living, transparent image of Christ. Pope John Paul II adds, that:

In the consecrated life, then, it is not only a matter of following Christ with one's whole heart, of loving him more than father or mother, more than son or daughter (Mt 10:37) - for this is required of every disciple - but of living and expressing this by conforming one's whole existence to Christ in an all-encompassing commitment which foreshadows the eschatological perfection, to the extent that this is possible in time and in accordance with the different charisms⁷⁵.

In another text, the Roman Pontiff writes that:

Consecrated persons make visible, in their consecration and total dedication, the loving and saving presence of Christ, the One consecrated by the Father, sent in mission. Allowing themselves to be won over by him (Phil 3:12), they prepare to become, in a certain way, a prolongation of his humanity. The consecrated life eloquently shows that the more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve him in others, going even to the furthest missionary outposts and facing the greatest dangers⁷⁶.

⁷⁵ Pope John Paul II. 1996. *Vitae Consacrata*, 14

⁷⁶ Pope John Paul II. 1996. *Vitae Consacrata*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 75

Consecrated persons, therefore, in a radical and even more evident way, are called to become living *icons* of Christ during this jubilee year: their special consecration is nothing other than the call to becoming progressively like Christ, the sacrament of Christ's presence in the world "by allowing themselves to be guided by the Spirit on an endless journey of purification"⁷⁷. Consecrated persons need to allow themselves to be penetrated even more by the power of the Spirit in order to effectively fulfil their mission in the world. Even though this is true of every disciple, in a special way, it is true of those who, in the manner that characterizes the consecrated life, are called to follow Christ 'more closely', and to make him the 'all' of their lives⁷⁸.

This is also the moment to reflect deeply about community life among consecrated persons. This is not unconnected with hope. The quality of life lived together determines the quality of hope among the members of the community. Pope Francis speaks of the Hope that never fails as a hope that is fostered and sustained by the community. This is based on the understanding that the community is a source of hope, as believers support one another; shared experience of hope helps the community to deepen understanding and inspire one another; and communal support through prayer, witness and encouragement and solidarity is essential for hope to be kept alive.

⁷⁷ Pope John Paul II. 1996. *Vitae Consacrata*, 19

⁷⁸ Pope John Paul II. 1996. *Vitae Consacrata*. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 72

The life in common must be nourished every day through faithful personal and communal prayer, through a constant listening to the Word of God, a sincere review of life that draws from the sacrament of reconciliation the strength for a continuous rebirth and hope. It is in this sense that Pope Francis refers to the Jubilee year as a year of “reconciliation, conversion and sacramental penance”. Only if the Spirit takes possession of our humanity, of our heart, of our need for love and tenderness, will religious communities be the churches in miniature, a sign of the Spirit's presence and hope. In this dynamic of fraternal life, an absolutely central place must be given to the Eucharist. According to Pope John Paul II:

This is the heart of the Church's life, and also of the consecrated life. How can those who are called, through the profession of the evangelical counsels, to choose Christ as the only meaning of their lives, not desire to establish an ever more profound communion with him by sharing daily in the Sacrament which makes him present, in the sacrifice which actualises the gift of his love on Golgotha, the banquet which nourishes and sustains God's pilgrim people?⁷⁹

It is important that consecrated persons realize that it is impossible for them to be witnesses of communion unless their own life finds its centre in the Eucharist. Pope John Paul II refers to the Eucharist as the centre of the consecrated life.

⁷⁹ Pope John Paul II. 1996. *Vitae Consacrata*, 95

By its very nature the Eucharist is at the centre of the consecrated life, both for individuals and for communities... By means of the Eucharist all consecrated persons are called to live Christ's Paschal Mystery, uniting themselves to him by offering their own lives to the Father through the Holy Spirit⁸⁰.

It is within this context that Pope Francis asked that 2024 be made a great 'symphony of prayer'.

Conclusion

A Jubilee is a unique year of grace and conversion that takes place every 25 years, or at other times as the Pope requests. This is evident in the different jubilees proclaimed by the Pope in the history of the Church. It is a period that involves prayer, fasting, and sacramental reflection. It has its roots in the scripture, particularly in Leviticus, and this offers fantastic opportunity to appreciate those roots even more. A cursory glance at the history of jubilees in the Church reveals that the Great Jubilee of 2000 was the most recent (ordinary) celebration of a jubilee. However, the Holy Year of Mercy in 2015 was the most recent Extraordinary Jubilee Year. The purpose of a jubilee year is to inspire and foster holiness of life among the faithful and, by extension, to increase the Church's witness to God's loving mercy in and for the world through a sequence of tangible ceremonies, deeds, and commitments.

⁸⁰ Pope John Paul II. 1996. *Vitae Consacrata*, 95

While the 2025 Jubilee Year will involve a series of event that concern the entire people of God, this paper has attempted to relate this jubilee year to the particular concerns of consecrated persons. It is in this sense that it becomes for consecrated persons a period to reflect on the value of their consecration in a profound manner. It is a period to reflect on the vocation of the consecrated person within the context of a Christ-like existence. It is also a period to think about the quality of life in community. This is important as the quality of life lived together determines the quality of hope among the members of the community.

Given the connection between community and hope, Pope Francis teaches that hope is fostered and sustained by the community given that the community is a source of hope, as believers support one another. More so, shared experience of hope helps the community to deepen understanding and inspire one another; and communal support through prayer, witness and encouragement and solidarity is essential for hope to be kept alive. The quality of hope that consecrated persons are able to offer the world at this difficult moment is depended on the quality of hope that they are able to cultivate within their various communities. These notwithstanding, this jubilee year for consecrated persons is also a season of peace, reconciliation, and a time to be more attentive to the cry of the poor and be committed to the care of our common home: the environment.

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