



Pastoral Message from Archbishop Eamon Martin to launch the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025



29 December 2024
Feast of the Holy Family

There couldn't be a better time for a Jubilee Year of Hope! We live in a world where anxiety, doubt and sometimes even despair, often appear to have the upper hand. When Pope Francis announced the Jubilee Year for 2025, he invited us to become 'pilgrims of hope'. He reminded us of the words of Saint Paul who said, "hope (in Christ) does not disappoint".

It is sad that so many people go through life without realising in a personal way that God loves them as they are. Others find it difficult to believe in hope and love because of the present state of the world - surrounded as we are by so much war, violence, exploitation and displacement of people, human trafficking and attacks on human dignity and life. All the more reason, however, for us who believe to be fearless ambassadors of faith and hope; energetic peacemakers and supporters of the cause of all human life; carers for the sick and those with disabilities; consolers of the lonely and the bereaved; faithful stewards and protectors of the environment and all God's creation; generous helpers of the poor, the homeless and the marginalised; and welcoming friends for migrants and refugees.

Bishop Michael Router, Cardinal Seán Brady and I pray that during this Jubilee Year 2025 there will be many graced opportunities for the people of the Archdiocese of Armagh to grow in their personal friendship with Jesus Christ. It is expected that many thousands of Irish people will accept the invitation of Pope Francis to visit Rome this year as pilgrims, in order to pass through the Holy Door at St Peter's Basilica and participate in the special Jubilee events which will take place there. The Jubilee 2025 Website and App contain all the information about the Jubilee Year - including the Jubilee hymn, prayer and logo: www.iubilaeum2025.va - I'm delighted that some of our young people are already planning to go to Rome for the Jubilee of Youth next July.

Of course it is not necessary to travel all the way to Rome to be a Jubilee 'pilgrim of hope'. Here in the parishes of the Archdiocese of Armagh, we will be marking the Jubilee Year with various celebrations and prayers for different ages and groups.

At a national level we encourage parishes and families to consider making a pilgrimage to one of our national shrines: Knock, Lough Derg or Croagh Patrick - or perhaps even to all three! Of course we mustn't forget the national shrine to Saint Oliver Plunkett in Drogheda, especially given that 2025 marks 400 years since the birth of this saintly archbishop and martyr who courageously gave up his life, rather than forsake his faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

I encourage Parish Pastoral Councils to organise their own Jubilee events during the year, perhaps including pilgrim walks to local shrines or Mass Rocks. Each month in 2025 we will highlight, in our parish bulletins and on our social media platforms, lots of ideas for how you might enter into the spirit of the Jubilee Year.

This year we will also celebrate the amazing spiritual courage and witness of the Venerable Matt Talbot, who died in June 1925. This outstandingly holy man was able to overcome the scourge of addiction in his own life and he has become an inspiration for the many thousands of people and

families whose hope and happiness is threatened by addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling or pornography.

I'll never forget the joy of our hosting the relics of Saint Bernadette back in October. Thousands of families and people of all ages came to Armagh, Newry and Dundalk in a great outpouring of faith, hope and love. I pray that the Jubilee Year will provide similar opportunities - locally, nationally and internationally - for us to celebrate our faith in Christ. To that end, on this Feast of the Holy Family, I'm delighted to announce that we will be preparing, during 2025, for a great Congress of Family and Youth to take place here in the Archdiocese of Armagh in March 2026. Family and young people are at the heart of the Church. Our Congress will be an opportunity to celebrate this and also to consider how we might better nurture, in homes, schools and parishes, a faith that is alive and active, hope that does not disappoint, and love that flourishes. Today, I entrust the planning for our Congress of Family and Youth to the care of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus through the intercession of Carlo Acutis - soon to be declared a Saint on 27 April 2025.

To conclude this pastoral message I offer you these encouraging words of Pope Francis for the Jubilee Year:

“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” (Ps 27:14).

+ Eamon Martin

Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh