
WHAT IS OUR EVALUATION OF JUBILEE YEAR 2000?



At the end of a civil or fiscal year, it is good to evaluate the weeks and months past in order to appreciate what has been achieved or overlooked. It seems to me that it would be beneficial to everyone and every Christian community to draw up a balance sheet, however brief, of what we have experienced of a year which ran for 380 days, since it began at Christmas, 1999 and ended on the feast of the Epiphany, 2001.

EVALUATION GUIDES

During the year I made a pilgrimage to each parish in the diocese to meet my my brothers and sisters and to explain to them the major points of a holy year. The six major elements I mentioned can serve as guides to evaluate our Holy Year. According to biblical tradition, there are three major elements which mark every jubilee year celebrated at fifty-year intervals: the liberation of slaves, the cancellation of debts, and rest for the earth. These were three of the most important social measures for God's chosen people, measures which can still inspire us today. According to Christian tradition, three further elements are part of a jubilee year: the holy door, the pilgrimage, and the grace of the jubilee.

WELCOME AND RESPECT OF THE OTHER

In our democratic context, we at first glance don't have slaves or oppressed people in our midst: we want to respect all human beings, men, women and children, in their dignity. Everyone can say with a clear conscience whether one has succeeded in actually living up to this great challenge. To what extent have we welcomed among us the one who is different from us? For example, to what extent have we made our youth and young people, the elderly, and strangers feel welcome? During this Holy Year have we financially supported youth centres which had a hard time staying open? Did we, in the course of this Holy Year, reach out to the sick who were lonely? It is proverbial that our people are very welcoming of others, but will this year have spurred us on to further reaching out to others in respect? It is equally proverbial that our people are compassionate, that they welcome and show concern for others, but will the Holy Year have helped us make greater strides along the road of human dignity?

CANCELLATION OF DEBTS

We speak of the liberation of slaves, but there is also the remittance of debts. The petition for the cancellation of the debts of poor countries by richer nations has not left us indifferent: thousands of our fellow-citizens joined countless millions of others to ask for the cancellation of debts incurred by poor nations. But there are also other kinds of debt cancellations: the forgiveness of past mistakes and reconciliation were requirements of the jubilee year. What is our score, on this issue, reconciliation between family members and members of the same parish, reconciliation between coworkers, and collaborators? Each one in particular must answer for him- or herself to what extent there was concern for reconciliation.

REST FOR THE EARTH

To liberation of slaves, respect of people, cancellation of debts and reconciliation there were also rest for the earth or respect of our natural resources. More and more people strive to respect their environment and protect resources of which we are the stewards, the custodians. For too long we have believed that the earth's resources, that water and clean air were limitless. The recent tragedies caused by water contamination, and the scarcity of certain commodities are a serious warning. To what extent has the Holy Year made us sensitive to the need for respect of the earth?

THE HOLY DOOR

On December 25, 1999, the Holy Father opened the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, and we witnessed its closing on January 6, 2001. In what measure are we opened to Jesus the "Door" to the Father? How wide did we open doors to Jesus? Pope John Paul II urged us to "open wide the doors to the Lord". To what extent will the Holy Year have helped us open wide the doors to Christ? In what measure will the Holy Year have opened the vast realms of culture, civilisation and development to Christ's saving power?

PILGRIMAGE

In addition to the Holy Door there was also the pilgrimage which reminds humankind of its progress toward Dieu. "The history of the Church is the living diary of a pilgrimage made", Pope John Paul II has said. In his kindness, the Pope left to each bishop the care of designating those places where such pilgrimages could be made. In our diocese, every church as well as the Hôtel-Dieu of Saint Joseph, in Saint-Basile, the convent of Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Edmundston, and the Diocesan Centre were designated as places of pilgrimage: in what measure did we discover the holiness of these places and the deep significance a chapel or church has for every Christian community? Did we realise that our journey to a church was also a journey to the Father who welcomes us with open arms?

THE GRACE OF THE JUBILEE

All through this year of blessings I have insisted on the grace of the jubilee, the grace of meeting Jesus, of welcoming him into our hearts, of introducing him to others. In what measure will this Holy Year have brought us to greater intimacy with Jesus in his Word, his Eucharist, and in the suffering members of his mystical body? Are we intimate with the Blessed Trinity who desires to abide in us and be one with us?

CONVICTIONS

Jesus showed himself to us throughout the year so that our lives may show it radiate his presence. I firmly convinced that the Holy Year 2000 will have helped us show this by the respect we have for everyone, by reconciliation with our brothers and sisters, and by protecting the earth; the Holy Year will have sustained us on the wonderful pilgrimage of opening our hearts to Christ, opening wide our doors to him every day, and welcoming the grace of the Jubilee with open arms. Yes, may the Holy Year have contributed in making more tangible, more concrete, and more visible the presence of Jesus in the midst of our world. May this Holy Year have shown that *the love of God is from age to age*.

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