



**Archbishop Thomas Wenski's  
homily during the opening  
MASS OF THE JUBILEE OF  
HOPE 2025 at the Cathedral of  
Saint Mary on December 28, 2024  
Feast of the Holy Family.**

Jubilee 2025

Every 25 years, the Church celebrates a Jubilee Year to commemorate that God became flesh of our flesh and born a child, He grew up in a holy and loving family. He came to reconcile us to Himself through His self-giving, life-giving sacrifice on the Cross and His rising to new Life for our salvation and the salvation of the whole world. The Jubilee Year marks the 2,025th anniversary of the Incarnation, and its purpose is to strengthen our faith, to recognize Christ in our midst so that, our lives are transformed, we may be pilgrims of hope.

Pilgrims are not wanderers with no particular place to go. Pilgrims are people with a destination, they know where they are going, and therefore, they know who they are.

That destination is the Kingdom of Heaven, where our hope in Jesus Christ will be vindicated. For we walk by faith, confident that Jesus Christ is the hope that will not disappoint.

Perhaps because of the ascendant secularism of our times, perhaps because of the mediocre witness or even counter-witness of too many Christians, many people today have lost hope – or perhaps they never had it in the first place.

Many of the social ills of our day are symptomatic of this loss or lack of hope.

Lives lost through suicide or through addictions are referred to as “deaths of despair.” For one who has hope does not kill himself, nor does she poison herself with drugs. While not as serious in this country as in Europe or in China, we are on the cusp of experiencing a demographic winter as birth rates continue to drop. Children are, of course, our future. But without hope, there is no future. Women who abort their babies in their wombs obviously do not see a future of hope for themselves and their babies, and young people put off marriage and having children because such commitments require a belief in a future of hope. And aren't the various “woke” ideologies today substitute religions, peddling an ersatz or false hope that will ultimately disappoint their adherents as last century's false religions of Marxism and Fascism disappointed theirs.

So, this Jubilee Year, that began in Rome on Christmas Eve and will end with the Feast of the Epiphany in 2026, could not have come soon enough. Jubilee 2025 calls each one of us to spiritual renewal and to the transformation of the world by re-introducing hope to the world. A world without God is a world without hope; without hope, there is no future.

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus is found by his parents in the Temple preaching. The Holy Family was on pilgrimage, and they were returning to Nazareth when they noticed that Jesus was not with them in the caravan.

I remember when I was bishop of Orlando, this same Gospel was read at an ordination of two priests. And one of the soon-to-be ordained priests was very happy with the choice of this Gospel reading, because he said when he told his parents that he was going to the seminary and becoming a priest, his mother reacted just like the Blessed Mother did. “Son,” Mary said, “why have you done this to us?”

In any case, the young Jesus did return with them to Nazareth and was obedient to them. Today, besides celebrating the beginning of the Jubilee, on the first Sunday after Christmas, we celebrate the feast of the Holy Family.

As pilgrims of hope, we also need to remember that hope is nurtured in the domestic Church, the Church in the home, the family.

The family founded on the marriage of a man and a woman, is the path where children can best encounter and know God; it is a school of faith and of values; it is where the mutual self-giving and faithfulness of husband and wife provide a secure and protected home for children to best grow in virtue and to assume their own responsibilities as members of society and as citizens of a country.

The family is not optional, not even for God. When God chose to reveal Himself, He did so within a family. He didn't need Joseph to make Jesus, for the Word became flesh in the Virgin Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit and not through any human agency. But God judged it necessary that Jesus be raised by Joseph, who was married to his mother, Mary.

The feast of the Holy Family reminds us of the sacredness of the institution of the family itself. It should be obvious that much of the dysfunction that occurs in people's lives, or in the life of society, has its roots in dysfunctions found in the breakup of the family today. Healthy families mean healthy people and healthy societies. Healthy families mean hopeful and hope-filled people and hopeful and hope-filled societies.

For this reason, the Church invites all families to look to the Holy Family of Nazareth as a model for all parents. All children should strive to imitate the virtues found in that family, but the Church also invites all families to find comfort and strength in the Holy Family. Mary is a mother for all of us, but she can be, in a special way, a mother to the motherless; and Joseph, the foster father of Jesus, can also be a protector and guide to those who are fatherless.

As Catholics, we call ourselves a “pilgrim people” because we are just “passing through” this “vale of tears,” and we do hope to “pass over” with Jesus into the Kingdom of his Father. A “pilgrimage” is a way of reminding us of this: we journey to a Holy site as a way of reminding ourselves that life is a journey whose destination is God. Pilgrims should travel light – not carrying any extra baggage. And so, pilgrimages afford pilgrims the opportunity to take a load off their consciences by making a good confession.

Some of you might be planning a trip to Rome and the various Jubilee Year churches there. But, in the Archdiocese, I have designated several churches or shrines as pilgrimage destinations where one could also obtain a plenary indulgence by fulfilling the usual conditions. Of course, St. Mary's Cathedral is one such pilgrimage site. So, welcome pilgrims.