

Christian Hope

In May 2024, Pope Francis published a document called, 'Hope does not disappoint', proclaiming the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope. Every 25 years a jubilee year is announced inviting everyone to reflect on a specific theme. This year's theme is 'Pilgrims of Hope'. The word *Pilgrims* invites us to look anew at our journey as a human family in all its fragility.



The Pope's initiative led me to revisit a reflection on the essence of hope written by Vaclav Havel, last president of Czechoslovakia (1989-92).

He wrote that hope is 'an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, and is anchored somewhere beyond its horizons'.

Given all the sadness and tragedy we see around us and experience at times in our own lives, you can expect to hear folk pose the question, 'How can you really be a person of hope?' We often misidentify hope as some kind of naïve and giddy optimism which says, 'don't worry, everything will work out ok', but this is far from the essence of Christian hope.

This hope derives from a faith which has entrusted itself to *another*, to the crucified and risen Jesus, the Christ. To varying degrees, we fear the mortality we cannot cure, but the great English mystic Julian of Norwich famously wrote, 'all will be well in all manner of things'. This was not the musings of an optimist that somehow tragedy and suffering would cease. No, it means that God is in charge of his creation and in that Julian put her confidence. Horatius Bonar, the 19th century Scottish pastor, encapsulated this hope wonderfully in one of his hymns:

'Upon a life I have not lived, upon a death I did not die, another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity.'

St Laurence Church