



Keep alive the seeds of the Great Jubilee

January 5, 2001
Colorado

These post-communion comments were offered at the conclusion of the 5:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 5, 2001, Mass at Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. The Mass ended the Great Jubilee Year in the Archdiocese of Denver.

A reporter asked me a few weeks ago whether I thought the Great Jubilee had been a success.

Whenever someone asks that kind of question, Americans are tempted to begin reciting statistics. It's a national reflex.

So I could have told him that 2,500 of our young people went to Rome for World Youth Day; or that 5,000 of our people attended our Jubilee eucharistic congress; or that 1,200 took part in our Pentecost 2000 celebration; or that 2,000 converts entered the Church this past Easter Vigil; or that I wrote two pastoral letters, gave nine Jubilee Lectures and our priests and deacons preached hundreds of homilies on the Jubilee.

I could have said that we have a new theological institute and our seminaries are growing; or that tens of thousands of you did pilgrimages here within the archdiocese to seek the Jubilee indulgence; or that we reached out and deepened our friendship with the Jewish community, and our brothers and sisters in the Greek Orthodox Church; or that individual parishes and Catholic organizations honored the Jubilee in hundreds of different ways.

I could have said all of that and more — and it would have been true. But I didn't say any of it, *because the numbers aren't finally important.*

Questions about the "success" of the Jubilee are good, and they make sense. But they're also, in an important way, incomplete and premature. Was the Jubilee Year a success? I believe it was enormously successful, both here in northern Colorado and around the world. But I don't think we gain anything in trying to measure it by the standards of the world.

Six months, 12 months, even 18 months after World Youth Day 1993, some people here in Denver were still trying to track the data on things like increased Mass attendance, numbers of conversions and youth ministry growth, in order to correlate that mathematically with the event that had happened. Of course, they couldn't do it, at least not in any conclusive way.

But seven years later, I think most of us here tonight would agree that the Church in northern Colorado is stronger, healthier and more evangelical than at any time in the recent past — *exactly because* World Youth Day had a transfiguring effect. World Youth Day changed the way the Church perceived herself and her surroundings. And that gradually changed the way she approached her mission. Today, nearly everybody arriving here from the outside notices it.

That's how we need to understand the Jubilee Year. We need to remember that *immediate* results, even when they're good, are the least important fruit. How could anyone hope to measure the "success" of the cross in statistics? Or the first Pentecost, or the conversion of Paul, or World Youth Day or the Jubilee? None of these things can be seen for what they really are in the short run — just as our redemption was once no more than the word "yes" in the mouth of young Jewish girl 2,000 years ago.

But in the long run, these things make a huge difference. They make all the difference in the world. That's the only way to judge the Great Jubilee. In eight or 10 years — that's when the real seeds will start to show. Our job, beginning tonight, is to keep the Jubilee alive in our hearts and our actions each day. And if we do, God in His own good time will bring the Jubilee Year to fruition in the lives of our Church and our families. So let's join with Mary, the mother of our Savior and *our* mother, in giving grateful thanks in song.