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Pope Francis greets seminarians from Córdoba, Spain, during a meeting at the Vatican Jan. 17, 2025. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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During the Holy Year 2025, which is centered on proclaiming a message of hope, Pope Francis told future priests to let hope be the guiding principle of their lives.

"In the journey of life, we could identify hope as the signpost that marks our itinerary," he said during a meeting with seminarians from Córdoba, Spain, Jan. 17.

Hope provides a "direction" in the lives of Christians, leading them "toward heaven, to the definitive encounter with Jesus," the pope said. "Not to the top positions, not to the most comfortable places; those are dead ends that if we have the misfortune of getting into, we must leave by walking backward with effort and shame."

Referencing the theme of the Jubilee, Francis encouraged the seminarians to be "pilgrims of hope," and to draw inspiration from St. Pelagius, a 10th-century Christian martyr who was killed in Córdoba at the age of 13 and is celebrated there today.

He was taken hostage by Moors in southern Spain and held captive for three years. When the emir of Córdoba offered him freedom on the condition he convert to Islam, Pelagius refused, and he was tortured and killed.

"You can bear witness to hope as that holy boy did then, in the midst of the pain of war, of the cruelty most unworthy of human beings, armed with the helmet of hope," the pope told the seminarians. "You can persevere in the way of the Lord, convinced that Jesus will always sustain you and will give us the strength to be sowers of

hope."

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Sowing hope, however, is not "saying nice words or an overly sweet goodness," he said. Rather the path of hope is "the path of Jesus, which leads to the heavenly Jerusalem, passing through the earthly one, embracing the cross and supported by countless Cyrenians."

Just as Jesus was helped to carry his cross on the way to the Crucifixion, Christians are called to take "a road on which one cannot advance alone," Francis said, "but in community, guiding, defending, assisting and blessing those whom the Lord has left for us as our undertaking."

Francis also urged the seminarians to be "sustained" by Jesus on the path of life, a journey which led them to Rome to cross the threshold of the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, and "to feel the presence of the one who is our only hope."

Jesus, he said, "presents himself to us as master, as Lord, he gives himself to us as food in his word and in the Eucharist, he repairs us when we have a flat tire in the middle of the road, and he welcomes us when we are overcome by fatigue and must stop for a break."

Underscoring the centrality of hope, the pope explained that "without such hope, setting out on the road would be madness, but trusting in him we have no doubt that we will arrive at the desired gate."