

The story of Jesus remains just a story — just words — if we do not continue to live the life Jesus has called us to share. The story, the Gospel of Mark, is the beginning, and we must continue that story. The Gospel of Mark reminds us that we are to pattern our lives on the life of Christ. We must tell the world about the good things that God has done for us. We must minister to the same poor and suffering that Jesus ministered to. We must make the Gospel real in our words and actions.

Prayer, reflection

During this holy year, the church is taking advantage of special opportunities for evangelization. On Jan. 18, 2000, Pope John Paul II will "open wide the doors" of St. Paul's Basilica in Rome for an ecumenical service marking the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. An International Eucharistic Congress will take place in Rome in June 2000 to highlight Christ's living and saving presence in the church and in the world. The theme of this Congress is: "Jesus Christ, the Only Savior of the World, Bread for New Life." This year of Jubilee 2000 will be a time of great prayer and thanksgiving.

There's a song that asks, "What are you doing New Year's, New Year's eve?" Have you made plans to incorporate Jesus into your celebrations? A popular slogan proclaims "No Y2K without Jesus. No Jesus, No Millennium." Throughout the world churches have scheduled special liturgies for that evening to help us to ask forgiveness for the times we have not lived up to our Christian faith. Some will include candlelight services calling upon Christ to be our light and to guide us into the new millennium.

On Jan. 1, 2000, as the church takes time to celebrate a World Day of Peace, we take time to commit ourselves to be a people of peace. Jubilee is a time of reconciliation. It is a time to think back about how we have shaped the world into a "just and caring society" and to look at those areas in which we have failed to accomplish this. Through repentance of our past weaknesses, by being honest about our failures, we can move ahead to face the challenges of working toward building a more caring world.

For those who cannot get to parish celebrations, the millennium vigil can be a time of prayer, fasting and reflection on the readings for those days.

Readings for Dec. 31

1 John 2:18-21 and John 1:1-18

Readings for Jan. 1

Numbers 6:22-27 and Galatians 4:4-7 and Luke 2:16-21

How are you going to celebrate this "once-in-a-thousand-years event"? Pope John Paul II has called us to take time for study during this holy year. This is a time to renew our faith. It would be a good time to learn more

about the Scriptures, the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the documents and teachings of the Second Vatican Council, which our pope has called "the advent liturgy of the new millennium." There are many opportunities to continue our faith development. Parishes throughout our diocese will be offering adult-education programs. In our diocese, St. Bernard's Institute and St. Bernard's On the Road enable us to formally continue our education about our faith.

Pilgrimages are another way of celebrating the holy year. These include time for travel as well as prayer and penance, and serve as a way to mark our personal journeys to Jesus. Many people will travel to Rome and the Holy Land to celebrate the jubilee. Some will make a trip to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., and others will travel to our diocesan church, Sacred Heart Cathedral, where we will be welcomed to take time for prayer and reflection during this year.

The diocesan Office of Evangelization and Catechesis is sponsoring a special Family Pilgrimage on Oct. 15, 2000, at the New York State Chiropractic College in Seneca Falls. This will be a day to journey through our history as church. Activities will include storytelling, music, arts and crafts and the living Stations. The *Catholic Courier* and parish bulletins will include more about this as the date nears.

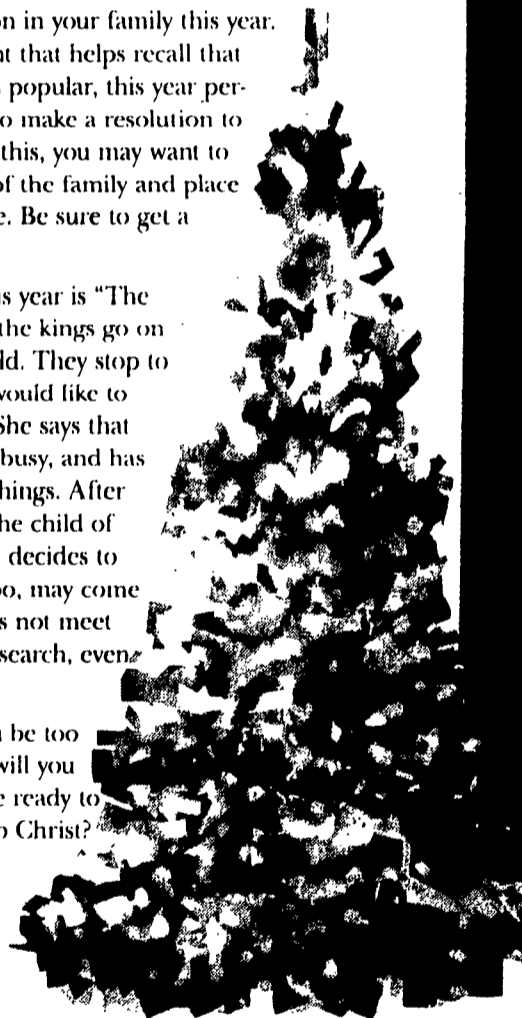
As a way of "opening wide our doors" to show that we are a welcoming people, a custom we have introduced in my parish is to bless the doors of our homes. On the feast of the Epiphany, we mark the doors of our homes with chalk with the year as well as the initials of the "Kings." This year we will inscribe 2O+C+M+B+OO above our doors. Legend tells us the names of the kings are: Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. Sometimes these same initials represent the first letters in the phrase *Christus mansionem benedical*, which is translated as "May Christ bless this house."

How can we make this a special time of celebration and remembrance for our families? Ask each person in the family to recall a special moment from this past year. There may have been a birth, first Communion, new pet or special vacation in your family this year. Use your creativity to make an ornament that helps recall that event. New Year's resolutions are always popular, this year perhaps more so than ever. You may want to make a resolution to read more this year. To help encourage this, you may want to buy a religious book for each member of the family and place it under their pillows on New Year's Eve. Be sure to get a book for yourself.

One story that you may want to read this year is "The Legend of Old Befana." In this legend, the kings go on their journey in search of the Christ child. They stop to see a woman, la Befana, and ask if she would like to come along on the journey with them. She says that she is not ready to go with them. She is busy, and has to clean her house and do many other things. After the kings leave, she realizes that this is the child of God that they are going to see and then decides to try to catch up with them so that she, too, may come to see the child. As it turns out, she does not meet up with the kings, but is on a continual search, even to this day, for the kings and the child.

What about you? This holy year, will you be too busy fretting about your computer? Or will you be ready to journey to Jesus? Will you be ready to open wide your doors and your hearts to Christ? If so, then, "come, let us adore!"

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Midnight Mass

at

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11:30 Choir & Organ Carols
12:00 AM Solemn Mass at Midnight

Choral Music of Charles Marie Widor: *Grande Messe (Kyrie, Gloria, Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei)*; Bach: *Break Forth, O Beauteous Light*; Holst: *In the Bleak Midwinter*; Chant: *Come, O Come Emmanuel, Of the Father's Love Begotten*; and more.

Organ Music of Balbastre: *Les Bergers*; Bach: *Rejoice, Ye Beloved Christians, In Dulci Jubilo*; D'Aquin: *Noel*.

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