

Msgr. Graham Bell

Jubilee 2025 - Pilgrimage of Hope



I am here to talk to you today about the Jubilee 2025, which I suppose you all know will be the whole year of 2025. This is a subject which is very dear to my heart as Fr.

Stanislaus Lazar representing me knows. I began working for the Holy See in the Office which prepared the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. And that was a very, very interesting experience; very, very interesting because, at the end of the day, after all the very, very complicated preparations, which the Holy See and the Italian Government undertook, and the preoccupation felt, the success of the Jubilee of 2000, in particular of World Youth Day, and not just World Youth Day, really depended on God's holy people. The people who either came to Rome or made the Jubilee a success in their own local Churches. Obviously not everyone was able to come to Rome for the Jubilee, but the Jubilee had its origins in Rome, when Pope Boniface VIII established the first Jubilee in the Year 1300, a long, long time ago. Since the time of Pope Boniface VIII, I believe there have been about 26 Ordinary Jubilees. At the beginning the jubilee was held every 100 years, but very quickly we came to realize that if the 100 years rule remained very, very few people would be able to see a Jubilee in their lifetime. So, it was changed very, very quickly to every 25 years. So that every generation would be able to celebrate a Jubilee Year.

And what was the specificity of the Jubilee?

I think it's very interesting to know that the word '*Indulgence*' and the word '*Mercy*' at that time were almost synonyms. And that from the beginning it was based on the Jubilee Indulgence. And the Jubilee Indulgence was a remission/forgiveness of sins, as Pope Boniface

VIII stated. The people of Roman wanted the Jubilee and ever since then, the Jubilee Year has been a fact. It has become a part of the Institutional Church. It's the people who really make it a success. As I said at the beginning, the jubilee came to be a synonym of a whole year. Now obviously, people wanted to develop the spiritual part of the jubilee, and so, the people tried to do this by going back to see if there were any records in Sacred Scripture, especially in the Old Testament. And of course, people immediately found a jubilee regulation in Leviticus Chapter 25:8-13, and I quote, "You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall sound abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement; you shall send abroad the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property, and each of you shall return to his family. You shall keep the fiftieth year as a jubilee; In it you shall neither sow, nor reap what grows of itself, nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat what it yields out of the field. In this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property".

Now, the thing about the biblical Jubilee, as described in the Book of Leviticus, is that it was every 49 years and then a whole year. As far as we know from the documentation we have outside the Bible, it never really took place. This was never really put into practice. But what we know is that the way of jubilee was ordinary, an alternative way, broadcast by blowing a horn. This ram's horn trumpet was called *yobel*. And through the Greek version, of the Old Testament this came into the Latin language as *Jubila-eum*: jubilee. This is a synonym as I have said, of a whole year, now

whole years have been particularly important in the recent history of the churches in the Middle Ages. And before I go on, I'd like to remind you not just of the Great Jubilee Year 2000, in which many of you may have participated, at the time of John Paul II. Earlier there was the jubilee of 1975 with Pope Paul VI, as well as the Jubilee of 1950 celebrated by Pope Pious XII.

The Jubilee of 1950, for example, is very important, because of the Proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, only five years after the end of the Second World War. As you know, Europe had been devastated by the Second World War and people came to Rome, people from enemy countries who had fought each other. And the Jubilee of 1950 became extraordinary for Catholics and for reconciliation. Typically, the Church has always been carried forward by reconciliation. Reconciliation with God, through the forgiveness of our sins, but also reconciliation among ourselves because we cannot be reconciled to God, if we are not reconciled with our brothers and sisters. The Jubilee 2025 is an Ordinary Jubilee which will begin on Christmas Eve of this year. The Holy Father began thinking about it, I suppose in 2021. Then in February 2022 he wrote a Letter, you can find on the Vatican website, which has just published an article in *L'Osservatore Romano*. This Letter is addressed to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, the Pope's Prefect, of the Dicastery for the Evangelization of Peoples and Pope Francis literally talks about his idea for the jubilee. I can say right from the start that the Holy Father established a preparatory, a particular, year so that the Council's work should be known and heard about. The first day of the year 2023, he decided that the Church should dedicate that year to the study of the Documents of the Second Vatican Council.

Why?

Because the Holy Father said the Second Vatican Council characterized, more than anything else, the life of the Church, and the second half of the 20th century; the history of the 21st century. But young people don't know very much about the Second Vatican Council. So, he wanted a year in which people may be encouraged to focus on the four major

Constitutions of the Council: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, and The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*. Our Office will prepare small booklets. So, these records are the four Constitutions. I think, obviously, there are Italian and Spanish, French and English versions being produced in India, and all that is available and I think you can find them on our website; beside other relevant material available. Our website is in Latin: www.jubilaum.va , with all the information about the jubilee.

As the last year was supposed to be dedicated to the study of the Second Vatican Council Documents, the Holy Father wanted the year 2024 to be a Year of Prayer in preparation for the Jubilee. We have prepared a small series of books: a very, very small book, called in Italian, *Appunti Sulla Preghiera*, and I think these will be more widely published. For example, there is a Catholic Society in London; Our Sunday Visitor in the United States, and there are translations in all languages. A lot of these texts are designed to improve the life of prayer of the Christian faithful. The Italian version, thanks to Catholic efficiency, is by far the most popular; almost all of them were sold out as soon as they appeared, as soon as they were printed. I think that in the preparatory year is what Pope Francis wants to tell us about prayer, because I think in every endeavour, if a prayer does not touch the heart of people, then it may have little effect.

So, our Office which has also been the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, also worked on the Year of Faith, and also on the *Jubilee of Mercy*. So, now I am working on the Jubilee of the Year 2025. The first thing we did was we set up a competition for the official Hymn, and we set up a competition to find a logo and we asked the Holy Father what he would like as a motto for the jubilee. And he immediately came up with a concise Latin guideline *Peregrinantes in spem*, which has been translated in English, as *Pilgrims of Hope*.

Now, the original Latin, translated into English as well as the other languages, is very particular, is particular for two reasons. First,

Peregrinantes is a verb, a verb followed by a participle which means on pilgrimage in English. We can speak of going on a pilgrimage, but we don't have to go on pilgrimage. But if we did, it would be on a *Pilgrimage into Hope*. In English as Pilgrims of Hope. So, we are journeying to hope.

And this idea is most likely at the basis of the celebration of the Jubilee: we are journeying to hope. Now, this morning you heard the homily before I came; you heard the theological presentation of hope. But I think we all know that it's very difficult to speak about *hope*.

It's one of the theological virtues, but we're not comfortable with it. I know for sure that to preach on hope is not like Faith or Charity. We all know what faith is. Faith is a man and a woman's response to God's revelation. And Charity, is above all because we have a very concrete example of Charity which is the Cross of Christ. So, we all know and can say something about Faith, and something about Charity. It is more difficult to speak about Hope because there is so little of it in the Church today. It is really not talked about and I think hope in many ways, like love, can be a very, very difficult thing to define, but then when it is absent, we know what we are talking about. And when we see the absence of love, and it often manifests itself as suffering and aches and pains we need to articulate it, using words we know instinctively in our hearts. We know what love and its absence mean which I think is also true of hope.

So many people today in our world have lost hope, that has to do for so many reasons with a fallen human nature. And this fallen human nature is reflected in the way we are governed, in the way families have developed, in the way relationships are developed and the way the economic and political systems are developed. And very often we have come up against agencies and people who have completely lost hope. We also see this in actions, which are apparent when it no longer characterizes peoples' existence. Look, for example, at the tremendous use of drugs; this problem really affects the whole world. For example, in the United States, a country I visited, I have often been taken aback by what is turning into a crisis.

People are addicted to painkillers; in my own country, I am taken aback by the number of people who find solace in alcohol, and all these facts point to a tremendous deficit of hope in our world. And of course, the hope of Christians is in Jesus Christ. But it's not just Christians who hope. St. Augustine, a theological genius, tells us that everybody loves charity. Everybody believes in faith and everybody hopes; the difference lies in what constitutes the object of our faith, hope and charity. And obviously for Christians Christ is our Hope. Christ is our Hope because he opens the gates of Eternal Life. And hope in the Christian Tradition always referred to Eternal Life. But that doesn't mean that we can forget our earthly existence and forget about everyday life because we're destined for eternal life. That does not mean that at all. Hope has to characterize not just by faith in eternal life, but also, you know, how we can get there? Also, the way we live here on earth? Life should be modelled on eternal life, but very rarely on terminology.

Talking about hope there's a French thinker called Shal Biggie. Shal Biggie you know, says that hope is like a little sister in the middle of her two big sisters. The big sisters are Faith and Charity and the little sister holds her two sisters by the hand, but she is really the most important one. I think if we reflect on the relationship between hope on the one hand, and faith and charity on the other, I think there is a tremendous amount to what Biggie says. So, this Jubilee, brothers and sisters, is to be based on Hope.

So as soon as we have the Hymn for the Jubilee we can listen to it on our website and it is translated into four languages. Then, as soon as we got the motto we all designed the logo and the logo you can find on the website. Basically, it is a Cross with an anchor underneath, and people are going towards the Cross, signifying the earthly pilgrimage towards Christ, while he comes towards us.

I think it is useful to remember that in the early Church, in the absence of churches, it was very often just a Cross, just to think of a Cross, because most of the early churches abroad couldn't be decorated with mosaics and all the things that came later. But that Cross stood outside the church with all it signified. Then the Liturgy was being celebrated in the presence of

the Coming of Christ and also a manifestation of the coming of Christ. I think that's very, very important considering our journey towards Christ as Pilgrims of Hope, because our life is based on Christian life and it is very much of a pilgrimage. We are going towards Christ as he moves towards us in human history.

So, this is what the Lord wants to signify by the jubilee for religious people. You are free to use the logo in your religious works, and your pastoral works, but you will need to contact our Office and we will give you a graphic file you can use. Any commercial use of our logo will be questioned.

And so, once we had got that on the way, we began working on the jubilee to be celebrated both in Rome and in the local Churches. The next jubilee event, I think is on 9 May, the solemnity of the Ascension which is essential. It is traditionally held before the Jubilee Year opens: and it will be proclaimed in front of the Holy Door of St. Peter's, when the people bow: the event is called the proclamation of the Bull of Induction of the Jubilee. We will have more precise information on the actual celebration of the Jubilee both in Rome and in the Local Churches.

Obviously, we began organizing the jubilee both at the level of Rome and the level of the universal churches. On the Rome level, in strict contact with the Italian Government, with the Lazio Region, in which the City of Rome is situated, we were talking about the preparation of the people: also, some information that has to be respected, because all this has to be finalized. We're talking about the equipment of people: Maybe some 32 million people will come to Rome for the Jubilee. so, you can imagine the complexity. So, areas have to be reserved for the celebrations because we have a very limited time and all we can do is trust. And many more people are expected than those who came for the Year 2000. We are more conscious of the safety requirements. In St. Peter's Square I think, there will be about forty-five thousand people. The Basilica can contain from five to seven thousand people.

So, the Jubilee will need public spaces, public areas, especially for the so-called Technical World Youth Day. The Jubilee of Youth will be very, very particular indeed. We are working

with the Italian Government, to find a suitable area for this Day.

The jubilee will be a very, very big event in Rome, but it's not just going to be a bigger thing in Rome, it will also be celebrated in all the Dioceses. And, you know, our Office, meeting today on the Youth Day. The opening of the Jubilee in all the churches, after the one on 24 December, will be some days later in the diocese. Now about the Jubilee Indulgences; obviously the poorer people will not be able to come, but it will be a little different in the dioceses.

What is the Scope of the Jubilee?

I think Christians are very conscious of the universal call to holiness. I think that we are poorly informed about religious ideas, although we are conscious that we're all called to be holy, and I think the Jubilee is the manifestation of this. I'll put it like this. Maybe you are familiar with the political term in the New Testament, *Kairos*, the Greek language's term to define time. *Kairos* is the passing of minutes, hours, days, weeks, months. Now *Kairos* is a completely different thing. *Kairos* is time, but from a qualitative point of view. I think this is one of the most beautiful texts in the New Testament. It is the so-called stumbling block to the Hebrews, and there we see the essence of *Kairos*, the essence of this time, which is dear to God. You know that in many ways and in different ways, and in times past, God spoke to us through the prophets. In these days, these days are our days, he has spoken to us through the Person of his Beloved Son. Now you can say on the basis of this, that all the time which runs between the incarnation and the Second Coming of Christ at the end of a time is *Kairos*. It's about *Kairos*, it causes time, it causes time for mankind. The time we are to decide. In this time which we have called Christ's time, or to reject them, because it's not that way, not that way so you can see that all of Christian life is a *Kairos*, but we are human beings, and our nature is rhythmic. We like rhythms, and we respond to rhythms. We have a very acute sense of it passing, for example of the seasons. The seasons are not the same. We read its passage from a winter to spring, and from spring to summer. Our life is very much a succession of peaks and droughts, ups and downs. And we are very well used to this. So, it is with the life of

the Church: not every Sunday is Ordinary Time; not every Sunday is Easter Sunday.

We like rhythm and this also touches the religious aspect of our life and so it is with Jubilee. Every 25 years we have a whole year, not because we are holy every 25 years, but because we delight in essential things, and this is the year in which we want to make a special effort and see we are called to grow in holiness and called to help others to grow in holiness as religious and priests. Also, religious and also women religious have a role to play, which I consider to be unique; uniting the role of women religious in evangelization. A lot of people are talking about the evangelization which is similar to *propaganda fide*, and I am not talking about being just for show, as some people would say the new evangelization is, in a country like Italy, where the place of faith is ancient. But the churches are the same obviously. The religious have a tremendous role to play, because they can touch the heart of people more than priests or maybe male religious people are doing. And I think this is a resource, which really has to be brought into the open and the warmth of the religious. As Msgr. Rino Fisichella, prefect for 12 years and second to none in evangelization, says they will be able to emerge during the Jubilee Year, because people are willing to listen to women religious, and the way they are willing to engage is similar. Maybe it's got to do with a maternal sense, I don't know. But it's a fact of life. When I am in a parish, as a parish priest, most these very, very well indeed.

So, the jubilee is about *Kairos*. It's about getting back to the basics, it's about dusting down. It's about becoming better sons and daughters of both the Churches under the Blessed Lord. And I believe it's an occasion in which we can renew the Church, the face of the Church, ourselves. And we mustn't forget that the beauty of the Church, and the Church is a very, very beautiful institution because she is an emanation of the Blessed Trinity. The beauty of the Church depends a lot on us, because sinful life you know, and we keep on sinning, and if we do not seek forgiveness, means destruction. We ran down the face of the Church earlier, and we know all of us engaged pretty often in criticizing the Pope, the Bishops, our brothers and sisters, religious. We all have to remember

that we always have a solution in our own hands, because better times begin with us. Better times begin with our own personal conversion. And I think the jubilee is all about this and we need to do a lot more. It's a lot about this, about forgiveness, God's forgiveness to family and all our lives.

So, we can continue to reconcile with God and be reconciled to each other. And we know, we all know, that very often in religious communities, both male and female dynamics appear and the dynamics of unforgiveness appear. People are not capable of forgiving and what's worse very often we engage in forms of behaviour which prevent another person's return, which prevents them from being forgiven. And this concerns all of us. I think the Jubilee of 2025 is an occasion in which we are all called to briefly, because doing it for too long is not positive, and profoundly examine our conscience. Briefly and profoundly, when profound, less critical. There's no point in engaging in the examination of conscience in last month, that doesn't get you anywhere, briefly and profoundly. And I'll just conclude with saying something else.

We are very, very busy organizing, trying to organize the City of Rome, and trying to reserve the related necessities for the Universal Church, which involve the Jubilee of 2025. But the jubilee is beginning. It's a beginning because 2033 we will celebrate the two thousandth Anniversary of the Redemption. Pope Pius XI in 1933 convened a special Holy Year, an Extraordinary Holy Year for the 1900's Anniversary of the Redemption. It's very difficult to think, inconceivable almost, that the Pope in 2033, will do something similar, because it is 2000 years. It will be 2000 years which mark the precise date for it is coincidental that He died in 33.

Also, before the world, we are going to see what this means, what these 2000 years have been for mankind and for us, and what they mean for the future of mankind? We are going to have to represent Christ to ourselves and to the world. Now, you're here because you are occupying managerial positions in Religious Orders. The Africans are thinking about this, because it, too, is an important occasion to do this. And we have from 2025 to 2032 to think about this,

about what we are going to do. Because for the Religious Orders it is going to be another extremely important occasion. Not just for us as Christians, but also for humanity. So, it would be wonderful, if the plans which you have for your Order. Could in a certain way be guided by this: be guided by the consciousness of this. Do you know, what do you want to do for the Lord in 2033? So, we have to think certainly by 2025. But we have to look beyond this very, very important celebration, which is on the horizon. Can I just say something about this as I said earlier? The Jubilee, obviously, it's a Catholic thing, it's a very catholic concept.

As far as I know, and I come from the world of Protestantism. Protestantism doesn't really have something equivalent to the Orthodox, but that does not mean that other Christians and people who do not believe at all, exclude the Jubilee, because the Jubilee has always been a religious event. It's also a cultural event. And we are organizing events for 2025.

Also, this year for the second part of this year, there will be cultural events, not just for believers, but also for people of other faiths or no faith at all. Last year in the month of October, we had an offer to do some work. And so, we were lucky enough to be able to hold a conference in Spain where there were three paintings by El Greco with a very, very strong Christological reference. We have been brought three paintings by El Greco from Spain, and we

situated them in the visual part of the Church of Sant' Agnese in Agone in Piazza Navona.

We were astounded at the result of this special exhibition, with free entry, don't have to pay. And in the space of a month 300,000 people visited the church, and their testimonies are just incredible; particularly about the painting by El Greco.

The face of Christ carrying the Cross, and the face of Christ is incredible. But also, the Cross is incredible because El Greco, in that painting wanted to signify, that to Christ the Cross was light, it was something he wanted to carry. And the testimony we have shown that believers and non-believers alike were just completely taken aback. by what El Greco depicted. We are going to do more things of this kind during the Jubilee. And there also becomes of this kind. So, if you have a shortage in Rome, or elsewhere, please don't forget this cultural dimension. Because culture is a wonderful creation. It obviously allows us how to enter into contact with people. Both to share our ways, or not share our ways, or there's no way. Culture is very, very important for us. And the dimension of the Jubilee is among the most important.

Thank you for your attention. If you want to ask me any questions about the jubilee or anything else, please feel free.

