



# The Holy See

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PRESENTATION OF THE BULL OF INDICTION  
OF THE GREAT JUBILEE OF THE YEAR 2000

**EUCCHARISTIC CELEBRATION**

***HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS JOHN PAUL II***

*Sunday, 29 November 1998*

1. *"Let us go joyfully to meet the Lord"* (refrain, Responsorial Psalm; Italian Lectionary).

These are the words of the Responsorial Psalm for today's liturgy of the First Sunday of Advent, a liturgical season which from year to year renews our expectation of Christ's coming. Advent has taken on a new, unique aspect in these years as we look forward to the third millennium. *Tertio millennio adveniente*: 1998, which is coming to an end, and 1999, now close at hand, bring us to the threshold of a new century and a new millennium.

Our celebration today also began "on the threshold": on the threshold of the Vatican Basilica, in front of the Holy Door, with the presentation and reading of the *Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*.

"Let us go joyfully to meet the Lord" is a refrain perfectly in tune with the Jubilee. It is, so to speak, a *"jubilee refrain"*, according to the etymology of the Latin word *iubilare*, which in itself contains a reference to joy. Let us go joyfully, then! Let us walk with joy and watchfulness, as we wait for the season that recalls God's coming in human flesh, a time which reached its fullness when Christ was born in a stable in Bethlehem. It is then that the time of waiting was fulfilled.

In Advent we await an event which occurs in history and at the same time transcends it. As it does every year, this event will take place on the night of the Lord's Birth. The shepherds will hasten to the stable in Bethlehem; later the Magi will arrive from the East. Both the one and the other in a

certain sense symbolize the entire human family. The exhortation that rings out in today's liturgy: "Let us go joyfully to meet the Lord" spreads to all countries, to all continents, among every people and nation. The voice of the liturgy — that is, the voice of the Church — resounds everywhere and invites everyone to the Great Jubilee.

2. The last three years preceding the Year 2000 form a very intense period of waiting, aimed at meditation on the meaning of the forthcoming spiritual event and on its necessary preparation.

The content of this preparation is modeled on the Trinitarian formula which is repeated at the end of every liturgical prayer. Let us therefore go with joy *to the Father, through the way which is our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with him in the unity of the Holy Spirit.*

That is why the first year was dedicated to the Son, the second to the Holy Spirit, and the one that begins today — the last year before the Great Jubilee — will be the year of *the Father*. Invited by the Father, we are going to him through the Son, in the Holy Spirit. This three-year period of immediate preparation for the new millennium, because of its Trinitarian character, speaks to us not only of God in himself, as an ineffable mystery of life and holiness, but also of *God who comes to us.*

3. For this reason the refrain "Let us go joyfully *to meet the Lord*" sounds so appropriate. We can meet God, because he has reached out to us. He did so as the father in the parable of the prodigal son (cf. *Lk 15:11-32*), because he is rich in mercy, *dives in misericordia*, and wants to meet us from wherever we come and wherever our journey is taking us. God comes to us whether we have sought him, ignored him and or even avoided him. He reaches out to us first, his arms open wide like a loving and merciful father.

If God is moved to reach out to us, can we turn our backs on him? But we cannot go alone to meet the Father. We must join the company of all who are members of "God's family". To prepare for the Jubilee properly, we must be ready to accept everyone. They are all our brothers and sisters because they are all children of the same heavenly Father.

We can interpret the Church's 2,000year history in this perspective. It is comforting to note how, in this passage from the second to the third millennium, the Church is experiencing a fresh missionary impulse. This is one of the results of the continental Synods held in recent years, including the current one for Australia and Oceania. It can also be seen in the information received by the Committee for the Great Jubilee about activities planned by the local Churches in preparation for this historic event.

I would like to offer a special greeting to the Cardinal President of the Committee, the General Secretary and their staff. I also extend my greeting to the Cardinals, Bishops and priests present, as well as to all of you, dear brothers and sisters who are taking part in this solemn liturgy. And I

offer a particular greeting to the clergy, religious and committed lay people of Rome, who together with the Cardinal Vicar and the Auxiliary Bishops are here this morning to open the final phase of the City Mission, directed to various social contexts.

It is an important phase that will see the entire Diocese focused on a vast work of evangelization in every context of life and work. At the end of this Holy Mass, I will give the missionaries their Mission Cross. We must proclaim and bear witness to Christ in every place and in every situation. I invite everyone to support this great undertaking with prayer. I am counting in particular on the contribution of cloistered religious, of the sick and the elderly who, although unable to take part directly in this great apostolic initiative, can contribute so much by their prayer and the offering of their suffering to preparing hearts to receive the Gospel message.

May Mary, whom the season of Advent urges us to contemplate in eager expectation of the Redeemer, help you all to be generous apostles of her Son, Jesus.

4. In today's Gospel we heard the Lord's invitation to be watchful: "Watch, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming". And then immediately: "Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (*Mt 24:42, 44*). The exhortation to be watchful resounds many times in the liturgy, especially in Advent, a season of preparation not only for Christmas, but also *for Christ's definitive and glorious coming at the end of time*. It therefore has a distinctly eschatological meaning and invites the believer to spend every day and every moment in the presence of the One "who is and who was and who is come" (*Rv 1:4*), to whom the future of the world and of man belongs. This is Christian hope! Without this prospect, our existence would be reduced to living for death.

Christ is our Redeemer: *Redemptor mundi et Redemptor hominis*, Redeemer of the world and of man. He came among us to help us cross the threshold that leads to the door of life, the "holy door" which is he himself.

5. May this consoling truth always be clearly present before our eyes, as we advance on our pilgrimage towards the Great Jubilee. It is the ultimate reason for the joy which today's liturgy urges us to have: "Let us go joyfully to meet the Lord". By believing in the crucified and risen Christ, we also believe in the resurrection of the flesh and in eternal life.

*Tertio millennio adveniente*. In this perspective the years, centuries and millenniums acquire that definitive meaning of life which the Jubilee of the Year 2000 is meant to reveal to us.

Looking to Christ, we make our own the words of a popular old Polish hymn:

"Salvation came through the Cross,  
this is a great mystery.

All suffering has meaning: it leads to fullness of life”.

With this faith in our hearts, which is the Church’s faith, today, as Bishop of Rome, I open the third year of preparation for the Great Jubilee. I open it in the name of the heavenly Father, who “so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (*Jn* 3:16). Praised be Jesus Christ!

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