

Easter 2025

On this Easter day we all gather for a message of hope, even when reason says it is impossible.

Is there hope beyond the grave? Is there hope in the situation of Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan, Syria? At this moment in the world, is there hope in our divided economies and politics?

We hear many more stories about people losing hope than finding it.

When the situation in the world leaves us with less certainty, we realize that we need each other more. Our quality of life with our families, with our local communities and neighboring countries start to matter more.

We try to rediscover ancient values that kept people together. In who and what can we still believe?

During this Holy Year, pope Francis call us Pilgrims of Hope. Trying to find our path we are moving forward on our journey through life, no matter what.

When many things around us fail, there are three things that last: Faith, Hope and Love.

Let's start with **Faith**. In a secular world, we believe a lot in ourselves, in our technological, financial and material possibilities. It is often through what we have and own that we find status and value.

At the same time, we realize that all these things are relative. At a certain time in our lives, we are valued much more for who we are. For our relationships, our authenticity and for what is sacred to us.

Faith finds its way in humility. In silent awe about the greatness of life. Through our technology we discover how vulnerable our planet is and how small we are in the big picture.

Faith comes through gratitude for life, and the gradual process of discovering that there is a greater power at work than what we human beings can create.

The second thing that lasts, is: **Hope**. It is the theme of this Holy Year.

Hope is the thread that holds us together during our hardest moments. It is not just optimism. It is deeper. It is the stubborn belief that something *can* change. It keeps us reaching forward.

Hope is the belief that love can heal. In our deepest loneliness we hope for a meaningful connection, be it in this life, or the next. Hope is in the courage of someone rebuilding a life.

Life will always find a way to hurt us, but we are more than what hurts us. Hope is often seen in resilience and solidarity. People standing side by side in good times and in bad.

For us Christians, hope is also found in the fact that Christ, crucified and rejected 2000 years ago, somehow still manages to touch our lives today with his story of resilience.

By dying and rising, -over and over again-, God teaches us that He will not allow life to be depreciated and attacked.

In the eyes of God life is sacred, no matter where you live or who you are. That respect and treatment of life continues to contrast with all the conflict areas where life is treated in the opposite way.

Therefore the 3rd thing, and the greatest of all that lasts, is: **Love**. The love that God has for us becomes visible in the way we treat each other, ourselves and our planet.

The entire law and all the prophets are summed up in a simple and new commandment:

Love your neighbor as yourself, in that you will show the authenticity of your faith and hope in God.

The reason and consequence of the gift of love, is that my joy may be in you, and therefore our joy more complete.

If you deny yourself love, you deny yourself joy. A life without joy and love is: a dead life.

This easter 11 adults were received in the faith in our parish. Somehow, they found the courage to make this step through what they saw and found in this community. In the way it prays; works for charity and interacts with each other.

A community that shows love, becomes attractive, believable and fertile. God works through each-and-every one of us.

It is through works of mercy that hope is kept alive, and that we move forward as Pilgrims of Hope.

This year we have more than 40 couples preparing for their wedding, more than 30 teenagers doing their confirmation and 83 children doing their First Communions.

Apart from that, there are hundreds of volunteers working with many more people in and outside the parish.

Refugees and homeless are served through love and generosity, and many other volunteers keep this community alive through their faith and love.

If this is not a sign of hope and resilience, then I don't know what is?

I thank you all for your generous faith and love. It helps us to continue to believe in miracles, because we see them happen every day.

All you need to do is to see with the eyes of faith, hope and love. Looking at life with that vision, you may even dare to hope in life after death.

I wish you all a very happy Easter.