



## The Eucharist: Banquet Table of the Jubilee

by St. Gerelyn Spaulding, OSB

**A**ndrei Rublev's beloved icon, "The Trinity of the Old Testament" (1422-1427), depicts three beings around a table. On the front side of the table is a small rectangular opening. Artists tell us that this opening in the table represents our invitation to be a part of the table of the Trinity.

Jesus, the Paschal Lamb, at the Last Supper, spoke thusly: "I have ardently longed to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, because, I tell you, I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:14-16). The *Jerusalem Bible* footnote to this passage reads: "The first stage of fulfillment is the Eucharist itself, the center of spiritual life in the kingdom founded by Jesus; the final stage will be at the end of

time when the Passover is to be fulfilled perfectly and in a fashion no longer veiled." "Then he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.' He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood poured out for you' (Luke 22:19-20).



In his book *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, Fr. Edward Schillebeeckx states: "In the fullest sense of the word, a sacrament is the pledge of Christ's availability to a particular individual; the tangible pledge of his willing readiness to enter upon an encounter." In the sacrament of the Eucharist, Jesus offers us himself—an encounter with him—in forgiveness, nourishment, rest, a place at his table, a covenant relationship.

One year ago, a friend, Pat Cotter, was dying of breast cancer. She and her husband, Bob, had been attending our Sunday morning Eucharist at the monastery. Due to her illness, she could no longer come. The Abbot, several other community members and I alternately brought her the Eucharist. She was fifty-eight, an artist who had raised two sons who lived out of state. Her husband was a counselor in a high school on the Navajo Reservation in Arizona and commuted frequently. Because of the severity of her illness, her family was present. She was in the final stages of cancer, heavily medicated, and was walking with an oxygen machine. She and I visited privately on her back patio with an incredible view of the mountains.

After I had given her the Eucharist, we sat in silence. Quietly, Pat apologized for not being more entertaining. I told her how much she had blessed me. Every time we met, her encouragement and genuine interest in my life and concerns touched my heart. I went on to tell her that visiting her as she was suffering was like being close to Jesus on the cross. She was so close to heaven. Pat paused a long while and looked at me—her eyes focusing on me through her thick glasses. I wondered what she would say. Her every word was proving to be so significant. She then said, "You have really honored me today!" We both broke into tears. Being uncomfortable with the power of her words to me at this time, she broke into laughter shortly afterwards. She was joyful even at a time like this. I felt Jesus had just spoken those words to me. That was our last shared Eucharist. Pat passed to the kingdom within two weeks.

*You have really honored me today!* Aren't these the words of Jesus to us at every Eucharist? We are in heartfelt communion with the Trinity.

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The Jubilee is an appointed time of rest—the land rests, debts are canceled, grievances are forgiven, so the people take a "breather." The Eucharist is also a place of rest. My most vivid experience of rest came to me in 1996 while living in the village of Ein Karem, the village of the Visitation of Elizabeth and the Blessed Virgin Mary, southwest of the city of Jerusalem. I was one of sixteen students attending the four-month Jerusalem Studies Program sponsored by St. John's University in Collegeville, Minnesota. Our program took place in the dormitory adjacent to the Franciscan monastery that maintained the shrine of the birth place of John the Baptist.

The small Jewish village of Ein Karem gave us beautiful glimpses of the Sabbath rest. All public transportation in Jerusalem stopped from sunset of Friday until "the first three stars" at sunset on Saturday. During the Sabbath, families walked together, worshipped together and ate together amid Scriptures, wine, holy bread, candles and flowers. The Sabbath, like the year of Jubilee, is a "taste of heaven."

In our class on Jewish worship taught by Sr. Maureen Fritz, a Sister of Zion from Canada, we learned that petitions are not allowed on the Sabbath, but rather prayers of blessing and thanksgiving. This one day a week is to be all joy and rest—no worry. Instead of being goal-oriented, we are challenged to lead quality lives. It is a day that one creates for oneself where one steps out of time into heaven.

In the book *I Asked for Wonder* by Abraham Joshua Heschel, rest is again associated with the Sabbath. "In the tempestuous ocean of time and toil there are islands of stillness where man may enter a harbor and reclaim his dignity. The island is the seventh day, the Sabbath, a day of detachment from things, instruments and practical affairs as well as attachment to the spirit."

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, says: "Especially in this phase [of the Jubilee], the phase of celebration, the aim will be to give glory to the Trinity, from whom everything in the world and in history comes and to whom everything returns. This mystery is the focus of the three years of immediate preparation: from Christ, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to the Father. In this sense the Jubilee celebration makes present in an anticipatory way the goal and fulfillment of the life of each Christian and of the whole church in the Triune God."

The words of the third Eucharistic prayer speak of reconciliation, nourishment, peace and rest for the whole world:

Look with favour on your church's offering, and see the victim whose death has reconciled us to yourself. Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ...Lord, may this sacrifice, which has made our peace with you, advance the peace and salvation of all the world.

We need not wait for the death of our earthly bodies to partake of the blessings of the kingdom. We can each receive Jesus in the word, in forgiveness, in rest, nourishment, peace and joy at our Eucharistic feasts here on earth—at the invitation of the Blessed Trinity. We can even now partake of the banquet table of the Jubilee. ♦

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## The Mystery of the Incarnation

### Excerpts from *Incarnationis Mysterium* Pope John Paul II's Proclamation of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000

Published on the First Sunday of Advent 1998, *Incarnationis Mysterium* is the official proclamation of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. In it, Pope John Paul II states the reasons for observing this Jubilee, reminding the world that it is more than the beginning of a new millennium; it is the anniversary of the Incarnation of the Son of God. It offers rich reflections on the importance of this event, and notes the various signs which will highlight the Jubilee Year: pilgrimage, the holy door, indulgences. Looking to the future, the Pope calls the church to use the Jubilee as an opportunity for extraordinary growth in holiness, making the new millennium a time of increased Christian witness, facilitating God's desire for a new heaven and new earth.

The excerpts below offer an overview of *Incarnationis Mysterium*. Leaders will find the document helpful in keeping in focus the authentic meaning of the Jubilee throughout the year. It is also an excellent resource for teaching on the Incarnation as the focal point of history, the symbolism of pilgrimages, the theology of indulgence and the witness of the martyrs. These brief sections could be used effectively within prayer meetings and other gatherings.

Contemplating the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the church prepares to cross the threshold of the Third Millennium...In Jesus Christ the history of salvation finds its culmination and ultimate meaning. In him, we have all received "grace upon grace" (Jn. 1:16), having been reconciled with the Father (cf. Rm. 5:10, 2 Cor. 5:18). The birth of Jesus at Bethlehem is not an event which can be consigned to the past. The whole of human history in fact stands in reference to him; our own time and the future of the world are illuminated by his presence. He is "the Living One" (Rev. 1:18), "who is, who

was and who is to come" (Rev. 1:4). Before him every knee must bend, in the heavens, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim that he is Lord (cf. Phil. 2:10-11). In the encounter with Christ, every man discovers the mystery of his own life. Jesus is the genuine newness which surpasses all human expectations and such he remains for ever, from age to age. The Incarnation of the Son of God and the salvation which he has accomplished by his death and resurrection are therefore the true criterion for evaluating all that happens in time and every effort to make life more human...

The coming Jubilee, therefore, can well be considered "Great," and the church declares her fervent desire to embrace all believers in order to offer them the joy of reconciliation. From the whole church there will rise the hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, who in his incomparable love has granted us in Christ to be "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). On the occasion of this great feast, a warm invitation to share our joy goes out to the followers of other religions, as it does to those who are far from faith in God. As brothers and sisters in the one human family, may we cross together the threshold of a new millennium that will demand effort and responsibility on the part of all...

In the course of history, the institution of the Jubilee has been enriched by signs which attest to the faith and foster the devotion of the Christian people. Among these, the first is the notion of *pilgrimage*, which is linked to the situation of man who readily describes his life as a journey...A pilgrimage evokes the believer's personal journey in the footsteps of the Redeemer; it is an exercise of practical asceticism, of repentance for human weaknesses, of constant vigilance over one's frailty, of interior preparation for a change of heart...

In addition to *pilgrimage*, there is the sign of the *holy door*, opened for the first time in the Basilica of the Most Holy Savior at the Lateran during the Jubilee of 1423. It evokes the passage from sin to grace which every Christian is called to accomplish...There is only one way that opens wide the entrance into the life of communion with God: this is Jesus, the one and absolute way to salvation...The focus on the door is to recall the responsibility of every believer to cross its threshold. To pass through that door means to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; it is to strengthen faith in him in order to live the new life which he has given us...

Another distinctive sign, and one familiar to the faithful, is the *indulgence*, which is one of the constitutive elements of the Jubilee. The indulgence discloses the fullness of the Father's mercy, who offers everyone his love, expressed primarily in the forgiveness of



sins...The sacrament of Penance offers the sinner "a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification" won by the sacrifice of Christ. The sinner thus enters the life of God anew and shares fully in the life of the church...Reconciliation with God does not mean that there are no enduring consequences of sin from which we must be purified. It is precisely in this context that the indulgence becomes important, since it is an expression of the "total gift of the mercy of God"...

Revelation also teaches that the Christian is not alone on the path of conversion. In Christ and through Christ, his life is linked by a mysterious bond to the lives of all other Christians in the supernatural union of the Mystical Body. This establishes among the faithful a marvelous exchange of spiritual gifts, in virtue of which the holiness of one benefits the others in a way far exceeding the harm which the sin of one has inflicted upon others. There are people who leave in their wake a surfeit of love, of suffering borne well, of purity and truth, which involves and sustains others. This is the reality of "vicari-

ousness," upon which the entire mystery of Christ is founded. His superabundant love saves us all. Yet it is part of the grandeur of Christ's love not to leave us in the condition of passive recipients, but to draw us into his saving work and, in particular, into his passion...

**Let us therefore look to the future.** The merciful Father takes no account of the sins for which we are truly sorry (cf. Is. 38:17). He is now doing something new, and in the love which forgives he anticipates the new heaven and the new earth. Therefore, so that there may be a renewed commitment to Christian witness in the world of the next millennium, let faith be refreshed, let hope increase and let charity exert itself still more...

A sign of true Christian love, ageless but especially powerful today, is the memory of the martyrs. Their witness must not be forgotten. They are the ones who have proclaimed the gospel by giving their lives for love. The martyr, especially in our own days, is a sign of that greater love which sums up all other values...The believer who has seriously pon-

dered his Christian vocation, including what revelation has to say about the possibility of martyrdom, cannot exclude it from his life's own horizon...In the hearts of the faithful, may admiration for their martyrdom be matched by the desire to follow their example, with God's grace, should circumstances require it.

The joy of the Jubilee would not be complete if our gaze did not turn to her who in full obedience to the Father gave birth to the Son of God in the flesh for our sake...May she, who with Jesus her son and Joseph her spouse went on pilgrimage to the holy temple of God, guard the steps of all those who will be pilgrims in this Jubilee year. And through the coming months may she deign to intercede intensely for the Christian people, so that abundant grace and mercy may be theirs, as they rejoice at the two thousand years since the birth of their Savior.

Let the praise of the church rise to God the Father in the Holy Spirit for the gift of salvation in Christ the Lord, both now and forevermore. ♦

## Eighth Haitian Congress meets

From July 30<sup>th</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup> of 1999, the Haitian Council for the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the US held their Eighth National Congress at the James L. Knight Center in Miami. The Congress was entitled "God, the Father of Mercy."

Previous Congresses have been held in New York, New Jersey and Boston. This was the second time the gathering was in Miami. Speakers included: Fr. Gaëtan Boursiquot, the spiritual director of the Renewal in Haiti; Mrs. Evelyne Olivier, a former member of the Service Committee of Haiti; and Msgr. Joseph Malagrecia, the Moderator of the Haitian Council in the US. Bishop Serge Miot, Archbishop of Port-au-Prince, celebrated the closing Mass and gave the closing homily.

This Congress attracted the largest number of people ever; over 3,300 gathered for the event. One of the highlights was the procession with the Blessed Sacrament in the streets of Miami, with the final benediction given in the plaza. This segment attracted live tele-

vision broadcast and was shown on the Miami news that very night.

Another beautiful element of the Congress was the dramatization presented by the youth group of *Communauté Nouvelle* from the parish of St. James in Miami. This group of Haitian youth portrayed for the entire Congress three different Bible stories: Creation and Fall; Calvary to Pentecost; and the Prodigal Son.

The enthusiasm engendered by the Congress is still high, and we are all looking forward to the 9th Congress, scheduled to be held in New York on July 28-30, 2000: "The Word Became Flesh."

## First National Hispanic Conference held

Hispanic Charismatics hold many diocesan and regional conferences in the United States, some of which attract large numbers. But this year, for the first time a National Conference, sponsored by the Hispanic National

Service Committee and supported by Hispanics all over the country, was held in Miami from October 1-3. The theme of the Conference was "Abba Father."

Speakers included Fr. Ricardo Castellanos, pastor of San Isidro in Pampano Beach, and the founder of the international ministry *Verbo y Vida*. Marilyn Kramar, founder of *CharisMissions*, also spoke. *CharisMissions* is an evangelistic Catholic outreach to Hispanics, centered in Los Angeles. Msgr. Joseph Malagrecia, the Spiritual Director of the Hispanic National Service Committee, was a speaker, and led the evening healing service. Fr. Lucas Casaert, a Belgian missionary working for many years in Bolivia, was a speaker and celebrated Saturday's Mass. Bishop Gilberto Fernández, Auxiliary Bishop of Miami, celebrated the closing Mass.

Over 2,300 people attended the Conference. On Saturday, the Youth National Committee hosted a session which attracted over 200 Hispanic youth. The great success of this national endeavor means that the Hispanic National Service Committee wants to do it again. Plans are being made for 2001. ♦