



May 2025

MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF SAINT PAUL

LINK

between relatives, friends, benefactors
and Paulist Missionaries
447 Royal Parade, Parkville Vic 3052

VALE POPE FRANCIS



The year 2025 in the Catholic world started on a strange note. Pope Francis had just inaugurated the Jubilee Year with a message of hope. He then visited the Rebibbia prison near Rome to open another door of mercy. We all knew that our pope was getting weaker, many times, he was unable

to read his messages. Things had a turn to the worse when on 14th February he was hospitalised. We held our breath. Francis confessed to his close friends that this time he would not make it. Eventually we learnt that a number of times he was close to dying. He finally left the hospital on 25th March and ordered to sit low for a couple of months to fully recover his health. Like a young naughty boy, Francis started to sneak out of his room and surprise us with small visits. He even gave the famous Urbi et Orbi blessing on Easter Sunday and spent a long time with the crowds.

On Easter Monday we heard the news that our much loved Pope Francis, who had earned the title of the People's Pope, had died. Many of us felt that we had lost a good friend, one who, like Christ, walked in our midst.

There are many scenes that stay with us. One such scene is of Francis embracing a man whose face was covered with terrible looking boils. Probably many people avoided this man because of his looks, Francis went down to him and took him in his arms. One of his last sayings was a reminder that the Church of Christ is for everyone: "Todos, todos, todos," he cried out in Lisbon in 2023.

Farewell Pope Francis. Thank you for reminding us that the name of God is mercy.

WELCOME POPE LEO XIV

Following the death of Pope Francis speculation started about who would be the next Vicar of Christ. Lists of potential candidates started to appear and be discussed. Amidst our prayers to the Holy Spirit, some had favourites.

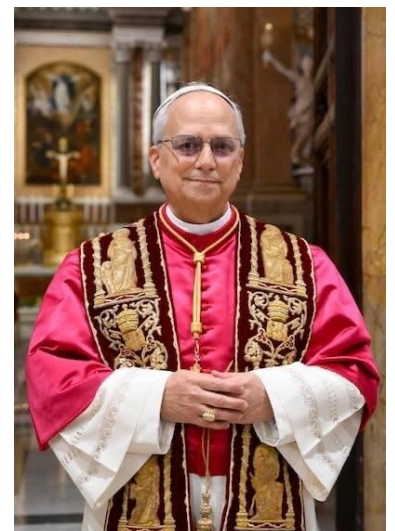
Eventually we farewelled Francis and turned attention to the elaborate rituals of the conclave. Some of us had watched the largely fictitious movie by the same name, it came out at a very opportune time. Twice we saw black smoke coming from the chimney, and on the third attempt we saw white smoke. 'Habemus Papam!'

Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, an American Augustinian missionary in Peru had been on the radar, but not considered by many as a great contender for this ministry. Many times in the history of the Church we get to be reminded that the Holy Spirit has his ways. The cardinals have chosen a pope who was a close confidant of Pope Francis, and yet is not a copy of Pope Francis.

The job of the cardinals was not to find another Pope Francis, but to elect a new Vicar of Christ, and so they did. Pope Leo XIV, with his smile and gentle demeanour, carries the smell of the sheep. He has spent a long time working among the poor in Peru. There are many stories about him being a good listener, one who knows how to discern the needs of our Church and how to lead us forward.

Life is a pilgrimage of hope, Pope Leo, with his closeness to the poor and downtrodden will show us how to continue living in hope.

Our job now is to pray for our new spiritual leader that the Spirit may inspire him in his important role as Vicar of Christ.



LIVING THE 2025 JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE



Logo of the Jubilee year.

On 9th May 2024 Pope Francis solemnly proclaimed the 2025 Jubilee Year and inaugurated it by opening the Holy Door at St Peter's on Christmas Eve. This Holy Door

will be officially closed on the feast of the Epiphany, 6th January 2026. Apart from the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica, Pope Francis also opened a Holy Door in a prison in Rome, to give the opportunity to prisoners to celebrate this event.

The Holy Door was introduced by Pope Alexander VI for the 1500 Jubilee to evoke Jesus' description of himself as the door to salvation. Walking through the Holy Door is a symbol of walking into God's presence, a presence of love, reconciliation and mercy. Through his incarnation, life, passion, death and resurrection Jesus became for us the visible face of the invisible God, teaching us that God is a loving Father, a Father of mercy and reconciliation. Christ is the doorway that leads us to God.

A Jubilee Year is also marked by pilgrimage; we are reminded that life is a pilgrimage towards the love of God. There are a number of pilgrimages in both the Old and the New Testaments and perhaps the greatest image of pilgrimage is the return journey of the prodigal son to his father's house. The



The Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

Church invites pilgrims to travel to Rome to experience the Holy Year, or, for those unable to do so, to celebrate it in their local Churches. During this Holy Year every effort should be made to participate fully in the proclamation of hope in God's grace, and in the signs that attest to their efficacy.'

The book of Leviticus instructs the Jews to celebrate a Jubilee year every fifty years, during the Jubilee debts are forgiven, slaves freed, and land is returned to the original owners.



Pope Francis opening the Holy Door, Christmas Eve 2024

In the Gospel Jesus proclaimed: *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour,'* here Jesus proclaimed the Jubilee of God's freedom made real through the incarnation. Jesus came to set us all free.

Jubilee years were introduced into the Catholic Church in 1300 by Pope Boniface VIII and were to be celebrated every hundred years. Eventually, in 1470 Pope Paul II established the current practice of celebrating the Jubilee every 25 years. Apart from the ordinary Jubilee years every twenty-five years, popes may also declare extraordinary Jubilees to celebrate special events. The latest being the Year of Mercy declared in 2015.

The Catholic Church celebrates the Jubilee Year as a year of grace and conversion, a year of remission of sins and universal pardon. We are invited to live this year in prayer, pilgrimage and the sacrament of Reconciliation. The Jubilee aims to inspire and encourage us to live holy lives and to strengthen the witness to God's loving mercy for the world.



Pope Francis going through the Holy Door.

Prayer for the Holy Year

Father in heaven, may the *faith* you have given us in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother, and the flame of charity enkindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, reawaken in us the blessed *hope* for the coming of your Kingdom. May your grace transform us into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel. May those seeds transform from within both humanity and the whole cosmos in the sure expectation of a new heaven and a new earth, when, with the powers of Evil vanquished, your glory will shine eternally. May the grace of the Jubilee reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*, a yearning for the treasures of heaven. May that same grace spread the joy and peace of our Redeemer throughout the earth. To you our God, eternally blessed, be glory and praise for ever.

Amen

Fr Lonnie Borg mssp

Pope Francis invited us to be '*Pilgrims of Hope*,' to renew our hope which comes from knowing that God loves each one of us, whoever we are. The Pilgrimage is an image of our life and even if we cannot travel, this year should still be for us all a journey of hope.

Pilgrims of Hope need to start the journey through actions, words and decisions we make and our patient efforts to sow seeds of beauty and kindness. We are asked to be signs of hope for others, putting the Catholic Social Teaching into action through caring for our common home and supporting our sisters and brothers experiencing war, hunger or poverty. Hope is the desire and expectation of good things to come despite not knowing what the future will bring.

Hope is greatly needed in our world faced with poverty, injustice, violence and the destruction of the environment. Hope transforms us, widens our vision, fills our hearts, inspires our imagination and creativity, strengthens our resolve and helps us to live differently.

Pope Francis urged us to bring hope to the sick, the young, the elderly, especially grandparents, and migrants. He reminds us that the fruits of the earth are intended for all and encouraged us to assist the poor. He called on richer nations to forgive the debts of countries that will never be able to repay them.

The logo of the Jubilee year is made up of four figures, to represent all humanity from the four corners of the earth. They embrace each other to indicate the solidarity and fraternity which should unite all peoples. The figure at the front is holding the cross which is not only the sign of the faith, but also of hope. The rough waves symbolise life's pilgrimage that does not always go smoothly. The lower part of the cross is shaped like an anchor, another symbol of hope.



Rembrandt's depiction of the Return of the Prodigal Son (1668).

A MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE IN CUBA.



Fr Ivano celebrating Mass in Cuba.

parish in the town of Manicaragua, Cuba. My first struggle was to understand Cuban Spanish, which is different to that spoken in Peru, but the parishioners were very welcoming, patient and happy that someone was willing to join them in their struggles.



Horse and cart—a form of transport.

Manicaragua is a farming village with a particular history that has resulted in a significantly diminished Catholic community. Our parish includes another eight villages which we visit to celebrate Mass and to share time with smaller communities or groups of families sometimes in their homes or, where possible, in a chapel. At times it is difficult to travel to these villages due to lack of fuel and public transport. Often one has to wait for hours for a truck or a bus to appear. Whenever possible we visit all the communities monthly.

Cubans try their best to lead a decent life while enduring a desperate economic situation. They often experience long hours without electricity and the limited public and private transport leads them to use horse driven carriages. Moreover, due to very limited funds, they struggle to maintain their

infrastructure. Their food is limited and only those supported by family members living overseas can afford to buy imported goods from special Government shops.

The lack of hope in the future has seen many Cubans seek refuge, legally or illegally, in the United States or in Europe. On weekdays Fr Nilton often spends time in the parish office assisting those asking for Baptism certificates, hoping that they can prove they have Spanish ancestors, allowing them to apply for Spanish citizenship.

Fr Nilton and I do our best to visit sick housebound parishioners. Fr. Nilton has also started a group of Lay Paulists and at present meet monthly with a group of twenty-seven members. I am impressed at the way parishioners journey together, placing their faith and trust in the crucified and risen Lord and the loving mother of faith, Mary, under the titles of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the parish patroness, and Our Lady of Charity del Cobre, Patron Saint of Cuba.

Parishioners take care of each other and of Fr Nilton and myself and are very involved in the life of the parish. When I preach in Spanish on Sundays, I have to be very careful often I am not sure what the congregation understands with my very limited Spanish.

I thoroughly enjoyed my first experience in Cuba and have now accepted to minister with Fr Nilton permanently. Together we aim to build community and to continue journeying with our parishioners and others, sharing in the ups and downs of life as well as our faith and hope in the love of our God.

Fr Ivano
Burdian
mssp



The parish church in Manicaragua, Cuba.

Paulist Missionaries Australia—follow us on web (aust.paulistmissionaries.org), Facebook (facebook.com/msspaustralia), Instagram (instagram.com/mssp.aus), Twitter (twitter.com/MissionStPaul). Contact details: missions@mssp.org.au / 0429 145 569. A tax deductible receipt can be provided for your donation upon request.