



# LETTER TO THE MENNAISIAN FAMILY

Dear Brothers, Dear Lay Mennaisians,

In the year 2025, huge crowds of pilgrims are streaming into Rome to take part in the Jubilee Year pilgrimage and crossing the threshold of the Holy Doors of the four Papal Basilicas in Rome. Elsewhere in the world, even if in a less spectacular way, Christians are invited to meetings or pilgrimages in their parishes or dioceses. This 'Holy Year' concerns us all.

## A Jubilee Year

Pilgrims of hope

In the call addressed to the Church in 2024 in the "Bull of Indiction for the Jubilee"<sup>1</sup>, Pope Francis said he was convinced that this Jubilee Year would be an intense experience of grace and hope for the whole Church. At the same time, he indicated the particular theme: "*pilgrims of hope*". He also hoped that this Jubilee Year "would be for everyone a moment of living and personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the gate of salvation (cf. Jn 10:7.9). He is 'our hope' (cf. 1 Tim 1:1), and it is the Church's mission to proclaim him always, everywhere and to everyone'. For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the "door" (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as "our hope" (1 Tim 1:1).

The Jubilee Year opened at Christmas 2024 and is taking place in a particularly difficult context. Violence and war are present on every continent and unfortunately affect countries where we are present as Mennaisians, Brothers or Lay people: Haiti, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Togo and Benin... Added to this, are more diffuse concerns linked to the toughening of international relations, climate change, the rapid transformation of societies, sometimes uncontrolled technological developments, uncertainty about the future... The Church itself is going through difficult times, as is consecrated life and our congregation. Talking about hope in this context, and living it, is not easy. But it is the path we are called to take as pilgrims.

## A word of Hope

To live the Jubilee is not to commemorate a past event, even if it concerns the birth of Christ who came to save the world. Living the Jubilee means realising that now is the day of salvation, as the Lenten liturgy reminds us. It is believing that this salvation brought by Christ is being realised for us, that it is real, and that it is a source of hope for our world.

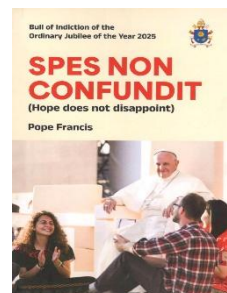
Following in Paul's address to the Christian community in Rome, Pope Francis invites us to let ourselves be guided by these words of the apostle:

*"Hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:1-2.5).*

The Pope himself makes the following comment:

*"By his perennial presence in the life of the pilgrim Church, the Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives. Christian hope does not deceive or disappoint because it is grounded in the certainty that nothing and no one may ever separate us from God's love: 'Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril or the sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that [...] nothing, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord'. (Rom 8:35.37-39)."*

This is why this hope perseveres in the midst of trials: it is founded on faith and nurtured by charity.



<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Hope does not deceive*, Bull of indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025, Rome, May 9, 2024.

## Signs of hope

During this Jubilee Year, we are invited to watch and read the signs of hope. ‘We must therefore pay attention to all the good that is present in the world so as not to fall into the temptation of considering ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence’ writes the Pope (*Hope does not disappoint*, no. 7). He adds that ‘the signs of the times, which contain the yearning of the human heart in need of God’s saving presence, demand of us to be transformed into **signs of hope**’. We need to recognise the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. The signs of the times, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God’s saving presence, ought to become signs of hope. Among these, he describes the yearning for peace and the work of the peacemakers, the openness to a vision of life full of enthusiasm that is transmitted, the merciful attentiveness towards those in situations of distress, illness or who experience weakness.



Pope Francis also speaks of those **who are waiting for signs of hope**.

- ✚ First of all, young people, who represent the future of the Church and the world and who need our closeness and attention.
- ✚ Migrants who abandon their homeland in search of a better life, exiles, displaced persons and refugees.
- ✚ The elderly, who deserve signs of hope because they often experience loneliness and feelings of abandonment.
- ✚ The poor, who often lack housing and daily food and suffer from the exclusion and indifference of many.

## Witnesses of Hope

“Hope, together with faith and charity, makes up the triptych of the “theological virtues” that express the heart of the Christian life (cf. *1 Cor 13:13*; *1 Thess 1:3*). In their inseparable unity, **hope** is the virtue that, so to speak, **gives inward direction and purpose** to the life of believers. For this reason, the Apostle Paul encourages us to “rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer” (*Rom 12:12*). Surely we need to “abound in hope” (cf. *Rom 15:13*), so that we may bear credible and attractive witness to the faith and love that dwell in our hearts; that our faith may be joyful and our charity enthusiastic; and that each of us may be able to offer a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed, in the knowledge that, in the Spirit of Jesus, these can become, for those who receive them, rich seeds of hope.” (*Hope does not disappoint*, 18)



Hope orients us towards the future and turns our gaze towards God and the promises he wants to fulfil for us. And yet, it is not a refusal or an escape from the present, nor from the responsibility we have to commit ourselves to. The Pope shows these two realities clearly. For him, hope (*Hope does not disappoint*, no. 25). This hope, which “transcends life’s fleeting pleasures and the achievement of our immediate goals, makes us rise above our trials and difficulties, and inspires us to keep pressing forward, never losing sight of the grandeur of the heavenly goal to which we have been called”. It is hope that does not pass away. And yet Pope Francis wants a hope that changes our lives and leads us **to commit ourselves to be signs of hope** in our different places of life and mission. He wants that the Jubilee may help us to recover the confident trust that we require, in the Church and in society, in our interpersonal relationships, in international relations, and in our task of promoting the dignity of all persons and respect for God’s gift of creation. (*Hope does not disappoint*, no. 25)

To go further personally, in community, in a Mennaisian fraternity, in a Mennaisian group...

1. *Hope : What does it mean to me? What are the calls I feel in this Jubilee Year?*
2. *Signs of Hope: What signs do I see around me, in the Church and in the world ?*
3. *Witnessing hope: What calls? What concrete actions can we take to be prophets of hope?*

A good Jubilee year and a fruitful Lenten season to each one.

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