

Families celebrate,
practice caring
- Pages 6-7



Deepening our
bonds with Jesus
- Pages 8-9



Apostles at work,
in Kids' Chronicle
- Page 16



Catholic Courier

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The Year Of Jesus

Pope urges broad focus

When their leader tells them to concentrate on Jesus Christ for an entire year, Catholics understandably might be confused.

"We can't ever separate Christ from the rest of what we do. Christ is a part of everything," remarked Mary Britton, diocesan catechetical consultant.

"Most people would say, 'You're not saying anything new' - which is right," remarked Paul Henderson, an official with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the United States Catholic Conference.

Perhaps reflecting on Christ is nothing new, but Pope John Paul II has placed a high priority on *renewal* with Christ in 1997.

In his 1994 apostolic letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* ("As the Third Millennium Draws Near"), the pope designated 1997 as the Year of Jesus. He has asked Catholics to uphold that theme through ecumenical efforts; devotion to Mary; a renewed appreciation of the Bible; and a similar appreciation of baptism.

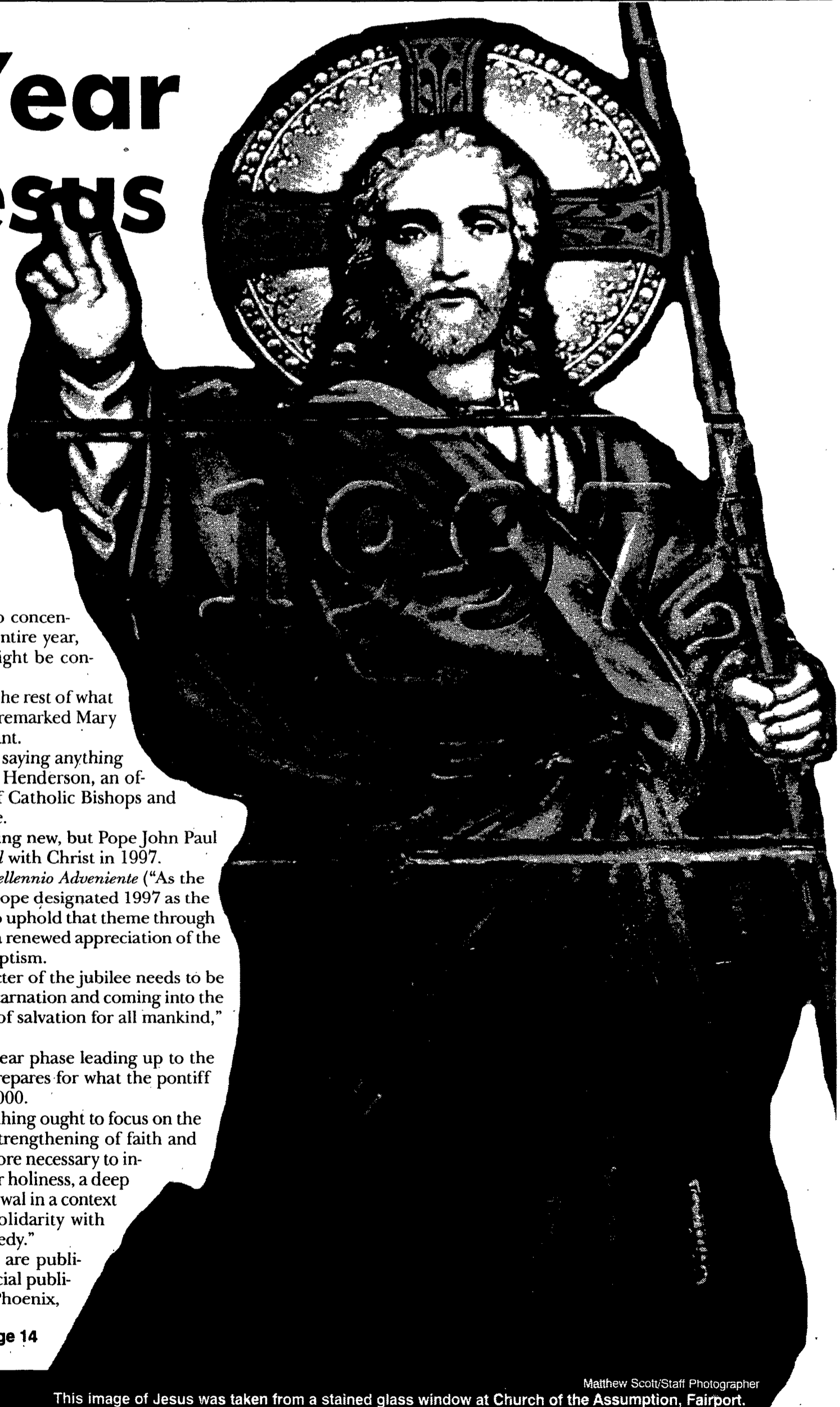
"The distinctly Christological character of the jubilee needs to be emphasized, for it will celebrate the incarnation and coming into the world of the Son of God, the mystery of salvation for all mankind," Pope John Paul stated in the letter.

1997 is the first portion of a three-year phase leading up to the millennium as the Catholic Church prepares for what the pontiff terms "the great jubilee" in the year 2000.

The pope noted that in 1997, "everything ought to focus on the primary objective of the jubilee: the strengthening of faith and of the witness of Christians. It is therefore necessary to inspire in all the faithful a true longing for holiness, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with one's neighbor, especially the most needy."

Some dioceses in the United States are publicizing the pope's wishes by issuing special publications. For instance, the Diocese of Phoenix, Ariz., has created a 56-page

Continued on page 14



STORY BY MIKE LATONA

This image of Jesus was taken from a stained glass window at Church of the Assumption, Fairport.

Matthew Scott/Staff Photographer