

Jubilee Year 2025 – Pilgrims of Hope – Message from Fr Mark

Our parish mission is “to bring people closer to Jesus Christ in hope and joy”. One way which helps me to understand this is to think of those four “mat carriers”, mentioned in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, who bring their paralysed friend to Jesus. They reach the door to the house where Jesus is, only to find that there is no room for them. So, instead of turning away, they persevere and get creative, clambering up onto the roof and stripping it back so that they can lower their friend to the feet of Jesus.



Can you imagine what hopes must have been filling their hearts as they made their way towards the place where Jesus was preaching? How those hopes must have been dashed temporarily on finding the way blocked? Then the hope that must have been re-kindled as their friend was brought even closer to Jesus through the ceiling? Can you imagine with me the joy that was overflowing from deep within them as they made their pilgrimage and then as they saw their friend being healed – spiritually and physically? Can you picture how their hope in God’s promises, and in Jesus as the fulfilment of those promises, must have been strengthened.

Hope and joy are also two themes which ‘flow’ out of the image the prophet Ezekiel gives us of the water coming from the side of the Temple (ch.47). The scene is almost unbelievable as the prophet looks out from the Temple across the desert towards the appropriately named Dead Sea. But now, the prophet can begin to see water - first a trickle, then a stream, then a fast-flowing river, deep and wide, with fruit trees blossoming and providing food and medicine where there should be nothing but dust. Even the smelly Dead Sea is teeming with fish. It’s a scene of hope and joy brought about by the Water of Life, the Holy Spirit.



How pertinent, then, that these next two years give us an opportunity to focus on “hope and joy”. 2026 is the Centenary of the consecration of St. Peter’s Church. I’m sure it will be a year of great joy across the parish, as this church building is made even more beautiful, and as we celebrate 100 years of faith and look forward to the future.

During this year, 2025, we are participating in the universal Church’s celebration of a Jubilee, which our beloved Pope Francis asked us to mark as a year of hope. As part of his enduring legacy, he reminds us of these words which St. Paul wrote to the Christian community in Rome:

*"...we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and **hope does not put us to shame**, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."* (Rom 5:5)

How can we throughout this year, even in the midst of our own sufferings and those of our loved ones and the world, be renewed in hope? How can we become signs of hope for others, pointing them to Jesus, who is Himself our hope and our salvation?

We begin, as always, with our celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the source and summit of our Christian life. My hope is that we can open ourselves up more deeply to how the Lord wants to speak to us and transform us through our full, conscious and active participation in the Mass: that we don't come merely out of a sense of duty or habit, but that we instead experience a renewed, authentic, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus through the Sunday Mass, as we gather together as a community.

We've already been marking this Year of Hope in many and various ways, including our Lenten Small Groups and daily messages. In addition, we are offering further opportunities throughout the rest of the Year of Hope to experience and offer trustworthy hope, and I've listed some of these below.

Let me finish with these words of Pope Francis:

"May we who have taken refuge in him be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered" (Heb 6:18-20) ...The image of the anchor is eloquent; it helps us to recognize the stability and security that is ours amid the troubled waters of this life, provided we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus. The storms that buffet us will never prevail, for we are firmly anchored in the hope born of grace, which enables us to live in Christ and to overcome sin, fear and death. This hope, which transcends life's fleeting pleasures and the achievement of our immediate goals, makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called. Let us even now be drawn to this hope! Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: "Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart and hope in the Lord!" (Ps 27:14).



Pilgrimages to Shrine Churches

- ✦ Walking Pilgrimage to St. Edmund's, Southampton – Weds 11th June
- ✦ Pilgrimage (by coach) to Sacred Heart, Bournemouth – Saturday 13th Sept

Festival Fun

- ✦ Big Church Festival (Sat 23rd – Sun 24th Aug) – ideal for individuals, couples, and families. You can travel each day or camp overnight. You can get a flavour by looking at the [website](#). Details for booking with a group discount will appear in Peterpost shortly.

Faith Formation

- ✦ "Hope in Scripture" – Dcn Martin is hoping to offer some input on this theme in the autumn.
- ✦ Advent Talk on *Spe Salvi* - Fr Mark will offer a talk on Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical on the theme of hope. This will be 3:30pm on Sun 2nd Nov as we begin the month of November, in which we traditionally pray for our departed loved ones.

Personal Faith Encounter

- ✦ Pentecost Personal Pledge – we will invite People (including children and young people) to make a Personal Pledge of Hope
- ✦ Quarant'ore – on 19th-21st June we will again offer 40 hours of Eucharistic Adoration in St. Peter's Church, with the theme this year of "Pilgrims of Hope"
- ✦ Mothers Prayers – we have launched this in our parish as part of our year of hope. Every Tuesday, 1pm – 3pm in the Pastoral Centre or the Milner Hall. To attend please contact Isabelle at: office@stpeterswinchester.org.uk. Visit www.mothersprayers.org for more information

Children, Family, Youth

- ✦ "Kingdom Seekers" – as part of this year, we have launched our Service Programme for children and young people post First Holy Communion. For more details, please contact Rosanne Walker – rosanne@stpeterswinchester.org.uk
- ✦ Jubilee of Youth Pilgrimage with Diocese (Rome, July 28th – Aug 3rd)

Outreach Ministry

- ✦ Mass for Healing – on 4th October we will celebrate another Mass to ask for God's healing for ourselves and others. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP) will make the preparations for the Mass and the wonderful fellowship afterwards as we sit down together for a delightful afternoon tea in the Pastoral Centre. The theme of **hope** will again be at the forefront of the celebration.



Church Community - Celebration

- ✦ Parish Party – on Sunday 29th June we will host our annual Parish Party. It's one of our Patronal Feast Days, as we ask for the continued intercession of Ss. Peter and Paul.

