

1997: The Year of Jesus Christ

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As the Church prepares for the third millennium, the Holy Father presents us with a beautiful apostolic letter entitled *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (The Coming of the Third Millennium). He wants the time leading up to the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 to be a new Advent for the Church.

The preparatory phase will take place over the span of three years, 1997 to 1999. Each of the three years has a theme and focuses on a sacrament and a virtue. For 1997 the Holy Father is inviting us to a yearlong reflection on Jesus Christ, the Word of God made man by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is challenging us to a deeper life of faith, Scripture study and holiness, and to an enlivened appreciation of catechesis, Sacred Tradition and the authentic teaching authority of the Church.

The Blessed Virgin Mary will be contemplated especially under her title the "Mother of God." The Holy Father states the general theme proposed by many cardinals and bishops for this year which is: "Jesus Christ, the one Savior of the world, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

I would like to offer some practical ways to focus on Jesus Christ and to fulfill what the Holy Father asks of us during this wonderful year of 1997:

1) Enthroned an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in your home, particularly on one of the following feast days: the feast of the Sacred Heart in June, Corpus Christi in November, or the feast of the Holy Family in December. If the Sacred Heart Enthronement has already been done, then I would suggest renewing it on the anniversary of the original ceremony.

2) Pray the rosary each day. One of the best ways that I have found to meditate on the mysteries of the rosary is to make the rosary "seasonal." For example, during the time of Lent, pray the Sorrowful Mysteries daily. During Easter time, pray and meditate on the Glorious Mysteries each day. During Advent, pray and meditate daily on the Joyful Mysteries. During Ordinary time, recite the mysteries that are usually designated for each day of the week (Monday and Thursday, the Joyful Mysteries; Tuesday and Friday, the Sorrowful Mysteries; Wednesday and Saturday, the Glorious Mysteries; for Sunday, recite the Joyful Mysteries during Advent, the Sorrowful during Lent, and the Glorious during Easter time and Ordinary time)

3) Make the Stations of the Cross each Friday. This would keep our focus on just how much Jesus loves us and suffered for our salvation.

4) Watch good Catholic videos with the family, especially "Jesus of Nazareth" or videos on the Shroud of Turin.

5) Read and study the Gospels. I would recommend reading a good Catholic commentary on Scripture such as the Navarre Bible Series. If you spend a lot of time in the car, listen to the New Testament on cassette tape. Read excellent books such as The Life of Christ by Bishop Fulton Sheen, A Doctor at Calvary by Pierre Barbet, Love of Eternal Wisdom by St. Louis Marie de Montfort, or To Know Christ Jesus by Frank Sheed.

6) Make daily Mass and Holy Communion a regular part of your schedule. There is no better way to grow closer to Our Lord than to receive Him in Holy Communion and to deepen your knowledge of Him by listening to the Scriptures at Mass.

7) Make a daily Holy Hour before the Blessed Sacrament. Bishop Sheen writes that those who make a daily Holy Hour before our Lord will receive countless graces and blessings for themselves and their loved ones.

8) The Holy Father wants us to have a renewed love for the sacrament of Baptism. Focus on the Baptismal days of your children by looking at the pictures from that day, by bringing out the Baptismal garment, and by lighting the Baptismal candle. Perhaps you might even have a party or give the child a religious gift, such as a Bible, holy card, or medal on the anniversary of his or her baptismal day.

9) Since faith is the virtue that the Holy Father wants emphasized during this year, purchase a copy of the new "Catechism of the Catholic Church" for the family and read the catechism on a regular basis to deepen your faith.

10) Increase your love for the Blessed Mother during this year by meditating on Mary as the model of faith at the Annunciation. Pray the Angelus daily as a way to meditate on the mystery of the Incarnation.

11) Make the total consecration to Jesus through Mary as described by St. Louis de Montfort in his book, True Devotion to Mary. As St. Louis de Montfort says, we love Mary so that we may love Jesus perfectly. Our beloved Holy Father loves this book and has said, "The reading of this book was a decisive turning point in my life... This perfect devotion is indispensable to anyone who means to give himself without reserve to Christ and the work of Redemption." Consider attending one of the many conferences offered at the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Ohio. The 1997 summer conference season is devoted to Jesus and will focus hearts and minds on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Time will be set aside at each conference to consecrate lives and ministries to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. No matter what your vocation happens to be there is a conference for you! For more information, call 1-800-437-TENT.

In conclusion, I strongly recommend that every Catholic purchase a copy of John Paul II's great document, Tertio Millennio Adveniente to read and study. Let us begin right away to enter more deeply into the powerful treasure of grace that this beautiful year of

1997 is meant to be! May all of us grow in love for our Lord Jesus Christ this coming year.

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