

# JUBILEE 2025

Pilgrims of Hope  
**Reflection Guide**

## INTRODUCTION

# “For all of us, may the Jubilee be an opportunity to be renewed in hope.”

- Pope Francis

This booklet will help you to reflect on the meaning of this special year, and how it calls us to reset, renew our faith, and commit to building a better world where all people may flourish.

Whether you are exploring this on your own, in a small group or with your parish, we hope the contents will deepen your faith and renew your hope. There are 4 sessions to explore, you can choose one or all of them. If you are planning to facilitate sessions for a group, you can find full details of how to do so in our leader's guide notes.

Thank you to our sister agency CAFOD for kindly allowing us to reproduce this Reflection Guide.



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## 1

### SESSION 1

# Jesus of the Jubilee

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'Jubilee'?

## THE BIBLICAL ORIGINS OF JUBILEE

2025 is a Year of Jubilee! The word 'Jubilee' comes from the Hebrew word for a ram's horn, which was blown to announce the start of a Jubilee Year in the Bible.

In the Old Testament, the Jubilee Year was a time of renewal and celebration. Debts were cancelled, people could rest, and because crops weren't planted even the land was able to rest.

It was also a time of freedom: prisoners and slaves were freed, and land was given to those who didn't have any. It was known as the year of the Lord's favour.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
 because he has anointed me  
 to proclaim good news to the poor.  
 He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
 and recovering of sight to the blind,  
 to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*

Jesus makes it clear that his mission is to bring the justice and freedom of the Jubilee. Inspired by his example, we can share in his mission to create a world of justice, peace and love.

Now we celebrate a Jubilee every 25 years. It's still a very special, holy year of forgiveness and mercy, a time to reset, to renew our relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation.

Pope Francis has called this Jubilee Year ‘Pilgrims of Hope’. It is an invitation to renew our hope, a hope which comes from knowing that God loves each one of us, whoever we are.

Pope Francis says: “Pilgrimage is of course a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Setting out on a journey is traditionally associated with our human quest for meaning in life.”

Even if we can’t travel far away, the Jubilee Year will still be a journey for all of us – a journey of hope. Pope Francis asks us to be signs of hope for others, by putting Catholic Social Teaching into action through caring for our common home and supporting our sisters and brothers who are experiencing war, hunger or poverty.

We know that the world is facing many of these challenges – but you are one of millions of people who are joining together in the Jubilee Year to bring the light of hope and the message of God’s love to every part of the world!

We can all be Pilgrims of Hope, so let’s start our journey right now! Pope Francis says: “By our actions, our words, the decisions we make each day, our patient efforts to sow seeds of beauty and kindness wherever we find ourselves, we want to sing of hope... and reawaken in every heart the joy and courage to embrace life to the full.”

### READER 1:

Luke 4:16-21

Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”*

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today, this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

*Pause for a moment of quiet reflection.*

### JUBILEE ICON

An icon is a visual aid for reflection and discernment, inspiring prayer and devotion.

Our sister agency CAFOD in England and Wales commissioned a Jubilee icon, depicting Luke 4:16-21, from Mulugeta Araya. He is an artist and an engineer who studied at St Mary’s College, Wukro in Ethiopia, which is supported by CAFOD.

St Mary’s offers vocational training for young people in agriculture, IT and accounting, as well as the arts. The college also takes part in programmes to improve food security, the supply of water and emergency response in the area.

Take some time now to look at the icon, below, while the gospel is read again. You could consider the following questions:

- > What do you notice?
- > What draws you in?
- > Does the icon help you to see the story of the Gospel in a different way?

*Share one thing with the group which strikes you about the icon.*



**The icon portrays Jesus faithfully in the Northern Ethiopian tradition and is full of meaning:**

- 1 The crowd gathered to listen to Jesus includes men, women and children. Old and young. Their body language shows they are engaged with the Word of God. Their eyes are fixed on Jesus. The people are hungry for this truth.
- 2 Jesus looks out into the world. His gaze encompasses all people, not just this crowd, and his teaching is for all time.
- 3 The woman with a stick at the front shows Jesus' concern for those who are often overlooked in our society, such as the elderly, the vulnerable and those living with a disability.
- 4 The golden halo shows that Jesus is divine and the Son of God.
- 5 Jesus' right hand is raised to show he is teaching.
- 6 This man holds a leather bag used to carry and protect the Holy Bible in Ethiopia.
- 7 The words of the Scripture are written in Ge'ez, an Ethiopian liturgical language.
- 8 The rainbow is a symbol of hope and of God's covenant with all people bridging the Old and New Testaments, and which will lead to liberation.
- 9 The brick wall shows the separation between God's house – the Synagogue and the outside world. Jesus has come into an open space where the crowds can gather together on equal terms. Here the Good News and the Jubilee liberation are for the whole world.

## ICON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- > Does the knowledge of the artist's intentions change anything about how you view the icon?
- > Do you notice anything new?
- > What thoughts or feelings does the icon bring up for you about Jubilee?

*Your leader may invite you to share your thoughts with the group.*

## PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Pope Francis has declared that the theme for this Jubilee Year will be 'Pilgrims of Hope'. Let's think a little bit more about what this means.

The gift of hope is greatly needed in our world, where we are faced daily with the challenges of poverty, injustice, violence and the destruction of the environment. Hope is transformative. It widens our vision and fills our hearts, inspires our imagination and creativity, strengthens our resolve and helps us to live differently.

But what does it mean to be a pilgrim? The difference between a pilgrim and a traveller is openness to God. A pilgrim seeks God not just in their ultimate destination but in all that they encounter along the way. So, in this Jubilee Year, we are called to our own journey – a journey in which we become "tangible signs of hope for those of our brothers and sisters who experience hardships of any kind" (Spes non confundit, #10).

## SIGNS OF HOPE

Having reflected on the biblical origins of Jubilee, Christ's mission on earth, and about what it means for us today, let's consider and write down how we can be a pilgrim of hope in our homes, our communities and within the wider world in this Jubilee Year.

- > How will you be a pilgrim of hope?
- > How will you walk alongside people experiencing poverty?
- > How will you take care of the earth and each other?

## CLOSING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, on whom the Spirit rests,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, bringer of Good News,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, liberator of captives and all who are oppressed,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, restorer of sight,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, proclaimer of the year of the Lord's favour,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, in whom the Scripture was fulfilled,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

**Lead us all to be signs of your hope in our world.  
 Amen.**



People taking part in a pilgrimage near Ampleforth Abbey, York.

## 2

### SESSION 2

# Jesus of good news

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

What good news have you heard or thought about recently?

**Leader:** Sharing good news is something we all like to do. As Christians, we are called to share the gospel, the good news of Christ Jesus. Maybe your faith journey began with a powerful encounter with Jesus which transformed your life. Or perhaps the Lord's presence has been a constant for you, a source of quiet strength, guidance and comfort. Either way, sharing the story of Jesus and the new life he brings is a vital part of our Christian mission.

Today we will be focusing on Jesus' words proclaiming the good news. Luke tells us he spoke these words right at the start of his ministry at the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. Reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, Jesus said:

**Reader 1:** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."

**Reader 2:** The good news that Jesus brings is good news for each of us. A chance to recognise our own poverty, need for God and dependence on his goodness. However, Jesus' teachings and actions make it clear that the good news is not simply about our spiritual relationship, but a radical call for transformation in our world so it reflects the justice, healing and peace of God's kingdom.

**Reader 3:** We know we live in an unequal world. The world's richest 1% own 43% of all global financial assets<sup>1</sup> and emit as much carbon pollution as the poorest two-thirds of humanity<sup>2</sup>. Despite there being enough food in the world to feed everyone, approximately 735 million people worldwide face hunger daily<sup>3</sup>.

**Leader:** Yet there is also good news. The Spirit is inspiring individuals and communities around the world to come together to build a world where all can flourish.



## Vincent's story

Vincent and his wife Josephine live in Rwanda. When their small piece of land was not harvesting very much, the couple received seeds, tools and training to help them grow more food to eat. After the training they were able to grow extra crops to sell and save some money.

Vincent now teaches in demonstration plots which help other farmers in the community to learn agricultural skills. He is also the leader of the community savings and loans group, encouraging and helping other farmers to save money so that the whole community can benefit.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- > The word gospel means good news. Who is it that the gospel is good news for and why?
- > Have you heard of or met people whose lives and actions reflect the priorities of Jesus?
- > How does the good news challenge us or offer us hope?
- > How can we share the good news with others?

*Your leader may invite you to share your thoughts with the group.*

### Leader:

Loving Lord,  
 May we be still and know you are God.  
 Grant us the grace to rest in your presence,  
 ready to receive the good news of Jesus  
 and reflect on his call for our lives.  
 Amen.

*There will be some time now for silent prayer. Distractions are normal but try to let these go and gently bring yourself back to the still centre of God's love.*

### CLOSING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, on whom the Spirit rests,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, bringer of Good News,  
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Christ Jesus, liberator of captives and all who are oppressed,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, restorer of sight,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, proclaimer of the year of the Lord's favour,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, in whom the Scripture was fulfilled,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

**Lead us all to be signs of your hope in our world.  
 Amen.**

## 3

## SESSION 3

## Jesus the Liberator

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

What does freedom mean to you?

**Reader 1:** “He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.”

## CHAINS OF OPPRESSION

Who are the captives and the overburdened in our world today?

*While you discuss the question above, write some of the examples on strips of paper and add them together to make a paper chain. These chains serve as symbols of oppression in our world.*

**Leader:** Debt is one way in which people can be trapped, unable to free themselves from the burden laid upon them by their lenders. But in Leviticus, it is laid out that in the Jubilee Year debts should be released and property returned to its original owner (Leviticus 25:28). This was a recognition that over time, wealth could become concentrated in the hands of a small minority, and a call for society to be rebalanced every 50 years. Debts were to be cancelled, equality restored and those who had been trapped in poverty would be freed and could have a fresh start.

Ahead of Jubilee 2025, Pope Francis called for richer countries to cancel the debts of poorer nations who are struggling with immense debt burdens, saying: “More than a question of generosity, this is a matter of justice.”

## DEBT JUSTICE

The number of low-income countries in debt crisis has more than doubled since 2015 to over 50. About 3.3 billion people now live in countries where debt interest payments are greater than expenditure on health or education.



## Sharon's story

When Sharon went into labour, she couldn't feel her legs. She had to be carried from her home to the community's broken-down clinic. A mattress was dragged behind her and dropped on the floor. That's where she would give birth. Her dignity was destroyed; her safety compromised.

“When delivering, I feared I would die. There was no floor in the clinic, just sand everywhere and some tarpaulin on the ground.”

It was almost pitch black. There was no pain relief, no clean water, no privacy. Just a rising sense of fear of what was to come.

“Then, one hour later, my baby stopped breathing, and I feared my child would die.”

In the places SCIAF works, like Zambia, millions of people do not have enough food, water or adequate shelter to live dignified lives. Schools do not have enough teachers; clinics do not have enough safe equipment.

Yet despite this deep poverty, poor countries like Zambia are paying back enormous debts to some of the richest groups in the world. This money should be spent on improving people's lives – one improving health clinics, schools, and public services – but is instead lining the pockets of bankers, hedge fund managers and greedy governments.

Debt is stealing lives, and robbing children of their futures. Debt is an injustice that must be cancelled.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- > Can you think of any other Scripture passages which mention setting people free?
- > Can you think of any more examples of where you feel trapped or see others trapped in our world? > What situations of injustice do we turn a blind eye to?
- > How does the Good News set us free? What does it free us from?
- > Are there any ways we can change or work so that more people can be free, especially in the Jubilee Year?

## CHAINS OF OPPRESSION

*While you discuss the questions above, add any additional examples of injustice you come up with to your paper chain.*

## PENITENTIAL RITE

**Leader:** We have listened and considered how debt can keep countries and their people trapped in poverty. We have thought about other situations of injustice in our world, which keep us, and our sisters and brothers throughout the world, captive. We have thought about the times when we might have turned a blind eye to something we knew was wrong, as well as the times when we might have been afraid to speak out for what is right. Let us now turn to God in search of forgiveness and freedom.

Lord, you were sent to bring good news to the poor.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Christ, you came to bring freedom to all people.

**Christ, have mercy.**

Lord, you are our hope and salvation.

**Lord, have mercy.**

## BREAKING THE CHAINS

*We now invite you to break a link of the chains that we made earlier, as a sign of the liberation that we seek for ourselves and for others. If you are reflecting on your own, you could create the chain and then, as an act of commitment, break one of the chain's links each day.*

*As part of the Jubilee Year, we all hope for and try to work towards this liberation, in the knowledge that Jesus promised freedom for all.*

**Leader:** We are called throughout the Jubilee Year to be tangible signs of hope in our world. We know that our actions can make a difference. Many people were inspired by the Jubilee in the year 2000 to come together and call for debt cancellation. As a result of the debt cancelled – because of this campaign – Uganda had \$1bn (£715m) worth of debt relief and used it to double the number of children able to go to primary school.<sup>4</sup>

Raising our voices to call for change did make a difference. But the same structural causes remain in place. That is why we need action again now. As we leave this reflection session today, let us commit to acting in our own way to free others and ourselves from the oppression that so many face.

We are campaigning on the vital issue of debt justice as part of the Jubilee Year. **See [sciaf.org.uk/debt](http://sciaf.org.uk/debt) for ways for you and your parish or community to get involved.**

## CLOSING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, on whom the Spirit rests,

**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

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Christ Jesus, proclaimer of the year of the Lord's favour,

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**Lead us all to be signs of your hope in our world.**

**Amen.**

## 4

## SESSION 4

# Jesus Lord of Creation

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

- > What brings you joy when you contemplate nature?
- > Are there places or aspects of the created world that draw you closer to God? Why?

**Leader:** The Bible begins with a wonderful picture of abundance as God declares all creation 'good'. Everything that follows in the scriptures is set in the context of the goodness of creation and our call to care for our common home.

**Reader 1:** So, it's no surprise that care for creation has been a feature of the Jubilee Year since its Old Testament origins. When Jesus stood up in the Synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth and proclaimed the year of the Lord's favour, his listeners would have thought at once of the Jubilee Law in the book of Leviticus, where it is written:

**Reader 2:** "And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you... in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines." (Leviticus 25:10-11)

**Reader 3:** This extended Sabbath not only let God's people rest from their usual labour but also allowed the land to heal and repair itself. Today that means promoting sustainable farming practices, enhancing biodiversity and allowing soil regeneration.

**Reader 1:** We can see the cost of our broken relationship with creation in the environmental crisis that we now face: climate change, pollution, deforestation, species extinction and biodiversity loss. People across the planet are already experiencing the effects of the climate emergency, from more frequent and severe storms and floods to historic droughts and food crises. Communities that have contributed the least to causing the crisis are hit hardest by these changes.



## Felicien and Silvie's story

Felicien and Silvie are part of the Batwa indigenous group, living in rural Rwanda. They live in extreme poverty, making only small amounts of money selling hand-made pottery.

"When it comes to food, or life in general, we find ourselves in a challenging situation which not only affects us, but also casts a shadow over the future of our children.

Due to heavy rain, made more common and severe due to climate change, their house has been damaged heavily too.

"Our current situation is a critical challenge. We fear that the house could collapse while one of our children is sleeping."

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- > In our busy world, what does the Jubilee Year focus on rest for the people and land have to teach us today?
- > What helps you to be hopeful when you think about the global issue of the environmental crisis?
- > What positive, practical steps can we take by ourselves or as a community to care for our common home? How can we be tangible signs of hope?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer, outside if possible, listening for God in nature. Be attentive to the sights and sounds around you. If something stands out, stop and take some time to notice the details of this.*

*Ask God to make you aware of the sacredness of all living things. Give thanks for the abundance and beauty of the world.*

What might God be saying to you, or calling you to, through his presence in creation?

## SIGNS OF HOPE

At the end of our first gathering we invited you think about how you can be a pilgrim of hope in this Jubilee Year. Is there anything you want to deepen, change or add to what you wrote down as a result of your reflection and prayer? If so, add it now

## CLOSING PRAYER

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**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

Christ Jesus, in whom the Scripture was fulfilled,  
**Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope.**

**Lead us all to be signs of your hope in our world.  
Amen.**

## References

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