



The Holy See

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST -
CONSIGNMENT AND READING OF THE BULL OF INDICTION FOR THE JUBILEE 2025 AND
SECOND VESPERS

PAPAL CHAPEL

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

St. Peter's Basilica
Thursday, 9 May 2024

[Multimedia]

Amid shouts of joy, Jesus ascends to heaven, where he takes his seat at the right hand of the Father. As we have just heard, he embraced death so that we might be heirs to life eternal (cf. *1 Pet 3:22*). The Ascension of the Lord is not his separation or removal from us, but rather the fulfilment of his mission. Jesus first descended to us, so that we might ascend to the Father. He came down to us in order to raise us on high. He descended even to the depths of the earth, so that the gates of heaven might open wide above us. He destroyed our death, that we might receive life, forever.

This is the basis of our hope. Christ, in ascending to heaven, brings to the very heart of God our humanity, with all its hopes and expectations, so that that “we, his members, might be confident of following where he, our Head and Founder, has gone before” (*Preface I of the Ascension of the Lord*).

Brothers and sisters, it is this hope, based on Christ who died and rose again, that we wish to celebrate, ponder and proclaim to the whole world in the coming Jubilee, which is almost upon us. This hope has nothing to do with mere “human” optimism or the ephemeral expectation of some earthly benefit. No, it is something real, already accomplished in Christ, a gift daily bestowed upon

us until the time when we will be one in the embrace of his love. Christian hope – as Saint Peter writes – is “an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (1 Pet 1:4). Christian hope sustains the journey of our lives, even when the road ahead seems winding and exhausting. It opens our eyes to future possibilities whenever resignation or pessimism attempt to imprison us. It makes us see the promise of good at times when evil seems to prevail. Christian hope fills us with serenity when our hearts are burdened by sin and failure. It makes us dream of a new humanity and gives us courage in our efforts to build a fraternal and peaceful world, even when it seems barely worth the effort. Such is hope, the gift that the Lord bestowed on us in Baptism.

Dear brothers and sisters, in this Year of Prayer, as we prepare for the celebration of the Jubilee, let us lift up our hearts to Christ, and become *singers of hope* in a culture marked by much despair. By our actions, our words, the decisions we make each day, our patient efforts to sow seeds of beauty and kindness wherever we find ourselves, we want to sing of hope, so that its melody can touch the heartstrings of humanity and reawaken in every heart the joy and the courage to embrace life to the full.

What we – all of us – need, then, is hope. Hope does not disappoint: let us never forget this. Hope is needed by the society in which we live, often caught up only in the present and incapable of looking to the future. Hope is needed by our age, caught up in an individualism that is frequently content merely to scrape along from day to day. Hope is needed by God’s creation, gravely damaged and disfigured by human selfishness. Hope is needed by those peoples and nations who look to the future with anxiety and fear. As injustice and arrogance persist, the poor are discarded, wars sow seeds of death, the least of our brothers and sisters remain at the bottom of the pile, and the dream of a fraternal world seems an illusion. Hope is needed by our young people, often confused and uncertain, yet desirous of living lives of happiness and fulfilment. Hope is needed by the elderly, no longer revered or listened to by a culture obsessed with efficiency and excess. Hope too is needed by the sick and those who suffer in body and spirit; they can find comfort in our closeness and care.

Furthermore, dear brothers and sisters, hope is needed by the Church, so that when she feels wearied by her exertions and burdened by her frailty, she will always remember that, as the Bride of Christ, she is loved with an eternal and faithful love, called to hold high the light of the Gospel, and sent forth to bring to all the fire that Jesus definitively brought to the world.

Each of us has need of hope in our lives, at times so weary and wounded, our hearts that thirst for truth, goodness and beauty, and our dreams that no darkness can dispel. Everything, within and outside of us, cries out for hope and continues to seek, even without knowing it, the closeness of God. To us it seems – as Romano Guardini once said – that ours is a time of distance from God, a time when the world gorges itself on material things and the word of the Lord goes unheard. Yet Guardini went on to say: “If, however, there comes a time, and it will come, once darkness has lifted, a time when people will ask God: ‘Lord, where were you?’, then they will once more hear his

answer: 'Closer to you than ever before!' It may be that God is closer to our age than to the Baroque with its sumptuously decorated churches, to the Middle Ages with its rich profusion of symbols, to the Christianity of the origins with its youthful courage in the face of death... Yet God expects... that we remain faithful. From this, there may arise a faith that is no less firm, perhaps even more pure, and in any case more intense than it was even in the times of interior richness" (*Die Annahme seiner selbst. Den Menschen erkennt nur, wer von Gott weiß*, Mainz, 1987, 76-77).

Brothers and sisters, may the Lord, risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, grant us the grace to *rediscover* hope, to *proclaim* hope and to *build* hope.