



Diocese of Thunder Bay



Newsletter

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Winter 2025

Reflections of the New Year *By Katelin Legros*

For the most part when we look towards the New Year, we have a sense of excitement of what's to come; what blessings the New Year will bring. However, for some there is a genuine resounding fear. "What if I am not strong enough to go through the same trials and tribulations that I went through during the last year?" thoughts like this mixed with the reality that our problems don't just disappear when the clock strikes twelve on December 31st.

When your thoughts are filled with dread of the unknown, I always find it best to remember that God is with us. In varying forms; the most common phrase in the Bible is "Do not be afraid" and can be found in some of my favourite verses. 'When I am afraid, I put my trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid. What can flesh do to me?' (Psalm 56:3-4) Which reminds me that when I am in my darkest moments to always put my trust in God. 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the Earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the seas, through its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.' (Psalm 46:1-3) The strongest take away from that verse would be that even through terrible times, many things may happen to us but God will never forsake or leave us. For myself personally knowing that through God we are never alone reassures and gives me the ability to stay strong and endure through the hard times. I can't help but think that being the children of God, he knew we would need constant reminders that he is with us and that we shouldn't be afraid. Knowing that true peace is only found in the presence of



God; there are a few things you can do to strengthen your connection to God. First and foremost, keep praying, I know it might seem hard to do especially if you are already feeling like your prayers are not being heard. You may not be getting the answers you want or as fast as you would like but always remember to keep praying because God hears you and your patience in Him is worth it. Prayer doesn't always change your situation but it always changes you. Secondly, try to remember that being connected to God comes in many forms, so if you really feel like your prayers are not being answered try connecting with your Catholic community through volunteering or participating in a Bible study. Lastly, I want to remind you that even David cried out to God asking why he wasn't answering, so if sometimes you feel far from God just know you aren't alone and when you are feeling like this it's important to rely on the strengths God has given us to make it through. He gives direction, he gives us grace, he shows us how to escape temptation, he helps us when we are hurting and most importantly, he gives us peace. Trust in God. †



The Jubilee Year: 2025. What is it? By Msgr. Pat Stilla

Pope Francis inaugurated this special Jubilee Year of Hope in the Vatican when, at the Christmas Eve Mass he solemnly opened the symbolic Jubilee Holy Doors of St. Peter's Basilica. He also announced that on Sunday, December 29, 2024, the Feast of the Holy Family, the opening of the Jubilee 2025 would be subsequently celebrated in all the Cathedrals of every Catholic Diocese in the world, including our own in Thunder Bay. In the mind of the Holy Father this Jubilee of 2025 is meant to be 'a holy year offered to us as Pilgrims of Hope, and a time to provide all peoples around the world, the opportunity to be reconciled to God, to each other and to themselves!

The Jubilee Prayer

Father in heaven,
may the *faith* you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of *charity* enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators
of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within
both humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.
May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever. Amen

Franciscus

Holy Years in the Bible

The Concept of Jubilee years had its origins in the Jewish Faith. In the Old Testament Book of Leviticus (*Chapter 25*), the Jewish people were taught to observe a "Jubilee" every 50 years. During these year-long observances, debts were forgiven, slaves were freed and land was allowed to remain fallow. The observance of such a year, was meant to remind God's People that everything on earth belongs to the Lord and that we are only stewards and not owners of creation. It was also a time to rest and to gain a proper perspective regarding one's work and accomplishments. In other words, it was a year designed to help us remember the distinctions between the insignificant aspects of life and the important and essential ones.

The Church's 'Ordinary' and 'Extraordinary' Holy Years

In the year, 1300, Pope Boniface VIII proclaimed the Church's first worldwide "Jubilee". It was he who named it a "Holy Year" because he envisioned it as a time to promote holiness and spiritual growth for God's People. His plan was to celebrate future Jubilees every 100 years. Later, though, in keeping with the original Biblical Jewish tradition the intervals were reduced to every 50 years and eventually to a 25 year span, a custom that we normally still observe in our present day. In different centuries, some Popes also chose to use '33 year' intervals between Jubilees to commemorate the anniversaries of Christ's crucifixion. In more recent times, this "33 year" observance was revived only twice: by Pope Pius XI in 1933 (1900 years after Christ's death) and by St. John Paul II in 1983 (1950 years after the Lord's death). These special anniversaries were named "extraordinary" Holy Years of our Redemption.





Holy Years of Faith Teachings

Popes in recent times have also declared 'Holy Years' outside of the regular 50 or 25 year cycles, to teach us various aspects of our beliefs, like: 'The Year of the Priest', 'The Year of Faith' 'The Year of Consecrated Life'. and, Pope Francis' 'Year of Mercy' in 2016.

While the themes for these years differed, their purpose was always the same: *to encourage prayer, a re-dedication to Gospel values and an enthusiastic renewal of Christian spirit.*

The Solemn Opening of the Jubilee Holy Year in our Diocese

The solemn Mass officially inaugurating the Jubilee Holy Year for our Diocese, was celebrated in our Cathedral on the Feast of the Holy Family, on Sunday, December 29 at 10:30 am. This special Liturgical Event to which all were invited, unfolded in the following ways:

The Opening Prayer Service in the Cathedral Auditorium

Before the Mass began, the faithful, the ministers and the clergy were invited to first gather in the Cathedral Auditorium or in the Foyer of the Church for a brief Introductory Prayer Service and the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ.

The Symbolic Procession of Entry into the Church

The Mass of the Lord's Day of the Feast of the Holy Family will then began with the solemn processional entrance into the Cathedral, behind the richly decorated Processional Cross and the Book of the Gospels. This is the sign of the journey of hope of God's Pilgrim People, as evidenced in the Jubilee logo: "*In a world in which progress and regression are intertwined, the Cross of Christ remains the anchor of salvation: a sign of renewed and lasting hope*". This special Cross is then placed near the altar in the sanctuary where it will remain for the entire year 2025, as the enduring symbol of the theme of the Jubilee.

The Memorial of our Baptism

After the faithful entered the church and have taken their places, the celebrating priest, deacons and the ministers proceeded towards the Baptismal font for the Blessing of the Water and the subsequent sprinkling of all the People.

The Culmination in the Celebration of the Eucharist

The Inaugural Mass of the Holy Family which follows the entrance Rites, constitutes the focal point of the joyful opening of the Jubilee Year for our Diocese and for every Diocese around the Globe.

"We are Called to be Pilgrims of Hope"

This Jubilee 2025 will offer all of us in every corner of the world, a special year of opportunities and a time to participate in various Rites both in the City of Rome and in one's own Diocese and Parish. All are meant to be celebrations of faith, designed to assist us in renewing our resolve to be "Pilgrims of Hope" and to share our hope with others to ultimately promote unity and peace among all peoples in our troubled world. †



Luce, the Official Mascot of the Jubilee 2025 Makes Her Debut



During a press conference on October 28, Archbishop Rino Fisichella officially presented the mascot of the 2025 Jubilee, “Luce”.

This character, designed by the illustrator Simone Legno, was designed with the intention of reflecting pop culture, popular among young people, and brings with it a message of hope and welcome.

Luce is a pilgrim dressed as a typical traveller: a yellow anorak to protect herself from the elements, dirty boots that bear witness to the path she has already traveled, a missionary cross around her neck and the pilgrim’s staff in her hand. Particularly evocative are Luce’s eyes, which shine with an intense light: they symbolize the hope that is born in the heart of every pilgrim, and reflect the desire for spirituality and connection with the divine. They act as a reminder of the universal message of peace and brotherhood. The choice of a mascot like Luce is part of a broader context, aimed at reaching new generations and promoting intergenerational dialogue. The mascot not only represents the Jubilee, but is also a symbol of community, of welcome and of sharing. †

Source: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en/notizie/comunicati/2024/luce-mascotte-ufficiale-giubileo-2025.html>



Who is Carlo Acutis? *By Katelin Legros*

Carlo Acutis was born May 3, 1991, in London. Then he moved with his parents, to Milan, Italy. From a young age, Carlo had a special love for God, even though his parents weren't especially devout. Antonia Salzano, his mom, said that before Carlo, she went to Mass only for her first Communion, her confirmation, and her wedding. But as a young child, Carlo loved to pray the rosary. After he made his first Communion, he went to Mass as often as possible at the parish across from his elementary school. According to the postulator promoting his cause for sainthood, he "managed to drag his relatives, his parents to Mass every day. It was not the other way around; it was not his parents bringing the little boy to Mass, but it was he who managed to get himself to Mass and to convince others to receive Communion daily. He used to say, 'There are queues in front of a concert, in front of a football match, but I don't see these queues in front of the Blessed Sacrament' ... So, for him the Eucharist was the center of his life." Carlo's witness of faith as a child led adults to convert and be baptized. Rajesh Mohur, who worked for the Acutis family as an au pair when Carlo was young, converted from Hinduism to Catholicism because of Carlo's witness. Carlo taught Mohur how to pray the rosary and told him about the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Mohur said that one of the things that most impressed him as a non-Christian was the witness of Carlo's love and concern for the poor — how he interacted with the homeless man who would sit at the entrance of the church and would bring Tupperware dishes filled with food out to people living on the streets.



Carlo wasn't afraid to defend Church teaching, even in situations when his classmates disagreed with him. Many of Carlo's high school classmates remember Carlo giving a passionate defense for the protection of life from the moment of conception when there was a classroom discussion about abortion. Carlo was a faithful friend. He was known for standing up for kids at school who got bullied, especially kids with disabilities. With his friends, he spoke about the importance of going to Mass and confession, human dignity, and chastity. Carlo was fascinated with computer coding and was self taught. He used his computer skills and internet savvy to help his family put together an exhibition on Eucharistic miracles that has gone on to be displayed at thousands of parishes on five continents. His spiritual director has attested that Carlo was personally convinced that the scientific evidence from Eucharistic miracles would help people to realize that Jesus is present in the Eucharist and come back to Mass. Carlo was diagnosed with leukemia as a teenager. Before his death in 2006, he offered his sufferings for Pope Benedict XVI and for the Church, saying: "I offer all of my suffering to the Lord for the pope and for the Church in order not to go to purgatory but to go straight to heaven." Carlo died on Oct. 12, 2006, and was buried in Assisi. His body lies in repose in a glass tomb in Assisi where he can be seen in jeans and a pair of Nike sneakers. Thousands came to pray at his tomb at the time of his beatification in October 2020.

Pope Francis recognized a second miracle attributed to Carlo's intercession in a decree on May 23, 2024. The miracle involved the healing of a 21-year-old girl from Costa Rica named Valeria Valverde, who was near death after seriously injuring her head in a bicycle accident in 2022. Faced with such devastating news, Liliana, the girl's mother, turned to faith. She knelt at Carlo's grave, prayed fervently, and left a heartfelt letter addressed to the blessed teenager, pleading for his intercession before God for her daughter's healing. In an astonishing turn of events, the hospital reported that Valeria had spontaneously resumed breathing that same day. The following day, she began to move again and partially spoke. A CT scan revealed that the

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With Gratitude and a Fond Farewell By Msgr. Pat Stilla

It has recently been announced that Fr. Gerry McDougall, S.J., the current Pastor of St. Anne and Kitchitwa Kateri Parishes in Thunder Bay and Our Lady of the Snows Parish in Armstrong, with its Mission in Gull Bay will be reassigned for Ministry in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie. Not only will Fr. Gerry be truly missed by his many parishioners in our Diocese but also by his brother Priests with whom he ministered here for several years. Sadly, the Provincial Superior of the Jesuit Community, to which Father Gerry belongs has also announced that after Father's departure, the priests of the Society of Jesus will no longer be available to minister in our Diocese in the foreseeable future. This marks the end of a significant era of their service here.



Jesuits not only celebrated the first Mass in our area almost 360 years ago but they have also continuously worked in Northwestern Ontario in a variety of Parishes, Missions and Retreat centres for hundreds of years. In appreciation to the Society of Jesus for their Ministry among us, I wish to summarize in this article the history of this worldwide Religious Order of priests and brothers which now numbers about 14,500 members and briefly highlight some of the work that they accomplished in our area and Diocese.

Brief Jesuit History

Origins of the Order

One year before Columbus set sail for the New World, the founder of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, was born in 1491 in what is now Spain. He was an aristocrat and a soldier, dedicated to the service of the then Spanish Monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella.

At the age of 30, he was injured in battle and, while recuperating, happened to read a volume on the Lives of the Saints, a book that changed his life forever! After reflecting on the accounts in this book, he decided to commit himself to continue their work for the Lord. He began by enrolling in University courses at the age of 34 and inspired a group of like-minded friends and disciples who followed him wherever he went. The group that he gathered together at the University of Paris enacted a ceremony in 1534, binding themselves to each other with vows of poverty and chastity. After three years of Theological studies, they were ordained to the priesthood.

Official Church Approval

This group of fervent young priests travelled to Rome to offer their service directly to the Holy Father. They offered to teach the Catholic Faith in the universities of Europe and to preach the Gospel to the peoples of the New World. Pope Paul III accepted their offer and, in 1540, the new Order, called 'The Society of Jesus' was established.

Jesuits in Canada

It was on May 22, 1611, Pentecost Sunday, that two French priests of the Society of Jesus, Fathers Biard and Massé arrived at Port Royal in Acadia, which is part of modern-day Nova Scotia. Despite many hardships,



these two priests were successful in establishing the first Catholic community in Canada. Over the many years since then, the Jesuits have founded numerous missions and parishes, schools and colleges across the country.

Sainte-Marie-Among-the-Hurons near Midland

Founded by the Jesuits in 1639, Sainte-Marie was the centre for the mission to the Huron-Wendat peoples. The mission was built in the territory known as Huronia, which was inhabited by the Huron-Wendat Peoples. Christian Hurons visited Sainte-Marie for worship, and for medical treatment after the establishment of a hospital, but Sainte-Marie remained essentially a European enclave, the headquarters from which priests were sent out on missions to the individual villages. The mission developed into a sizeable colony. Many years later, in 1920, this Centre was designated a national historic site, because it was headquarters of the Jesuit Mission to the Hurons from 1639-1649.

Their Presence and Work in Our City and Diocese

It was on May 29, 1667 that Jesuit Father Claude Allouez celebrated the first Mass in what is now part of our Diocese. It was near the Nipigon River close to the site where St. Sylvester's Church at Lake Helen now stands. After years of ministry here in a variety of locales, the Jesuits established an enduring Mission headquarters, in July 1849, named "Immaculate Conception". It was located on the left bank of the Mission River at its junction with the Kaministiquia River.

After this, the Jesuits set to work in establishing permanent Parishes, Missions and Schools in our area. *Among them were St. Andrew's Parish, in 1872, St. Agnes Parish in 1886, St. Patrick's (later, Cathedral) Parish in 1893 and a number of smaller Parishes in Thunder Bay and in Northwestern Ontario. Arpin Memorial High School (now, St. Patrick's) was also founded during this period by Jesuit Father Arpin, S.J.

"Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam"

These four Latin words, which mean, "*To the Greater Glory of God*" constituted the personal motto and goal of St. Ignatius of Loyola. It was Ignatius' prayer and pledge that all his efforts, missionary activity and good works for God's people everywhere he was called, would not be done for his own edification but always "to the greater glory of God"! After all, it was God who had entrusted him with many gifts and talents and therefore it was to God that the founder of the Society of Jesus, offered the fruits of these talents.

We again acknowledge and thank his modern-day Jesuit disciples who worked here for so many years and we wish them Godspeed and success, as they continue to minister to the spiritual wellbeing of God's People. †

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hemorrhage had disappeared. The first miracle that led to his beatification involved the healing of a 3-year-old boy in Brazil in 2013 who had been diagnosed with a malformation of his pancreas since birth. The family had found out that a priest had brought a piece of clothing from Carlo to Brazil and on October 12, 2010, the boy's grandfather took him for a blessing with the relic. The child touched the cloth and simply asked to "stop throwing up." According to the family, after that day, Matheus was able to eat solid food and never vomited again. The doctors then did tests and found that he was cured of the disease. After the due investigation, the miracle was approved, and the announcement that Carlo Acutis' cause would advance was made on February 22, 2020. Now that you know more about Carlo Acutis, I want to leave you with one of his famous quotes- "Do not be afraid because with the Incarnation of Jesus, death becomes life, and there's no need to escape: in eternal life, something extraordinary awaits us." †





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