

## **To the Clergy, Religious and Laity of the Archdiocese of Miami**

*“The new and unique situation in which the world and the Church find themselves at the threshold of the Third Millennium, and the urgent needs which result, mean that the mission of evangelization today calls for a new program which can be defined overall as a new evangelization.”(The Church in America #6*

My dear friends,

The Star of Bethlehem led the Magi to Jesus, the true Light of the World. The Church’s beautiful Epiphany celebration closes the Great Jubilee Year 2000. We join our Eastern Rite Catholics and Orthodox brothers and sisters in giving special significance to this Feast of Lights when Jesus, God’s Light in the world, reveals himself to all nations and every people.

For the Church, the Holy Year 2000 has been a remembrance of God’s many blessings which sustain us in our daily conversion of life. The thrust of God’s love is always outward, love to be shared with all creation and most especially with the children of his household. Ever outward, God’s love awaits everyone; those who

respond as members of the Christian tradition as well as all believers, and even those who do not yet believe. The Star of Bethlehem beckons everyone to a personal search to find Jesus and to remain close to him.

The Great Jubilee Year celebrated the everlasting love of the Father in sending His Son into the world to share our life and to teach us how best to live that life by sharing it with others.

## **CONVERSION**

Personal recommitment to Jesus, the World's Savior, was the goal of Jubilee 2000: conversion from our sinful ways and rededication to follow the gospel in a new and exciting way. The new evangelization Pope John Paul II calls us to, begins with personal conversion.

*“As the Church’s Supreme Pastor, I urgently desire to encourage all the members of God’s People, particularly those living in America – where I first appealed for a commitment ‘new in its ardor, methods and expression’ – to take up this project*

*and to cooperate in carrying it out. In accepting this mission, everyone should keep in mind that the vital core of the new evangelization must be a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ, that is, the preaching of his name, his teaching, his life, his promises and the Kingdom which he has gained for us by his Paschal Mystery.” (The Church in America #66).*

In my Pastoral Letter issued at Christmas 1999, the beginning of this special year of Grace, I called everyone to follow a simple plan for personal spiritual renewal (cf. Appendix 1). However, genuine holiness of life is never meant to be only a personal relationship between the individual and God. True holiness, like the very love life of God, is never self-contained. It is always directed outward, to be shared with others.

Now that we have been personally renewed by the beautiful events and graces of the Jubilee Year in the Archdiocese in union with those of the Universal Church, we must share with others that same Light of Christ which has illumined us. The Star that has led us to Jesus now returns us, like the wise men, to the workplace of our everyday lives. Like so many of those whom Jesus encountered

and healed in the gospel, we now must return to our own and tell the good news.

## **COMMUNION**

*“The evangelization of America is not only a gift from the Lord, it is also a source of new responsibilities.” (The Church in America # 1)*

In November 1997, John Paul II convened the Synod for America in Rome. Elected and appointed bishops and a few religious and lay observers from across the American continent participated in the month-long event. I was fortunate to be one of the 25 bishop-delegates from the United States. There were bishop delegates from Canada, U.S., Central and South America, and the nations of the Caribbean, 265 in all.

The Pope views all of us as one. He never referred to the “Americas”, but always “America.” By our common undertaking, he hoped to develop among us the understanding and appreciation of our communion in the one faith and baptism. In his Introduction to the final Synod document, he states:

*“In Santo Domingo, when I first proposed a Special Assembly of the Synod, I remarked that ‘on the threshold of the third Christian millennium and at a time when many walls and ideological barriers have fallen, the Church feels absolutely duty-bound to bring into still deeper spiritual union the peoples who compose this great continent and also, prompted by the religious mission which is proper to the Church, to stir among these peoples a spirit of solidarity’. I asked that the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops reflect on America as a single entity, by reason of all that is common to the peoples of the continent, including their shared Christian identity and their genuine attempt to strengthen the bonds of solidarity and communion between the different forms of the continent’s rich cultural heritage. The decision to speak of ‘America’ in the singular was an attempt to express not only the unity which in some way already exists, but also to point to that closer bond which the peoples of the continent seek and which the Church wishes to foster as part of her own mission, as she works to promote the communion of all in the Lord.” (The Church in America #5).*

The teaching of the Synod challenges everyone on the American continent to take seriously the role of the new evangelization in addressing the many needs of the Church and society.

Mindful of the original evangelization begun more than 500 years ago with the arrival of Columbus, the Synod Fathers were asked to assess the needs of the Church today and to join in a plan for new evangelization appropriate to our times and circumstances as we enter the third millenium.

The Apostolic Exhortation describes the goal, as follows:

*“Faced with a divided world which is in search of unity, we must proclaim with joy and firm faith that God is communion, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, unity in distinction, and that he calls all people to share in that same Trinitarian communion. We must proclaim that this communion is the magnificent plan of God the Father; that Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Lord, is the heart of this communion, and that the Holy Spirit works ceaselessly to create communion and to restore it when it is broken. We must proclaim that the Church is the sign and instrument of the communion willed by God, begun in time and destined for completion in the fullness of the Kingdom.” (The Church in America #33)*

The communion described here is that of a unity with much diversity on the American continent and in the Archdiocese of Miami. This is reflected in the diverse ethnic, cultural and language differences among us. Yet, it is our oneness of faith that unites us.

As God's family, the Churches of the American continent share serious common challenges. The following were enumerated in the final document of the Synod:

Promotion of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Spiritual renewal of parishes.

Spiritual renewal of family life.

Youth ministry.

Relations with other Churches and Ecclesial Communities

Relations with Jews and other non-Christian communities.

In the Archdiocese of Miami we have already begun to address most of these issues:

## Vocations

We have initiated a plan for developing vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Parish Vocation Committees exist in 41 of our parishes. Our people are praying for vocations and God is answering. Presently, our College Seminary is at capacity; the Archdiocese has been blessed with over 70 seminarians. We have a locally-approved diocesan community of women living a religious rule, the Servants of the Pierced Hearts of Jesus and Mary, which numbers 12. Our parishes and schools are becoming more and more aware of our need for vocations.

## Spiritual Renewal

Renew 2000/Renacer was a three-year program of spiritual renewal for our people and for family life. Sixty four parishes chose to participate in weekly group meetings, in English, Spanish, Creole and Portuguese. Over 14,000 persons are committed to participate regularly in the 1,800 faith sharing communities. The yearning for personal spiritual growth and support in the faith is most encouraging.

## Family life

The Family Enrichment Center offers both individuals and parish leadership opportunities of healing when relationships are broken; of challenge when values and truths are put aside; of enrichment towards making a good marriage better; of support as families experience change and challenge, and finally, as an advocate on behalf of a safe and healthy environment for all families through a variety of programs of instruction, retreats, trainings and support.

At Confirmation, I speak briefly about a simple plan to help renew every Catholic family: a) pray: morning and evening prayers, at meals, and attend Mass together; b) eat a meal together every day with no music, television, etc., just family sharing good conversation about your life, and c) playing together, parents and children sharing time to get to know each other better and sacrificing all else for that purpose.

## Youth

Our Archdiocesan Office for Youth Ministry offers parish visits and consultations, training of adult advisors and training of youth leaders. Retreats for youth are regularly conducted at our Miami-Dade and Broward Youth Centers. Youth members from across the Archdiocese interact through diocesan youth events, sports programs and council meetings. They also participate in regional, national and international encounters.

Our Catholic schools are a major instrument of evangelization for our youth. Currently, we enroll over 36,000 in our elementary and secondary schools. We have opened six new elementary schools in the past ten years and two new high schools.

Our Religious Education programs in our parishes educate over 48,000 students in the faith.

## Ecumenical and interfaith efforts

The Archdiocese of Miami offers Ecumenical and Inter-Religious leadership in South Florida and throughout the State in a variety of

programs and activities. We are participants in the efforts of the Florida Council of Churches which speaks to ecumenical issues and shared ministry in Florida. The Archdiocese was a founder of the Miami Religious Coalition which seeks to address critical religious and community issues and to be a moral voice on the questions of peace and justice common to Christians, Muslims and Jews.

In so many ways we can be proud of the communion we share in the Archdiocese among our Catholic community and with the other Christian and non-Christian communities. But so much more needs to be done. So many need to hear about Jesus. The work of the new evangelization is the challenge we must now accept in the new millennium as we discover new ways to invite others to learn about Jesus.

## **SOLIDARITY**

*“Solidarity is thus the fruit of the communion which is grounded in the mystery of the triune God, and in the Son of God who took flesh and died for all. It is expressed in Christian love which seeks the*

*good of others, especially of those most in need.” (The Church in America #52).*

The Church’s teaching about solidarity is based on Saint Matthew’s gospel, chapter 25, describing the last judgment when Jesus concludes: *“Whenever you did it to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.”* The identification of Jesus in the face of those in need is what prompts us to act. Whatever the need, it is always the Jesus in others who is in need.

Catholics who have truly experienced a conversion to the Lord will respond not only to the needs of those in the household of the Lord, but those outside as well. Not only to those in the Archdiocese, but to those in other dioceses and countries. Our oneness as God’s family unites believers and unbelievers alike.

We cannot close our eyes to the crying needs that surround us and our continent. Our sense of social justice urges us always to open our hearts and do what we can to meet the challenge of our times.

Some of the issues that surround us here in the United States and across the American continent are: human rights, poverty, foreign debt, drugs, corruption, violence, arms race; racial discrimination, immigrants, indigenous peoples and disregard for nature.

In the Archdiocese, we have begun to address some of these:

In the spirit of the ancient Jewish custom of forgiving debts as part of the celebration of the Jubilee Year, the Archdiocese has forgiven the debt of eight poor parishes in the amount of 1.8 million dollars.

Annually, the Archdiocese contributes over one million dollars to continue the operation of 22 needy parishes and additionally, over one million dollars to keep Catholic schools in those parishes open for the evangelization of their parishioners.

In our recently completed Vision 2000 Campaign, there will be set aside a \$20 million endowment for the needy students who wish to attend our Catholic elementary and high schools, and an additional \$5 million to supply scholarships for needy Catholic High School

students who wish to attend Saint Thomas University, which is sponsored by the Archdiocese of Miami.

We have entered upon a twinning program whereby parishes with plentiful financial resources share those resources with parishes that are not financially solvent. Currently 40 parishes are involved in this program.

Since the very foundation of the Archdiocese of Miami, services to immigrants have been at the heart of our work in Catholic Charities and Pastoral Ministries. Helping refugees from Cuba, Haiti, all of Latin America and indeed from around the world, the Archdiocese has been at the forefront of community response to the needs of those who arrive on our shores due to political, religious and other forms of persecution and poverty. Currently, the Archdiocese has a full range of services, providing from the point of entry resettlement assistance, to housing for unaccompanied minors, educational and pastoral care and legal services to help immigrants become full members of our Church and community.

In our Archdiocesan Detention Ministry, we promote communities of faith inside the institutions which are made up of inmates, staff and volunteers, and they proclaim, celebrate and build the kingdom of God. We also develop teams of volunteers to care for the victims of crime and relatives of inmates through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. Detention Ministry also works with numerous community agencies to advocate for the abolishment of the death penalty; justice reform; youth at risk, and fair treatment of immigrants.

Through the assistance of numerous parishes throughout the Archdiocese, we assist the Churches of needy dioceses in the Caribbean. The Archdiocese has a special sister relationship with the Diocese of Port-de-Paix in Haiti, and through the extensive works of a lay organization, Amor en Acción, schools are being built there, an orphanage is being supported.

In addition to our financial support of the Church in other countries of the continent, the Archdiocese also assists with missionaries to these areas. We currently have priests of the

Archdiocese on leave for ministry in Perú, Cuba and Mexico. Lay missionaries through the services of Amor en Acción are involved in the Churches in a number of countries in the Caribbean.

The Archdiocese participates in the annual Mission Sunday Collection taken up across the world in all Catholic parishes to help the missionary labors of the neediest areas of the world. Through our own Missionary Cooperative Plan, which includes annual presentations and appeals made in our local parishes, we assist particular missions.

Under the auspices of Amor en Acción and our local seminary, young people and seminarians are involved in visits to other countries in order to work with the poor and needy of those areas.

#### New initiatives in the Archdiocese of Miami

To assist us in developing an ever-wider appreciation for the papal call to new evangelization and for our solidarity with those beyond the Archdiocese, I am announcing the following plan for the Archdiocese of Miami:

1. The establishment of a Mission Committee in every parish and mission Church of the Archdiocese of Miami.
2. A new comprehensive program of missionary presentations and appeals in every parish of the Archdiocese, every year, arranged through the services of our Propagation of the Faith Office.
3. The education of our youth about our missionary responsibilities through the establishment of the Holy Childhood Society in every Catholic elementary school and parish Religious Education Program and a Mission Committee in our Catholic High Schools where they do not exist.

### **ROLE OF MARY**

To conclude the Synod for America and to promulgate the Synodal Document “The Church in America”, the Synodal Fathers convened in Mexico City on January 22, 1999, at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Celebrating Mass with the over 600 bishops of the American Continent, the Holy Father took the occasion to declare

December 12 to be a feast day in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe to be observed throughout America. Raising this special veneration of Mary to the rank of a feast for everyone, not just Mexicans, emphasizes once again the communion and solidarity we, all Americans, share. The mestizo face of Guadalupe reminds us of the common life that is ours and the common faith that binds us together. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patroness of the American Continent. We place all of the efforts of the Archdiocese of Miami toward the new evangelization in the third millennium in her loving care. We beg Our Lady to support us through her powerful intercessions and to present our humble intentions and deeds to her Son, our Divine Redeemer.

## **CONCLUSION**

We united ourselves with the Holy Father today as he closes the Holy Year doors to conclude this Year of Grace, the Great Jubilee 2000. We offer the prayer Pope John Paul II offered at the conclusion of his Apostolic Exhortation "The Church in America"

and beg God's grace on our humble efforts to be faithful disciples of the new evangelization.

*We thank you, Lord Jesus, because the Gospel of the Father's love, with which you came to save the world, has been proclaimed far and wide in America as a gift of the Holy Spirit that fills us with gladness. We thank you for the gift of your Life, which you have given us by loving us to the end: your Life makes us children of God, brothers and sisters to each other. Increase, O Lord, our faith and our love for you, present in all the tabernacles of the continent.*

*Grant us to be faithful witnesses to your Resurrection for the younger generation of Americans, so that, in knowing you, they may follow you and find in you their peace and joy. Only then will they know that they are brothers and sisters of all God's children scattered throughout the world.*

*You who, in becoming man, chose to belong to a human family, teach families the virtues which filled with light the family home of Nazareth. May families always be united, as you and the Father are one, and may they be living witnesses to love, justice and solidarity; make them schools of respect, forgiveness and mutual help, so that the world may believe; help them to be the source of vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life, and all the other forms of firm Christian commitment.*

*Protect your Church and the Successor of Peter, to whom you, Good Shepherd, have entrusted the task of feeding your flock. Grant that the Church in America may flourish and grow richer in the fruits of holiness. Teach us to love your Mother, Mary, as you loved her. Give us strength to proclaim your word with courage in the work of the new evangelization, so that the world may know new hope.*

*Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mother of America, pray for us!*

**PERSONAL HOLY YEAR RESOLUTIONS**

1. Pray morning and evening prayer, grace before and after meals, the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory – daily.
2. Confess your sins and ask for reconciliation with God and others monthly in the Sacrament of Penance.
3. Attend Mass every Sunday, and daily if it is possible.
4. Spend time in adoration of Jesus in the Tabernacle once a week.
5. Read a five-minute passage from one of the four gospels at your family meal each day.
6. Review the Ten Commandments and what they call us to live. (The New Catechism of the Catholic Church can provide this).
7. Practice the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
8. Fulfill the responsibilities of your state of life faithfully each day.
9. Participate in programs of personal spiritual renewal in your parish: Renew 2000; Renacer; Lay Apostolic movements and associations of the Archdiocese.
10. Pray the Rosary for vocations and religious life.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE FOR ALL

A Catholic Framework for Economic Life

A Statement of the U.S. Bishops

As followers of Jesus Christ and participants in a powerful economy, Catholics in the United States are called to work for greater economic justice in the face of persistent poverty, growing income gaps, and increasing discussion of economic issues in the United States and around the world. We urge Catholics to use the following ethical framework for economic life as principles for reflection, criteria for judgement, and directions for action. These principles are drawn directly from Catholic teaching on economic life:

1. The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy.
2. All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person, support the family, and serve the common good.
3. A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring.

4. All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, safe environment, economic security).
5. All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations.
6. All people, to the extent they are able, have a corresponding duty to work, a responsibility to provide for the needs of their families, and an obligation to contribute to the broader society.
7. In economic life, free markets have both clear advantages and limits; government has essential responsibilities and limitations; voluntary groups have irreplaceable roles, but cannot substitute for the proper working of the market and the just policies of the state.
8. Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action where necessary, to assure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life.
9. Workers, owners, managers, stockholders, and consumers are moral agents in economic life. By our choices, initiative, creativity, and investment, we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life, and social justice.
10. The global economy has moral dimensions and human consequences. Decisions on investment, trade, aid, and development should protect

human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need wherever they might live on this globe.