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Bishop's Christmas Message

My dear People,

More than five centuries before the birth of Christ, a man known to us as Second Isaiah looked out over the city of Babylon. He saw there his Hebrew brothers and sisters held in exile. They had been taken far from their land. Gone was their beautiful Temple. No king sat on the Hebrew throne. The eternal covenant between God and His chosen people appeared to be at an end. But, filled with the Spirit of God, Isaiah proclaimed that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all mankind shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." The glory of the Lord — something at once radiant and terrible, too deeply mysterious to be comprehended — would again be made known.

It was in Jesus who walked the hills of Judea ministering to the poor, healing the sick and raising the dead that Christians saw the promise of Isaiah come to pass. It is John's Gospel that states: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." This is why the Christmas Preface says, "In the wonder of the incarnation, your eternal Word has brought to the eyes of faith a new and radiant vision of your glory."

It has now been nearly two thousand years since Jesus walked the earth. And once again mankind is in a very real sort of exile. The world faces terrible food shortages. People die of hunger. Inflation presses hard on all, but most especially on the poor and elderly. Strife and scandal rock even the greatest of nations. Christian values often have little effect on society. Now, as never before, we so need to see again the glory of God.

But how will this vision come again? Through us. St. Paul tells us that "man is the image of God and reflects God's glory." It will be man loving and ministering to his fellowman who will reveal God's glory. This radical service, this care beyond cost, this simple life and firm hope — and too deeply mysterious ever to be comprehended — will once again proclaim to the world that God is with us.

My wish, then, and my prayer is that this Christmas, we might all come to see a new vision of the glory of God and having seen it, we might have the courage to share it with the world.



In Christ, our Saviour,

Joseph L. Hogan

+ Joseph L. Hogan
Bishop of Rochester

Pope Stresses Concern For Poor at Christmas

Vatican City (RNS) — Urging the faithful to open their minds and hearts to the "true spirit of Christmas," Pope Paul emphasized that this spirit should find its expression in "personal encounter with Jesus" and in "sensitive" concern for the needs of the world's poor, suffering, and imprisoned.

"Christmas," he told the crowd gathered in St. Peter's Square for his customary Sunday noon homily and blessing, "is an event that is new and important every year."

But this year, he said, it takes on added significance because the Church's 1975 Holy Year will be formally inaugurated on Christmas Eve.

"Let us try to open our minds and hearts to the true spirit of Christmas," he urged, "a spirit that must not lack two fundamental forms of expression, the one interior, the other, exterior."

"The first form of expression," the Pope explained, "is characterized by an interiority of prayer made joyful by personal encounter with Jesus, the Messiah of everyone and for everyone, who presents Himself to us in history and through his sacraments."

"The second form of expression is one you know very well," the pontiff continued. "It is the exterior expression of a beneficent love that makes us sensitive to the needs of others — the meanest, the poor, the suffering, the abandoned, prisoners, and even of the indifferent and of evil people."

"Has not Jesus made us all brothers, Jesus, the God-made-man who dwells among us?"

Pope Paul insisted that there could be no "authentic Christmas" unless it were marked by the love that Jesus personified and "which He wills to radiate in the world" through Christians.

Midnight Mass On Channel 8

New York (RNS) — The launching of the 1975 Holy Year and Pope Paul's Midnight Mass at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome will be televised via satellite on Christmas Eve, at 11:30 p.m. by the NBC television network. (In Rochester, WORC-TV, Channel 8.)

Beginning with the opening by the Pope of the Holy Door of the basilica for pilgrims who will come to Rome during the next year, the telecast will include the Christmas liturgy at the main altar. Pope Paul will also preach on the Holy Year theme of renewal and reconciliation.

Church Jubilee Year Under Way in Rome

By Father Robert F. McNamara

Pope Paul VI declared 1974 a preliminary Holy Year, to be observed in all dioceses throughout the world, in preparation for the official Holy Year of 1975, which is held, according to custom, only in Rome. This Christmas Eve the Pope inaugurated Holy Year 1975 in St. Peter's Basilica. The Roman ceremonies, by opening the official Year of Jubilee, automatically terminate the Advance Holy Year of the Rochester Diocese.

The Holy Father intended the Advance Holy Year to be a preparation for the 1975 Jubilee. It was a new and wonderful thought. It emphasized, in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, the importance of the individual diocese in the total structure of the Church. It also created the image of the faithful as a "pilgrim people," moving from their parishes to their cathedral as a sign of unity with their bishop. Pilgrimages from each diocese to Rome during the actual Holy Year, would testify, in turn, to the unity of their dioceses with the Holy See.

Two weeks ago, the Holy Father, speaking to a general audience, implied that the response of Catholics to the diocesan Holy Year had not been as great as he hoped it would be.

It is regrettable if some dioceses did not give to the diocesan jubilee pilgrimages the encouragement they deserved. In the Diocese of Rochester we have had a wonderful response. Thousands of people have taken part in pilgrimages great and small to Sacred Heart Cathedral

or one of the regional pilgrimage churches. They have found the experience very meaningful; no doubt, because they have taken

seriously its themes of penance and reconciliation. Early in 1975

Continued on Page 4

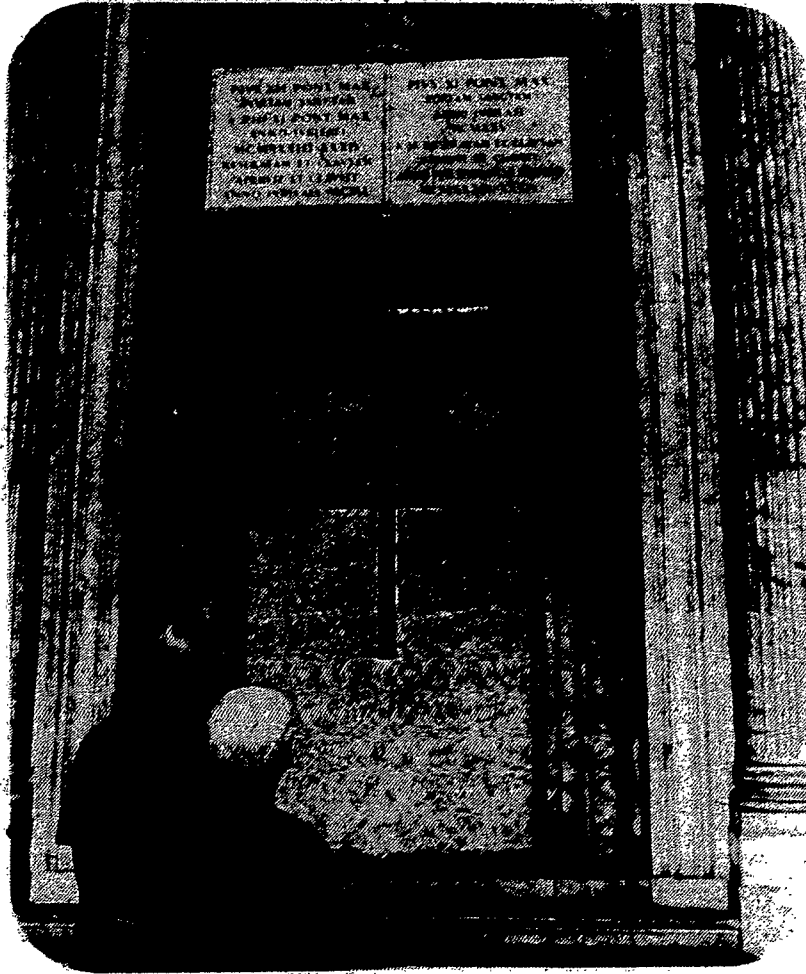


Photo. by Anthony J. Costello

Bishop Joseph L. Hogan and Msgr. Richard K. Burns look over the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica during their visit to Rome last September. On Christmas Eve, Pope Paul VI knocked with a ceremonial hammer and the door was opened, signaling the start of the Holy Year. Papal delegates also will open Holy Doors at the other major basilicas in Rome, St. John Lateran, St. Paul and St. Mary Major. All four doors have been sealed since Dec. 24, 1950, the end of the last holy year.