

## *Editorial*

# JUBILEE AS A TRANSFORMATIVE THEOLOGY OF HOPE

The 2025 Jubilee Year, titled “Pilgrims of Hope” (*Peregrinantes in Spem*), is a major holy year declared by Pope Francis to foster spiritual renewal, hope, and reconciliation amid a world grappling with conflict, climate crisis, and the pandemic. As the global Church observes this Jubilee Year, the atmosphere is filled with the anticipation of Hope. However, for numerous individuals across Asia’s extensive and diverse regions, hope may appear as a delicate privilege—or even a superficial sentiment—when faced with the persistent machinery of systemic debt, land dispossession, and ecological vulnerability. In this publication, Asian Horizons aims to transcend the sanctuary and engage with the streets. We call for a prophetic reimagining of the Jubilee, not solely as an ancient Israelite statute or a liturgical milestone, but as a transformative and liberating theological paradigm for the twenty-first century.

### **1. The Jubilee of Hope - A Gift for a World in Darkness**

Each Holy Year represents a profound gift, embodying an emanation of God’s gratuitous and boundless love for every individual. In this tradition, the Jubilee of Hope signifies not merely a celebration but also a vital call to action for our present era. It constitutes an urgent invitation to rediscover and strengthen the virtue of hope—a virtue currently scarce within a contemporary landscape marred by secularism, conflict, and significant social injustice. For the billions contending with poverty, violence, and the disorientation of postmodernity, hope transcends a mere abstract concept; it becomes an existential necessity. They seek not only improved conditions but also a future they can envisage positively.

As Pope Francis reminds us, the renewal of our shared destiny commences with the discovery of genuine hope, which emanates not solely from human optimism but from a personal encounter with

Christ. His salvific mystery encompasses all of humanity, affirming that no individual is beyond its reach. This hope, grounded in the love of God poured into every heart, serves as an unassailable foundation. It is a light awaiting discovery, a truth awaiting recognition as the fundamental bedrock of life.

For those immersed in the darkness of sin and the adversities of life, this light is essential for building on firm foundations. The Jubilee, therefore, presents a unique opportunity to experience the mystery of divine mercy. This mercy is encountered profoundly in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, but it must also be lived out in the world through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The granting of indulgences during this Holy Year serves as a tangible sign of this mercy, a foretaste of the promise of eternal life that illuminates our present.

Nevertheless, the blessing of the Jubilee is not an asset to be accumulated for personal advantage. To encounter God's love is to be motivated to share it. The Holy Year should serve as a period when Christians, fortified by this gift, decisively turn their attention to those in greatest need: the hopeless, the impoverished, the displaced, the suffering, and the victims of conflict. It is a prophetic moment that necessitates the forgiveness of guilt and debt, as well as the courageous act of overcoming barriers and prejudices that divide us.

This spiritual richness translates into tangible challenges and responsibilities for the entire Church. Pastoral ministry during this Year of Hope must be characterised by clear and resonant communication of its central themes through preaching and catechesis. More importantly, our efforts must be intentionally inclusive. It is insufficient to minister solely to the regular faithful. The Church must extend its outreach to the margins of parish life, to welcome newcomers, and to reach those who have felt alienated or forgotten. Our mission is to walk with them, share the joy of encountering the Risen Christ, and collaboratively build a future illuminated by renewed hope. The Jubilee of Hope is a gift; however, its promise can only be realised when it is embraced and shared by all.

## **2. The Radical Roots of Restoration**

The Jubilee serves as a theological declaration of God's intention for the world. Anchored in the mandates of Leviticus 25, the prophecy of Isaiah 61, and the inaugural mission of Jesus as recorded in Luke 4:16-21, it calls for a comprehensive overhaul of the social order. It can

be characterised as a “theology of the reset button,” emphasising principles such as:

- Economic Equity: The cancellation of burdensome debts.
- Restorative Justice: The restitution of ancestral lands to displaced populations.
- Human Dignity: The emancipation of individuals subjected to modern slavery and exploitative labour practices.
- Ecological Stewardship: A sabbatical for the land, necessitating a cessation of environmental exploitation.

Furthermore, it advocates for a Hope rooted in Asian realities, asserting that a Transformative Theology of Hope in Asia must be an active pursuit. It seeks to dismantle despair by highlighting God’s preferential option for the oppressed within our specific continental context. Jubilee hope is not a passive anticipation; rather, it is a collective struggle. It urges the faith community to embody the coming Kingdom in the present moment.

### 3. The Contributors’ Insights

The article, *Spe Salvi and the “Pilgrims of Hope” Jubilee: Continuity or Crisis in the Contemporary Theology of Hope?* by Liju Porathur, analyses the relationship between Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Spe Salvi* (2007) and Pope Francis’s 2025 Jubilee theme, “Pilgrims of Hope.” While Benedict offers a philosophical, Christocentric exploration of hope, Francis provides a pastoral, socially-engaged perspective. Despite stylistic variations, both share foundational themes: hope rooted in Christ, transformative of the present life, communal in nature, and responsive to contemporary crises, reflecting development through continuity rather than rupture.

The article titled, *Restoring Dignity: Jubilee Hope for Marginalised Groups* by Winfred Yao Akakpo examines the biblical Jubilee tradition (Leviticus 25, Isaiah 61, Luke 4) as a theological framework for restoring dignity to marginalised groups in Asia, including the impoverished, landless, caste-oppressed individuals, women, and ecological refugees. It posits that Jubilee necessitates a holistic approach: debt cancellation, land restitution, liberation of captives, and ecological renewal. The Church is called to embody a Jubilee community, exemplifying prophetic witness, pastoral support, interfaith solidarity, and internal reform. Jubilee hope represents proactive, transformative action that enacts God’s justice and restoration in the contemporary context.

The article by P. Vincent Raj, titled “*Pilgrims of Hope: Journeying in Faith for a Radical and Living Communion with Others*,” explores the Jubilee 2025 theme “Pilgrims of Hope” as a call to radical, living communion with others. Examining Scripture, Church Fathers, and theologians, it argues that authentic faith is not private belief but transformative action that fosters unity, reconciliation, and care for the marginalised. Faith requires us to journey with others, embodying Christ’s inclusive love through practical service and community building.

The article *Light in Darkness: Hospice and Palliative Care as a Witness to Christian Hope* by Michael George examines hospice and palliative care as a testimony to Christian hope. Grounded in Scripture, patristic tradition, and magisterial teaching—including notably *Spe Salvi* and *Evangelium Vitae*—it contends that such care exemplifies the Gospel of life by affirming human dignity until natural death. Through compassionate presence, prayer, and sacraments, hospice care opposes euthanasia and transforms suffering through the Paschal Mystery, providing a “light in darkness” that bears witness to the hope of resurrection within a secularised culture.

The article titled “Prophet Ezekiel’s Vision: A Hope for the ‘Dry Bones’ in the Indian/Asian Context” by Gabby D Costa applies Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones (Ez 37) to inspire hope among India’s marginalised populations—the poor, child labourers, Dalit women, and internally displaced persons. Mirroring Israel’s Babylonian exile, these groups confront systemic oppression and despair. The author contends that, just as God revitalised Israel through Ezekiel, He calls the Church to serve as prophets of hope in contemporary times. The Jubilee initiative “Pilgrims of Hope” encourages believers to harness God’s restorative power through advocacy and solidarity, thereby transforming India’s “dry bones” into a revitalised community.

The article *Pope Leo XIV’s Social Question: AI, Human Dignity and Labour Justice* by Deogratias M. Rwezaura explores Pope Leo XIV’s engagement with artificial intelligence as the contemporary “social question,” extending Leo XIII’s legacy in *Rerum Novarum*. It examines the influence of Industry 4.0 on human dignity, justice, and labour, with particular emphasis on Africa. While artificial intelligence presents opportunities in the fields of healthcare, agriculture, and productivity, it also poses risks such as job displacement, algorithmic

bias, and the exploitation of workers. The Church advocates for the ethical and human-centered development of artificial intelligence that promotes comprehensive human development. In anticipation of Industry 5.0, the article emphasises the necessity of collaboration between technologists and ethicists to ensure that technological advancement enhances rather than undermines human dignity.

The article *The Reception of Gaudium et Spes: An Eastern Reassessment* by Philip A. Amartolos provides an Eastern Orthodox re-evaluation of *Gaudium et Spes*. It contends that its patristic anthropology—emphasising *imago Dei*, Christocentric humanism, and Trinitarian communion—aligns closely with Orthodox theology. Nonetheless, authentic reception necessitates corresponding ascetical practice: humility, discernment, and purifying the heart. Absent this spiritual foundation, pastoral involvement risks becoming mere cultural adaptation rather than spiritual transfiguration. The article advocates a “patristic humanism” that integrates theology and asceticism, exemplified by the Syro-Malabar and Syro-Malankara traditions, as essential for authentic Christian witness in a secular era.

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