

**Homily for the Feast Day of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph  
Closing Mass for the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope**

**December 28, 2025**

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My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is good that we are here to celebrate the continued joy of the Christmas Season. In addition to celebrating the feast day of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, this is also our diocesan closing Mass for the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope. This morning in Rome, the Holy Doors at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, the Basilica of St. John Lateran, and the Basilica of St. Mary Major were closed. The final Holy Door to be closed will be that of St. Peter's Basilica on January 6.

The theme for the 2025 Jubilee Year has been "*Spes non confundit*" or, in English, "Hope does not disappoint," taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans. St. Paul addressed these words to the first Christian community in the city of Rome. In his ministry, St. Paul experienced many trials and challenges. He underwent persecution, shipwreck, stonings, and rejection, but he never lost hope. Why was this? As he wrote to the Romans, "Hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts

through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.” We have hope as Christians not because of earthly wealth or entertainment, but because God’s love has been poured into our hearts. It is this love that St. Paul communicated to the early Church and wrote about in his letter to the Romans.

As we approach the end of a year, it is natural for us to look back and give thanks to God for the many blessings that we have experienced. For some of us, 2025 may have been a hard year, one that we will remember primarily because of the challenges that we faced or loved ones whom we lost. For others, 2025 may have been a very good year, thanks to a wedding, the birth of a child, or a significant milestone. But the beauty of our Christian life is that living in hope does not depend on external events, but on the presence of God in our hearts, through which we cry, “Abba, Father!”

When Pope Francis inaugurated this Jubilee Year in December of 2024, he wrote beautifully about the gift of hope in the “Bull of Indiction,” or the official document introducing the Jubilee Year. In this document, he reflected on the reality of death, and how Christian hope responds to death. Looking back, we could even say that Pope Francis wrote prophetically, as he reflected on something he would experience only a few months later.

Pope Francis wrote, "What, then, will become of us after death? With Jesus, beyond this threshold we will find eternal life, consisting in full communion with God as we forever contemplate and share in his infinite love. All that we now experience in hope, we shall then see in reality."<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis died on April 21, the morning of Easter Monday. Providentially, he completed his earthly pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year of Hope, and we pray that he will see in reality what he hoped for while on earth.

Pope Francis reflected on the symbolism of the baptismal font, which traditionally has eight sides, as ours does in the center of the Cathedral. He wrote, "The Jubilee, offers us the opportunity to appreciate anew, and with immense gratitude, the gift of the new life that we have received in Baptism, a life capable of transfiguring death's drama. It is worth reflecting, in the context of the Jubilee, on how that mystery has been understood from the earliest centuries of the Church's life. An example would be the tradition of building baptismal fonts in the shape of an octagon, as seen in many ancient baptisteries, like that of Saint John Lateran in Rome. This was intended to symbolize that Baptism is the dawn of the 'eighth day,' the day of the resurrection, a day that transcends the normal, weekly passage of time, opening it to the dimension of eternity and to life everlasting: the goal to

which we tend on our earthly pilgrimage (cf. *Rom 6:22*).”<sup>2</sup> Baptism is the doorway into the life of Christ. The book of Genesis presents the seven days of a week as the time when God created the universe. The eighth day is the day of Resurrection, and this symbolizes the fulfillment of God’s work on earth. The weeks of human history will not cycle on endlessly, but point towards a definitive goal – the eighth day, a day that never ends because it is the life of heaven. This “eighth day” is lived by us Christians here and now through baptism and the Christian life.

At the center of the Jubilee celebration is the religious experience of pilgrimage. This past year, millions of Christians travelled to Rome to experience the joy of walking through a Jubilee Door in one of the major basilicas. Right here in our own diocese, many parishes made a pilgrimage to visit this Cathedral, and to venerate the Jubilee cross, placed here in the sanctuary next to the altar. The instructions for the Jubilee Year indicated that the cross was to be adorned with flowers. Although the cross was the instrument of death for many throughout history, the cross has become for Christians the new Tree of Life. The cross of Christ is our anchor of hope which keeps us grounded in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We heard in the Gospel today about the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, and how they had to flee the persecution of King Herod, who was afraid of the newborn king of the Jews. Only a short time earlier, the choir of angels had announced the good news of Christ's birth to the shepherds in Bethlehem. This coexistence of joy and sorrow is a snapshot of family life. The Holy Family was not immune to the pressures of life of their time. They became refugees in Egypt as they fled from a tyrannical regime. Many families have experienced this same danger, even to the present day. But the Holy Family never lost trust in God, because they were centered on Jesus. God's plan for our families is that they all be holy. The family is the place in which new life comes into the world, and in which we learn to love another.

Although this Jubilee year is now coming to an end, our pilgrimage of hope continues. A pilgrimage is not meant to last forever, but it is meant to be an intense encounter with God, and a true pilgrim returns home as a changed person. A pilgrimage provides opportunities to trust in God and pray on the journey. The next ordinary Jubilee Year will be celebrated in 2050, although 2033 may very well be declared as an Extraordinary Jubilee to mark two thousand years since the death and resurrection of Christ. May

the Holy Spirit, who in this Jubilee Year has filled us with grace, fill us once again with the hope that does not disappoint.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Bull of Indiction *Spes non confundit*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> Bull of Indiction *Spes non confundit* p. 24.