

By Marie Venaglia, Guest contributor

In a few days the new millennium will be upon us. Just about every news report, magazine and daily discussion seems to revolve around getting ready for the year 2000. Most of this discussion is wrapped up with talking about whether computers will crash, and whether there will be regular delivery of services such as heat, electricity and food. People are stockpiling supplies of food, batteries and water in case these things will not be available come Jan. 1, 2000.

Are you ready? Are you Y2K compatible?

The close of this millennium seems to have come upon us without our knowing where the time has gone. Just as Christmas seems to rush up on us each year and we find ourselves wondering how it ever got here so fast, this year, especially, we wonder how the end of the year — never mind this millennium — got here without our noticing its creeping upon us.

Some people have made all sorts of plans to help ring in this new year. Some will be partying in New York City at Times Square waiting for the new Waterford crystal millennium ball to drop to proclaim the year 2000. Others will celebrate in more quiet ways with friends and family. With all the concern and anxiety about what will happen when our calendars change, some people will be hiding in their basements, with the stockpiles of food and supplies they have accumulated, waiting for catastrophe to strike.

Some people believe that the end of this millennium will mean the end of the world as we know it. This is not a surprising idea. At the end of the last millennium, in 999 A.D., there were those who thought the end of the world was upon them. These people sold their possessions, left their homes and took their families to St. Peter's in Rome to wait for the end of time.

But for Christians throughout the world, this time of millennium is a time of hope and promise. Instead of thinking of this as the end, we recognize it as a new beginning. This is a time of "Jubilee." It is a time to renew our faith and to acknowledge the 2,000 years of faith that are behind us.

Jubilee begins

The Catholic Church will begin this time of jubilee on Dec. 24, 1999, with the opening of the doors to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. On that evening, Pope John Paul II will formally open the doors to remind us that we are called to "Open Wide Our Doors to Christ." Those doors have been sealed since the end of the last holy year (1983-84), and the pope asked us to take time to pray and reflect in preparation for this holy year, this year of jubilee.

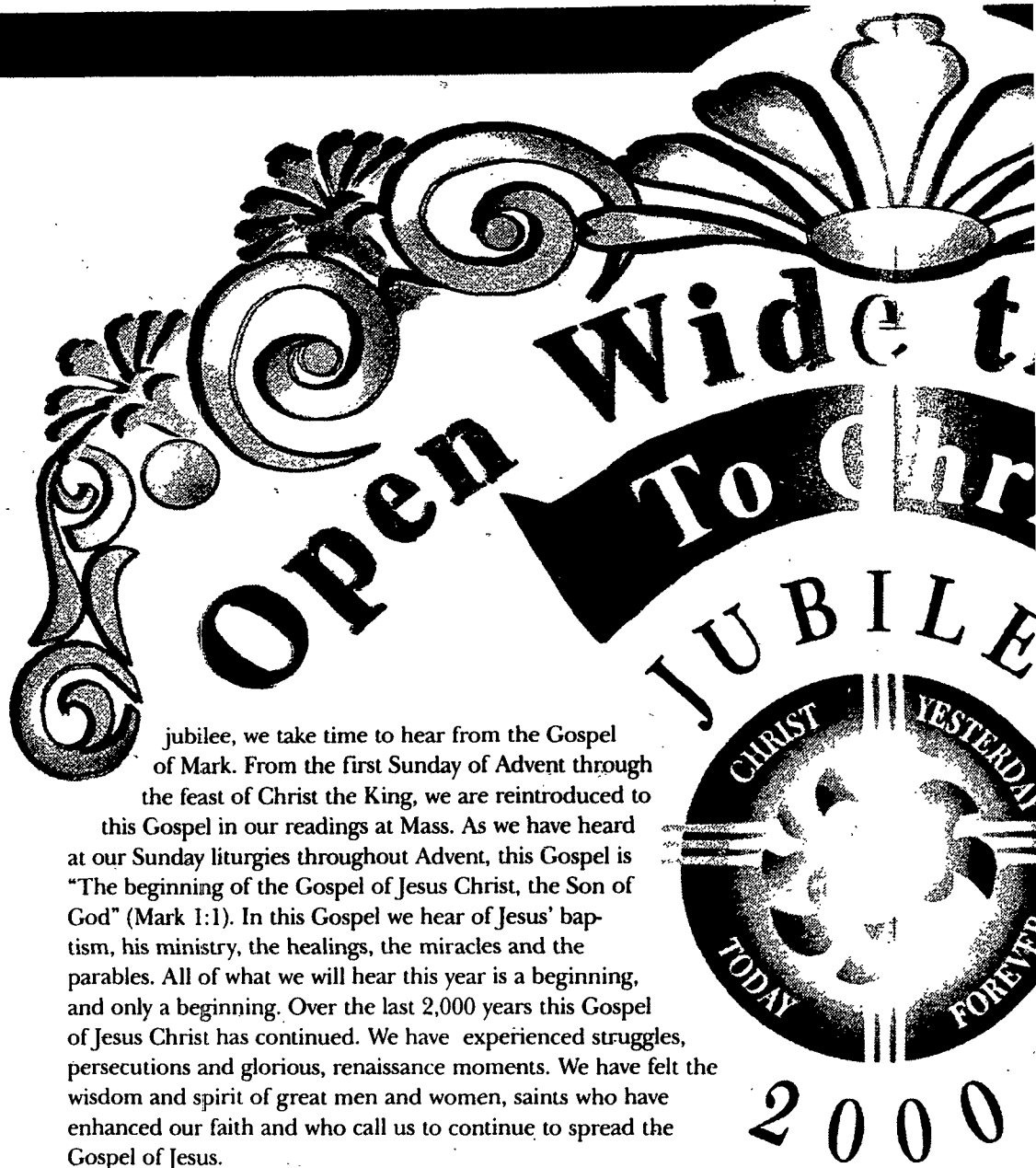
"Jubilee" comes from the Hebrew word *jobel*, which means ram's horn. This horn is sounded to proclaim a special year of favor of the Lord, a chance to start over again. This Jubilee Year is a 54-week celebration that will close on the feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 6, 2001.

To open the holy year celebrations of our diocese this Christmas Eve, Bishop Matthew H. Clark will formally open the doors to Sacred Heart

Cathedral in Rochester. Those present will sing "Open your hearts to the Redeemer. Come, let us adore." We are called to open our doors and hearts to Christ. Jubilee is not just about recalling the birth of Jesus 2,000 years ago, it is also a celebration that Jesus is alive and with us today.

Story of Jesus

To help guide us through this time of



jubilee, we take time to hear from the Gospel of Mark. From the first Sunday of Advent through the feast of Christ the King, we are reintroduced to this Gospel in our readings at Mass. As we have heard at our Sunday liturgies throughout Advent, this Gospel is "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1). In this Gospel we hear of Jesus' baptism, his ministry, the healings, the miracles and the parables. All of what we will hear this year is a beginning, and only a beginning. Over the last 2,000 years this Gospel of Jesus Christ has continued. We have experienced struggles, persecutions and glorious, renaissance moments. We have felt the wisdom and spirit of great men and women, saints who have enhanced our faith and who call us to continue to spread the Gospel of Jesus.

Mark begins with the story of the baptism of Jesus. This story is a foreshadowing of our baptism. It is our baptism that begins our story and directs us to continue the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God. Throughout this Jubilee Year this Gospel will encourage us to learn about Jesus. It serves as an introduction to what it means to be Christ in the world.

It is up to us, the baptized, to continue Jesus' story. Those of us who have the privilege of coming forward to receive the Eucharist respond "Amen" to "The Body of Christ." We say "yes" that we believe that this is the body of Christ and "yes" to going forth to be the body of Christ in the world. We go forth to make Christ real, flesh to the world, to all we meet and encounter.

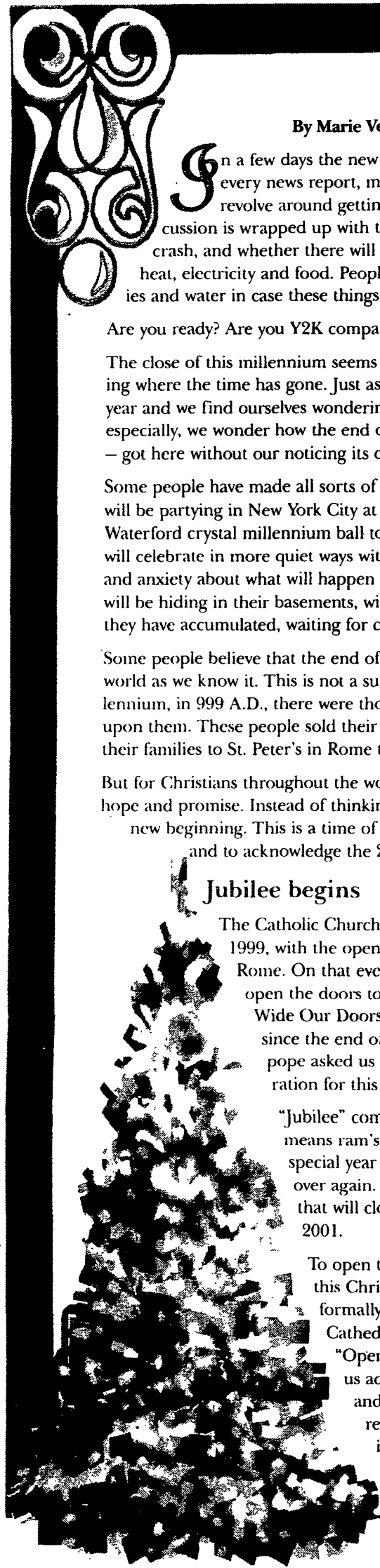
There is a song for the Jubilee Year that reflects this message:

Somos el cuerpo de Cristo. We are the body of Christ. Hemos oido el llamado; we've answered 'yes' to the call of the Lord. Somos el cuerpo de Cristo. We are the body of Christ. Traemos su santo mensaje. We come to bring the Good News to the world.

Bringing the Good News to the world is the work of all the baptized. When we are nourished by the Eucharist, we are strengthened to carry on the work of Jesus in the world.

Reflection Questions:

- What do I have to change in my life to deepen my relationship with Jesus?
- How will I open wide my door to Christ in the new millennium?
- How am I entering into this new year?
- Is Jesus at the center of my life?
- How can this be a special time of celebration for my family?
- How can we welcome Jesus to be more a part of our lives?



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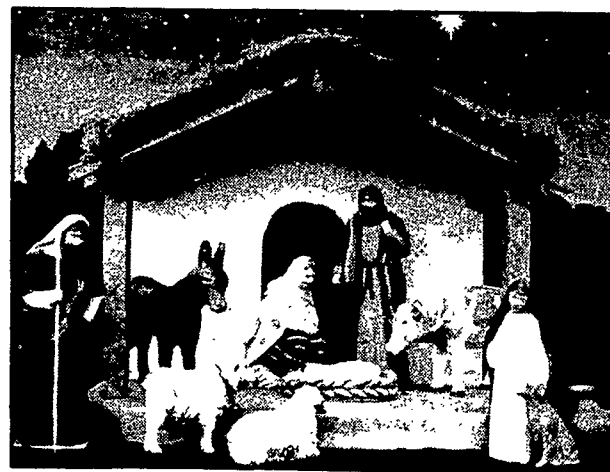
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