

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT 2024

PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Towards Jubilee 2025



THERE WILL BE SIGNS

The Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples: “There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand. Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man’ (Luke 21:25-28; 34-36).

For Jesus’ disciples, the events of history do not bring despair even when there is great suffering. God’s plan for all creation will be fulfilled. All will be reconciled in Christ and suffering and pain will end. We are Advent people of hope, disciples ready for Christ’s coming. ‘Stay awake!’. Life’s troubles, attractions and distractions can easily deflect attention from what is most important. Hearts may lose sensitivity and become hardened. Opportunities may be missed. When Christ comes, are we ready?

FOR EVERY DAY PILGRIMS

From Pope Francis’ announcement of the Jubilee Year 2025 and meditations offered by Timothy Radcliffe OP to delegates at each of the sessions of the recent Synod Assembly in Rome.

“Hope does not disappoint” (Rom 5:5) ... Hope is ... the central message of the coming Jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the Pope proclaims every twenty-five years ... For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the “door” (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as “our hope” (1 Tim 1:1) (Pope Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, #1).

Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. At crucial moments in the gospels,

we always hear these words: ‘Do not be afraid.’ St John tells us ‘Perfect love casts out fear.’ So let us begin by praying that the Lord will free our hearts from fear. For some this is the fear of change and for others the fear that nothing will change. But ‘the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.’ **Of course, we all have fears**, but Aquinas taught us that courage is refusing to be enslaved by fear. May we always be sensitive to the fears of others, especially those with whom we disagree. ‘Like Abraham, we leave not knowing where we are going (*Hebrews* 11.8). But if we free our hearts of fear, it will be wonderful beyond our imagination’

(Timothy Radcliffe OP, Synod Retreat Meditation 1: ‘Hoping Against Hope’ October 1, 2023).

... **We have contradictory hopes!** So how can we hope together? In this we are just like the disciples. The mother of James and John hoped that they would sit on the left and the right of the Lord in glory and so displace Peter; there was rivalry even within the closest circle of Jesus’ friends. Judas probably hoped for a rebellion that would throw out the Romans. Some of them probably just hoped not to get killed. But they walked on together. So what shared hope can we have?

Timothy Radcliffe OP, Synod Retreat Meditation: ‘Hoping Against Hope’ October 1 2023

FROM PILGRIMS OF THE PAST

- **He will either shield you** from suffering or will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations. *St Francis de Sales*
- **I will not fear**, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. *Thomas Merton*
- **Live in faith and hope**, though it be in darkness, for in this darkness God protects the soul. Cast your care upon God for you are His and He will not forget you. *St John of the Cross*

FOR THINKING AND PRAYING

- **What words stand out for you?**
- **What insights might you take with you on your own life ‘pilgrimage’?**



**Put your ear to the ground
and listen,
hurried, worried footsteps,
bitterness, rebellion.
Hope
hasn't yet begun.
Listen again.
Put out feelers.
The Lord is there.
He is far less likely
to abandon us
in hardship
than in times of ease.**

Don Helder Camara, Essential Writings, 95

PUT YOUR EAR TO THE GROUND

PILGRIMS OF HOPE PILGRIMS OF HOPE PILGRIMS OF HOPE PILGRIMS OF HOPE PILGRIMS OF HOPE PILGRIMS OF HOPE PILGRIMS OF HOPE



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