



ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE



## Pilgrims of hope

*Letter from the Roman Catholic bishops of The Netherlands  
on the occasion of the beginning of the Jubilee Year 2025*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In our Church, 2025 will be a special year. It will be celebrated as a 'Year of Jubilee' or 'Holy Year'. This is originally an Old Testament tradition, which is now repeated every 25 years. Pope Francis has given the Holy Year 2025 the theme 'Pilgrims of Hope'. In preparation for this special Jubilee Year, we turn to you with this letter, to reflect together on the meaning of 'hope' in our lives, in our community of faith and in society.

### **1. The hope that does not disappoint**

'Hope' is a very old religious theme. We speak of 'the Christian hope that lives within us'. By this we mean that Jesus Christ died and rose again and thereby opened for us the prospect of eternal life. For people of faith, this means that there is always hope for a better future: here or in the hereafter. Translated to everyday life, this means that believers may be people who are, by definition, positive and optimistic in life. The glass is always half full, never half empty.

It is for good reason that Pope Francis titled the document announcing the Holy Year 2025: 'Hope does not disappoint'. In a world where uncertainty and fear often prevail, the pope calls us to remain firmly anchored in the hope given to us by Christ. That hope comes from the promise that God loves us and that he leads us on our life's journey. As pilgrims of hope, we are called to propagate this trust.

### **2. Hope as a gift and mission**

Pope Benedict XVI has already stressed the fundamental nature of Christian hope in his 2008 encyclical 'Spe salvi'. *'Hope is a condition for life and a means of survival. It is the force that enables us to face the future with a certain expectation, even in the face of difficulties and suffering'* (Spe salvi, §27). These words remind us that hope not only provides comfort in times of adversity but is also a driving force that helps us face the challenges of our time with courage and determination.

Every day, people hear around them many negative and gloomy stories about wars, refugees, social inequality and all kinds of crises near and far. It would make you pessimistic. But from our faith, we know that this is the wrong attitude. A lot of good things happen in society that deserves to be highlighted. We therefore call on everyone to spotlight in the coming Holy Year places of hope, hopeful events in society and people who radiate hope.

### **3. Bearing witness to hope**

A key characteristic of Christian hope is that we do not keep it to ourselves but share and propagate it in the world. Our faith is not just a personal matter, but a call to bear witness to the hope that lives within us.

The apostle Peter writes about this: *'Always be ready to give an account to those who ask you for the hope that lives in you'* (1 Peter 3:15). As believers, we are called to live with hope and make a positive contribution to society. This means not only trusting in God's providence, but also actively working to promote justice, peace and solidarity.

This is why we want to initiate a 'movement of hope' with you. Let us make our parishes, families and communities places of encounter and hope. Let us support each other, encourage each other and look together for ways to make our faith visible in our actions. Hope finds its fulfilment in love. By living in love, we bear witness to the living hope Christ has given us.

### **4. Passing on the hope**

Finally, we invite you to pass on hope to others, especially those who are discouraged or in a difficult situation. Pope Francis invites us to build "bridges of hope" and focus our lives on the needs of others, especially the poor, the lonely and the strangers. Our vocation as Christians is not only to keep our hope alive, but also to bring hope. Especially to people and places where hope is lacking.

### **5. Final word**

Dear brothers and sisters, let us move in this Holy Year and set out on our way as 'pilgrims of hope'. In doing so, may we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, who gives us true and imperishable hope. At the same time, may we answer the call to work together for a world, in which love, and justice prevail and in which the hope of God's promise guides and inspires us.

May the Holy Spirit fill you with joy and peace in your faith so that you can richly hope, as the apostle Paul encourages us: *'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in your faith, so that your hope overflows by the power of the Holy Spirit'* (Romans 15:13).

May these words inspire you and help you to embark - with us - on the pilgrimage of hope, with a heart open to the future that God promises us.

*Baarn, 18 December 2024*

***The Roman Catholic Bishops of The Netherlands***

More information on the Jubilee Year 2025 and its celebration can be found at:

[www.jubeljaar2025.nl](http://www.jubeljaar2025.nl)