



DIocese of GALLOWAY

Pastoral Letter – Jubilee 2025

Pilgrims of Hope

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As part of the Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis has invited us all to be ***pilgrims of hope***. This is an invitation to us whether we travel to Rome or whether we celebrate the Jubilee here in the Diocese of Galloway.

A Jubilee is a time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation. I invite all of you to look for ways to do just that in the year ahead. It is a chance for us to take a bit of a step back, to reflect on what is, or should be, most important in our lives and to reset things a wee bit. Above all the Holy Father hopes that for all of us the Jubilee may be “a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus.”

In simple terms, if we deepen our relationship with the Lord and have the confidence to share that publicly, then we become sure signs of hope in our own communities. And let’s be honest, if there is one thing people need today it is ***hope***. There is so much to drag people down: present concerns and worries for the future, whether for themselves, their loved ones or the whole world. And as Pope Francis reminds us, we have the answer at our fingertips:

“Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one can ever separate us from God’s love” (Romans 8:35-39)

But here is a question: how much time and prayer do we give to reflecting on and praying about the love of God made present in Jesus Christ? Is it our first and last thought of the day? Is it the thing that gets us through our own difficulties and trials? Are our eyes fixed on Christ, or are they very often drawn elsewhere?

So, how about using this year ahead to fix our eyes on the Lord? And for that, I would like to invite all of us to deepen our prayer of ***thanksgiving***. Very often, we spend prayer asking the Lord for things, and rightly so. But before that, let’s spend time reflecting on what He has already given us. Ask for eyes of faith that can see the presence and action of God already amongst us and just say thank you.

Pope Francis uses a lovely phrase in the document introducing the Holy Year:

“I am loved therefore I exist”.

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What a beautiful message. God loved me into existence, and God's love sustains me in existence. Wow! I am not here by accident. I am here on account of the love of God and that can never be taken from me. One of the psalms puts this beautifully, reflecting on how my very existence relies on God and thanking him for that:

***"For it was you who created my being,
Knit me together in my mother's womb.
I thank you for the wonder of my being"*** (Psalm 138)

Starting from there, recognising and giving thanks for our very existence, we can then move on to what the Holy Father next asks of us. Not only does God will us into existence, but He is also with us here and now. If we open our eyes to them, we can see signs of His active presence:

"In addition to finding hope in God's grace, we are also called to discover hope in the signs of the times that the Lord gives us ... We need to recognise the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence."

For this reason, in the Diocese of Galloway, I urge all of you to look around for the signs of God's love here and now in your local communities. The Lord never abandons us, so the signs are there for us to see. It is not about pretending everything is just fine and that we do not have struggles and difficulties. But it is about letting the signs of God's presence shine through and offer us hope. Look for them, notice them, name them to each other and thank God for them.

Ask yourselves this. Why do we teach children to say thank you? So that they will appreciate the gifts they receive and not take them for granted. It is the same for Christians. The more our prayer is a hymn of thanksgiving the more we train ourselves to appreciate the many gifts God gives us.

For that reason, I am asking you to pray one simple prayer more than you have before: the **Glory Be**. It is a simple prayer and one we often rattle through. But its beauty is that it is a prayer of pure praise. It asks for nothing. Instead, with the Glory Be we declare our faith in the Trinity and praise God. And within that atmosphere of praise, we can then recognise the many graces God has given us and respond with a prayer of thanksgiving just as Our Lady does in her own prayer:

***"My soul glorifies the Lord,
My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour"***

May this Holy Year be for each one of us a chance to grow in praise and thanksgiving to the God who loved us into existence and continues to pour out His graces upon us.

***Glory Be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.***



+ Francis Dougan
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