

**LITURGY FOR THE FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY  
&  
INAUGURATION OF THE ORDINARY JUBILEE YEAR 2025**

**Sunday, December 29, 2024**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Today, we gather with hearts full of joy as we celebrate two significant occasions. First, we honour the Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the perfect model of love, unity, and faith. In Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, we see the beauty of family life rooted in God's will—a source of inspiration for all our families.

Secondly, we mark a moment of profound grace as we inaugurate the *Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025* in our local Church / Arch (Diocese) our families and the Jubilee Year to the Holy Family, asking their intercession to guide us on our pilgrim path. May this year be a time of abundant blessings for our Church, our families, and our communities.

**LITURGY OF THE WORD**

**First Reading:** 1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28  
**Psalm:** Psalm 84: 2-3,5-6,9-10  
**Second Reading:** 1 John 3:1-2. 21-24  
**Gospel:** Luke 2:41-52

**HOMILY NOTES**

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The opening of the holy door of St Peter's Basilica on December 24, 2024 by the Holy Father in the Rome marked the opening of the Jubilee Year 2025. Today, the Jubilee is inaugurated in each Arch (Diocese) all over the world, having the Cross as the symbol of the Jubilee. The holy doors symbolize the gates of mercy, as a passage to salvation, the path to new and eternal life opened by Jesus where everyone is invited to come in.

The two purposes of today's celebration blend very well. To start with, a pilgrim is defined as a person who journeys in foreign lands especially to a shrine or holy place of worship. The purpose of a pilgrimage is usually to encounter the divine, to seek spiritual enlightenment and as a time for personal growth and exploration. In the Bible, we find references to many pilgrimages. For example, Abraham undertook a pilgrimage, the Israelites travelled from Egypt through the desert to the promised land, the Judeans returned to Jerusalem after the exile, the Holy Family journeyed to Bethlehem for the census and as described in today's Gospel also to Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples made multiple pilgrimages to Jerusalem for festivals. St Paul was known to have made pilgrimages to different places to spread the message of Jesus. Every pilgrimage is rich with meaning and significance in the life of the pilgrim.

Pope Francis has chosen "**Pilgrims of Hope**" is the theme for the Jubilee Year 2025 to emphasize the need for renewed hope in a world facing significant challenges like war, climate change, and poverty. He invites us to find strength and trust in God amidst difficult circumstances and to actively work towards a better future for all. He is using the pilgrimage metaphor to signify a journey towards a more hopeful reality. The Pope is calling all Catholics

to renew their hope of Christ, using St Paul the Apostle, a seasoned pilgrim as a guide for this special year.

In the first reading, Hannah is presented to us as a “pilgrim of hope.” Being childless, she vowed to God that if He would give her a son, she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life and the Lord granted her this wish. Her barren womb was opened to welcome God’s grace of childbirth in Samuel, her son. The second reading outlines the journey of every pilgrim towards God who loves each one of us, his children. Our belief in Jesus Christ opens the doors of an intimate and faithful relationship with God. In the Gospel, the twelve-year-old Jesus on a pilgrimage has already presented his credentials to his parents about his life’s purpose as the Son of God. His discussions in the temple with the elders and teachers were the gradual opening of the doors of his ministry as the Messiah.

The Church clearly teaches, that in “the domestic Church (family), parents by words and examples are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children”, (Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium.*, 11). Hannah has her role cut out as a herald of faith in the life of her child, Samuel, as she encourages him to offer his life in service to the Lord. As parents, it is imperative to make children aware of God’s love in the respect and affection that parents have for children and vice versa. The parents of Jesus encouraged him in seeking his true vocation and Jesus, in return, grew in wisdom and stature as an obedient child.

As a family, we all journey together as pilgrims of hope. The Sacrament of Marriage opens the doors into family life where love, mercy and deep respect for each other makes way to value-based relationships in this world. Within the family, through prayer and worship together, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, all receive nourishment to be disciples of Jesus. Vocations to the priesthood, the religious life and even marriage and singlehood are fostered in families, and this gives hope to the Church which recognises each one as labourer in the Lord’s harvest (Matthew 9: 35-38). Like Hannah, Mary and Joseph, parents must remember that they are important stakeholders in strengthening the faith of their children. Healthy families give rise to a healthy Church and therefore a healthy society, where positive, loving attitudes and lifestyles help surmount the many challenges faced in the world due to a self-centred, selfish, secular mentality. And where there is peace in every family, there is peace in every heart and therefore peace in the world. Here evil intention and egos have no place. The Church is aware of the struggle families experience in relationships and offers support to them in crisis with hope.

The year ahead will be a beautiful opportunity for the family to grow in their faith through concerted efforts to come together, to pray, to reflect on the Word of God, on the documents of the Church, to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. During this year, the family must make efforts to enjoy meals together, to reconcile with each other, to encourage and appreciate one another, without taking relationships for granted. There is a definite spirituality in meals shared together and especially in practising the vocabulary of praise and appreciation at home. The Jubilee Year can also be a good opportunity to pray and fast together for peace in the family and in the world, for healing from the ravages of war and for the needs of unborn children, helpless elders, the refugees and migrants, the sick, the dying and making efforts together to protect the environment.

As Christians, let us become responsible builders of a better world to create hope and peace by embracing the cross of Christ as suggested in the icon of the theme of the holy year. The Cross is a sign of struggle and suffering on which the Lord won the victory over sin and death. As a family “we fix our eyes in Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2)

In the words of today’s psalm, “let us be blessed who dwell in God’s house, whose hearts are set on pilgrim ways (vs. 2).

#### **PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL**

**Celebrant:** On the Feast Day of the Holy Family of Nazareth, and on the Opening of the Jubilee 2025 in our Arch (Diocese), let us turn to our Heavenly Father with trust and confidence as we place our petitions before Him with faith. Our Response is: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

1. For our Holy Father Pope Francis, our Bishops, Priests, Religious and Lay faithful; that the Jubilee Year may make all of us become rays of hope and consolation to the vulnerable, the sick and suffering and those in need of support. *We pray...*
2. For the leaders of the countries of the world; that their policies may promote peace, justice and respect for human dignity, and that they may radiate hope to those whom they govern. *We pray...*
3. For all families; that the Holy Family of Nazareth may inspire them to live a life of love, respect and faith in the light of the Gospel as positive influencers of society. *We pray...*
4. For families in distress, vulnerable persons, migrants, the elderly, the sick and victims of war and violence; that the Jubilee Year of hope may bring them comfort and healing as they draw strength and consolation from the Cross of Jesus. *We pray...*
5. For vocations to the priesthood and the religious life; that like Hannah, Mary and Joseph, parents may plant, nourish and nurture the seeds of a life of service in the Church. *We pray...*
6. For the various needs we have, that the Lord may be gracious and generous in his mercy...  
*(Pause for 7 seconds)... We pray...*

**Celebrant:** Loving Father, we thank you for listening to the prayers of your children, who seek your generous graces through Jesus Christ, your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen

**[The Liturgy Notes have been prepared by Fr George Jarain, Diocese of Nongstoin, Meghalaya and Regional Secretary, Commission for Family, North-East Region]**