

MESSAGE FOR THE 2025 WORLD DAY OF PEACE

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Cordial greetings to the journalists here present, to all attending online, and to the esteemed speakers.

Pope Francis will deliver his Message for the 58th World Day of Peace: “Forgive us our Trespasses: Grant us your Peace”, at the beginning of the 2025 Jubilee year that focuses on “Pilgrims of Hope”. I will comment on both sides of this wonderful pairing.

“Trespasses” is a classical English word which means “sins”. French and Spanish have the words *offences* and *ofensas*, and Polish the word *winy*, with a similar meaning.

By contrast, the Pater Noster in Latin says *debita nostra*, and similarly Italian, *i nostri debiti*; Portuguese, *nossas dívidas*; and German, *unsere Schuld*.

The ideas of “sins” and “debts” are combined in the biblical meaning of jubilee. The word comes from *yobel*, the ram's horn announcing the time “of forgiveness and freedom for the entire people” (no. 2) every 50 years. This goes back to the Law of Moses in ancient Biblical times (Leviticus 25, 10-14). The Church has employed this model of Jubilee since the year 1300.

Consistent with the ancient meaning, the Holy Father speaks about the poorer countries. In our time, he says, this must include the conversion of hearts, the cancellation of foreign or international debt, and paying back the ecological debt. Let us “think of the mercy with which [God] constantly forgives our sins and forgives our every debt” (no. 9).

The Message invites everyone:

1. To strengthen and solidify our faith.
2. To renew our commitment to conversion; and
3. To disarm!

I will now address these three invitations in turn.

1) Faith: Why does the Church celebrate a special Jubilee every 25 or 50 years, and why does she rejoice?

Because the Lord Jesus died and rose again for us. Christ is the joy that the Church rejoices in and proclaims to the world. The risen Christ is the cry of jubilation that rises up in every age and opens up a vision of the future of humanity. Human fulfilment is to be in communion with the God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

When the many injustices in the world fill us with horror, when we are terrified by the senseless evil that human beings keep on perpetrating, it's good to be reminded of the salvation Christ brings. It is good to be reminded of the power of the Holy Spirit, as gentle as "a tiny whispering sound" (1 Kings 19:12), who guides history to the fulfilment of the Father's will – the Father who wills, as Jesus explains, "that I should not lose anything of what [the Father] gave me, but that I should raise it on the last day" (John 6:39).

So, to challenge the many uglinesses that inhabit our time and disfigure the face of humanity and the earth, we fix our gaze on Christ who is our joy and peace.

2) Conversion:

As the Church and as disciples, we need to undergo conversion, constant renewal of mind and heart. The Christian is "a person who has hope" (1 Thes 4:13) and who "waits for Christ" (Phil 3:20; Heb 9:28). Rather than being defined by the past and the errors and sins committed, the Christian yearns constantly for the encounter with the Lord, patiently bearing the fatigue of incompleteness and imperfections, one's own and of others.

Conversion is a path traced by that love for Christ that inspires, transforms, orients, energizes us.

"Love is patient" says St Paul (1Cor 13:14) because it moves us from immediate needs and consumption and a logic of waste and self-interest, to seeking authentic communion, service, the common good, the gift of oneself, "integral human development" (see *Populorum Progressio* 14).

During the year of the Jubilee, conversion "inspires us to seek to establish the liberating justice of God in our world" (n.3). It is paying attention and listening to the voice of God, but also to the cry of the poor and the earth. It is accepting responsibility for "for the bonds of injustice" which need to be loosened, for the "conflicts that presently plague our human family," and for "the devastation to which the earth, our common home, has been subjected" (n.4).

3) Disarmament:

The ram's horn sounding loud does not invite us to a moralistic effort at self-improvement, but to a radical change in how we look at reality. When we entrust the present to God and live today in faith and service, the future is no longer under threat. Instead, to expect the Lord, to pay attention and exercise responsibility, are expressed concretely in acting for the good and for unity and for care.

Today and tomorrow are in the merciful and providential hands of God the Father, as Jesus Christ makes abundantly clear and as the Holy Spirit constantly consoles us. Such faith frees our hearts from anguish, to respond and to serve. Relax your face! Smile at your brothers and sisters! Give thanks for the earth, our common home! Recognize in them the presence of the One who smiles at us first.

As if to sum up the Jubilee challenge, Pope Francis invites us, the whole human family, to disarm our hearts (cf. no. 14). Concretely, he proposes three urgent gestures of détente and peace:

- to forgive the foreign debt,
In response to Pope Francis' appeal, Caritas Internationalis is going to launch a campaign called "Turn Debt into Hope", with a global petition aimed at raising awareness about the systemic change needed.
- to eliminate the death penalty,
- and to establish a global Fund to eradicate world hunger (Cf. no. 11).