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The hope of a new year is here as the Catholic Church enters the 2025 Jubilee, a yearlong period of forgiveness and mercy whose theme is taken from Romans 5: "Hope does not disappoint." The Jubilee also coincides with the 10th anniversary of *Laudato Si*', Pope Francis' landmark encyclical on the environment.

The coming together of these events kindles in me a feeling of optimism for the future of our planet. The U.S. is currently on track to reach 80 percent or more of its emissions-reduction target under the Paris Climate Agreement, according to the Rhodium Group. While much work still needs to be done, this is progress. I am also encouraged by church leaders, led by Pope Francis, using their voices. Archbishop Timothy Broglio, as president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), sent a powerful letter to Pope Francis thanking the Holy Father for his "consistent reminder on the need to address the climate crisis and experience ecological conversion."

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Archbishop Broglio acknowledged our current challenges in his message of gratitude, lamenting the suffering brought by natural disasters and noting that "devastating hurricanes and other events have leveled entire communities." Acknowledging both our progress and how much we have to do gives me hope because we must be honest about where we are to truly see where we must go.

As a group, the USCCB has taken important stances on the climate crisis, asserting its voice with clear policy positions. Last year, I advocated for their climate positions as part of a delegation of Catholic leaders visiting the White House to amplify Pope Francis' exhortation on climate, *Laudate Deum*. Archbishop John Wester, Bishop Edward Weisenburger, Sister Carol Zinn from Leadership Conference of Women Religious and Lonnie Ellis from In Solidarity made the trip together.

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It was quite an experience to bring the pope's message to the building where so much national policy takes shape. Within five months of our visit, the Environmental Protection Agency enacted all four of our policy stances — on mercury, methane, carbon pollution from power plants and emissions from heavy-duty vehicles. We weren't the only people raising our voices — groups advocating for public health and the environment have long pushed for these protections. Being part of democracy in action gives me hope, too.

Yet as important as policy is, as a person of faith my hope ultimately resides in something deeper: the resurrection of Christ, and with it the restoration of all creation in the fullness of time. I think of Pope Francis' message on the World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation this past September. He linked our earthly and our eschatological hope: "Our Christian optimism is founded on a living hope: it realizes that everything is ordered to the glory of God, to final consummation in his peace and to bodily resurrection in righteousness, as we pass 'from glory to glory.'"

Some may wonder whether hope, however we define it, is enough to combat our many intersecting crises. The climate crisis itself can at times feel insurmountable. When we also see the prevalence of war, poverty, migration, authoritarianism and the breakdown of social bonds and institutions, things can feel hopelessly beyond our capacity to change.

When we are tempted to lose hope, we must remember that it is not a feeling or an emotion but a virtue. Unlike emotions that come and go, virtues can be cultivated with purpose. The Holy Father touched on this in his message for the World Day of Prayer, when he defined hope as "the possibility of remaining steadfast amid adversity, of not losing heart in times of tribulation or in the face of human evil." Hope animates our care for creation; it is both a first step and a final reward, an incentive as well as an intention. Let us enter the Jubilee year preparing to make St. Paul's words our own: "For in hope we were saved."

This story appears in the **2025 Holy Year** feature series. View the full series.