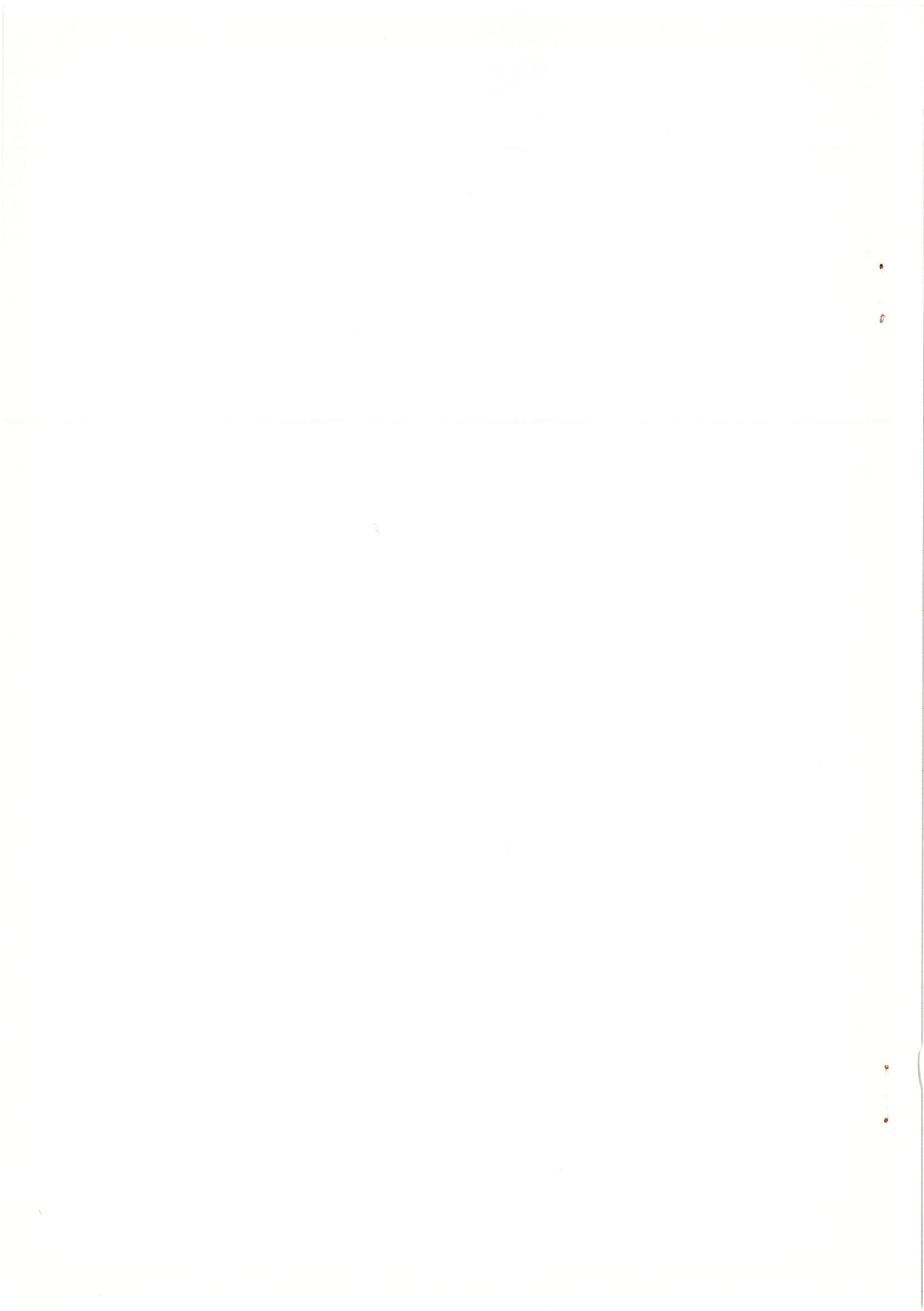


St Mary's RC Church
Merthyr Tydfil
Parish Advisory Council

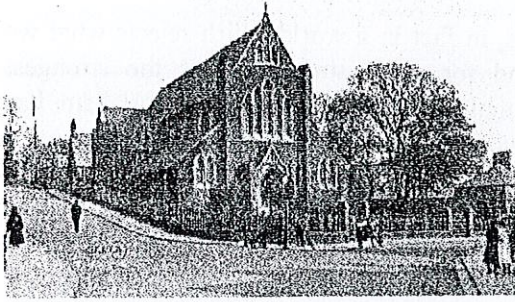
ST MARY'S MAGAZINE

FOR THE GREAT JUBILEE





EDITORIAL



St Mary's Church c1910

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This edition of the magazine is part of the Parish Advisory Council's celebration of the Year of the Great Jubilee. One of its aims is to be a source of information on the Great Jubilee, hence there is a mixture of articles, some written by members of the parish, some by influential Catholics whose writings have appeared in national magazines.

In eliciting articles from the parish, contributors were asked to bear in mind two questions.

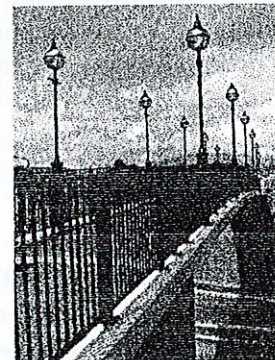
The first was where do we as Catholics stand now and what have we learned and benefited from in our experiences of being a Catholic?

The second was what would we like to see in the way of changes and improvements in the Church in the next millennium - or is everything all right?

These questions are not parochial and about our parish of St Mary's. They concern the Catholic Church as a whole - in what it does and how it plans to do it in the future. As often happens in our magazine some have asked their own, different, questions and written accordingly - why not? The purpose of the magazine remains the involvement of parishioners in the life of the parish. A special appeal was made for contributors to be as fresh and as challenging as they wished. It goes without saying, then, that the views expressed in these pages are not all necessarily shared by the editorial group.

A photographic theme runs through this issue - bridges. These symbolise the need to maintain, enhance and where necessary to build bridges - with God, between one another as a family and individuals in the parish, between parishes and between denominations and Churches.

Hywel Mathews
 Editor



Swansea Road

WHAT DOES THE MILLENNIUM MEAN TO ME?

Well, we have arrived at the eve of the Great Year of Jubilee. It is our privilege to celebrate the 2000th anniversary of the Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High God and of the humble Virgin Mary. No event in history is more momentous than when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. The repercussions of the mystery of the Incarnation echo out into eternity. We rejoice at the occasion when mankind reached its noblest hour when Christ laid aside His splendour and majesty and took on our human nature. Even the angels sang out in joy when this wondrous exchange of gifts was manifested in Christ at Bethlehem. Ever since that holy night generation after generation has repeated the angelic chorus. Now it is our time to prepare with the Church during Advent to add our voices with faith, hope and love to the Universal song of praise. For us the Great Year of the Jubilee, 2000, is Christ-centred and all our religious, cultural and social activities should reflect this more than ever.

Actually this should not be too difficult for us. After all, during the course of each year this mood of celebration is expressed in the way in which we live the Liturgical life of the Church. Through our observance of the feasts, the recalling of the lives of the Saints, the experiences of the graces of Advent, Lent, Easter and Pentecost we keep alive and open up the wonders of the Story of Salvation. Each year in the light of our daily circumstances, to which we apply various aspects of the Church's life, we have always before us the Coming of Christ and the reasons why. Christmas has been real to us since childhood and its significance has deepened with time. At this stage of our journey, which sees us entering the Great Year of the Jubilee, we have no doubts as to what we should be celebrating when we hear of the Millennium.

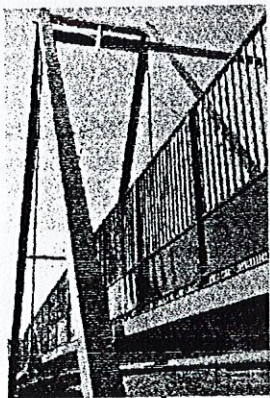
But strangely enough maintaining the spirit of the Church in our celebrations becomes even more difficult, especially for the young. We live in a world whose sense of values are not

ours, in fact in a world which rejects what we stand for. Christmas time is the strongest example of what I mean. Materialism has reduced the real meaning of the celebrations to a mere commercial level. From September the pressure is on to spend and spend. There is an unremitting appeal to the senses, to greed and self love as business seeks even higher profits. Even children are not immune from this as they too come under pressure to want, demand and secure whatever takes their passing fancy. Their parents' prudence and good sense should offer them some protection. Unfortunately very many parents allow themselves to be carried along by the crowd and can only show wasted money and heavy debts as their contribution to a soft, mediocre and self-centred generation. Indeed the betrayal of the young through peer pressure is evident throughout the social round over the pre-Christmas period when so many adults indulge themselves, again without counting the cost to themselves as people, their family or the community. To add to the confusion as to what they are 'celebrating' so many sleep their way through Christmas Day itself without any reference to the Infant who is the real cause of the festivities in the first place; not for them the notion that the Church celebrates Christmas from the mid-night of the Feast until the Epiphany (6 January). The sales, the continuing commercialism and even the appearance of Easter eggs remove Christmas from the scene very quickly. Even radio and television do not play a carol after whatever 'Church slot' they manage on Christmas morning. Everything closes down on Christmas night. No wonder society has so little to offer the people in their daily struggle to survive. More than any other time of the year the Media is seen as the pathetic thing it is in its Emperor's clothes. The Media holds up a mirror to society. What a picture of Dorian Gray it shows, with all the evils of the age made manifest. What a contrast with the Holy Face first seen 2000 years ago and which still attracts men and women of good-will with its gentleness, dignity, compassion and love. How

we need Christmas to recall us to our first innocence.

In order that the vibrance and vitality of the unique event of Christmas is not lost to our times we are called upon to bear witness. Our belief in the mysteries of the God-made man is meant to dispel the errors of the age. Our steadfast hope and trust in Jesus as Saviour is meant to remind people of God's goodness and to recognise Him Alone as the source of all good. Such witness is to challenge the values and principles of today's society. But it is in terms of love that our witness is to be at its most powerful. Our individual experience of divine love is part of the history of love which runs like a mighty force through the history of the Church. To people who are demeaned, marginalised, unloved and unwanted we speak of dignity, destiny and greatness. The love that changed the world and gave us every noble fibre of civilisation is still on offer, still poured out, still capable of touching the lives of men and women. As we celebrate the beginning of the Great Year of the Jubilee 2000 we really must ensure that we give full expression to our Faith, our Hope and our Love of Jesus Christ. He must be seen as the focal point of the Christmas season for young and old. No matter what the pressures we must not let Christ down but stand up and be counted. So let us open the door of our hearts and be merciful. Let us also stand up and be counted in all issues where justice is being down trodden or ignored.

Thank God we have been chosen to welcome in the Year 2000 and to be part of the task of



Near Rhydycar

winning our world for Christ Jesus. Let us pray that we may be worthy of our noble vocation. Mankind, through the use of the gift of his intellect, has achieved much by the use of the laws and forces of nature given by a generous God. Too often pride has blinded man in the pursuit of happiness. With all the positive progress made, man so far has still not conquered himself. Every attempt to displace God or even remove Him has resulted in chaos. Every effort made to bring about human progress while leaving God to one side has resulted in a loss of direction and the blasphemy of self-sufficiency. We are not mislead by the hype which concentrates on mere human or national progress. Instead we are uplifted and inspired by those heroic men and women who lived out lives of faith, hope and love. Their achievements are the ones which prevail. Against their example we measure the tremendous events, momentous occasions and great moments of the ages. Against their lives we examine the heroism and cowardice, the generous sacrifices of the few for the many, the horrifying cruelties of the world's mighty and the scandal of the uncompassionate rich against the helplessness of the poor.

We must pray that the call of Our Holy Father the Pope for the genuine renewal of our lives will not go unheeded. As the renewed we can offer to all the love of the Church, His mercy can be made real and Jesus the Son of Justice will come to reign in all our hearts.

Very Rev. Sean M Canon Kearney

Old Chinese Proverb

*If there be righteousness in the heart,
there will be beauty in the character.
If there is beauty in the character,
there will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home,
there will be order in the nation.
When there is order in each nation
there will be peace in the world.*

Sent in by Josie Egan

PARISH ADVISORY COUNCIL'S PLANS FOR THE JUBILEE

There have always been people who have given their time, energy and talents to their parish, their priest, their church. Sodalities have existed for a long time but ultimately the Parish Priest ran the parish. He still does, but in recent years the formation of the Parish Advisory Council (PAC) seems to have put this in a more official capacity. The PAC is what it says it is, a parish advisory council - a group of people elected by the parish to advise the Parish Priest, to listen to parishioners and bring their concerns and suggestions to meetings for discussion and consideration.

Things have changed and one of the issues that is to the forefront at the moment is the shortage of priests. Where once there were two or three priests we now have one or, on some occasions, none. The average age of clergy is more elderly. The number of men entering the priesthood is fewer. The pressures therefore presented are greater and becoming greater.

In a recent discussion concerning this it was pointed out that there are a number of things which bring another issue - why? What should we be offering the youth and young parents of the parish? Are we prepared to accept the changes in their lifestyles which makes their relationship with God and the Church more difficult than it was for the previous generation.

The discussions of the PAC must be widened. All ages and walks of life must be accommodated. What a wide and complex situation this is. However, it must be addressed somehow. For the immediate future the following ideas are proposed to celebrate the great Jubilee 2000.

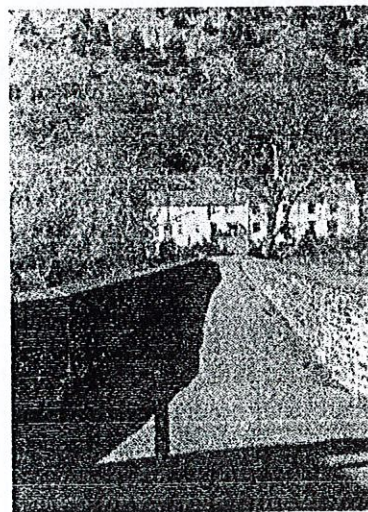
- decoration of the church interior with banners and posters
- the sale of Jubilee candles
- a penitential service
- a carol service
- a school Christmas concert in church
- a children's Christmas party
- a vigil
- an historical exhibition

functions that the laity could carry out. While some things are the prerogative of only the priest, such as celebrating Mass, hearing confessions, baptisms etc., lay people may officiate at funerals, register weddings and conduct communion services. However, what must be considered is how this would be accepted by those seeking these services. Some years ago extra-ordinary ministers of the Eucharist were introduced but not readily accepted. On the basis of their not being good enough or worthy enough to do the job we might say none of us is! It is an anomaly that those who have not been to church for years are more reluctant to accept someone other than the priest for services than those who know how serious the situation has become.

And so, back to the future - what is to be done? An elaborate education programme? Those to whom this would be directed are a bit dyed-in-the-wool, difficult to convince. Those to whom these ideas might be suggested are in general no longer regular attenders. That

- a Jubilee edition of the Parish Magazine and possibly an historical issue
- our own home-made stained-glass window
- a parish social function

Mary Mathews, Chair of the PAC



Pontrhydyfen

THOUGHTS ON THE GREAT JUBILEE BY THE LATE CARDINAL HUME



In my chapel at Archbishop's House I have a shell, the pilgrim shell, given to me in 1987. Alongside it there is another religious symbol from Moscow. They remain in my chapel, constant reminders to pray for unity between those Churches which split in the sixteenth century and those Orthodox Churches from which we have been divided since the eleventh. Sometimes I look at them and wonder how long we must wait before the prayer they symbolise is answered.

The shell in my chapel is the pilgrim's badge. I reflect often on that word *pilgrimage*. For each one of us the Christian life is a pilgrimage as we make our way to the house of the Father. In a recent document Pope John Paul II laid great stress on the notion of pilgrimage. "A pilgrimage," the Pope said, "evokes the believer's personal journey in the footsteps at 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."

Society, too, makes its pilgrim way through history, constantly in need of discovering its true bearings, often requiring a change of direction. In every age, society all too often loses its way. Ours has. We disagree about the moral values which should guide us. We often put human need second to money and material gain. We are deeply at odds over what makes for lasting human fulfillment. As our society makes its way towards the new millennium we seem to lack confidence in our ability to mould our future.

My mind turns now to that pilgrim who comes towards us from the opposite direction. It is he, who spoke of himself as the way, the truth, and the life. It is he who guides us on our pilgrim way. It is he who reveals to us the truth about God. It is he who gives us that life which makes us children of his Father, temples of the Holy Spirit. That pilgrim coming from the opposite direction has come to seek us. In Jesus Christ God comes in search of us. He is like a woman who has mislaid a precious coin, like a father seeking a wayward son, like a shepherd risking the ninety-nine to go in search of the one who is lost. It is a search which begins in the heart of God and culminates in the Incarnation of the Word. It is a search that is never abandoned, as God seeks constantly to come more fully into our lives. The shepherd never abandons his sheep.

That shepherd wants us to be one fold. As we walk together, pilgrims not strangers, towards that point of time when we shall be truly one, there will be many difficulties and pains on the way. These should be a stimulus towards further spiritual reflection and dialogue - not stumbling blocks but stepping stones.

Jesus reminded us that if we are to be his followers then we must be prepared to deny ourselves, to take up our cross and follow him. Therefore, none of the difficulties which we experience on our journey together towards unity must tempt us to sit by the side of the road, complaining, rather than continuing the journey with resolution.

We are now walking together into the next millennium. Once we are into the year 2000, there will be the danger that for many people life will carry on as usual. But it must not be so. It is important that we make the most of what will be a year of opportunity, when we can understand our commitment as Christians, individually and collectively, to the well-being of our planet and its people.

If we do not put Christ at the centre of the celebration of the millennium then we risk making that celebration no more than a commercial extravaganza. It is the birth of Christ that we shall be celebrating. The crib will always be more important than the Dome. As Christians we must be proud of our faith and profess it. At the same time we want, of course, to walk with those of other faiths and religions, respecting them, and they us. They will respect us the more if we are true to ourselves.

Let us start now to prepare for Christmas Day, 1999. It is the day when the celebrations of the millennium should really begin. Do not allow claims that we are no longer a Christian nation to become an accepted orthodoxy. Do not listen to cynical non-believers who deride our Christian efforts. Of course, we are not perfect. But we must now move forward with a renewed enthusiasm to preach the Gospel.

We should concentrate not so much on what type of world we want to create in the new millennium, but rather on what kind of people we should become. We will not, and cannot, change the world unless and until we change ourselves.

In Rome on Christmas Eve, the Pope will open the great bronze door to mark the opening of the Christian millennium, the beginning of the Holy Year, a gesture which has taken place every 25 years since the year 1425. We might remember that there is a door at which the pilgrim who comes to us from afar has been knocking, your door and mine (Rev 3:20). He wants to have access into our minds and hearts. We admit him or keep him out. It is our choice. But, surely our celebration of the year 2000 can only be measured in terms of that journey of conversion that each one of us is called to make, for the call to conversion is the

indispensable condition of Christian love. The Lord's command. *Repent and believe the gospel* should ring in our ears as we take every step on our pilgrimage into the millennium and beyond. We should aim to cross the threshold of the third millennium different - better - people.

Recalling that Jesus came to preach good news to the poor the Pope says that "a commitment to justice and peace in a world like ours, marked by so many conflicts and intolerable social and economic inequalities, is a necessary condition for the preparation and celebration of the Jubilee".

Last year we saw a wonderful example in the witness of over 60,000 people, not all of them Christians, gathered in Birmingham to call for the crippling burdens of international debt to be lifted from the shoulders of the poorest nations by the year 2000. Further action can and must be taken by the end of this year, but we should not forget the urgent need also to address the endemic corruption in many countries, the civil strife, and the profligate arms sales which do so much to exacerbate the plight of the poorest of the poor.

As Christians we are commanded by Christ to witness to the gospel. In our society today there are many people searching for a peace which the world cannot bring. They seek authentic values, standards, reasons for living and hoping. Have we any thing to say to them? Of course we have! It is incumbent on each of us as individuals and Christian communities to lay aside our divisions - lay aside, I say, not pretend they do not exist - in order to speak to the nation of the things of God and his gospel, to describe our pilgrimage of faith, and to show them that it leads to life hidden with Christ in God, the fulfillment of every human aspiration.

At the dawn of a new millennium we are there to tell the world that the ultimate and universal source of all hope in the future is to be found in him, and him alone. Christ must be born again into our society in the year 2000. Yes, it must be so.

The Late Cardinal Basil Hume writing in the Columban Millennium Special

INDULGENCES IN THE HOLY YEAR 2000

At the heart of the Great Jubilee is a call to ask forgiveness for our sins and make amends for sins committed. It is a call to turn away from sin, including venial sin, and to restore a deeper friendship with God. Reconciliation with God does not mean that there are no enduring consequences of sin from which we must be purified. God gives us His mercy when we are repentant and when we try to make amends for what we have done wrong.

Along with a sincere intention to renounce all sin, there are four conditions to receive the Jubilee Indulgence:

- 1 Sacramental confession of sins
- 2 Receiving Holy Communion
- 3 Prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father
- 4 Either

(i) a pilgrimage to the Cathedral Church of the diocese or some designated church to take part in a liturgical celebration, (e.g. Mass, Morning or Evening Prayer) or some prayerful celebration (e.g. Stations of the Cross, the Rosary), a private visit to the Cathedral church of the diocese or some designated church during which prayers are to be said, such as Our Father, the profession of faith in any approved form, and prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary;

or

(ii) an act of charity, such as visiting those in need, the sick, the imprisoned, the elderly living alone, the handicapped etc., supporting by a significant contribution works of 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 proportion of personal free time to activities benefiting the community;

or

(iii) an act of penance, such as abstaining for at least one whole day from unnecessary consumption (e.g. from smoking or alcohol or fasting or practising abstinence) and donating a proportionate sum of money to the poor.

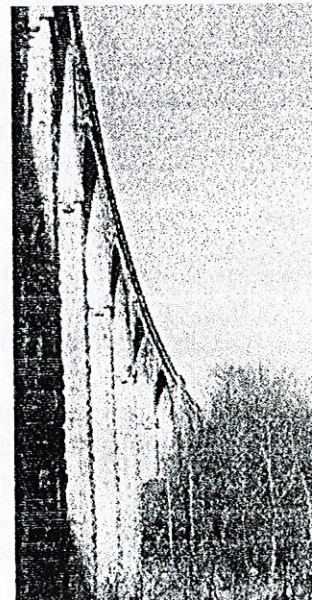
*From CTS Parish Resources, Reconciliation for the Millennium
Peter Williams*

CATHOLIC CHURCH "THE UNIVERSAL, ALL-EMBRACING GATHERING OF CHRISTIANS"?

Let us hope that we give a better welcome than in the following story.

A black American tried to get entry to an exclusively "white" church and was refused entry by stewards at the door. He sat on the sidewalk with his head in his hands and said: "Lord, I tried to go into church to worship You, but they wouldn't let me." "Don't worry," the Lord is said to have replied, "I have been trying for years to get into that church Myself."

Kevin O'Donnell



Cefn Coed viaduct

PAPAL BULL ON THE GREAT JUBILEE YEAR 2000

Incarnationis Mysterium
(The Mystery of the Incarnation)

John Paul II Bull of indiction of the great jubilee of the year 2000

SUMMARY

John Paul, Bishop, servant of the servants of God, to all the faithful journeying towards the third millennium, health and apostolic blessing!

The approaching millennium marks two thousand years since the birth of Christ and reminds us of His central place in the history of salvation, of the Church and of humanity.

The millennium will be celebrated around the world as a holy year, a jubilee. For the Church, it will focus on Rome and also the Holy Land, where it is hoped it will provide a way forward to peace between Christians, Muslims and Jews, so that all may exchange greetings of peace in Jerusalem one day. For Christians this is also a time of renewed evangelisation.

During the preparation for the jubilee the Church has concentrated on the role of the Trinity: the jubilee should be "one unceasing hymn of praise to the Trinity".

The jubilee is shared by all Christians. It provides a stimulus to overcome division and to grow in unity. The whole year is a time of reconciliation within the Church, and of inviting people of other faiths and those of none to share in the joy of celebration.

The Church has celebrated jubilees since 1300 and they have always been occasions to grow in faith and charity, and for the remission of sin. The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 will begin on Christmas Eve 1999 with the opening of the holy door in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome. In local cathedrals the beginning of the jubilee will be marked by a solemn Mass presided over by the bishop. The jubilee will last until 6 January, 2001, the Feast of the Epiphany.

Jubilees are traditionally accompanied by signs: the pilgrimage, the holy door, the indulgence and works of charity. The pilgrimage is a metaphor for the journey of faith; the holy door reminds us of the passage from sin to grace and that Jesus is the door through whom we reach the Father; the indulgence is a sign of the total mercy of God. Catholics are recommended to make use of the jubilee indulgence.

The jubilee is a call to conversion through acknowledgement and repentance of sins. The Church, too, is asked to seek forgiveness for the sins of Christians past and present, both from God and from those who have been hurt, in order to look more fully to the future.

God's mercy should inspire justice on earth. The human race is facing new and more subtle forms of slavery, including the oppressive burden of international debt. Nations should act in solidarity and co-operation and work for the elimination of poverty.

Martyrdom is still a potent example of Christian love. The twentieth century has seen many die for their Christian faith. Mary, the Mother of God and of the Church, shows us the way that leads to Christ. Her intercession will assist the Christian people in their celebration of two thousand years since the birth of the Saviour.

From John Paul II, The Jubilee Year 2000, Bull of Indiction - Incarnationis Mysterium. CTS 1999

ANOTHER THOUGHT FOR THE YEAR OF THE GREAT JUBILEE



"I didn't know he'd been ill."

*Those who have no faith
Have no answers
Those who have faith
Have no questions*

The late Chief Rabbi Lord Jacobowitz

"For me, the Jubilee 2000 and the next century should help the Church to be not only a Church in prayer, but also a Church both reconciled and of reconciliation. This is in the essence of the Jubilee, in the essence of the Church, and in the essence of Jesus. He came to preach "a year of favour from the Lord" (Lk 4:19-22). The Pope obviously insists on this idea in his apostolic letter *Tertio millennio adveniente* and in the subsequent documents on the Jubilee of 2000.

The Jubilee is reconciliation, and reconciliation must be an essential characteristic in the Church for the whole of the twenty first century. It would be the best witness for the world.

In the first place the Jubilee is reconciliation with God, this being the origin for every other reconciliation. His pardon, his love, the friendship of God as friend. But there is also reconciliation with our neighbours, with ourselves, with life".

*The Apostolic Nuncio,
Archbishop Puente*

MAKE-BELIEVE FOR THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

Some time during the writing of his standard-setting *History of England*, Macaulay, no lover of the Roman Church, paused one night as he walked home, leaned over the Thames at London Bridge, and asked himself what changes the river had seen. In his mind, he ran through the early tribal peoples, the Romans, the Anglo-Saxons, the Normans and the post-Norman royal lines; then he asked himself what constant could he find, and answered himself that, from Roman times on, the only constant was the Roman Church, and he found the reason for this in the authority of the Bishop of Rome.

Within a few years (July, 1859) Newman was to publish his not-welcomed "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine" and, although it is very possible to over-estimate the lasting impact of this work, the seeds of lay

participation in the nitty-gritty of their salvation had been sown. *De Rerum Natura* (1891), *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931), showed the Church cared for the physical needs, as well as the spiritual welfare of its people, whom Pius XII called the "auxiliaries of the Hierarchy", though Paul VI was to promote them to "gospel-inspired lay people" and John Paul II promoted the theme of "shared responsibility".

So, what may lay people look for from Rome in the Third Millennium? No lay person of good faith would challenge the fundamental teachings of the Church where doctrine is concerned, though one may have sympathy with those who say, "I believe in the Mass and all it implies and contains there is nothing more to say."

But there IS more to say. Hundreds - and it is not possible to quantify the numbers accurately - of good pastoral priests have left their parishes condemned to a life of facing their consciences because they are human, because the emotions that make us human took them over, perhaps because the loneliness of an artificial life was too great for them to bear. Yet, although Rome still insists on a celibate clergy, over a hundred married ex-Anglican clergy have been admitted to Holy Orders. I do not begrudge them their new status. But I ask, if these can be successful clergy, with a place in the Church, what remains of the dubious arguments that insist on a celibate clergy. St Augustine of Hippo is often quoted as refusing to have married clergy in his diocese, but could not this have been an atonement for his early prayer for "purity, but not yet?"

And then, why not women priests? In chapter ten of his Gospel, St Luke records that when Martha complained that Mary had left her

alone with housework while Mary sat at His feet, Christ said, clearly, that Mary had made the right choice, that would not be taken away from her. Early in our history, some abbesses had great authority; one of the greatest Doctors of the Church was a woman. Why is it that gender allows one individual to approach and officiate at the Altar of God, and another has to watch from a distance?

My prayer and my hope will be that the Third Millennium will bring equality to all members of the Church, that we all may be seen to be one in the Lord.

JF Lane

Frank Lane was the first Headteacher of Bishop Hedley High School when it opened in 1967 and now enjoys an active retirement living in Cardiff. Few will know that Sister Mary Justin, one of our regular contributors who also writes in this edition, is his sister. This is a fact, not a secret!

LAITY TODAY, AS ALWAYS, "ORDINARY PEOPLE"

How do the laity, that is us, look at ourselves today? Probably a more important question, how does God see the laity today? The answer to both of these questions is probably the same now as it has been throughout the history of the church, even the history of the world. God has called very ordinary people (in the eyes of people of the time) to take on tasks to save His people.

Two thousand years ago we were given the ultimate role model, Jesus Christ. In other words God gave us Himself and ultimately sacrificed Himself for us. Yet it was ordinary people whom He chose, and who chose to follow Him, laity - ordinary people, yet people who were prepared to listen to His call. These included fishermen and tax collectors as His disciples, and later when Jesus had been crucified even Paul, a man who could be classed at the time as one of the enemy, who had been persecuting Christians - all different people from all different walks of life, who

obviously did not always agree. When Jesus was still with them they would argue amongst themselves. So when He was gone, who would keep His church together? With the help of the Holy Spirit it was kept whole by a combination of all the people. Leaders such as Peter, Paul, Barnabas and many other disciples, who could teach and give guidance to the laity, but it was also the laity who were needed to hold together, to keep the faith alive. An example of this was when Paul and Barnabas disagreed as to whether another follower, John Mark, would travel with them on a mission from Antioch. This must have been a serious argument, as in the end they went their separate ways. But the church at Antioch did not take sides in this issue and what might have turned into a crisis in the early church, causing a division and even a split, seems to have been resolved in its own time, with Paul asking for John Mark to aid him at a later date. Thus the laity helped to defuse and control a difficult

situation. Having different opinions should be constructive not destructive.

We must put ourselves in the position of the early church when it was the laity who would have taken responsibility for their own day to day running. We too could be put in a similar position. Would we, if put to the test, thrive like many early churches did? With or without priests we should still be able to do the work of Jesus. When He left us He did not say He would leave us plenty of clergy. He did however promise the gift of the Holy Spirit. That should be enough for any of us to be able to give of the talents we have.

We must look at ourselves as a team with the clergy as our manager, all playing our individual roles, but for the good of the team as a whole. The manager can co-ordinate, but he cannot be with players on the field and do every job himself. However, if he cannot be with them in the flesh, then he will be in spirit. At the end of the day, it is the performance of the team that will win or lose the game. If we pray to God (who is our Holy Spirit) and more importantly listen to what God has to say to us, we will answer the questions which I posed at the beginning. We will hear what Gods call is to us, as lay people, with the time we have to offer today.

Kevin O'Donnell

NEW YEAR'S EVE IS ON 13 JANUARY

About 200 people in the Gwaun valley near the Preseli Hills in Pembrokeshire always celebrate their New Year on 13 January. Although the UK switched to the Gregorian calendar in 1752, this small community has kept to the Julian calendar, the calendar established by Julius Caesar in 46 BC. Why they resisted the change to a new calendar in this part of Wales is not known, but one theory is that a stubborn anti-Catholic landowner was the culprit. In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII removed ten days from that year's calendar so that Easter fell at the right time. The new Gregorian calendar was named after him and adopted by a number of Catholic countries. Britain persisted with the original Julian calendar for another 200 years when, despite a public outcry, Parliament voted for the change. The *callenig* as it is called in the Gwaun valley, is celebrated by children in the community travelling from house to house, singing.

Report in The Independent, 16 October, 1999



Footbridge over the Taff at Trefechan

THE FAMILY THAT RINGS TOGETHER CLINGS TOGETHER

The most popular phrase of the millennium looks set fair to be, "Hello I'm on the train (or the bus or in town)." On and on goes the remorseless march of the mobile phone, with thousands, millions new users a year. Multiple family ownership. Do they all go into their

separate rooms and call one another up? The family that rings together clings together.

They are the bane of modern life, the mobile phone-users who seem to be everywhere. Recently at a peaceful garden centre in the

Wye valley we sat at a cafe table for the sole purpose of having their excellent cappuccino and to enjoy the surrounding peace. Two customers arrived, plonked their mobile phones on the table like cowboys parking their six-guns and ordered their coffee. They hadn't exchanged more than ten words before the familiar chirrup-chirrup-chirrup which regularly punctures the atmosphere like off-key bird-song. One of them switched on and began to rabbit away to a 'distant' boyfriend (we assumed he was distant and for all we know he could have been next door). "Hello luv, I'm in the cafe." Her friend picked up her own mobile, punched out a number and commenced a lengthy chat with her own boyfriend. Ten minutes later they were still at it. If they had so much to say to their boyfriends I wondered why weren't they out with them instead of each other? But if they had been, the boyfriends would have been left standing like lemons while they yacked on the mobile to one another, this being the only way they now know of communicating.

They said that television killed the art of conversation. The mobile phone has revived it - but the conversation has to be with someone who isn't there. In another peaceful resort in Heolgerrig, about half a dozen young people whose mobiles trilled one after the other, had come out with each other in order to talk to their absent friends elsewhere. Weird. The

sole topic of conversation, by the way, was the question of where they were when Wales played Argentina in the World Cup. On the mobile, I should imagine.

Another puzzle. Why do so many people, who clearly have their own phones at home, prefer to go out into the supermarket to make their calls? Is it exhibitionism; the wish to be taken for a person of consequence? I must ring up



someone to ask.

In the world of modern communications it seems that it's not always good to talk. With thousands of mobile phone users and proving increasingly popular with young people, the time has come to take these executive toys more seriously.

Finally, mobile phones can add to the quality of life, although some people seem to enjoy talking loudly on them, but there have always been people who are loud even before mobiles were invented.

Chirrup-chirrup-chirrup - excuse me please, the phone is ringing - must be my grand daughters on their mobiles.

Peg Baxter

The editor regrets that he can not divulge Peg's mobile phone number.

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL IN A NEW MILLENNIUM THE CONTINUING CHALLENGE

From time to time when I reflect on the role of the catholic school I receive mixed images. When things are going well we are rightly perceived as a community where gospel values exude from every activity. At other moments when human frailty momentarily assumes the upper hand a totally different image emerges.

There is general agreement nowadays that the influence of the combined Christian community on our society has so diminished as to appear to many to be of little significance. The all-powerful media giants have marginalised

anything which seems to support gospel values. Many of our politicians have sensed a swing in public attitudes and seem to have "abandoned the Christian ship" and look to be seen heavily supporting the new values of our increasingly selfish society.

Therefore the role of the truly catholic school as an oasis of gospel values in a desert of materialism and selfishness is vital. It is now more necessary than in the recent past where Christian influence in society was far more widespread and supportive. Additionally every

effort must be made to ensure that the Catholic School compares favourably by any measure with other schools within the locality

Many of the children who attend our schools are fortunate to have a stable background where their faith is nurtured and the witness of their immediate and extended families is ever present. Many others, sadly, are not so fortunate and are consequently over influenced by the values they find portrayed by the media and the communities in which they live. The difference between right and wrong is often so blurred that almost anything is being portrayed as "cool".

The challenge then is quite clear; the catholic school must strive against the tide with the help of parents and the catholic community to become a coercive witness to gospel values. Governors, teachers and students have an equal part to play, each helps to determine the quality of the climate within the school. Everyone must agree the aims of the school and cooperate in efforts to carry them out. Inter-personal relationships must be built on mutual respect, each member of the school community being valued. Every student must be encouraged to strive for the highest possible level achievable both human and Christian. The school must be open and welcoming to families and parishioners and the wider community.

Importantly, our catholic liturgy and traditions must be practised within the school community. When topics arise within the curriculum which raise specific moral and religious issues there must be planned responses constructed in the light of the teaching of the church.

Many highly respected experts in the various sections of education who would in their normal line of work visit a large number of schools always speak of being able to detect "a special atmosphere", "a distinctive indefinable quality", "a genuine caring" when they have

visited one of our catholic schools. These qualities are often indicators of what sets us apart and gives us our distinctive nature. These qualities certainly do not feature in league tables. David Blunkett, no less, has expressed a wish to "bottle the atmosphere" of the Church school and spread it through all such like institutions.

I believe that this "special atmosphere" in great part is generated by the conscious and often sub-conscious acceptance by everyone in the school community that each member is of worth. At times living this belief is difficult. The naughty pupil who greatly frustrates you on a wet Friday afternoon must nevertheless be given a fresh start as soon as possible, preferably on Monday. There are doubters amongst our own faith who would wish to see our schools closed, often blaming schools for not reversing the lapsation tide. I would argue that without the influence of the catholic school this problem would be even greater. There is no room for complacency as we move into the next millennium, particularly when the National Assembly is about to rule on new arrangements for organising and funding post-16 Education. Tertiary arrangements are likely to be favoured. Smaller secondary schools could face significant funding difficulties which has obvious implications for most of our catholic secondaries outside of Cardiff.

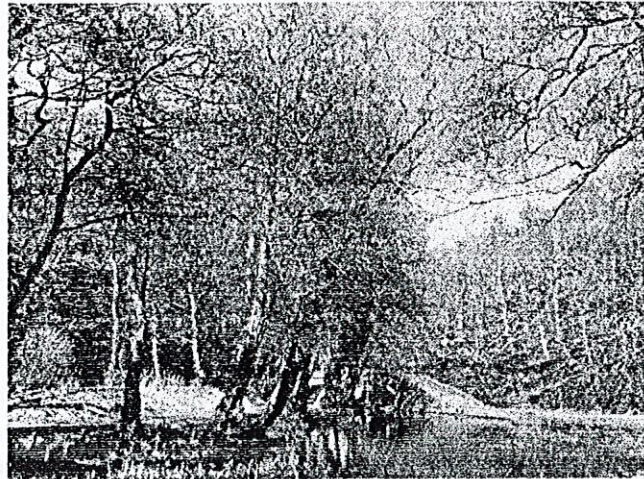
Everyone will need to be on alert and become pro-active if we are to ensure that the quality of provision we have enjoyed over the years is to be maintained. We must not be the generation remembered for being the least effective in handing on the faith. We have largely wonderful youngsters in our care. It is a privilege to work with them and see them develop the qualities necessary to take a valued place in society, while also growing in their faith and spiritual awareness.

Martin Gay, Headmaster of Bishop Hedley High School.

Martin Gay prefaced his account with some compliments on the editor's rugby skills in the 1960s, when we played against one another at Aberystwyth. Modesty and space prevent their inclusion.



"Do they Hoover and dust as well?"



Canal at Aberdulais basin

CARING FOR THE SICK AND ELDERLY

The International Year of Older Persons was launched in February, 1999, but the Church's attention and commitment to older people is nothing new. She has directed her mission and her pastoral care to older people in the most varied circumstances over the centuries and her teaching has been implemented often through the initiative and concern of both religious congregations and lay associations.

In confirmation of this, Pope John Paul II addressing about 8,000 older people received in audience on 23 March, 1984, said: "Despite the inadequacies of social organisations, the delays of official legislation and a selfish society's failure to understand, you are not and must not consider yourselves to be on the margins of the life of the Church, but active people of a period in human existence which is rich in spirituality and humanity. You still have a mission to fulfill and a contribution to make."

How can this be achieved? Prayer is the principal means for a spiritual understanding of life proper to older people. Prayer is a service, it is a ministry that older people may perform for the good of the whole church and

the world. Even the most infirm and handicapped of them can pray. Prayer is their strength, it is their life. Through prayer they can break down the walls of isolation, emerge from their condition of helplessness and share in the joys and sorrows of others. Only in the light of faith shall we be able to accept old age in a truly Christian way, both as a gift and a task. We must understand that the only way to live well in old age is to live it in God. As a visitor of the elderly over many years I have had personal experience of the power and strength of their prayers. Two years ago when I was taken ill, I felt certain that the prayers of those whom I visit helped me to regain my strength and continue my close association with them.

Our church, St Mary's, was known as the cathedral of the valleys, the parish itself is quite a sizable area and in the first half of this century was served by three to four priests who helped to keep the Eucharistic devotion alive in the elderly and infirm parishioners by taking Holy Communion to them in their homes or hospital regularly. They were greatly assisted in their ministry by dedicated workers in the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Legion of

Mary who spent many precious hours in visiting the elderly people of the Parish. These visits, private prayers and devotions (the people of Merthyr are people of great faith, a praying people, who have always had deep love and devotion for their priests and the Holy Mass) were helpful in offsetting these people's regrets at not being able to get to church for Holy Mass owing to an incapacitated state.

However, due to a reduction in the number of those coming forward to the priesthood (our own parish has only one priest) it has to be recognised that the Church soon needed to revise her approach to the pastoral care of the sick and elderly. Therefore, new forms and methods more consistent with the needs and spiritual aspirations of older people had to be found. As brothers and sisters in Christ, the

laity became extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist and were ready to assist the priests in ministering to the sick and elderly. In our own parish this team of dedicated people now goes to the homes of those unable to attend church and take our Blessed Lord in the Eucharist to strengthen and enrich their lives.

It is vital that, as we enter the third millennium, we recognise that each of us must understand the interdependence we have on one another and so overcome the widespread contemporary tendency to ignore and marginalise older people. We need to "educate" the new generations not to abandon them; young people, adults and older people have a need for each other.

Sister Brendan

MEMORIES OF AN ALTAR BOY

The youngsters of today must be fed up to the back teeth of listening to "how things were in our day", and they must also be grateful that with the passing of the years even the old war stories are now beginning to fade away. Nevertheless, because of my fascination with all things historical and a belief that we really can learn from the past, here goes with just one more how-it-was tale.

I went to my first Latin lesson at the age of seven. I was not supposed to be there at all. My two-years-elder brother was preparing to be an altar boy and I thought that if he could do it so could I. So I tagged along. The lady teacher, who operated from her own home, reluctantly allowed me to stay. How well I remember that slim volume with its large-letter Latin phrases. It all seemed magical to me and I took to it like a duck to water.

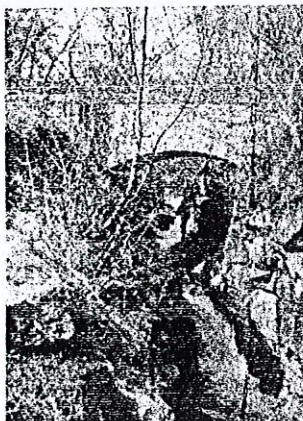
A few years later, on my first day at the old County grammar school, the first lesson was Latin! I was determined to top the class in this subject if in nothing else, for after all I was the expert! I did, too, in that first year, although in 12 months' time my superiority had vanished.

My early years as an altar boy were great. We regarded ourselves as members of an exclusive club. In church, with everyone's backs to the people, we were among the few who knew exactly what went on at the altar. We were privileged. But, as we got older, we were only too ready to swap that privilege for the football field or some other amusement.

For the moment, though, we were content. And there were the perks. I remember with particular pleasure the altar-boys' outings. Simple and very unsophisticated at first: a charabanc to the top of Sanatorium Hill, where we had to get out and walk the rest of the way to Pontsarn. (They would never have got the motor back up again!).

I loved Pontsarn. To me it had everything. It perplexed me that nobody had thought to turn it into an idyllic country holiday spot. My generation of youngsters, under the guidance of our teacher (Pat Lenane, an expert swimmer who later became a priest), fashioned a pool above the Seven Arches, and there we learned to swim.

The river in those days was crystal clear and the fish abundant. The spot was ideal for camping, and one summer I spent six weeks there. How I won my parents' permission for this I will never know; possibly because I agreed to take my school books with me. Imagine studying for your school certificate around a camp fire! Not unnaturally I failed the exam and had to retake it the following year.



Blue Pool Pontsarn

But back at the altar boys' outings. After Pontsarn we graduated to short train journeys to places like Dolygaer and Llangorse. Even after all these years I remember one little gem from the wise old priest in charge of us on that first trip. "Listen to what the wheels are saying", he told us. When the train toils up the hill the wheels struggle to say 'I think-I-can, I-think-I-can; I-think-I-can, I-think-I-can!' Then, when it goes down a hill, it speeds up and cries out triumphantly, 'I-thought-I-could; I-thought-I-could; I-thought-I-could!'

Those were the days when something as sophisticated as a seaside holiday was just a dream, and some time later when I paid my first visit to Barry Island even that trip was an illegal one. At County school we had a rather idiotic 'dare' game which involved jumping on the running board of charabancs and seeing how far we could travel. First we would search around for a chapel running an annual summer holiday. Usually they left at about 9 o'clock. We would jump aboard when the vehicle slowed down passing the County school and just before the old General Hospital

turning. In those days the coach was an open one with doors (with handles) running down its length. This particular day I was "going for the record", and so eventually found myself on the beach in Barry, wondering how on earth I was going to get back to school. The headmaster was not at all appreciative of my record-breaking.

Talking of headmasters, here is a story which illustrates how unfeeling schoolboys can be when their eyes are on the main chance. My first head was a kindly old man named Pearmain, in his last years before retirement. Early in his career he had had an unfortunate experience. A boy came to school through a rainstorm and, even though soaking wet, had been kept in school all day. He caught a chill and later died. After that, even if you were only slightly damp, you stood a good chance of getting sent home. So on rainy days, shortly after 9 o'clock, a queue used to start outside the head's study of boys who had stepped into every puddle on the way to school.

So, all our pleasures in those days were fairly elementary, and mostly the fruits of what we concocted ourselves. The seasons automatically brought around the different games. No television, of course: I think I can remember one whiskery wireless set in the neighbourhood. Books were read by the light of oil lamps. Our staple diet was the long walk and this was taken for granted. Every Sunday morning after Mass a group would form and take off for Pontsarn.

I doubt whether all this would have suited the youth of today, who already talk to each other by computer and whose 'Pontsarn' excursions will probably be to the moon. Exciting times ahead for them.

Why, then, do I still feel lucky to have lived at the beginning of the century leading into the Millennium rather than at the end of it?

Jack Walsh

Jack retired as the editor of The Universe in 1978, the year when he was knighted, Knight of St Gregory the Great, for services to Catholic journalism

ON GOING TO CHURCH

Close the door, so no heat loss
 Holy Water - sign of the Cross.
 Speak to friends in quiet voice
 The Living Lord is here - rejoice!
 Read the notices, take a sheet
 Sponsor those with walking feet.
 Greet the Lord on bended knee
 Forgiveness, thanks, maybe a plea.
 Mass, Communion then a hymn
 Quiet thoughts in interim.
 Go, the Mass is ended now
 And to the altar all will bow.
 Go home then each sister, brother,
 Continue to care for one another.

Mary Mathews

To *the* Brecon Beacons

BACK TO BASICS

Where do we stand? What have we learned? What do we look for?

Let us start with a few quotations. This is from Bernard of Chartres, who died about 1130 AD:

"We stand on the shoulders of giants. If we see farther than they, it is because they are holding us up..."

What a waste of opportunity it would be, to ignore the insights of the intellectual giants on whose shoulders we stand! I quote from two who lived about two and a half millennia apart. "No one steps twice into the same river", wrote Heraclitus, the scruffy and unpopular but admirable Greek philosopher who lived about 500 BC. The water flows away and is replaced before a second step can be taken.

In 1845, John Henry Newman, Anglican ex-Vicar of the University Church of St. Mary the Virgin at Oxford, later Cardinal, and now the Venerable John Henry, wrote a marvellous book *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, beginning with this

statement: "Here below, to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often." (1.1.7). Life that does not grow withers; there is no standing still in nature, nor in the supernatural, based as it is on nature. But it is still the same river that flows, the same tree or person that grows. And so it is with the Church, of which we are the living and therefore changing members.

It is the same Mass that was offered first in Aramaic, later in Greek, later in Latin and now in everybody's own language; the same Sacrament of Penance instituted by Our Lord on Easter Sunday as the first-fruits of his Death and Resurrection (John, 20.19-23), which now we may, but need not, celebrate face to face with the priest - who is well aware that he, too, needs to go to Confession.

Change is good, then, when it is organic, not a contradiction of what has gone before but a true development of it. But have all the

changes since Vatican II been good? What about the trendy theologians who decry the need for frequent Confession? who deny that the Mass is the Sacrifice of Calvary perpetuated in sacramental form - that is, under its own signs? who question the perpetual virginity of Our Lady? Read the documents of Vatican II on all these points. Development never contradicts what has gone before in the Church's teaching. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and for ever," (Hebrews, 13.8), and his word of truth is unchanging. It is not the truth that grows, says St. Augustine of Hippo, but we who grow in understanding of it.

So, for the next Millennium - back to basics!

A small parable to end with, the first part not original:

Jesus said to them: "Who do you say is Jesus Christ?"

They replied: "Jesus Christ is the eschatological manifestation of the kerygma in which we find the ultimate meaning of our interpersonal relationships." And Jesus said: "WHAT?"

Then He asked two children who were listening open-mouthed. They said, for they had learnt their catechism: "Jesus Christ is God the Son made Man for us."

And Jesus smiled fondly on them and gave them each a hug and a bar of chocolate.

Back to basics!

An afterthought: St. Jerome said: "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ". Dare one suggest that ignorance of the Councils is ignorance of the Church? The Council documents are issued by the CTS - easy and cheap to get, and fascinating to read and "ponder in the heart", as Our Lady pondered the words and actions of her divine and human Son. (Lk. 2. 19, 51).

Sr Mary-Justin Lane, OP

Sr Mary-Justin is based at the Dominican Convent of St Vincent Ferrer in Ealing, London. She is a regular contributor to our magazine and for those who haven't made the family connection, her brother is Frank Lane.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND THE 1944 EDUCATION ACT

According to the Prime Minister of the time, David Lloyd George, the 'most formidable institution that we had to fight in Germany was not the arsenals of the Krupp or the yards in which they turned out submarines, but the schools of Germany.' Yet, as the Board of Education drew up its plans for the post-war reconstruction of the education service it was apparent that one of the major obstacles to be overcome would be the religious question. Reform of the Dual System, a system of County and Voluntary (Church) schools, had to be an essential part of the Board's plans. Since the passing of the 1870 Education Act, however, it had proved to be extremely difficult to reconcile the competing views of those who favoured state support for a denominational form of education and those who were opposed to any form of financial subsidy for church schools.

The outbreak of the Second World war, however, witnessed a nation that was united in 'sacrifice and fear', where religious intolerance and sectarian strife were at a minimum. Consequently, as early as November 1940, officials at the Board of Education met to discuss the possibility of educational reform in the post-war world. In March 1941 the Board's discussion document Education After the War (the Green Book) was distributed in a 'blaze of secrecy'.

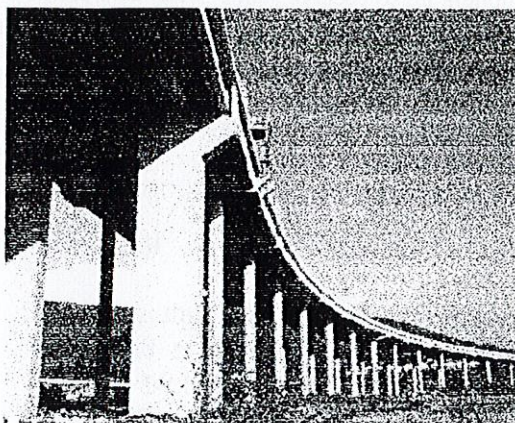
Cardinal Hinsley was to lead Roman Catholic discussions with the President of the Board, R A Butler, on the proposed reform of the Dual System. Several meetings were held and from the outset it was obvious that the Roman Catholic hierarchy was opposed to the Board's proposals as outlined in the Green Book - which they considered would bring about an end to the

churches 'all-age' schools, but would provide no viable alternative. The essential dilemma was that of finance. For the Board to agree to the state funding of Church schools a degree of control would have to be exercised by the Board; the Roman Catholic hierarchy found this to be 'wholly unacceptable'.

Eventually, the Board came up with an offer of 50% grant to be made to the Church Schools (Voluntary Aided) in return for certain managerial rights being relinquished. The Hierarchy at first refused to accede to this position as Catholic schools were already 'saddled with extra and crushing financial burdens.' Yet, Lord James Chuter-Ede considered that it would be 'unwise for the Roman Catholics to put themselves out on a limb and then find themselves lopped off and falling in the way of educational progress.' And, with Winston Churchill letting it be known, at a luncheon meeting with R A Butler, that he was disappointed with the lack of progress being made, it was incumbent upon the Hierarchy to agree to the Board's position. The Catholic Hierarchy, however, remained opposed to the Board's position even as the Education Bill made its passage through the Commons. A letter from Butler to Archbishop Griffin on 8 March 1944 noted that continued Catholic intransigence threatened educational advance. Consequently Catholic support was eventually,

yet reluctantly, forthcoming for the Bill, though Archbishop Griffin noted that the Catholic Hierarchy would ask for a revision of the 50% grant in future years. Indeed, in 1959 the grant paid to Voluntary Aided Schools was raised to 75% and increased subsequently to 80% in 1967 and to 85% in 1976. In recent years with the financial issue having been finally resolved the debate now centres on the place of the church school in a society that is becoming increasingly diverse and less noticeably Christian. What therefore is the role and future of the voluntary aided school?

Dr Paul Price



Motorway at Briton Ferry

HOW I BECAME INVOLVED IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES

I first started attending St Mary's in the mid 1970s. For some years I attended on a fairly anonymous basis, which is very easy in a large parish like ours. My first involvement in any parish activity was to be part of the team of stewards who assisted during the visit of the Pope to Cardiff in 1982. I was asked to get involved by one of the senior stewards who was a friend. Following on from that I became involved in the Parish Committee which, at that time, looked after social activities.

Around the same time, Father Seddon arrived in the parish and in response to his enthusiastic appeals I mentioned to him that I worked in the Tax Office. That quickly gave Canon O'Leary the signal to ask me to look after deeds of Covenant in the parish. Basically I became involved because I was asked to. I have never regretted saying yes to those invitations, as it has been a very rewarding experience, and I have had the opportunity to work along side many people whom I like and respect.

John Strand

PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE BRIDGES

The photographs of the bridges which appear in the magazine were taken during 1999 as part of a course in photography which I am still pursuing at Merthyr College. They will be put on display in the porch of the church. They are all black and white.

Hywel Mathews

MY FAITH

It is nine o'clock on a Sunday morning, the alarm is going off, and I awake from a deep sleep and debate in my tired mind whether or not to turn it off and go back to sleep. But I can't. My mother is calling up the stairs and my brother is banging on my door shouting that it is time for church. So, grudgingly, I get up, wash and dress and climb into the car with my family for the journey to church. My brothers are arguing over the rugby results, the music is blaring and my parents are happily chatting away. I, on the other hand, am still trying to wake up wondering how everyone can be so happy on a Sunday morning.

The first things that hit me as I walk through the door are the friendly faces and smiles and the warm greeting by Canon. By the time I sit down I already feel uplifted. As the singing of the hymns fills the church I realise the beauty of my church around me and feel sorry for those who can't see it. The Mass is in progress and I listen to God's word. During Holy Communion I watch all of the parishioners go to receive Jesus' body and blood and I join them. I kneel down and bow my head; it is then that I realise why I am here. I feel loved, I feel happy and I feel close to God. I also feel thankful - thankful for my faith, thankful for God's love and thankful to my parents for bringing me to Mass, for showing me where God is and for making Him a big part of my life.

Charlene Dacey

DEVOTION OF THE CRIB

The traditional site of Christ's birth is crowned by the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem. Here St Jerome (d. 420) believed the crib was moulded in clay in the rock wall of the stable/cave where our Saviour was born. Twenty years later when pope Sixtus III rebuilt the Basilica of St Mary Major there was already, in the old Basilica, a small oratory built like a cave of Bethlehem containing five small boards of Levantine sycamore venerated as the crib of Christ. (If the crib was of clay or cut into the rock of the cave these would have formed a subsidiary part of the structure.) These boards have been venerated as the crib since the fifth century and explain why St Mary Major was where the pope said the Mass of the First Sunday of Advent from the seventh century onwards.



Devotion to the crib was confined to Rome and not found elsewhere for the next eight hundred years. Then in 1223, St Francis of Assisi decided that, in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the Nativity with great devotion, he should construct a crib. This would show in a physical way the mystery of the Incarnation. He visited Rome, explained his ideas to pope Honorius III and got his approval.

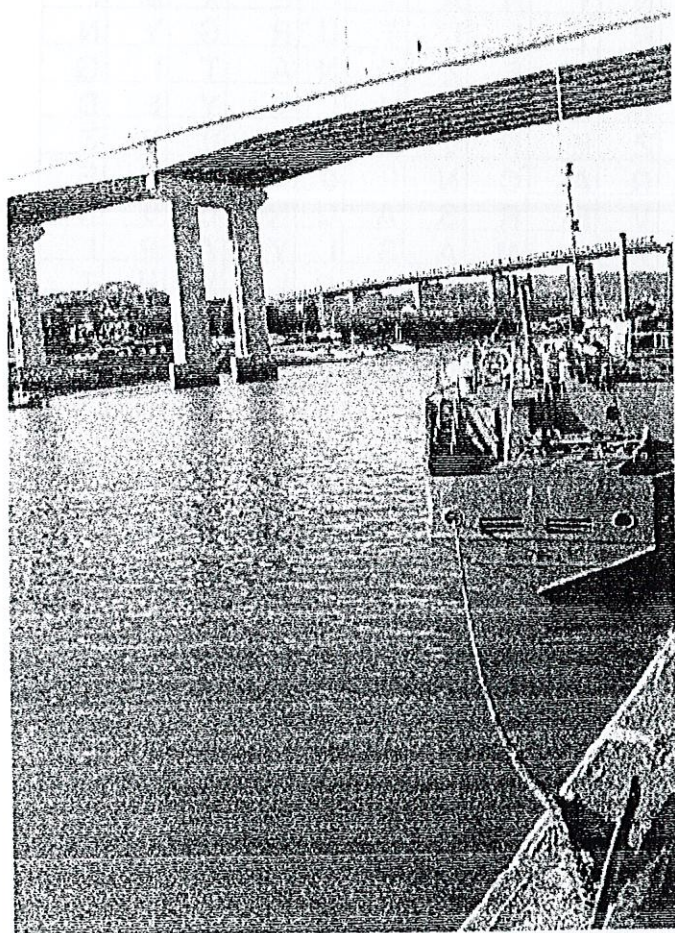
On getting papal approval St Francis wrote to his friend, the nobleman John of Greccio: "I wish to keep Christmas night with you, and if you are agreed, this is the manner in which we will celebrate it. You shall choose a place in your woods, a grotto, if there is one; you must put into it a manger with hay and bring in an ox and an ass, in order that it may resemble as closely as possible the stable at Bethlehem; for I greatly desire to see with my own eyes a representation of the birth and poverty of the Divine Child."

John of Greccio followed St Francis's wishes and on Christmas Eve 1223 the Friars and people of the surrounding villages, bearing torches and tapers, walked in procession to the

crib that John had built. St Bonaventure, a witness, says of St Francis: "He stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy. At the Mass that followed he read the Gospel, for he was never more than a deacon, refusing the priesthood because, in humility, he thought himself unworthy."

From that event in 1223 the devotion to the crib has spread throughout Europe and the wider world. We now have cribs in churches, homes and even shop windows! So at Christmas we give thanks to God for the vision of St Francis in providing us with a tangible reminder of the mystery of the Incarnation.

Peter Williams



Motorway over the river Neath

TOPS FOR THE MILLENNIUM

"Oo, 'Allo", said the lady standing next to me in the bread shop, "'Avn seen you for ages". I turned to look back at her, not at all sure she was talking to me. She was, and my mind was blank. Out of setting I could not think who she was. "You want to come in the shop. We've 'ad some lovely tops in for the M'llennium". Had she mistaken me for someone else? "All glittery, they are", she said. Eventually it clicked - the lady from the clothes shop! I mused on this on the way home and wondered where I would go to wear an all-glittery top, possibly with an all-glittery skirt? How suitable would this be for going to church or Asda or for a walk along the river? Finally I decided on an occasion, but decided that it would be a lot of money to spend on something to wear to watch television - I think my usual slippers and dressing gown will do!

Mary Mathews

A WORLD FULL OF PEACE

I wish for the world to be full of peace and for the mission club (Children Helping Children) to help poorer parts of the world like Africa to be a rainbow nation. I would also like wars and fights to stop and the world to be a very happy place. I wish for everyone to love others and to forgive them always. As well as that I also wish that selfishness and greediness would stop and everyone will respect others and everyone will be kind, honest, patient and full of hope.

Lydia Samy, aged nine and a half, St Mary's School

WORDSEARCH

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| O | N | E | T | D | O | F | E | S | T | A | V | I | F | R | J | O | I | C |
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| M | P | A | K | I | N | G | U | M | I | L | O | E | V | A | V | D | U | N |
| E | T | L | U | T | R | E | J | O | I | U | N | I | E | V | E | R | S | I |
| M | D | I | T | Y | T | R | A | N | S | C | E | N | D | E | N | T | R | K |
| O | N | E | M | I | L | L | I | A | N | Y | N | A | T | I | E | X | M | I |
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| A | N | N | I | V | E | R | S | E | S | A | C | R | E | Y | N | A | T | I |

All these words can be found in the wordsearch grid. reading in straight lines, horizontally, vertically or diagonally. either backwards or forwards.

ANNIVERSARY
BIRTH
CHRISTIANITY
COMMEMORATION
DIVINITY
ETERNAL
FESTIVE
GLORY
HOLIDAY

INCARNATE
JUBILEE
KINGDOM
LITURGY
MILLENNIUM
NATIVITY
ONE THOUSAND YEARS
PROPHET
REJOICE

SACRED
TRANSCENDENT
UNIVERSAL
VENERATE
WORSHIP
XMAS
YAHWEH
ZENITH

Solution on back page

GRAND JUBILEE

See how many three letter words you can make out of the letters contained in GRAND JUBILEE. Each letter can be used only once for each new word, except E which can be used twice because there are two in *Grand Jubilee*. Then see how many four-letter words you can make, followed by five-letter words and so on.

If you can make any additional words to those shown in the answers please let us know and they will be listed in the next edition of the Magazine.

Check to see that none of the words in your list contain double letters (except E) and none of the letters C, F, H, K, M, O, P, Q, S, T, V, W, X, Y or Z, as they do tend to creep in when you're not looking.

Solution on back page

Wordsearch and Grand Jubilee compiled by Amelia England

JUBILEE YEARS

For the origin of the Jubilee Year we have to go back to the Old Testament where, in the 25th chapter of the Book of Leviticus we read:

“You shall sanctify the fiftieth year and proclaim the liberation of all the inhabitants of the land. This is to be a Jubilee for you.....when you buy or sell let no one harm his brother.....let none of you wrong his neighbour..”

The whole of the chapter is one of love of God and of one's neighbour; this involved setting slaves free, cancelling debts, forgiveness and reconciliation.

History

In the Christian era the first Jubilee was instituted by Boniface VIII who declared the year 1300 a Holy Year or Jubilee Year. During this year a special indulgence, the Jubilee indulgence, was granted to pilgrims who visit Rome and fulfilled certain conditions. Boniface intended that there should be a Jubilee Year every 100 years.

Because of pressure from the faithful, Clement VI in 1343 declared the jubilee should be every 50 years. Urban VI made further modifications in 1389 and finally in 1470 Paul II settled on 25 years as the interval between Jubilee years. This has more or less been kept the same ever since. Some key dates in the development of the Jubilee year are shown.

Some key dates in the development of the jubilee year

1300 The first ordinary Jubilee proclaimed by Pope Boniface VIII with the Bull, 'Antiquorum Habet Fida Relatio'. Marked by thousands making pilgrimages to Rome, which began at Christmas, 1299, and it was proclaimed a 'year of forgiveness of all sins'. It was proposed that such years would be held every hundred years in the future.

1350 The Jubilee was brought forward from 1400 due to many requests to the Papal See. Pope Clement VI consented to the time between Jubilees being every fifty years. Pope Urban VI later reduced the time to thirty three years in memory of the earthly life of Jesus.

1390 On Christmas Eve Pope Boniface IX opened the Holy Door. He called a second Holy Year at Christmas, 1400, because of the number of pilgrims.

1400 Pope Boniface IX proclaimed the Jubilee.

1425 Pope Martin V proclaimed the Holy Year (not 1433 as previously set). Marked by a commemorative medal and the opening of a Holy Door in the Cathedral of St. John Lateran, Rome.

1450 Pope Nicholas V called the Holy Year.

1470 The time of Jubilee is set for every twenty-five years in a Bull issued by Pope Paul II.

1475 Pope Sixtus IV proclaimed the Holy Year. To mark the occasion Sixtus ordered the Sistine Chapel

and the Ponte Sisto or 'Sixtus Bridge', over the Tiber, to be built.

1500 Pope Alexander VI opened the Holy Door of Saint Peter's and the Doors in the three other major basilicas were opened at the same time.

1524 Pope Clement VII opened the ninth Jubilee on 24th. December.

1550 Pope Paul II proclaimed the Jubilee but it was opened by Pope Julius III.

1575 Pope Gregory XIII opened the Jubilee, 300,000 people came to Rome.

1600 Pope Clement VIII proclaimed the Holy Year.

1650 Pope Urban VIII proclaimed the Holy Year.

1675 Pope Clement X proclaimed the Holy Year.

1700 Pope Innocent X opened the Jubilee. He established the Hospice St. Michele a Ripa.

1725 Holy Year called by Pope Benedict XIII.

1750 The Jubilee proclaimed by Pope Benedict XIV and during the year Stations of the Cross were set up in the Colosseum.

1775 Pope Clement XIV announced the Jubilee but died before it's start - it was opened by Pope Pius VI.

1800 Pius VII did not proclaim the Jubilee this year due to Napoleon's rule.

1825 Holy Year led by Pope Leo XII and 500,000 went to Rome.

1850 Pope Pius IX was in exile, because of the Roman Republic, and so the Jubilee was not held.

1875 Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Holy Year but there was no ceremony of the opening of the Door. Rome was occupied by King Vittorio Emmanuele.

1900 22nd Jubilee opened by Pope Leo XIII. Start of the 20th century of the Christian era.

1925 Pope Pius XI opened the Holy Year, emphasis on missionary work.

1933 'Extraordinary' Jubilee proclaimed by Pope Pius XI to mark 'the 1900th anniversary of Redemption'.

1950 Holy Year called by Pope Pius XII. On 1st November the 'Assumption into Heaven of Mary, the Mother of Jesus' was made a dogma of the Catholic faith.

1975 Pope Paul VI called the ordinary Jubilee with the major themes of Renewal and Reconciliation.

1983 'Extraordinary' Jubilee proclaimed by Pope John Paul II to mark '1950 years since the Redemption carried out by Christ through his Death and Resurrection in the year 33'.

Source: Based on information from 'What is a Holy Year?' and 'The History of the Jubilee', on the Vatican Web Site

Ceremonies

The most important ceremony is the opening of the Holy Door at St Peter's. It is a bricked-up doorway on the west front of the Basilica nearest to the Vatican Palace. Before First Vespers of Christmas (24th December) the Pope and the Cardinal Penitentiary arrive here and symbolically open the door (the brickwork having been removed earlier). The door remains open throughout the Jubilee Year giving pilgrims access to the basilica at all times.

At the same time as the Pope and Cardinal Penitentiary are opening the Holy Door at St Peter's, three Cardinal legates are conducting the same ceremony of opening the three other Holy Doors in Rome. These Holy Doors are at the three other major basilicas in the city - St John Lateran, St Paul outside the Walls and St Mary Major. All four Holy Doors are open for the entire period of the Jubilee Year to enable pilgrims to enter the basilicas and fulfil the conditions required to gain the Jubilee Indulgence. The Jubilee Year ends with a repeat of the ceremony, except that this time masons are present to brick up the doors until the next year of Jubilee.

Realising the impracticability for many Catholics to visit Rome during Jubilee Year, since 1975, Popes Paul VI and John Paul II have attached the Jubilee Indulgence to Cathedral Churches and other named churches. This means that those unable to make the pilgrimage to Rome may still gain the Jubilee Indulgence by visiting a nearby church, as described elsewhere in the magazine in the article on 'Indulgences in the Holy Year'.

Peter Williams

SOME THOUGHTS OF YOUNG CHILDREN

St Mary's School was asked to make a contribution to the magazine and each class responded with a variety of pieces of writing. Many of the classes had been learning about the poor people of Africa and had been collecting money for them. They remember the children of South Africa, like Simunye, in their prayers and would like to see them to give them a gift, like 'a carpet, 'a bed' or 'some dinner'. Others gave their aspirations for the future: 'to stop people killing animals', 'to see people looking after our environment', 'to see people being very kind to one another'. Promises and wishes included 'that everyone believes in Jesus Christ and will follow His ways', 'I promise I will tell the truth' and 'I

wish for the millennium that the poor people will be just as fortunate as us'. One class used the word MILLENNIUM and wrote phrases which started with each letter, for example, 'make peace not war', 'in the millennium we remember that Jesus was born 2000 years ago', 'member Jesus for ever'. As you would expect, the older children were able to write more but some of the younger ones were very simple and effective in giving their thoughts. Most were very altruistic in what they wrote as well as very practical and down to earth, like 'I will help my mother look after my new baby', 'I wish to be an archaeologist', 'I wish I was rich'. In the case of the latter, don't we all!

A sample of what the children said is included below and the full collection of their writings is kept at the school.

'I will give my old clothes to charity to help the poor children'

'I wish I will always be loved'

'I wish Jesus will return in the next Millennium'

'My millennium promise is that I will be good and love my family. I will help people every day and not be nasty again'

'I wish my mother and father were proud of me'

'I wish to grow up as an artist'

'Never fight with one another, Never swear or argue'

'In the new millennium may peace be around us'

'May the sick be well for ever'

'Make more priests in the new millennium'

'Might we have a wonderful millennium'

'I want to make a difference by giving more money for charity, stop fighting with my friend and always forgive them and I will try to break fight. I will stop being selfish and greedy. I will always be honest and I will try to be more patient with my friends and my little brother'

'I wish that people everywhere didn't get diseases and also people all over the world have the same as us, clean food and clean water'

'I want to make a difference by saying my prayers every night, sharing things with other people'

'I want to help the poor across India, Africa and other countries'

'I wish for a world of loving, caring sharing, peaceful, non homeless, non poor people happy people. I can make a difference by trying to make more people Christian'

The editor would like to thank the children for their contributions and, of course, their teachers

ONE BREAD ONE BODY

Earlier this year the parish held a series of meetings to look at the teaching document *One Bread One Body*, which deals with the Eucharist in the life of the Church and the norms for sacramental sharing. The document, prepared in 1998 by the Bishops of England, Wales and Scotland, is offered as an opportunity to reflect on the place of the Eucharist at the centre of Catholic life.

Those at the meetings looked at all the main issues included in the document. There was an opportunity to discuss and clarify the real meaning of the sacrifice of the Mass and holy communion; the need to pray to God, not only on our own, but collectively at Mass. It was interesting to learn of the Church's views on sacramental sharing with Christians from the Eastern Orthodox Church as well as Christians of other denominations. It is impossible and unnecessary to summarise all the issues here, especially when the documents have been made available to all parishioners. The meetings were instructive and enlightening and gave an opportunity for members of the parish to listen to an exposition of the Church's teaching on the central issue of the body and blood of Christ and to engage in a discussion about them. I commend and recommend the books and the booklet.

Victor Jones

Wordsearch solution

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Grand Jubilee words**Grand Jubilee – 3 letter words**

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| age | and | bar | bun | die | eel | gel | jar | lag | nil | rib | run |
| aid | are | bed | | dig | eld | gun | jig | | nub | rid | |
| ail | | bee | dab | din | end | gnu | jug | nab | | rig | urn |
| air | bad | beg | dan | due | | | | nag | rag | rub | |
| alb | bag | bud | deb | | gad | jab | lab | neb | ran | rue | |
| ale | ban | bug | den | ear | gal | jag | lad | nib | red | rug | |

Grand Jubilee – 4 letter words

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Able | band | been | bund | deal | drab | edge | gile | idea | lair | need | real | rule |
| aged | bane | beep | bung | dean | dreg | elan | glad | idle | land | nude | reed | rung |
| agin | bang | beer | bur | dear | drug | | glen | | lane | | reel | |
| aide | bard | bend | burn | deer | dual | gain | glib | jade | lard | rage | rein | ulna |
| alee | bare | blue | | deli | duel | gale | glue | jail | laud | raid | rend | urge |
| arid | barn | blur | dale | dial | dung | garb | grab | jeer | lead | rail | ride | |
| bead | brad | | dane | diet | gear | grid | June | lean | rain | rind | | |
| bail | bean | brag | dare | dine | earl | geld | grin | | | rand | ring | |
| bald | bear | bran | darn | ding | earn | gene | gurn | lade | nail | read | rude | |
| bale | beau | brig | daub | dire | Eden | gild | | laid | near | real | ruin | |

Grand Jubilee – 5 letter words

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| abide | angel | barge | brine | debit | eager | gland | grind | judge | regal |
| agent | anger | beard | bring | debug | eagle | glare | gruel | jural | reign |
| agile | angle | began | bugle | deign | eider | glean | guard | | renal |
| aglet | argil | begin | build | derig | elder | glebe | guide | lager | ridge |
| agree | argue | being | built | dinar | elide | glide | guild | laird | |
| alder | auger | braid | bulge | diner | endue | gnarl | guile | large | unbar |
| algae | | brain | burin | dinge | | grade | | learn | under |
| alien | badge | brand | | dirge | gable | grain | ideal | | unrig |
| align | bagel | bread | debag | drail | genie | grand | idler | range | |
| anele | bairn | breed | debar | drain | glade | green | inure | rebid | |

Grand Jubilee – 6 letter words

| | | | | | | |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| adjure | bunder | dangle | endear | glider | league | unread |
| angler | bundle | dealer | endure | | | unreel |
| bungle | delude | | engrid | jailer | rebind | urbane |
| badger | burden | deluge | enrule | jangle | redial | urinal |
| baleen | burgee | denier | | jingle | regale | |
| bangle | burgle | | garden | jungle | | regild |
| bridle | dingle | durian | gender | | | |
| budgie | danger | during | genial | leader | | unable |

Grand Jubilee – 7 letter words

| | | | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Abridge | brigade | engrail | general | leading | realign |
| blunder | builder | enlarge | gnarled | reading | rebuild |

Grand Jubilee – 8 letter words

underlie

If you wish to use extracts from this issue of the Magazine please contact the editor, whose name, address and telephone number are given on page one. Comments on it are always welcome.