

HOMILY FOR THE OPENING OF THE JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE 2025
29TH DECEMBER 2024 | CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, PENANG

PILGRIMS OF HOPE - A THRILL OF HOPE | KEEP HOPE ALIVE!

1. I have a story to tell about HOPE and I have asked the help of three persons to join me in telling the story. The three persons are Archangel Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, and soon saint to be Carlo Acutis. The Divine Gift of HOPE never gives up, overcomes fear, does not despair and is always alive! [visual of three persons + cardinal]
2. The Holy Family whose Feast we celebrate today, is a model of HOPE! The challenges and uncertainties that Mary, Joseph and Jesus underwent throughout their earthly life and mission on earth, is a concrete and radical reflection of HOPE. They were pilgrims of HOPE. [visual of holy family]

So how do we keep HOPE alive? Especially when we are constantly bombarded with news of disunity, wars, natural disasters, daily trials, financial burdens, uncertainties about the future, grappling with addictions, struggles within the family, job insecurities, corruption, illnesses, crisis in our vocations and our daily struggle with sin. These and many more may sometimes entertain doubts in us and draw us away from keeping HOPE ALIVE.

3. But today, Pope Francis, the Holy Spirit and I, your Bishop, invite you to begin your pilgrimage of HOPE on 29th December 2024 as a pilgrim of HOPE and culminate your pilgrimage on 28th December 2025 as a renewed pilgrim of HOPE; alone and together with the entire Catholic Church around the world and beyond. Let the Holy Spirit surprise you between the beginning and the culmination of this pilgrimage of HOPE. [Pope Francis + Bishop, Holy Spirit in between the two]

CALLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO CONVERSION

4. The key to begin this pilgrimage of HOPE as mentioned by the Synod of Bishops in Rome in October this year, is CONVERSION. What is Conversion? In the words of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, Peter and Paul it is simply to repent and believe in the Gospel. This is the key to begin and culminate the pilgrimage. The Jubilee of HOPE may turn out to be lots of activities and distractions and end in failure. In Luke 3:10, the crowds ask John the Baptist, “What should we do” to repent and believe in the Gospel? John’s answer was surprising and simple, “Whoever has two tunics should share with him/her who has none, and whoever has food should do the same.” In Acts 26:20, St. Paul said that the people should show evidence of their repentance. Conversion and Repentance, is not complicated and ideological. It is simple. From the story of the Prodigal Son and Extravagant Father, we, Pope Francis, the Holy Spirit and I, invite you to make a pilgrimage from the mud of the pig’s farm and return home to the Father. [visual of the prodigal son in the mud of the pig’s farm looking at an image on his handphone of his father embracing him] arrow pointing to [Rembrandt’s painting].

THE CONNECTION OF FAITH, HOPE, CHARITY

5. In the pilgrimage, you will discover the connection between Faith, Hope and Charity. All three are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Begin your pilgrimage by asking the Holy Spirit for the Gift of Faith and Hope to return home. Charity will come after you return home.
6. Hope seems to be about the future. Hope allows us to dream dreams and see visions about the future as it unfolds in God’s plan for Creation, Humanity and the Church. It does not linger and brood in the past. It leaves behind the mud in the pig farm and moves towards home where Someone is waiting. Seeing this vision of

the future in hope in God's plan, we can be fully immersed and courageously embrace all the dangers, risks, challenges, that exist in the present and move forward. This movement forward has an ultimate and absolute focus. It is based on the Final Promise of Jesus Christ Himself that He will not abandon us but will come again at the end of time and space to take us back to our Heavenly Home. This promise of the ultimate future fills us with Faith and Hope to fully embrace the present and be Missionary Disciples of Joy, Mercy and Hope.

BEING PILGRIMS OF JOY, MERCY AND HOPE

7. We invite you to make a pilgrimage from the HEAD (thoughts) - ears (messages) & eyes (visuals) and move to the HEART, pondering like Mary. From the heart, continue the pilgrimage to your HANDS and FEET (faith in action). The pilgrimage will involve your total self, made of body, soul and spirit.
8. We, Pope Francis, Carlo Acutis and myself would like to now speak to the young ones. We invite you to begin a virtual pilgrimage of HOPE. Use the internet courageously and become digital missionaries, sharing stories of HOPE with one another. Just a gentle reminder, you need to sweat it out! Sometimes, go and move on a physical pilgrimage of Hope, alone or with your friends. You may bring your smartphones along. [visual of Pope Francis, Carlo Acutis, Cardinal]

We send you, young and old, healthy and sick, saints and sinners, apostles and disciples, including children, to begin this pilgrimage today, 29th December 2024 until 28th December 2025 with the Trinitarian blessings of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

“MARANATHA!”