
ONWARDS TO THE YEAR 2000!



All these paths, passages and ways are as many moments of grace from the Lord to enlist us both personally and as a community for the building up of the kingdom of life and truth, of grace and holiness, of justice, love, and peace. They are grace-filled events which I invite you to experience fully on the occasion of this turning-point in the history of humankind.

JUBILEE 2000

Last November 27, in officially announcing that the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 would begin on Christmas, 1999 and last until January 6, 2001, Pope John Paul II said: "The Holy Year must be one uninterrupted hymn of praise to the Trinity. May this hymn to the Trinity, praise for the Incarnation of the Son, be sung with one voice by all those who have been baptised and who share in the one faith in Jesus the Lord." [Cf. "On the Road to the Year 2000" in *From A Bishop's Journal (Working Paper Dated December 1998)*, par. 1]

VARIOUS PATHS

Pope John Paul II insists on the importance of prayer during the year: prayer for the universal Church, prayer for the Pope, prayer for pastors, prayer for the faithful, and celebration of the sacraments of reconciliation and of the Eucharist: a vast network of prayer, forgiveness and thanksgiving covering the universe. If the Roman and Holy Land basilicas are important meeting places for these periods of prayer and pilgrimage, Pope John Paul has also decreed that these grace-filled moments of the Jubilee can also be experienced in a special way in every diocese if the faithful go on pilgrimage to the cathedral church or other places designated by the diocesan bishop.

DESIGNATED CHURCHES

In our diocese, the Cathedral at Edmundston is the sign of the unity of our diocesan community and a sign of communion with all other Christian churches in the world. It is a special house of prayer; it is the place of the *cathedra*, the bishop's seat, symbol of his apostolic charge to oversee the prayer, teaching and service of his flock. As in previous years, pastoral activities will be offered at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception throughout the year to remind all of the presence of Jesus among his people. Because of the importance of the Sunday gathering at the heart of the community, I appoint all of our parish churches as places of prayer, reconciliation, and communion throughout this jubilee year: I invite all to come often, at least on a weekly basis, in order to continue building up our Christian communities.

DEBTS AND INJURIES

According to the jubilee tradition, slaves were freed, debts were remitted, and the soil was left fallow, at that time. Because of requests from our milieu and also due to the explicit request of Pope John Paul II, rich countries are asked to remit the debt of poor nations; there are encouraging signs that this will take place. May we too,

in answer to the Lord's command in the prayer he has taught us, remit the debt of those who have offended us: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." May the year 2000 be a special time of reconciliation and forgiveness in our families and parishes, may we help heal those wounds we have voluntarily or involuntarily caused.

COMPASSION AND PRESENCE

Besides prayer, pilgrimages, celebrations and reconciliation, the Holy Father reminds us of these graced events which are visits to our needy or distressed brothers and sisters: the sick, prisoners, the elderly and the lonely, the handicapped, and the grieving. These are opportunities for us to discover Christ Jesus present in these people in a very special way. May the values of friendship, mutual help and solidarity which are so well established in our milieu, continue to flourish throughout this period of grace.

EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESSES

I would like to remind you of the principle activity we are promoting, to help us prepare for the Jubilee of the Year 2000: the preparation and celebration of five diocesan Eucharistic Congresses. Our Fourth Eucharistic Congress will soon take place in the Grand Falls Deanery (June 4, 5, 6), and we are already looking forward to the fifth and final congress which is to take place in the Edmundston Deanery, on Pentecost weekend, June 9, 10, and 11 of the year 2000. The Eucharist is the chief sacrament of the presence of Jesus among his people. Bread is broken and wine is poured out for the salvation of our brothers and sisters. Jesus gives up his life so that we may have it to the full. The mystery of our faith is truly great: we recall the death of Jesus, his resurrection, and his return in glory. May the Jubilee be a living source of graces for all humankind. More than ever, let us welcome Jesus in our hearts, and let us witness daily by our commitment of faith, hope, and charity. If each one in our communities is focused on Jesus and is renewed in the grace of his/her baptism, during the Jubilee year, there is no doubt that our communities as a whole will be more dynamic, fraternal, and mission-oriented.

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