

# National/International Report

## Holy Father launches Marian year, celebrates Pentecost

By Agostino Bono

Vatican City (NC) — In activities celebrating Pentecost and opening a 14-month year dedicated to Mary, Pope John Paul II expressed hope that the prayers generated by the events would help bring peace to a troubled humanity.

The pope also called the Second Vatican Council a "new Pentecost" for the Catholic Church and cited Mary as the model for Catholic women.

The Marian year began June 7, Pentecost Sunday. The evening before, the pope had led an internationally televised recitation of the rosary in Rome's St. Mary Major Basilica, the oldest existing church dedicated to Mary.

"In spite of unprecedented advances, the man of today feels deeply shaken by the contradictions in the world and in people, contradictions which sometimes make him doubt the very value of life," the pope said June 6 in a short speech after the rosary.

Praying together strengthens "our bonds of solidarity with the whole human family, in the conviction that the challenges presented

by this difficult moment in the world's history must be faced with generous openness" to spiritual values needed to solve problems, the pope added.

He asked that the rosary "once more become the accustomed prayer" of Christians.

"The prayer of the rosary will bring to our world, with the smile of the Virgin Mother, the tender tones of God's love for the brave but anxious humanity of the 20th century," he added.

The rosary ceremony was televised live via satellite to more than 31 countries, with a potential viewing audience of 1.5 billion people.

The ceremony also involved live televised responses from people gathered in 16 Marian shrines and churches in other parts of the world.

Around midnight, the pope formally inaugurated the Marian year during an outdoor Mass in St. Peter's Square.

With the announcement, wreaths of flame were lit on the steps leading to the altar. At

the same time, flames were lit on several levels of the facade of St. Peter's Basilica and along the tops of the two circular colonnades on either side of the square. The flames lasted throughout the Mass.

Boy Scouts also carried torches throughout the crowd to light individual candles.

In the homily, Pope John Paul II noted that Pentecost is an apt feastday to begin the Marian year, because Mary was with the apostles at the first Pentecost.

Pentecost, as described in the Acts of the Apostles, is the day when the Holy Spirit, in the form of tongues of fire, descended upon the apostles, inspiring them to go into the world and evangelize.

"On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the Church is born," the pope said. "From the day of Pentecost onward, the saving word of the Gospel begins to course through the history of peoples and nations."

The pope promoted Pentecost and the Marian year at other events June 7.

At his noontime Regina Coeli talk to pilgrims in St. Peter's Square, he noted that the October world Synod of Bishops on the laity will meet during the year devoted to Mary.

"In that ecclesial assembly, Mary will be present as an inspiration to reflection and also as a model figure for the lay faithful, particularly women," the pope said.

In an afternoon visit to Rome's Divine Love Shrine, which is dedicated to Mary, the pope prayed that the Marian year would

inspire the church to carry out Vatican II's teachings.

"The Marian year should especially stimulate us to commit ourselves to the full maturity of the fruits of the recent council, which has been for our century a kind of new Pentecost," he added.

Mary's intercession is helpful in getting the Holy Spirit to strengthen people in overcoming contemporary problems, he said.

"Men of today feel threatened. Humanity knows it is in danger," he said. "But the Holy Spirit, a fountain of life and peace, is always ready to overcome our weakness and to suggest ways of overcoming tensions, injustices and conflicts."

The Marian year, the second in the church's history, will last until Aug. 15, 1988, the feast of Mary's bodily assumption into heaven. Last January 1, the pope announced the 14-month year to help Catholics enter the third millennium of Christianity.

During the special year, Catholics can receive plenary indulgences by attending special Marian events and pilgrimages approved by local church officials. A plenary indulgence is full remission of temporal punishment due to sins forgiven in confession.

To gain an indulgence, Catholics must also go to confession, receive Communion and pray for the intentions of the pope on the day of the event or within a reasonable time before or after the event.

### NCCB president urges sharing of gifts, charisms

Washington (NC) — To make the Marian year "a time of special grace," U.S. Catholics should share their gifts and charisms in the likeness of "our mother and model Mary," said Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis.

The archbishop, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, urged U.S. Catholics to wholeheartedly enter into the spirit of the special year of devotions to Mary. He made the comments in a June 5 statement.

Archbishop May encouraged Catholics to make special efforts to practice both liturgical and private devotions to Mary, including observance of her feastdays and recitation of the family rosary.

He said the year would be of great value to all in the Church, and would enable Catholics to draw closer to Mary's son Jesus and to other Christian churches.

"Mary's example is a sure guide for us to follow in responding generously to the special graces and charisms of her son's Holy Spirit as we take our part in preparing for a new millennium of salvation history in the Church."

He noted that special devotion to Mary has been common in history of the U.S. Catholic Church, beginning with convert George Calvert's establishment of Maryland as a crown colony where religious liberty would be assured.

John Carroll of Maryland, the first bishop of the new United States, on the feast of the Assumption in 1790. He put the Diocese of Baltimore under the special patronage of Mary.

Archbishop May reminded U.S. Catholics that at the urging of the U.S. bishops, Pope Pius IX in 1847 named Mary patroness of the United States.

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