

Beginning the year of Mary

JUNE 7, 1987 -

August 15, 1988

John Paul turns the Christian world

toward the mother of Jesus.

VATICAN CITY — On the evening of June 6, Pope John Paul II will pray the rosary in the oldest basilica dedicated to the Virgin Mary, Rome's enormous Santa Maria Maggiore.

A world television hook-up via satellite with Marian shrines on every continent will beam him to an estimated 1 billion viewers.

In this massive display of modern technology and traditional Catholic devotion, the Pope will usher in the second Marian year in the history of the Church, to run from June 7 (Pentecost) to Aug. 15, 1988 (Solemnity of the Assumption).

The Marian Year "is not a Holy Year or a Jubilee."

Rather, "it is a year intended to increase and make more profound the knowledge of Mary's role in the history of salvation."

The year 2000, the 2,000th anniversary of Jesus' birth, for which the Marian Year is intended as a preparation, is an epochal year which seems to increasingly occupy this Pope's thinking.

An ancient Church tradition relates that Mary was 14 years old when she gave birth to Jesus, so 1987, the 14th year before the year 2000, seems to correspond to this belief.

But the year 1987-88 was not chosen for the Marian year to parallel Mary's birth, since the date of Mary's birth is unknown, but simply as a year prior to the year 2000, as Mary was, in history, prior to Jesus,

The Marian Year is intended to remind Catholics of the profound riches of their faith with regard to Mary, and to prepare Catholics to move toward the third millennium of Christianity with the openness to God's will which Mary herself exhibited,