

Editor's words

The Jubilee 2025 is a holy year celebrated by the Catholic Church, beginning on Christmas Eve, 2024 (December 24) and ending on Epiphany, 2026 (January 6). The Jubilee 2025 was announced by Pope John Paul II at the end of the Great Jubilee of 2000. Prior to this Extraordinary Jubilee was the Jubilee of Mercy, 2015-2016.

In face of the pandemic and various challenges worldwide, Pope Francis believes it is essential to keep the torch of hope burning, striving to ensure that everyone regains strength and certainty, looking to the future with open minds and full confidence. Therefore, he chose “Pilgrims of Hope” as the theme of celebration, pointing out that in preparing for the Jubilee, it is crucial to carefully listen to the voices of the poor so that everyone can receive the gifts of the earth. Francis issued the bull *Spes non confundit* to call for the grace of hope in the world, emphasizing that we are called to be the sign of authentic hope for our brothers and sisters who are going through all kinds of hardships.

Since the announcement of the Jubilee celebrations, various festivities have followed. The Vatican itself has identified 26 important celebrations and provides guidance for pilgrims, while local churches also have their own celebrations. With the Jubilee drawing to a close, many Catholics have participated in various kinds of celebrations,

especially pilgrimages. It's time to re-examine the original intent of the Jubilee and whether related activities have responded to its initial purpose. The theme of this issue is "Jubilee and Hope," with several authors reflecting on the theme from different perspectives.

This issue features five thematic articles. First, based on the theme of the Jubilee 2025, which is hope, Rev. Lanfranco Fedrigotti explores this theme through the Psalms. He points out that we all aspire to be true "pilgrims of hope," and that making good use of the Psalms can ignite hope in believers. The rich language of the Psalms teaches us how to place our hope in God and pray in hope. The author analyzes the connotation and expression of hope from seven aspects, emphasizing that God is the subject of hope. He also reminds us that there are true hopes and false hopes. The article confirms the initial impression of the all-pervasiveness of the theme of "hope" in the Psalms.

Besides through psalms, inspiration can also be found in the patristic tradition to nurture Christians as "pilgrims of hope." Andrew Lam uses Augustine's *Catechism Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Charity* as the content and goal for nurturing catechumens and believers, fostering a life of faith, maintaining hope amidst challenges, fulfilling the mission of charity, and practicing the gospel in daily life.

The following three articles explore the Jubilee activities of the churches in China and Hong Kong, along with related theological and pastoral reflections. Two of these articles focus on the theme of pilgrimage. The article

written by Edward Huang, a theology graduate student from mainland China, examines pilgrimage activities by combining historical context, theological connotations, and contemporary Chinese church practices. The author first explores the modern meaning of pilgrimage, pointing out that it is the first sign of Christians fulfilling the life of faith during the Jubilee. It emphasizes not only the spirit of freedom and liberation within the socio-economic system but also the experience of God's forgiveness and assistance during the pilgrimage. It is a symbolic journey towards life's fulfillment, leading to a transformation of life and bearing witness of God's love on life's journey.

Based on the author's interview research, the author also explores the reflections of pastors and parishioners in different regions of China on Jubilee pilgrimage activities. It reflects not only the believers' enthusiasm for pilgrimage and their initiative in spiritual practice, but also reveals a lack of understanding among the parishioners, presenting numerous challenges in pastoral practice. Then, the author reflects from the perspective of the New Evangelization, pointing out that the Church's Jubilee pilgrimage should emphasize discerning the signs of the times, walking together in a spirit of synodality, and helping believers strengthen their faith, cultivate hope, and practice charity in modern society.

Patrick Cheung, a Catholic from Hong Kong, shared his personal experiences of discovering and experiencing God's presence, abundant grace, and blessings during his four pilgrimages. He deeply realized that God is the only reliable

anchor in life; among all the limitations of the world, only God is eternally faithful. Moreover, he understands that apart from deepening one's relationship with God, true pilgrimage is also about transforming the grace received into actions of serving others, especially caring for the marginalized and vulnerable, and witnessing to the hope that God loves the world.

Mary Yuen's article uses the “Sowers of Hope” program of the Catholic Commission of Labour Affairs cum pastoral centres as an example to explore how the Hong Kong Church responds to the theme of hope by taking practical actions to care for the vulnerable, especially grassroots workers. On the one hand, it trains parishioner volunteers to become sowers of hope, bringing hope to the forgotten workers. On the other hand, it establishes Jubilee Rest Stations in parishes, allowing outdoor cleaners to have opportunities to rest and rejuvenate both physically and mentally during their hard work, and to feel respected, cared for, blessed, and hopeful.

In addition to the thematic articles, this issue includes two articles on the influence of former Pope Francis on the Church, particularly on the Church in China. These articles pay tribute to Pope Francis and help readers understand his ideas, because his open-mindedness and advocacy for Church reform sometimes drew criticism.

Through analyzing Pope Francis's diplomatic stance, theological writings, and the 2018 Provisional Agreement between China and the Vatican regarding the nomination

of bishops, Vania Cheng explores how the Pope strived to promote ecclesial unity and legitimate bishop leadership amidst the long-standing division between the state-sanctioned Church and the underground Church loyal to the Holy See. She argues that the Pope's perspective reflects the Church's necessity to be present in every culture, to be attentive to every suffering, and to commit to unity without erasing any differences. She points out that the synodal model of the Church still offers a spiritual and pastoral path for the Church in China toward healing, participation, and mission.

Besides, through an analysis of Pope Francis's teachings and apostolic journeys, Erica Lee explores the theological basis of Pope Francis's stance on interreligious dialogue, which lies in God's love and mercy, and emphasizes sincere communication with culture and the world using contemporary language. Furthermore, the Pope places inter-religious dialogue within the broader context of social dialogue, hoping to achieve the pragmatic goal of building world peace. While some have expressed concern or even criticized Francis's openness, the author points out that Francis's teachings are consistent with those of his two predecessors, demonstrating that the Catholic faith "firmly believes that Jesus is the only Redeemer of the world," thus avoiding syncretism.

Mary Yuen