

Jubilee of Loreto 2019- 2020



Called to fly high

Dear people of Loreto and pilgrims,

How can we fail to thank the Lord for the many gifts of this time: the visit of the Pope last March 25, the inscription in the General Roman Calendar of the optional memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loreto, so that on 10 December of each year, in every part of the world, the Memory of Our Lady of Loreto can be celebrated and, not least, the great gift of the Holy Year!

In fact, Pope Francis benevolently granted the Jubilee of Loreto on the centenary of the proclamation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Loreto, patron saint of all pilots. This is an event of the Holy Spirit for all the faithful, for those involved in the world of aviation, workers and passengers, and for those who will arrive on pilgrimage to the Holy House of Loreto from all over the world.

Let us open our hearts to the gift of this Jubilee!

Holy Year: Year of Grace

The word Jubilee originates from the Hebrew name *yobèl*, the horn of a ram that was played to announce the start of the Jewish Jubilee Year, and from this term derived the Latin *jubilaeum* to distinguish the Christian celebration. In addition, in the Latin language *jubilum* means joy: here then the Jubilee is a gift to be welcomed and to be lived in joy.

We thank Pope Francis for the great gift of the Holy Year from December 8, 2019, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, to December 10, 2020. The religious event, with the rite of opening the Holy Door to be presided over by His Eminence Card. Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State, is destined to promote holiness of life.

Be holy because I, the Lord, your God, am holy (Lv 19:2), a figurative expression that can sound like this: ***Take flight, do not be afraid, do not let the engine of your heart rust.***

This is the grace that Pope Francis invites us to ask for in the prayer composed for the Holy Year of Loreto: ***the grace of flying high with our spirit.*** And what does it mean to fly high if we do not respond, in the concreteness of daily life, to the call to holiness, as indicated to us by the Holy

Father himself in his apostolic exhortation *Gaudete et exsultate*?

Do not be afraid of holiness. It will take away none of your energy, vitality or joy. On the contrary, you will become to be what the Father had in mind when he created you, and you will be faithful to your deepest self.

To the extent that each Christian grows in holiness, he or she will bear greater fruit for our world. Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit.

*Holiness does not make you less human, since it is the encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace. For in the words of León Bloy, when all is said and done, "the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint". (cf. *Gaudete et exsultate*, 32-34)*

And again:

*Being holy is not a privilege for the few, as if someone had a large inheritance; in Baptism we all have an inheritance to be able to become saints. Holiness is a vocation for everyone. (Pope Francis, *Angelus*, Nov. 1, 2013).*

Flight: a metaphor for our life

The Holy House, carried by angels in flight according to ancient tradition, inspired the veteran aviators of the First World War to rely on Mary as their main patron saint. At that time, in fact, airplanes were popularly called flying houses. Thus Pope Benedict XV, on March 24, 1920, declared the Blessed Virgin of Loreto "main patroness before God of all aircraft".

Today, in a short time, we can fly all over the world, learn about the extraordinary variety of humanity and weave deep relationships, promoting fraternity between peoples and promoting a sustainable future at an environmental, social and economic level. Airplanes, from flying houses, have become bridges that unite men and embrace the continents.

The flight of planes also inspires the metaphor of our existence: ***we are called to fly high, because the Lord wants us to be saints***. The concrete reality of our daily lives becomes the runway for taking off and flying high. And if, from time to time, we no longer remember how to fly, let us entrust ourselves to the Lord, who is ready to help us and let us draw on His strength so as never to surrender. *The ways of holiness are many, according to the vocation of each. A large number of Christians, and among them many lay people who attained holiness in the most ordinary circumstances of life. The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this **high standard of ordinary Christian living**.* (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 31).

The course of this Jubilee: holiness for all

I keep alive the memory of a story that struck me as a child. It tells of a fact that happened at an airport.

A furious thunderstorm had hit all the passengers of a departing plane who were in a hurry to board. A steward, who checked that all the passengers were on board, closed the door. However, the plane did not take off. Suddenly a man from the outside knocked hard on the tailgate and asked for it to be opened. The steward firmly replied that the time for boarding was over and that it was no longer possible to get on. The man

continued to knock. Then a woman, who was watching the scene, stood up, approached the steward and persuaded him to open the door. The man entered: he was the pilot.

For us, too, there is a risk of leaving the pilot of our life, Christ the Lord, on the ground. And Mary is the Woman who helps us to open the door for Him because we have nothing to fear with God. He stands at the door and knocks (cf. Rev 3:20), constantly asking to enter. It is up to us to open up to him, to make room for him and to let ourselves be guided by him, so that he may direct the flight of our existence.

The path of holiness **is to live Christ** (cf. Phil 1:21), which *gives life a new horizon and thus the decisive direction* (Deus caritas est, 1). This is the authentic and profound meaning of this Jubilee: **to turn to the Lord, to renew our trust in Him and to let ourselves be carried upwards by Him, to live life in the breath of the Spirit, redeeming us from those realities that can weigh it down or even crush it and imprison it.**

Holiness for all is therefore the spiritual content and the route that this Jubilee proposes to welcome us **to give new form and stronger hope to our daily lives.** As Mary and Joseph have witnessed in the humility and simplicity of the Holy House. *Mary lived on earth a life common to all, full of family concern and work* (cf. Apostolate of the Laity, 4). A weekday holiness, I would say almost **homely**, that weaves and irrigates the daily life of the Church and society and takes charge of the place and situations in which we live.

We fly high, because only from on high, with the eyes of God, can we understand the profound meaning of our life, of the world and of the Church.

Let us fly high, but with our feet on the ground, because being holy does not mean "fluttering", that is, wandering about extraordinary undertakings, but doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, that is with faith and much love, as it was in the house of Nazareth.

Mary supports us in making our Yes to daily life more generous, to make our life the house of God, the truth of his presence.

To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious... We are called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by labouring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain. (Gaudete et exsultate, 14).

Life thus fills the heart with joy, with that **inner joy** felt by St. Francis of Assisi, because it is a gift from God and is proper to those who follow Jesus' proposal in the discourse of the Beatitudes.

The coordinates of the flight: the Beatitudes

Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the afflicted, the meek, the hungry and thirsty for justice, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, the persecuted... because of them is the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 5:3-10). In this year of grace, it will be precious **to meditate on and live the evangelical beatitudes in our daily lives.**

In the spirit of the Beatitudes we can recognize the face of man, our possible face, because in the mystery of the Beatitudes, incarnated in the life of Christ, *the mystery of man finds true light* (cf. Gaudium et spes, 22). There is a blessing for those who recognize their own poverty, their own

condition as creatures and with humility entrust themselves to Him who marks the course of their lives; there is a happiness for the hungry and the seeker of meaning and justice, for those who keep in their hearts a desire for a full life and pursue it with passion; there is a happiness enclosed in a smile, which illuminates a face streaked with tears; there is a happiness that can arise after the night of hatred and violence, of gratuitous slander, of selfish opposition..... because the Lord does not abandon the lives of his children to the forces of evil and has a plan of love for each one.

Mary believed in God's promises of happiness.

Above with Mary, Queen and Door of Heaven

The logo and the prayer of the Jubilee take up the invocation of the Litanies of Loreto: Mary *Queen and Gate of Heaven*. Mary takes us to Jesus: we can entrust ourselves to her because she shared in depth the mystery of the Redemption of her Son Jesus. The wonder of being looked at by God filled her heart with confidence and she did not hesitate to tell him her YES. She exhorts us: ***Do whatever Jesus tells you*** (cf. Jn 2:5), to transform the water of our daily lives into the wine of joy and peace.

With her unconditional *Yes* to God's plan, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and departing from her house, Mary determined the ***final stopover*** of her earthly adventure: Paradise. She too has had to face obstacles and "turbulence" and to be anxious, but the difficulties were not a reason to say no, but a further push to look beyond doubt, turning to God in the style proper to Jesus: *Abba, Father... not what I want, but what you want* (cf. Mk 14:36).

We poor sinners invoke her *now and at the hour of our death*, because she is the Door to Heaven, the **heavenly porter** who takes us by the hand and makes access to her Son possible: **per Mariam ad Jesum**. Just as she helps us to open the door of our hearts to Jesus the Saviour, so too we continually look to her so that our flight proceeds in the right direction, until we reach Heaven, sustained by faith, hope and charity.

That faith and charity of those who have experienced flight and will continue to walk ***looking to heaven, because there they have been and there they want to return*** (Leonardo da Vinci). That hope that makes us say with the psalmist: ***only in God is my salvation and my glory*** (Psalm 61).

A man was watching a child who was alone in the waiting room of an airport, waiting for the announcement of the departure of the flight. When boarding began, the child was guided by the hostess to his seat near the window. By chance, the man who was watching him had his seat next to the child. During the flight, the child pulled a book and some crayons out of the bag and began to color. He showed that he had no anxiety or concern about travelling by plane. Suddenly the plane ran into a furious storm and all the passengers were very scared. Some cried, others prayed, others trembled clinging to the seat. The child seemed to be in another world, still focused on his paintings as if he were sitting quietly in his living room. Finally the turbulence ceased. There were so many sighs of relief... someone said... "Look at this, we adults so frightened and this child all quiet"... Then a lady still very much tried by the situation and almost without a voice asked the child: "Weren't you afraid? How did you do it?" With a voice of absolute serenity and looking up from his book, the child replied: "No, I'm not afraid. My dad is the pilot of this plane!"

Let us rekindle the certainty that the ***Father loves us*** (cf. Jn 16:27) ***and leads our lives*** according to his plan of love and salvation.

This is the root of our hope!

With Mary, we cross the Holy Door

Let us unite our voices to the song of praise and gratitude of Mary: *My soul proclaims the Lord* (Lk 1:47). Let us sing of *the joy of being saved* (cf. Psalm 50) and of finding in her the brightest indication to let ourselves be renewed by her Son Jesus.

Let us allow ourselves to be taken by the hand of her tenderness as a Mother and humbly cross the Holy Door, which is none other than Jesus Christ. He will *lift us up* with the grace of the Sacraments, restoring our original beauty; he will be the light that guides our journey, the compass so as not to lose the flight route, the grace to be received so that *our joy may be full* (cf. Jn 15:11).

Gaudete et exsultate!

May the apostolic exhortation of Pope Francis on the *call to holiness* in the *contemporary world* accompany us on our Jubilee journey.

Happy Jubilee to all! Blessings to you.

✠ Fabio
Archbishop

Loreto, 11 November 2019