

70th anniversary of the Diocese of Rotterdam, 1st February 2026

Today we celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Diocese of Rotterdam, which opens with this solemn Eucharist. It is a time of joy and thanksgiving. I thank in a special way your Bishop, His Lordship Bishop Johannes van den Hende for his fraternal invitation. He invited me in a fraternal spirit emphasizing the special connection of the Nunciature which is in the territory of his Diocese. I responded to his invitation with great pleasure. Let me explore now the Christian meaning of an anniversary. It is primarily a celebration of life as a gift from God, inviting gratitude and spiritual reflection. Many Christians approach it today as a time to thank God for the gift of life, personal growth, and renewal of faith. This is the case for us today.

1. **First of all, there is gratitude:** The anniversary is an opportunity to thank the Creator for the life received and for the past year. For diocesan life over the past 70 years.
2. **There is also a spiritual reflection:** It is a time to examine diocesan life to grow in wisdom and to be more committed to God, in the light of Jesus teaching.
3. **There is also a choice to be made: that of non-idolatry:** Unlike the ancient Egyptian or Roman customs focused on the deification of man or the current anthropological drifts, the Christian sense refocuses the anniversary of this Diocese on God, avoiding the idolatry promoted by society and the current culture. The Diocese of Rotterdam is invited to refocus its life on God and to propose the life of God, the Good News of Christ which is liberating and loving for

all from conception to death. This is possible only with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Diocese proposes a path of light, truth and life.

4. **Finally, this celebration of the anniversary is a sharing and a joy:**
It is an opportunity to celebrate as faithful of Christ the joy of existence and the presence of each person on the common path to God, Trinity.

The Holy Father joins you in your joy. He wishes the best for the Diocese of Rotterdam, for its pastor and for all the faithful. Affectionately and fatherly, he blesses you all.