



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP  
Christmas 2024

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Christmas Eve 2024 marks the beginning of a Holy Year that will last until January 6, 2026. It starts with the opening of the Holy Year Door at St. Peter's Basilica. This happens once every twenty-five years. Pope Francis has asked each diocese throughout the world to officially begin the Jubilee Year on December 29, 2024. We will mark that day with a Mass at our Cathedral at two o'clock in the afternoon.

The theme that Pope Francis has chosen for this Jubilee is, "Pilgrims of Hope". In the document initiating this year (*Spes Non Confundit* -Hope Does Not Disappoint), the Holy Father states, "Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. ... For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope. God's word helps us find reasons for that hope." (SC 1)

Another significant reason to hope is the feast of Christmas. This is the hope that is found in the birth of a child which is always a joyous event. What makes this birth so unique is that the child is Jesus, the Son of God.

New life is always a sign of hope; however, this becomes even more significant when it is connected to our salvation. In the beautiful Advent Hymn, "Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus" we hear these words: "Born thy people to deliver, born a child and yet a King, born to reign in us forever, now thy gracious kingdom bring."

God became a little child in order to save us so that we could be with Him forever. This means that on our pilgrimage of life, we have a future. It is rooted in a belief that good things will come to us because Jesus was born in a simple stable in Bethlehem.

Please be assured of my sincere prayer that this Christmas will be a source of hope for you. May any disappointments that come from anxiety and doubt be overshadowed by the bright hope found in the birth of the Christ child.

May the coming Holy Year also bring us closer to Jesus as we take to heart the words of Pope Francis: "may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the 'door' of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as 'our hope'. ( SC 1)

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D.  
Bishop of St. Catharines

P.O. Box 875, St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada L2R 6Z4  
905-684-0154 • Fax: 905-684-7551  
Email: bishop@saintcd.com