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REFLECTIONS OF THE JUBILEE.

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In the three years prior to the end of the twentieth-century, Catholics spent time in prayer and meditation in preparation for the success of the Jubilee Year of 2000.

1997-98 was spent in praying to Jesus
1998-99 to the Holy Spirit and
1999-00 to God the Father.

At the beginning of 2000 we were confused for a while because with the new century opening a public debate decided that the millenium did not commence until 2001.

However, Pope John Paul had his plans and he called for the year 2000 to be a Jubilee devoted to celebrating 2000 years of Christianity since the birth of Christ, high-lighting the Celebration of the Blessed Eucharist.

For many, the first reaction was:

What is a Jubilee Year?

How did it eventuate?

How long has the Church been celebrating Jubilee Years?

From Desmond O'Grady's Book- 'JUBILEES 1300-2001 we learn that Jubilee 2000 is distinctive because it is the first time that a Jubilee coincides with a New millenium, seeing that the celebration of Jubilee Years commenced in 1300. Jubilee Years were held every twenty-five years and 2000 marks the 26th year of Jubilee.

The origin of Jubilee is traced back to the book of Leviticus, the name meaning Trumpet or Ram's Horn which was sounded to announce the time of Joy, and it derives from the Old Testament recommendation to hold a Jubilee every fiftieth year in which Jewish slaves would be freed, debts cancelled, and land returned to original owners, in a collective tribute to the Lord's sovereignty and the integrity

of creation. In such years, equality was to be recovered, **freedom**, property and land were to be restored to the dispossessed, and so the poor were to be protected and cared for. In those days distances between lands were not scattered as they are today.

In his encyclical “Tertio millenio Adveniente” Pope John Paul suggests that in the Spirit of the Book of Leviticus; “Christians will have to raise their voices on behalf of all the poor in the world” proposing the Jubilee as an appropriate time to give thought, among other things, to reducing substantially - if not cancelling outright- the international debt which seriously threatens the future of many nations.

Therefore, inspired by this Apostolic letter of Pope John Paul “The Coming of the Third Millenium,” the Australian Catholic Bishops made public their commitment to celebrations in the year 2000. They guided us to consider the year as “The Celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus and God’s action in Human History with personal and Communal reconversion to the heart of the Gospel Message with special emphasis on the

Teachings of the Scriptures,
the Second Vatican Council and the
Social Teaching of the Church.”

At this point of time when the year is half-way through, it is evident that the Australian Bishops have organized a twelve-month celebration, which though spaced out differently in each state, based on Leviticus 25, would include EVERYONE based under six headings:

Freedom	Justice
Fallow	Journey
Forgiveness	Jubilate (Thanks)

and they devised a Jubilee Emblem:

JESUS, OUR JUBILEE HOPE
A NEW ERA FOR AN ANCIENT LAND-

The outstanding person in organizing this Jubilee Year, putting it into practice, touching on all areas, was Pope John Paul himself. Thanks to the rapid advancement of Modern Technology, it was wonderful to view our earthly leader in a dramatic way, opening the Jubilee door in St. Peter’s, Rome, at Midnight Mass and hear Him pray:

“Look upon us who joyfully open the door to a year of Reconciliation and peace. Grant to those who cross this door, the joy of salvation and peace.”

It was exciting to see Michael Tate, a former Australian Federal Member of Parliament- then a Deacon but since ordained to the Priesthood- come to Pope John Paul for a blessing and then reading the Gospel. It was a fitting tribute to AUSTRALIA.

The Opening of a Jubilee Door was repeated in all Cathedrals through-out the world. On the first Sunday of Advent 1999, the Jubilee door was closed and Pilgrim Staffs were distributed to representatives of each parish who had been invited to the Cathedral for the occasion. These staffs were to be used in Processions during Mass or on Parish Pilgrimages. This door was opened again on Christmas Night, by Archbishop Bathersby, as the official opening of the JUBILEE YEAR 2000. The request of Pope John Paul to celebrate the year in a more spiritual than historical manner was answered in a very positive way.

The parishioners of St. Stephen's Cathedral were catered for by:

The first Mission for many years conducted by two Redemptorist Fathers.

The opportunity to make a Pilgrimage in the Cathedral which merited a Jubilee Indulgence. It included prayers at various stations and the touching of a rock from Israel and one from Stradbroke Island, the scene of the first Mass and Mission in Queensland. The visit concluded with prayers at the shrine of Blessed Mary MacKillop who had attended Mass in the original St. Stephen's Cathedral.

The Carmelite Sisters in Ormiston in Brisbane have committed themselves to pray for the spiritual success of the Jubilee Year. In February they organized a prayer meeting consisting of the Prayer of the Church and Benediction and invited all religious orders to join with them. A Special Jubilee Hymn, composed by a Victorian and which won a competition for the best Hymn, was sung at the gathering. Among the many prayer meetings organized Australia-wide was a Eucharistic Congress in Wollongong from 4th-18th June. This coincided with a Eucharistic Congress in Rome.

At this part of the year we are aware of the various groups following the directions of Leviticus, Freedom, Forgiveness and Justice. The following is the result so far:-

RELEASE FROM PRISONS:

The Chaplains in Prison Amnesty have called for a *10%* reduction in sentences for around 5000 prisoners in New South Wales in a proposal inspired by a similar call by New Zealand Chaplains. Prison Chaplains everywhere have been contacted-but as yet there is no success.

DEBTS:

Another world-wide appeal was for the CANCELLING OF DEBTS owed to powerful nations by SMALL-STRUGGLING Nations.

Recently we heard that Australia has cancelled the debt of Ethiopia and Nicaragua. Canada and the United States have done likewise. United Nations Committee have to approve of this so as yet the final word is not available.

FORGIVENESS:

Reconciliation between races, cultures and Churches is a goal of the Jubilee Year.

INDIVIDUAL EFFORTS:-

Another of Pope John Paul's initiatives was to call to Rome, well-known artists to commemorate the mystical painter, Beato Angelico.

Later in the year, a call was circulated to 6,000 dentists to come to the Vatican where Pope John Paul requested that they attend to the Dental Problems in Third World Countries by advice or personal contact.

JUBILEE HYMN:

An Australian-wide competition was held to discover the best hymn for the year. The winning Hymn had very appropriate words.

A Brisbane Group composed many hymns to be sung in their Jubilee play 'Sound the Trumpet.'

JUBILEE CAKE:

A lady in Sydney used her only talent (in her own words) to bake a special Jubilee cake, iced in the Jubilee colours which signified the diversities of the many people in the One inclusive Church. She presented the cake to Cardinal Clancy.

FALLOW EFFORTS:

A Group of farmers let their lands lie fallow while as a group planted over 400 trees. This was an ecumenical effort by men from Crows Nest on the Darling

Downs. This prompted the local Council to enclose the area with a fence to preserve it as a monument of the Jubilee Year.

PILGRIMAGES:

These were of two kinds - Ecumenical with a chance to heal the painful divisions during the centuries,

AND Pilgrimages to significant places as a prayerful group.

Once again, Pope John Paul led the way. He concentrated on the divisions from the Eastern Orthodox Churches. His first visit was to Cairo to visit the Leader of the Coptic Church, and also the Muslim Leader there. He was happy with these meetings.

He continued on to Mt. Sinai where Moses had received the Ten Commandments. The Monastery there is occupied by Greek Orthodox Monks who did not extend the hand of welcome to Pope John Paul. This was the second time the Greek Orthodox members refused reconciliation, the first being during Vatican II.

Later in the year, he visited Jordan and Israel, the home of Jews and Palestinians. A striking photo of the Pope was taken when he stood in the lookout in Jordan from whence Moses VIEWED the Promised Land (Israel). Unlike Moses, Pope John Paul 'MADE' the visit to Israel. At the Mount of the Beatitudes, he was greeted by thousands of pilgrims including 200 Australians who also included 20 young people from the Wynnum Parish who planned their pilgrimage so as to be present at this spot with Pope John Paul. It must have been a reminder of the multitude at the feeding of the 5000.

AUSTRALIA'S PILGRIMAGE Seeking Reconciliation (FORGIVENESS).

An Ecumenical Effort was the pilgrimage to Uluru, the centre of Australia, consisting of the Heads of all religions and one representative from each denomination which took place in June. They travelled through the centre of Australia greeting people on the way. Much publicity was given to this effort which left from Canberra. One Anglican Leader described the pilgrimage as 'A CHANCE to heal the painful divisions between the denominations as a SYMBOLIC Journey.) They celebrated Pentecost Sunday at Uluru and their Ecumenical Service focussed on OUR UNITY AS CHRISTIANS IN A NATION OF MANY CULTURES. Cardinal Clancy represented the Catholic Church.

The Governor-General and his wife joined the pilgrimage at Uluru on Pentecost Sunday.

The Media Company- Albert Street Productions- propose to produce a film of the Pilgrimage so as to give the experience to a wider community. The Local Mutitjulu People have been invited to join in a creative celebration of reconciliation prepared by a Good Samaritan Sister, Sister Margaret Smith.

PEOPLE'S EFFORTS - ECUMENICAL.

Two gigantic programmes were prepared to include everyone, in order to seek reconciliation with our indigenous people: the first one in Canberra and next in Sydney culminating in a march across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Brisbane was not to be outdone so thousands walked across the William Jolly bridge on a Sunday. There appeared to be much satisfaction on both sides.

OVERSEAS PILGRIMAGES:

Our Archbishop Bathersby and Bishops Gerry and Putney will each lead pilgrims to Rome and the Holy Land. Archbishop Bathersby will lead a group of young people who have been sponsored by their parishes.

Many Catholics have joined in the various oversea trips, organised by tourist agencies.

LOCAL SCENE

In Australia, we do not have the ancient historical sites of the Old World, but the planning of this Jubilee has unearthed SACRED Sites which have become part of our short history of 200 years.

Church Hill (Sydney)	New Norcia (W. Aus.)
Penola (S. Aus.)	Port Arthur and Richmond (Tas.)
Fitzroy (Vic)	Cathedral site (Brisbane Qld.)
Stradbroke Island (Qld.)	Bowen (Qld.)

ROCKHAMPTON

All Catholics of the Rockhampton Diocese were invited to Rockhampton Cathedral for the Jubilee celebrations of Mass, Prayer Sessions and Sausage-Sizzle in the Park later. The city people were asked to billet parishioners from the far-flung areas of the diocese.

TOWNSVILLE:

Parishioners from all areas of the Townsville Diocese were invited to BOWEN which included a pilgrimage to the grave of FATHER MCGINTY, the first parish priest of Bowen (and the only priest in the northern district.) He was a very zealous priest from New South Wales belonging to the Archdiocese of Sydney (before separation.)

MARYBOROUGH

Their day of Prayer and Pilgrimage coincided with the visit and passage of the Olympic Flame and Torch.

BRISBANE:

St. Stephen's Cathedral is a pilgrimage centre and there are daily tours for groups wishing to avail of them.

Early in the year the Brisbane Parish of Cannon Hill undertook a pilgrimage to Stradbroke Island, the scene of the first Mass in Queensland. They visited the old cemetery first, then they marched behind the Parish Priest, carrying the Jubilee staff, up the hill to the little Church, for the celebration of Mass.

A large group of Sisters of Mercy made a pilgrimage to the grave of Mother Vincent Whitty who led the first group of Sisters to Queensland in 1861 and pioneered the growth of the Mercy Mission.

In the other Capital cities, people marched through city streets from one historical site to another.

Many of the Jubilee Year celebrations will continue into 2001 maybe to include the new millenium

As the year progresses, there has been an opportunity for everyone to become involved.

Primary school children and those in the Secondary schools have had their special occasions.

With modern technology we are much more privileged than those of the last Jubilee. In 1900 the Pope was a prisoner in the Vatican. In 1950, Europe was recovering from the destruction of World War II. Refugees from the European Internment Camps had arrived in Australia and the schools were struggling to cope with language difficulties and lack of space for the hundreds of newly-arrived children.

Recently the Catholic Weekly in Sydney published a few details of the Pilgrimage to Rome and England on the Holy Year of 1950 and of 1975. This Jubilee Year of 2000 is remarkable for being at the beginning of a new Millenium.

CONCLUSION:

Pope John Paul, in his first General Audience of 2000, urged the faithful to reflect on Mary, the Mother of Jesus who is also the mother of all Christians.

At the opening of the Jubilee Door on Christmas morn, he had prayed to Mary asking her to be with us as we took the first steps into the Jubilee Year.

As the year progresses towards Pentecost 2001, we repeat the request for her prayers and patronage.