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Jubilee

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During King David's rule, when vast masses of lands were acquired, an administrative structure developed where not only was land inherited, but it also became a reward for service to the state.

"In all of this the losing party is the peasants, who had access to small plots. The ruling class is taking over those kinds of land and larger estates are being formed at the expense to the total disappearance of these plots," Premnath said.

The jubilee was an attempt to slow those effects and attempt a return to pre-monarchic values, he said.

Jubilee values lived on, he said, in accounts of eighth-century prophets. Isaiah 5:8-10 and Micah 2:1-4 denounce the accumulation of land and the disappearance of small plots, he said, adding, "They may not be in jubilee form, but certainly values embedded in jubilee continue(d) on."

In the end, he said, "What was the basic intent behind the jubilee? If we can relate to that, it is going to provide us more practical ways of relating to this concept."

"The primary question is who has access and what kind of access to the economic base. The question can be raised irrespective of time and place and culture."

No limitations

The diocese does not intend to limit such questioning, and creativity in celebrating the jubilee, according to Suzanne Schnittman and Sister Janet Korn, RSM, both of diocesan Catholic Charities.

"We see the Jubilee Year as a wonderful opportunity to restore the world in communion with God's dream for it," Sister Korn said. "I call it leveling the playing field of humanity, in a sense. We know it is a very big dream, almost like starting over. Biblically what they did was they returned the land ... and gave everybody the opportuni-

ty to start again in right relationship. There wasn't an economic domineering power over one another, it was more equal. That's what our hope would be for humanity when we get done jubiling."

At this point both the diocese and the National Council of Catholic Bishops' jubilee committees are developing resources for anticipating and celebrating the Jubilee Year. The diocese began distributing reflection questions to parishes this month.

Schnittman, with Judy Taylor, have been heading a Public Policy Committee's Subcommittee on the Jubilee.

"Everything we're doing is under the premises of the jubilee theme, which I think we've really tried to condense to restoring right relationships" among people, God and the earth, Schnittman said. The public policy agenda is based on the recognition of restoring God's justice — "to be good stewards of God's creation, to work to reduce violence, oppression, poverty and all kinds of abuse of power," the agenda states.

The Public Policy Committee has identified many ways for diocesan parishes and individuals to do this in 1999-2000, including promoting adoption and working for a

ban of the partial-birth abortion, promoting hospice care, passing a patients' Bill of Rights, supporting alternative sentencing, raising the minimum wage, encouraging fair trade and reducing military spending.

In addition, a diocesan International Justice and Peace Task Force has been meeting to consider what it means to be a debtor or creditor, Schnittman said, and how to add its voice to those urging forgiveness of Third World debt. Others have been looking at ways the diocese can forgive debt.

The diocese also will distribute a Jubilee Pledge for Charity, Justice and Peace for parishioners to sign.

As with others involved in planning for the Jubilee Year, Schnittman noted that themes overlap.

"I don't know how you can restore a right relationship without reconciliation," she noted.

"Forgiveness has to be at every level," Schnittman said. "We can look at endless opportunities."

Similarly, the essential theme of "letting the land lie fallow" holds a constellation of meanings, from caring for the environment to caring for ourselves. Its importance cannot be understated, Henderson said. While

his national office has identified eight initiatives parishes may take, he said the Sabbath theme is interwoven.

"Part of it is the reality of how we create regular rhythms of our life," he said. For instance, the office will encourage a personal pilgrimage, whether to certain local churches, area shrines or major sites as the Holy Land, as a spiritual journey. Another suggestion is to join a small Christian community or faith-sharing group.

"A personal pilgrimage is really letting the land lie fallow," he said. "Joining a small Christian community is really letting the land lie fallow. It is a misnomer in the United States that it is really doing nothing."

To usher in the year 2000, the diocese will hold a simultaneous major eucharistic celebration in its parishes, "so that the great prayer goes up from all the parishes," according to Workmaster.

Meanwhile, evening prayer will be celebrated in the various regions Bishop Matthew H. Clark will visit throughout the rest of the year 2000 as another way to unite believers, she said.

"When we talk about reconciliation and forgiveness, whatever the scope, private or between two families or corporate or how nations look at each other, all that is central to the jubilee, that we become the body and blood of Christ, we become Christ for others. That's all caught up in the celebration of the Eucharist. It becomes a foreshadowing, a model for a way of life."

In his apostolic letter "As the Third Millennium Draws Near," Pope John Paul II stated, "The words and deed of Jesus thus represent the fulfillment of the whole tradition of jubilees in the Old Testament."

The Jubilee indeed is full of Christological significance, he said. Preparing for it is "not a matter of indulging in a new milenarianism ... rather, it is aimed at an increased sensitivity to all that the Spirit is saying to the church and to the churches, as well as to individuals through charisms meant to serve the whole community."

Reflections on the Jubilee

The Rochester Diocese's Department of Evangelization and Catechesis has prepared reflection questions on the jubilee. They include:

• For Christians, the year 2000 offers the opportunity to rejoice and celebrate 2,000 years of God incarnate. What does the idea of incarnation mean to me? How do I understand God's entering this world in human form? How can our parish see and understand itself as a community celebrating Jubilee, a community reexamining its life as a community of the disciples of Christ in this time and place?

• Jubilee reminds us of the need for social justice, of the need to care for and about the widow and the orphan, the weakest among us. What can I do to support a more just society?

• In what ways do I need to "let the land lie fallow" in my personal life? What changes do I need to make to allow prayer to become more integral to my life? What can I do to learn to listen more closely to where God is leading me?

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