

Holy Year

A Pastoral Letter

St. Peter, when he had received the Holy Spirit in Pentecost Sunday, went into the streets of Jerusalem and preached the first papal sermon. “You must repent,” he said, ‘for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will received the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise that was made is for you and for your children... and for all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

When Pope Paul VI announced that a Holy Year was to begin on Pentecost Sunday, this year, he sent this same message to us. Repent; turn to God; seek reconciliation with him and with all men; renew the life that is within you. Unite yourselves through Christ and in Christ, that in unity you may approach the Father.

The vast body of men in our age are intent on material success and on all that can be achieved by unaided human power. They think very little about the things St. Peter and the Pope spoke of. The very idea of a Holy Year is, as the Pope has pointed out, alien to the spirit of the time. Yet open any newspaper and you will find a sad tale of crime, degradation, falling morale and sin. Our age may not want a Holy Year of repentance and reconciliation. It certainly needs one.

Despite all sins and all failure, men still yearn to go forward, guided by truth, to the fullness of life. Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father but through Him. Repent, therefore, and be reconciled to the Father, through Christ and in Christ.

In Baptism we were reconciled, becoming dead to sin and rising to new life. If we find ourselves untrue to that life, we seek reconciliation in the Sacrament of Penance. Weak though we may be, we seek ever more perfect reconciliation with the Father and with all the children of the Father. Through Christ, we seek the union of all men in Christ, that we may advance together to the perfection of love in God. If we had not this hope, our lives would be dark and sad indeed. It is in this hope that we welcome the Holy Year.

Earlier Holy Years focused first on pilgrimages to Rome, though they were later extended to the whole world. The Holy Father wished this Holy Year to begin in the local Churches on Pentecost Sunday this year, with representative pilgrimages to Rome in 1975.

Our mourning for our well loved Bishop delayed the start of the Holy Year in Hong

Kong. Now we begin.

A diocesan committee will be set up to organize Holy Year activities and to recommend Holy Year practices, so that all may be able to take part with abundant fruit. It is hoped that all parish councils, with their pastors, will take similar action in the parishes.

United thus with one another and with all our fellows in Hong Kong and in all the world, let us go forward with joy and love, through reconciliation and repentance, that through Christ and with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, we may give honour and glory to the Father.

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