



The Holy See

JUBILEE AUDIENCE

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER

Audience Hall

Saturday, 11 January 2025

[Multimedia]

To hope is to begin again – John the Baptist

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

Many of you are here in Rome as “pilgrims of hope”. This morning, we are starting the Saturday Jubilee audiences, which will ideally welcome and embrace all those who are coming from all over the world in search of a new beginning. Indeed, the Jubilee is a new beginning, the possibility for everyone to start anew from God. With the Jubilee we start a new life, a new phase.

On these Saturdays I would like to highlight, from time to time, some aspects of hope. It is a theological virtue, the Catechism tells us. And in Latin, *virtus* means “strength”; thus, it is a strength that comes from God. Hope, therefore, is not a habit or a character trait – that you either have or you don’t – but a *strength to be asked for*. That is why we make ourselves pilgrims: we come to ask for a gift, to *start again* on life’s journey.

We are about to celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus, and this makes us think about that *great prophet of hope, John the Baptist*. Jesus said something wonderful about him: that he is the greatest among those born of women (cf. *Lk 7:28*). We understand then why so many people flocked to him, longing for a new beginning, longing to start over. And the Jubilee helps us in this. The Baptist appeared truly great, he appeared credible in his personality. Just as we today pass through the Holy Door, so John proposed to cross the river Jordan, entering the Promised Land as

Joshua had done the first time. To begin again, to receive the land all over again, like the first time. Sisters and brothers, this is the word: *begin again*. Let us put this in our heads and let us all say together: “begin again”. Let us say it together: begin again! [all repeat several times] There, don't forget this: begin again

Jesus, however, immediately after that great compliment, adds something that makes us think: “I tell you, among those born of women, no one is greater than John; yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he” (v. 28). Hope, brothers and sisters, is everything in this qualitative step. It does not depend on us, but on the Kingdom of God. Here is the surprise: welcoming the Kingdom of God leads us to a new order of greatness. Our world, all of us, we need this! And us, what must we do? [Everyone: “Begin again!”]. Do not forget this.

When Jesus utters those words, the Baptist is in jail, full of questions. We too bring many questions on our pilgrimage, because there are many “Herods” who still oppose the Kingdom of God. Jesus, however, shows us the new path, the path of the Beatitudes, which are the surprising law of the Gospel. Let us ask ourselves, then: do I have within me a true desire to start again? Think about it, each one of you: inside myself, do I want to begin again? Do I want to learn from Jesus who is truly great? The least, in the Kingdom of God, is great. Because we must ... [Everyone: “Begin again!”].

From John the Baptist, then, we learn to recreate ourselves. Hope for our common home – this Earth of ours, so abused and wounded – and the hope for all human beings resides in the difference of God. His greatness is different. And let us start again from this originality of God, which shone in Jesus and which now binds us to serve, to love fraternally, to acknowledge ourselves as small. And to see the least, to listen to them and to be their voice. Here is the new beginning, our Jubilee. And so we must... [Everyone: “Begin again!”]. Thank you.

Special greetings:

I greet the English-speaking pilgrims and offer my cordial good wishes that the Jubilee will be for all of you a season of spiritual renewal and growth in the joy of the Gospel. Upon you and your families I gladly invoke God's blessings of wisdom, strength and peace.

Summary of the Holy Father's words:

Dear brothers and sisters: During this Jubilee Year, many of you have come to Rome as “pilgrims of hope”, confident in the power of God's grace to offer us the possibility of a new

beginning. Hope, as we know, is a virtue that enables us to trust in Christ's promises and ask for their fulfilment in our lives. This Sunday we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord by Saint John the Baptist. John's message in calling for conversion was one of hope in the advent of the Messiah, a hope fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and his invitation to welcome the Kingdom of God. Like the crowds that flocked to the waters of the Jordan, may all who pass through the Holy Door this year receive the grace of interior renewal, openness to the dawn of God's kingdom and its summons to conversion, fraternal love and concern for the least of our brothers and sisters.