

SUNDAY PLUS

Hold on to hope

“Hope loves what will be”

By Paul Higginson

Hope Francis is fond of quoting the poem by French writer Charles Peguy who describes Faith, Hope and Charity as three sisters who walk together. Although Hope is the little sister, she leads the others and makes them all walk together: “Because Faith only sees what exists. And Charity only loves what exists. But Hope loves what will be.”

In today's Gospel Elizabeth's baby leaps with joy in her womb when Mary arrives at her home. The future John the Baptist is filled with the joyful hope of what will be. Take time today to contemplate the hope that we all place in that tiny baby, born into poverty, far from home, sharing a stable with farmyard animals.

God enters our world, not as a distant heavenly ruler but as a weak and vulnerable infant. He embraces the messy reality of our world – a declaration of hope as well as love.



As Mary gazed at her new baby, her heart filled with Faith and Charity, she must also have recognised the little sister Hope “who loves what will be”. Jesus was to become the hope of the world, the Saviour, our Emmanuel. Nothing will ever be the same again. From now on we will glimpse Christ in everyone and everything if we have eyes to see and ears to hear. Spend time with Mary at the crib this Christmas as we prepare for the Jubilee Year of Hope and let the child Jesus stir your soul with the promise of new life with him.

Paul Higginson is a retired teacher and author of *Doing Christianity: How religion is about what you do, not what you believe.*

We're so close...

By Natasha Pritchard

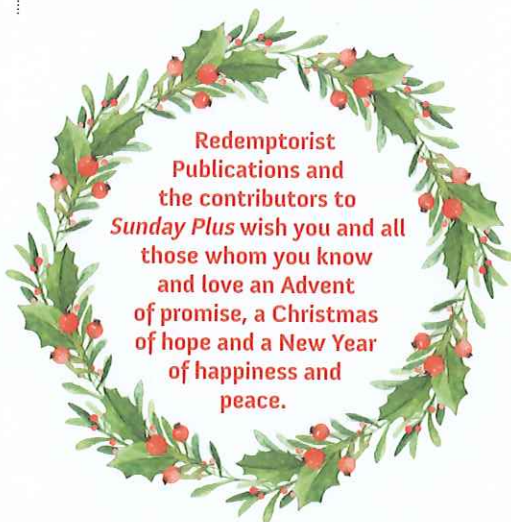
Hidden away in darkness, the baby in Elizabeth's womb recognises the light outside. He leaps in joyful acknowledgement of the Lord, completely alert to his presence. This is how close we are to encountering Jesus and yet we are still hidden away, awaiting the light of Christmas Day. We are not yet experiencing the joy of the baby in the womb, but rather the anticipation of Mary and Elizabeth.

Would we leap for joy if we met Christ today? In the midst of our worries about shopping to be done, presents to be wrapped and meals to be prepared, we might not notice him. It's not too late to experience the reverence and awe of the Advent season, as we prepare for the joy of Christmas. Let us acknowledge with joy the tiny bundle of light which will soon enter the darkness of our world.

Natasha Pritchard has worked in Catholic hospital chaplaincy, youth ministry and is now Area Support Chaplain at Methodist Homes.

Don't let anyone rob you of hope.

Pope Francis



Loving Lord, may this Christmas be a time of hope for everyone I know and love, and also for people whom I may never meet but are equally precious to you. ✝ Amen.

Jubilee 2025

24 December: Opening of the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica

All the four papal basilicas in Rome have a Holy Door which is bricked up from the inside and only opened during Jubilee years. On the first day of the Holy Year, the Pope strikes the brick wall with a hammer and then opens the door to allow pilgrims to enter. He will also close the door at the end of the Jubilee Year. The tradition of the opening and closing of the Holy Door, which represents Jesus, the Good Shepherd and gate of the sheepfold, can be traced back as far as the fifteenth century.

In 2015, Pope Francis allowed for a Holy Door in every diocese and prison globally, thus allowing access to people who couldn't travel to Rome.

The Jubilee of Hope will begin in December 2024 when Pope Francis opens the Holy Door in St Peter's Basilica, closing the doors and the Jubilee on the feast of the Epiphany in 2026.

Pope Francis



Today: Micah 5:1-4 Hebrews 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45	Monday: Malachi 3: 1-4. 23-24 Luke 1: 57-66	Tuesday: 2 Samuel 7:1-5. 8-12, 14, 16 Luke 1:67-79	Wednesday: Vigil Mass: Isaiah 62:1-5 Acts 13:16-17. 22-25 Matthew 1:1-25	Mass During the Night: Dawn Mass: Isaiah 9:1-7 Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-14	Isaiah 62:11-12 Titus 3:4-7 Luke 2:15-20	Thursday: Acts 6:8-10; 7:54 - 8:1 Matthew 10:17-22	Friday: 1 John 1:1-4 John 20:1,2-8	Saturday: 1 John 1:5 - 2:2 Matthew 2:13-18	Next Sunday: 1 Samuel 1: 20-22, 24-28 1 John 3: 1-2, 21-24 Gospel: Luke 20:1-52
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