THE JUBILEE OF HOPE:
Good News for All

Mario J. Paredes, KGCHS

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On May 9, 2024, with the publication of the Bull *Spes non confundit* ("Hope does not disappoint," Rom 5:5), Pope Francis officially announced and summoned the Catholic Church to the celebration of the ***JUBILEE OF HOPE***.

This experience of a special or "holy year," as it is also called, serves as a special space-time to ***renew our relationship with God, our interpersonal relationships, and the entirety of our lives in society, reflecting the criteria established by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.***

By provision of the Papal Bull, ***these special dates will be celebrated during this Jubilee***: December 24 of this year will mark the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica and, on subsequent days, the Doors of other Temples in the city of Rome, each important for the Catholic world, will open. On December 29 of this year, in all cathedral churches of all dioceses worldwide, local bishops will preside over a Eucharistic celebration to observe the solemn opening of the Jubilee Year, which will culminate with the closing of the Holy Door of the Papal Basilica of St. Peter in Vatican City on January 6, 2026, with the liturgical celebration of the Epiphany of the Lord.

The origin of jubilees or "holy years" – ordinarily or extraordinarily – convoked and celebrated in the Catholic Church, combines the sabbatical and jubilee years celebrated in Old Testament Israel, and they trace their origins to juridical-religious customs. According to these customs, just as the Sabbath was a day of rest every seven years ***during a "sabbatical year,"*** the country entered into a time of rest dedicated to the Lord, so that everything that – freely – grew in the field could be gathered – also freely – by the poor, as a sign that the earth is holy and God's property. Likewise, every seven years, the slaves were released, and debts were canceled (cf. Lev 25:1-7; Ex 23:10-11; Ex 21:2-6; Deut 15:1-6).

The jubilee year, conversely, consisted of a legal order where, every fifty years, in addition to the same concessions of the sabbatical year, the ownership of land and goods was to be restored to their original owners (cf. Lev 25:8-17; Lev 23:55; Is 61:1-2).

Because of these ancestral customs and the difficulty of being correctly fulfilled by men, Christians in the New Testament depict the time lived and shared with Jesus as *"a year or time of grace."* They describe a year of grace announced in the Old Testament, half fulfilled or definitively unfulfilled by the people of the Old Covenant, but which would return fully with the Messiah. A year of grace and salvation, a time of justice and peace, a time of mercy and *"abundant life"* (Jn 10:10)

The Good News, which is Jesus of Nazareth for those who encounter Him, is interpreted, especially by the Evangelist Luke, as *Good News (gospel) for the poor, freedom for the imprisoned and oppressed, sight for the blind, and a favorable year for all, from God.* (Lk 4:16-21)

The official celebration of jubilees in the Church dates to the year 1300, with the first jubilee, convoked by Pope Boniface VIII, who decreed that they be celebrated every one hundred years. Subsequently, in 1490, Paul II reduced this to every twenty-five years, so that each generation could participate in at least one Jubilee.

Over time, the Jubilees in the Church, initially in the Old Testament a time of grace and forgiveness amid ***material*** and tangible realities such as land, crops, harvests, debts, and slavery – acquired a ***"spiritual"*** emphasis, consisting of obtaining indulgences – which at one time were bought – through repentance, prayer, confession, communion, and visits to shrines, previously intended as places of pilgrimage, for the forgiveness of sins.

Pope Francis has chosen the theme of ***hope*** as a focus for prayer, reflection, and practice in the lives of the disciples of Jesus Christ in this coming jubilee year. This is a very timely theme if we consider that every human being lives thanks to the hope that, as the engine of existence moves and drives us to search for better days and that today – amidst the despair, failures, and anguish of our world – reminds us that we urgently need symbols, men, women, communities, and institutions that can be witnesses of hope.

Daily, as we await better times amidst hopes that sometimes fail and other times come true, we Christians wait, in a never-ending Advent, for the Hope that completes everything, does not disappoint, and that is Christ himself.

Every man and Christian can be defined, essentially and fundamentally, as a being in, of, and for hope, until they can cry out like Paul, *"It is no longer I who live, it is Christ who lives in me"* (Gal 2:20), in order to achieve the construction of a new heaven on a new earth, that is, the reign of God, which is the reign of justice, peace, truth, and fraternity, through the new commandment of love.

For disciples, this is an ongoing challenge that drives us to live and to build, through our daily hope, a world with hope.

The meaning and significance of these Jubilees have also permeated the work of the world's governments. On special occasions, leaders of nations issue decrees of pardons or amnesties that benefit the poor, prisoners, etc.

May the Jubilee of the year 2025, convoked by Pope Francis, encourage us all – in the Catholic Church and the governments of the world – to construct actions, signs, and realities (concrete and tangible) for the hope of all.

May we always build coexistence and a world that, in an ongoing and permanent jubilee, becomes a permanent space-time of the good news of salvation, healing, liberation, and hope for all. May it be a time of bread for the hungry, clothing for the naked, social opportunities for the "discarded" on earth, shelter for the homeless and migrants, health for the sick, and justice for the innocent and impoverished, etc.

Pope Francis ends his Bull convoking the Jubilee: *"Let us even now be drawn to this hope! Through our witness, may hope to spread to all those who anxiously seek it,"* because no one can live without reason to hope for better times. No one lives without reasons to hope for hope.

Mario J. Paredes is member of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Catholic Leaders in New York.