

Pope John Paul II has announced a “Year of the Eucharist” to begin in October.

A special year devoted to the Eucharist “is part of the pastoral plan to which I referred in my Apostolic Letter, “Novo Millennio Ineunte,” the Pope said on June 13 in St. Peter’s Square, “when I invited the faithful to ‘walk with Christ.’”

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On the solemnity of Corpus Christi, which the Holy Father celebrated in St. John Lateran on June 10, he announced that a Eucharistic Year is to begin in October 2004.

Commenting on the words of St. Paul to the Corinthians—“whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes”—John Paul said that whoever takes part in the supper of the Lord “is united to the mystery of his death; even more, he becomes the Lord’s ‘herald.’ There is, then, an intimate relationship between ‘celebrating the Eucharist’ and announcing Christ. To enter into communion with Him in the Paschal memorial means becoming a missionary of the event which makes that rite present to us. In a certain sense, it means becoming contemporary with every epoch until the Lord returns.

“Ever since Pentecost, when the People of the New Covenant ‘began their pilgrimage toward the heavenly homeland, this divine Sacrament has marked their days, filling them with trusting hope.’ With precisely this in mind, I wished to devote to the Eucharist my first encyclical of the new millennium, and I am happy to announce now a special ‘Year of the Eucharist.’

“It will begin with a World Eucharistic Congress October 10 to 17 in Guadalajara, Mexico, and will end in the Vatican at the next Ordinary Synod of Bishops October 2 to 29, 2005 on ‘The Eucharist as Source and Summit of the Life and Mission of the Church.’ By means of the Eucharist, the ecclesial community is built up as a New Jerusalem, the principle of unity in Christ among the different persons and peoples.

“Christ, ‘the living Bread that has come down from heaven’ is the only one who can satisfy the hunger of mankind in every time and place on earth. But He does not wish to do that in the same way He multiplied the loaves with the help of the disciples.... That prodigious miracle is but an image of the much greater mystery of love that is renewed daily in the Holy Mass. Through his ordained ministers, Christ surrenders his Body and Blood for the life of mankind. And all who worthily nourish themselves at this table become living instruments of his presence in love, mercy, and peace.”

After the Corpus Christi Mass, the Holy Father led the Eucharistic procession along the Via Merulana from the Basilica of St. John to St. Mary Major. Thousands of persons accompanied the Blessed Sacrament,

which was carried in a covered vehicle along with the Pope.

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