

From the Desk of Fr. Jerry

January 5, 2025

Dear Friends,

On Christmas Eve Pope Francis opened the holy door at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and marked the official start of Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope. In January 2021, as the world struggled to return to some kind of normalcy after the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pope Francis announced that he had chosen "Pilgrims of Hope" as the theme for the Holy Year.

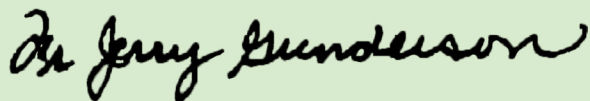
"We must fan the flame of hope that has been given to us and help everyone gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart, and farsighted vision," the pope wrote in a letter entrusting the organization of the jubilee to the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization. The pope prayed that the Holy Year would be marked by "deep faith, lively hope and active charity."

The holy year of jubilee is a time of pilgrimage, prayer, repentance and acts of mercy, based upon the Old Testament tradition of a jubilee year of rest, forgiveness, and renewal. Holy years are also a time when Catholics make pilgrimages to designated churches and shrines, recite special prayers, go to confession, and receive communion. Unlike in previous jubilee years the only holy doors that will be opened will be in Rome: St Peter's Basilica, St. John Lateran, St Mary Major and St. Paul outside the Walls. However, for people who cannot travel to Italy on pilgrimage, the archdiocese has established 24 pilgrimage sites at local parishes in each vicariate.

From January 15-25 I will accompany to Rome a group of pilgrims who are members of Illinois Patrons of the Arts of the Vatican Museums. We will visit each of the designated churches in Rome. This group sponsors a variety of programs highlighting the close relationship between art and faith. Patrons also raise funds for the restoration work at the Vatican museums. I hope to also visit Castel Gandolfo where the Pope has a summer residence. Recently Pope Francis established Castel Gandolfo as a center to foster the implementation of "Laudato Si," his encyclical on the Care of the Earth. He named a Chicago priest, Fr. Manny Dorantes, to be the director. Fr. Manny is a friend I hope to have as tour guide.

While I am away from St. Patrick, Fr. Wilfred Bwezani Phiri will reside at the rectory, preside at Masses, hear confessions, and be available for sacramental and pastoral assistance. Fr. Wilfred is my priest friend from Zambia who is visiting the US. I will be able to spend time with him both before and after my trip. He has graciously agreed to take my place.

At the end of January, Fr Wilfred will speak at all the Masses on behalf of Friends of Chikwa Parish. I want him to share the story of all that the partnership between Chikwa and its friends has made possible.



Fr. Jerry Gunderson