

JUBILEE, APOCALYPSE, AND THE SYNODAL WAY

LIVING OUR CATHOLIC FAITH IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM: WHAT DOES OUR HISTORY AND TRADITION TEACH US?

A form of writing, called apocalyptic literature, was developed by Jewish writers as a way to bolster perseverance and hope in the midst of persecutions and devastating cataclysmic events. Christian writers borrowed this genre to help the early Christian communities face their own troubled times and persecutions and often tied the apocalyptic literary form to the second or final coming of Christ at the end of time. And throughout Christian history there have been many movements and groups who have emphasized an end-of-the-world, Christ-is-coming-soon, 'look at the signs of the times' approach. We saw it again as we came up to the year 2000 A.D. and the predictions of computer breakdowns and worldwide chaos. We see it in some Christians today who point to terrorism or the troubles in the Middle East and other wars or certain natural disasters or the exponential growth of artificial intelligence as signs of the end times. But the basic Christian attitude toward such things must be one of humble ignorance and therefore trust in God (*"But of the day or the hour no one knows."* Matthew 24:36). It is simply a mistake to take the symbolic images and sayings of the Scriptures and try to turn them into literal predictions of historical events in our day or in any age.

On the other hand, such biblical texts are highly meaningful. They speak to our emotional core in an imaginative way, trying to instill in us a visceral sense of the horror that we will face, if we continue down our destructive paths. They remind us that we truly can unleash an apocalypse upon the world. We need to recognize that our actions and decisions have the potential to cause tremendous harm and chaos, to acknowledge that unless we allow our world to be shaped by the reign of God it can fall into destruction. In a stark way they put before us a clear choice, at least from the Christian perspective: either the cross of the innocent Christ leads us to let go of all violence and frees us to be a people of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation, or else we become complicit in the destructive apocalyptic vision mentioned above.

At the same time, the biblical tradition has another strand of thought that helps to put such apocalyptic imagery into a more hopeful vision, without reducing the urgent call to follow God's ways. That other strand of thought is the tradition of Jubilee. Jubilees place a moral obligation on God's people (who then can be a witness for the world to do the same) to examine all the ways that our social-cultural-political-economic systems have led not to true freedom for people but have chained them in ways that keep too many people from living fully free, dignified human lives. Jubilees require a willingness to free those oppressed by debt, to give them a new start. Jubilees obligate us to forgive and not let the patterns of hurt and vengeance have power on future decisions. Jubilees call us to 'sabbath rest,' intentionally letting go of our frenzied pursuit of "more" whether it is money, status, fame, power, whatever—and pursuing a deeper relationship with God and with one another as greater priorities. Jubilees call us to celebrate the good that is within us and all people, to highlight the solidarity we have rather than the divisions we cause. Jubilees, then, are the flip side of apocalyptic visions. Yes, the world can be in the midst of a chaotic slide toward destruction, or, the world can embrace the spirit of Jubilee and re-energize an authentic vision of human living. Either is possible. Which will we choose?

Jubilee 2025 gives us the opportunity to once again affirm the good rather than the destructive. Proclaimed by Pope Francis as a way to invite the universal Church and the entire world to an ethical and spiritual renewal, Jubilee 2025 enable us to examine our core Christian approach to the world, to history, and to who we are as Church. The Jubilee Year invites us to intentionally become, once again, "pilgrims on the journey," recognizing that we need to stir our spirits, let go of any lethargy, and be open to a journey of conversion, which can re-center us in what is core to the Gospel and the Tradition of the Church, rather than hanging on to the status quo or that which is not essential. To help that sense of being pilgrims, on Christmas Eve this year (2024) Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, officially inaugurating the Jubilee Year, which lasts until the Feast of the Epiphany in the next liturgical year (January 6, 2026). The other three major basilicas in Rome will also have their Holy Door opened, as well as doors in every cathedral of every diocese of the world, along with numerous other shrines and churches, which will be designated as official places of pilgrimage for the Jubilee Year.

For Pope Francis this celebration of Jubilee flows directly from and continues the call to be a more synodal Church, a call that Pope Francis sees rooted in and inspired by the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. What insights does our faith give us as to who we are and what we are destined for? What has been our historical experience as a Church through the centuries? Specifically, what horizons did the 20th century event the Church calls “the second Vatican Council” open up for us as we continue to move through the beginning of this third millennium? And how can these horizons lead us to become not an apocalypse-waiting Church but a Church of Jubilee, what Pope Francis has called a “Synodal Church”?

For Reflection:

1. *What are the patterns in my life that are in good order, healthy, lead toward life, toward God? Are there patterns that are less healthy, caught in sinful or hurtful patterns? Why? What can I do about these?*

2. *Where is my life limited by social, economic, or genetic factors? How do I integrate these into my life? Do I have any areas I refuse to take responsibility for and in some way put the blame on others?*

For Discussion:

1. *What do I image or understand by terms like “resurrection from the dead”? “eternal life”? “heaven”? “hell”? “final judgment”?*

2. *Do I take resurrection with Christ and life after death with God for granted? Why or why not?*

OUR DESTINY IN LIGHT OF THE “LAST THINGS”

“I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live....” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

From our biblical roots to the present, we understand our freedom to be such that, when we act on that freedom, we find ourselves moving either toward God (life) or away from God (death). At the deepest level there is no neutrality or standing still. Our lives have a destiny, a finality, and ultimately that end is either union with or separation from God.

The Church’s Tradition on the “last things” (final judgment, heaven, hell, purgatory, resurrection)—called ‘eschatology’—preserves this understanding. There is no belief in a continuously reincarnated wheel of life. Our present lives, no matter how limited by genetic, economic, social, and cultural realities, are of utmost importance. In our decisions, relationships, commitments, and actions, we walk toward a final destiny. We choose life and so enter a final union with the Giver of life and communion of saints—what we call heaven. Or we choose death and so freely choose separation from God and others—what we call hell. We contribute to life by how we live responsibly and share the resources and gifts God has given us, or we contribute to death by ignoring such responsibilities and hoarding such resources. Even “purgatory,” as the Church’s teaching makes clear, is not some middle option, but already a claiming by God for full union, and represents the purification needed in our lives to have that happen.

Moreover, our Tradition reminds us forcefully that our destiny is more than simply an individual one: *“We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains, even until now...as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.” (Romans 8:22-23).* As we look toward our personal destiny, we remember that it is intimately connected to the destiny of all of life. We do not look for individual salvation alone but for the healing and reconciliation of all creation so that its intrinsic goodness and harmony may be fully realized. We long for a personal union with God but also to be part of a “communion of saints,” sharing intimately with others as we draw closer to God. We desire and need personal wholeness. Just as importantly we seek a reconciled community, a healed world, a creation that is not marred.

Both collectively and communally, then, our lives have a final destiny or judgment that cannot be avoided. Our hope for sharing in the resurrection of Christ is not some guarantee for immortality or perfection no matter what we do in our lives. Trusting in that resurrection is an act of faith and hope that must affect how we live our lives now. We do not escape death, but we place our hope in a God who walks with us through

death to new life. The power behind the Church's Tradition is its emphasis that, ultimately, we always have only one basic choice—for life or for death. It sharply focuses our moral responsibility. It makes clear our need for forgiveness when we don't choose for God. And it highlights our inability to do this by our own power alone. We need salvation. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

TRUE FREEDOM IS A DIRECTED FREEDOM: GOD'S COVENANT WITH US

"May it be done to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38)

Since our destiny has two possible ends, how we exercise our freedom—the decisions we make and the paths we travel—is of great significance. Our freedom is much deeper than a freedom of choice. A model of what that means is Mary in her response to the angel. She shows that freedom already has a built-in direction. She is free to say "No, not me," but to say that "No" would be to actually limit her deepest freedom and deepest expression of who she is in the depths of her being. (*"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord...the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name."* Luke 1:46,49). She is not required to, but she says "Yes" and in so doing discovers herself to be freely walking along the path that will bring the greatest life not only to others but also to herself.

Our lives are immersed in such directed freedom. When two people truly marry, even though they are 'limiting' themselves by that covenant of life and love, they are achieving a more difficult but deeper level of freedom. To whom and in what direction should I focus my desire for partnership, union, shared life? No longer is it a question. I am free to direct it fully toward my marriage partner. In fact, to be able to say "I could choose between this person and that person" is a freedom of choice on the surface level but at the deepest level is no freedom at all. To have directed our freedom toward one person and, guided by God's Spirit, one we can journey with the rest of our lives, is to be free indeed. The challenge is to live our lives consistent with that freedom. For that we need God. We need to be identified by the covenant relationship we have with the Triune God.

The Scriptures make clear that to be human is to be in covenant with God. To be God's people and followers of Jesus is to know how to live that covenant in the fullest way. It is not a contract that guarantees certain rewards, if we act in certain ways. It is an open-ended covenant, whereby God claims us as his own, whether we respond favorably to God or not. God desires to direct our freedom along the path of greatest happiness and life, not just for us but for the good of the whole world, if only we listen and respond. We are certainly capable of saying "No" to God. We experience glimpses of this when we say "No" (sin) at so many other levels of our lives. But we are made in such a way (*"in God's image and likeness"*) that in Christ Jesus we all have a solidarity in grace, not just in sin. That "No" is neither the path of our greatest personal freedom nor the likeliest path. To use the popular image of a balance scale, with heaven on one side and hell on the other, it is not as if we are teetering between the two and both are equal possibilities. Thankfully, because of God's covenant love for us, the "scale" is weighted toward salvation and union with God. In our journey of life, then, not all paths are of equal value. That is why discernment is so much a part of the Christian life. It truly

For Reflection:

Do I experience my relationship with God to be a covenant-type (open-ended relationship based on commitment) or more of a contractual one (I do certain things, God rewards and punishes)?

For Discussion:

- 1. Have I ever experienced being responsible or obligated to do something, and yet that gave me a sense of real freedom? Describe.*
- 2. Why is it that even though we are made at our deepest level to be in union with God, we so often make choices that go against that?*

matters what we decide to do. In such discernment we surrender to the Spirit of God, trusting that God is already pointing the way to greatest freedom.

To help that discernment we are invited to develop a relationship to God as the communion of persons we call Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In deepening our relationship to God the Father, we find ourselves before the One who is beyond all, more than all, prior to all. That relationship opens us to the mystery of life and to a contemplation of God's glory. It makes us realize that we can never 'own' God or know God fully. God acts first; we respond. In developing a relationship with God as Son, we connect more consciously to the Paschal Mystery of Jesus of Nazareth. His life, death, and resurrection are the pattern of deepest human living, and our lives, too, can be formed in that pattern. Life has a type of in-built call to obedience, which demands a willingness to let go of our own comfort and even take on sacrifice for the sake of others. We learn to not be afraid to live in this way, by learning to breathe "in sync" with the Holy Spirit. Allowing our relationship with the Holy Spirit to grow enables us to discover in ourselves a grace, a love, an ability to respond in ways that are framed not by our desires alone but by what is objectively right and good in each situation. We experience times and places where we are inspired to act, where our knowledge and abilities are used, but we find something more than just us is at work—God's very Spirit.

As we live our lives of faith in this third millennium of Christian history, along what path is God calling us? Where do we as a Church, as a world, as a community of faith, and as individuals need to quit resisting God's Spirit and respond, like Mary did, with a "Yes," knowing full well that to do otherwise contradicts the very core of who we are? To consistently say and live that "Yes," even though it will require courage, perseverance, and sacrifice, actually will give us the deepest and most joyful sense of freedom.

THE FIRST TWO MILLENNIA

"... graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the help of your mercy, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress, as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ." [Prayed at Mass after the Lord's Prayer.]

For Reflection:

If you were to draw your own time-line, what would be the peaks and the valleys of your life? How have you changed? How have you experienced Christ as present or absent at such moments?

The first 1000 years of Christian history witnesses a small community of disciples of Jesus the Christ, rooted in a Jewish, Aramaic-speaking environment, become a large Church of mostly non-Jewish (Gentile), Greek and Latin-speaking people. In our hymns and prayers to this day we sometimes hark back to the earliest time of the Church when we pray or sing the Aramaic "*Maranatha*" ("*Come, Lord*"). The early Church had a strong expectation and prayed often that the risen Lord would come again soon. Baptism into the community of faith was a radical step that marked a person, no matter the family or culture into which one was born. This separateness did not lead to passive disregard for the society around them but to an active, missionary effort to bring others the "Good News" and be baptized into Christ.

As the larger Roman Empire and its culture became the setting for much of the Church's thought and life, the Church adapted as well. The Church moved from being a persecuted Church to a tolerated Church to the officially established Church of the empire, East and West. Great controversies arose as to the nature of God and Jesus Christ, leading to the creed we still proclaim at Mass, which articulates our faith in one

God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; in Jesus Christ truly human and truly God; in the communion of saints and life everlasting. Never ceasing to be a missionary-minded, evangelizing Church, it nevertheless became adapted to its culture.

For Discussion:

What are some aspects of our history as a faith community that give you a sense of hope, that you are proud of, or help you live your own Christian life? What are some aspects that trouble you? Why?

Monastic living grew and flourished in various times and places as a type of extraordinary Christian witness. In many ways it was like the radical step of becoming Christian in the earliest Church, or the witnessing of one's faith through martyrdom when the Church was being persecuted. At the same time, the Church became more circumscribed with the growth of Islam and the vigorous spread of the Muslim faith. Ongoing political, cultural, and religious tensions between the western (Roman) and eastern (Byzantine) parts of the empire led to a split in the Catholic Church between East (Orthodox) and West (Catholic), a division that continues to this day.

The second millennium of Christian history sees the growth of the medieval Church, whereby the sacrament of orders rather than baptism becomes the defining social sacrament in Christian Europe. Not so much "Are you a Christian?" but "Where within the Church do you fall?". The feudal structure in Europe offered a challenge as to who was "in charge"—does the civil authority of the prince extend over the Church as well or vice-versa?—with pope and prince each claiming their own authority, but in practice no clear distinctions are made between where one stops and the other starts. Many outstanding persons from all walks of life, many movements, and many religious orders emerge and energize the Church again and again.

In the second half of the second millennium, the Protestant Reformation splits the western Church between Catholic and a multitude of Protestant denominations. Questions are raised as to the centrality of the Bible and the role and type of authority in the Church. The rise of modern science and philosophy, the industrial revolution and rise of capitalism offer significant challenges not just to the Church's proper sphere of authority but to the very identity of Church and faith as divinely established and community-centered realities. Sometimes called "secularism" this modern challenge falsely and too quickly relegates faith and religion to the realm of private morality and family life rather than the overarching framework giving meaning to all aspects of life. Church as community becomes too easily categorized as just one of many social groups to which a person may optionally belong. In such a situation the focus turns to the individual's self-worth, dignity, rights, and freedoms at the same time challenging traditional communities to justify their authority, traditions and ways of life.

In the last couple of centuries people discover the richness of the diverse cultures of the world and yet how interrelated we all are. We find ourselves capable of feats of extraordinary beauty and discovery as well as of great destruction and greed. The modern nation-states go to war again and again. Colonialism slowly dies and many new nations arise, taking their seat at the world table. We are able to explore space and the vast universe around us. Technology creates ever more ways to interconnect all people, as well as overload all of us with false or misleading information. We are able to create nuclear weapons of unprecedented destructive power. The Catholic Church reacts to all of this by strengthening the role of the papacy, becoming prodigious in its missionary efforts throughout the world, and developing a more clearly articulated social teaching. Because we are made in the image of God, every human person has an intrinsic dignity. It is the common good rather than simply individual happiness that must guide the social arena.

VATICAN II: THE END OF THE SECOND MILLENNIUM AND PREPARATION FOR THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

For Reflection:

1. *If you are old enough to have experienced the Second Vatican Council, what changed in the Church for you in a positive way and why?*

2. *If you did not personally experience the second Vatican Council, what do you see as some strengths of the Church today and being part of the community of faith? What excites you?*

3. *Are there aspects of our present-day Church that bother you or cause you to worry? What and why?*

For Discussion:

1. *What are some of the 'signs of the times' (i.e. joys and hopes, hurts and anxieties) you see in our world today? What could our response in faith be to them?*

2. *If you had to describe the 'core beliefs' of your faith in a few sentences, what would you put down?*

In this context, the importance of the event we call the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) needs to be highlighted. As the second millennium drew to a close, we Catholics had an experience of Church that proclaimed a number of challenging but, from the standpoint of history, healing realities. The Council looked out at the hope and joy as well as the hurt and anguish of the modern world, trying to discern the "signs of the times" and how the gospel of Jesus Christ invites us to respond to them. It saw the Church not as in competition with the world but as in dialogue with that world. It also looked internally at the Church's own identity and structure, reaffirming that we are by nature a pilgrim people, always striving to witness to the reality of Christ, always in need of renewal.

Specifically, Vatican II recognized that we do not have to be a Church in charge of the civil and legal and cultural spheres but can most appropriately be a Church that is a leaven within all aspects of those spheres. We can respect and learn from the wisdom of the so-called secular world around us. We need not be afraid of it, and we are not limited to one expression of it. At the same time, we can offer the world the wisdom of our Tradition. We are called anew to inculturate the gospel not just in one time and culture but throughout the world and the many cultures of the world. The Church never is to exist for its own sake but points toward the kingdom or reign of God, which is always more than what the world can create on its own.

The second Vatican Council affirmed that we are a Church rooted in Tradition. But not Tradition as opposed to the Scriptures. Rather, the Scriptures are at the heart of our Tradition. The authority of both comes from a living, faithful witness to Christ. Our Tradition, then, is a living Tradition. We distinguish what is essential and core from what is more peripheral and therefore changeable. Our faith is rooted in the core Tradition. It is that core we announce to all cultures and situations so that the gospel takes root. Our unity is a unity of faith, not a uniformity of practice.

Moreover, in baptism we have more in common with other Christians than anything that separates us into Catholic/Orthodox or Protestant/Catholic. Ecumenism—the call to work and pray for the unity of all Christians—is not an optional extra but a mandate to heal the sad history of enmity that too often characterized our past relations with other Christians and they with us. And we do not stop there. We can be in dialogue with all people of good will. This means especially our Jewish brothers and sisters who have given us our biblical roots, the Muslim faithful who share a belief in one God and in faith as a revelation from God, as well as men and women of other faiths who witness to different facets of the truth of God.

Baptism is not simply an individual-centered action, focused on the removal of Original Sin. Rather, we are baptized into a people, the body of Christ, a community of faith, which is not of our own choosing but a gift from God. We are a community first, individual Christians with different roles second. All the Christian faithful, not just the ordained, actively participate together in Christ's mission. We all are called to a holiness of life and to be witnesses to Christ, not just monks or those who have taken religious vows. Far from negating the distinction between ordained and laity, Vatican II captured the importance of hierarchy as a service toward communion and unity. The pope is to

act in collegial service with his fellow bishops and they with him. Bishops act best in collaboration with their local Church, especially their priests. Pastors properly seek the wisdom and direction from the local parish. The communion and unity of the Trinity can inspire all levels of the Church's life and practice.

At the same time the second Vatican Council called us once again to be a counter-cultural Church by re-discovering the early Church's understanding of baptism and taking seriously what it means to be marked by our baptism. We have an identity that distinguishes us from some aspects of the culture around us, no matter the culture, including our American one. We can witness to that Christian identity not just in our worship but in all aspects of our lives. Justice and morality have a social dimension that affects structures and institutions and not just personal, private decisions. What emerges from Vatican II is the importance of our identity as an evangelizing Church, giving witness to Jesus Christ in our daily relationships.

From the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Francis recognized that the vision which the Second Vatican Council laid out for the Church has not yet been fully embraced. His call to become a more "Synodal Church" is his way of expressing that. For a vocal minority our post-Vatican II Church has been too often an effort at nostalgia, trying to hold on to some supposed golden age, Tridentine Church. For others it has been too slow in adapting to the changing times in regard to its teaching and practices concerning women, sexuality, and so on. In both cases the danger, says Pope Francis, is that we want the Church to undergo change without looking more deeply at how **we** need to fundamentally change first. He is not opposed to even radical change (in those things that are not core to our Tradition), but that change starts in a conversion of mind and heart, which opens itself on all levels—personal, familial, parish, social, economic, political—to a shared conversation, where solidarity is stronger than ideological division and where all, especially those on the margins and without resources, see themselves as active participants in the future of the Church and world.

That means that the Church, to be credible in its evangelizing witness, is to become a Church not just helping the poor but a Church of the poor, where the least amongst us finds a full voice, where those not on the margins are evangelized by the living witness of those who are. A Synodal Church trusts that the Holy Spirit can create a shared wisdom that is capable of accompanying every person on their journey, not just those that fit some pre-conceived criteria of orthodoxy. In so doing, we act what the Second Vatican Council calls "as leaven for the world," helping the whole world toward its transcendent identity and hope.

LIVING OUR MEMORIAL OF FAITH IN THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

*"We proclaim your death, O Lord, and profess your resurrection until you come again."
[Memorial Acclamation in the Eucharistic Prayer].*

As we continue to move more deeply into the third millennium of Christian history, it is remarkable how human history has developed and changed. Change will not stop but will continue to accelerate during this millennium. Yet the Spirit of God inspires men and women of every generation to give faithful witness to God's love in Jesus Christ.

For Reflection:

1. *Name a cross in your life that you must carry right now. How can you carry that cross so as to give witness to God's love? To your hope and trust in God?*

2. *Have you experienced personally the presence of the Risen Christ? When and how? What difference has this or could this make in your life?*

3. In this Jubilee Year, who do I need to “set free”? How can I take moments of “sabbath rest” to let the Spirit of God re-center me/us on the presence of the Jesus Christ?

For Discussion:

1. What are some ways we must change as Church or as people as we move through the third millennium of Christian history? Where do we see a need today to give courageous and faithful witness to Christ?

2. How can we embody in our local setting more fully what Pope Francis has called “the synodal way,” truly open to other people’s experiences and trusting in a shared wisdom that the Spirit of God can create?

Who do we have to be and what kind of Church do we have to become so that God’s kingdom will continue to break more fully into our world? The three-fold emphasis in our proclamation of the mystery of faith at every Eucharist gives us a clue.

“Christ has died.” Our faith is rooted in historical witness. The death of Jesus of Nazareth unites God in a human way to all who suffer innocently. All of human life is significant to God. All is redeemed and redeemable. This is not a naïve optimism about human life. We know our ability to sin and cause evil and how that corrupts the goodness and beauty of our world. Christ has not just died but died on the cross for us. We have to give historical witness in our day and age to the reconciling love of God. Our crosses, too, must be embraced if they are truly the crosses God invites us to accept. True crosses are those burdens, responsibilities, even sufferings that come our way when we are living out the gospel. We do not look for such crosses. They find us. But Christ has died on the cross and we know that we must share in that, if the world is to be made whole, if the reign of God is to break more fully into our world.

“Christ is risen.” The center of our proclamation of faith. Christ is raised from the dead by the Father. A new era has opened. The reign of God does break through into human history with its healing grace every time we turn from sin, every time we turn from hatred and violence, every time we surrender to God and allow God’s reconciliation to guide our actions. Because of the resurrection we know that death does not have the final word. Our crosses are not borne in vain. Christ’s presence is not just an historical memory but is an abiding presence (*“Behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20*). At heart we are to be a people of hope, of life, of surprises, of freedom and liberation. We are called to be a Church not just for youth but a youthful Church, a joyful Church, a Church of vitality and exuberance, a Church that lives by believing truly that the risen Christ lives among us.

“Christ will come again.” This is not a statement of the how or what of the end but a statement of trust that in Jesus Christ all will find its proper unity. We are part of making that unity happen. Proclaiming that Christ will come again helps to keep us focused on our final destiny and not get side-tracked. It means we must be open to conversion, again and again, so that Christ can break into our hearts anew. Because our final destiny is meant to be union with Jesus Christ and the communion of saints, we can live our lives boldly and courageously. We can seek the greatest common good, even if in the short term that good might not seem achievable. All temporary power structures, all passing pleasures, take on a different significance in light of such a proclamation. We are invited to live and act so that Christ might be *“all in all” (Colossians 3:11)*.

As the third millennium of human history moves forward, how do we more faithfully proclaim and live this three-fold reality of our faith? How do we become energized to speak out this gospel to our world, which is hungry for such “good news”? The ultimate call to witness—martyrdom—will not arise for most of us. But our identity and focus need to be clear so that we will be ready to give full witness to Christ’s love in all circumstances. Jubilee Year 2025 gives us a chance to re-connect to the core Tradition of who we are as Church. We can let go of what is not essential to the gospel and embrace an openness to walk with all people, listening to one another (“the synodal way”), challenging one another, and always witnessing to the depth and joy of what a follower of Jesus Christ experiences. We can take a “sabbath rest” approach to our lives, pausing to reflect on what is really essential, appreciating what is most important in life, and celebrating that with our family and faith communities.