

Salvatore Fari CM

**“Hands for Bread”**  
Signs of hope for the poor



 **Congregazione della Missione**  
Ufficio di Comunicazione

  
**400 years**  
Congregation of the Mission  
of Saint Vincent de Paul

**Towards the Jubilee 2025/1**

## Introduction

After the great Jubilee of the year 2000, which with John Paul II brought the Church into the third millennium of her history, we have experienced the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (December 8, 2015 - November 20, 2016), desired by Pope Francis, which has allowed us to rediscover the power and tenderness of the merciful love of the Father, so as to be witnesses of it in our turn. More recently, Pope Bergoglio himself, on February 11, 2022, wrote a letter to Monsignor Rino Fisichella, President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization, entrusting to him the responsibility of "finding the right way so that the Holy Year (2025 Jubilee) can be prepared and celebrated with intense faith, lively hope and active charity."

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic, which "has changed our way of life, has at times raised doubts, fear and bewilderment in our souls," can be overcome, Francis writes, "to the extent that we act with active solidarity," keeping the torch of hope burning. "The upcoming Jubilee - the Pope continues - can greatly help to restore a climate of hope and trust, as a sign of a new rebirth that we all perceive as urgent." So here is the motto: *Pilgrims of Hope*. "All this will be possible if we are able to recover a sense of universal fraternity, if we do not close our eyes to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a humanly dignified way. I am thinking especially of the many refugees who are forced to leave their lands. May the voices of the poor be heard in this time of preparation for the Jubilee which, according to the biblical mandate, restores to everyone access to the fruits of the earth."

After the year of 2023, dedicated to reflection on the documents and the study of the fruits of the Second Vatican Council, 2024 is the year of prayer, a *great "symphony" of prayer that translates into solidarity and sharing of daily bread*, thus making *Our Father* the program of our life.

In 2025 the Vincentian Missionaries will also celebrate the fourth centenary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission. For this goal we are preparing with prayer and commitment to the mission to revitalize the three dimensions of our Vincentian spirituality, as indicated to us by the Superior General, Fr. Tomaž Mavrič, who writes: "*the prophetic dimension*, which from the grace of the Spirit of God who is 'above us', comes to listening to the cry of the poor and availability for attention; the *synodal dimension* that sees the overcoming of individualism for a community journey and action; the *missionary dimension* whose authenticity comes from a deep spirituality, intense communion, closeness and friendship with Jesus."

For everyone, 2025 is "a year of the Lord's grace, and we will thank God for the grace granted to all the faithful through the Jubilee, and we will try to prepare ourselves well to acquire it" (SVit XI, 333). A path, marked by stages, towards the Holy Year. A path to walk together, exercising ourselves to recover the awareness of being all *sinodoi*, companions on the journey, that is to say, *synodal*.

## Hope does not disappoint

"*Spes non confundit*", "hope does not disappoint". With these words of the Apostle Paul (*Rom* 5:5), Pope Francis, on May 9, 2024, presented the Bull announcing the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025, which is intended to be an opportunity for everyone, but in particular for those inhabited by skepticism and pessimism, to revive hope sustained by God-love. Hope - Pope Francis writes - is born of love and is founded on the love that flows from the Heart of Jesus pierced on the Cross.

A virtue closely related to hope is *patience*. In a social context where haste has become a constant, where space and time are supplanted by the "here and now", we are called to rediscover patience understood as the ability to wait with confidence without forgetting the patience that God has with us.

From this intertwining of hope and patience it is clear how the Christian life is *a journey in search of the meaning of life*; it is not by chance that *the pilgrimage* expresses a fundamental element of every Jubilee event.

The 2025 Ordinary Jubilee will begin on December 24, 2024 with the opening of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. It will end on January 6, 2026 and will lead the way to another fundamental anniversary for all Christians: the two thousandth anniversary of the Redemption accomplished through the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus will be celebrated in 2033.

The Pope asks all Christians to be tangible signs of hope for those living in difficult situations: *prisoners* who, deprived of their freedom, experience every day, in addition to the harshness of imprisonment, emotional emptiness, imposed restrictions and, in not a few cases, disrespect; the *sick*, who are at home or in hospital; *young people*, who often see their dreams crumble; *migrants*, who leave their lands in search of a better life for themselves and their families; the *exiled, refugees, and fugitives*, who are forced by controversial international events to flee to avoid war, violence and discrimination; the *elderly*, who often experience loneliness and a sense of abandonment; the billions of *poor*, who often lack the necessities of life.

Pope Francis had already taken up the theme of hope in 2019, writing the message for the third World Day of the Poor entitled: "The hope of the poor will never be disappointed" (*Ps* 9:19). The Lord God listens, intervenes, protects, defends, redeems, saves, does not forget the cry of the poor whose hope defies the various conditions of death, because they know they are particularly loved by God and this love overcomes suffering and exclusion. The poor - continues the Pontiff - is he who "trusts in the Lord", because he has the certainty of never being abandoned, he is the man of trust!

St. Vincent de Paul was convinced of this when he told the Daughters of Charity that "hope produces trust.... We must believe that God wants to give us all the graces necessary to save us. Therefore, whoever does not believe that God takes care of our salvation through the ways that his Providence considers suitable for us, offends him. Not to be firm in hope and not to believe that he takes care of our eternal salvation is a distrust that displeases him. Hope consists, then, in expecting from the divine goodness the fulfillment of the promises he has made to us. There is, then, confidence in Providence. Trust and hope are almost the same thing. To trust in Providence means to hope that God will take care of those who serve him, as a bridegroom takes care of his bride and a father takes care of his son. God takes care of us in the same way, or rather, much more" (*SVit* X, 502-503).

## **Hands for Bread**

The fourth centenary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission is, not only for the Missionaries but for the whole Church, an opportunity for all believers to rekindle the awareness of being a sign of hope for the poor. Yes, that's right! We are all a sign of hope for the poor, we are all an extension of God's action, we are all called to perform "divine actions."

I propose to you a painting on canvas. "*Hands for Bread*", by the Bosnian artist who fled the siege of Sarajevo during the Balkan war in the 1990s, Safet Zec. The artist depicts arms and hands desperately stretched out to the point of exhaustion to ask for help, justice, freedom, mercy. It is around bread that we rediscover ourselves as brothers, humanity that lives, strives, hopes, rejoices.

In these hands we contemplate the poor who seek bread... bread of justice, of work, of love. We also contemplate our hands, our arms whose weariness, together with the sweat of our brow, testifies to our love for God (cf. *SVit* XI, 40).

In the bread we also contemplate the work of the poor: "We live from the inheritance of Jesus Christ and thanks to the sweat of the poor. When we go to the refectory we must always ask ourselves: "Have

I earned the food I am about to eat? I am often assailed by this thought that confuses me: "Wretched man, have you earned the bread you are eating? That bread comes from the work of the poor! If we do not earn it as they do, let us at least pray for their needs. The poor feed us. Let us pray to God for them, and let not a day pass without our offering them to the Lord, that he may give them the grace to make good use of their sufferings" (*SVit XI*, 201).

The time has probably come for a *cultural revolution* that begins by sharing what we are and what we have for the advent of a new fraternity.

### **Mercy, the embrace to begin anew**

Pope Francis, in the Bull announcing the Holy Year 2025, recalled an important element in the celebration of the Jubilee: the plenary indulgence that allows us to discover how boundless God's mercy is. "Precisely the sacrament of Penance represents for all of us a great opportunity to heal the heart, embrace ourselves, get up and start again. Forgiven we are called to forgive, to allow others also to experience the embrace and to start over."

God's mercy is the wonderful news, it is the heart of the Vincentian mission. The parable of the Good Samaritan shows us how the oil (*elaion*) with which he anointed the wounds, according to a Greek pun, contained God's compassion (*eleos*). In the man who fell among the bandits I see the peasant of Gannes who fell into the sin that held him prisoner to himself, and in the Good Samaritan I see St. Vincent and all believers pouring on every man and woman the oil of consolation and the wine of hope, through care and mercy.

Preparation for the Jubilee should be animated by the desire to approach *with full confidence before the throne of grace, to receive mercy and find grace and to be helped in time of need* (*Heb 4:16*) to experience the tenderness of an embrace.

May love and mercy be for everyone *a path that leads from the heart to the hands*.

**Rome, July 9, 2024**

Liturgical memorial

St. Francis Regis Clet