

From the Editor

Introducing the Jubilee Year

The Year of Grace 1997, the first year of proximate preparation for the "Great Jubilee" has just dawned. Leaving aside the historical accuracy about the exact date of the greatest of the cosmic events, the enfleshment of Jesus Christ on this earth, on the basis of the calendar in use among us for centuries, the year 2000 rings in the Third Millennium, the "*Great Jubilee*".

There are two not-enviable groups vying with each other to profit by this unique event: *The secular group*: the media-folk and the marketing magnates who would like "to celebrate" this mega-event by building up tower-blocks in the sky and flying round the world with a champagne binge on Concorde etc; and *the religious group*: the millenarists, the Catholic Visionaries, fundamentalist protestant groups as well as deviant sectarian movements who are whipping up the frenzy of credulous faithful by reviving the aberrations of a thousand years ago, the millenarist interpretation of Rev 20:2 of a "Thousand-Year-Reign-of-Christ-on-Earth"!

When secular society could take over an event in which it has no real interest, with so much zest and enthusiasm and if religious fundamentalists and fanatics parade about with wild predictions of a weird nature about the fast approaching end-time, we Christians of good will have as much right and duty to make use of this time to help renew the face of the earth and in the words of Dom Helder Camara, "take up the challenge to do something about the miserable balance-sheet of the first 2000 years of Christianity, as a consequence of Christian weakness".

It is with this intention that the Pope invites all the faithful through his apostolic letter "*Tertio Millenio Adve-*

niente" to a biblical "*metanoia*" which involves "a turning from" ("*apo ton*") and "a turning to" ("*pros ton*"). It is a call to awake from our "Christian weakness" and repent of the wrongs of the past and at the same time a challenge to work toward and bring about radical changes in the Church, the Society and the World.

The concept of the Jubilee year, "the acceptable year of the Lord" (Lk 4:16-20; Is 61:1-2) cannot but be understood except in terms first of the '*Yom Kippur*', the annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16:1-22). The fact that Lev 25 which prescribes the Jubilee Year as part of the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) separating Israel as a people belonging to Yahweh is preceded by the liturgy of the Day of Atonement (Lev 16), the "*Great Jubilee*" of the Year 2000, must be clearly marked by a conscious return, the "at-one-ment", of all Christians with the Lord and with the Community. As on the day of "*Yom Kippur*" all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions, all their sins" (Lev 16:21-22) are identified and confessed before the inauguration of a Jubilee year, so too the preparation for the "*Great Jubilee*" must be signaled by penance and reconciliation (TMA. 32-33); not merely on a personal and individual level but from the point of view also of the widespread social and structural evils which are corroding the fabric of a just and humane society. This is the real significance of the Atonement ritual for us today.

But once this negative but necessary preparatory phase as outlined in Lev 16 is over, Lev 25 takes us on to the celebration of holy years once every seven years (25:1-7) and jubilee years, every fifty years (25:8), during which there should be restoration of the land, rest for the cattle, liberty for the people, freedom for the slaves, remission of all debts because "*I brought you forth out of the land of Egypt; for I am the Lord your God*" (25:17, 38, 55).

Both the holy years (the 7th and the 50th) were instituted to bring about a new social order as well as to create an egalitarian society based on and rooted in justice - "a new heaven and a new earth" (Is 65:17-23).

This is exactly what Jesus was demanding from his audience at the synagogue of Nazareth by proclaiming through his presence "the acceptable year of the Lord". In him all the holy years and the Jubilee years were ushered in as he went about "proclaiming release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, setting at liberty those who are oppressed" (Lk 4:18-19).

In this Year of Grace 1997, which the Pope has dedicated to "Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8) and who is at the same time the Saviour of the World, we must try to follow the "*magna carta*" chartered out by Jesus for establishing "the Just Jubilee". If we want this "Just 2000 Vision" become a reality, let us first be aware of "the miserable balance sheet of the first 2000 years" and work earnestly for establishing a counter-culture with constant vigilance both on the hype and the glamour of the media culture and the blatant escapism of the religious sects from the harsh realities of the world.

In this first preparatory year for the millennium let the readers of Vaiharai heed to the invitation of the Pope and "go forth to Jesus outside the camp" (Heb 13:13), and make a New Covenant with the poor and "with every living creature upon the earth" (Gen 9:8-17) so that we will be able to greet with open arms the Alpha and the Omega of all the Jubilees - Jesus the Emmanuel.

Introducing the Issue

The article "Dialogal Mission" by Fr. Paul Dominic, S. J. (Satyodayam, 12-5-33 S. Lallaguda, Secunderabad-500 017) part of a bigger manuscript "God of Mission"

soon to be published sees dialogue and conversion not as opposite poles, but on the basis of biblical and secular models, as head-level argumentation and exposition yielding to and merging into the heart-level communion in the Spirit which is authentic conversion or discipleship of Christ.

Dr. Peter A. Abir (Director of St. Paul's Bible Institute, Poonamalee, Madras 600 056) argues convincingly in his article on "The Blasphemous Triad in the Book of Revelation" that the Dragon and the two Beasts that appear in the Book of Revelation are contrast-forces against the Triune God. These anti-God forces, the author concludes, are very much alive in contemporary Indian society in the form of castism, communalism, religious fundamentalism etc.

In his scholarly article "God as Mother in the O.T. and Thiruvagam" Fr. A. Theresanton S.D.B., a M.Th. student (St. Paul's Seminary, P.B. 36, Trichy 620 001) ably demonstrates that both Yahwism and Saivism are at one in painting God as a tender, compassionate and caring mother. The concept of "Arthanariswara" is something which the author will endorse as giving new vitality and intimacy to our prayers and fulfilling the deeper aspirations of all humanity.

The editor and his team of collaborators wish each of you a purposeful 1997.

R. J. Raja, S.J.