

The Great Jubilee Year 2000 celebrates the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world. At the very dawn of the third millennium, we recall the depth of God's love for us as shown in the Incarnation of Jesus. *For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16)* Now, twenty centuries later, we pause with great jubilation in this Holy Year to reflect on the great mystery of our redemption.

HISTORY

The word "Jubilee" takes its origin from the Hebrew word *jobel* which means "a ram's horn". This instrument was used to proclaim the celebration associated with the Hebrew year of Jubilee. It relates to Joshua's sounding the ram's horn on the seventh day bringing down the walls of Jericho.

Every seventh year, like every seventh day, was always accounted holy and set aside for rest, but the year which follows seven complete cycles was to be kept as a sabbatical year of special solemnity. *Thou shalt sanctify the fiftieth year. (Leviticus 25:10)*

During the Old Testament jubilee year, crops were not grown, slaves were released and debts were forgiven. These practices were meant to emphasize the Hebrew trust in God's providence and to reflect their gratitude to God for freeing them from the slavery of Egypt and for leading and feeding them throughout their desert journey. In the jubilee year especially, they were to put into practice in their lives the goodness God showed to them.

CHRISTIAN HOLY YEAR

The first Christian Jubilee Year on record was initiated by Pope Boniface VIII in 1300 A.D. Though it is certain that solemnizing a fiftieth anniversary was regularly practiced in the Middle Ages, there is some evidence that the custom was celebrated in even earlier ages. But the first publicly announced Jubilee Year was during the Holy Year of Boniface VIII. His purpose was to call the Church to do repentance, seek the forgiveness of sin and spiritual renewal.

JUBILEE 2000

On November 10, 1994, Pope John Paul II issued the call to the people of our time to prepare for the celebration of the Great Jubilee Year 2000 in his Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. Recalling Saint Paul's description of the birth of Jesus in the "fullness of time", the Holy Father notes: "Time is indeed fulfilled by the very fact that God, in the Incarnation, came down into human history. Eternity entered into time: what fulfillment could be greater than this? What other fulfillment would be possible." (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 9)

The beginning of the third millennium offers Christians a time to celebrate God's mysterious love for all creation by sending his only Son to abide in and with his creation. For us, the year 2000 is not merely a milestone historical mark of time; rather it marks the remembrance of the fulfillment of our salvation through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

So then, in this year the Church and all Christians celebrate our liberation from sin, indeed our very new life of grace through the merits of Jesus, the Son of God. It is a year to renew our faith in Jesus, Our Lord, whose life brought life to the world. It is a year to renew our hope, through the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, that God will renew the face of the earth.

In this Jubilee Year, we are reminded that “the whole of the Christian life is like a great pilgrimage to the house of the Father, whose love for every human creature, and in particular for the ‘prodigal son’, we discover anew each day.”
(*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 49)

CALL TO HOLINESS

As with our Hebrew ancestors, so too we Christians during the Jubilee Year are called to greater holiness of life. Clergy, religious and laity in reflecting on God’s great Providence over us are asked to acknowledge our own sins, to seek forgiveness of God and one another, and to follow God’s law of love more closely, in imitation of Jesus. It is precisely because Jesus became one of us that we have an example to follow.

In a world so often confused by the distortion of truth, Jesus is the only measure of truth that will reverse our relativistic and selfish morality. Our world continues, despite all of the technological advances, to be clouded by the culture of death. Our gifts of reason and will, unenlightened, do not see and choose the abundant good God desires for his children. Only Jesus can light our path and show us the way.

The Jubilee Year is a special year of grace, a new beginning. This special time affords all of us the opportunity to renew our commitment to the Lord Jesus, to call upon the help of the Holy Spirit and to redirect our daily lives to the path that leads us home to the Father.

I exhort my brother priests and deacons to reflect during this year on their call to identity with the Lord. By the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest acts *in persona Christi*, in the person of Christ, and deacons represent Christ the servant. Through our daily ministry of prayer and service, we make Jesus present to our

people. More than ever, we must, by prayer and penance, allow Him to be more present to us so as to make us more authentic icons of our Holy Savior.

Religious, by their sacred vows, make visible to the world the Christ, poor, obedient and single-minded in His love of His Father. Today, those evangelical counsels need to be perceptibly highlighted in a society characterized by consumerism, materialism and hedonism.

Our faithful laity, especially our married couples, are called to reflect on the great love of Christ for his Church so as to renew and uphold the sanctity of marriage and family life. In our time divorce, violence and other social aberrations are trivializing both. Faithful conjugal love must become the norm once again and responsible parenthood must reinvigorate our families.

Young people, who are by nature inclined to high ideals, are also called to holiness. "The future of the world and the Church belongs to the younger generation, to those who, born in this century, will reach maturity in the next, the first century of the new millennium. Christ expects great things from young people, as He did from the young man who asked him: *What good indeed must I do to have eternal life?* (Matthew 19: 16). If they succeed in following the road which he points out to them, they will have the joy of making their own contribution to his presence in the next century and in centuries to come, until the end of time." (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 58)

This Great Jubilee affords us the opportunity to reconsecrate ourselves to greater holiness of life. I offer to all of my brothers and sisters of the Archdiocese and all others a very simple plan for holiness as we inaugurate the Special Year of Grace.

PERSONAL HOLY YEAR RESOLUTIONS

Pray morning and evening prayer, grace each day before and after meals, the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory. (*Appendix*)

Confess your sins and ask for reconciliation with God and others monthly in the Sacrament of Penance.

Attend Mass every Sunday and daily if it is possible.

Spend time in adoration of Jesus in the Tabernacle once a week.

Read a five-minute passage from one of the four gospels at your family meal each day.

Review the Ten Commandments and what they call us to live. The New Catechism of the Catholic Church can provide this. (*Appendix*)
Practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. (*Appendix*)

Fulfill the responsibilities of your state of life faithfully each day.

Participate in programs of personal spiritual renewal in your parish: Renew 2000, Renacer; Cursillo, Charismatic Renewal, etc.

Pray the Rosary for vocations and religious life.

INDULGENCES

In the document *The Mystery of the Incarnation*, our Holy Father urges us to spend the Great Jubilee Year 2000 repairing our own relationship with God by engaging in acts of penance, prayer and charity. Those who do so will be able to receive a special Holy Year indulgence.

According to the Catholic Catechism, “an indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven.” (no. 1471) Whenever we sin, we put disorder into our lives. Our sins carry double consequences. The eternal punishment for grave sin is complete separation from God forever - hell. That punishment is removed once we ask for forgiveness in confession and receive absolution. But the secondary or “temporal” effect of sin, even venial sin, remains - our tendency to continue to sin and separate our will from God’s.

Even though God forgives our sins in confession, we still suffer from the disorder left. This temporal punishment separates us from complete holiness of life. We need to be purified of this disorder before we can attain the perfect holiness that will enable us to fulfill our destiny and be with God for all eternity.

Indulgences can help us to reorder our life to God and our will to His. The Holy Father exhorts all the faithful to spend the Millennium Year repairing their relationship with the Lord. Repentance is intrinsic to the Jubilee Year and to the granting of indulgences. The public acts associated with indulgences are based on the practice of the early Church regarding forgiveness of sins, namely:

By making a pilgrimage to specific churches or shrines located in Rome (including the Catacombs); or the Holy Land; or the diocesan cathedral; or a local church or shrine so designated by the bishop.

By participating, during that visit, in a liturgical celebration such as Mass or vespers; or spending time before the Blessed Sacrament and ending the meditation with an Our Father, a profession of faith (the Creed), and a prayer to the blessed Virgin Mary.

In addition, the Pope has recently added the practice of the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy as a means of gaining an indulgence.

By visiting the sick, the imprisoned, the elderly living alone, the handicapped, and anyone else who is in need, "as if making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them."

By abstaining for at least one whole day from unnecessary consumption of alcohol or tobacco; fasting or practicing abstinence; donating money or time to charitable works that benefit the community, in particular abandoned children, young people in trouble, the elderly in need, and foreigners in various countries seeking better living conditions.

Those who fulfill these conditions will receive "full forgiveness" of the temporal punishment due to their sins, whether for themselves or for the soul of a deceased person.

The following are the churches and shrines where indulgences may be obtained during the Jubilee Year 2000:

In Rome

Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican
Archbasilica of the Most Holy Savior at the Lateran
Basilica of Saint Mary Major
Basilica of Saint Paul on the Ostian Way
Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem
Basilica of Saint Lawrence in Campo Verano
Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love
Christian Catacombs

In the Holy Land

Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem
Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem
Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth

In the Archdiocese of Miami

Saint Mary Cathedral in Miami
Gesù Church in Miami
Saint John Vianney Seminary Chapel in Miami
Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami
Saint Mary Star of the Sea in Key West
Saint Agnes in Key Biscayne
Saint Rose of Lima in Miami Shores
San Lazaro in Hialeah
Saint Louis King of France in Miami
Church of the Little Flower in Coral Gables
Saint Elizabeth of Hungary in Pompano Beach
Saint Gregory the Great in Plantation
Little Flower Church in Hollywood
Saint Anthony in Fort Lauderdale

In addition, the Archdiocese of Miami will be sponsoring two pilgrimages to Rome during the Holy Year - in March and May 2000.

Since spiritual renewal is at the heart of the Jubilee celebration, I exhort everyone during this special time of grace to seek opportunities for receiving the indulgences granted by the Church.

CALL TO JUSTICE

“In the spirit of the book of Leviticus, Christians will have to raise their voice on behalf of all the poor of the world, proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing

substantially, if not canceling outright, the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations.” (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 51)

The Holy Father reminds us that justice is a special concern in a jubilee year. To right what has been wrong is part of bringing God’s order to our lives and world. Our redemption through Jesus is the correction of our original disobedience by our first parents, Adam and Eve.

In the spirit of the ancient Jewish custom of forgiving debts during a Jubilee Year, the Archdiocese has forgiven the debts of eight poor parishes, in the amount of \$1.8 million. This is meant to be a testimony to our love and commitment to our brothers and sisters in poorer areas of our local Church. It is also meant to be a model for individuals and countries to follow in sharing the Lord’s blessing with others so that a more equitable system of social justice might be achieved.

In addition, the Archdiocese of Miami has entered into a twinning program whereby parishes with plentiful financial resources are sharing those resources with parishes who are not so financially solvent. The twinning program is an exchange of resources allowing both parishes to place their respective gifts at the service of the other.

Finally, I urge you to support the Holy Father’s plea for amnesty for undocumented aliens and to renew your commitment to building a culture of life that respects life from its beginning in the womb until its natural end. I urge all Catholics to imitate the Pope’s efforts to abolish the death penalty as punishment for serious criminal offenses. Respect for the abundant life Jesus came to bring should not be repulsed by violently taking the life of any other person, even a convicted criminal.

FINAL EXHORTATION

As Christians, we believe that Christ came to bring life to the world. His birth among us has made it possible for all of us to call God "Our Father". We need to retell His good news in the Third Millennium. But the personal renewal of each of us is the first step toward any effective preaching of the Gospel. I call upon every one of you, my beloved brothers and sisters, to take this Jubilee Year seriously - to take Jesus Christ wholeheartedly into your everyday lives.

Pray to Mary, Our Lady of the New Millennium, to share with you her Son Jesus. She brought him into the world; watched him through his ministry; suffered with him on the cross, and received his Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Surely, she will show him to you, if you ask her.

Throughout the Jubilee Year, may Mary leads us and all God's people together with the heavenly chorus of angels and saints in a triumphant song of praise to the Father:

Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forever. Amen.
(Hebrews 13.8)

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord
25 December 1999
The Cathedral of Saint Mary