

# **Solemnity of the Holy Family inaugurating the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope**

## **Homily of Bishop Barres**

### **St. Agnes Cathedral**

#### **Sunday, December 29, 2024 11am CFN Mass**

On Christmas Eve in Rome, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica and inaugurated the **2025 Jubilee Year of Hope**.

Today at this St. Agnes Cathedral Mass, in solidarity with our Holy Father Pope Francis and every Bishop and Cathedral in the world, we celebrate and begin this 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, New York.

How many of you remember the 1964 World's Fair and how many of you were present?

A book entitled *Our Lady of the World's Fair: Bringing Michelangelo's Pieta to Queens in 1964* was published in just the last few months.

Many of us have powerful memories of that World's Fair and have family pictures in front of the Unisphere – a 120 foot-diameter stainless steel globe of the world that still stands close to the US Open tennis courts and Citi field.

Many of us remember hearing the song "It's a Small World after all" with our families and singing that joyful anthem to global peace in our cars.

I mentioned the 1964 World's Fair at St. Gerard Majella parish in Port Jefferson Station last Sunday and after Mass I had a line of about 15 people waiting to tell me stories.

A Puerto Rican couple flew from Puerto Rico to spend their honeymoon at the World's Fair and sixty years later their faces radiated together with the memories.

A wife and mother remembers she and her husband bringing their children with one of the children in a baby carriage and one in her womb.

It's always so moving to hear about the beautiful things parents will do to create lasting memories for their children!

Many, of course, remembered visiting Michelangelo's Pieta which was transported from the Vatican to Queens for the '64 World's Fair.

Think of the endless lines of Catholics, atheists, agnostics, ecumenical and interfaith brothers and sisters who had their moment in front of the Pieta.

They were moved at that moment for the rest of their lives by the living image in marble of Our Lady cradling her Crucified Son's body the way she cradled him in a Manger at Bethlehem.

Pope Francis would call this a poignant moment of "universal fraternity."

It was somewhat miraculous that permission was ever granted to allow this precious and fragile masterpiece to be transported by boat from Rome to Queens.

Some compared it to securing permission to allow the Statue of Liberty to be transported to Rome!

But people like Cardinal Francis Spellman, Robert Moses and many others began to think big and they were determined.

It would have been easy to give up and say it was impossible, a complete waste of time and a fool's errand to pursue this goal.

But they persevered and Our Lady intervened the way she intervened in the catering details of the Wedding Feast of Cana.

My point in telling this story is this.

In the 2025 Jubilee Year Catholic evangelization of Long Island and Metro New York and the global worldwide mission of the Catholic Church, we have to begin thinking, praying, hoping and serving big again.

The story of the 1964 World's Fair was a story of families from around the world celebrating big, thinking big, praying big in front of Michelangelo's Pieta and hoping big.

So is the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope with the Holy Family of Nazareth at the very center.

It is no mistake that the global inauguration of our **2025 Jubilee Year of Hope** occurs on the **Solemnity of the Holy Family**.

The Jubilee Year of Hope runs through the family and fidelity to the splendors of the liberating and objective truths of Christ and the Catholic Church on Marriage and the Family.

The Jubilee Year of Hope runs through every family experiencing Christ's Cross, grief, tragedy, crisis, tension and transition.

In his Christmas Midnight Mass homily, Pope Francis said: "All of us have received the gift and task of bringing hope wherever hope has been lost, lives broken, promises unkept, dreams shattered and hearts overwhelmed by adversity. We are called to bring hope to the weary who have no strength to carry on, the lonely oppressed by the bitterness of failure, and all those who are broken-hearted. To bring hope to the interminable, dreary days of prisoners, to the cold and dismal lodging of the poor, and to all those places desecrated by war and violence. To bring hope there, to sow hope there."

The Holy Family was a refugee family and they are deeply present today to every struggling refugee family in the world to rekindle their hope.

The Jubilee Year of Hope reminds us that while all families are imperfect and that all families have many problems and challenges, all families are called to grow together in holiness and a missionary spirit.

And so we heed the powerful words of St. Paul as they apply to our daily family life: "Put on, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another...Let the peace of Christ control your hearts...Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly."

Our Lady invites us to have a pondering and contemplative heart as we contemplate God's providential design in the past, present and future of our families and as we begin this Jubilee Year of Hope.

In unity with the Holy Family, our own families are called to transform the world and history with Christ's love and the mission of mercy of the Church He Himself founded.

In the 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, the Church presents us with the canonizations of soon to be Saint Carlo Acutis (1991-2006) and Saint Piergiorgio Frassati (1900-1924).

As children, teenagers and young adults, they helped Christ transform their own families with their faith and their holiness as they helped Christ transform the Church and the world to this day.

Together, they are asking every young Catholic to do the same in their time, in their place and in their own unique family.

As the Successor of the Apostles on Long Island, I want to thank every Catholic family on Long Island and beyond for being Lights of Christ's Hope and Lights of Catholic evangelization to the world.

The 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope is a time for us and our extended families to cast the nets of Eucharistic charity throughout Long Island understanding that the Eucharist is a "Fountain of Charity" -- a Fountain of the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, a Fountain of the Gospel of Life and a Fountain of every dimension of Catholic Social Justice teaching.

Catholic Long Island and Catholic Metro New York!

Think big!

Pray big!

Hope big!

Celebrate, Serve and Evangelize big!

Happy 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope!

May each one of us be a beacon of Christ's Light and Christ's Hope in this New Year!