

PASTORAL LETTER 7
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A person with long dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a blue and white striped long-sleeved shirt and a dark brown leather backpack, is seen from behind. They are sitting on a ledge, looking out over a city skyline at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow. The city buildings are silhouetted against the bright sky.

**What Christian for
what kind of hope?
Here and now!**



Dear beloved brothers and sisters,

In this Holy Year, following the twelve years of Pope Francis' pontificate and the welcome of Pope Leo XIV whom the Lord sends us to continue the mission of Saint Peter, I wish to share with you this spiritual, ecclesial and existential reflection around this question: What Christian for what kind of hope? Here and now!

Let us deploy our Christian hope in the face of the contemporary challenges we face, day by day, by offering a bold witness in this world that is searching for meaning, and where so many people are searching for purpose. Saint Francis of Assisi will be journeying with us.

Our Christian hope is a dynamic and incarnate virtue

Our Christian hope is lived in the light of the Gospel, good news for all the peoples of the world. It is not lived in a bygone age, but rather through a dynamic attitude, a desire to serve as a kind of drive for transformation and propulsion.

Every baptized person has a vocation to be a missionary. Pope Leo XIV affirms the need to *promote a spirit of missionary discipleship in all the baptized, and a sense of the urgency of bringing Christ to all peoples.*

Christian hope is not a kind of blissful optimism, nor can it be reduced to a kind of escape from a world in crisis. It is a theological virtue that takes its source and is solidly founded on the rock of the Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a radical trust in God, who journeys with us just as Jesus journeyed with the disciples of Emmaus, who were totally transformed and returned to Jerusalem by night: I believe in God. I believe in God.

God's love and tenderness are at work in our history. This is why every baptized person believes not in an uncertain future, but in a living God who keeps his promises and shares his surprises. This hope gives meaning to our history in the here and now of our lives, even when we are going through dark and uncertain times in our families, in society, in the world.

Thanks to the breath of the creative Spirit, Christian hope is performative. It engages us. It transforms us. It enables us to lift up our heads, to take up our cross, and to move forward: get up, go!

In this Holy Year, let us be pilgrims of hope. Hope is called to be visible in our courageous attitudes in the face of adversity, patience in the face of trial and boldness in mission.

Christian hope is a driving force, not a refuge, that encourages us to build, to repair, to start again, to go further.



It is this quiet strength that led Abraham to leave his land, that led Mary to say "yes", and that led so many martyrs to remain faithful to their faith in the face of trial, like the monks of Thibirine in Algeria (1996).

Hope as radical trust in God - the poor, crucified Christ

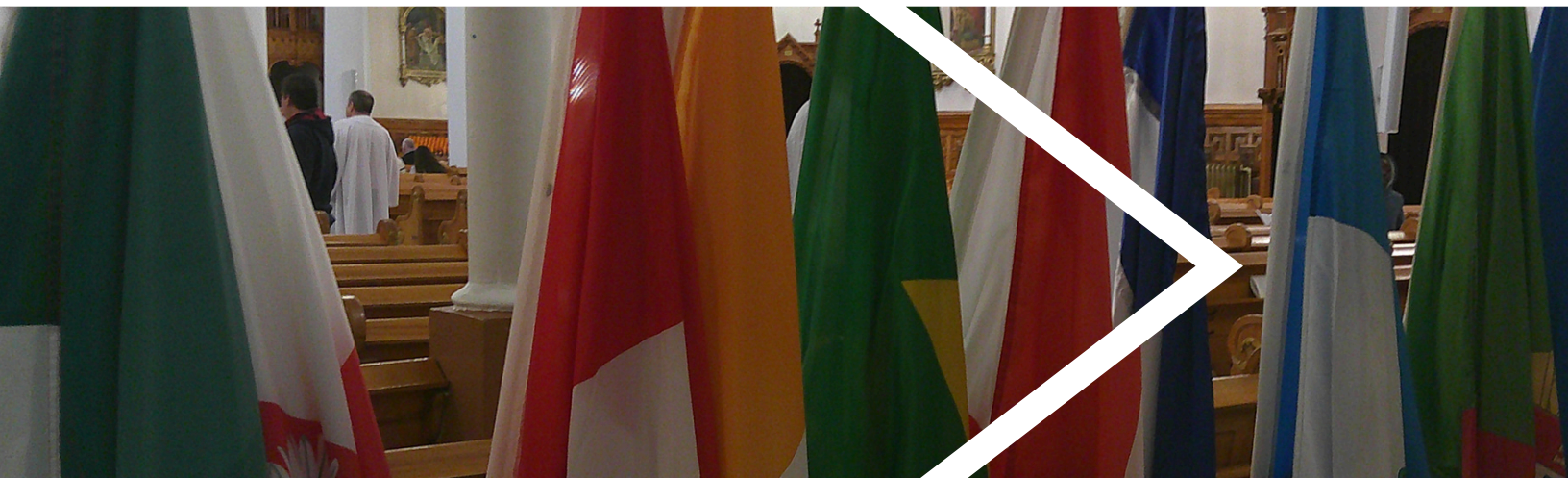
St. Francis of Assisi lived a radical evangelical hope, not based on human securities, but on Christ's poverty and faithfulness.

What I had thought bitter was changed into sweetness of soul and body. These words bear witness to his transformative conversion. It was in his encounter with the leper that he experienced a hope born of self-denial and abandonment to God. Beyond the leper's ugliness, St. Francis of Assisi discovered the beauty of every brother and sister.

Saint Francis of Assisi is a model of the baptized person who dares to hope against all hope, even in the face of suffering or apparent failure. He reminds us that hope is linked to the Cross. The experience of God transforms suffering into hope. It bears witness to a faith that works in concrete life, transforming bitterness into sweetness and fear into confidence.

Every baptized person is rooted in the Gospel and open to the world

Called to be bearers of hope, let us live an incarnated faith, attentive to human realities. To be a missionary disciple is to follow Christ's example,



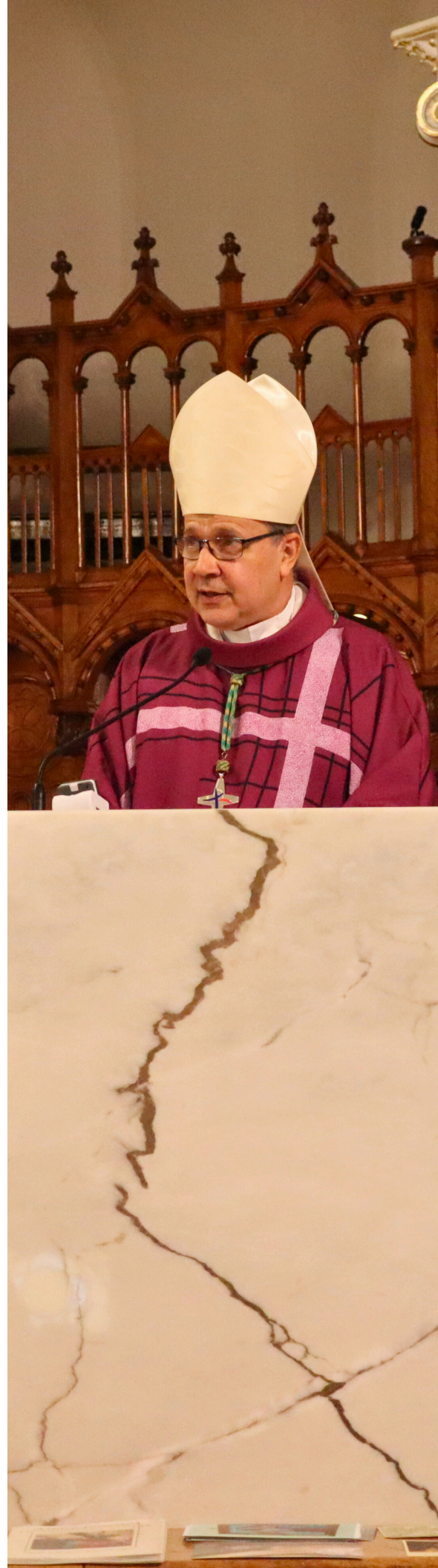
the salt of the earth and the light of the world
(Mt. 5:13-16).

We are confronted with the issues and challenges of a world in crisis of meaning, saturated with information and so lacking in authentic hope.

Our challenge is to live our Catholic faith, deeply rooted in the Gospel, while being proactive in the face of the existential challenges of our time, listening to the suffering of our brothers and sisters in humanity without ever resigning ourselves to it.

Christians cannot be spectators or stage managers. Let's embody the joy of the Gospel in our relationships, in our professional, social, economic and even political commitments. Openness to the world does not mean dilution, but welcoming, meeting, listening and dialoguing. Let's widen our gaze by making use of all our senses, making them more spiritual.

As Pope Francis so often said, we are called to be "bridges" rather than "walls". Pope Leo XIV, in his first address on May 8, 2025 in the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica, said: *I call for building bridges through dialogue.*



Time and again, Pope Francis insisted on the dignity of every human person and the role of the Christian in social transformation: to be peacemakers, to be defenders of the poor, to be stewards of creation.

Our Christian hope is not ideological. It is incarnate, visible and verifiable in our concrete love of our neighbor.

Faith incarnate in universal brotherhood

The Lord has given me brothers (Testament). These words of St. Francis of Assisi compel us to live our faith and our daily lives in a spirit of brotherhood. Our Catholic faith doesn't close in on itself, but opens out to others in a spirit of trusting openness. Hope is born of this open relationship with the world, with others and with the Almighty, God of love and tenderness.

With *Cantique de frère soleil*, or *Canticle of Creatures*, St. Francis of Assisi addresses all creatures as brothers and sisters. Composed at the end of his life, it is a hymn of cosmic hope, rooted in praise, even in the midst of suffering and death... *our bodily sister Death*.

If we are truly Christians of hope, let us recognize in creation a call to relationship, not domination. Let us live peace, reconciliation and fraternity as a path of hope for the whole human family.

A synodal Church, a sign of hope for humanity

Lived around the theme of synodality, of walking together in the diversity of vocations, these last few years clearly illustrate this challenge



from Pope Francis to live our baptismal vocation and our respective commitments in a spirituality of common journey, in a spirit of communal hope and not just of a spiritual individualism withdrawn into its cosy cocoon.

Christian hope is ecclesial communion. *You are the body of Christ, and each of you is a member of that body* (1 Cor 12:27).

The Catholic Church, through the path of synodality, is taking a path of hope for the world that requires us to be a humble Church, one that listens, that walks with everyone, with those wounded by life, especially with brothers and sisters who feel sidelined, rejected, excluded.

As Pope Francis wrote, the Church must be a "field hospital" (Evangelii Gaudium), that is, a Church of welcome, closeness and compassion, caring for its brothers and sisters in humanity. In this fragmented world, the Church becomes a place of encounter, reconciliation and unity.

"Blessed is that servant who does not exalt himself more over the good that the Lord says and works through him than over that which he says and works through another." (Admonition XVII)

These words of St. Francis of Assisi highlight the humility necessary for synodality, reminding us that the Christian who lives in hope





does not seek to dominate or impose, but to walk with others in listening, respect and collaboration: making oneself the smallest, being with the poor, listening, putting oneself on and acting in service... these are profoundly evangelical attitudes.

In a world marked by selfishness and individualism, Christian hope manifests itself in joyful humility. The Christian who lives in hope does not seek to shine, but to serve.

Witness to hope today with courage, joy, boldness and perseverance

Christian hope manifests itself in daily witness, and is lived out in joy - the fruit of hope - even in the midst of difficulties, challenges, trials and storms. Every baptized person, because he or she knows that life has meaning and direction, can face the future without fear.

Today, our human family needs credible witnesses, Christian men and women capable of being luminous without being naive, critical without being desperate, fervent without being fanatical.



The witness of hope takes very concrete forms: accompanying a young person in search of meaning, supporting a family in difficulty, welcoming an immigrant in search of a land of welcome, committing oneself to peace and social justice...

The Christian of hope is called to be the seed of renewal, in a world too often tempted by withdrawal, fear of the other, or cynicism.

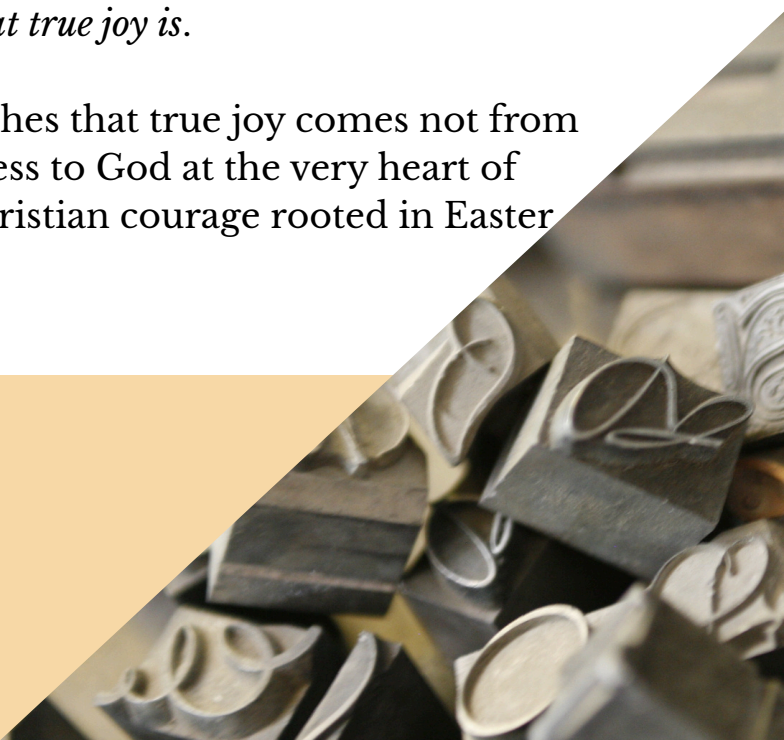
Christian hope is the leaven of a new world that dares to shine in the social, existential and digital peripheries, which face so many challenges. *Artificial intelligence requires a certain responsibility if it is really to be at the service of the whole of humanity*, Pope Leo XIV emphasized on Monday May 12, 2025, addressing journalists from all over the world who had come to Rome.

Let us sing as we go. May our struggles and our concern for this planet never take away the joy of our hope (Laudato Si (2015), §244) .

True joy: hope in failure, rejection and trial

Brother Léon, write (...) Write, he said, what true joy is.

In this writing, St. Francis of Assisi teaches that true joy comes not from success or comfort, but from faithfulness to God at the very heart of suffering: an original illustration of Christian courage rooted in Easter hope.





I tell you that if I keep patience and am not shaken, in this is true joy and true virtue and the salvation of the soul. It's a radical call to live a hope not conditioned by external circumstances. In suffering assumed in faith, authentic hope is revealed.

Being a Christian peacemaker in a violent world

"Nightwatchman, where is the night? Watchman, where is the night?" The watchman answers: "Morning comes, and then night again..." (Isaiah 21:11).
In this regard, Pope Francis said: *We are not prophets of doom, but sentinels of the morning.*

Dear brothers and sisters, let us live this Holy Year as a time of conversion, mission and reconciliation, rich in our hope rooted in the living Christ. Let us be pilgrims of hope, not only by walking to holy places, but above all by making our lives a sanctuary of living hope.

The hopeful Christian does not despair of the world, of non-believers, of other believers of other denominations. He believes that dialogue and peace are possible, because the Holy Spirit is at work.

Saint Francis of Assisi is an icon of the Christian of hope, rooted in the poor Christ, radiating joy despite his wounds, in dialogue with the world, living in simplicity and fraternity, and singing even in times of trial. He offers a relevant prophetic figure for a synodal, poor, joyful and missionary Church.

Dear brother, dear sister, welcome with joy and hope this blessing from St. Francis of Assisi to Brother Léon and share it around you: *May the Lord bless you and keep you; may he show you his face and be merciful to you. May he turn his face toward you and give you peace.*



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