



Diocesan Pastoral Life Commission Members Attend Retreat

By Abel Vargas

On Saturday, December 14, 2024, the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the eight ministries of the Diocesan Pastoral Life Commission attended a retreat held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Mercy Center in Belize City. This retreat was led by our Diocesan Administrator, Rev. Fr. Jordan Gongora. The staff of the Chancery was also invited and three of our seminarians were also present.

The day started at 8:00 a.m. with introductions and ice-breaker games. Morning prayers then followed. The first talk, "Advent encounter with Christ" was presented by Fr. Jordan Gongora, followed by group sharing and reflections. At 11:20 a.m. the second talk entitled, "Walking with Mary this Advent" was presented by Rev. Fr. Scott Giuliani, SOLT followed by Mass in the Chapel at Our Lady of Guadalupe Mercy Center grounds. At 12:30 p.m. retreatants were engaged in adorning the "Jessie Tree" where each person got a term, and were tasked with drawing an image of the term, to hang on the "Jessie Tree" and shared related bible passages. Lunch was served and at 1:50 p.m. after which the third talk, "Advent and our Eucharistic Lord" was presented by Deaconate Candidate Mr. Jose Ortez.

Some of the sharings include; (i) Advent - pay attention now, and in the future be ready,

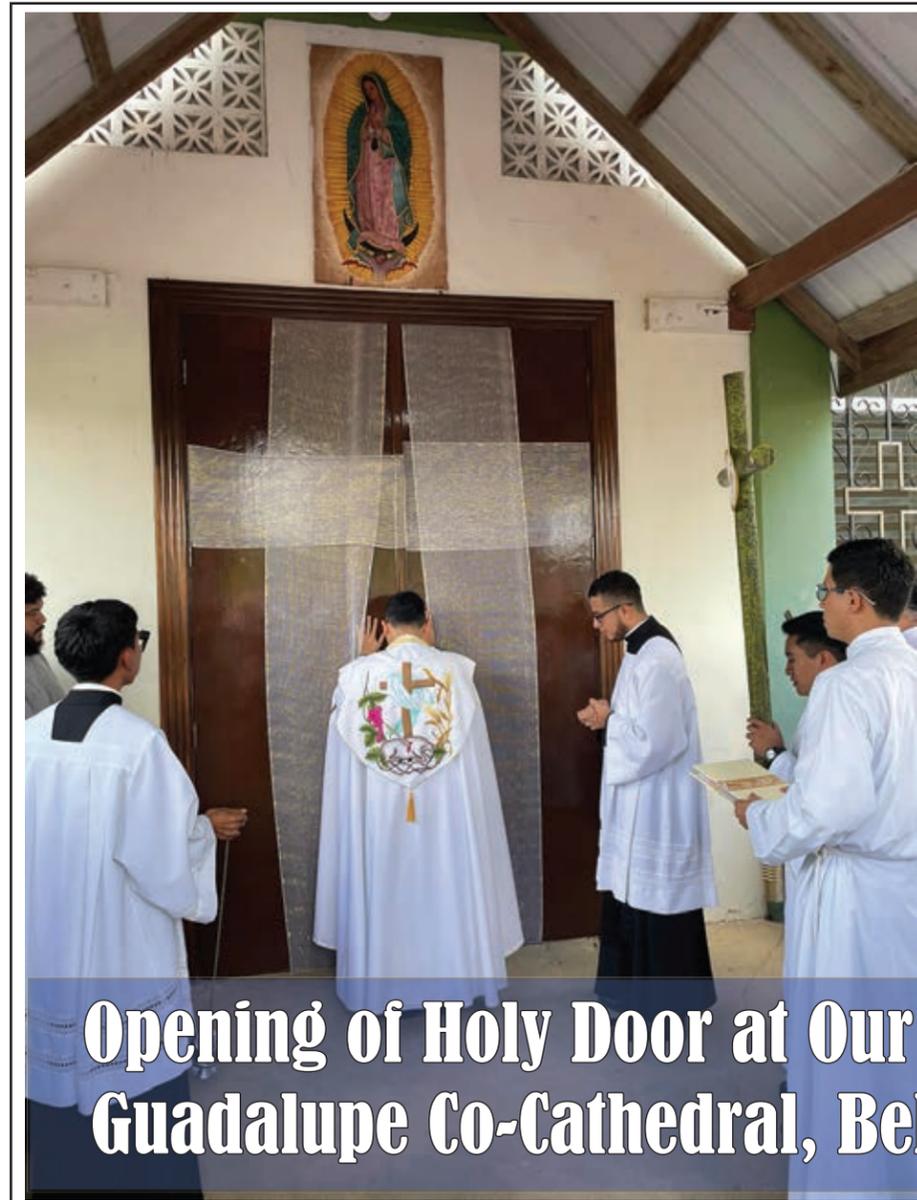


Retreat was led by Diocesan Administrator, Rev. Fr. Jordan Gongora.

prayer is very important. (ii) What does it mean to celebrate God's arrival into our families and country? The arrival of Christ into the inner workings of our hearts and brokenness. (iii) Advent reminds us that God arrives, and we wait in anticipation, and we respond with hope. (iv) We need to honor Mary as we await her son.

She encourages us to examine the interior importance of our hearts, to trust in God's Mercy, to be holy, to remain constant and to be indifferent to everything except Jesus. (v) We must ask Jesus to guide us, to take away our fears, to make us humble, to transform us and to make us more faithful in Eucharistic adoration.

After the third talk, we all returned to the Chapel for Adoration, where we all made individual prayer request before the Blessed Sacrament, whilst spending prayerful reflective time allowing the Holy Spirit to enter and guide us in our future plans for the DPLC and Christmas. The day ended with Benediction which completed a great day of reflective sharing and spiritual enrichment. Our Diocesan Administrator has proposed that the DPLC, Chancery and Seminarians join to do yearly retreats during Advent and also during Lent.



On Saturday, January 4, 2025 the Holy Door at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral, Belmopan was opened with an official opening Mass to launch Jubilee 2025 in the Catholic Diocese of Belize City and Belmopan. This multi-cultural Mass was celebrated by Rev. Fr. Jordan Gongora, Diocesan Administrator, and concelebrated by priests from various parishes around the country.

A second Holy Door will be opened at Holy Redeemer Cathedral, Belize City, on Thursday, January 9, 2025 (We will have photo coverage in our February issue since continues on page 4

Opening of Holy Door at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral, Belmopan



Each person got a "term" and were tasked with drawing an image of it to hang on the Jessie Tree.



JUBILEE YEAR 2025



The Year of the Jubilee 2025

Pilgrims of Hope

The Holy Father has announced that 2025 will be a Jubilee Year, something which happens every 25 years. The theme for Jubilee 2025 is “Pilgrims of Hope.” Pope Francis has invited Catholics to renew our hope and discover a vision that can “restore access to the fruits of the earth to everyone.” We are also invited to rediscover a spirituality of God’s creation in which we understand ourselves as “pilgrims on the earth” rather than masters of the world.

When does the Jubilee Year start and finish?

The 2025 Jubilee Year began on Christmas Eve 2024 at 7:00 p.m. with a Mass presided over by Pope Francis in St. Peter’s Square. The rite of the Opening of the Holy Door followed. The Jubilee Year concludes on January 6, 2026.

For us in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Belize City and Belmopan the Jubilee Year started with a multicultural Mass on Saturday, January 4 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral, Belmopan at 10:00 a.m. This Mass was celebrated by our Diocesan Administrator, Rev. Fr. Jordan Gongora, and was live-streamed via the Diocese Facebook page - Catholic Diocese of Belize. For the Diocese of Belize City and Belmopan, the Jubilee Year will conclude on Sunday, December 28, 2025.

What is the Jubilee?

“Jubilee” is the name given to a particular year; the name comes from the instrument used to mark its launch. In this case, the instrument in question is the *yobel*, the ram’s horn, used to proclaim the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). This (Jewish) holiday occurs every year, but it takes on special significance when it marks the beginning of a Jubilee year. We can find an early indication of it in the Bible: a Jubilee year was to be marked every 50 years, since this would be an “extra” year, one which would happen every seven weeks of seven years, i.e., every 49 years (cf. Leviticus 25:8-13). Even though it wasn’t easy to organize, it was intended to be marked as a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation, and involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields.

Quoting the prophet Isaiah, the Gospel of Luke describes Jesus’ mission in this way: “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 captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord,” (Luke 4:18-19; cf. Isaiah 61:1-2). Jesus lives out these words in his daily life, in his encounters with others and in his relationships, all of which bring about liberation and conversion.

In 1300, Pope Boniface VIII called the first Jubilee, also known as a “Holy Year,” since it is a time in which God’s holiness transforms us. The frequency of Holy Years has changed over time: at first, they were celebrated every 100 years; later, in 1343 Pope Clement VI reduced the gap between Jubilees to every 50 years, and in 1470 Pope Paul II made it every 25 years. There have also been “extraordinary” Holy Years: for example, in 1933 Pope Pius XI chose to commemorate the 1900th anniversary of the Redemption, and in 2015 Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of Mercy as an extraordi-

nary jubilee. The way in which Jubilee Years are marked has also changed through the centuries: originally the Holy Year consisted of a pilgrimage to the Roman Basilicas of St. Peter and St. Paul, later other signs were added, such as the Holy Door. By participating in the Holy Year, one is granted a plenary indulgence.

What is a Holy Door?

A Holy Door is one of the usually sealed entrances that lead into the major basilicas of Rome. The beginning of the Jubilee Year is marked by the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter’s Basilica in the Vatican. It is only during a Jubilee Year that these doors are opened.

What do Catholics do during a Jubilee Year?

The Jubilee Year is an opportunity to respond to God’s call to turn to him and to pursue justice. In the Jubilee Year of 2000 many Christians joined together to call for cancellation of debt owed by the world’s poorest countries.

Often people will go on pilgrimage during a Jubilee year, to Rome or another holy site. Pope Francis writes:

“Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life. A pilgrimage on foot is a great aid for rediscovering the value of silence, effort and simplicity of life.” (*Spes non confundit* #5)

The Jubilee Logo

The logo shows four stylized figures, representing all of humanity, coming from the four

corners of the earth. They embrace each other to indicate the solidarity and fraternity which should unite all peoples. The figure at the front is holding onto the cross. It is not only the sign of the faith which this lead figure embraces, but also of hope, which can never be abandoned, because we are always in need of hope, especially in our moments of greatest need.

There are the rough waves under the figures, symbolizing the fact that life’s pilgrimage does not always go smoothly in calm waters. Often the circumstances of daily life and events in the wider world require a greater call to hope. That’s why we should pay special attention to the lower part of the cross which has been elongated and turned into the shape of an anchor which is let down into the waves. The anchor is well known as a symbol of hope. In maritime jargon the ‘anchor of hope’ refers to the reserve anchor used by vessels involved in emergency manoeuvres to stabilize the ship during storms.

It is worth noting that the image illustrates the pilgrim’s journey not as an individual undertaking, but rather as something communal, marked by an increasing dynamism leading one ever closer to the cross. The cross in the logo is by no means static, but it is also dynamic. It bends down towards humanity, not leaving human beings alone, but stretching out to them to offer the certainty of its presence and the security of hope. At the bottom of the logo is the motto of the 2025 Jubilee Year: *Peregrinantes in Spem* (Pilgrims in hope), represented in green letters.



Correction:

On page 2 of last month’s edition of the Christian Herald, “Christmas message from our Diocesan Administrator,” it should read:

“While it relates to us the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham and so forth, it reminds us that Jesus’ family wasn’t perfect.”

Our apologies for the misspelling of Jesus’

February Deadline
Friday, January 24

The Christian Herald

Published monthly (except July and August) by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Belize City & Belmopan

148 North Front Street, Belize City /// P.O. BOX 1823 /// Tel: 223-7183 Ext. 228

Email: chrherald@yahoo.com // chrherald@hotmail.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Mr. Ruben Wong
CHILDRENS’ FEATURE: Sr. Consuelo Burgos, S.A.C.

Printing: Norman’s Printing House Ltd.
3682 University Blvd., Belize City

Pope Francis Opens Holy Door Inaugurating 2025 Jubilee

Pope Francis opens the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica thereby officially inaugurating the 2025 Jubilee of Hope. He reassures during his Christmas evening Mass that the Christ Child of Bethlehem offers the world infinite hope and joy.

By Deborah Castellano Lubov

As Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica, the evening of December 24, 2024, he ushered in the widely-anticipated 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope.

With the liturgical gesture of the Door's opening at the start of the Christmas Mass during the Night, as explained in the papal bull for the Jubilee *Spes non confundit*, the Pope inaugurated the Ordinary Jubilee, a historic event taking place every 25 years.

The Ordinary Jubilee will conclude with the closing of the same Holy Door on January 6, 2026, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord.

The significance of the Holy Door

The Holy Door is deemed 'Holy' since it calls all those who enter through it to walk in holiness of life. In the footsteps of the Pope, during the singing of the Jubilee hymn, representatives of the entire People of God crossed its threshold, as a prelude to the countless pilgrims of hope from every country and language who will visit St. Peter's Basilica and celebrate the mysteries of salvation during the Holy Year.

The origin of the custom goes back to Pope Martin V who, for the Extraordinary Jubilee of 1423, opened a Holy Door to enter the Lateran Basilica. In St. Peter's, it was first used for the Jubilee of 1450.

Its location, the rear wall of the chapel dedicated by Pope John VII to the Mother of God, corresponds to a place where it is found today. Pope Alexander VI, in 1500, endowed this symbol of the opening of the Jubilee with a ritual that remained virtually unchanged over the centuries, until the turn of the millennium, when in the year 2000, the removal of the former brick wall was replaced by the ceremonial opening of the bronze Door already in 1983.

The last opening of the Holy Door for an Ordinary Jubilee was when Pope St. John Paul II had done so in the Year 2000. Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in 2015 for his 2016 Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy.

Jubilee to strengthen faith and recognize Christ in our midst

"During the Holy Year," the Pope has prayed, "may the light of Christian hope illumine every man and woman, as a message of God's love addressed to all! And may the Church bear faithful witness to this message in every part of the world!"

The Holy Father invited us to pray, to prepare ourselves throughout this year, so that this Jubilee may "strengthen us in our faith, helping us to recognize the Risen Christ in the midst of our lives, transforming us into pilgrims of Christian hope."

Restoring us to Our Father's embrace

The Pope picked up the Jubilee theme of hope in his homily. He began recalling the Gospel passage according to St. Luke which re-



Pope Francis at the threshold of the opened Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica.

counts when the angel of the Lord, bathed in light, illumines the night and brings glad tidings to the shepherds: 'I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord' (Lk 2:10-11).

At that moment, the Holy Father reflected on how Heaven breaks forth upon earth amid the wonder of the poor and the singing of angels. "God," he highlighted, "has become one

of us to make us like Himself; He has come down to us to lift us up and restore us to the embrace of the Father."

Little Child offers hope for the world

In Emmanuel, 'God with us,' the Pope reiterated, we find our hope.

"The infinitely great," he marveled, "made Himself tiny" and "the glory of heaven appeared on earth as a little child."

continues on page 10



The Roman Catholic Diocese of Belize City and Belmopan

148 North Front Street; P. O. Box 1823
Belize City, Belize; Central America; 223-6919

CONFIRMATION SCHEDULE 2025

DATE	PARTICULARS	PARISH / CHURCH
March 2 nd , 2025	Belize City	St. Ignatius Church
March 5 th , 2025	Ash Wednesday	
March 9 th – 14 th , 2025	Toledo District	St. Peter Calver Parish
March 16 th , 2025	Belize City	St. Joseph Church
March 23 rd , 2025	Caye Caulker	Nuestra Sra. De Asunción Church
March 30 th – April 4 th , 2025	Orange Walk District	La Inmaculada Parish
April 6 th – 11 th , 2025	Corozal District	Saint Francis Xavier Parish
April 13 th , 2025	Palm Sunday, Holy Week	
April 16 th , 2025	Chrism Mass	
April 20 th , 2025	Easter Sunday	
May 4 th - 10 th , 2025	AEC Annual Conference	
May 17 th , 2025	San Pedro Town	San Pedro RC Church
May 18 th , 2025	Belize City	St. Martin De Porres Church (A.M.)
May 18 th , 2025	Belize City	Belize Elementary School (P.M.)
May 24 th , 2025	Benque Viejo del Carmen	Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church
May 25 th - 30 th , 2025	Cayo District	Sacred Heart Parish, San Ignacio
June 1 st – 6 th , 2025	Belmopan	Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish
June 8 th , 2025	Belize City	Holy Redeemer Cathedral
June 15 th – 20 th , 2025	Stann Creek District	Sacred Heart Parish, Stann Creek
June 22 nd , 2025	Ladyville, Bze District	Our Lady of the Way Parish
June 29 th , 2025	Belize City	St. John Vianney Church

Maya Island Air

At Maya Island Air, we always believe that the ability of an airline is to build and maintain customer loyalty. We strive to provide exceptional services on the ground and in the air.

Homily - Opening Mass of Jubilee 2025

The following is Fr. Jordan Gongora's homily given at the opening of the Jubilee Year at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral, Belmopan.

January 4, 2025

In his address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1995, Pope John Paul the great said: "I come before you as a witness: a witness to human dignity, *a witness to hope*, a witness to the conviction that the destiny of all nations lies in the hands of a merciful Providence." In that speech, he gave the reason for the hope that he bore within. For him, hope was essentially a paraphrase of his famous repetition of Jesus' words "Be not afraid!"

We gather today to begin our journey of hope, summoned by the Holy Father Pope Francis. As a diocese we join the universal church and the Holy Father to live this jubilee year of grace as pilgrims of hope.

Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit. (CCC 1817)

As Christians, my hope and your hope must be centered on Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is for us God made man (that is what we celebrate during this Christmas season) and made a part of the history of humanity. Precisely for this reason, Christian hope for the world and its future extends to every human person. Therefore, my friends, we are all called to be witnesses to hope because of our faith in Jesus Christ and bring that hope to our homes, our workspace, our schools and to every corner of our nation.

In the words of John Paul the Great, we must learn not to be afraid, we must rediscover a spirit of hope and at the same time a spirit of trust. He reminds us today, "Hope and trust are the premise of responsible activity and are nurtured in that inner sanctuary of conscience where 'man is alone with God' and he thus perceives that he *is not alone* amid the enigmas of existence, for he is surrounded by the love of the Creator."

Let us remind ourselves the words of St. Paul to the Christians in Ephesus: "You were at that time without Christ, alienated from the community of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world." They were hopeless because they were living without God in the world. Once you begin to live with God, you begin to have hope in every circumstance. As the catechism reminds us that the virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. (CCC 1818)

Speaking about what hope means in these modern times, the late Pope Benedict defined hope as "living with God in the world." Pope Benedict wrote about this in his beautiful encyclical on Christian Hope, *Spe Salvi*. "Paul reminds the Ephesians that before their encounter with Christ they were 'without hope and without God in the world' (Eph 2:12)." This is an earnest reminder that as we go through rough and challenging times, even to the point of despair, we need to trust and hope in Him, by returning to our origin, as chosen people, bound by a covenant that leads us to union with Him.

By proclaiming this jubilee year of hope, Pope Francis tells us that "hope, on the other hand, is a gift and a task for every Christian. It is a gift because it is God who offers it to us. Hoping, in fact, is not a mere act of optimism, like when we sometimes hope to pass an exam at school or when we hope for good weather for the trip or an event. No, hoping is waiting for something that has already been given to us: salvation in God's eternal and infinite love."

This jubilee year reminds us that Jesus wants to help us keep a lively awareness of his presence, which is the source of our hope. He meets us in prayer when we come into His pres-



Fr. Jordan Gongora, Diocesan Administrator, delivering his homily at the opening Jubilee Mass held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral on Saturday, January 4, 2025.

ence. That is why the Holy Father has requested that we seek sacred sites to encounter Christ, our only hope. It is in this context of encounter that we can allow Him to rekindle and reassure our hope in salvation.

As we begin this journey as pilgrims of hope, we are also called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardship of any kind. For the unemployed, for the lonely, the depressed, the terminally ill, the migrant and the incarcerated. It is imperative that we draw that undeniable strength from the source of our hope, Jesus, who during this Christmas time came to assert and renew our hope in Him.

Let us be hope for others, but above all, let us be enthusiastic and ready to share that hope with others. With a deep prayerful and hopeful intention, we beg Almighty God for a more renewed and faithful world, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit.

The catechism again reminds us: In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere "to the end" and to obtain the joy of heaven, as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ. In hope, the



Fr. Jordan Gongora was main celebrant at Opening Jubilee Mass.

Church prays for "all men to be saved." She longs to be united with Christ, her Bridegroom, in the glory of heaven. (CCC 1821)

I would like to leave you these words from Pope Francis: "we need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence, we need to hope, for hope does not disappoint."

May all of us go forth as pilgrims of hope. Amen.



Entering the Holy Door at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral, Belmopan, on Saturday, January 4, 2025.



● OPENING OF HOLY DOOR (... from page 1)

the January issue went to press before the opening). Several Sacred Sites will also be opened, namely, 1) St. Peter Claver Church, Punta Gorda, with missions to San Luis Rey (San Antonio) and Nazareth; 2) Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Benque Viejo; 3) Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral, Belmopan; 4) San Pablo (San Pedro), Ambergris Caye; 5) Holy Redeemer Cathedral, Belize City; 6) La Immaculada Conception, Orange Walk; 7) San Roman, Orange Walk; 8) San Juaquin, Corozal; 9) Saint Francis Xavier, Corozal and 10) Divine Mercy Church, Belize City.

In November 2024 Fr. Gongora formed a Jubilee Committee, wherein, all twenty members were introduced at a zoom meeting. The terms of reference for the committee was presented and the following sub-committees were formed: Liturgical Music, Liturgy, Planning & Logistics, Finance, Publicity, School & Youth.

Several Jubilee Masses will be held throughout the year. There will be Jubilee for Teachers, Jubilee for Youth, Jubilee for Mothers, Jubilee for Fathers, Jubilee for Lay Ministers, Jubilee for the Family, Jubilee for the elderly, Jubilee for Public Officers, Jubilee for Health Professionals, Jubilee for Communications. For updates on other Jubilee Masses please follow the diocese Facebook page (Catholic Diocese of Belize) and the diocese website at (catholic.bz)

Reflections on the Sunday Gospels for January

By Sr. Jean Martinez, SSF

SUNDAY, JANUARY 5 THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

“WE SAW HIS STAR ...” (MATTHEW 2:2): Isaiah 60:1-6 is reminiscent of the tender words of a beloved father to a much-loved daughter. The father in Isaiah 60 wants his daughter, Jerusalem, to feel the wonder; “the glory of the Lord shines and appears over” her. He truly wants her to see. He says: “Raise your eyes and look about ... they gather and come to you” (v. 4). “Radiant... your heart shall throb and overflow and ... riches emptied before you” (v. 5).

The refrain of Psalm 72 confirms that “every nation on earth will adore the Lord.” Stanza one is a prayer for the king and his son to “govern with justice and the afflicted ... with judgement” (vv. 1, 2). Stanza two claims that “justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace” forever. (v. 7). “All kings shall bring gifts, [serve] and pay him homage (v. 11). “He shall have pity for the lowly ... and save the lives of the poor” (v. 13).

Paul contends in Ephesians 3 that “a mystery was made known to [him] by revelation” for the benefit of the people (vv. 1, 2). “The divine plan has long existed, but ... only now been revealed to Paul, the apostles, and prophets” that “Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, ... in the promise in Jesus Christ through the gospel” (*Workbook for Lectors, Gospel Readers, and Proclaimers of the Word*, 41, v. 6). We welcome this teaching now; it was difficult for the Jews.

Magi come from the east in Matthew 2:2 and ask: “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star ... and have come to do him homage.” “King Herod hears and is troubled” (v. 3). After consulting his diviners, Herod calls the magi and tells them: “Go and search ... when you find him, bring me word that I may go and do him homage” (v. 8). Guided by the star the magi find “the child with Mary.” They “did homage, offered gifts and returned to their country by another way” (v. 11). “Warned in a dream they did not return to Herod” (v. 12).

SUNDAY, JANUARY 12 THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 104:1b-4, 24-25, 27-30; Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7; Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

“WITH YOU I AM ... PLEASED” (LUKE 3:22): A new day dawns for Jerusalem in Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11. Lord God requests “Comfort,” tenderness, and “proclaim” that her slavery and guilt are ended (vv. 1-2). Verse 3 urges us to “make straight ... a highway for our God,” to mend relationships with self, others, countries, the earth and our universe. Embrace God’s tender image “carrying [the lambs] in his bosom and leading the ewes with care” (v. 11).

Effervescent praise and awe resound from Psalm 104: “O bless the Lord, my soul” (Refrain). “Lord my God, you are indeed! You are clothed with majesty and glory” (v. 1)! Verse 24 gazes on the manifold works of the Lord that he has wrought. Stanza four celebrates all God’s creatures who look to him for food while stanza five muses at how easily our breath is taken “away,” but equally we are renewed by the spirit (vv. 27, 29).

Titus 2 trains us “to reject godless ways ... and live temperately ... as we await the blessed hope ... of Jesus Christ who ... delivers us ... and cleanses for himself a people ... eager to do good” (vv. 12, 13). “When the kindness and love of Jesus was revealed ... he saved us through the Holy Spirit who gave us new birth and new life” so that we “might become heirs in hope of eternal life” (3:4, 5, 7).

With expectation, the people in Luke 3:15 wonder “whether John might be the Christ.”

John answers them and says, “I baptize you with water, but one mightier than I is coming He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (v. 16). “After all the people had been baptized and Jesus, [too], ... the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended ... like a dove. A voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased’” (vv. 21, 22). The best news is that we are all beloved sons and daughters with whom our God is well pleased.

Wednesday, January 15, 2025: Happy Feast of Nuestro Señor de Esquipulas!

SUNDAY, JANUARY

19 2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 96:1-3, 7-10; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-11

“WATER ... HAD BECOME WINE” (JOHN 2:9): The prophet will not be silent, until Jerusalem’s “vindication shines forth ...” in Isaiah 62:1. “Nations shall behold [her] vindication ... and all the kings [her] glory...” (v. 2). She “shall be called by a new name ... a glorious crown ... a royal diadem held by ... God” (v. 3). She will no longer be called “Forsaken,” or her land “Desolate,” but “my Delight” (v. 4). The Lord will rejoice in her as “a bridegroom in [his bride]” (v. 5).

Joyful verses 1, 2 and refrain of Psalm 96 urge us and all lands “to sing to the Lord, to bless his name ... to proclaim his marvelous deeds to all nations.” Verse 3 sings: “Announce salvation Tell his glory and wondrous deeds.” Verse 7 calls on “families and nations to give ... glory and praise.” Finally, verse 9 tells us and “all the earth” to “Worship the Lord and say ...: ‘The Lord is king....’”

Paul insists in First Corinthians 12 that “There are different kinds of spiritual gifts,” “forms of service,” and “workings of the spirit” but the same God “produces all of them in everyone” (vv. 4, 5, 6). To everyone, the gifts are given to serve the common good (v. 7). The

same Spirit distributes wisdom, knowledge ... to another faith ... (v. 8). The Spirit “distributes his gifts to each person as he wishes” (v. 11).

Google agrees that “the Wedding at Cana is considered one of the most familiar stories in the Bible” (12/28/24). I believe that also because hardly anything in life brings so much joy, love and hope as a wedding, even in our time. Cana ushers in the public ministry of Jesus when he changes jars of plain water into the best wine around. At this, Jesus’ “disciples began to believe [more] in him” (v. 11). Most importantly, Jesus embraces his spiritual identity and launches his ministry.

Monday, January 20, 2025: Happy Martin Luther King, Jr. Day!

Wednesday, January 22, 2025: Happy Founder’s Day to the Pallottine Sisters of Belize and Associates! Thanks for all you do for Belize!

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26 3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10; Psalm 19:8-10, 15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27; Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

“THIS SCRIPTURE PASSAGE IS FILLED ...” (LUKE 4:21): Nehemiah 8 recounts how “Ezra the priest” read the law “from the book from daybreak till midday” as the people and children who could understand listened ... (vv. 2, 3). As Ezra “opened the scroll ... the people bowed ... their heads to the ground” (v. 6). After the reading, Nehemiah and Ezra said to all the people: “Today is holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep—for all ... were weeping when they heard the words of the law” (v. 9).

Psalm 19 describes the law of the Lord in a cascade of rich words while the refrain repeats that “The words of the Lord are Spirit and life.” Verse 8 says that the law ... is perfect and trustworthy.” Verse 9 pipes that the precepts are right and the commands clear. Verse 15 is a prayer request: “Let the words of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before you, O Lord, my rock and redeemer.”

Reading Two is a continuation of last Sunday’s teaching on gifts. First Corinthians 12 focuses the lens on the body which has many parts (v. 12). We are challenged to realize and understand that although of many cultures, languages, and lands, indeed, many parts, we “are one body” – the body of Christ” (v. 27). *Living Liturgy 2025* reminds us that our “many parts are all equally unique, precious, and equally important” (50). Get it!

Living Liturgy 2025 submits that “Today’s gospel recounts Jesus’ declaration of his mission statement” (50). “In the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus returned to Galilee” (Luke 4:14). There in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus “stood up to read ... from the scroll ...”: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me He has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor ...” (v. 18). When he finishes “he handed the scroll to the attendant and sat down” (v. 20). As the people look intently at him, Jesus says to them: “Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (v. 21).



Fr. Jordan Gongora celebrated a Memorial Mass for Bishop Lawrence Nicasio at Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral on Wednesday, January 1, 2025.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Pope Francis: Family dialogue defeats digital distraction

By AC Wimmer

CNA Newsroom
December 29, 2024

On Sunday, the feast of the Holy Family, Pope Francis highlighted the Family of Nazareth as a model of dialogue and mutual listening while warning against allowing mobile phones to disrupt family communication.

Speaking to pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square for the weekly Angelus prayer, the pontiff reflected on the Gospel account of the young Jesus being found in the Temple after his parents had searched for him anxiously.

"It is good when a mother does not start with a rebuke, but with a question," the pope

said, pointing to Mary's response when finding Jesus. "Mary does not accuse and does not judge, but tries to understand how to accept this Son who is so different by listening."

The Holy Father emphasized that mealtimes offer "a special moment for dialogue in the family" while specifically cautioning against digital distractions.

"Never, never this," Pope Francis said emphatically about using mobile phones at the family table. "Talk, listen to each other; this is the dialogue that is good for you and that makes you grow!"

Following the Angelus prayer, the pope offered special greetings to families connected via

media. He also expressed particular concern for those suffering in war-torn regions, including Ukraine, Palestine, Israel, Myanmar, Sudan, and North Kivu.

The pontiff remembered families mourning in South Korea "following the dramatic air accident," saying he was praying for both survivors and the departed.

At least 177 people died in South Korea's deadliest air disaster Sunday when an airliner belly-landed, veered off the runway, and exploded at Muan International Airport, Reuters reported.

Taken from catholicnewsagency.com

Special report: Inside the prison as Pope Francis opens the Jubilee Holy Door

By Courtney Mares

Vatican City
December 26, 2024

From inside the walls of Rome's largest prison, Christmas hymns rang out as inmates and prison guards together sang "Silent Night" and exchanged the sign of peace during an intimate Mass led by Pope Francis to mark a historic moment — the first opening of a jubilee Holy Door within a prison.

The pope's Thursday Mass in Rome's Rebibbia Prison Complex on the feast of St. Stephen — the first Christian martyr — marked a profound beginning to the Catholic Church's Jubilee of Hope, symbolizing redemption and the possibility of new beginnings for the inmates.

The pope's visit began with a solemn ritual as he stood from his wheelchair to knock six times on the bronze Holy Door of the prison chapel, the "Church of Our Father." On the other side of the threshold, the church was filled with about 100 inmates as well as police officers, chaplains, volunteers, prison guards, and their families who had all been eagerly awaiting the pope's arrival since before sunrise.

"The first Holy Door I opened at Christmas in St. Peter's. I wanted the second one to be here, in a prison," Pope Francis told the inmates on December 26. "I wanted each of us here, inside and out, to have the possibility of throwing open the door of our hearts and understanding that hope doesn't disappoint."

While the other four Holy Doors open to jubilee pilgrims visiting Rome are all in the Eternal City's historic basilicas, this fifth Holy Door stands alone, accessible to only inmates and staff at the prison, which Pope Francis called "a cathedral of pain and hope."

Paolo Impagliazzo, secretary-general of the Catholic Community of Sant'Egidio, has served as a volunteer in the prison ministry at Rebibbia for the past 20 years.

"We have more than 1,500 inmates here in Rebibbia," Impagliazzo told CNA. He noted that a group of inmates who participate in the prison chaplaincy and who usually attend the prison Mass were selected from different parts of the prison facility to take part in the papal Mass.

He described how one of the prison ministers had formed a small choir among the inmates who had been practicing together in the weeks leading up to the pope's visit.

Prisoners also participated in the liturgy by bringing up the gifts during the offertory, while prison guards read the Scripture readings.

For Impagliazzo, this moment in the Jubilee of Hope is a reminder that the prisoners are not "confined to their mistakes."

"They are a part of a journey, of a Christian journey together with the other Christian people all over the world," he said.

During the pope's off-the-cuff homily, Fran-



Pope Francis walks through the Holy Door at Rome's Rebibbia Prison Complex on the feast of St. Stephen, Thursday, December 26, 2024. | Credit: Vatican Media

cis spoke directly to the prisoners, emphasizing how one of the graces of the jubilee is "to open hearts to hope."

"Do not lose hope. Hold on to the anchor of hope," Pope Francis underlined.

At the end of the Mass, the pope took the time to personally greet each prisoner present and extended his greetings to those who remained in their cells.

"I pray for you every day," Pope Francis told the inmates.

"I really do. It is not a figure of speech. I think of you and I pray for you," he continued. "I wish you much peace."

The prisoners presented the pope with a series of gifts, including a miniature reproduction of the prison's Holy Door, crafted from wood salvaged from migrant boats, and a basket containing handmade items from the women's section of the prison. In return, Pope Francis gave a parchment bearing a message of hope.

Bishop Benoni Ambarus, an auxiliary bishop of Rome who oversees the diocese's charitable initiatives, called the day a "dream we've been cultivating for a long time." Ambarus served as the celebrant at the altar for the Mass, which was concelebrated by the pope.

Pope Francis announced his intention to open a Holy Door in a prison for the first time during an ordinary jubilee in his papal bull *Spes Non Confundit* ("Hope Does Not Disappoint"), in which he called for the Church's holy year to be a moment when "governments undertake initiatives aimed at restoring hope; forms of amnesty or pardon ... and programs of reintegr-

ation."

"During the holy year, we are called to be tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind. I think of prisoners who, deprived of their freedom, daily feel the harshness of detention and its restrictions, lack of affection and, in more than a few cases, lack of respect for their persons," Pope Francis wrote in the papal bull.

"In order to offer prisoners a concrete sign of closeness, I would myself like to open a Holy Door in a prison, as a sign inviting prisoners to look to the future with hope and a renewed sense of confidence," he said.

As the pope left the Rebibbia prison, he stopped to greet the 300 inmates and staff who had waited outside of the crowded chapel on the cold December morning.

The pope also gave an impromptu interview to an Italian TV journalist whom he met on the side of the road outside of the prison from the window of the white Fiat 500 car bringing him back to Vatican City.

Reflecting on his visit, Pope Francis said in the interview: "Every time I come to a prison, I ask myself: Why them and not me?"

"Because we all can fall, the important thing is to not lose hope, to hold onto that anchor of hope," he said.

"We have to accompany the prisoners," he added. "Jesus says that on the day of judgment we will be judged on this: 'I was in prison, and you visited me.'"

Taken from catholicnewsagency.com

'It took a while, but I'm here': Denzel Washington is baptized before his 70th birthday

The Oscar-winning actor has previously spoken about his religious beliefs saying 'it's not talked about in this town but that doesn't mean people in Hollywood don't believe'

Denzel Washington has become a minister after being baptized shortly before his 70th birthday, in a ceremony at a church in New York.

The Oscar-winning actor, now appearing in *Gladiator II*, was baptized on Saturday at the Kelly Temple Church of God in Christ in Harlem, New York City, affiliated to the Pentecostal Church of God in Christ denomination. The service was livestreamed on Facebook, showing Washington, wearing a white robe, being immersed in the church's ritual pool and being presented with a certificate of baptism.

Mentioning he was about to turn 70 on December 28, Washington told the congregation: "It took a while, but I'm here." He also spoke about an incident when he was 20 in which he encountered a woman called Ruth Green in his mother's beauty parlor, who told him: "Boy, you are going to travel the world and preach to millions of people."

Later in the ceremony, Washington was given a minister's license by the church, which would enable Washington to officiate at minor religious services, such as weddings, and allow him to be ordained in the future.

In an interview with *Esquire* in November, Washington described his moment of religious awakening in the early 1980s in a church in Los Angeles. "It felt like I was getting lifted up. It



Denzel Washington's baptism on Saturday. Photograph: First Jurisdiction Church of God in Christ.

felt like my back was arched, and I had my eyes closed. Not that I was going up in the air, but – I can't exactly describe it. And I was blabbering, and kept blabbering, because I was filled with the Holy Spirit."

In the same interview Washington also alluded to the difficulties he faced being open about his faith in the film industry. "You can't

talk like that and win Oscars. You can't talk like that and party. You can't say that in this town ... It's not talked about in this town. It's not talked about ... It's not fashionable. It's not sexy. But that doesn't mean people in Hollywood don't believe."

Taken from theguardian.com

Pope's new cardinals stress peace, evangelization

By Elise Ann Allen

December 9, 2024

ROME – Several new cardinals elevated by Pope Francis on Saturday have said they want their service to focus on promoting peace and facilitating a return to Christ through prayer and evangelization.

Speaking to journalists after the December 7 consistory Mass in St. Peter's Basilica in which he got his red hat from Pope Francis, Cardinal Francis Leo of Toronto said his appointment was a "great surprise and shock," and that he was not expecting the news at all.

"I went to kneel in front of the Blessed Sacrament," he said. "If this was being asked, I gave my fiat like the Blessed Mother," he said, expressing his willingness "to serve Jesus and the Church and his kingdom."

Asked what he believes the Church's biggest needs are, Leo said, "We need to get back to the basics in proclaiming Jesus and his Gospel in a clear way, a loving way, to help people come to know the person of Jesus, to belong to him and to live with him and in him."

"Everything else will flow from the relationship with Jesus, which is a walk of faith," he said, saying the Virgin Mary is "the one who helps us most" to proclaim Jesus.

"No one knows him and loves him and follows him more faithfully than her, so taking her lead and following her footsteps, speaking to people, proposing Jesus as the way, the truth and the life, there's nothing more. Everything else will flow from that connection, that relationship with Jesus," he said.

Leo also touched on the issue of secularization in Canada, and in society as a whole, saying there is a need for believers to learn the var-

Pope: Assist the poor with a joyful heart

In a meeting with a group of Vietnamese benefactors of the Pontifical Missionary Works from the United States, Pope Francis highlights the "steadfast faith" of many Catholic immigrants from Vietnam living in America.

By Francesca Merlo

In an address to a group of benefactors of the Pontifical Missionary Works, Pope Francis emphasized the joy of supporting "those who live on the margins of society." The delegation of Vietnamese origin, now residing in the United States, is on a pilgrimage to Rome and was received by Pope Francis in the Vatican's Consistory Hall on Thursday.

Proclaiming Jesus everywhere

The Pope spoke about the upcoming opening of the Holy Door and the start of the Jubilee Year, expressing his hope that this sacred time would become an opportunity for "authentic and personal encounters with the Lord Jesus Christ." Quoting the papal document, *Spes non confundit*, he reminded the group that Jesus should be proclaimed "always, everywhere, and to everyone as our hope."

ious kinds of prayer in the Church, and to begin praying sincerely.

He stressed the need for "strong families and strong parish communities, with a missionary aspect."

"We know that our faith is nourished, and we pray, but how can we bring other people into the Church? We need to keep asking ourselves that question and try to find creative ways of reaching out to others and bringing them to Jesus, bringing Jesus to them," he said.

English Cardinal Timothy Radcliffe, who preached throughout the pope's two Rome-based sessions of the Synod of Bishops on Synodality, and who is over 80 and thus not eligible to vote in the next conclave, said he has no specific vision for his new role as a cardinal, but is waiting for God to show him how to serve.

Radcliffe, a former master of the Dominican order, told journalists Saturday that "I have to discover where it has to happen, and how it has

Supporting the missionary work of the Church

The Pope acknowledged the efforts of those present, praising their commitment to "supporting the missionary and charitable works of the universal Church." These efforts, he noted, are tangible expressions of faith that help bring the message of the Gospel to "many of our brothers and sisters across the world."

Joyful assistance

Reflecting on the early days of the Church, Pope Francis recalled a community where people "supported one another." Even today, he said, Christians are called to "respond to the Lord's command to care for the least among us." He encouraged them to provide assistance to those in need "with joyful hearts and smiling faces."

Faith inspires generosity

Finally, the Pope praised the "steadfast faith" of many Vietnamese Catholics who have emigrated to the United States. He described it as a "precious source of inspiration," driving their desire to "support Christian communities," even those far from their ancestral homeland.

Taken from vaticannews.va

to happen."

"You can't arrive with a plan, you wait and see the moments that God gives you, so you have to let yourself be surprised. You never know beforehand what it is that you're asked to do," he said.

In terms of how he sees his role as a cardinal, Radcliffe said he thinks it is "to create conversation in the Church."

"The process of synodality is with us to the end, we have much to learn, we're just at the beginning. When Cardinal [Carlo Maria] Martini was dying, he said the Church is just at the beginning," he said.

Speaking to journalists after getting his red hat, Cardinal Mykola Bychok of the Eparchy of Saints Peter and Paul of Melbourne of the Ukrainians, who at 44 is now the Catholic Church's youngest cardinal, said he wants his elevation to send a message of peace.

continues on page 11



The Children's Corner

with Sister Consuelo Burgos, S.A.C.

Hello Girls and Boys

This month, we are diving into a topic that is very important to our daily lives and also very important to help us to grow in our faith.

The topic is **Kindness**. It is the Fruit of the Spirit that helps us to spread God's love to others around us. When you think about kindness, what comes to your mind? Maybe you think of an action such as doing something nice for someone else.

In bible book of Ephesians 4:32, it says, "Be kind and compassionate to one another." So maybe you are wondering why kindness to others is so important. If you stop a moment and pay attention to what happens in your neighborhood or around your home or school, you might notice that you are often surrounded by harsh words or people not making an effort to help others. But, as followers of Jesus, we are called to stand out by showing the love of Christ through our words and actions. By practicing acts of kindness to others around us we become witnesses to a world that needs Jesus, who is the Light of the world. Today, boys and girls, try to come up with some ways that you can surprise a family member or a friend with little acts of kindness.

For example, try sharing a hug, taking out the trash, sharing a kind word with a friend, or maybe going shopping for a person in need. When you think about God's great love and kindness toward you, it will help you to show love and kindness to others. It is not always easy to be kind, but kindness is a powerful way to live out our faith and to make a difference in the lives of others.

Boys and girls, don't give up. Be more like Jesus every day by practicing kindness, and you will be a shining example of love and compassion to those around you. Ask for help when you struggle to be kind. Do this by talking to God. He is always there for you and loves you, and He is ready to help you. So, ask Him.

By ourselves, we might struggle to be kind. We have that strong will to be selfish and look

out for ourselves. But as followers of Jesus, He can change your heart to help you show His kindness to others. Because Jesus is kind, we can be kind, too.

You probably know the bible story of the Good Samaritan. It is a good story about kindness, so I will end with the story. It is about a good man who was so kind that he stopped and helped a stranger in trouble. Just like in this story, we can be Samaritans who are ready to give a helping hand to a friend, or to anyone who needs a hug or who feels sad. Jesus touches our heart to be like the good Samaritan, and He will encourage us to lend a helping hand to others.

It is important to pay attention to the ideas that God puts in your mind. He will encourage you to be kind. Maybe you can share some of the love you experience daily; maybe share some of your toys or share comforting words to those who really need them.

Boys and girls, try to become like the good Samaritan person in the bible story. Try showing kindness to those in need of it. You can show kindness to your family, friends, and even to strangers. With the help of this **Fruit of the Spirit** you WILL be like the good Samaritan. **In January, practice the fruit of KINDNESS.**

1 CORINTHIANS 13

WHAT IS LOVE?

Fill in the Blanks. Color the picture.

“ Love is _____ and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is _____ arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not _____ or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but _____ with the _____. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, _____ all things. Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will _____ away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for _____, it will pass away. ”

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Nativity Word Search

C A N O I T A V L A S D N S H S
 Q S H E P H E R D S R F A L L U
 R A T S A M T S I R H C T E J S
 N E M E S I W S H E E P I G O E
 J G N I K M A R Y G I U V N S J
 M O S Y I H X Q U R Q W I A E T
 D O N K E Y R E G N A M T D P M
 Z I L I N N K E E P E R Y O H F

angels
 Christmas
 donkey
 innkeeper
 Jesus
 Joseph
 king

manger
 Mary
 nativity
 salvation
 sheep
 shepherds
 star
 wisemen

My Love Letter To God

Dear God,

I am thankful for your love because _____

I love you because _____

Your love makes me _____

Because you love me I will _____

Yours truly,

_____/_____/_____



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Our Lady of Guadalupe Co-Cathedral, Belmopan.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Benque Viejo.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - St. Francis Xavier, Corozal.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - St. John Vianney, Belize City.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Catholic Public Schools.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - La Inmaculada Concepcion, Orange Walk.

February Deadline: Friday, January 24



Loreto Pelayo (left), organist at St. Joseph Parish, and his Jazz Band performing at a home concert.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - St. Peter Claver, Punta Gorda.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Sacred Heart, Dangriga.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Divine Mercy Church, Belize City.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Our Lady of the Way Church, Ladyville.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Liturgical Dancers.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - San Pedro Roman Catholic Church, Ambergis Caye.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Holy Redeemer, Belize City.

● POPE FRANCIS (... from page 3)

“If God can visit us, even when our hearts seem like a lowly manger,” the Pope continued, “we can truly say: Hope is not dead; hope is alive and it embraces our lives forever!”

‘There is hope for you’

The Pope reminded that with the opening of the Holy Door, the new Jubilee was inaugurated, which exhorts each one of us to enter into the mystery of this extraordinary event.

“Tonight, the door of hope has opened wide to the world” and “God speaks to each of us and says: ‘there is hope also for you!’” he said.

“With haste,” therefore, he said, “let us set out to behold the Lord who is born for us, our hearts joyful and attentive, ready to meet him and then to bring hope to the way we live our daily lives. For Christian hope is not a ‘happy

ending’ which we passively await, but rather, a promise, the Lord’s promise, to be welcomed here and now in our world of suffering and sighs.”

“With haste, let us set out to behold the Lord who is born for us, our hearts joyful and attentive, ready to meet Him and then to bring hope to the way we live our daily lives”

The end to wallowing in mediocrity

Significantly, Pope Francis underscored, the Jubilee “is a summons not to tarry, to be kept back by our old habits, or to wallow in mediocrity or laziness.”

The Pope recalled Doctor of the Church Saint Augustine’s having suggested that hope calls us to be upset with things that are wrong and to find the courage to change them.

With this in mind, as disciples of the Lord, the Holy Father encouraged, “we are called to find our greater hope in Him, and then, with-

out delay, carry that hope with us, as pilgrims of light amid the darkness of this world.”

Rediscovering joy of encounter with the Lord

“Brothers and sisters,” the Pope reminded, “this is the Jubilee.”

“This is the season of hope in which we are invited to rediscover the joy of meeting the Lord,” he stressed, adding how the Jubilee “calls us to spiritual renewal and commits us to the transformation of our world, so that this year may truly become a time of jubilation.” Pope Francis concluded by offering some food for thought.

“Dear sister, dear brother, on this night the ‘holy door’ of God’s heart lies open before you. Jesus, God-with-us, is born for you, for us, for every man and woman. With him, joy flourishes; with Him, life changes; with Him, hope does not disappoint.”

Taken from vaticannews.va

Making a Difference

Reflections on Pope Francis' 2025 World Day of Peace Message

By Tony Magliano

In these early days of the new year, many of us are probably feeling a mixture of anxiety and hope – anxious about the many crises in our nation and world, yet hopeful that 2025 will be better.

In his January 1, 2025 World Day of Peace message titled “Forgive Us Our Trespasses: Grant Us Your Peace” Pope Francis appears to have similar feelings. But for him hope, especially hope in God that is expressed in concrete action, is the elixir to anxiety (see: bit.ly/4gVEuYc).



Reflecting on this Jubilee Year of Grace, the Holy Father writes, “We wish to hear the ‘desperate plea for help’ that, like the cry of the blood of Abel (cf. *Gen 4:10*), rises up from so many parts of our world – a plea that God never fails to hear. We for our part feel bound to cry out and denounce the many situations in which the earth is exploited and our neighbors oppressed. These injustices can appear at times in the form of what Saint John Paul II called “structures of sin,” that arise not only from injustice on the part of some but are also consolidated and maintained by a network of complicity.

“I think, in particular, of all manner of disparities, the inhuman treatment meted out to migrants, environmental decay, the confusion willfully created by disinformation, the refusal to engage in any form of dialogue and the immense resources spent on the industry of war.

All these, taken together, represent a threat to the existence of humanity as a whole. At the beginning of this year, then, we desire to heed the plea of suffering humankind in order to feel called, together and as individuals, to break the bonds of injustice and to proclaim God’s justice. *Sporadic acts of philanthropy are not enough. Cultural and structural changes are necessary, so that enduring change may come about*” [emphasis added].

One of the many cultural and structural realities that morally demands our attention and action is the hellish military industrial complex’s determination to fuel the world’s many violent conflicts with weapons for sake of monetary profit (see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUtxTvdSF_4 and <https://winwithoutwar.org/take-action>).

Trying to also raise our consciousness on other life and death issues Pope Francis writes, “Foreign debt and ecological debt are two sides of the same coin, namely the mindset of exploitation that has culminated in the debt crisis. In the spirit of this Jubilee Year, I urge the international community to work towards forgiving foreign debt in recognition of the ecological debt existing between the North and the South of this world. This is an appeal for solidarity, but above all for justice” (see: <https://turndebttointohope.caritas.org/>).

The Holy Father adds, “I also ask for a firm commitment to respect for the dignity of human

life from conception to natural death, so that each person can cherish his or her own life and all may look with hope to a future of prosperity and happiness for themselves and for their children. Without hope for the future, it becomes hard for the young to look forward to bringing new lives into the world. Here I would like once more to propose a concrete gesture that can help foster the culture of life, namely the elimination of the death penalty in all nations. This penalty not only compromises the inviolability of life but eliminates every human hope of forgiveness and rehabilitation.

“May 2025 be a year in which peace flourishes! A true and lasting peace that goes beyond quibbling over the details of agreements and human compromises. May we seek the true peace that is granted by God to hearts disarmed: hearts not set on calculating what is mine and what is yours; hearts that turn selfishness into readiness to reach out to others; hearts that see themselves as indebted to God and thus prepared to forgive the debts that oppress others; hearts that replace anxiety about the future with the hope that every individual can be a resource for the building of a better world” (see: <https://www.loyolapress.com/retreats/start/3minuteretreat-proclaim-peace/>).

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated Catholic social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings. Tony can be reached at tmag6@comcast.net.

● POPE'S NEW CARDINALS (... from page 7)

A native of Ukraine who once served as a missionary in Russia and who has been posted in Australia since 2021, said that as the world’s youngest Catholic cardinal, “the pope has something in his mind” with the appointment.

“To be young is good, but on the other hand, it is a big responsibility, to be a cardinal for the Universal Church, for the Ukrainian Church, because I was born in Ukraine, as well as for the Australian Church,” he said.

Referring to his time as a missionary in Russia, Bychok said his main reason for doing so was to preserve the lasting legacy of the mass persecution of Ukrainian Greek Catholics in Soviet-era Russia, many of whom died in gulags in Siberia.

These faithful were sentenced to death, he said, because “they believed in God, because they did not agree with the Communist regime, so for that reason, many bishops, priests, religions and lay people, they were martyrs.”

Bychok said the message he wants to send to the world with his elevation as a cardinal is that Ukrainians “are looking for just peace, where Russia as the aggressor will be punished, and Ukraine, who is the victim of this war, will be justified.”

“At the end of the day, when we have a just peace, there will be peace around the world. When we find only simple peace, it will be the same as what happened after the occupation of Crimea, which means the war was frozen only for a few years, and with new forces started again,” he said.

Asked whether his appointment was a sign to Ukrainians that the pope was fundamentally on their side, Bychok said he didn’t know what the pope had in mind.

“Maybe the future will open a little bit, for which reason I was nominated as a cardinal, the youngest cardinal, and especially not only for the Ukrainian Church and the Australian Church, but also for the Universal Church. But at least there is a small light of hope in this nomination,” he said.

Pope Francis in his consistory Mass Saturday cautioned his 21 new red hat recipients to

not be “dazzled by the allure of prestige, the seduction of power, by an overly human zeal for the Lord.”

“We need to look within, to stand before God in humility and before ourselves in sincerity, and ask: Where is my heart going?” he said, saying they should always put Jesus at the center of their hearts, cultivate a “passion for encounter” with others, and strive to build communion and unity.

Pope Francis noted that among Jesus’s disciples, “the worm of competition” sought to destroy unity, “while the path that Jesus walked was leading him to Calvary.”

“On the cross, he fulfilled the mission entrusted to him, that none be lost, that the dividing wall of hostility be finally broken down, and that all might see themselves as children of the same Father and as brothers and sisters of one another,” he said.

For this reason, the pope said, “the Lord is

looking to you, who come from different backgrounds and cultures, and represent the catholicity of the Church. He is calling you to be witnesses of fraternity, artisans of communion and builders of unity.”

“Love one another with fraternal love and be servants to one another, servants of the Gospel,” he said.

During Sunday’s Mass for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, celebrated alongside the new cardinals, Pope Francis highlighted Mary’s role as a daughter, a bride, and a mother.

He urged believers to look to Mary “and ask her to conquer us through her loving Heart.”

“May she convert us and make us a community in which filial, spousal and maternal love may be a rule and criterion of life. Only then will families be united, will spouses truly share everything, will parents be physically present and close to their children,” he said.

Taken from cruxnow.com



Cardinal Tarcisio Isao Kikuchi, Archbishop of Tokyo, Japan, left, is greeted by fellow cardinals after being elevated by Pope Francis during a solemn Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican, Saturday, December 7, 2024. (Credit: Gregorio Borgiata/AP.)



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - St. Ignatius Church, Belize City.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - St. Joseph Church, Belize City.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - Sacred Heart, San Ignacio.



Opening of Jubilee 2025 - St. Martin de Porres, Belize City.

The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven,
 may the faith you have given us
 in your son, Jesus Christ,
 our brother,
 and the flame of charity
 enkindled in our hearts
 by the Holy Spirit,
 reawaken in us the blessed hope
 for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us into
 tireless cultivators of
 the seeds of the Gospel.
 May those seeds transform
 from within both humanity
 and the whole cosmos
 in the sure expectation of
 a new heaven and a new earth,
 when, with the powers
 'of Evil vanquished,
 your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
 reawaken in us, Pilgrims of Hope,
 a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
 May that same grace
 spread the joy and peace
 of our Redeemer throughout the earth.
 To you our God, eternally blessed,
 be glory and praise for ever.
 Amen



Oración del Jubileo

Padre que estás en el cielo,
 la fe que nos has donado en
 tu Hijo Jesucristo, nuestro hermano,
 y la llama de caridad
 infundida en nuestros corazones por
 el Espíritu Santo,
 despierten en nosotros la bienaventurada
 esperanza en la venida de tu Reino.

Tu gracia nos transforme
 en dedicados cultivadores de las semillas
 del Evangelio que fermenten la humanidad y
 el cosmos, en espera confiada
 de los cielos nuevos y de la tierra nueva,
 cuando vencidas las fuerzas del mal,
 se manifestará para siempre tu gloria.

La gracia del Jubileo
 reavive en nosotros, Peregrinos de
 Esperanza,
 el anhelo de los bienes celestiales
 y derrame en el mundo entero
 la alegría y la paz de nuestro Redentor.
 A ti, Dios bendito eternamente,
 sea la alabanza y la gloria por los siglos.
 Amén.



Li Tij Re Li Chihab' Jubilee

At Kacua'li cuankat sa' Choxa, ha' taxaq' li
 pabal li xaq'ue ke
 Riq'uin la cualal, Jesucristo, li q'as,
 Ut lix xamlel xsihinkil li k'a'ru'cuan q'ue
 reheb li mac'a' cuan reheb' lechloq' sa' li
 q'anm xban li Santil Musiq'ej' Chiajq'
 qui'q'uin li royb'eninkil la Nimaj'cual Cuanki-
 lal li osob'tasinb'il ab'an.

Ha' taxaq' la cuxtan toxjal renaq' inc'a' to
 lub'q' chixcanjelankil rawb'al li riyajil
 li Evanjelio.

Ha' taxaq' li iyaj a'an, tixjal lix cuanjic
 chixjunil li junjunq' a'yalabar, naq'
 tzaq'al yal naq' yoco
 royb'eninkil jun ac' Choxa ut jun ac'
 Ruchich'och',

Naq' tasacheq' xcuankilal li mausilal, la
 loq'al ta sak'enoq' chi junelic.

Ha' taxaq' li rusilal li Jubilee ta rajsil q'uikin li
 oyb'eninc re li santil na'jej, a'an lix bihomal li
 Choxa li yoco xrahinkil ru.

A'an ajcui' li rusilal a'an, tix puctas li sahil
 ch'olej ut li tuq'tukil usilal li naxq'ue li
 Kacuca' Jesucristo sa' chixjunil li
 ruchich'och'.

Acue at q'ua Dios, li junelic osob'tesic, li
 loq'al, ut li gloria chi junelic cutanc.
 Jo'can taxak.

