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Year of Jesus

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brochure, "Jesus: Door to the Millennium," which contains reflections on the Sunday Gospels from December 1996 to November 1997. And in the archdioceses of Philadelphia, Miami and Detroit, prayer cards are being issued for each year leading up to the millennium.

Meanwhile, the diocese of Savannah, Ga. — formed in 1850 — is already launching events as part of combined millennium and sesquicentennial celebrations. The diocese has created booklets in English and Spanish for parish groups and has also slated celebrations each year — including youth gatherings, annual parish galas and diocesan and deanery events — to highlight themes announced by Pope John Paul.

"In a number of dioceses, many of the celebrations are linked in with other anniversaries," noted Henderson, who serves as executive director for the Secretariat for the Third Millennium and the Jubilee Year 2000.

Henderson's office, established last August, serves a clearinghouse for millennium information coming from the Vatican. Under the guidance of a subcommittee of eight U.S. archbishops and bishops, the information is then disseminated throughout the country from the secretariat's office in Washington, D.C. Henderson also gives guest presentations about millennium preparations in various dioceses.

Several other vehicles are available for Catholics to receive millennium information: St. Anthony Messenger Press has launched *Millennium Monthly*, a newsletter reflecting on theological and pastoral aspects of the jubilee; the NCCB/USCC office on the third millennium publishes a monthly newsletter for millennium cele-



Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Statue of Jesus at St. Stanislaus Church, Rochester

bration organizers in dioceses and organizations; and the office also offers a web site with frequent updates on millennium preparation.

In the Diocese of Rochester, activities acknowledging the Year of Jesus and the upcoming millennium are less apparent. However, diocesan officials emphasized that the pope's themes are certainly not being ignored.

The Year of Jesus is accentuated, for example, through the Department of Evan-

gelization and Catechesis' year-long theme: "Jesus, The Heart of Catechesis."

Maribeth Mancini, department director, welcomes the chance to use the Year of Jesus and the millennium as a springboard to renewed faith.

"This only happens every 1,000 years. It's a fantastic opportunity to call us to examine how Jesus is central to our lives," Mancini commented.

"Jesus, The Heart of Catechesis" was introduced as the 1997 diocesan catechetical theme at a December 1996 meeting of 120 catechetical leaders and youth ministers in Waterloo. Bishop Matthew H. Clark's keynote lecture implored participants to fully integrate Jesus into their lives and their ministry throughout 1997.

Mancini noted that the theme was also emphasized at a diocesan retreat for catechetical leaders and youth ministers in January, and will be the focus of similar programs in April, May and November.

At the parish level, St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads began the Year of Jesus by erecting a special display in the church foyer's seasonal shrine. The exhibit was filled with paintings of Jesus.

Sally Curley, secretary of religious education, said that she and religious-education director Rosemary Bloise got the idea for the display after attending Bishop Clark's lecture in December. Curley added that she promoted the display by pointing out in the parish bulletin that 1997 is the Year of Jesus Christ.

"Unless it's laid out, maybe in writing for people to look at, they might not understand," Curley said.

Sister Mary Ann Binsack, RSM, diocesan Faith Development Ministry director, acknowledged that the pope's theme has not been heavily publicized at the parish level.

However, Sister Binsack pointed out that parishes in this diocese are currently immersed in other major, time-consuming processes: implementing goals from the 1993 Synod; strategic planning for parish restructuring; and reflecting on the Eucharist as was called for in Bishop Clark's 1996 pastoral letter on the subject.

"Certainly there are some dioceses that are doing special programs, but many have not gathered the people as much as we have (recently)," said Sister Binsack, who recently represented the Rochester diocese at an NCCB/USCC-sponsored national convocation on millennium preparation.

"We don't want more themes than any parish can safely handle. We're doing the best we can, given the serious concerns our local church has," said Karen Rinefierd, diocesan coordinator of Young Adult, Adult and Family Faith Formation.

In light of these other initiatives, Sister Binsack said that parish staff members are not being asked to begin separate programs to acknowledge the Year of Jesus.

"We're taking the themes the pope has given us and integrating them into already existing programs," she explained. "Can we look at the things the parish is already doing through the lens of Jesus?"

"A challenge to us is to mesh this theme with everything else we are ordinarily doing, so that we don't add a layer on top but so that it permeates," Britton said.

Henderson said many other dioceses are taking a similar approach, opting for contemplation rather than special events.

"We need to really do a reflection of what we are doing in our lives, our church, our society," Henderson said. "I think, at times, we've become almost automatic with our faith. We think about it, but are we living it? This year, we should be asking, 'How do we develop our relationship with Christ?'"

Help for doing so can be found in suggestions set forth in a booklet issued by the national Secretariat for the Third Millennium and the Year 2000. In planning for the millennium, the secretariat suggests:

"Focus on spirituality, not programs. The Holy Father is primarily calling us to deepen our spiritual lives. What would parish or diocesan activities look like if the goal was helping people enrich and deepen their spirituality? Which initiatives arise from the expressed needs of the people rather than perceived needs? Can we do more by doing less? Can we simplify parish life?"

"While special initiatives may be, and should be, planned for the jubilee year 2000, initiatives undertaken during the years of preparation should be woven into the regular activities of parish life," the secretariat booklet continued. "Use the themes of 1997-1999 to provide a focus for regular parish and diocesan activities."

One catechetical leader who plans on following this philosophy is Scott Rutan, director of religious education at St. Paul's Church in Webster. He intends to keep the pope's guidelines for 1997 at the forefront of his teaching approach.

"What are we being called toward in deepening our relationship with Christ? Many times in religious education we don't do a good job of teaching that. There's a tendency to get locked into a school model, where we pass on information," Rutan commented.

Rutan said he was particularly inspired by the pope's plea in his apostolic letter to focus during this year on strengthening faith.

"Roman Catholics don't talk about our personal faith well; we're shy. It's in that personal storytelling that brings us closer to our faith," Rutan remarked. "Let's develop a language that says, 'I know Jesus better this year than last year.'"

Beyond 1997, Pope John Paul has called for similar reflection on the Holy Spirit in 1998 and God the Father in 1999. The pontiff terms this three-year phase as a "call to conversion" that is "particularly important in contemporary society where the very foundations of an ethically correct human existence often seem to have been lost."

Pope John Paul's preparation for the millennium actually began with a three-year phase from 1994 to 1996 that he dubbed a time of "awareness." When the current three-year phase is completed, the pontiff envisions a worldwide ecumenical celebration in the year 2000. He also is scheduled to tour such biblical sites as Mount Sinai and Damascus that year.

Weighing the pope's approach to the millennium against those who make dark predictions about the end of the world, Britton and Mancini prefer the pontiff's upbeat attitude.

"I like the pope's call to enter this in a positive way," Britton said.

"We're trying to bring a faithful presence to the new millennium; a rootedness and a trust," Mancini added.

APRIL BINGO CALENDAR

SPECIAL PAID ADVERTISEMENT ■ CALL FOR HOLIDAY CANCELLATIONS

BINGO

SUNDAY

6:15 pm St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951
 7:30 pm Holy Family Church Water Tower Park, Rochester 716-235-0860
 7:30 pm St. Rita Church... New Location... Knights of Columbus, Barrett Dr., Webster ... 716-671-1100

MONDAY

7:30 pm St. Jude the Apostle Church 4100 Lyell Rd., Rochester 716-247-4322
 7:30pm St. Michael's Church Corner S. Main & Franklin, Newark 315-331-6753

TUESDAY

10:00 am Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church Bingo Palace, Rochester 716-467-2725
 7:30 pm St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951
 7:30 pm St. Helens Church Gates Center Bingo, Westmar Plaza 716-235-1210
 7:30 pm St. Francis Xavier 316 Bay St. (School Hall) (716) 288-9700 or 482-3211

WEDNESDAY

7:30 pm Holy Family Home School Assoc. Water Tower Park, Rochester 716-235-0860

THURSDAY

7:30 pm St. Stanislaus Church 1150 Hudson Ave., Rochester 716-544-9951

FRIDAY

7:30 pm St. Margaret Mary Church 380 Empire Blvd., Rochester (716) 482-9770

SATURDAY

12:30 pm Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church Bingo Palace, Rochester 716-467-2725
 7:30 pm Good Shepherd Church 3288 E. Henrietta Rd., Rochester 716-334-3518
 8:00 pm St. Thomas the Apostle Church 41 Colebrook Dr., Rochester 716-226-2943

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