



# The Holy See

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*Incarnationis Mysterium* BULL OF INDICTION

OF THE GREAT JUBILEE

OF THE YEAR 2000

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SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD

TO ALL THE FAITHFUL

JOURNEYING TOWARDS

THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

**HEALTH AND THE APOSTOLIC BLESSING** 1. Contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Church prepares to cross the threshold of the Third Millennium. Never more than at this time do we feel the need to make our own the Apostle's hymn of praise and thanksgiving: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will... For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (*Eph* 1:3-5, 9-10). These words clearly indicate that in Jesus Christ the history of salvation finds its culmination and ultimate meaning. In him, we have all received grace upon grace (*Jn* 1:16), having been reconciled with the Father (cf. *Rom* 5:10; *2 Cor* 5:18). The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is not an event which can be consigned to the past. The whole of human history in fact stands in reference to him: our own time and the future of the world are illumined by his presence. He is the Living One (*Rev* 1:18), who is, who was and who is to come (*Rev* 1:4). Before him every knee must bend, in the heavens, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim that he is Lord (cf. *Phil* 2:10-11). In the encounter with Christ, every man discovers the mystery of his own life.<sup>[1]</sup> Jesus is the genuine newness which surpasses all human expectations and such he remains for ever, from age to age. The Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation which he has accomplished by his Death and Resurrection are therefore the true criterion for evaluating all that happens in time and every effort to make life more human.<sup>2</sup> The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is almost upon us. Ever since my first Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis*, I have looked towards this occasion with the sole purpose of preparing everyone to be docile to the working of the Spirit.<sup>[2]</sup> The event will be celebrated simultaneously in Rome and in all the particular Churches around the world, and it will have, as it were, two centres: on the one hand, the City where Providence chose to place the See of the Successor of Peter, and on the other hand, the Holy Land, where the Son of God was born as man, taking our flesh from a Virgin whose name was Mary (cf. *Lk* 1:27). With equal dignity and significance, therefore, the Jubilee will be celebrated not only in Rome but also in the Land which is rightly called Holy because it was there that Jesus was born and died. That Land, in which the first

Christian community appeared, is the place where God revealed himself to humanity. It is the Promised Land which has so marked the history of the Jewish People, and is revered by the followers of Islam as well. May the Jubilee serve to advance mutual dialogue until the day when all of us together Jews, Christians and Moslems will exchange the greeting of peace in Jerusalem.[3] The period of the Jubilee introduces us to the vigorous language which the divine pedagogy of salvation uses to lead man to conversion and penance. These are the beginning and the path of man's healing, and the necessary condition for him to recover what he could never attain by his own strength: God's friendship and grace, the supernatural life which alone can bring fulfilment to the deepest aspirations of the human heart. The coming of the Third Millennium prompts the Christian community to lift its eyes of faith to embrace new horizons in proclaiming the Kingdom of God. It is imperative therefore at this special time to return more faithfully than ever to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, which shed new light upon *the missionary task of the Church* in view of the demands of evangelization today. At the Council, the Church became more deeply conscious both of the mystery which she herself is and of the apostolic mission entrusted to her by the Lord. This awareness commits the community of believers to live in the world knowing that they must be the leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society, destined to be renewed in Christ and transformed into the family of God.[4] In order to meet this commitment effectively, the Church must persevere in unity and grow in the life of communion.[5] The imminent approach of the Jubilee offers a powerful stimulus in this direction. The journey of believers towards the Third Millennium is in no way weighed down by the weariness which the burden of two thousand years of history could bring with it. Rather, Christians feel invigorated, in the knowledge that they bring to the world the true light, Christ the Lord. Proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth, true God and perfect Man, the Church opens to all people the prospect of being divinized and thus of becoming more human.[6] This is the one path which can lead the world to discover its lofty calling and to achieve it fully in the salvation wrought by God.

3. Responding to my Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*,[7] the particular Churches during these years of immediate preparation for the Jubilee are getting ready, through prayer, catechesis and pastoral action of different kinds, for this celebration which is leading the whole Church into a new time of grace and mission. The approach of the Jubilee is also evoking growing interest among those who are searching for a favourable sign to help them discern the traces of God's presence in our time. The years of preparation for the Jubilee have been placed under the sign of the Most Holy Trinity: through Christ in the Holy Spirit to God the Father. In the mystery of the Trinity, the journey of faith has its origin and its final goal, when at last our eyes will contemplate the face of God for ever. In celebrating the Incarnation, we fix our gaze upon the mystery of the Trinity. Jesus of Nazareth, who reveals the Father, has fulfilled the desire hidden in every human heart to know God. What creation preserved as a seal etched in it by the creative hand of God and what the ancient Prophets had announced as a promise is disclosed in the revelation of Christ.[8] Jesus reveals the face of God the Father compassionate and merciful (*Jas 5:11*), and with the sending of the Holy Spirit he makes known the mystery of love which is the Trinity. It is the Spirit of Christ who is at work in the Church and in history: we must listen to him in order to recognize the signs of the new times and to make the expectation of the glorified Lord's return ever more vibrant in the hearts of the faithful. The Holy Year must therefore be one unceasing hymn of praise to the Trinity, the Most High God. At this point, the poetic words of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, the Theologian, come to our aid: Glory to God the Father and to the Son, King of the universe.

Glory to the Spirit,

worthy of praise and all holy.

The Trinity is one God

who created and filled all things:

the heavens with heavenly beings,

the earth with creatures of earth,  
 the sea, the rivers and springs  
 with creatures of the waters,  
 giving life to all things by his Spirit,  
 that all creatures  
 might sing the praises of their wise Creator,  
 who alone gives life and sustains  
 all life in being.

Above all others, let the creature who reasons  
 celebrate him always

as the great King and good Father.<sup>[9]</sup>4. May this hymn to the Trinity for the Incarnation of the Son rise with one voice from all who have been baptized and share the same faith in the Lord Jesus. May the ecumenical character of the Jubilee be a concrete sign of the journey which, especially in recent decades, the faithful of the different Churches and Ecclesial Communities have been making. It is only by listening to the Spirit that we shall be able to show forth visibly in full communion the grace of divine adoption which springs from Baptism: all of us children of the one Father. The challenging call of the Apostle rings out again for us today: There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all (*Eph* 4:4-6). To use the words of Saint Irenaeus: after receiving the Word of God as rain falling from heaven we cannot allow ourselves to present to the world an image of dry earth; nor can we ever claim to be one bread if we prevent the scattered flour from becoming one through the action of the water which has been poured on us.<sup>[10]</sup>Every Jubilee Year is like an invitation to a wedding feast. From the different Churches and Ecclesial Communities throughout the world, let us all hasten to the feast now being prepared; let us bring with us everything that already unites us and, by fixing our gaze on Christ alone, let us grow in the unity which is the fruit of the Spirit. The present task of the Bishop of Rome, as the Successor of Peter, is to make the invitation to the Jubilee celebration all the more insistent, in order that the two thousandth anniversary of the central mystery of the Christian faith may be experienced as a journey of reconciliation and a sign of true hope for all who look to Christ and to his Church, the sacrament of intimate union with God and the unity of the entire human race.<sup>[11]</sup>5. How many historic memories the Jubilee evokes! We can recall the year 1300 when, responding to the wish of the people of Rome, Pope Boniface VIII solemnly inaugurated the first Jubilee in history. Resuming an ancient tradition which offered abundant remission and pardon of sins to those who visited Saint Peter's Basilica in the Eternal City, he wished on that occasion to grant a pardon of sins which would be not only more abundant, but complete.<sup>[12]</sup> From that time onwards, the Church has always celebrated Jubilees as significant steps on her journey towards the fulness of Christ. History shows how enthusiastically the People of God have entered into the Holy Years, seeing them as a time when Jesus' invitation to conversion makes itself more deeply felt. In this long experience there have been abuses and misunderstandings, but the testimonies of true faith and sincere charity have been very much greater. An exemplary witness to this is Saint Philip Neri who, for the Jubilee of 1550, established the Roman charity as a tangible sign of welcome to pilgrims. A long story of holiness could be told on the basis of the Jubilee experience and the fruits of conversion which the grace of pardon has produced in so many believers.<sup>6</sup> During my Pontificate, I have had the joy of proclaiming in 1983 the Extraordinary Jubilee for the 1950 years since the Redemption of the human race. Accomplished in the Death and Resurrection of Jesus, this mystery is the consummation of an event which has its beginning in the Incarnation of the Son of God. The coming Jubilee, therefore, can well be considered Great, and the Church declares her fervent desire to embrace all believers in order to offer them the joy of reconciliation.

From the whole Church there will rise the hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, who in his incomparable love has granted us in Christ to be fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (*Eph 2:19*). On the occasion of this great feast, a warm invitation to share our joy goes out to the followers of other religions, as it does to those who are far from faith in God. As brothers and sisters in the one human family, may we cross together the threshold of a new millennium that will demand effort and responsibility on the part of all. For us believers, the Jubilee Year will highlight the Redemption accomplished by Christ in his Death and Resurrection. After this Death, no one can be separated from the love of God (cf. *Rm 8:21-39*), except through their own fault. The grace of mercy is offered to everyone, so that all who have been reconciled may also be saved by his life (*Rm 5:10*). I therefore decree that *the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 will begin on Christmas Eve 1999*, with the opening of the holy door in Saint Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, a few hours before the inaugural celebration planned for Jerusalem and Bethlehem and the opening of the holy door in each of the other Patriarchal Basilicas of Rome. At Saint Paul's Basilica, the holy door will be opened on Tuesday, 18 January, when the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins, as a way of emphasizing the distinctive ecumenical character of this Jubilee. I also decree that in the particular Churches the Jubilee will begin on the most holy day of the Nativity of the Lord Jesus, with a solemn Eucharistic Liturgy presided over by the diocesan Bishop in the Cathedral, as also in the Co-Cathedral where the Bishop may delegate someone else to preside at the celebration. Since the rite of the opening of the holy door is proper to the Vatican Basilica and the other Patriarchal Basilicas, it would be appropriate that the opening of the Jubilee in the individual Dioceses be done by having the *statio* in one church and a procession from there to the Cathedral, by liturgical reverencing of the Book of the Gospels and a reading of parts of this Bull, in accordance with the directives of the Ritual for the Celebration of the Great Jubilee in Particular Churches. May Christmas 1999 be for everyone a feast filled with light, the prelude to an especially deep experience of grace and divine mercy, which will continue until *the closing of the Jubilee Year on the day of the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ, 6 January 2001*. Let all the faithful welcome the invitation of the angels who ceaselessly proclaim: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased (*Lk 2:14*). Thus the Christmas season will be the pulsing heart of the Holy Year, bringing to the life of the Church an infusion of the copious gifts of the Spirit for a new evangelization.<sup>7</sup> In the course of its history, the institution of the Jubilee has been enriched by signs which attest to the faith and foster the devotion of the Christian people. Among these, the first is the notion of *pilgrimage*, which is linked to the situation of man who readily describes his life as a journey. From birth to death, the condition of each individual is that of the *homo viator*. Sacred Scripture, for its part, often attests to the special significance of setting out to go to sacred places. There was a tradition that the Israelite go on pilgrimage to the city where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, or visit the shrine at Bethel (cf. *Jg 20:18*), or the one at Shiloh where the prayer of Samuel's mother, Hannah, was heard (cf. *1 Sam 1:3*). Willingly subjecting himself to the Law, Jesus too went with Mary and Joseph as a pilgrim to the Holy City of Jerusalem (cf. *Lk 2:41*). The history of the Church is the living account of an unfinished pilgrimage. To journey to the city of Saints Peter and Paul, to the Holy Land, or to the old and new shrines dedicated to the Virgin Mary and the Saints: this is the goal of countless members of the faithful who find nourishment for their devotion in this way. Pilgrimages have always been a significant part of the life of the faithful, assuming different cultural forms in different ages. A pilgrimage evokes the believer's personal journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer: it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weaknesses, of constant vigilance over one's own frailty, of interior preparation for a change of heart. Through vigils, fasting and prayer, the pilgrim progresses along the path of Christian perfection, striving to attain, with the support of God's grace, the state of the perfect man, to the measure of the full maturity of Christ (*Eph 4:13*).<sup>8</sup> In addition to pilgrimage, there is the sign of the *holy door*, opened for the first time in the Basilica of the Most Holy Saviour at the Lateran during the Jubilee of 1423. It evokes the passage from sin to grace which every Christian is called to

accomplish. Jesus said: I am the door (*Jn 10:7*), in order to make it clear that no one can come to the Father except through him. This designation which Jesus applies to himself testifies to the fact that he alone is the Saviour sent by the Father. There is only one way that opens wide the entrance into the life of communion with God: this is Jesus, the one and absolute way to salvation. To him alone can the words of the Psalmist be applied in full truth: This is the door of the Lord where the just may enter (*Ps 118:20*). To focus upon the door is to recall the responsibility of every believer to cross its threshold. To pass through that door means to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; it is to strengthen faith in him in order to live the new life which he has given us. It is a decision which presumes freedom to choose and also the courage to leave something behind, in the knowledge that what is gained is divine life (cf. *Mt 13:44-46*). It is in this spirit that the Pope will be the first to pass through the holy door on the night between 24 and 25 December 1999. Crossing its threshold, he will show to the Church and to the world the Holy Gospel, the wellspring of life and hope for the coming Third Millennium. Through the holy door, symbolically more spacious at the end of a millennium,<sup>[13]</sup> Christ will lead us more deeply into the Church, his Body and his Bride. In this way we see how rich in meaning are the words of the Apostle Peter when he writes that, united to Christ, we too are built, like living stones, into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God (*1 Pt 2:5*).<sup>9</sup> Another distinctive sign, and one familiar to the faithful, is *the indulgence*, which is one of the constitutive elements of the Jubilee. The indulgence discloses the fulness of the Father's mercy, who offers everyone his love, expressed primarily in the forgiveness of sins. Normally, God the Father grants his pardon through the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation.<sup>[14]</sup> Free and conscious surrender to grave sin, in fact, separates the believer from the life of grace with God and therefore excludes the believer from the holiness to which he is called. Having received from Christ the power to forgive in his name (cf. *Mt 16:19; Jn 20:23*), the Church is in the world as the living presence of the love of God who leans down to every human weakness in order to gather it into the embrace of his mercy. It is precisely through the ministry of the Church that God diffuses his mercy in the world, by means of that precious gift which from very ancient times has been called indulgence. The Sacrament of Penance offers the sinner a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification<sup>[15]</sup> won by the sacrifice of Christ. The sinner thus enters the life of God anew and shares fully in the life of the Church. Confessing his own sins, the believer truly receives pardon and can once more take part in the Eucharist as the sign that he has again found communion with the Father and with his Church. From the first centuries, however, the Church has always been profoundly convinced that pardon, freely granted by God, implies in consequence a real change of life, the gradual elimination of evil within, a renewal in our way of living. The sacramental action had to be combined with an existential act, with a real cleansing from fault, precisely what is called penance. Pardon does not imply that this existential process becomes superfluous, but rather that it acquires a meaning, that it is accepted and welcomed. Reconciliation with God does not mean that there are no enduring consequences of sin from which we must be purified. It is precisely in this context that the indulgence becomes important, since it is an expression of the total gift of the mercy of God.<sup>[16]</sup> With the indulgence, the repentant sinner receives a remission of the temporal punishment due for the sins already forgiven as regards the fault.<sup>10</sup> Because it offends the holiness and justice of God and scorns God's personal friendship with man, sin has a twofold consequence. In the first place, if it is grave, it involves deprivation of communion with God and, in consequence, exclusion from a share in eternal life. To the repentant sinner, however, God in his mercy grants pardon of grave sin and remission of the eternal punishment which it would bring. In the second place, every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the temporal punishment of sin,<sup>[17]</sup> and this expiation removes whatever impedes full communion with God and with one's brothers and sisters. Revelation also teaches that the Christian is not alone on the path of conversion. In Christ and through Christ, his life is linked by a mysterious bond to the

lives of all other Christians in the supernatural union of the Mystical Body. This establishes among the faithful a marvellous exchange of spiritual gifts, in virtue of which the holiness of one benefits others in a way far exceeding the harm which the sin of one has inflicted upon others. There are people who leave in their wake a surfeit of love, of suffering borne well, of purity and truth, which involves and sustains others. This is the reality of vicariousness, upon which the entire mystery of Christ is founded. His superabundant love saves us all. Yet it is part of the grandeur of Christ's love not to leave us in the condition of passive recipients, but to draw us into his saving work and, in particular, into his Passion. This is said in the famous passage of the Letter to the Colossians: In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his Body, that is, the Church (1:24). This profound truth is also wonderfully expressed in a passage of the Book of Revelation, where the Church is described as a bride dressed in a simple robe of white linen, the finest linen, bright and pure. And Saint John says: The fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints (*Rev* 19:8). In fact, in the lives of the saints the bright linen is woven to become the robe of eternal life. Everything comes from Christ, but since we belong to him, whatever is ours also becomes his and acquires a healing power. This is what is meant by the treasures of the Church, which are the good works of the saints. To pray in order to gain the indulgence means to enter into this spiritual communion and therefore to open oneself totally to others. In the spiritual realm, too, no one lives for himself alone. And salutary concern for the salvation of one's own soul is freed from fear and selfishness only when it becomes concern for the salvation of others as well. This is the reality of the communion of saints, the mystery of vicarious life, of prayer as the means of union with Christ and his saints. He takes us with him in order that we may weave with him the white robe of the new humanity, the robe of bright linen which clothes the Bride of Christ. This doctrine on indulgences therefore teaches firstly how sad and bitter it is to have abandoned the Lord God (cf. *Jer* 2:19). When they gain indulgences, the faithful understand that by their own strength they would not be able to make good the evil which by sinning they have done to themselves and to the entire community, and therefore they are stirred to saving deeds of humility.<sup>[18]</sup> Furthermore, the truth about the communion of saints which unites believers to Christ and to one another, reveals how much each of us can help others living or dead to become ever more intimately united with the Father in heaven. Drawing on these doctrinal reasons and interpreting the motherly intuition of the Church, I decree that throughout the entire Jubilee all the faithful, properly prepared, be able to make abundant use of the gift of the indulgence, according to the directives which accompany this Bull (cf. attached decree).<sup>11</sup> These signs have long been part of the traditional celebration of Jubilees. Nor will the People of God fail to recognize other possible signs of the mercy of God at work in the Jubilee. In my Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, I suggested some which may help people to live the exceptional grace of the Jubilee with greater fervour.<sup>[19]</sup> I recall them briefly here. First of all, the sign of *the purification of memory*; this calls everyone to make an act of courage and humility in recognizing the wrongs done by those who have borne or bear the name of Christian. By its nature, the Holy Year is a time when we are called to conversion. This is the first word of the preaching of Jesus, which significantly enough is linked with readiness to believe: Repent and believe the Good News (*Mk* 1:15). The imperative put by Christ flows from realization of the fact that the time is fulfilled (*Mk* 1:15). The fulfilment of God's time becomes a summons to conversion, which is in the first place an effect of grace. It is the Spirit who impels each of us to return into ourselves and to see the need to go back to the Father's house (cf. *Lk* 15:17-20). Examination of conscience is therefore one of the most decisive moments of life. It places each individual before the truth of his own life. Thus he discovers the distance which separates his deeds from the ideal which he had set himself. The history of the Church is a history of holiness. The New Testament strongly states this mark of the baptized: they are saints to the extent that, being separate from the world insofar as the latter is subject to the Evil One, they consecrate themselves to worshipping the one true God. In fact, this holiness is evident not only in the lives of the many Saints and Beati recognized by the Church, but also in the lives of the immense host of unknown men and women

whose number it is impossible to calculate (cf. *Rev 7:9*). Their lives attest to the truth of the Gospel and offer the world a visible sign that perfection is possible. Yet it must be acknowledged that history also records events which constitute a counter-testimony to Christianity. Because of the bond which unites us to one another in the Mystical Body, all of us, though not personally responsible and without encroaching on the judgement of God who alone knows every heart, bear the burden of the errors and faults of those who have gone before us. Yet we too, sons and daughters of the Church, have sinned and have hindered the Bride of Christ from shining forth in all her beauty. Our sin has impeded the Spirit's working in the hearts of many people. Our meagre faith has meant that many have lapsed into apathy and been driven away from a true encounter with Christ. As the Successor of Peter, I ask that in this year of mercy the Church, strong in the holiness which she receives from her Lord, should kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters. All have sinned and none can claim righteousness before God (cf. *1 Kgs 8:46*). Let it be said once more without fear: We have sinned (*Jer 3:25*), but let us keep alive the certainty that where sin increased, grace abounded even more (*Rom 5:20*). The embrace which the Father reserves for repentant sinners who go to him will be our just reward for the humble recognition of our own faults and the faults of others, a recognition based upon awareness of the profound bond which unites all the members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Christians are invited to acknowledge, before God and before those offended by their actions, the faults which they have committed. Let them do so without seeking anything in return, but strengthened only by the love of God which has been poured into our hearts (*Rom 5:5*). At the same time, there will be no lack of fair-minded people able to recognize that past and present history also records incidents of exclusion, injustice and persecution directed against the sons and daughters of the Church. Let no one in this Jubilee year wish to exclude himself from the Father's embrace. Let no one behave like the elder brother in the Gospel parable who refuses to enter the house to celebrate (cf. *Lk 15:25-30*). May the joy of forgiveness be stronger and greater than any resentment. Thus the Bride will shine before the eyes of the world with the beauty and holiness which come from the Lord's grace. For two thousand years, the Church has been the cradle in which Mary places Jesus and entrusts him to the adoration and contemplation of all peoples. May the humility of the Bride cause to shine forth still more brightly the glory and power of the Eucharist, which she celebrates and treasures in her heart. In the sign of the consecrated Bread and Wine, Christ Jesus risen and glorified, the light of the nations (cf. *Lk 2:32*), reveals the enduring reality of his Incarnation. He remains living and real in our midst in order to nourish the faithful with his Body and Blood. Let us therefore look to the future. The merciful Father takes no account of the sins for which we are truly sorry (cf. *Is 38:17*). He is now doing something new, and in the love which forgives he anticipates the new heavens and the new earth. Therefore, so that there may be a renewed commitment to Christian witness in the world of the next millennium, let faith be refreshed, let hope increase and let charity exert itself still more.<sup>12</sup> One sign of the mercy of God which is especially necessary today is the sign of *charity*, which opens our eyes to the needs of those who are poor and excluded. Such is the situation affecting vast sectors of society and casting its shadow of death upon whole peoples. The human race is facing forms of slavery which are new and more subtle than those of the past; and for too many people freedom remains a word without meaning. Some nations, especially the poorer ones, are oppressed by a debt so huge that repayment is practically impossible. It is clear, therefore, that there can be no real progress without effective cooperation between the peoples of every language, race, nationality and religion. The abuses of power which result in some dominating others must stop: such abuses are sinful and unjust. Whoever is concerned to accumulate treasure only on earth (cf. *Mt 6:19*) is not rich in the sight of God (*Lk 12:21*). There is also a need to create a new culture of international solidarity and cooperation, where all — particularly the wealthy nations and the private sector — accept responsibility for an economic model which serves everyone. There should be no more postponement of the time when the poor Lazarus can sit beside the rich man to share the same banquet and be forced no more to feed on the scraps that fall from the table

(cf. *Lk 16:19-31*). Extreme poverty is a source of violence, bitterness and scandal; and to eradicate it is to do the work of justice and therefore the work of peace. The Jubilee is a further summons to conversion of heart through a change of life. It is a reminder to all that they should give absolute importance neither to the goods of the earth, since these are not God, nor to man's domination or claim to domination, since the earth belongs to God and to him alone: the earth is mine and you are strangers and sojourners with me (*Lev 25:23*). May this year of grace touch the hearts of those who hold in their hands the fate of the world's peoples!<sup>13</sup> A sign of the truth of Christian love, ageless but especially powerful today, is *the memory of the martyrs*. Their witness must not be forgotten. They are the ones who have proclaimed the Gospel by giving their lives for love. The martyr, especially in our own days, is a sign of that greater love which sums up all other values. The martyr's life reflects the extraordinary words uttered by Christ on the Cross: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (*Lk 23:34*). The believer who has seriously pondered his Christian vocation, including what Revelation has to say about the possibility of martyrdom, cannot exclude it from his own life's horizon. The two thousand years since the birth of Christ are marked by the ever-present witness of the martyrs. This century now drawing to a close has known very many martyrs, especially because of Nazism, Communism, and racial or tribal conflicts. People from every sector of society have suffered for their faith, paying with their blood for their fidelity to Christ and the Church, or courageously facing interminable years of imprisonment and privations of every kind because they refused to yield to an ideology which had become a pitiless dictatorial regime. From the psychological point of view, martyrdom is the most eloquent proof of the truth of the faith, for faith can give a human face even to the most violent of deaths and show its beauty even in the midst of the most atrocious persecutions. Filled with grace during the coming Jubilee year, we shall be able with new strength to raise the hymn of thanksgiving to the Father, singing: *Te martyrum candidatus laudat exercitus*. Yes, this is the host of those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (*Rev 7:14*). For this reason the Church in every corner of the earth must remain anchored in the testimony of the martyrs and jealously guard their memory. May the People of God, confirmed in faith by the example of these true champions of every age, language and nation, cross with full confidence the threshold of the Third Millennium. In the hearts of the faithful, may admiration for their martyrdom be matched by the desire to follow their example, with God's grace, should circumstances require it.<sup>14</sup> The joy of the Jubilee would not be complete if our gaze did not turn to her who in full obedience to the Father gave birth to the Son of God in the flesh for our sake. For Mary the time to give birth came to pass in Bethlehem (*Lk 2:6*), and filled with the Spirit she brought forth the First-Born of the new creation. Called to be the Mother of God, from the day of the virginal conception Mary lived the fulness of her motherhood, crowning it on Calvary at the foot of the Cross. There, by the wondrous gift of Christ, she also became the Mother of the Church, and showed to everyone the way that leads to the Son. Woman of silence, given to listening, docile in the hands of the Father, the Virgin Mary is invoked as blessed by all generations, for she recognized the marvels accomplished in her by the Holy Spirit. The nations will never grow weary of invoking the Mother of mercy and will always find refuge under her protection. May she who with Jesus her son and Joseph her spouse went on pilgrimage to the holy Temple of God, guard the steps of all those who will be pilgrims in this Jubilee Year. And through the coming months may she deign to intercede intensely for the Christian people, so that abundant grace and mercy may be theirs, as they rejoice at the two thousand years since the birth of their Saviour. Let the praise of the Church rise to God the Father in the Holy Spirit for the gift of salvation in Christ the Lord, both now and for evermore. *Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 29 November, the First Sunday of Advent, in the year of our Lord 1998, the twenty-first of my Pontificate.* **Joannes Paulus II**

#### **CONDITIONS FOR GAINING**

**THE JUBILEE INDULGENCE** By the present decree, which implements the will of the Holy Father expressed in the Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, and by virtue of faculties granted by the same Supreme Pontiff, the Apostolic Penitentiary defines the discipline to be observed for gaining the Jubilee indulgence. All the faithful, properly



prepared, can fully enjoy, throughout the Jubilee, the gift of the indulgence, in accordance with the following norms. While indulgences granted either generally or by special rescript remain in force during the Great Jubilee, it should be noted that the Jubilee indulgence also can be applied in suffrage to the souls of the deceased: such an offering constitutes an outstanding act of supernatural charity, in virtue of the bond which, in the Mystical Body of Christ, unites the faithful still on pilgrimage here below and those who have already ended their earthly journey. Then too, the rule that a plenary indulgence can be gained only once a day remains in force during the entire Jubilee year.<sup>[20]</sup> The high point of the Jubilee is the encounter with God the Father, through Christ the Saviour present in his Church and in a special way in the Sacraments. For this reason, the whole Jubilee journey, prepared for by pilgrimage, has as its starting point and its conclusion the celebration of the Sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist, the paschal mystery of Christ, our peace and our reconciliation: this is the transforming encounter which opens us to the gift of the indulgence for ourselves and for others. After worthily celebrating sacramental confession, which ordinarily, according to the norm of Canon 960 of the Code of Canon Law and of Canon 720 § 1 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, must be individual and complete, each member of the faithful, having fulfilled the required conditions, can receive or apply the gift of the plenary indulgence during a suitable period of time, even daily, without needing to go to confession again. It is fitting however that the faithful should frequently receive the grace of the Sacrament of Penance, in order to grow in conversion and in purity of heart.<sup>[21]</sup> Participation in the Eucharist, which is required for all indulgences, should properly take place on the same day as the prescribed works are performed.<sup>[22]</sup> These two culminating moments must be accompanied, first of all, by the witness of communion with the Church, manifested by prayer for the intentions of the Roman Pontiff, and also by acts of charity and penance, following the indications given below: these acts are meant to express the true conversion of heart to which communion with Christ in the Sacraments leads. Christ is truly our forgiveness and the expiation of our sins (cf. *1 Jn 2:2*). By pouring into the hearts of the faithful the Holy Spirit who is the remission of all sins,<sup>[23]</sup> he guides each individual towards a filial and trusting encounter with the Father of mercies. From this encounter springs a commitment to conversion and renewal, to ecclesial communion and to charity towards our brothers and sisters. Likewise confirmed for the coming Jubilee is the norm whereby confessors can commute, on behalf of those legitimately impeded, both the work prescribed and the conditions required.<sup>[24]</sup> Cloistered men and women religious, the infirm and all those who for whatever reason are not able to leave their own house, can carry out, in lieu of a visit to a certain Church, a visit to the chapel of their house; should even this be impossible for them, they can gain the indulgence by spiritually uniting themselves with those carrying out the prescribed work in the ordinary manner and by offering to God their prayers, sufferings and discomforts. With regard to the required conditions, the faithful can gain the Jubilee indulgence: 1) *In Rome*, if they make a pious pilgrimage to one of the Patriarchal Basilicas, namely, the Basilica of Saint Peter in the Vatican, the Archbasilica of the Most Holy Saviour at the Lateran, the Basilica of Saint Mary Major and the Basilica of Saint Paul on the Ostian Way, and there take part devoutly in Holy Mass or another liturgical celebration such as Lauds or Vespers, or some pious exercise (e.g., the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, the recitation of the *Akathistos* Hymn in honour of the Mother of God); furthermore, if they visit, as a group or individually, one of the four Patriarchal Basilicas and there spend some time in Eucharistic adoration and pious meditations, ending with the Our Father, the profession of faith in any approved form, and prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary. To the four Patriarchal Basilicas are added, on this special occasion of the Great Jubilee, the following further places, under the same conditions: the Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem, the Basilica of Saint Lawrence in Campo Verano, the Shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love, and the Christian Catacombs.<sup>[25]</sup> 2) *In the Holy Land*, if, keeping the same conditions, they visit the Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, or the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem or the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth. 3) *In other ecclesiastical territories*, if they make a sacred pilgrimage to the Cathedral Church or to other Churches or places

designated by the Ordinary, and there assist devoutly at a liturgical celebration or other pious exercise, such as those mentioned above for the City of Rome; in addition, if they visit, in a group or individually, the Cathedral Church or a Shrine designated by the Ordinary, and there spend some time in pious meditation, ending with the Our Father, the profession of faith in any approved form, and prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>4</sup> *In any place*, if they visit for a suitable time their brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty (the sick, the imprisoned, the elderly living alone, the handicapped, etc.), as if making a pilgrimage to Christ present in them (cf. *Mt* 25:34-36), and fulfilling the usual spiritual and sacramental conditions and saying the usual prayers. The faithful will certainly wish to repeat these visits throughout the Holy Year, since on each occasion they can gain the plenary indulgence, although obviously not more than once a day. The plenary indulgence of the Jubilee can also be gained through actions which express in a practical and generous way the penitential spirit which is, as it were, the heart of the Jubilee. This would include abstaining for at least one whole day from unnecessary consumption (e.g., from smoking or alcohol, or fasting or practising abstinence according to the general rules of the Church and the norms laid down by the Bishops' Conferences) and donating a proportionate sum of money to the poor; supporting by a significant contribution works of a religious or social nature (especially for the benefit of abandoned children, young people in trouble, the elderly in need, foreigners in various countries seeking better living conditions); devoting a suitable portion of personal free time to activities benefitting the community, or other similar forms of personal sacrifice. *Given in Rome, at the Apostolic Penitentiary, on 29 November 1998, the First Sunday of Advent.*

Major Penitentiary Luigi De Magistris

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Regent

[1] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 22. [2] Cf. No. 1: AAS 71 (1979), 258. [3] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Epistle *Redemptiois anno* (20 April 1984): AAS 76 (1984), 627. [4] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 40. [5] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 36: AAS 87 (1995), 28. [6] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*, 41. [7] Cf. Nos. 39-54: AAS 87 (1995), 31-37. [8] Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 2 and 4. [9] *Dogmatic Poems, XXXI, Hymnus alias: PG* 37, 510-511. [10] Cf. *Adversus Haereses*, III, 17: *PG* 7, 930. [11] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, 1. [12] Bull *Antiquorum habet* (22 February 1300): *Bullarium Romanum* III/2, p. 94. [13] Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (10 November 1994), 33: AAS 87 (1995), 25. [14] Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* (2 December 1984), 28-34: AAS 77 (1985), 250-273. [15] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1446. [16] John Paul II, Bull *Aperite portas Redemptori* (6 January 1983), 8: AAS 75 (1983), 98. [17] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1472. [18] Paolo VI, Apostolic Constitution *Indulgentiarum doctrina* (1 January 1967), 9: AAS 59 (1967), 18. [19] Cf. Nos. 33.37.51: AAS 87 (1995), 25-26; 29-30; 36. [20] Cf. *Enchiridion indulgentiarum*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1986, Norm. 21, § 1. [21] Cf. *ibid.*, Norm. 23, §§ 1-2. [22] Cf. *ibid.*, Norm. 23, § 3. [23] « Quia ipse est remissio omnium peccatorum »: *Missale Romanum*, Super oblata, Sabbato post Dominicam VII Paschae. [24] Cf. *Ench. indulg.*, Norm. 27. [25] Cf. *Ench. indulg.*, Grant 14.