

hOPE does not disappoint



retirement January 2025

Formation and Spirituality

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF THE PILLAR

JUBILEE 2025

The name alone "sounds" like something special and makes us want to get ready for the event. It sounds to us like the *yobel*¹ sounded for the people of Israel, remembering that every 49 years they proposed the celebration of a year that they called Jubilee (Lev 25, 8-13), on the solemnity of Yom Kippur, the feast of the Atonement.

Today we begin our Jubilee retreats, for Israel it was a time of returning home, remitting debts, freeing slaves, restoring property, resting... and knowing that sins were forgiven. The Jewish Jubilee year had an ethical and social component that cannot be missing in ours either, as Pope Francis proposes in the Bull "Hope does not disappoint" and invites us, on the one hand to offer signs of hope to different groups that are somehow vulnerable, and on the other hand from different appeals to generosity and solidarity.

An "extra" year is beginning that we didn't count on, a time to welcome extraordinary things, a time to take a break, to reset, to start again, that liberating and wonderful exercise that puts everything back in its place: asking for forgiveness and knowing that we are forgiven, putting shame aside, changing our minds, allowing ourselves to do different things, not having to keep it together, choosing to be softened instead of hardened, making new friends, meeting different people, opting for peace, fleeing from confrontation, turning

¹ Hebrew term from which jubilee is etymologically derived and which refers to a horn used as a trumpet in liturgical celebrations.

our faces away from tension, laughing in silence, silencing pain, suffering for everything (because everything matters), sitting and watching... and praying quietly.

Called to go on pilgrimage, we are going to set, as a Church, from the most sincere and simple joy, towards the Holy Door, wherever it may be, but to go through it is a call to holiness. During these months, doors will appear that we will have to cross in order not to remain locked in the security of our known spaces, since we have been called for a mission: to manifest God's love to humanity, with hope... with the hope that does not disappoint

A NECESSARY PILGRIMAGE

And if there is a pilgrimage to be made, let's start from the beginning:

"The Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country, from your homeland, and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, I will make your name famous, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you'" (Gen 1,1-3).

From now on, God is in charge, He is responsible for everything, we are only asked to trust, to trust the present and to trust the future. Our hope in the call we have received is what makes the fulfillment of the promise possible. God has committed Himself to us forever. In this pilgrimage everything begins, we have the opportunity to make all things new.

Come out of your troubles, come out of your dramas, come out of your house, come out of your own, come out of your ego, come out to MEET a You who confronts you in an embrace, calls you in an invitation and reveals Himself to you in every face... so we must set out and, in love with life, make ourselves responsible for our vocation, the one each of us has received.

Pilgrimage requires HOSPITALITY, that way of living and exercising Charity, sensitive to what is sensitive, that allows itself to be affected by the lives of others, that looks into the eyes and asks 'how are you?' Giving time and space to welcome the joys, longings and concerns of those with whom I live, of those who knock on my door, of so many whom I demand, of all those whom I love....

Pronounce before God the formula of Profession that took you out of your land, your homeland, your family home and brought you here.

What do I talk about with whom I live?

To go on pilgrimage is to walk in truth, so today is a good day not to deceive oneself (at least not oneself), to name everything that makes my luggage an immovable burden and that I insist on not abandoning, even if I am dragging my life along.

Pilgrimage requires accepting myself as I am, with everything, so as not to become an unbearable burden for my companions on the way, so as to move forward lightly,

freely and without having to beg for recognition. Accepting our weaknesses, our clumsiness, our mistakes and our laziness, makes us less dependent, opens us to trust, makes us ready to approach the Lord and, without violence, to ask him to do something for us. Acknowledging and praying our fears, sensitivities and suspicions, to let the identity of a God who **is here to save us** be revealed to us.

Choose a healing story and pray with it:

- Mk 5, 25-34: The woman with hemorrhages (and an atrocious fear).
 - Mt 15, 21-28: She who intercedes for her daughter (because sometimes we need).
 - Lk 18, 35-46: The blind man of Jericho (who cries out).
 - Jn 5, 1-9: The paralytic (who has no one to push him).
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TOWARDS HOPE

"Spes non Confundit", the Bull of convocation to the Jubilee, has in its title a precious wish that we can spend some time contemplating: *"May hope fill the hearts of all those who read this "*.

It seems to me a very evocative image and a petition to incorporate into all our prayers, a kind of superpower that will help us to face whatever comes our way (whatever it may be) and that will make us relate to our fellow human

beings in a much more compassionate and just way. A heart full and brimming with hope must beat to the rhythm of God's heart and the rhythm of creation.

But these are difficult times, and although *"in the heart of every person there is hope as a desire and expectation of the good [...] the unpredictability of the future often gives rise to conflicting feelings: from confidence to fear, from serenity to discouragement, from certainty to doubt. We often meet people who are discouraged, who look to the future with skepticism and pessimism, as if nothing could offer them happiness"* (SnC, 1).

So, we welcome the invitation to be transmitters of hope, which is a **theological virtue** and a **human** hope, the hope that is at home in and overflowing from our hearts: *"It becomes evident that (a person) has need of a hope that goes further. It becomes clear that only something infinite will suffice for (her or) him, something that will always be more than (she or) he can ever attain."* (Spes Salvi, 30).

- Theological virtue as a gift, hope that *"can only be God, who embraces the universe and who can propose and give us what we cannot obtain on our own. In fact, being graced by a gift is part of hope. God is the foundation of hope; but not just any God, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us in particular and humanity as a whole. His kingdom is not an imaginary beyond, situated in a future that never comes;*

his kingdom is present where he is loved and where his love reaches us". (Spes Salvi, 31)

- Human hope, as a way of life, as that way of imitating Jesus, of wanting to resemble Him, Christian hope, looks to the Gospel which, *"is not only a communication of things that can be known, but a communication that involves facts and changes life. The dark door of time, of the future, has been opened. Those who have hope live; they have been given a new life" (Spes Salvi, 2).*

Let us not fall into the temptation of reading these two hopes separately, nor believe that it is possible to separate the sacred from the human, we have just celebrated the Incarnation, capable of directing all our hopes in the same direction: Jesus makes for us that the smallest and most insignificant hope of each day be mediation and encounter with God. *"His name is Jesus, his name is what we would call ourselves if it were really us" (Casaldáliga).*

We have many months left to talk about hope and to look at it from one side and the other, upside down and inside out, from above or from below... but in this first retreat, in this "year of grace", we are going to end by contemplating Jesus in Luke's gospel, beginning his particular Jubilee year:

"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and according to his custom he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read. The book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. He opened it and came upon the text which reads:

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 and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. He closed it, handed it to the attendant and sat down. The whole synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. He began by saying to them:

-Today, in your presence, this passage of Scripture has been fulfilled" (Lk 4:16-21).

JESUS, INCARNATION OF OUR HOPE

The Resurrection is undoubtedly the event on which Christian hope is founded. *"Beyond this threshold is eternal life with Jesus, which consists in full communion with God, in contemplation and participation in his infinite love. What we experience now in hope, we will see later in reality" (SnC, 21).* God, by raising his Son, demonstrates his power over death and his commitment to justice and life:

"I am the resurrection and the life; He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live" (Jn 11:25).

Let us walk with Jesus along some of the paths of that patient and tenacious waiting, that enduring and enduring faithfulness that we call **"hope"**. For our hope is not naïve optimism, it is the total confidence that God will transform the whole of creation into a new reality, according to his love and faithfulness:

- *"The earth brings forth fruit of its accord: first the grass, then the ear, then the wheat in the ear. And when the fruit, immediately the sickle is thrust in, for the harvest has come" (Mk 4:28).*

The owner of the sown field, even though he will only possess the wheat when he harvests it, rejoices when he sees that his field is already green and that the ears of corn are ripening, laden with fruit. We call this presentiment of a harvest that has already arrived, but has not yet been harvested, **hope**.

- *"When a woman is about to give birth, she is troubled because her hour has come; but when she has given birth to the child, she remembers her trouble no more, for joy that a man has been born into the world" (Jn 16:21).*

The pregnant woman does not yet hold her child in her arms, she cannot yet caress or kiss it, but she already lives with the promise of its arrival. We call this anticipation of joy, which precedes another definitive form of presence, **hope**.

- *"Treasure up treasures in heaven, where there is no moth and rust to eat away, nor thieves to break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Mt 6:20-21).*

Jesus draws on a basic human experience: the security that comes from possessing goods, the shrewdness and effort we are capable of employing to get what we desire and to increase it. And far from condemnation, we are invited to have these same attitudes, but "treasuring" the currency that circulates in the Kingdom. We call this passion, which awakens and excites us and sharpens our tenacity and ingenuity, **hope**.

- *"The kingdom is like a king who held his son's wedding feast and sent his servants to call the guests..." (Mt 22:2).*

That is our present situation: to be invited to the King's wedding feast. The invitation is already in our hands; the day has not yet arrived, but we are already preparing ourselves and counting the days until the feast. We call this joyful impatience with which we await the final feast **hope**.

- *"Be like servants waiting for their master to return from the wedding..." (Lk 12,15). "The bridegroom is coming, go out to meet him" (Mt 25:6).*

Those servants of the parables knew how to endure, keeping watch in the middle of the night, the absence and the delay of the master or the bridegroom: that lamp that we keep burning in our hands and in our hearts and that illuminates our waiting in the middle of the night, we call **hope**.

And stay with Jesus for the rest of the day, even with your discouragement and tiredness, or with your joy, impetus and desire to do. Ask him to teach you to understand the rhythms of the Kingdom, which are not fast, not visible, not tangible...

Place before him your lamp that threatens to go out; ask him for the humble patience that remembers that there is a seed buried in history that grows by its own impulse and that one day will germinate in a way we do not know.

Together with the whole Church, listen to the words of the Apocalypse spoken by Jesus: *"I will make my dwelling among you, and you shall be my people, and I, God with you, will be your God. I myself will wipe away the tears from your eyes, and there will be no more weeping or crying or pain, for the old world has passed away. Behold, I am making a new world" (cf. Rev 21:3-5).*

PRAYER

I will wait for the tree to grow
and give me shade.
But I will fertilize the waiting with my dry leaves.
I'll wait for the spring to gush forth
and give me water.
But I will clear my riverbed
of muddy memories.
I'll wait for you to sign up
the dawn and enlighten me.
But I will shake my night
of prostrations and shrouds.
I will wait for it to arrive
what I don't know and what surprises me
But I will empty my house of all encrusted things.
And when fertilizing the tree,
clear the riverbed,
shake the night
and empty the house,
the earth and the lament
will be open to hope.

Benjamín González Buelta, sj

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