
LET IT COME, THE YEAR 2000 JUBILEE! (1)



On December 24 of this year, at 6:00 P.M. as Pope John Paul II officially inaugurates the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, I hope that in all parishes church bells will ring for a full five minutes. This shall be our first activity marking the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ Jesus, our Saviour.

YOUR CHURCH : HOLY GROUND

It will not be necessary to undertake a pilgrimage to Rome to fully enjoy the benefits of the Holy Year 2000: Pope John Paul II has authorised every diocesan bishop to designate those places where such an event can be experienced. That is the reason why as far back as last May I designated each of our 32 parish churches as places marked with special and exceptional graces, on condition that one pray for the world-wide Church and especially for the Sovereign Pontiff, and that the sacraments of penance/reconciliation and Eucharist be celebrated.

A PLACE FOR LIVING

It would be such a great thing if during the year 2000 we were to discover even more the importance of every parish church, and that they become once more places of life for the whole community and each of its members. They must not become vestiges of the past, objects of nostalgia, museums of a deceased Christianity, but rather real tangible and actual signs of God's presence in the midst of our world. Jesus became man and dwelt among us: every church is a reminder of this great mystery of Christ's incarnation, 2000 years ago. Emmanuel, God-with-us wants to be with us humans at the very centre of our hearts. We must respect every church and each and every baptised person because they are holy places, temples of God.

A PLACE OF PRAYER

How beneficial it would be if during the year 2000 we were to discover or rediscover the life of prayer: a life of personal prayer and of community prayer. The saintly Curé of Ars, Saint John Vianney, used to say that there are two things proper to human beings, and these are love and prayer. Prayer is a tender exchange between God and each human being. It is sometimes silent prayer where one listens to God; other times it is a call to God in our distress, or thanksgiving, or petition. How I wish our church doors remained open at least a few hours each day so that individually, as a couple or a community we could set aside time for prayer to our God.

A BOND OF PATERNITY

One of the first actions we could do at each visit we make to our parish church would be to acknowledge one another as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. We are not just anybody, any thing. And the same goes for those brothers and sisters we come across. Let us learn to recognise the presence of God in oneself and in every baptised person. We are the members of Jesus Christ: this is our first confession of faith. How can we

recognise Jesus in the bread and wine if we cannot recognise him in the brothers and sisters in the community? Welcoming Jesus is dependent on the welcome we extend to our brothers and sisters: it is the same gesture of faith and love.

A PLACE OF THANKSGIVING

As both individuals and members of a community we must express "always and everywhere", but especially in our parish churches, the most profound of our thanksgivings. We have so many reasons to do this: the gift of life, the gift of creation, the gift of baptism, the gift of fellowship, the gift of forgiveness, the gift of the Word, the gift of the Church, the gift of all the sacraments, the gifts of faith, hope, and charity... the gift of the Eucharist. Saint John Eudes was fond of saying that an eternity would be needed to adequately thank the Lord for the gift of a single eucharistic celebration. All the more reason why we should dedicate one hour per week to God, to thank him for all His goodness.

A PLACE OF PETITION

The liturgical reform has brought out the importance of the prayer of the faithful. We must pray not only for ourselves but for the whole Church and all humankind. The liturgical form for Good Friday is an excellent prayer model: prayer for the Church, prayer for the Pope, the bishops, priests, and deacons, prayer for our political leaders, for those in difficult situations, for believers and non-believers in Jesus our Saviour. We are invited to make of each of our churches places of petition and earnest supplication for all humankind, like Abraham who pleaded for the salvation of his people, like Jesus who amid crying and tears pleaded to the Father for each human being.

Next week I shall explain how each parish church can be a place of reconciliation and of sharing.

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