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17<sup>th</sup> December 2024

### The Mass of the Inauguration of the Jubilee Year 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!

I am delighted to have this wonderful God given opportunity of writing to all of you. I hope you are keeping well during this Holy Season of Advent as we prepare our hearts, minds and our whole life for the celebration of Christmas which marks the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. St John's Gospel and the Angelus reminds us that, "The Word was made flesh, and it dwelt among us!" The mystery of the Incarnation has transformed the whole universe and our human history forever.

At our Annual Plenary of the Clergy in November, it was decided that on **Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> of January 2025 we shall have Holy Mass of the Inauguration of the Jubilee Year 2025, Pilgrims of Hope. This will take place at St Augustine's Cathedral here in Gqeberha at 10:00am.**

So, I kindly invite all the priests, permanent deacons, religious sisters, members of institutes of apostolic life, different sodalities, lay associates and youth leaders. I expect all representatives of Christian formation groups and leadership structures of all 65 parish communities of all shapes, sizes and income groups to come. I am talking about catechetical coordinators, liturgical coordinators, extraordinary eucharistic ministers, proclaimers, choir members, family desks coordinators, hospitality ministers, ushers – practically all those who are involved in some form of Church ministry. All members of Parish Pastoral Councils (PPC), Pastoral Finance Committees (PFC) Maintenance Committees – and other leadership structures, as I have mentioned already, are invited, welcome and expected to come.

All the People of God who want to come are also most welcome, nobody is excluded!

Before the Holy Mass, there will be a solemn opening of the Cathedral door by the Bishop to mark the inauguration of the Jubilee Year 2025, Pilgrims of Hope. During the Holy Mass there shall be a special blessing of the Jubilee candles, they shall be lit and used for the renewal of our baptismal promises in preparation for the Solemnity of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ which will be commemorated on Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup> of January (2025). This will be followed by the commissioning of various parish community representatives, lay ministers and leaders of sodalities. It shall include the handing on of the Jubilee candles, prayer cards and banners for all the faithful back in your deaneries, parish communities and sodalities. Other useful information, guidelines, directives will be communicated closer to the date of inauguration and at St Augustine's Cathedral on the day of inauguration itself.

On parish level the launch of the Jubilee Year 2025, Pilgrims of Hope shall be observed and celebrated on the Solemnity of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ on Sunday the 12<sup>th</sup> of January 2025. Where it is feasible smaller Church communities shall come together. The Jubilee candle received from St Augustine's Cathedral would be welcomed, received during the entrance procession and placed in a suitable place where it can be clearly visible. In the place of the Creed, the lighting of the candles of the faithful from the Jubilee candle, the renewal of baptismal promises and sprinkling with holy water is highly recommended. In this way as the living Body of Christ we can renew our encounter with God and become aware of our communion with our diocese and the Catholic Church throughout the world.

Our Holy Father Pope Francis encourages us to become Pilgrims of Hope by undertaking pilgrimages to various holy sites: Churches, shrines, places of spiritual importance both locally and abroad, depending on our means.

Here in our Catholic diocese the following places have been established by the Bishop as sacred destinations of pilgrimage for the Jubilee Year 2025: St Augustine's Cathedral and St Luke's Retreat Centre in the deanery of Port Elizabeth; Immaculate Conception and St Pius Retreat Centre in the deanery of East London; Sacred Heart on Albert Street in Qonce, St Patrick's in Makhanda and the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady into Heaven in Sommerset East for Border/Midlands deaneries respectively.

We are called to sow the seeds of hope and to build peace in our hearts, homes, families, church communities, workplaces, neighbourhoods, country, continent and in the world at large. "Those who go on pilgrimage seek above all to keep their eyes fixed on the goal, to keep it always in their heart and mind. To achieve that goal, however, they need to concentrate on every step, which means travelling light, getting rid of what weighs them down, carrying only the essentials and striving daily to set aside all weariness, fear, uncertainty and hesitation. Being a pilgrim means setting out each day, beginning ever anew, rediscovering the enthusiasm and strength needed to pursue the various stages of a journey that, however tiring and difficult, always opens before our eyes new horizons and previously unknown vistas" (Message of Pope Francis for the 61<sup>st</sup> World Day of Prayer for Vocations, 21<sup>st</sup> April 2024).

After the Inaugural Mass, the leaders of different sodalites, lay associates, parish communities, youth, choirs; various parish representatives, coordinators of liturgy, catechetics and family life ministries are requested to remain behind for an important meeting that will empower them to understand their clear roles during the course of the Jubilee Year so that they will be able to animate others to become the true Pilgrims of Hope to everyone they shall encounter.

It was felt that we would need to benefit fully from our once-off opportunity to come together as the Diocese.

My God bless all of you in every step of the way as Pilgrims of Hope, builders of peace and bearers of Goodnews.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vincent Mduzi Zungu OFM". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bishop Vincent Mduzi Zungu OFM