

Open wide the doors to Christ

Jubilee hopes fill diocesan hearts

Pope John Paul II will "open wide the doors to Christ" Dec. 24 to open the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. He has stated, "The Holy Door of the Jubilee of the Year 2000 should be symbolically wider than those of previous jubilees, because, humanity, upon reaching this goal, will leave behind not just a century but a millennium."

Catholic Courier staff writers Mike Latona and Rob Cullivan asked Catholics around the diocese what doors they hope the new millennium to open for them.

There's a lot of confusion about the Catholic faith, and a person needs a foundation. There are a lot of strong voices, both liberal and conservative, and around the two here's all of us trying to live a good Christian life. I hope, in the new millennium, to have a little more unity and a little less confusion. A lot of people are suffering with women's roles in the church; and even as Catholics we don't all agree on abortion, which is a tragic thing.

What I want is for us to celebrate the fact that we can agree on essential core teachings of our faith and faiths, and then work from there. And that the mutual agreement will magnify the glory of God.

- Paul Flansburg, parishioner,
Blessed Sacrament Church, Rochester

I hope people can be very hopeful of the role the church can play. In ministry to the poor. I hope we can reach out with a real consistency and have it be something we never give up on.

I think that the next generation will have a real good sense of reaching out to the poor. I think they've had this ingrained into them in a way that my generation didn't. At St. Joseph's, when we deliver our Christmas giving tree gifts to people in the inner city, our teens will be piling up all the boxes and going right to the homes.

I have a lot of hope for our children. They're going to be the church of tomorrow, and I hope we're instilling that in them.

- Sister Alice Cooney, SSJ, Pastoral Administrator,
St. Joseph's Church, Rush

There is a sense, perhaps intensified by new technologies and rapid social change, that we are passing into a new epoch. I also feel, however, that the church as a whole is not well prepared to take advantage of the new opportunities arising.

As Catholics, we should realize that what we are celebrating is the 2,000th anniversary (as it is popularly reckoned) of the incarnation of Christ. What a milestone! On such an anniversary, it is only natural both to look back and to look forward, reflecting on the meaning and impact of the Incarnation, in our world, our church and ourselves. We think of battles lost and won. We should be asking what we have left undone and what must yet be done to facilitate the incarnation of the Word in our own person, as Christians, in the body of the church and in our witness in the world.

Here at St. Thomas we have been spending a number of months for each of the past three years preparing for this Jubilee Year by studying themes suggested by the Holy Father. Father Joseph Brennan came here to give us

a picture of the biblical idea of a jubilee. We have also been working with Catholic evangelization materials in the last half of '99, looking forward to "Harvest 2000" and beyond, in hope of a new Catholic springtime.

I know that we must encourage one another, everyone who calls themselves a Catholic Christian, young and old, as we strive to wake up and allow Christ to make himself so much more tangible in our work-a-day world. After all, the ultimate pilgrimage in a jubilee year is internal, into the infinite recesses of the Divine Heart.

-David Higbee, religious education coordinator,
St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Irondequoit

I think that the youth need to be more aware of the Catholic Church. A lot of kids my age might be Catholic, but they don't go to church. They need to respect the hierarchy and the pope. The pope has talked about the new millennium; he's told us we should be aware that Jesus is coming. We don't know when it is, but we've got to be prepared. There's no necessity to be in an underground bunker with a supply of food, but teenagers think they can do anything they want. People have to take this more seriously.

I also hope that once the teens grow up and we're adults, that everything is going to be more religiously centered in this world.

- Brian Leavy, 15, parishioner,
St. Thomas the Apostle Church, Irondequoit

It is good to stop and give thanks for all the doors God opens for us. Christ is the way, truth and life that leads us to the Father - who knocks at the doors of our hearts, homes and churches.

The first door we are called to prepare and open is the door of our heart. Have we opened it like Mary, to Christ?

The second door we should be challenged to open is the door of our homes to our families, friends and all who need us. God invites us to look at our relationships and identify those areas for which we should seek forgiveness: Greed, racism, lust, pride, injustice and discrimination.

The third door of our lives is the door to the church. It is the door to all the moments of our lives from Baptism to the funeral liturgy of resurrection.

My friends, we are entrances, portals, doors that reflect Christ's love and presence. Do others see God through our lives and liturgies? If not, we are closed and can be the obstacle of God to others. Let us this new Jubilee Year be the path that leads others to the place where God abides by our faith, hope and charity.

- Father James Jaeger, pastor, Roman Catholic Faith Community of the Canisteo Valley (excerpts from his homily the second Sunday of Advent)

When (fellow parishioner) Phyllis Burdick and I went to Washington in August, it was the feast of the Assumption. At the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, one door was closed off and we thought it would be nice if we did it at St. Ann's. Then people would realize that you should prepare yourself for opening the door for the Lord and your heart.

So we made a drape across the side door. It will be taken down on December 24th at midnight Mass, when the pope is opening the door at the Vatican. The people know when they walk through the door, it will be with an open heart and mind.

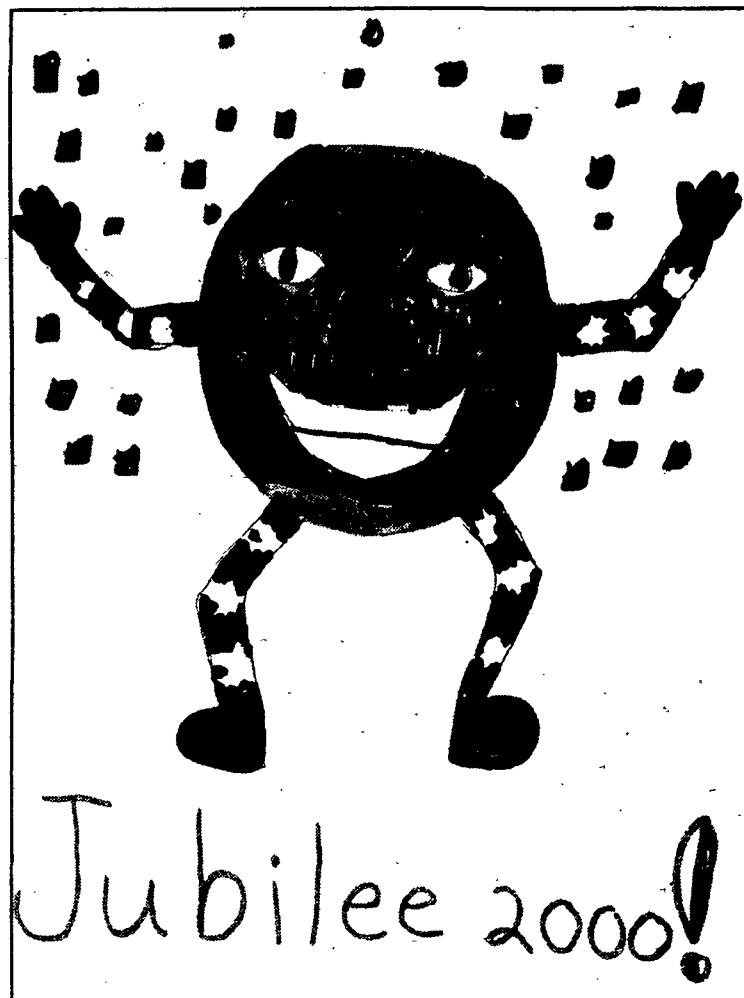
My thoughts, with much meditation, are toward getting rid of some of the baggage that we don't need to carry. And doing a little more for another person - not so much financially, but charitable gifts of time. Time, that's the most valuable thing we have. The elderly, the homebound, they value that little bit of time you give them so much. After the first of the year I'm going to start going to the nursing home and give Communion.

- Betty McKinley, parishioner,
St. Ann's Church, Hornell

I think there will be more busloads of people embarking on pilgrimages in the jubilee year. For instance, the diocesan family pilgrimage will be October 15 in Seneca Falls.

We're looking at a couple special jubilee celebrations at St. Agnes. We're decorating the door and the youngsters will open it and walk through it. We won't be able to do it at the same time as the pope, so we'll have a special ceremony when we first come back in January.

The youth group and myself are organizing a special



Laura Nemeth

outreach to the youth in correctional facilities. We're inviting other youth groups to send musical groups along for once-a-month Communion services in these facilities. We're going to start the first Sunday in January.

During the past year I have realized how blessed I, and many other people are, to be on the threshold of a new millennium, although it officially doesn't start until 2001. People can say "In the year 2000, this is what we did." I'd doing my best to line up events for my family, and parish families, so that we can have memories like this.

- Mike Drexler, faith formation coordinator and youth minister, St. Agnes Church, Avon

I dream that we could all begin to value human life more. We have come so far in the devaluation of life by our stance on abortion and the death penalty. We tolerate euthanasia and random killings with nothing more than mild curiosity. Why are we so shocked when children go on killing rampages for attention?

I dream that we could love one another as Jesus taught us. Through this love we could foster the peace we so long for, peace among all people without barriers of race or religion, age or gender.

I dream of real justice for all, not just the rich or the connected.

I dream of a renewed sense of responsibility. People need to take responsibility for their actions and not always blame someone, or some system, for what they do.

-Kathy Farrak Social Ministry/Justice Committee chairperson, St. Agnes Church, Avon

If anything, I think my spirituality could be strengthened because of the Y2K. The worst-case scenario, to me, is that the computers will go down and we can't get money out of the ATMs. But we're not going to die. God will get us through it.

Other than that, my thoughts are the same as every other year. I would hope that people would start to treat each other better, show more respect for basic humanity.

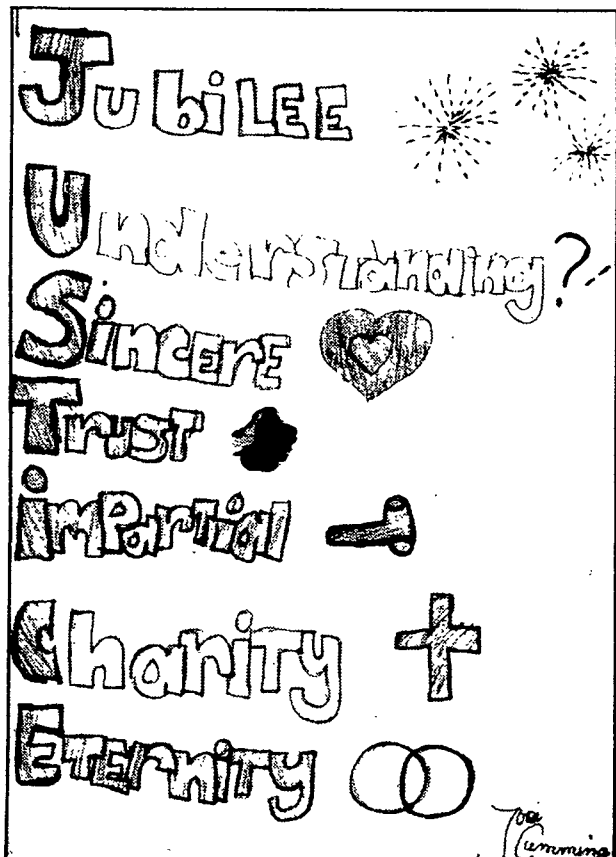
-Jennifer Truell, Mail/Copy Room supervisor,
diocesan Pastoral Office

I have a spinal-cord injury. Some of the medical things, like spinal-cord injuries and cancer and AIDS, hopefully we'll take a step toward curing them. A major part is funding. I'd also like to see, over the next couple of years, more people aware of wheelchair accessibility.

In my opinion, (in the Catholic Church) within the next few years there should be some change. Not dramatic like Vatican II, but something to pull young people into the church more - getting input from them about what the church can put together to relate to them. St. Mary's is very good about including young people, but I've been to other churches and it's different.

- Evan Cummings, parishioner at St. Mary's Church,
Rochester, and student at McQuaid Jesuit High School

Continued on next page



Jodi Cumming