

Along the track

In the Twilight of the Jubilee Year

Every twenty-five years, the Church asks us to take part in a Jubilee year. The 2025 Jubilee Year called us to be "Pilgrims of Hope" in a world that is sorely in need of renewal in vision and in action. The Jubilee Year offered us a time to find hope and to be agents of hope in our families, our workplaces, our communities, our local churches.

So how did you go? What signs of hope do you see in your family? In your community? In your workplace? What signs of hope do you see in your own life, in your faith journey? Did you feel that there may have been occasions when you brought hope to a situation, a change of mind and heart perhaps? What seeds of hope do you see in your parish, in the church as a whole?

As we near the end of this Jubilee Year, do you find yourself to be more optimistic or more pessimistic? It is a bit of a cliché but there is truth within it – we cannot give what we haven't got!

As Christians we have much to offer, we bring, in the late Pope Francis' words, the Joy of the Gospel, a message of love, acceptance of others, hospitality to all, especially those in need, we offer a vision of justice and fairness for all, we have the courage to challenge what is not helpful or constructive, what tears down and divides rather than what unites.

The starting point may be how we communicate that message.

In one of his last messages, Pope Francis wrote: I dream of a communication capable of making us fellow travellers, walking alongside our brothers and sisters and encouraging them to hope in these troubled times. A communication capable of speaking to the heart, arousing not passionate reactions of defensiveness and anger, but attitudes of openness and friendship. A communication capable of focusing on beauty and hope even in the midst of apparently desperate situations, and generating commitment, empathy and concern for others. (Dilexit Nos, 217).

We all have a part to play in that. None of us is helpless, none of us is exempt from being an agent of hope, we each have something to offer. We do live in troubled times, a time where sometimes those on the extremes are given platforms that can be so divisive, where anger and outrage seem to be the norm. We know that social media thrives on conflict and

polarisation. On the other hand, the Gospel thrives where peace is promoted, where people are accepted for who they are, where justice and fairness are seen as important to everyone, where the stranger is welcomed, where God's creation is treated with respect.

Change is created, it does not just happen automatically. It does not happen because we wish for it. It does not happen simply by chance. It happens because we make it happen, especially if we work together. It happens because of the little decisions we make daily; it happens as a result of getting out of our comfort zone, doing things that take effort and commitment. It happens when we stop waiting for the right time, when we look for the opportunities rather than what could go wrong. When we learn to trust in God and God's ways.

The attitude we bring can be such a powerful catalyst for hope-filled change. If you want respect, then you must give respect. The loudest voice isn't always the most important, nor does it usually carry the best message. If we expect someone to listen to you, you have to listen to them. We need to work at being able to respectfully disagree and to have a message that gives another vision, another way of seeing our world rather than that of those who want to promote division, prejudice, anger and distrust. It's about approaching life with a sense of curiosity and optimism, being open to new experiences, new learning, and new growth.

That starts at home, in our workplaces, in our communities. This Jubilee Year may have slipped by or was it a challenge to step out of our comfort zone, to reflect on what is and what might be. And what I might be able to do to make that happen. We can't do everything but we can do something. Is there one action I could take to bring hope to another, one action I could do to make my community or parish just that bit more caring, one change I might make to help diffuse some conflict or distrust?

In this Jubilee Year why not imagine what might be, to ask what the possibilities are here.

Start small.

Start now.

Just start.

Regards
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