

January 2025 - Calendar / Feast Days

January 1, Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God



This holiday is a celebration of Mary's motherhood of Jesus. It is a reminder of the role she played in the salvation of humankind.

Today's Feast of Mary, the Mother of God, is a very appropriate way to begin a new year. This celebration reminds us that the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, is also our Heavenly Mother. Therefore, perhaps our ideal motto for the New Year 2023 could be "Through Mary to Jesus!"

This is an occasion to renew our devotion to Mary, who is also Mother of the Church because she is our spiritual mother — and we are the Church. The solemnity shows the relationship of Jesus to Mary. It is a perfect example of how we should venerate Mary under all of her titles. The Church puts the feast of this solemnity on the first day of the New Year to emphasize the importance of Mary's role in the life of Christ and of the Church. We commemorate the various saints on different days of the year, but Mary is the most prominent of them all. She has a special role and mission given to her by God. As Mother of our Redeemer and of the redeemed, she reigns as Queen at the side of Christ the King. She is a powerful intercessor for all of our needs here on earth. In celebrating her special feast day, we acknowledge this great gift for the

Church and world; we call on her to be actively involved in our daily life; we imitate her virtuous life as a great inspiration; and we cooperate with all the graces we receive through her.

January 1, World Day of Peace



The Church also observes the 1st January as the World Day of Peace and invites us to pray specially for peace in the world. Every year on January 1, the Holy Father marks the World Day of Peace with a special message inviting all people to reflect on the important work of building peace.

The theme chosen by Pope Francis for the World Day of Peace for 2025 is “Forgive us our trespasses: grant us your peace”, corresponding to “the biblical and ecclesial understanding of the Jubilee Year”.

The **World Day of Peace** is an annual celebration by the Catholic Church, dedicated to universal peace, held on 1 January, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

January 6, Epiphany of the Lord



The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated on January 6. This feast commemorates the visit of the wise men to worship the baby Jesus. Tradition tells us that their names were

Caspar, Melchior and Balthassar. The men were astrologers who were looking for the star that would lead them to the promised Messiah. This was prophesied in the Book of Micah. According to the Gospel narratives, the wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh with them. These gifts were very meaningful. Gold was a precious and expensive gift, and showed how important Jesus was. Frankincense is a sweet perfume which was often burned in the temple to worship God. It was a sign that Jesus should be worshipped. Myrrh was used to keep things fresh, and it was used by the women to anoint Jesus' body when he died. By bringing it as a gift to Jesus, the wise men foretold his suffering and death.

January 7, The Baptism of the Lord



The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is observed annually. It falls on the Sunday after January 6, so this year the date is January 8. It commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit and his power. He is proclaimed Messiah.

He now goes about doing good, working the signs that make him known as the Servant of God. He is the one who brings good news to the poor and tells of salvation.

We are invited to not only think about the baptism of the Lord Jesus but also of our own baptism.

- How often do I think of my baptism and what it means in my daily life?
- Do I see myself as God's beloved son or daughter?
- Can I think of a recent example of when I was a light to those around me?

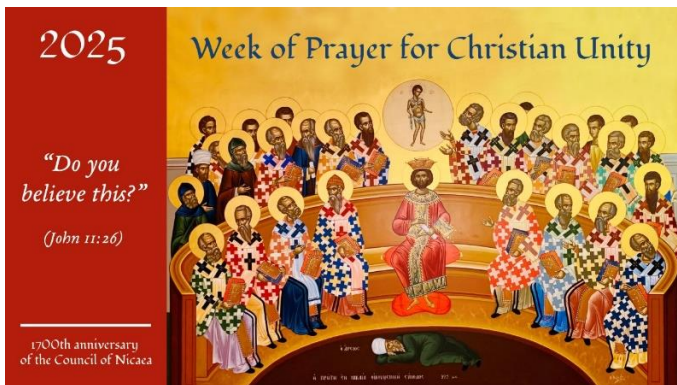
"Baptism is the door of the spiritual life and the gateway to the sacraments."

Thomas Aquinas

Week of January 18 – 25 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 offers an invitation to draw on this shared heritage and to enter more deeply into the faith that unites all Christians.

The guiding biblical text for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 comes from John 11:17-27. The theme for the week, “Do you believe this?”



Churches and Christian communities worldwide are invited to use the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2025 to pray together for the unity among churches throughout the year.

January 24, St. Francis de Sales



Francis de Sales was born in 1567 and died in 1622. He lived in France and came from a large family. He had twelve brothers and sisters. His father wanted him to be a

lawyer, but Francis knew God was calling him to be a priest and serve others. He was ordained in 1593. He is the patron saint of writers because he wrote many letters and books about having faith in God.

Trust in God

He was a kind and caring person who shared God's love with others. Frances de Sales taught people to trust in God. He said, "Have no fear for what tomorrow may bring. The same loving God who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day." We should have peace in our hearts because we know that God is with us.

Pray always

Francis de Sales encouraged people to pray. He said that prayer is a conversation with God. Through prayer, we speak to God and God speaks to us. He knew it was important to be people of prayer. As he said, "Prayer is for everyone." The life of this saint reminds us to pray always.

Be patient

Francis de Sales said: "Have patience with all things, but chiefly have patience with yourself." He knew that we sometimes worry about mistakes we've made and judge ourselves harshly. But God created us and loves us just as we are. These words of St. Francis de Sales speak to our lives today. His meekness and sunny disposition won for him the title of "Gentleman Saint." He is the patron saint of writers, editors and journalists. Some St. Francis de Sales quotes:





January 25, Conversion of St. Paul



On January 25, we celebrate the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle. His radical transformation is demonstrative of the extraordinary redemptive power of the Gospel. As a zealous Jewish scholar, he had persecuted countless Christians – including the first martyr for Christ, Stephen.

**After his encounter with Christ, however,
Paul became an unstoppable force for the kingdom of God.**

Paul's Conversion to Christianity

One day, Saul was “breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord,” and decided to go down to Damascus to see if he could find incriminating evidence to arrest the Christians there (Acts 9). However, God had other plans for him:

On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” He said, “Who are you, sir?” The reply came, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do.” The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard

the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days, he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank. – Acts 9:3-9

After this incident, God spoke to a believer named Ananias, asking him to find Saul, lay hands on him, and restore his sight. Ananias was reluctant to do so at first, as he knew Saul's history of persecuting Christians. However, God urged him, saying, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites," (Acts 9:15). He then did as God commanded, restoring Saul's sight – and baptizing him.

After his conversion, Saul changed his name to Paul. Saul then began proclaiming the gospel in Damascus and beyond, inaugurating a life of dedicated ministry.

Paul would go on to significantly mould the Mediterranean's early Christian communities, traveling and writing countless letters of spiritual guidance and insight. Paul's ministry is set apart from other apostles because of his message that the gospel is for Gentiles and Jews alike. He is thought to be the author of 13 books in the New Testament – more than any other biblical writer.

Few Bible stories are as thrilling as Paul's road to Damascus conversion. Through the power of Christ, a man who had been a hate-filled villain became a love-filled hero. By submitting himself completely to Jesus, Paul was able to spread the gospel throughout the known world.

Paul's life-changing experience on the Damascus Road led to his baptism and instruction in the Christian faith. He became the most determined of the apostles, suffering brutal physical pain, persecution, and finally, martyrdom.

He revealed his secret of enduring a lifetime of hardship for the gospel:

**"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
(Philippians 4:13)**

January 27, St. Angela de Merici



St. Angela de Merici, 1470-1540, founder of the Ursulines, devoted herself to Christian education based on love, kindness and firmness, and concern for the individual.

“You will accomplish more by kind words and a courteous manner than by anger or sharp rebuke”

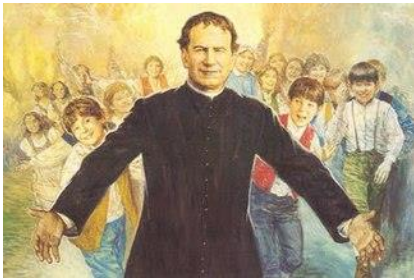
St. Angela de Merici

January 28, St. Thomas Aquinas



St. Thomas Aquinas was born in Italy in 1224 and died in 1274. Thomas was taught that Christian revelation and human knowledge are aspects of a single truth and cannot be in conflict with one another. One of the greatest theologians, he is patron of schools, universities, students and booksellers.

January 31, St. John Bosco



St. John Bosco 1815 – 1888 born in Piedmont, founded the Salesians to educate boys for life. He also became involved in publishing catechetical material for youth. He is a patron saint of youth and of catholic publishers.

John Bosco (16 August 1815 - 31 January 1888) who was popularly known as Don Bosco was an Italian Roman Catholic priest, educator, and writer. He worked in Turin, where the population suffered from illnesses because of industrialization and urbanization. He dedicated his life to the education of street children, juvenile delinquents, and other youth. He developed teaching methods based on love rather than punishment, a method that became known as the Salesian Preventive System.

He founded the Salesians to educate boys for life. He also became involved in publishing catechetical material for youth. He is a patron saint of youth and of Catholic publishers.

Catholic Schools Week 2025

Theme – Alive in Christ!

Catholic Schools Week 2025 will take place from

Sunday 19th January to Saturday 25th January, 2025

“Christ is alive! He is our hope, and in a wonderful way he brings youth to our world, and everything he touches becomes young, new, full of life. The very first words, then, that I would like to say to every young Christian are these: Christ is alive and he wants you to be alive!” – Pope Francis, Christus Vivit, Section 1.

Reflecting on the theme, Catholic schools will explore what it means to be fully alive as a human being – living life to the full in Christ. Sensitive to the age appropriateness of the various classes and years, the theme will explore how we exist for one another in Christ, building from the wellbeing of the individual, extending the notion of true wellbeing to others, to our families and communities,

and to The Other, in God. The theme will mediate on hope, the true purpose and meaning of human life, and, in the more senior years, on true freedom.

As is usual, the theme will be connected at primary level with Grandparents' Day on the Wednesday of Catholic Schools Week.



The resources will reflect on these features within the overarching theme and will make use of scriptural reflection on prayer, action, student voice, and concern for each other our common home.

<https://catholiceducation.ie/catholic-schools-week-2025-alive-in-christ/>



We hope that you have been enjoying the Laudate 2025 repertoire and are looking forward to the celebrations during Catholic Schools Week 2024. The venues and dates for Laudate 2025 are as follows:

Church of Our Lady of Victories, Ballymun Road

Laudate Festival Night on Tuesday 28 January at 7.00-8.15 p.m.

Rehearsal on Thursday 16 January at 12.00-1.30 p.m.

Church of St Therese, Mount Merrion

Laudate Festival Night on Wednesday 29 January at 7.00-8.15 p.m.

Rehearsal on Tuesday 14 January at 12.00 - 1.30 p.m.

Please continue to promote the **Laudate 2025 Festival** in your local community – the celebrations are ticketless and entry is free for all.

Participating in Laudate is a wonderful way

to celebrate our Catholic Schools and faith.



Launch of the Jubilee Year 2025 “Pilgrims of Hope”

Last May, Pope Francis announced the theme for the Jubilee 2025 as

(Spes non Confundit – Hope Does Not Disappoint).

**Everyone is invited to participate
in this special year of faith.**

THE JUBILEE LOGO

The cross of Christ is the hope that cannot ever be abandoned because we are always in need of it, especially in the most difficult moments.

The Cross, in the shape of a sail, is transformed into an anchor that imposes itself over the waves in motion. A universal symbol of Hope.

The figures represent humanity from the four corners of the World. They are embracing each other to illustrate the solidarity between the peoples, as the first holds onto the cross.

The rough sea is a reminder of the difficulties of the pilgrimage of life. Often, personal events as well as those of the world, press on us more intensely, demanding a greater hope.

The logo shows how the way of the pilgrimage is not an individual effort, but rather collective, with the impression of a growing dynamism that tends more and more to the cross.

Launch of the Jubilee Year 2025 “Pilgrims of Hope”

Homily of Archbishop Dermot Farrell

St Mary's Pro-Cathedral

Sunday, December 29, 2024

"Jesus then went down with Mary and Joseph, and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority, and *his mother stored up all these things in her heart.*" (Luke 2:51)

Last May, when Pope Francis issued his letter to announce the Jubilee Year, the opening of which we celebrate today, he expressed *his* hope that "the Jubilee... would be a Holy Year marked by the hope that does not fade, our hope in God." And he continued, "May it 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." (*Spes Non Confundit* §25)

The Holy Father has constantly put before us his vision of the Church, *and of the world*, as a people on a pilgrimage through time. Be it in his ongoing meditations on the 'journey of the Wise Men to Bethlehem,' or in his addresses at the World Youth Days, "the image of 'pilgrimage' has been a constant theme, as, for him, it "describes well our human condition; like pilgrims, we find ourselves facing great questions that have no simple or immediate answers, but challenge us to continue the journey, to rise above ourselves and to press beyond the here and now." ("Address to the Catholic University of Portugal," Lisbon, 3rd August 2023).

His sense of the Church as a pilgrim people, and of all of us in the world as in a pilgrimage through time, is born of his profound conviction about the vibrant aliveness of the People of God, and of the dynamic character of "the world and all its inhabitants," as it says in the psalm (see Psalm 24:1). The living God creates a world that is brimming with life, and ever-changing. While there is a stillness deep down things, a profound silence to be discovered and encountered, that discovery must happen in a movement of openness and welcome. Unless we go out to meet the world, most of the world God's offers us will be lost to us, and we to the world.

It is in this spirit that the engaging motto of this Jubilee Year, "Pilgrims of Hope," might best be heard. The Church is people on a journey outwards; especially in this time of apparent decline, when the temptation might be to close ranks, and turn to the security of what we appear to have always known. In a world overflowing with "ideas," it is vital to flesh out, what is at the heart of this motto. We might find one key in Pope Francis's hope for this Jubilee: that it may it be a "a Holy Year marked by the hope that does not fade May it help us to recover the confident trust that we require in the Church and in society ... " (*Spes Non Confundit* §25)

Hope and trust go hand in hand. Hope is not some feeling that all will be well; rather hope is the conviction of how things truly are, and how they truly will be. Hope is not the result of some type of analysis, a prognosis out of the circumstances in which we find ourselves. No! Hope is beyond logic: it is born out of a relationship. Hope is the expression of a reality that we have experienced.

This was brought home in a wonderful experience relayed by Father Henri Nouwen. In his later years, Nouwen had developed a particular friendship with a troupe of trapeze artists whom he had first encounter in a circus in his native Holland. For a time he even joined them on the road, filling notebooks with his detailed jottings on every aspect of their craft. He had been particularly fascinated by a remark from one of the 'flyers'—the seeming star of the trapeze act—who told him that, in fact, "the flyer does nothing and the catcher does everything." As the flyer explained, "when I fly to (the catcher) I have simply to stretch out my arms and hands and wait for him to catch me...A flyer must fly, and a catcher must catch, and the flyer must trust with outstretched arms, that the catcher will be there for him."



In the insight of these circus artists, Nouwen discovered an empowering and consoling wisdom. So often we measure our identity and success by how well we remain in control. But in the end the depth of our lives is to be discovered in our capacity to let go, to trust, to place ourselves in the hands of another. Hope and trust go hand in hand. All of this is rooted in a relationship: to let go, in the hope of being caught mid-air is the expression of the relationship that had been built up between these trapeze artists. To hold one's arms out in the confidence that one would be caught, flows from the relationship of trust that had been built up between these two brothers. It is no mere calculation; of course there is skill and practice involved, but is it much more than practice and skill. We let go, we give of ourselves in the confident hope that we will be caught.

In its own way, this mirrors the hope of Christ on the cross: even when his mission appears to have come to a halt, Jesus can still pray the words of the Psalm, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” (Matt 27:46, citing Psalm 22:1) Hoping against hope, he can place his life in his Father’s hands: “Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit.” (Luke 23:46)

There are two dimensions to our Jubilee motto: there is the hope dimension, the dimension that, when we are at our limit—or even beyond it—expresses from our relationship with the Lord and with each other. True hope always involves a leap, a leap born of a deep, maybe unknown, trust. Hope is that which permits us to make that leap, to move beyond ourselves

There is also the ‘pilgrim dimension.’ Hope is not some quality that we receive all of a sudden. Hope comes to those who journey in hope. We put hope into practice. We live hope: it is the expression of a relationship between people who travel together. We travel with each other and we travel with God. Relationships, enduring relationships, take time. At Christmas, reflecting on challenges to peace and on the character of peace-making, I was very taken by an ‘image’ of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*. He spoke of “peace as a tree which grows a long time.” The same can be said of hope: “HOPE is a tree which grows a long time.” Hope will grow among us, when we journey with hope.

There is a line in the psalms which captures how we might approach this mystery: it says

A king is not saved by his army, nor a warrior preserved by his strength.

A vain hope for safety is the horse, despite its power it cannot save. (Ps 33:16–17)

In the end, even when we journey together, it is the Lord who is our hope. That said, we cannot ignore the suffering and misery of those around us. “Love does not snatch us from the pain of time, but takes the pain of that which passes upon itself. Hope makes us ready to bear the cross of the present” (J. Moltmann). As Pilgrims of Hope, we are all called upon to contribute to sowing seeds of hope everywhere, so that forgiveness allows us “to change the *future and to live different lives, free of anger, animosity and vindictiveness*” (*Hope does Not Disappoint*, 23)

During the Jubilee Year you are invited to journey the pilgrim path of the four churches in the inner city—Westland Row, City Quay, Sean McDermott Street, St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral—and St Kevin’s Church, Glendalough. Called “Pockets of Hope” the pilgrim route leads you through Pope Francis’s document “*Hope Does Not Disappoint*” from the opening lines in St Andrew’s Church to its conclusions in St Mary’s Pro-Cathedral, giving pilgrims time to ponder the richness of his witness to Hope.

It was in hope that Mary *stored all these things—all that had happened to her—in her heart*. (see Luke 2:51) My friends, may we make space in our hearts for the One who comes to save us. As we wait—in joyful hope—may we not wait passively but travel together to meet him. May the Spirit give us hearts shaped by hope, open for the world and all its inhabitants, AND open for our Lord. Could we risk a journey that would transform our lives, and our Church, that would bring us to a new place?

Mary, Mother of Hope, pray for us.

+Dermot Farrell
Archbishop of Dublin

Prayer for January



**Lord, as we begin a new calendar year,
we renew our commitment to offering our students
the best possible quality education.**

**Help us to lead the children to a greater awareness
of your presence in their lives.**

**Give us courage to take on the difficult challenges
and wisdom to make the right decisions along the way,
always listening to your Spirit
and discerning what is best for our students.**

**May Mary, your mother, help us
to lead the children closer to you.**

Amen.