

Living After the Great Jubilee

by Fr. Herbert Nichols

The passing of history is often compared to a river. Time is, after all, a measure of motion; the flowing waters of significant events in our lives moving headlong in a direction toward a final destination. The Year of Jubilee and its lengthy preparation have ended with the closing of the Holy Doors; and unless an extraordinary celebration is proclaimed, the next one will not occur until 2025. But the spirit of this Year of Grace should remain forever.

We might ask ourselves, "What difference did this Jubilee year make in my life?" It is the same question we might ask about any jubilee: our tenth, twenty-fifth, or fiftieth anniversaries of ordination. The USCC issued this statement on the Jubilee Year entitled, "Because God loves you", to which I add my own reflections:

"Because God loves you, you never stand alone. There is someone with you in anxious moments who knows your deepest desires; and wants what is best for you. Think of the person whom you have loved most. Multiply that love a million times over and you still haven't reached the extent of God's personal love for you."

I was ordained in the '75 Holy Year and celebrated by tenth anniversary two years after the extraordinary Jubilee of 1983—but I was burned out. My prayer life, my relationship with God, who has

so much love for me, was one-sided. Anxiety, loneliness, depression, guilt were propelling me like the swollen waters of an angry river to leave the ministry, even thinking of leaving life itself. Then came a letter in the mail from a former classmate about something called "Fraternity of Priests". My hands clutched the paper and my eyes read the typewritten words, there was an inert mysterious force that let me know in no uncertain terms that I had to attend this meeting—because God loves me,

"Because God loves you, you can go beyond yourself. You can forgive those who have hurt you, however deeply. Even when you feel intense pain, the possibility of forgiveness lies within you. You can forgive others because God is always ready to forgive your sins. You can overlook wrongs because God

empowers you to go beyond your own heartache."

In those days we followed up our general prayer sessions with sessions for members only, for teaching and sharing during which suddenly and quite unexpectedly grace swept over me replacing shame with dignity and life. It was the first of many such milestones or buoy markers along the new way of life.

"Because God loves you, you can ask forgiveness of those who have hurt you. You can admit wrongs and ask forgiveness. You can make amends in fractured relationships and ask God's healing grace."

The A.A. Big Book makes an outstanding statement: "Resentment is the number one offender." It destroys more alcoholics than anything else. In the very next sentence it implies why: "From resentment stems all forms of spiritual disease." The opposite of resentment is forgiveness, which is literally "given-for" in English; "pardonner" in French, and "pere-donar" in Spanish, because forgiveness belongs to the Divine. At-one-ment is the work of God. It is something other, something that is not ours. Unless we can acknowledge this, the world is only a noise we make with our mouths like the cacophony of a babbling brook. The experience of being forgiven pulls us out of the stagnating mire of self-centered focus on our own pain and pushes us into the not necessarily pure,



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HAPPY LENT!

At first glance, this greeting sounds like an oxymoron, doesn't it? Yet when we begin to consider the incredible love of God, that gives all away and holds nothing back from us, his sinful children, we cannot help but truly celebrate this penitential season. The centuries-old "Exultet" from the Easter Vigil Mass puts it this way:

"What good would life had been to us had Christ not come as our Redeemer? Father, how wonderful your care for us! How boundless your merciful love! To ransom a slave you gave away your Son. O happy fault. O necessary sin of Adam, which gained for us so great a Redeemer!"

This is a hymn of rejoicing and happiness; we can live new life because of what Christ has done for us.

The Church asks us to refocus and clarify our own vision of what is truly important in our lives, that is, our on-going conversion to Christ in the community of his Church. This season is a forty-day retreat in which St. Paul reminds us to "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor.5.20). On Ash Wednesday the priest asked us to "turn away from sin and return to the gospel". Sin is that which separates us from the love of the Father, it puts a wedge in our relationship, the relationship Christ died for us to have in reality, right now. I can't help but marvel at what I must mean to God and how unthinking and blase I can be about it.

Lent graphically calls us home to the loving arms of the Father, and reminds us that "now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor.6.2). Yes, I am a sinner, but, yes, I am loved by my Father. And he has given me the great sac-

raments of Penance and Eucharist to forgive, to heal, and to reconcile me with my awesome Father! All this because Jesus has died and risen for me.

For weeks, our Eastern Rite brothers and sisters will greet each other with: "Christ is risen!" to which one responds, "He is truly risen!" They do not wish each other "Happy Easter!"—that speaks of bunnies, and candy chicks, and stuff like that. They cut to the chase and hone in on the essential meaning of it all: "Christ is risen, truly risen!" Try this greeting this year and watch peoples' reactions.

In this penitential season of Lent let us prepare ourselves well. As we recall the great event that led to our salvation, let us keep our eyes focused on "Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb.12.2) He is our crucified and risen Savior sent by our Awesome God and Father out of unfathomable love for you and for me.

To you, our readers and patrons, our benefactors, may this Lent be a holy and renewing time of grace. Please continue to pray for the Fraternity of Priests, that more and more priests empowered by the Holy Spirit might effectively and mightily proclaim the good news, the Great News, of our salvation. Be assured of our prayers for a holy Lenten season and a life-giving Easter-time where Christ is risen, truly risen in you!

In Jesus,



Father John

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but a least circulating stream of community and commonality. As Jesus declared in the Lord's Prayer—Forgiveness is a two-way street.

“Because God loves you, you can care for the weak, remove injustices, alleviate poverty, annihilate oppression, and restore righteousness locally and globally. The love of God within you gives you strength to defend the unborn, support the elderly, and lift the hearts of those without hope. God's grace in you helps you see that in every person beats a heart yearning to be loved.”

Father Raneiro Cantalamessa writes: “If the enemy continues to make war against you, this might mean that he has not obtained what he has set out to achieve. If you have no struggle, be afraid and question yourself. Sin is like a deadly cobra coiled up beside you as you sleep. You awake to find it staring you in the face. No less deadly is the threat of sin.”

The bishops write: “The Jubilee is a time to take rest, a time to be with family, a time to be brother for, and brother with one another; the need to find some agreed upon time for enjoyable and wholesome entertainment which allows you to enjoy one another's company.” In those early days of Fraternity we gave primary time to praise and worship; but took time to minister to each

INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN TRINIDAD THIS SUMMER

All members are reminded that our Annual Meeting is moving to the Caribbean this summer. The brothers in the Port of Spain Fraternity are hosting our gathering from July 29-August 3, 2001.

You will be receiving a letter soon with all the details or you may register online at our website <http://www.fraternityofpriests.org>.

It should be a wonderful gathering with our brothers in the Caribbean and from other parts of the world. Please pray about the possibility of joining together with the brothers.

The brothers in Trinidad are very willing if you would like to spend extra time with them either before or after the meeting in their beautiful country.

SEE YOU IN THE CARIBBEAN!

other with teaching and reconciliation. We also took time socially: we dined and explored the Museum of Science, we did the theatre and the cinema.

Is there anything that happened during the Jubilee Year that marked a phase in your life? Did you make a pilgrimage? Forgive someone? Rediscover or renew a relationship? Jubilee is about spreading joy and sharing blessings; a grace that is not contained behind any doors, but penetrating the hearts of any who are open to receive it.

“Because God loves you, you have the power to touch hearts with compassion, heal wounds in those around you, and act

selflessly. Because God has first loved you, you are able to love yourself and one another. Amen.” †

Our Apologies!

Due to circumstances out of our control, this issue arrives to you several weeks later than normal.

Please accept our apology and know that the April issue should arrive to you on its normal schedule. Thank you!

—The Editors

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THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR A PRIEST EACH DAY!

A PRAYER FOR PRIESTS

Jesus, Eternal High Priest, live in (name of priest), act in him, speak in and through him. Think your thoughts in his mind, love through his heart. Give him your own disposition and feelings. Teach, lead and guide him always. Correct, enlighten and expand his thoughts and behavior. Possess his soul, take over his entire personality and life. Replace him with yourself. Incline him to constant adoration and thanksgiving; pray in and through him. Let him live in you and keep him in this intimate union always.

Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mother of Jesus and Mother of priests, pray and intercede for (.....). Amen.



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