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## EDITORIAL

### **Indigenization: A fad or a need?**

Hardly any theologico-pastoral discussion in the Philippines today escapes from the influence of the movement for "indigenization". When our Bishops met in Baguio for their semi-annual conference in July, they discussed Filipino values in view of their desire to have a norm for preserving and enhancing indigenized pastoral and religious practices of the Catholic Church. When controversy on the Cursillo movement was at its height, there were suggestions that the Cursillo be indigenized. When the Inter-Faith Theology Circle held a colloquium, a speaker dealt with the indigenization of the judeo-christian tradition.

Most persistently, indigenization is pursued by groups seeking a more meaningful liturgy. This was shown when, just a few weeks ago, the Maryhill School of Theology called for a Consultation on the "Misa ng Bayang Pilipino" composed by Rev. Anscar J. Chupungco, O.S.B., and his students and friends. People came from far and near to contribute their bit of insight. Priests, nuns and lay people engaged in lively discussions on the merits and flaws of the proposed indigenized Mass.

In spite of the growing strength of the indigenization movement, we may ask: is there really a need for indigenization? Theoretically, yes. The documents of the Second Vatican Council and of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences say so. But in practice, does it respond to a widely felt aspiration of our people? Sad to say, it does not, at present. Right now, the movement for indigenization is more of a fad than a response to a felt need.

We are not against indigenization. Precisely because we are for it, we point out that groundwork is necessary for it to succeed. We, as a people, must first regain our very own perspective on life — for our present perspective, we must admit, has been heightened by foreign influences, but also narrowed by the disregard of what is innermost in the filipino soul. We must rediscover our traditional cultural values and hold these aloft.

Only when we make progress in the discovery or rediscovery of our identity as a people shall the indigenization of the Christian religion become less and less a fad and more and more a felt need.

# APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION

## CONSTANS NOBIS STUDIUM

whereby the Sacred Congregations for the Discipline of the Sacraments and for Divine Worship are suppressed and the new Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and for Divine Worship is erected.

PAULUS PP. VI

Servant of the Servants of God  
for perpetual memory

It has been our constant care and assiduous solicitude, especially in these years following the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, to ensure that the Departments of the Roman Curia, through which we provide for the well-being and development of the universal Church, should remain effective instruments in the carrying out of the important tasks demanded of them, and that they should therefore respond in an ever better manner to the increasing exigencies of pastoral activity. This gave rise, in the first place, to the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae*, whereby following the indications of the Council<sup>1</sup>, we laid down a new and fuller general arrangement of the Sacred Congregations, Tribunals, Offices, Secretariats and other Departments of the Curia<sup>2</sup>, an arrangement which, moreover, in its prudent transformation of the previous forms or structures, was not such as to preclude either the possibility or the manner of introducing other forms, or of abolishing certain of them, as circumstances might suggest.

We do not consider it necessary at this time to recall those dispositions, which were established at various times and promulgated in the normal manner<sup>3</sup>. What should be noted, rather, is the fact that in the numerous

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Decree on the pastoral office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 9: AAS 58 (1966), pp. 676-677.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae*: AAS 59 (1967), pp. 885-928.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Sacra Rituum Congregatio*, whereby the Sacred Congregation of Rites was divided into two Congregations: AAS 61 (1969), pp. 297-305; Apostolic Letter in the form of a *Motu Proprio Apostolicae Caritatis*, whereby the Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral

modifications which have been made up to the present time in ecclesiastical government there is evident, on the one hand, the very rapid development of modern society, while on the other hand there appears clearly the great solicitude of the Church herself, which, availing herself opportunely of the appropriate instruments, strives to discern in the phenomenon just mentioned a sign of the times, in order fittingly to carry out the mission entrusted to her by her divine Founder. What impels us is precisely the intention that the above-mentioned structures should serve all the members of the People of God: for their nature consists precisely in a service.

The experience gained from 1969 until today — that is to say, from the time when we instituted the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship<sup>4</sup> — has shown that the relations between that Congregation and the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments are so close and convergent as to give rise to the idea, and then to bring to maturity the conviction, that it is in practice useful, indeed necessary, to entrust the matters dealt with by the two Congregations to a single new organism. In fact, it is a question, in a certain sense, of one single theological reality, in which the aspect of liturgy, worship and pastoral activity is inseparably joined to the juridical and disciplinary aspect. In consequence, it is our conviction that a unified ordering of the material hitherto within the competence of the two Departments will favour even more the liturgical reform which was wisely desired by the Council and which is already far advanced, and the orderly execution of such an important undertaking, to which we still feel constantly committed, and thanks to which such great and abundant fruits of religious life have already been produced in the midst of the People of God.

Therefore, having diligently considered the entire question and having heard the opinions of authoritative and expert persons, and in consideration — as said above — of the opportuneness of uniting in one organic whole the competence relative both to the discipline of the sacraments

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Care of Migrants and Tourists was set up: AAS 62 (1970), pp. 193-197; Letter to Cardinal Jean Villot, *Amoris Officio*, whereby the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum" was founded: AAS 63 (1971), pp. 669-673; Apostolic Letter in the form of a *Motu Proprio Quo Aptius*, whereby the tasks of the Apostolic Chancery were transferred to the Secretariat of State: AAS 65 (1973), pp. 113-116.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Sacra Rituum Congregatio*: AAS 61 (1969), pp. 297-305.

and to divine worship, we have decided to replace the two already existing Congregations with a new one.

For this purpose we lay down the following:

- 1) The Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship cease to exist in their present form.
- 2) A new Sacred Congregation is instituted, called "The Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship".
- 3) The new Sacred Congregation which is presided over by the Cardinal Prefect, assisted by the Secretary, is divided into two sections, one for the discipline of the Sacraments and the other for divine worship. An Under-Secretary is assigned to each section.
- 4) To the first section is assigned the competence which previously belonged to the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, as laid down in the Apostolic Constitution **Regimini Ecclesiae**, 54-57<sup>5</sup>; to the second section is assigned the competence which previously belonged to the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, as laid down in the Apostolic Constitution **Sacra Rituum Congregatio**, 1-4<sup>6</sup>.
- 5) The dispositions contained in the present Apostolic Constitution will come into force on the first day of the coming month of August.

We desire therefore that what we have laid down and ordered should have full and permanent value, any contrary Constitution or Apostolic Order whatsoever, issued by ourself and by our Predecessors, and any other prescription, even if worthy of most special mention, notwithstanding.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the eleventh day of July in the year 1975, the thirteenth of our Pontificate.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. AAS 59 (1967), pp. 903-904.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. AAS 61 (1969), pp. 299-301.

## SUMMARY OF "CONSTANS NOBIS STUDIUM"

The institution of the new Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, in place of the Congregations for the Discipline of the Sacraments and for Divine Worship, is inspired, as the Holy Father affirms in the Apostolic Constitution *Constans Nobis Studium*, by the desire to make the task of an important part of the Roman Curia more efficient and more adequate for the service of the Universal Church. The same reasons which led to the institution in 1964 of the *Consilium* for the application of the Conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and in 1969, of the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, have now suggested the formation of a new single department which will have the task of dealing in a co-ordinated manner with the very wide ranging liturgical-sacramental material.

In fact, the experience of the last few years has shown ever more clearly the close relationship and often the common aspects of the material hitherto dealt with by the two departments which have existed up to now. They were the expression of a single theological reality. It has therefore seemed necessary to entrust their competence to a single department, with the intention also of giving to its activity a form which would be better able to respond to the pastoral exigencies of today.

With this decision it is intended to create an instrument even more able to bring to completion the liturgical reform put forward by the Second Vatican Council, and to facilitate its salutary application.

Equally it is desired to ensure, through a more organic form of work, that the method also of treating the disciplinary aspects of sacramental realities should ever more manifestly adhere to the criteria emphasized by the same Second Vatican Council, which presented the Liturgy as "the culmination and the fount of the Church's life," and which also recalled that by means of the Liturgy, especially in the Divine Sacrifice of the Eucharist "the work of our Redemption is exercised."

The Apostolic Constitution then makes clear, in the dispositive part, that the new Congregation will be divided into two sections, one for the Sacraments and one for Divine Worship, each with its own undersecretary and possessing respectively the competences which formerly belonged to the Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. However, it will not be a case of simply adding together of competences, since, in addition to having a new form, the Congregation will also have a different structure, which will be defined by internal regulations.

## SECRETARIAT FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY

# ECUMENICAL COLLABORATION AT THE REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

### INTRODUCTION

The representatives of Ecumenical Commissions meeting in Rome in November, 1972, stated in their conclusion: "It is at the level of the local Church that the spirit of ecumenism must find a concrete expression".<sup>1</sup> The present document aims at being in part a response to the expressed need of many Catholics working on local ecumenical commissions.

The first draft was prepared by a small working group of consultants and staff of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in June, 1971. It was then sent to all members and a number of consultants as part of the preliminary documentation for the forthcoming Plenary. The Plenary was held in February, 1972 and the draft document was discussed both in groups and in plenary session. Substantial approval was given, subject to important suggestions for re-writing several parts of it.

Meanwhile a study of forms of ecumenical collaboration on regional, national and local levels had been going on between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches under the aegis of the Joint Working Group. This was the occasion for the production of two studies, one on a factual basis by Reverend Victor Hayward of the World Council of Churches Secretariat for Relations with Christian Councils and Reverend Basil Meeking of the staff of our Secretariat, and the other prepared by small groups at the request of the Joint Working Group and composed of people named by the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. While the former document was published along with a number of other articles on councils of churches, the latter was not, but was made available to the Secretariat by the Joint Working Group in its 1972 meeting as a contribution to the present document. We acknowledge with gratitude this generous gesture. It has contributed greatly to the value of our document.

Again in November 1972 and in April 1973 a small group of members, consultants and staff, using this new documentation, worked on the draft

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<sup>1</sup> *Information Service* 20 (1973), p. 16.

according to the instruction of the 1972 Plenary, preparing the version which was presented finally at the Plenary in November, 1973. Here it was given unanimous approval subject to several improvements both in content and form. These changes as well as some suggestions coming from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith were incorporated into the final text.

The status of the document was clearly described in the 1972 Plenary. It is not a set of directives or prescriptions endowed with authority in the juridical sense of the word. Rather it is a document that gives the kind of information which can help bishops in a certain place decide about the form to be given to the local ecumenical collaboration. But its purpose is to do more than give information. It sets out orientations which do not have the force of law but which have the weight of the experience and insights of the Secretariat.

It should also be clear that an amount of what the document contains does have the force of law when this is taken from sources of the Church's teaching and discipline such as the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the official decisions and directives of the Holy See.

With this status the document is now published. In addition to the approval of the Plenary, the Cardinal President has brought it to the notice of the Holy Father who approved of it being sent to all episcopal conferences as an aid to them in carrying out their ecumenical responsibilities. It is as such an instrument that the document must be understood and this defines both its scope and its limits.

The ecumenical dimension is a prime aspect of the life of the Catholic Church on the universal and on the local level. Catholic principles on ecumenism have been given in the conciliar Decree on Ecumenism. They maintain that ecumenical initiatives must be adapted to local needs, that the local church itself has a real and indispensable contribution to make, while always insisting that every local initiative be taken always in harmony with the bonds of communion in faith and discipline which link the Catholic Church. All of this the present document sets forth clearly.

At the same time it is not all-inclusive, nor does it aim to be so. At their meeting in 1972 the representatives of the Ecumenical Commissions raised many questions about local ecumenism. We believe our document responds to some, chiefly those touching on organised ecumenical work and its national and diocesan structures.



The Second Vatican Council stresses the responsibility of the bishops in this field. "This Sacred Synod . . . commends this work to bishops everywhere in the world for their skillful promotion and prudent guidance".<sup>2</sup> To this end the efforts of pastors and laity must be directed.

The Pope has proposed the theme of spiritual renewal and reconciliation with God and among Christians as one of the principal goals of the Holy Year. We trust that this present document may be a contribution to the realization of this deeply ecumenical perspective.

Rome, February 22, 1975.

JOHN CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS  
President  
of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity

CHARLES MOELLER  
Secretary

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<sup>2</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio* 4.

## 1.

## THE ECUMENICAL TASK

In November, 1972, addressing representatives of National Ecumenical Commissions, Pope Paul VI described the primary mission of the Church as being to call men to enter into communion with God, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, and then to help them to live in this communion which saves them and establishes among them a unity as deep and mysterious as the unity of the Father and the Son.<sup>1</sup>

On another occasion, in October 1967, the Holy Father in an allocution to Patriarch Athenagoras, noted that while this unity is to be a sign in the world calling forth faith, present day unbelief too can act like a summons to the churches and ecclesial communities awakening in them an urgent awareness of the need for unity and calling them to act together. "This common witness", said the Holy Father, "one yet varied, decided and persuasive, of a faith humbly self-confident, springing up in love and radiating hope, is without doubt the foremost demand that the Spirit makes of the churches today".<sup>2</sup>

The pre-condition of this ecumenical movement is a renewal in the Church, according to the spirit of the truth and holiness of Jesus Christ, a renewal which must touch every member of the Church and be attested to by the quality of their lives.<sup>3</sup>

As the call of the Holy Spirit to unity through renewal is heard and answered by the Christian communities, the volume of study and joint action grows apace, so that one may speak of the pressure of the ecumenical movement which more and more compels Christians to dialogue, common prayer, practical collaboration and common witness.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Allocutio* ad delegatos commissionum "pro oecumenismo" Conferentiarum Episcopaliū et Catholicorum Orientalium Patriarchatum Synodorum partem agentes: AAS 64 (1972), p. 761; cf. also *Information Service* 20 (1973), p. 23 (published by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity).

<sup>2</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Allocutio* ad Sanctitatem Suam Athenagoram, Patriarcham Oecumenicum, in Vaticana Basilica habita: AAS 59 (1967), p. 1051; cf. also *Information Service* 3 (1967), p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ecumenical Directory I, *Ad totam Ecclesiam*, Pars Prima, § 2: AAS 59 (1967), p. 575; cf. also *Information Service* 2 (1967), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Here we would make our own the clarification given in the Third Official Report of the Joint Working Group between the World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic Church, Appendix II, *Common Witness and Proselytism*, in *Information Service* 14 (1971), p. 19: "Modern languages use several biblically derived terms which denote particular aspects of the announcements of the Gospel in word and deed: Witness, Apostolate, Mission, Confession, Evangelism, Kerygma, Message, etc. We have preferred here to adopt 'Witness' because it expresses more comprehensively the realities we are treating".

Worthy of note is section 10 of the *Declaration of the Synodal Fathers*

The cooperation between churches and ecclesial communities has mission and unity as its aim, not least when it is concerned with social and allied questions. For all Christian communities recognize the proclamation of the Gospel to the world, in deed as well as in word, as their first duty.<sup>5</sup>

The ecumenical movement is a movement of the Spirit wider than any of the particular initiatives through which it is manifested. This ecumenical impulse, which for the Catholic Church is necessarily guided by the principles set forth in the Decree on Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Directory, seeks a great variety of expressions and structural forms and the purpose of this document is to look at some of the more prominent of these. As the Catholic Church in each country becomes more aware of the manifestations of ecumenism in various parts of the world, it has to avoid both isolationism and slavish imitation of other places. Ecumenical initiatives must be adapted to local needs and will therefore differ from region to region, while always remaining in harmony with the bonds of Catholic communion. Further, the quest for a structural local unity is a challenge, but so equally is that for a qualitative unity in the confession of a sound and complete faith. Ecumenical initiatives should be true expression of the life of the local church, and not simply the work of individuals. They should therefore be carried on under the guidance of the bishop and in close association with the ecumenical commission of the diocese or of the episcopal conference. It is important that ecumenical commissions should consider such local initiatives with discernment and sympathy and where appropriate offer encouragement and support. Ecumenism is an integral part of the renewal of the Church<sup>6</sup> and its promotion should be the constant concern of the local church.

A difficulty is created if ecumenical initiatives are left solely to unofficial groups.<sup>7</sup> Then there is an imbalance in which the full ecumenical responsibility will not be adequately and prudently met. Such difficulties will best be avoided if there is an obvious and sincere commitment to ecumenism by the local church.

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(October 26th, 1974): "In carrying out these things we intend to collaborate more diligently with those of our Christian brothers with whom we are not yet in the union of a perfect communion, basing ourselves on the foundation of Baptism and on the patrimony which we hold in common. Thus we can henceforth render to the world a much broader common witness to Christ, while at the same time working to obtain full union in the Lord. Christ's command impels us to do so; the work of preaching and rendering witness to the Gospel demands it" (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition, Nov. 7, 1974, p. 3).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Common Witness and Proselytism*, A Study Document, in *Information Service* 14 (1971), pp. 18-23.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Section 7 of this document: "Other forms of ecumenism", p. 29.

## 2.

**THE CATHOLIC UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL CHURCH<sup>8</sup>  
AND ITS RELATION TO THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT**

Ecumenism on the local level is a primary element of the ecumenical situation as a whole. It is not secondary nor merely derivative. It faces specific needs and situations and has its own resources. It has an initiative of its own and its task is a wider one than merely implementing world-wide ecumenical directives on a small scale.<sup>9</sup>

Not only do the local churches direct and assume responsibility for the work of local ecumenism in communion with the Holy See but in the local churches the mysteries of ecclesial communion (baptism, faith in Christ, the proclamation of the Gospel, etc.) are celebrated and thus constantly renewed, and they are the basis of ecumenical collaboration. This collaboration is served by a number of organized bodies some of which will be mentioned later. It must also be borne in mind that at the present time a good number of Christians prefer to work locally in "informal" groups of a more spontaneous nature than in institutional or "formal" groups.

The importance of local ecumenism derives from the significance of local churches in the Catholic Church as set forth in Vatican Council II:

"A diocese is part of the People of God entrusted to a Bishop, to be cared for with the cooperation of his priests, so that in close union with its pastor, and by him gathered together in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes a particular Church, in which is truly present and operative the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ" (*Christus Dominus*, 11).

The same Council taught:

"Individual bishops are the visible, fundamental principle of unity in their particular churches. These churches are moulded to the likeness of the universal Church; in them, and of them, consists the one, sole Catholic Church. For this reason individual bishops represent their own church;

<sup>8</sup> In n. 11 of *Christus Dominus* (cited p. 6), the "particular church" is defined very clearly and is identified with the diocese. The expression "local church" in this document is understood in a broader sense. In the first place it is what is called in the above mentioned text: "the particular church". It is the church also in territories where bishops have formed episcopal conferences or synods (cf. p. 7). Further it exists in all those legitimate gatherings of the faithful under the direction of their pastors in communion with their bishop which we call "the parish" (cf. *Sacro-sanctum Concilium*, 42). The expression "local church" is more all-embracing and more easily grasped than "particular church".

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger "Ecumenism at the local level", in *Information Service* 20 (1973), p. 4, § 1.

all, together with the Pope, represent the whole Church linked by peace, love and unity" (*Lumen Gentium*, 23).

It further stated:

"This Church of Christ is truly present in all lawful, local congregations of the faithful. These congregations, in attachment to their pastors, themselves have the name of churches in the New Testament. They are, for their own locality, the new people called by God, in the Holy Spirit and in great fullness (cf. 1 Thess. 1:5). In these churches the faithful are gathered together by the preaching of Christ's gospel; in them, the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated 'so that the whole brotherhood is linked by the flesh and blood of the Lord's body'" (*ibid.*, 26).

Where the people of God, linked in belief and love with their bishop gather to manifest the unity of lived and proclaimed faith, an irreplaceable sacramental expression is given to the living unity of the Catholic Church.<sup>11</sup>

From this Catholic perspective ecumenical responsibilities of the local church emerge clearly. It is through the local church that the Catholic Church is present with many other Christian churches and communities in the same localities and in wider regions such as the territory of an episcopal conference or of an eastern synod. These regions have their distinctive spiritual, ethical, political and cultural characteristics. Within these regions the other Christian churches and ecclesial communities often have the highest level of their churchly authority whereby they make those decisions which direct their life and shape their future. Therefore, the local church or several local churches in the territory of an episcopal conference or a synod can be in a very favourable position to make contact and established fraternal relations with other Christian churches and communities at these levels.

Through contacts at this point, the other Christian churches and communities may be afforded a fuller understanding of the dynamic of Catholic life as the local church makes it present both in its particularity and in its concrete universality. With the awareness that in a given place it is the vehicle of the presence and action of the Catholic Church, which is fundamentally one, the local church will be ready to take care that its free initiatives do not go beyond its competence and are always undertaken within the limits of the doctrine and the discipline of the whole Catholic Church, particularly as this touches the sacraments. This discipline is a safeguard of the unity of faith. In this way the bonds of fraternal communion with other local churches will be manifested and the role of the Church of Rome serving the unity of all will be evident.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Pope Paul VI: *Allocutio* referred to in Note 1.

Thus by reason of their Catholic communion the local churches can enrich the ecumenical movement in many localities, and the local church in one region by its activity may generate an impulse that will stimulate further ecumenical developments elsewhere. Through their communion each local church may also gain ecumenical insights which would not spontaneously arise out of its particular or local situations. And in the face of new and serious ecumenical needs, the local church will rightly call upon the resources and experiences of other churches of its communion to help meet these needs and judge the possibilities. Here the work of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity in stimulating an exchange of insights between the local churches may be of special value.

### 3.

#### VARIOUS FORMS OF LOCAL ECUMENISM

In addition to the sacramental expression of the unity of the Catholic Church given in the local church, the real but still imperfect communion between Christian churches and ecclesial communities find expression in a number of forms of ecumenical action and in certain joint organizations. In this section an attempt is made by way of illustration, to describe some of these areas and forms of local ecumenical action.<sup>11</sup> They are not suggested as being normative, for the initiatives described remain always subjected to the pastoral authority of the diocesan bishop or the episcopal conference. The account given here is clearly not exhaustive but provides a context for later sections of this document. It has to be kept in mind that while these fields of action offer many opportunities of ecumenical collaboration, they also entail problems and difficulties which have to be solved in light of Catholic principles of ecumenism.

##### a) *Sharing in Prayer and Worship*

At the level of the local churches there are many occasions for seeking the gifts of the Holy Spirit and that "change of heart and holiness of life which, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians,

<sup>11</sup> In 1973, the Joint Working Group between the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches commissioned a survey on the problems facing the various churches and ecclesial communities as they carry out their mission and an examination of the consequences for the ecumenical situation. Over twenty countries participated in the survey. The results have been published in the review *One in Christ* XI (1975), N. 1, pp. 30-88, and it is hoped will be published in French and German reviews during the year. In addition to an extensive reflection on the outcome of the survey, the publication includes appendices describing the situation in several countries.

would be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement".<sup>12</sup> Many forms of this "spiritual ecumenism" are emerging today in prayer groups in which members of various confessions assemble.

The Ecumenical Directory expressed the hope that "Catholics and their other brethren will join in prayer for any common concern in which they can and should cooperate — e.g., peace, social justice, mutual charity among men, the dignity of the family and so on. The same may be said of occasions when according to circumstances a nation or community wishes to make a common act of thanksgiving or petition to God, as on a national feast day, at a time of public disaster or mourning, on a day set aside for remembrance of those who have died for their country. This kind of prayer is also recommended as far as possible at times when Christians hold meetings for study or common action".<sup>13</sup>

The Prayer for Unity, as observed either in January or in the week preceeding Pentecost, is widespread and continues to be in most places the chief occasion on which Catholics and other Christians pray together. It is promoted by special committees set up for the purpose by ministers' fraternals or associations and very often by councils of churches.

In certain places some of the great festivals of the liturgical year are marked by joint celebrations in order to express the common joy of Christians in the central events of their faith.

On the Catholic side, participation in sacramental worship is regulated by the Decree on Ecumenism (N. 8), the Directory I (42-44. 55), the 1972 Instruction and the Note issued in 1973.<sup>14</sup>

Both participation in common worship and an exact observance of the present canonical limits are a feature of normal Catholic ecumenical activity.

#### b) Common Bible Work

In 1968, "Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation"<sup>15</sup> were co-published by the United Bible Societies and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and there is official Catholic collaboration in 133 Bible translation projects in various places in accordance with these norms.

<sup>12</sup> *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Ecumenical Directory*, 33.

<sup>14</sup> *Instructio de peculiaribus casibus admittendi alios christianos ad communionem eucharisticam in Ecclesia Catholica*: AAS 64 (1972), pp. 518-525; cf. also *Information Service* 18 (1972), pp. 3-6. *Communicatio quoad interpretationem Instructionis de peculiaribus casibus admittendi alios Christianos ad communionem eucharisticam in Ecclesia Catholica*: AAS 65 (1973), pp. 616-619; cf. *Information Service* 23 (1974), pp. 25-26.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Information Service* 5 (1968), pp. 22-25.

Many of the 56 national Bible societies that make up the United Bible Societies, working in agreement with a number of episcopal conferences and diocesan bishops, have developed programmes of cooperation with Catholics in scripture distribution and promotion of Bible reading (joint national Bible Sunday, Bible Weeks, exhibitions, lectures, distribution training, seminars, etc.). In some cases Catholics have become officers of Bible Societies<sup>16</sup> or episcopal conferences have appointed official representatives to Bible Society Advisory Councils.<sup>17</sup>

Bible Societies are a meeting ground for a very wide group of Christians. Their focus is the translation and distribution of the Scripture and a great variety of Christian bodies can cooperate in this important work. Co-operation in translation, distribution and study of the Scriptures has important repercussions in missionary work, catechetics and religious education at all levels. Interconfessional cooperation in the common translation of the Scriptures has important implications for common understanding of the content of Revelation. The World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate<sup>18</sup> has come into existence to promote in each episcopal conference an organization that will help to coordinate Catholic cooperation with the Bible Societies and to give priests and people all the help they need for understanding and using the Scriptures.

### c) *Joint Pastoral Care*

Where this exists, it is organized mainly in terms of some specific situation and does not compete with parish-based pastoral work. For instance, in hospitals the chaplains often adopt an ecumenical approach both for some of their contacts with the patients and for their dealings with the hospital authorities.

In universities, industry, prisons, the armed forces, radio and television, there is increasing evidence that the work of the various churches and ecclesial communities, is coordinated and, even, in a number of places is done jointly to some degree. The rapid social and economic change characteristic of the present age, is extending the fields where such special ministries,, either on a city-wide or a geographical basis, are needed (e.g., to youth, drug addicts, etc.). In a few places,<sup>19</sup> a deliberate effort has been made to devise new pastoral approaches on an ecumenical basis in terms of sector ministries, often on a team-basis.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This is the case in Nigeria and Zaïre.

<sup>17</sup> For example U.S.A. and the Philippines.

<sup>18</sup> Silberburgstrasse 121 A, D-7000 Stuttgart 1, West Germany

<sup>19</sup> Examples are to be found in England.

<sup>20</sup> Local Guidelines are offered for Catholic participation in these in the booklet *The Sharing of Resources*, published by the Catholic Ecumenical Commission of England and Wales.



A special area both of responsibility and difficulty concerns mixed marriages. The *Motu Proprio* "**Matrimonia Mixta**" encourages a joint effort on the part of the pastors of the partners in order to assist them in the best possible way before and during the marriage.

#### d) *Shared Premises*

The rule is that Catholic churches are reserved for Catholic worship. As consecrated buildings they have an important liturgical significance. Further they have a pedagogical value for inculcating the meaning and spirit of worship. Therefore sharing them with other Christians or constructing new churches jointly with other Christians can be only by way of exception.

However, the *Ecumenical Directory* (Part I) has stated:

"If the separated brethren have no place in which to carry out their religious rites properly and with dignity, the local Ordinary may allow them the use of a Catholic buildings, semetery or church" (N. 61).

"Because sharing in sacred functions, objects and places with all the separated Eastern brethren is allowed for a reasonable cause (cf. *Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches*, N. 28), it is recommended that with the approval of the local Ordinary separated Eastern priests and communities be allowed the use of Catholic churches, buildings and cemeteries and other things necessary for their religious rites, if they ask for this, and have no place in which they can celebrate sacred functions properly and with dignity" (N. 52).

Because of developments in society, because of rapid growth in population and building, and for financial motives, where there is a good ecumenical relationship and understanding between the communities, the sharing of church premises can become a matter of practical interest. It does not seem possible to adduce any one model for this kind of sharing since it is a question of responding to a need or an emergency.<sup>21</sup>

The building of an interconfessional place of worship must be an exception and should answer real needs which cannot otherwise be met. An airport chapel or a chapel at a military camp are examples that meet this condition. An exceptional pastoral situation could also be the reason for such a building as when a government would forbid the multiplication of places of worship or in the case of the extreme poverty of a Christian community, and there the simultaneous use of a church could be allowed.

<sup>21</sup> The experience of shared premises is not yet wide but in a number of places, as in some new towns in England and in "covenanted" parishes in U.S.A. it has led to a situation where certain joint social and pastoral activities are undertaken in common, while the identities of the Catholic Church and the other confessions involved are maintained and their disciplines of worship respected.

In a shared church, judicious consideration needs to be given to the question of the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament so that it is done in a way that is consonant with sound sacramental theology, as well as respectful of the sensitivities of those who use the building. In addition to strictly religious considerations, due attention ought to be paid to the practical, financial and administrative problems, as well as to the questions of civil and canon law which are involved.

Clearly, initiatives in the matter of shared premises can be undertaken only under the authority of the bishop of the diocese and on the basis of the norms for the application of those principles fixed by the competent episcopal conference. Before making plans for a shared building the authorities of the respective communities concerned ought first to reach agreement as to how their various disciplines will be observed particularly in regard to the sacraments. Arrangements should be made so that the rules of the Catholic Church concerning "communicatio in sacris" are respected.

It is important that any project for a shared church be accompanied by suitable education of the Catholic people concerned so that its significance may be grasped and any danger of indifferentism is avoided.

#### e) *Collaboration in Education*

The Second Part of the **Ecumenical Directory**, devoted to Ecumenism in Higher Education,<sup>22</sup> outlines many of the possibilities. The manner in which they have been realised differs greatly in different places. In this area there can be particular problems and difficulties which all for a high degree of pastoral prudence.<sup>23</sup>

There are now several "clusters" of theological schools and faculties.<sup>24</sup> In some place there is sharing of certain buildings, and especially the use of libraries, some common lectures (within the limits indicated by the Directory) and sometimes two or more confessional faculties have combined to organize a common academic degree course.

In catechetics local needs have led at times to collaboration in the teaching of religion, especially where this has to be done in non-denominational schools. But as long as Christians are not fully at one in faith, catechesis, which is formation for profession of faith, must remain necessarily the proper and inalienable task of the various churches and ecclesial communities.

The list of ecumenical institutes and study centres where there is Catholic involvement, at least by membership on governing boards and

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Ecumenical Directory II, Spiritus Domini*: AAS 62 (1970), pp. 705-724; cf. also *Information Service* 10 (1970), pp. 3-10.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Common Witness and Proselytism*, 22, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Mainly in the U.S.A.

among the student bodies, is now quite considerable. Some of these offer courses in ecumenism and study certain topics on an ecumenical basis. Others which depend on a particular confession may concentrate largely on the study of another Christian confession. The experience of an ecumenical community life over a substantial period of time is an important feature of certain ecumenical institutes.

#### f) *Joint Use of Communications Media*

A concern for the better quality of religious programmes on radio and television has led to coordination and in some areas to joint planning and use of common facilities. Occasionally, there is an inter-confessional organization with full Catholic participation, with the major part of its radio, publishing and audiovisual work common to the principal churches and ecclesial communities, but giving each the facilities for enunciating its own doctrine and practice.<sup>25</sup> These are a few instances where religious newspapers either Catholic or of other confessions give regular space to other Christian bodies.<sup>26</sup>

#### g) *Cooperation in the Health Field*

New concepts of health care are increasingly supplanting earlier attitudes regarding medical work and the place of hospitals. Donor and welfare agencies prefer to supply money for those health programmes which manifest a comprehensive approach. Some governments, as they strive to develop national health services, now tend to refuse to deal with a multiplicity of religious groups. So joint secretariats for the coordination of all church-related medical and health programmes have come into being, set up with the joint approval of the Catholic episcopal conferences and the national councils of churches.<sup>27</sup> In several places, Catholics participate in the work of the national coordinating agencies recognized by and reporting to the national councils.<sup>28</sup>

In this area of health and medicine there is room for continuing study and discussion between Catholics and other Christians to deepen understanding of the theological significance of Christian involvement in this work and to elucidate common understanding as well as facing up to doctrinal divergences. Particularly where ethical norms are concerned the doctrinal stand of the Catholic Church has to be made clear and the difficulties which this can raise for ecumenical collaboration faced honestly and with loyalty to Catholic teaching.

<sup>25</sup> *Multimedia Zambia* is an example.

<sup>26</sup> One such is *Moto*, the Catholic paper of the diocese of Gwelo in Rhodesia. Other examples could be given.

<sup>27</sup> Such secretariats exist in India, Tanzania, Malawi and Ghana.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Philippines, Uganda and Kenya.

h) *National and International Emergencies*

The response to emergency situations has given rise to ecumenical action in raising funds and in administering and distributing them. Although this latter is done in the main by international agencies, normally an attempt is made to work through local organizations, often a council of churches or the agency of a diocese or episcopal conference. Efficiency in the programme as well as the witness value of joint charitable concern often dictates that the work be done ecumenically.

i) *Relief of Human Need*

As the pressure of contemporary life, especially in great cities, become more intense, Christians are aware of their urgent responsibility to minister to the increasing number of people who become casualties of society. In many place therefore Catholics are joining with other churches and ecclesial communities to provide services for people with pressing personal problems whether of the material, moral or psychological order. There are examples of such common organizations of confessions to provide a more effective pastoral and social ministry to distressed individuals.<sup>29</sup>

j) *Social Problems*

As the Catholic Church engages its full energies in the serious effort for integral human development it works with all men of good will and especially with other Christian churches and ecclesial communities. Hence in particular situations it has been found appropriate to set up joint organizations to study and promote understanding for true human rights, to question those things which frustrate them and to promote initiatives which will secure them.<sup>30</sup> There are also organizations which enable Christians of various confessions to work with people of other faiths for common goals of social justice.<sup>31</sup>

k) *Sodepax Groups*

Sodepax, the international agency between the Catholic Church and the World Council of churches for society, development and peace, is

<sup>29</sup> One such is the Interconfessional Counselling Service of Porto Alegre, Brazil.

<sup>30</sup> There are for instance the Latin American Ecumenical Commission for Human Rights and the Ecumenical Commission for Service in Brazil; cf. also *Message of His Eminence Cardinal Roy* on the Occasion of the Launching of the Second Development Decade, 9 November 1970, Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace, § 15 and 16.

<sup>31</sup> In Indonesia there is the Committee on Community Organization.

promoting several initiatives on a local scale under the direction of local ecumenical agencies.

Since collaboration in the field of development is a major feature of local ecumenical relations, the impetus given by Sodepax on the international levels has led to local groups being set up to promote education in the issues of justice and peace. Some of these also operate under the name of Sodepax while being autonomous and adapted to their own situation.

This has led in some places to the establishment of joint secretariats for education in development, under the aegis of the Catholic Church and a national council of churches.<sup>32</sup>

There are also agencies for development, sponsored by all the Christian confessions of the place, which aim at promoting action for a more just and human society. In some places, this has made clear the desirability of a national or regional council of churches, with Catholic participation, in order that the Christian communities might play a significant role in the development of the region.<sup>33</sup>

Also notable are the considerable numbers of occasional actions in the area of local development which have not given rise to new continuing organizations but have been carried out through existing or ad hoc groups.

### 1) *Bilateral Dialogues*

Bilateral dialogues involving the Catholic Church have developed, regionally, nationally and locally since Vatican II. The structures of the Catholic Church and its theological patterns of encounter have made this kind of relationship fairly easy.<sup>34</sup>

A distinct progress can be noticed in the topics treated by many of the bilateral dialogues. As mutual trust and understanding grows, it becomes possible to discuss doctrinal points hitherto regarded as completely closed. In turn this has an influence on the ecumenical climate of the place. However, problems do arise when the gap in understanding of the ordinary church members and the discussion of the theologians is allowed to grow too great. It is the pastoral task of the church leaders at different levels (episcopal conferences and dioceses) with the aid of

<sup>32</sup> Such secretariats exist in Australia and New Zealand.

<sup>33</sup> There is the Christian Agency for Development in the Caribbeans.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. a more complete account in: Ehrenström and Gassman, *Confessions in Dialogue*, Geneva, 1975; cf. also the theological review and critique, commissioned by the Catholic Theological Society of America *The Bilateral Consultations between the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S.A. and other Christian Communions*, July 1972.

the existing organs of consultation (e.g., the national or diocesan ecumenical commission) to ensure that communication takes place in order to overcome the difficulty and to enable the work done by the theologians to be effective and this in a way that accords with the doctrine and discipline of the Church.

Most of the dialogues try to assess the common situation in which all confessions find themselves today, and to clarify existing difficulties in inter-confessional relations as well as outlining new possibilities on the way to unity. Some stick to selected topics, such as ministry, authority, etc., on which they aim at a deeper mutual understanding and possible convergence. Sometimes a specific problem, e.g., mixed marriages, religious education, proselytism, is taken up and a solution sought whether at the level of theological principle or pastoral practice. At times the task is to coordinate relations and to encourage practical cooperation and exchange on different levels.

#### m) *Meetings of Heads of Communions*

In certain places the heads of local churches or ecclesial communities meet regularly, sometimes having a permanent "continuation committee". Through their meetings they exchange information about their activities and concerns, share insights and explore areas of possible collaboration and even set on foot appropriate action. It is understood that the heads of communions have to agree on each occasion of collaboration about the extent to which they can commit the members of their particular body. The usefulness of such groups in certain circumstances has been proved beyond dispute.<sup>35</sup>

#### n) *Joint Working Groups*

The concept of a joint working group is that it is not itself a decision-making body, but an organ for joint exploration of possible fields of cooperation, study and action, its recommendations being submitted to the parent bodies on each side. Groups have been set up in several countries between the Catholic Church and either a council of churches or a number of churches and ecclesial communities which do not have membership in a council. In intention these groups have been often envisaged as a transitory expression of the relationship. However, their usefulness and the lack of a suitable substitute have led in most cases to their continuance in being. Since they involve a multilateral conversation they can be a handy instrument for coordinating the more local conversations and initiatives and giving them a coherent framework. They have often initiated multilateral theological studies, as well as practical cooperation in the field of social action. Indeed in some instances more

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<sup>35</sup> For instance in Rhodesia, Australia, New Zealand.

theological work seems to have been achieved through these groups than when the Catholic Church has been a member of a council of churches. The implications of baptism, problems connected with mixed marriages, conscience and dissent, authority, development issues and the problem of disarmament are among the topics found on their agendas.

*o) Councils of churches and Christian councils<sup>36</sup>*

These organizations date in some form from the beginning at the 20th century as a means of ensuring cooperation. As they have developed they have come to promote the collaboration of various churches or groups in social projects and now see themselves as servants of the ecumenical movement in its search for a greater measure of unity.

Because of their importance we are going to consider them at greater length in the next chapter.

#### 4.

### COUNCILS OF CHURCHES AND CHRISTIAN COUNCILS

#### A. DESCRIPTION AND CLARIFICATIONS

*a) What councils are*

In various regions of the world, in different countries and even in areas of a particular country, the ecumenical relation between the Christian communities differs and so the structures in which it finds expression also vary. In a number of places this relationship has taken the form of Christian councils and councils of churches. While these councils have their significance from the churches which take part in them, still they are very important instruments of ecumenical collaboration.

The earliest councils in the ecumenical movement were missionary councils composed of mission agencies and were formed to stimulate thinking on missionary problems and to coordinate action for the spread of the Christian message. As service agencies and other church groups took part in them, they were described as Christian councils, and finally as councils of churches when their membership came to be composed of representatives named by the churches.

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<sup>36</sup> In the following pages where councils or conferences of churches are dealt with, generally the term "church" is to be understood in a technical theological sense.

Among the principal activities of councils are joint service, the collaborative quest for a fuller unity and, to the extent possible, common witness.

Councils are multiple and diverse. Therefore theologically they must be evaluated according to their activity, and according to the self-understanding they advance in their constitutions. That is to say, councils must be considered concretely as they actually exist rather than approached through theories developed concerning them.

#### b) *Types of councils*

We may distinguish the following principal types:

— **Local councils of churches**, which involve the different denominations in a small area, e.g., a parish or a deanery. Such councils are not necessarily affiliated to or directed by their national council. Local councils are found in large numbers in the U.S.A. and in Great Britain.

— **State or area councils** are “at various levels below the national and above the strictly local”, and their relationship to the larger and smaller councils varies; in England some of the councils of churches in the major conurbations are of this kind; and in some of these a full time secretary acts virtually as “ecumenical officer” of the particular area.

— **National councils of churches** are composed primarily of representatives named by the churches in a country rather than of representatives from councils at a lower level.

— **Regional councils or conferences of churches** include churches from a number of neighbouring countries.

— **The World Council of Churches** is a distinct category. The World Council of Churches does invite selected national councils “to enter into working relationship as associated councils”, and it has set up a Committee on National Council Relationships. This does not imply any authority or control over a particular council; in fact, the decision to enter such a relationship rests always with the national council.<sup>37</sup> It has to be borne in mind too that Catholic membership in a local, national or regional council has implications on those levels and is therefore an independent decision, separate and distinct from any decision about relationship to the World Council of Churches.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. the *New Delhi Report* (London 1962), Appendix II, ZI, p. 438.



c) *The meaning of conciliarity*

The English word "conciliarity" can convey different meanings. For this reason Catholics need to explain what they mean by it.<sup>38</sup>

The conciliarity which marks the life of the Catholic Church and is sometimes expressed in ecumenical and provincial councils ("conciles"),<sup>39</sup> is based on a full and substantial communion of local churches among themselves and with the Church of Rome which presides over the whole assembly of charity.<sup>40</sup> This communion finds expression in the confession of faith, the celebration of the sacraments, the exercise of the ministry and the reception of previous councils. In this sense a council is a means enabling a local church, a certain group of local churches or all of the local churches in communion with the bishop of Rome to express the communion of the Catholic Church.

Councils of churches and Christian councils ("conseils") however are fellowships of churches and other Christian bodies which seek to work together, to engage in dialogue and to overcome the divisions and misunderstandings existing among them. Confessing Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour according to the Scriptures, they engage in joint action, in a quest for unity, and, to the extent that it is possible, in common witness. The fellowship which they embody does not suppose at all the same degree of communion expressed by ecumenical and provincial councils ("conciles").<sup>41</sup>

From this understanding it is clear that councils of churches and Christian councils ("conseils") do not in and of themselves contain in embryo the beginnings of a new Church which will replace the communion now existing within the Catholic Church. They do not claim to be

<sup>38</sup> The understanding not only of Catholics but of Orthodox, Anglicans and many Protestants finds expression in the description of "conciliarity" given in a paper of the Salamanca Conference (1973) of the WCC Faith and Order Commission.

<sup>39</sup> In some languages other than English two distinct words are used to denote the realities for which in English the single word "council" is used. In French for example there are the words "concile" and "conseil"; in Spanish "concilio" and "consejo"; in German "Konzil" and "Rat" and in Latin "concilium" and "consilium".

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 13; *Ad Gentes*, 22; S. Ignatius M., *Ad Rom.*, Praef.

<sup>41</sup> In the meeting of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC held in Accra, 1974, the following comment was made: "The local, national and world councils of churches which perform such a vital role in the modern ecumenical movement do not, obviously, conform to the definition of conciliar fellowship given at Salamanca. They are federal in character and do not enjoy either the full communion or the capacity to make decisions for all their members. They might properly be described as 'pre-conciliar' bodies".

churches nor do they claim authority to commission a ministry of word and sacrament.

d) *Points of clarification*

i) A distinction has to be made between Christian councils and councils of churches, the former including as voting members bodies and agencies other than churches.

ii) Neither Christian councils nor councils of churches are uniform in history, constitution or operation.

iii) The variety of patterns to be found in councils of churches around the world has grown up naturally; councils are autonomous bodies and no one council of churches is a sub-unit of another, nor has an attempt been made to impose uniformity. At the same time it should be noted that there are close relationships between some councils even though they are structured in different ways.

In general terms these councils at all levels of the churches' life are similar in nature, but their specific functions vary according to the possibilities and needs of each level.

iv) Although the ecumenical movement calls for fellowship and collaboration at all levels, still, given the variety and autonomy of councils of churches, the decision to join a council at one level must be taken on its own merits.

Membership in local councils does not imply that membership in national councils must then be sought, just as local or national membership does not involve membership in the World Council of Churches. The question of membership must be examined separately and afresh at each level.

v) The sole formal authority of councils is that which is accorded them by the constituent members. The degree of commitment to this fellowship of churches, which a council represents, depends entirely upon the churches themselves.

vi) Councils try to make clear that as a general rule they do not have responsibility for church union negotiations, since it is well understood that these are solely the responsibility of the churches directly involved.

vii) Councils do not claim to be the only appropriate organs of churchly cooperation.

## B. THE ECUMENICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRISTIAN COUNCILS AND COUNCILS OF CHURCHES

### a) *The ecumenical fact of councils*

The existence of councils of churches constitutes in numerous countries an ecumenical fact which the non-member churches cannot ignore and may well challenge the churches in countries where such councils do not exist.

In some places the trend towards collaboration is hastened when governments refuse to deal with a diversity of agencies in the fields of education, development and welfare and the churches engaged in these areas have to devise joint programmes.

### b) *The limits of ad hoc bodies for council-church relationships*

In the eyes of many councils of churches collaboration with the Catholic Church solely through ad hoc commissions is regarded as insufficient since this kind of collaboration:

i) gives the impression that the ecumenical fact represented by councils is not treated with sufficient seriousness, and

ii) it tends to remain partial and to lack the necessary continuity.

### c) *The existing relation of the Catholic Church to councils of churches*

The Catholic Church has full membership in national councils of churches in at least 19 countries and in a very large number of state and local councils. There is membership in one regional conference of churches covering a number of countries.<sup>42</sup> In addition, there is considerable Catholic collaboration with councils and certain of their programmes at various levels.

Given that "no central guidelines would be found valid for the variety of councils and of particular circumstances",<sup>43</sup> a number of questions and ecclesial considerations may be proposed, to be taken into account in deciding the appropriate relationship with councils.

<sup>42</sup> The Caribbean Conference of Churches. At the present time the Catholic Church has full membership in the following 19 national councils of churches: Denmark, Sweden, The Netherlands, Swaziland, Belize (British Honduras), Samoa, Fiji, New Hebrides, Solomon Islands, Papua-New Guinea, Tonga, West Germany, Botswana, St. Vincent (British Antilles), Sudan, Uganda, Finland, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>43</sup> *Minutes: Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches* (meeting held in June, 1971, Bernhäuser Forst, Stuttgart, Germany), December 1971, p. 10 (unpublished).

CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP<sup>44</sup>a) *Cooperation with other churches and ecclesial communities*

The documents of the Second Vatican Council expound clearly the conviction that the unity which is the gift of Christ already exists in the Catholic Church,<sup>45</sup> although susceptible of completion and perfection,<sup>46</sup> and this qualifies significantly the Catholic participation in the ecumenical movement. However, since the Second Vatican Council's recognition of the ecclesial character of other Christian communities,<sup>47</sup> the Church has frequently called upon Catholics to cooperate not only with other Christians as *individuals*, but also with other churches and ecclesial communities as *such*. This cooperation is commended both in matters of social and human concern, and even more in support of Christian testimony in the field of mission.

"Insofar as religious conditions allow, ecumenical activity should be furthered in such a way that without any appearance of indifference or of unwarranted intermingling on the one hand, or of unhealthy rivalry on the other, Catholics can cooperate in a brotherly spirit with their separated brethren, according to the norms of the Decree on Ecumenism. To the extent that their beliefs are common, they can make before the nations a common profession of faith in God and Jesus Christ. They can collaborate in social and in technical projects as well as in cultural and religious ones. This cooperation should be undertaken not only among private persons, but also, according to the judgement of the local Ordinary, among churches or ecclesial communities and their enterprises" (*Ad Gentes*, 15).<sup>48</sup>

The documents published by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity have stressed that the world often poses the same questions

<sup>44</sup> In certain cases where Catholic membership in a national council of churches is under consideration, studies have been undertaken and later published. They are of interest as applying general principles to given situations. Examples are: *The Implications of Roman Catholic Membership in the National Council of Churches* (1972), US Catholic Conference, 1312, Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., Washington DC 20005, USA; *Groupe mixte de travail - Comité pour de nouvelles structures œcuméniques*, Officen ational d'œcuménisme, 1452, rue Drummond, Montréal 107, aCnada.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1; *Lumen Gentium*, 8, 13.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 15; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3 sqq.; etc.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. also *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4, 12; *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 27.

to all the confessions and that, in the sphere of their internal life, most Christian communions have to face similar problems.<sup>49</sup>

The nature of the Church, the normal exigencies of the ecumenical situation, and the questions facing all Christian communions in our own day demand that the Catholic Church give positive consideration to the proper expression at every level of her ecumenical relations with other churches and ecclesial communities.

#### b) *Implications of council membership*

From a theological point of view, membership in a council of churches carries certain implications:

i) the recognition of other member churches as ecclesial communities even though they may not be recognized as being churches in the full theological sense of the word;<sup>50</sup>

ii) recognition of the council of churches as an instrument, among others, both for expressing the unity already existing among the churches and also of advancing towards a greater unity and a more effective Christian witness.

Nevertheless, as the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches said at its Toronto meeting in 1950: "... membership does not imply that each church must regard the other member churches as churches in the true and full sense of the word".<sup>51</sup> Therefore the entry of the Catholic Church into a body in which it would find itself on an equal footing with other bodies which also claim to be churches would not diminish its faith about its uniqueness. The Second Vatican Council has clearly stated that the unique Church of Christ "constituted and organized in the world as a society subsists in the Catholic Church which is governed by the successor of Peter and the bishops in communion with that successor, although many elements of sanctification and of truth can be found outside of her visible structure".<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Ecumenical Directory*, Part II, § 1; *Reflections and Suggestions Concerning Ecumenical Dialogue*, II, 2 c and d (A working instrument at the disposal of ecclesiastical authorities for concrete application of the Decree on Ecumenism, published in *Information Service* 12 (1970), pp. 5-11).

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 15; *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3; also *Minutes and Report of the Third Meeting of the Central Committee* (Toronto, Canada, July 9-15, 1950). The *Toronto Statement*, while it refers directly to the World Council of Churches, appears to be fully applicable to similar organizations such as a national council of churches.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.* (Toronto Statement).

<sup>52</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

c) *Councils and Christian unity*

Since councils of churches are not themselves churches, they do not assume the responsibility of acting for churches which are contemplating or have begun to engage in unity conversations. In principle their action is in the practical field. However, because of their facilities and their administrative resources, they are in a position to give important material help and can, upon request of the churches concerned, give a consultative and organisational assistance. While the study of "Faith and Order" questions, which goes on under the auspices of many councils and is authorised by member churches, has a deep importance in stimulating member churches to a deeper understanding of the demands of the unity willed by Christ, and to facing old deadlocks in a new way, nevertheless it is not the task of a council to take the initiative in promoting formal doctrinal conversations between churches. These belong properly to the immediate and bilateral contacts between churches.

d) *The problem of council statements*

Councils of churches, in some cases more frequently than the member churches themselves, on occasion make public statements on issues of common concern. These are addressed more often to area of social justice, human development, general welfare, and public or private morality. They are based on theological positions that may or may not be articulated in the statements themselves. Unless explicitly authorized, they cannot be considered as official utterances on behalf of the churches, but are offered as a service to the churches. They are often directed also to the wider public or even to specific audiences, such as government authorities. They vary in character from broad statements of position or orientation in general areas to specific stands on concrete questions. In some instances they examine and illuminate a subject, identifying a number of possible approaches rather than adopting a position. This practice of making statements has caused concern in some churches, and calls especially for clarification where the Catholic Church considers the possibility of membership in councils of churches.

i) *The decision-making process*

In attempting to fix criteria to evaluate the deliberative process in a particular council, it will be necessary to give serious consideration to the hesitations and objections of its members. A common declaration which engages the moral responsibility of its members is possible only with the consent of all.

ii) *The authority and use of public statements*

Important as is the process by which statements are formulated and issued, equally important is the manner in which they are received — both by the individual members of the churches and by the public at large. Differences in the weight of authority given to official statements within member churches, as well as differences in the normal mode of formulation and issuance of statements, can result in serious difficulties. Efforts have to be made to obviate the confusion that may arise in practice. Such statements should clearly identify the theological principles on which they are based so as to facilitate their acceptance by church members as being in accord with their own Christian commitment. Since councils cannot usurp the position of the churches that comprise their membership, they need to study how best they can determine what matters fall within their own purpose and mandate and to be sure of the approval of member churches before publishing statements.

iii) *Regard for minority viewpoints*

Councils, being composed of separated churches, inevitably face issues on which they cannot reach a perfect consensus. A profound respect for the integrity and individuality of its member churches will lead a council to develop procedures for ensuring that a minority dissent will be adequately expressed for the mutual benefit of the council, its members, and all to whom the council speaks. Provisions have to be made within councils for such expression of minority viewpoints and in this context polarization ought to be avoided.

e) *Joint Social Action — Opportunities and problems*

i) In the Apostolic Letter **Octogesima Adveniens**, the Holy Father has written:

“It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility, and in dialogue with other Christian brethren and all men of good will to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed” (n. 4).

ii) At a number of points Christian positions permit and encourage collaboration with other spiritual and ideological families. Therefore councils and ecumenical organizations rightly pay serious attention to possible areas of collaboration (e.g., in the field of development, housing, health, and various forms of relief), which concern people of other living faiths as well as Christian churches and ecclesial communities.

iii) Christian social action to which many councils of churches and ecumenical bodies devote a large part of their endeavours also raises questions for theological reflection. In the first place there is the essential role of social action in the proclamation of the Gospel. "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation".<sup>53</sup> Further there are questions of morality, especially regarding family life which more and more need to be faced seriously in all their complexity, in particular those which concern population, family life, marriage, contraception, abortion, euthanasia and others. These questions need to be studied with due regard to the moral teachings of the churches concerned and above all taking into account the objective content of Catholic ethics.<sup>54</sup>

## 6.

### PASTORAL AND PRACTICAL REFLECTIONS FOR LOCAL ECUMENICAL ACTION

a) Full account ought to be given to local needs and problems in organizing ecumenical action; models from other places cannot simply be imitated.

b) Ultimately, it is always the responsibility of the regional or national episcopal conference to decide on the acceptability and the appropriateness of all forms of local ecumenical action. They should do this in cooperation with the appropriate organ of the Holy See, viz the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

c) What really matters is not the creation of new structures but the collaboration of Christians in prayer, reflection and action, based on common baptism and on a faith which on many essential points is also common.

<sup>53</sup> Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis (1971), p. 6; *Documenta Synodi Episcoporum*, De Iustitia in Mundo: AAS 63 (1971), p. 924.

<sup>54</sup> "And if in moral matters there are many Christians who do not always understand the gospel in the same way as Catholics, and do not admit the same solutions for the more difficult problems of modern society, nevertheless they share our desire to cling to Christ's word as the source of Christian virtue and to obey the apostolic command: 'Whatever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him' (Col. 3:17). Hence, the ecumenical dialogue could start with discussions concerning the application of the gospel to moral questions" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 23, § 3).



d) Sometimes the best form of collaboration may be for one church and ecclesial community to participate fully in the programmes already set up by another. At other times parallel coordinated action and the joint use of the results may be more appropriate. In any event, as collaboration becomes closer, a simplification of structures should be sought and unnecessary multiplication of structures avoided.

e) Where joint actions or programmes are decided on, they ought to be undertaken fully by both sides and duly authorized by the respective authorities right from the earliest stages of planning.

f) It is necessary that where there are regional, national and local doctrinal bilateral dialogues, episcopal conferences ensure that at the right time there is contact with the Holy See.

g) Among the many forms of ecumenical cooperation and councils of churches and Christian councils are not the only form but they are certainly one of the more important. Since regional, national and local councils are widespread in many parts of the world and do play an important role in ecumenical relations, the responsible contacts which the Catholic Church is having with them are welcome.

h) It is normal that councils should want to discuss and reflect upon the doctrinal bases of the practical projects they undertake. But in such cases it is important to clarify the doctrinal principles involved. It should always be clear that when Catholics take part in a council, they can enter into such discussions only in conformity with the teaching of their Church.

i) The first and immediate responsibility for a decision to joint a council rests with the highest ecclesiastical authority in the area served by the council. In practical terms this responsibility is not transferable. With regard to national councils the authority would generally be the episcopal conference (where there is only one diocese for the nation, it would be the Ordinary of the diocese). In reaching a decision, there must necessarily be communication with the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

j) The degree of involvement of different confessions in the same council depends directly on their respective structures especially in those things concerning the nature and exercise of authority. However, it would seem desirable that councils be constituted in such a way that the various members can all accept the full measure of involvement possible for them.

k) Membership in a council is a serious responsibility of the Catholic bishops or their delegates. It is necessary that the Catholic representatives in councils should be personally qualified and, while representing the Church on matters within their competence, they should be clearly aware of the limits beyond which they cannot commit the Church without prior reference to higher authority.

1) It is not enough that the Church simply have delegates in a council or other ecumenical structure; unless they are taken seriously by the Catholic authorities, the Catholic participation will remain purely superficial. For the same reason all participation in ecumenical structures should be accompanied by constant ecumenical education of Catholics concerning the implications of such participation.

## 7.

### OTHER FORMS OF ECUMENISM

A growing number of Christians in certain parts of the world seem to prefer to engage in local action which is ecumenical by means of informal groups of a spontaneous kind. These people are often motivated by renewed appreciation of the word of Christ: "... may they be one in us, ... so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (Jn. 17, 21).

It is the kind of activity which springs up in a common environment or in a common social condition. Or it may arise in response to a common task or need. The result is a large number of highly diverse groups: action groups, prayer groups, community-building groups, reflection and dialogue groups, and evangelizing groups.

A number of groups are made up of Christians who are rediscovering central Christian truths out of their confrontation with a surrounding world which appears de-christianized and de-personalized.

Through their varied experiences they may have new insights of importance for the future growth and direction of the ecumenical movement.<sup>55</sup> It is desirable that there be real communication between the more organized or formal expressions and structures of the ecumenical movement and these groups when they seek to discover new ways of meeting contemporary needs and therefore engage in experimental projects. In connection with the hierarchy of the Church, these informal groups can offer original and inspiring ideas, whereas without such a contact and apart from ecclesiastical direction they run the risk of becoming unfaithful to Catholic principles of ecumenism and even of endangering the faith. If this communication is ignored, there is not only a danger that ecumenism may become detached from the pressing concerns of people in society but these groups themselves may become unbalanced and sectarian. Communication and dialogue are basic to the success of all ecumenical endeavour.

At the same time where there are groups of this kind under Catholic responsibility, it is necessary that they function in full communion with the local bishop if they are to be authentically ecumenical.

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Ecumenical Directory*, Part I. § 3.

# **SOCIAL ACTION ACTIVITIES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES**

## **A SUMMARY\***

**By: MINA M. RAMIREZ**  
**President, Asian Social Institute**

This study offers significant information on social action activities conducted by parishes, Catholic schools, seminaries and religious congregations. This is PHASE II of the study reported last year in the NASSA National Convention in Cebu. Last year's study dealt with all social action work of the church on the regional and diocesan levels.

It is to be recalled that the main conclusion of Phase I of this study was: "All Social Action Councils (SACs) in Luzon strongly stress economic development of people"; in Visayas, "six out of eight SACs retain economic motives", while "the top priorities in the Mindanao region include conscientization, people's organizations, and social justice."

Out of a total of 1,868 parishes in the entire country, 547 parish priests responded to the survey. This represents almost thirty percent (29.3%) of the total population of parishes.

The Visayas ranks first with returned questionnaires totalling 33%, followed by Mindanao, 30%, and finally Luzon — 27%.

In contrast to the response of the parish priests, it is observed that Catholic schools responded poorly with only 19% submitting the questionnaire.

Two-fifths or forty per cent of the total number of major seminaries responded.

A very poor response of 15% from the religious communities of men is observed. A slightly better picture may be seen in the communities of women, with a representative return of twenty per cent (20%).

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\* From a study of the same title undertaken by the Pastoral Methods Research Center, Asian Social Institute for the National Secretariat of Social Action, Justice and Peace (NASSA).

**FINDINGS:**

1. From the inquiry on community problems, the priority community needs are economic, social and educational in nature on the parish level. This is the same pattern in schools while in seminaries and religious congregations of men and women, they spotted technical assistance, and organization leadership as second priority in their respective groups. It is striking that the problem of justice always ranked last except among seminarians.

Regarding suggested solutions, only schools ranked economic as the first remedy to identified problems. Parishes gave stress to education, organization and leadership and religious congregations of men and women pointed to community involvement, education, organization and leadership.

2. Respondents from all the groups of church people revealed that their main reasons in engaging in social action are to meet community needs, part of being a priest or social action coordinator and for education purposes. Asked for grounds in desiring a social action program, answers also manifested the same basic response to community needs.

3. Among parishes, schools, religious congregations of men and women and in seminaries — the first two reasons given for not having social action programs are: personnel and lack of funds.

4. As to whether or not social action programs of parishes, schools and seminaries, religious congregations are formally organized or not, the answers are as follows:

Those who answered in the positive are 43.1% among parishes, 34.2% among schools, 31.3% among seminaries; 71.4% of the religious congregations of men and 55.9% of religious congregations for women.

5. The Social Action Program in the parishes are organized by parish priests through:

- initiative of the parish priests
- SEARSOLIN extension services
- in coordination with diocesan or religious congregations
- through parish and municipal councils
- through civic groups
- through CWL; Samahang Nayan.

The Schools' Social Action Program are mainly organized through:

- the help of the community
- the CCF programs
- Diocesan family life centers
- Rural Missionaries of the Philippines.

In seminaries, religious communities of both men and women, the Social Action Programs are formally organized through the initiative of the seminary school personnel, through committee on social action, parish organizations, diocesan social action center; coordination with diocesan or religious congregations and Catholic schools.

6. Parishes and schools appear to be unanimous in their common concern for the absence of reserved funds for social action. Of the 547 parishes in the country over 1/2 (55.9%) express the absence of regular funds for their social action programs. A less vocal cry comes from the schools, with forty-eight per cent (47.7%) unable to operate with regular funds. In comparison with the total number of seminaries and religious communities which responded, a good number seem to have funds for the operation of their social action work.

Parishes depend largely on funds given by their congregations or orders as expressed by 31%. This implies that a good majority of those able to afford social action work are the members of the religious organizations. On the other hand, schools and seminaries resort to availing of the school or seminary funds for their social work. Religious communities of men are highly dependent on foreign aid while women depend either on local funding agencies, local donations and foreign aid (Table 4.10)

One may wonder how those parishes without regular funds are still able to go on with their programs. A good number of the parishes (27.8%) and schools (29.3%) rely on voluntary contributions from generous benefactors. At certain times, donations, contributions, or gifts are of help, with the religious communities of women appearing to be most resourceful in this respect (Table 4.11).

7. Data on salary of social action coordinators reveal that those of the parishes have the highest number of volunteer workers and the lowest number with salary. The schools and religious congregations of women have the most social action coordinators receiving salaries. Salaries range from one hundred to six hundred pesos. Most of the coordinators of parishes and schools receives salaries ranging from three hundred to two hundred ninety nine pesos while there is only 1 social action coordinator in the parish having a salary within the 500-599 range.

8. The data on qualifications of social action coordinators manifest that only 61 coordinators in parishes had social action training and involvement. Seminaries have only two trained coordinators, too. The religious congregations of women have the most trained coordinators followed by those of schools.

9. On educational attainment of social action coordinators in parishes, 2.8% finished either M S , M A. or Ph D ; while 58.3% finished college education; 3.4% college undergraduates; 22% high school and 1% finished only elementary level.

In schools most Social Action Coordinators are college graduates while there are 23.6% with M.A., M.S. or Ph.D. There are 3 college undergraduates.

Educational attainment of social action coordinators in seminaries ranges from M.A., to college graduate level. Six finished their M.A. and one is a college graduate. Seven did not indicate any educational attainment.

Among the social action coordinators of religious congregation of men are 4 M.S., 27 college graduates, while 4 are college under graduates and 2 are high school graduates.

16. Significantly, a little less than 1/2 of the parishes, 48.2% did not respond to the question which relates to the goal or objective of the social action program. Viewed from the national level, 30% of parishes claim economic assistance as their primary goal; 14% express meeting of people's needs in general; 12% define evangelization/conscientization as well as total development.

In Luzon almost 1/4 of its parishes specify economic assistance as their primary goals. The Visayas and Mindanao specify Evangelization and/or conscientization as the primary thrust of their social action program.

A number of schools (21%) could not identify the goals of their programs. Among those able to, a large number are occupied in meeting the needs of the people in general. This is followed by the concern for conscientization and/or evangelization and lastly by the desire for socio-economic upliftment of the people. Among the respondents from the seminaries, more were able to identify their goals specifically expressed as evangelization and conscientization.

Among religious respondents evangelization and conscientization and "meeting the needs of the people in general", appear to be dominant over the other reasons.

11. In parishes, the types of social action projects listed by order of frequency mentioned are:

- |                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) Socio-economic                  | 5) Socio-religious       |
| 2) Nutrition                       | 6) Socio-political       |
| 3) Family life and Family Planning | 7) Health and Sanitation |
| 4) Relief and Rehabilitation       | 8) Social                |
|                                    | 9) Justice and Peace     |

Socio-economic emphasis is more conspicuous in Mindanao than in Luzon and Visayas. An average parish in Luzon and Visayas has some 1.5 socio-economic projects, while a counterpart in Mindanao has 2.2. More breakdown of those triogeographical regions into smaller ones, however, uncover the socio-economic lead of the Archdiocese of Manila,

seconded by Southern Mindanao and Ilocos region. An average parish in Manila has three socio-economic projects, a counterpart in Southern Mindanao has 2.4; and a counterpart in the Ilocos region has 2.2.

The campaign against malnutrition among Philippine parishes is very prominent in Visayas. An average parish in this region runs 1.2 nutrition projects; its Luzon counterpart has .9; its Mindanao counterpart has .5 only. The Archdiocese of Cebu leads all others in the nutrition drive with an average of 2.5 projects per parish, followed by Eastern Visayas and Luzon with an average of 1.1.

Mindanao leads in the drive for population control. A Northern Mindanao parish has an average of 1.3 family planning projects; while the Southern Mindanao counterpart has 1.2. The Bicol region ranks third by having 1.1 projects per parish.

Relief and Rehabilitation programs receive more attention in the parishes of Luzon than those of the Visayas and Mindanao. The Archdiocese of Manila demonstrates concern in the area of relief and rehabilitation by operating some 1.2 projects per parish.

The Archdiocese of Manila and Cebu excel all regions in the realm of socio-religious activities. An average Manila parish runs some 1.26 socio-religious programs; the Cebu counterpart operates 1.08 projects.

In terms of socio-educational-political involvement, the Ilocos region parishes spearhead all of respondent parishes. They administer an average of .71 socio-educational programs per parish. Southern Tagalog and Central Luzon follow next with averages of .57 and .55 respectively.

The Archdiocese of Cebu and Manila have more parochial health clinics than all other ecclesiastical divisions. Cebu parishes runs an average of .83 health clinics per parish; Manila has .41.

The parishes of the Archdiocese of Manila shows more interest in social projects than all others. Each has an average of .5 as compared to less than .3 per parish in any of the regions.

Northern Mindanao parishes illustrate more concern for peace and justice. Some .37 justice and peace concern comprises the average per parish. Such is so few, but much fewer are those of all other parishes in any of the regions.

Among schools, types of social action projects arranged by order of frequency mentioned are: 1) Socio-economic 2) Socio-religious 3) Socio-educational 4) Relief and Rehabilitation 5) Family Life 6) Nutrition 7) Health 8) Social 9) Justice and Peace.

Among religious communities of men: 1) Socio-economic 2) Family Life 3) Nutrition 4) Socio-religious 5) Socio-educational 6) Relief and Rehabilitation 7) Socials 8) Health 9) Justice and Peace.

Among religious communities of women: 1) Socio-economic 2) Socio-educational 3) Socio-religious 4) Family Life 5) Nutrition 6) Relief and Rehabilitation 7) Justice and Peace 8) Health 9) Social.

Seminaries: the types of projects are: 1) Socio-religious 2) Socio-economic 3) Socio-educational 4) Justice and Peace 5) Nutrition 6) Health.

12. Parish priests pointed to the role of NASSA, and regional Secretariats as giving them technical assistance. In addition the regional SAC's assist them in social development projects.

13. The attitude generally of the parish priests towards social action is the following: Priests should primarily concern themselves with moral and spiritual matters rather than with social action. However, they can initiate social action in the parish. Laymen therefore should be trained to direct the implementation of social action program in the parish. Lack of training in social action should not deter priests from engaging in it. The exposure, according to at least 50% of the priests—is part of the training.

14. Qualities of SAC Director according to Parish priests:

#### A. Personal Qualities

1) Basic character traits: good character, interested in social action, dedication to work, zealous, willing to take initiative, humble, courageous, generous, good listener, honest, simple, can communicate, patient, hard-worker, uninhibited by human respect or family ties.

2) Mental ability — intelligent, competent, prudent, broad-minded, with common sense, know-how to coordinate efforts, wise as a serpent and gentle as a dove, firm in his decision, not interested in surveys and making speeches about what should be done and does something constructive.

3) Relationship with others — good public relations, accepted as a man with standing, trusted by his fellow priests, able to work in a team.

4) Personality leadership traits — leadership, well-balanced personality, a person of all seasons, young and healthy.

5) Christian characteristics — biblically motivated, a person who act according to the demands of justice, witnessing, man of charity, big asset is the apostolate of the Church.

6) Academic qualifications — with training, well-informed, professionally competent and an expert in the subject, college graduate, a sociologist, economist/anthropologist.

7) Social orientation — has social feelings, highly motivated in spirit of evangelization, a conscientized man, sensitive to the needs of the time, interested in the development of his own people.

8) Others — has time and financially able, ... with qualities of an executive director not as an administrator.



# MSGR. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA DE BALAGUER OF THE OPUS DEI: A PORTRAIT

by

Rev. Frank S. Yncierto

"The Father, as we fondly called him, spent his life working and laboring." Thus spoke Fr. Joseph de Torre on the solemn funeral Mass for Msgr. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, founder and president of the Opus Dei, last July 5, 1975 at the Manila Cathedral.

Indeed, the value of work pervaded the core of Msgr. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer's life and thoughts.

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer first felt the spark of life on January 9, 1902 in Barbastro, Spain, the son of Jose Escriva de Balaguer y Corzan and Maria Dolores Albas y Blanc. Acting on the the impulse of his vocation, he entered the seminary. He was ordained a priest on March 28, 1925. He began his work as a priest in country parishes and later in the lowly districts of Madrid and among university students.

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer was a doctor in law of the University of Madrid, a doctor in theology of the Lateran Pontifical University in Rome, a doctor in philosophy and letters, *honoris causa*, of the University of Zaragoza. He was sometime superior of Zaragoza Seminary, professor of philosophy and ethics at the Madrid School of Journalism, chancellor of the University of Navarre in Spain and the University of Pirua in Peru, member of the Pontifical Roman Academy of Theology. He was an honorary prelate to Pope Paul VI and ably served as consultant to the Congregation for Catholic Education and to the Pontifical Commission for the Interpretation of the Code of Canon Law.

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer conceived of his ministry as a pattern of work, of continous work, devoid of rest. For him, idleness must be viewed with a deep sense of aversion for it is incompatible with the spirit of an apostle. As he put it: "Idleness is something inconceivable in a man who has the soul of an apostle."

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer believed that work is the trademark of man's existence, the sublime activity that underlines the framework of his being. For him work became labor because of the sin of Adam and Eve. This unfortunate event in man's existence gave rise to a score of

human difficulties and hardships. But not without a redeeming factor: work. For any kind of work duly accompanied with the love of God and molded in the redeeming sacrifice of Christ effects as a means to attain sanctity.

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer's vigorous affirmation in the transcendental value of work was reinforced by his belief in God. He maintained that harmony in the life of faith is the source of man's direction in loving God and his neighbor. He saw work as a weapon in the battleground of life's perplexities, responsible for man's merits and demerits. For him only the brave can achieve peace and freedom. Only the courageous can earn honor. Only the victorious can savor the triumph of victory.

For Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer the cross is man's unending source of inspiration in his struggle with weaknesses. It builds up man's confidence in himself. And it finds its realization in work: through the toils and labors of everyday life, man undergoes a process of self-redemption, sort of, thereby becoming a co-redeemer of Christ.

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer maintained that peace is the aftermath of war and a consequence of victory, the full taste of which is attained only in heaven. He described heaven as rest without labor but with work, positing that the beatific joy of union with God is the highest and noblest of man's activities. This joy, moreover, is self-diffusive. It prods the Christian to labor for a kingdom here on earth.

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer exhibited a profound feeling of compassion and concern for others. His scholarly frame of mind was richly supported by his expertise on the art of loving. He was a zealous lover of souls. He had his arms open to every man. As he exhorted: "Embrace the cross, but don't drag the cross. Carry it squarely on your shoulder and you will find Mary on the way."

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer was an ardent follower and supporter of the Pope. For him the Pope symbolized the universal realities of the Church, the visible source and foundation of the unity of faith and fellowship of the faithful. He called the Pope the "sweet Christ on earth".

It was Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer's wish "to work silently and disappear so that Christ will remain in the limelight". His desire did not fail to register in God's ears: he suddenly died of a brain stroke on an ordinary working day, in the middle of the day, at noon time, in the middle of the week, on a Thursday — June 26, 1975, to be precise — and in the middle of his work... as a priest totally dedicated to the service of God and the Church.

Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer is dead. But, he left the Catholic world a legacy: the Opus Dei — which he founded on October 2, 1928.

The Opus Dei is an international association of Catholic faithful who, by specific vocation, strive to seek union with God through the sanctification of their work and to make known the teachings of Christ by word and example, each one in his own profession or job. It enables its members to receive a spiritual formation and to employ spiritual means which are necessary to turn their work — in the office, laboratory, shop, factory, classroom, household, etc. — into an encounter with Christ and an occasion for sanctity. It encourages them to seek the fullness of charity by striving always to do the will of God in the midst of their daily activities. It aims to help them elevate human work into a supernatural one. At present, the organization commands a legion of followers — some 60,000 people, estimates have it — from every point of the globe. It has two sections: one for men and the other for women; these two sections are independent from each other.

A member of the Opus Dei is free to think of, to act and to work on, any endeavor — and this lends credence to the fact that the association flourishes in an atmosphere of unpolluted freedom. But each member is responsible for his own activities. His responsibility stems from and is the natural outcome of his freedom. And for him to claim responsibility for an action implies his knowledge of what God teaches or makes known about faith.

Here's Msgr. Escriva de Balaguer on the Opus Dei:

"Opus Dei is an international lay organization to which a certain number of secular priests belong, although they are a small minority. Its members are people who live in the world and hold normal jobs. They do not join Opus Dei to give up their jobs. On the contrary, what they look for in the Work is the spiritual help they need to sanctify their daily work. Thus, their work becomes a means to sanctify themselves and help others do the same thing. They do not change their status. They continue being single, married, widowed or priests. What they try to do is serve God and their fellowmen in their own state of life.

"The spirit of Opus Dei reflects the marvelous reality (forgotten for centuries by many Christians) that any honest and worthwhile work can be converted into a divine occupation. In God's service, there are no 'second-class' jobs. All of them are important.

"We give priority to spirit over organization and so the life of the members is not strait-jacketed by directives, plans and meetings. Each member goes his own way. What unites him to others is a shared spirit and a shared desire for holiness and apostolate which accompany him as he strives to sanctify his own everyday life.

"It would be ridiculous to think that the Opus Dei as such could mine coal or run any type of commercial venture. Its corporate works are all directly apostolic activities: training centers for farm workers, medical dispensaries in developing countries or areas, schools for girls from underprivileged families. In other words, educational or welfare activities like those carried on throughout the world by organizations of very religious creed.

"To these apostolic works should be added the growth of our corporate works of apostolate: student residences, conference centers, the university of Navarre, training centers for skilled and unskilled workers, technical institutes, schools, secretarial colleges, home management schools, etc. These centers are undoubtedly sources which project the Christian view of life. Run by laymen, directed as professional activities by lay citizens who are the same as their colleagues at work, and open to people of all classes and conditions, these centers have made any sectors of society appreciate the need of offering a Christian solution to the problems which arise in the exercise of their profession or job."

In the Philippines, the Opus Dei has established the Banahaw Cultural Center, the Mayana Cultural Center and the Makiling Conference Center. The Banahaw Cultural Center and the Mayana Cultural Center offer a course in theology for laymen who find themselves incapable of responding to their problems in life as well as the myriads of forces that challenge their faith. Both centers aim to provide some practical answers to the critical social problems of the times. And at the Makiling Conference Center men and women of all ages, social conditions and walks of life converge for workshops, seminars, study camps, closed retreats and other related activities eager to deepen their professional, cultural and spiritual formation in the Christian context.

With its variegated activities, we are prone to conclude that the Opus Dei has lived and is living up to the intentions and expectations of Msgr. Josemaria Escriva de Balaguer, its founder, who once preached: "We cannot be like schizophrenics, if we want to be Christians. There is just one life made of flesh and spirit. And it is this life which has to become, in both soul and body, holy and filled with God. We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things. Heaven and earth seem to merge in the horizon. But where they really meet is in your hearts, when you sanctify your everyday lives. Because when a Christian carries out with love the most insignificant everyday action, that action overflows with the transcendence of God."

# THE WAY

## A SPIRITUALITY OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

**PEDRO RODRIGUEZ**

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### I

#### THESE WORLD CRISES ARE CRISES OF SAINTS

**The Way** is one of the best known books of spirituality of this century. Written by Mgr. Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer, who founded Opus Dei in 1928, a first shorter version appeared in 1934, and the final version was published in 1939. New translations and reprints parallel the expansion throughout the world of the Association of the faithful, whose spirituality is reflected in the "thoughts" of this book.

**The Way** is written from a close contact with daily life. In no way it is a theoretical book in the sense of being the result of years of enclosed study. The strong doctrinal inspiration which runs right through it (and which has since been shown to have been ahead of its time) reflects a way of looking at God, the Church and the world, which did not come only from the theological training which Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer received in the Spanish seminaries of the twenties, however gifted a pupil he was. It comes rather from a new and better light, from 'new splendour for my eyes, from that Eternal Light, the holy Gospel' (**The Way**, 416) which must necessarily be related to the foundation of Opus Dei on 2 October 1928.

The 999 spiritual considerations which **The Way** contains are, as it were, snapshots of the life of prayer and apostolic work of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer. Each is explained and better understood not only in the context of the chapter in which it occurs, but often by reference to other points in very different parts of the book, which come to the memory of the habitual reader, showing him the coherence and unity of the whole.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anecdote. Some days ago a married lady with a family told me of a new discovery in her spiritual life, which coincided with a discovery of the coherence of the points in *The Way*: how each one is context for the others. She was meditating on the apostolic task of the Christian in the first point: 'And set aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart'. Afterwards in point 92, on prayer, she found: 'and in my meditation a fire shall flame out. That

The christian features of **The Way** result from a deep intimacy with God and at the same time, from a daily apostolic experience a contact with men of flesh and blood. Precisely because of this, one can find in this book, together with thoughts taken from contemplative prayer, practical advice on, for instance how to live better with others or make good use of one's time in study.

**The Way** is not a book to be read primarily for information or criticism: this, I think, holds true for all genuine christian writing from Sacred Scripture down: Christianity is primarily life and witness<sup>2</sup> and its subjection to intellectual examination is only a secondary stage. On the other hand, **The Way** is a book which has shown an extraordinary capacity for unleashing (if I may use such an expression) vital christian conduct among people of very different outlooks, varying from American university students to Filipino housewives.

Of course a book like this does not contain the whole spirituality of Opus Dei, much less a systematic exposition of it. Consequently, in order to elaborate on some aspects, I will have to refer to other writings of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer, set down in a different style from the incisive and confidential tone of **The Way**, and which are more doctrinal and reasoned out. Nevertheless, **The Way** itself contains the essence of the spirituality which Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer has spread throughout the world.

These lines, which are meant to be a theological reflection on this spirituality are the result of many years of effort (God only knows with what success) to live the spirituality of Opus Dei. And, indeed, when I read and meditate on the writings of its Founder, I cannot really say where what is usually called "spiritual reading" and "meditation" end, and intellectual and theological reflection (the ordered and systematic construction of the christian and wordly realities) begins.

### THE ENVIRONMENT OF **The Way**

**The Way** is written in a direct conversation style from the first line: "Don't let your life be barren" to the last: "Fall in love, and you will

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is why you go to pray: to become a bonfire a living flame giving heat and light'. Then came the discovery: the source of apostolate — to set alight — is prayer: a bonfire, a living flame. A 'new discovery' not a theoretical one but one which forms a part of prayer.

<sup>2</sup> It is also primarily doctrine. Christ, who said of Himself 'I am the Life', also said 'I am the Truth' (cfr. John 14, 6). But in their original manifestation, 'doctrine' and 'life' are so closely bound together that the doctrine is contemplated in order to be 'lived' and is grasped from living example. The second phase, the theological reflection on the doctrine and life, seeks to satisfy inborn intellectual demands: man wants to order rationally and to understand more deeply, in so far as it is possible, the truth and the life which he finds in Revelation — facts and doctrine — is supernatural and, therefore, cannot be rigorously and adequately "understood" or "rationalized".

never leave him." In the Introduction, Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer describes this climate of dialogue: "There are things that I whisper in your ear, as a friend, as a brother, as a father. We shall speak intimately: and and God will be listening to us". Each point of The Way is, in effect, a dialogue with God or a conversation with men or a word from Sacred Scripture with an excellent silence:

"To know you love me so much, my God, and yet . . . I haven't lost my mind" (*The Way*, 425)

"I admit that my clumsiness, Beloved, is so great, so very great that even when I wish to caress I cause pain" (*The Way*, 883)

"Lord, for myself I want nothing. All for your glory and for love" (*The Way*, 788)

"There's no denying the influence of the environment', you've told me. And I have to answer: Quite . . ." (*The Way*, 376)

"How you made me laugh and how you made me think with that trite remark of yours: 'I'm all for first things first'. (*The Way*, 845)

"Our Lord says: 'A new commandment I give you: to love one another. But this shall all men know that you are my disciples'. And Saint Paul: 'Bear each other's burdens, and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ'. I have nothing to add". (*The Way*, 385)

In this warm and friendly atmosphere the reader is gradually presented with the most radical demands of christian life in a completely straight-forward way. Christianity is shown as absolutely opposed to something just "received" or "added on". The Christian is not an arm-chair investor in heaven. His religion is a call, a commitment, which rules out any "bourgeois" peace of mind. From the fundamental first point of this book it is seen as something to be achieved in one's own personal existence:

"Don't let your life be barren. Be useful. Make yourself felt. Shine forth with the torch of your faith and your love. With your apostolic life, wipe out the trail of filth and slime left by the corrupt sowers of hatred. And set aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart" (*The Way*, 1).

If one remembers the historical context of *The Way*, one can easily understand why, in spite of the serenity of its doctrine, this book is written in dialectical opposition to a passive and lethargic christianity (reduced to ideology, ethics or "good behaviour", and lacking a lively faith which can make it a sanctifying leaven).

"Stir up the fire of faith. Christ is not a figure that has passed. He is not a memory that is lost in history. He lives! *Iesus Christus heri et hodie*, ipse et in saecula, says Saint Paul. 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever!' (*The Way*, 586).

Throughout *The Way*, the author sees the need to revitalize the presence of the Christians in the world, drawing his inspiration from the New Testament. This explains the frequent references to the early christians "who knew Peter and Paul and John, and all but witnessed the Death and Resurrection of the Master" (*The Way*, 925), and the invitations to read Sacred Scriptures: "Drink at the clear fountain of the Acts of the Apostles" (*The Way*, 570). "How I wish your bearing and conversation were such that, on seeing or hearing you, people would say: This man reads the life of Jesus Christ". (*The Way*, 2)

But Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer envisages the renewal of christian life through the renewal of individual and concrete persons. The whole book written in a personal tone, is an invitation to "you", the particular reader, to assume responsibility: "Many great things depend — don't forget it — on whether you and I live our lives as God wants" (*The Way*, 755). This evaluation of the free and responsible human person, is the anthropological basis on which the book builds its "image of the christian".

#### THE STRUCTURE OF *The Way*

As I see it, Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer in writing these pages, has tried to gather the "historical heritage" of christianity and give it to modern man; the way in which he does this leads him to draw up a concept of christian life in the world. This, though belonging to christian tradition ("I am going to tell you nothing new" he says in the Introduction), appeared to many in its time as a new discovery. The great social repercussion of these ideas (other people have contributed to the phenomenon in different ways) has meant that thirty years later the message of *The Way* can be studied calmly, without shocking "right-minded" people. Council documents, especially the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chapters IV and V, remove any need for arguing a doctrine which, not long ago, seemed to some a "dangerous modernistic innovation".

Though I know I will leave many things unsaid, I should like to show what, to my mind, makes up the theological nucleus of *The Way's* message, its image of God and man.

In its 999 points there is, I think, a double series of texts. One group of thoughts belongs to what I might call the "radical christian vocation". It is an ensemble of ideas which does not bring to the fore the variety of vocations, states and charism of the life of the People of God; it is, as it were, the christian "common denominator", whatever the "numerator" of the reader. Here no one is single or married, cleric or lay, religious or secular. We are, from the point of view of spirituality, on the level corresponding to the second chapter of the Church Constitution, *De populo Dei*: "This messianic people has as its head, Christ .. as its foundation,



the dignity and freedom of sons of God... as its law, the commandment of love... as its end, the growth of the Kingdom..."<sup>3</sup>

When we read, for example, "Get used to saying No" (*The Way*, 5) or "Live in the presence of God and you will have supernatural life" (*The Way*, 278) what we are getting is a concrete expression of christian fortitude and an essential principle which comes from the Sermon on the Mount: christian spirituality with no other colouring. It is something which must occur in any "image of the christian" which faithfully corresponds to the Gospel kept by the Church. It is pure transmission of the christian message,

In this sense, *The Way* contributes to and draws from all the holy enterprises which have historically enriched the christian heritage over the centuries.

"And what of the means? — They are the same as those of Peter and Paul, of Dominic and Francis, of Ignatius and Xavier: The Cross and the Gospel... Don't they satisfy you?" (*The Way*, 470)

On this level the spiritual experience of a saintly religious is presented to men of the world to urge them to a dedication to God: "... that Jesus won't have to say to you what we are told he said of others to Saint Teresa: "Teresa, I wanted it... But men did not." (*The Way*, 761)

And the anecdote about the monk (*The Way*, 704) leads to dialogue with the man in the street: "These words, which I joyously heard that holy man say, I can only repeat to you with sorrow when you tell me that you are not happy".

All this in a book which is addressed not to religious but to ordinary christians: "Be men and women of the world, but don't be wordly men and women" (*The Way*, 939). Nevertheless, it is this content of essential christianity to which I am referring which makes it possible for religious also to gain inspiration from many parts of the book, as can be deduced from the author's note to the third Spanish edition: "We have consoling evidence... letters from priests, from religious and, above all, from young people... of the supernatural fruit which these pages have produced in souls".<sup>4</sup>

*The Way*, as I said before, is a book which tries to awaken and channel the christian responsibility of lay people, leading them to a serious christian life; therefore, in this first series of texts, it gives them that doctrine which is necessary and essential in any condition of christian life and whatever its concrete spiritual experience. It is a distribution of christian tradition springing from Sacred Scripture and is enriched throughout the centuries by the experience of the Church and of saintly souls.

<sup>3</sup> Dogm. Const. de *Ecclesia*, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Besides this personal influence, many religious study and meditate *The Way* in order to guide lay people towards a genuinely lay spirituality.

All this doctrine is intended by the author to be given to the man in the street, to the ordinary faithful, immersed in everyday affairs. This doctrine—basic essential christianity — receives a new colour and style, a new spirit which would of itself constitute a new spirituality, were it not that this is to be found in another scattered series of texts scattered throughout the book, which gives it its attractive personality and makes up the “newness” of *The Way* in Catholic spiritual life. It is here, mainly, that the author sketches his “image of the christian”, characteristic of the spirituality of *Opus Dei*. Here we see the ordinary christian, the layman who, lives and sanctifies himself with all that is good, true and beautiful in the world, and penetrated to the depths of his being by the truth and grace of Jesus Christ.

In the pages which follow, I wish to describe this “image of the Christian” — the book’s particular way of looking at God, the Church and the world.

#### THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer’s views of the Christian realities captures, above all, the supernatural centre of Christ’s message, which appears as one of sanctity and salvation: “I have come so that they may have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10. 10). That the Redemption has as its proper effect the personal holiness of the faithful, and the universal call to holiness (which thirty years later was to be solemnly dealt with in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Second Vatican Council) is the basis of the book’s message and of its author’s preaching.

One finds this call to holiness right through *The Way* and one text in particular recalls the surprise which this aspect of the Christian Faith (then so little known), produced in the people who met the young priest: “Your duty is to sanctify yourself. Yes, even you. Who thinks that this task is only for priests and religious. To everyone, without exception, our Lord said: ‘Be ye perfect, as my heavenly Father is perfect’ ” (*The Way*, 291)<sup>5</sup>.

By the very fact of Baptism, the charter of Christian citizenship, man is called to sanctity,<sup>6</sup> personal holiness which is not abstract, generic or theoretical but specific and everyday. This is the sanctity of lay people, of the “men and women of the world” (*The Way*, 939).

<sup>5</sup> According to the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (n. 40), “God Our Lord, the Master and Model of holiness of life preached sanctity of life to each and all of his disciples, whatever their condition in life: “*Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*” (Mt. 5. 48).

<sup>6</sup> For Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer the Christian is, above all, the saint: “man of God”, “apostle”, “leader”, “apostle of apostles”, “man of prayer and sacrifice”, “soul of worth”, “man of interior life” (cf. *The Way, passim*), all have roughly the same meaning.

When the author sets out the task of the "modern apostle" (cf. *The Way*, 335), he does not stop to consider the political situation of the world, the presence of Marxism, the crises of contemporary culture, the tactical problems besetting the Church in a modern context... All this is of secondary importance; what has absolute priority, according to Christian Revelation, is the personal self-surrender to the Lord of the Church and of the universe: the need for men to be holy. Everything else must be seen in the light of this self-surrender, since everything in the world can be reduced to a problem of personal sanctity: "I'll tell you a secret, an open secret: these world crises are crises of saints" (*The Way*, 301).

The interior excitement which this doctrine has created in the readers of the book comes from the fact that it shows that sanctity sought in the world, the sanctity of ordinary people, is really attainable. To read *The Way* is to feel oneself invited and committed to a supernatural enterprise (sanctification), which had formerly regarded — erroneously — as the exclusive concern of a certain type of person, in a special position for holiness. This universal invitation to sanctity has been the incessant theme of Mgr. Escrivá de Balaguer's pastoral activity. "Since the beginning of the Work in 1928, my preaching has been that sanctity is not something for a privileged set of people. We have come to say that all the ways of the earth, all states-of-life, all professions, all honest human tasks, can be divine. We don't present to lay people as a model the sanctity of a priest or of a religious, but we say to each one — to all men and to all women — that there were they are, they can acquire the fulness of Christian life: and not a second-rate sanctity, because the sanctity of lay people is not a poor and sorry imitation of the sanctity of the religious or the priest"<sup>7</sup>.

The idea of specifically lay sanctity, neither imitating nor copied from that which is proper to religious, nor compared in degrees of facility with that of those men and women who live, by vocation, the *contemptus saeculi*<sup>8</sup> underlines and informs the spirituality of *Opus Dei*. The following words are also taken from the text which I have just quoted: "I do not mean that sanctity is easier in the world than in the religious life; but that each person must seek it and can achieve it in the state of life to which he has been called by God — his vocation — and there he will not lack the grace of our Lord."<sup>9</sup>

*(To be continued.)*

<sup>7</sup> Italics mine. (All italics in quotations from MGR. Escrivá de Balaguer or from the Magisterium are mine unless otherwise stated).

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. what is said on the religious vocation in note 18.

<sup>9</sup> *Letters*, Rome 19 March, 1954.

## S U M M A R Y

*(Part I is found in the preceding pages. Parts II and III will be published later.)*

### I. 'These world crises are crises of saints'

The environment of The Way

The internal structure of The Way

The universal call to holiness

### II. The three main features of the spirituality of Opus Dei

#### 1. The validity of the Christian's situation in the world for the task of sanctification

The concept of professional prestige

The frenzy for change

Sanctifying oneself in work

#### 2. The primacy of grace in the task of sanctification:

**Baptismal spirituality**

The awareness of being a son of God

Friendship with Jesus Christ

'Contemplatives in the middle of the world'

#### 3. Secular situations sanctified by grace as a form of Christian witness: apostolic spirituality, "consecratio mundi"

'Sanctifying work itself': apostolate in social environments and structures

'Sanctifying with work: apostolate with individuals

The apostolate of lay people, an ecclesial but not an ecclesiastical activity: the Christian's discretion

### III. The image of the Christian proposed by The Way: the concept of 'unity of life'

# THE LAS PIÑAS BAMBOO ORGAN: A RELIC RESTORED

Luningning B. Ira \*

*In Eastern tradition of bamboo musical instruments,  
the organ is unique*

**THE BRONZE BELL** of Las Piñas church pealed joyously last March to call the parishioners of this ancient salt-making and fishing town to the newly renovated Church of St. Joseph and there welcome the return of their — and the Philippines' — celebrated 159-year-old bamboo organ.

The famed musical instrument, the only one of its kind in the world, was airshipped from Bonn, West Germany, after almost two years. Restoration work on the historic organ was completed at year-end 1974 by the House of Klais, under precise conditions simulating the Philippine climate. The best and the biggest organ builder known in all Germany, Klais is in fact synonymous with excellent organ building.

With the storied instrument restored "as good as new," the Germans could not seem to make enough of it. Before the bamboo organ was shipped back, a special concert was held at the atelier of Johannes Klais Orgelbau KG in Bonn, featuring no less than the well-known master organ player of the Cathedral of Trier, Herr Wolfgang Oehms. The President of the Federal Republic of Germany headed the list of prominent guests who included members of the diplomatic corps, leading personages in the government and private sectors. After the concert, there was a reception at the Philippine chancery, which, like the concert, was covered by press, radio and television. Interest in the priceless Philippine relic was built up during its 20-month stay in Bonn, when feature articles on the bamboo organ appeared in German magazines, newspapers and other publications.

The Philippine Department of Tourism took care of airshipping the organ back through the facilities of the Philippine Air Force. Herr Klais, whose factory in Germany the major restoration work was done, and the technicians who will install the bamboo organ at its home in the Las Piñas church, came along to Las Piñas. They took no less than eight weeks to assemble and install the bamboo organ—in time for a gala concert early by Herr Oehms of Trier Cathedral.

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## 630 BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

Thus the Philippines welcomes back a celebrated culture object and a priceless legacy from its Hispanic past. To think that the bamboo organ was almost lost to this generation.

The bamboo organ languished in a decrepit state brought about by the vagaries of tropical weather. Before it was too late the Philippine Historical Conservation Society, formed in 1960, stepped in "to contribute funds, efforts and time to the preservation of our national patrimony." They rallied the townspeople of Las Piñas who awoke to the urgency of the restoration project. Restoration of the organ became crucial after authorities no longer heard the sounds it used to produce—nay, was famous for—on account of the instrument's state of disrepair. Churchgoers missed its music and soon town residents became apprehensive over the organ's condition. The appeal to have the bamboo organ repaired gained nationwide attention. In addition to the initial funds raised, more than a million pesos was pledged by provincial and municipal governments, civic and religious organizations for the restoration project. After assurances were received that it could be restored to its original state, the bamboo organ was airshipped to Bonn in 1973.

But why did it have to be shipped to Germany for repairs? Why was it not restored right on home ground?

The answer is provided by the Las Piñas parish priest, Fr. Mark Lesage, CICM: "It is only in Bonn where the organ builder, the House of Klais, the fourth generation of Johannes Klais Orgelbau, can be found. The firm has the sole technical knowledge of the craftsmanship of the bamboo organ built by Fray Diego Cera."

Parish church records show that the last of the Las Piñas residents who knew how to repair the bamboo organ died after 1891. They were the ones who helped Fray Diego construct the organ.

Later in 1973, technician Marciano Jacela, went to Germany to assist in the restoration work. His trip was sponsored jointly in the Philippine and West German governments; he was at the same time granted by the Federal Republic of Germany a two-year scholarship to undergo training in organ-building and repair at Bonn. His dispatches on the progress of the restoration work provide a highly interesting and intriguing sidelight to the story of the restoration:

"The House of Klais...found the organ excellent in all its features (mechanical, measurements, and the like) which can compare with any modern organ. A fitting tribute indeed to Father Diego Cera and the people who helped him build this unique instrument...

"The estimated completion date of the bamboo organ may fall short by two months because...the progress of the work is rather slow on account of several factors.

"Every feature of the organ should be exactly the same as it was before. Otherwise it would not function and sound as Father Cera had conceived it. Since it was handcrafted, machine could hardly be of any use. Most, if not all the work, has to be done by hand.

"Another factor that delays the repair is the climate. So far the organ has yet to feel the German atmosphere. Work has to be done in a room called *Klimaraum*, which is equipped with special devices to control humidity, or else the organ will be ruined.

"A German technician working with me had to go out of the room very often as he is not used to warm temperature. This contributes to the slow progress of the work.

"People who enter the room say, 'Oh, it's warm!' Others would say, 'I have been to the Philippines...!'

"A third factor that delays work is the coming and going of curious musicians and musically inclined people. The bamboo organ has received so wide a publicity that people as far away as Holland, England and other countries, come to see it. Hence, work is very often disrupted by the hour as the visitors have to be entertained and their questions answered.

"The last factor is Klais himself. He leaves nothing to chance. He sees to it that only parts of the best quality go into the organ. Leathers, felts, and all other parts are properly treated chemically against moth, termite and other destructive elements. Stainless steel springs, pins and cables are used to prevent rusting...

"I believe that when the restoration work is completed, the organ will need no further major repair for ages, with only a minimum of minor repair and maintenance.

"Upon completion of the work the organ will be assembled in another *Klimaraum* for a televised concert..."

The story of the Las Piñas bamboo organ is the story of the town itself — and of the man who, according to writer Quijano de Manila, "found Las Piñas a grass shack village and turned it into a town of stone."

It begins in July 1792, when an Acapulco galleon moored at Manila Bay after a five-month voyage. Among the passengers were 13 Recollect priests. One of them was Fray Diego Cera de la Virgen del Carmen, 33, from the Spanish province of Huesca. He volunteered for service in the Philippines and his reputation as a distinguished musician and organist preceded him.

Within a year after his arrival Fray Diego Cera had built a piano. The feat was considered sensational in Manila: the piano was relatively new, having been invented only in that century. The piano Fray Diego

built was one of very few, and almost certainly the first ever constructed, in the Philippines. The Recollects sent it as a gift to the Queen of Spain. So delighted was the royal recipient that she rewarded the piano-maker with a set of gold altar vessels and a bronze bell. That bell to this day calls the Las Piñas townfolks to church.

In 1795 the Recollects sent Fray Diego Cera to Las Piñas as its first parish priest. Although made a town 33 years earlier, in 1762, Las Piñas had been too poor to afford its own parish and remained for three decades merely as a *visita* of Parañaque town.

The records describe Fray Diego as "intelligent, active and generous, devoted to studying ways and means whereby this town, though poor, could become equal of other richer towns." The personal assessment proved an understatement. Rallying the town's population of 1,200, he built bridges and roads. The modest chapel of bamboo and nipa that served as town church by swampy seashore, was rebuilt gradually by Fray Diego to what, by 1819, was a stone church, which gave Las Piñas town a source of pride and a badge of identity. He taught leather dyeing, plant and animal husbandry, basketweaving and other crafts, and people from far and near consulted him. Because he was fond of music, by 1796, or a year after taking charge of the parish, he had "founded a choir of bass violins and other string instruments which he himself trained."

Of Fray Diego's work the most enduring are the stone church, which still stands today, and the bamboo organ. Actually the bamboo organ of Las Piñas is only one of the two notable organs Fray Diego constructed.

Under his direction, a huge organ was built for the Recollect church in Intramuros—an organ "gigantic, monumental in dimensions, extending its numerous tentacles throughout the church, covering the entire length of the galleries and the retablo of the high altar and even the vault of the church, with a multitude of limbs, each one armed with a different instrument through which it poured forth torrents of harmony." Some of the 33 stops of this organ were made of bamboo and it is of record that these stops "played very sweet melodies."

Completed in 1798, this creation was a pride and landmark of Intramuros for a hundred years. When the Revolution broke out in 1898, the organ was damaged beyond repair.

Work on the Las Piñas bamboo organ began in 1816 when, according to Quijano de Manila, Fray Diego "started selecting and curing the bamboos to be used in the project. In his experiments with native materials he had apparently stumbled on the idea of using bamboo as tubes for an organ." With the towns people's help he "gathered bamboos of different sizes and buried them in sea sand for a year. Then he dug them up and



picked out those that had remained intact. The bamboos he used have resisted weevils and rot for almost a century and a half."

**THE PROJECT** took all of five years. In 1821, town records testify, the "curious and famous bamboo organ was completed except for the clarin stops," devices that regulate the pitch of the organ. It was installed in the Las Piñas church in 1822.

Ten years after completing the bamboo organ, Fray Diego, then a frail 70, fell ill and resigned his parish. Soon after leaving Las Piñas, he died in Manila on June 24, 1832.

The 1860s through the 1880s were calamitous decades for Las Piñas. Strong earthquakes rocked the town, one after the other. An unusually strong typhoon blew off the church roof and the organ had to be disassembled. Fortunately by 1891 there were still in Las Piñas organ-makers trained by Fray Diego himself and they undertook the competent repair of the bamboo organ. Typhoons, epidemics, drought, locusts, then the Revolution, war and the change of sovereignty diminished and impoverished Las Piñas. All the while, for lack of maintenance funds, the bamboo organ was slowly going to seed.

In 1911 the tourists "discovered" the organ, and things took a turn somewhat for the better. The parish books began to show items of income under the heading "From some Americans who came to visit the organ." Nonetheless, until 1917, nothing remedial was done and by then the organ was in a truly sad state. Only two stops worked and most tragic of all, "the bellows were so heavy and deteriorated that they produced noise rather than wind."

The organ underwent a series of minor and major repairs, the most notable in 1917, by Fr. Victor Faniel, CICM, and in 1943, by two Spanish technicians, Carmelo and Jose Loinaz. The observance of Fray Diego's death centennial in 1932 was marked by substitution of the defective organ bellows with an electric motor.

To appreciate the Las Piñas organ more fully is to place it in its generic perspective. Largest and most powerful of musical instruments, the organ is a keyboard instrument in which sound is produced by pipes to which wind is supplied through a mechanism under the control of the organist. It should be particularized as reed organ or electronic organ. Organ, alone, implies an organ with pipes; which is why the *Britannica* disdains use of the term pipe organ as "tautologous."

**THE ORGAN** has the advantage of many tone qualities, and the disadvantages of an insensitive touch and the fact that all expression is obtained from it by mechanical means. It has anything from one to five keyboards or manuals, a pedal keyboard, and numbers of stops, in large organs more than a hundred.

The sound of the organ is universally associated with church music. Ironically, the ancient organ had pagan associations, its sound, according to the *Americana*, considered "screaming and thundering to the ears of an age accustomed to low-voiced lyres and harps." As a consequence, "it was used in the open air, where it had to sound over large areas, and was particularly suited to the brutal atmosphere of the Roman circus. As a worldly, vulgar instrument of the arena, where martyrs were often brought to death, it became disreputable in early Christian circles." Centuries lapsed before the organ was accepted in the church and eventually became "the most Christian of all instruments."

The evolution of the organ is lost in the mists of antiquity. The earliest record is of the Greek engineer Ctesibus (third century BC), who is credited with the invention of an organ very much on the lines of the single-manual organ. Subsequent development of the instrument through the Dark Ages is obscure, but by the eighth or ninth century it was being used in Christian churches, where a wide variety of national styles in organ-building was evident.

Italian organs developed to their maturity soon after 1500 and remained unaltered until the 19th century. The Spanish organ followed the Italian tradition, but later many reeds were added. Germany led the world in organ-building and the composition of organ music from 1500 to 1800, reaching the peak of its achievement in highly baroque music about 1700.

Many well-preserved 17th- and 18th-century organs of the German school still survive in Germany and the Netherlands. While there are many other fine instruments at Gouda and the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam, the 17th-century organ at Alkmaar, Netherlands is regarded by many people as the finest in the world.

The Philippine bamboo organ is unique and the only one of its kind in the world. It "hangs" at the upper left side of Las Piñas church, just upon the entrance, ornately surmounted by a crown. Its dimensions—5.17 meters high, 4.17 meters wide and 1.45 meters deep—are scaled to a town church that can seat 500. The organ has five complete scales, from

do to do, and 23 registers, and consists of 953 tubes, of which 843 are of bamboo and the rest of metal. A distinguishing feature is a special register so designed that, when a little water is poured in, it "produces a sound very much like the twittering of birds."

The horizontal placing in the bamboo organ of the several tubes played by pedal is characteristic of Spanish organs. Today it is world famous not just for its being made of bamboo but for having survived 159 years in a remarkably playable state. Earlier, however, it was renowned for a more musicologically valid reason: for the "softness of its melodies" and the magnificence of its tone quality.

**ORGANISTS** have said that the bamboo tubes "emit music of a sweetness no other organ is capable of." Musicologists describe its timbre, texture and tone quality as "distinctive" and "different" from other organs, and has "a haunting sweetness."

Its being made of bamboo could not have been remarkable to the Las Piñas helpers of Fray Diego, nor to the Padre himself. Nor, for that matter, to any countryside folk accustomed to the expedient of utilizing materials at hand. Bamboo is plentiful in most of Asia. That such mundane material can be transformed into a musical instrument is ancient knowledge—from the early primitives of the East who amused themselves with bamboo jews' harps to the sophisticates of Japan who created bamboo flutes. Fray Diego only shared in the secret.

## **BIBLE STUDY**

JUBILEE CONGRESS IN ROME

# **THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS TODAY**

by

**Barnabas Mary Ahern, C.P.**

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*By a happy coincidence the present Holy Year coincides with the Bicentenary of the death of St. Paul of the Cross (1775-1975). Just now, when the Church centres her attention upon the need for man to be reconciled with God and with his neighbour, the profound significance of the theme of this Holy Year is illuminated by the memory of a saint who spent his whole life in meditating and preaching the message: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself", (2 Cor 5, 19).*

*Every aspect of the character of St. Paul of the Cross goes to show his total dedication to the Passion of Christ. He looked upon the Cross of Christ as the one lasting mystery which could free man from sin and egoism, to unite him with God and with his neighbour as a Son of God. Every single day of his life, this saint realized in vital fashion that while the whole earth turned and tottered, Christ Crucified is ever present as the salvific power and wisdom of God. Crux stat dum volvitur orbis,*

*Faithful to the spirit of their Founder, members of the Congregation of the Passion decided to make their own special contribution to the meaning and importance of the Holy Year. In collaboration with the Pontifical Antonian University, they have sponsored an International Congress at which the best European and American scholars will discuss the theme "The Wisdom of the Cross Today". This Congress will be held in Rome at the Antonianum, 13-18 October 1975. Just as St. Francis of Assisi and St. Paul of the Cross were notably alike in their love of the Crucified, so their sons are united in a common effort to make the mystery of the Cross a vital reality and a force for reconciliation in the life of men.*

*The Congress programme noticeably reflects all the new advances made by recent study in the understanding of the Passion, and in appreciation of its contemporary relevance. While some were inclined to believe that the renewed theology of the Resurrection might necessarily*

*throw a shadow over the Passion, many voices were raised in strong protest against this lack of balance.*

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The Death and Resurrection of Christ are two equally important factors of one and the same mystery of redemption, and each one of these two aspects has its own proper and distinctive character and its own finality. If St. Thomas Aquinas has learned from Romans 4, 25, that the Resurrection and the Passion are equally important in God's redemptive work, the same step should be in evidence today to safeguard the truth that the Passion of Christ is as important as is the Resurrection: "He was put to death for our trespasses and raised to life for our justification."

Recent biblical teaching has accomplished an inestimable service in supporting the emphasis which the Christian faith has always placed upon the Death of Christ. The contents of the New Testament, especially in the Pauline Epistles, leave no doubt that God's salvific plan assigned an eminent role to the Passion both objectively and subjectively in the redemption. Many a time the Apostle Paul employs words and expressions which refer to the Death of Jesus as a theological summary of the whole salvific event of his Death and Resurrection. Thus Paul's references to "blood", to "cross", to "Christ and him crucified", are pregnant expressions of faith which connote the whole redemptive process. And of even greater weight is the fact that Paul attributes the same importance, but a different efficacy and finality, to these two related aspects of the Christ-event, as seems clear from the applications he makes of the Death-Resurrection to the Christian life."

Catholic scholars like Benoit, Lyonnet, Feuillet, Schurman, and Schnackenburg are in the first rank of the group of biblical researchers who strive to safeguard the essential importance of the Passion of Christ, especially when some are inclined to forget this because they are fascinated with the renewed theology of the Resurrection. Protestant Scripture scholars have shown equal interest. A collection of essays, edited by H. Conzelmann, *Zur Bedeutung Todes Jesu*, (Gutersloh: Gerd. Mohn, 1967) offers evidence of the intention of each contributor to protect the wealth of ail that God has revealed, on the death of his Son.

Dogmatic theology has also made its own contribution to the understanding of the nature and efficacy of Christ's sufferings. The present preoccupation of theologians with the integrity of the humanity of Jesus has led to a more careful study of what limitations he had imposed upon himself in his Kenosis, and consequently upon the character of his hu-

man experience. Moreover the study of experts like Rahner, Schillebeckx, Gutwenger, and Lonergan have made clear a wealth of insights about the mode and character of Jesus' self-knowledge. These studies have shown that his human intellect was at the same time a consciousness of light and of colour in the situation of sin in which he had to live and die. Many of these insights on the nature of the Passion of Jesus had already been anticipated in the writings of Soren Kierkegaard. But we must acknowledge in these present theological studies the singular merit of having more deeply probed the nature of the sufferings of Jesus, and thereby offering a firm basis for conclusions on the depth and extent of all that the God-Man had to endure for our salvation.

### *Safeguarding the delicate balance*

These insights of biblical and dogmatic teaching will serve to safeguard the delicate balance between the *agere contra* and the *sursum corda* which must be maintained in every solid ascetical theology. The description of his own life given by the Apostle as an on-going effort "to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings (Phil 3, 10), cannot simply be considered as Paul's personal ideal. As always, when expressing a Christian mystery, his "I" must be seen as the "I" of every Christian. A theology or programme of spirituality is solid and evenly balanced only on condition that it shows equal concern for the two aspects of the redemptive mystery, Death and Resurrection.

In his allocutions and letters, Paul VI has repeatedly rejected the prospect of a purely earthly Utopia, and has continually warned against the kind of egocentric mentality which would change Christian freedom into licence for every kind of thought and action. In this way he has simply repeated the authentic message of faith, that the Christian life of a Christian ought to be conformed to the Death of Christ if the Christian wishes to share in his Resurrection, imperfectly here on earth, perfectly in Paradise. This teaching of the Holy Father offers a guideline for all those who speak or write on Christian spirituality. Since ascetical theology is founded on Scripture and supported by insights of an authentic theology, its formulations and directives require equal attention to the two aspects of the Christian mystery: Death and Resurrection.

### *New sensitivity to suffering*

Providentially, at the present time, there is a new sensitivity to physical suffering, to depressing poverty, and to the spiritual anguish of so many men of our time; this spurs us on to a new interest in the Passion

of Christ. The purely human concern of sociology should now be transformed into a radical Christian concern and obligation to assert the presence of the compassion of Christ who died that men might live. In the field of human suffering there are still vast and unexplored regions which cry out to be filled with the active love of Christ who gave himself for all men. Social concern will become fully Christian only when all members of the Church make vital and effective the simple truth that Christ is our "eternal contemporary" who must be served and consoled in the sufferings of all those "little ones" whom he recognizes as his brothers and sisters. He himself has spoken the definitive word upon the reality of his Passion in the world. In Matt 25, 40, he gives an assurance to those who help anyone who is poor and suffering: "Truly I say to you: as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me."

The Congress on "The Wisdom of the Cross Today" will be developed along these lines. Lecturers recognized as masters in the field of Sacred Scripture, Dogma, Spiritual Theology, Ecumenism and Sociology will offer their contribution to the understanding of the Passion of Christ as the permanent reality that alone may reconcile man with God and men with one another.



## ERRATA

### IN LAST MONTH'S ISSUE

Editorial, p. 498, 3rd paragraph, 1st line: "deadline" should have been **headline**.

Editorial, p. 498, 4th paragraph, 5th line: "boast" should have been **boost**.

Cagayan Valley, p. 552, 4th paragraph, 7th line: "Cagayan" should have been **Cabagan**; p. 557, 3rd paragraph, 7th line, "1972" should have been **1752**; p. 558, 1st paragraph, 1st line "Campso" should have been **Sampso**.

Communication, p. 563, 2nd paragraph, should have been: Our reviewer also informs us that, in his view, some theological questions which are usually considered necessary, **are treated by Fiolet as unnecessary questions. Furthermore, St. Thomas may not have given the last answer to theological problems, but this is not our reviewer's point.**

# COMMUNICATION

*Originally, the word 'communicate' meant "to make (something) common, to participate, to share." This Section serves as a forum for exchange of views and for appeals. It also attends to questions that do not require scholarly study but call for practical advice.*

Dear Father Editor:

It appears that the theologians of the "Hartford Statement" have produced another piece of American middle class theology full of theological "escape hatches" and "weasel words" which appear in almost every statement of the thirteen themes they enumerate.

They are as follows:

- Theme 1. "all past forms of understanding reality"
- Theme 2. "totally independent".
- Theme 3. "and nothing else".
- Theme 4. "only be understood".
- Theme 5. "All religions are equally valid".
- Theme 6. "the whole meaning of salvation".
- Theme 7. "evil can adequately be understood".
- Theme 8. "The sole purpose of worship".
- Theme 9. "The modern pursuit of liberation from all social and historical restraints is finally dehumanizing (in the explanation).
- Theme 10. "ultimately normative".
- Theme 11. "An emphasis on transcendence is at least a hindrance and perhaps incompatible with".
- Theme 12. "will bring about" (It will certainly be a factor in the establishment of the Kingdom!)
- Theme 13. "hope beyond death is irrelevant at best marginal".

The use of such words as whole, totally, only, equally, all, adequately, sole, at least, perhaps, ultimately, etc. present a distortion of modern theological issues which are certainly false, but hardly "widespread among Christians today", certainly not in the caricatures which are presented here.



The statement is a reaction of, for and by middle class Americans. The theologians represented belong to this class and their formulations appear as representative of the preoccupations of this class. This is especially clear in themes number 9 and 10, in their distortions of the aims and goals of the theologies of liberation and the social-political aspects of grace and sin. (For a much more balanced view by an American theologian, see "Societal Grace: For a New Pastoral Strategy,"(5) by Fr. Thomas Clarke, S.J., in *Soundings*, Center of Concern, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.).

As Frederick Herzog points out:

To speak of white theology may be repulsive to some. It is not a merely descriptive term and certainly not a pejorative label. The best way to think of it is from a perspectival angle. This is the way minorities see us white religionists. For centuries the outcasts and downtrodden saw Protestant theology largely as standing apart from them. It served the special interests of the high and the mighty. Even when it tried to break the stranglehold of the wealthy as, for example, in the social gospel it hardly reached the minorities such as the blacks or the Indians. "White theology" thus functions as a perspectival term for (at least) Protestant theology. ("Liberation Hermeneutic as Ideology Critique," in *Interpretation*, vol. 28, no. 4, October, 1974, p. 388.)

Following Herzog, we would term the "Hartford Statement" a good example of white ecumenical theology expressed in white middle class American priorities.

It is only fitting that such a document should be formulated in Hartford Connecticut. It has one of the highest per-capita income averages in North America, and the themes reflect this bias. I am doubly aware of this since I was born, raised and educated in Hartford.

Sincerely in Christ,

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# HOMILETICS

by

**Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.**

## I. BIBLICAL NOTES FOR HOMILIES

### SOLEMNITY OF ALL SAINTS

(November 1, 1975)

**First Reading:** Apocalypse 7: 2-4.9-14.

**Second Reading:** First John 3: 1-3.

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 5: 1-12a

**A. First Reading:** Victory is the chief theme of the Apocalypse (or book of Revelation): victory of Christ who through his sufferings and death now reigns gloriously and triumphant; and victory of all his followers who have remained faithful to him in all trials and sufferings. Chapter seven presents a brilliant pageant in a double vision: that of the suffering People of God on earth and that of the triumphant People of God before God's throne in heaven. The former need have no fear of any adversity, not even death itself, if they belong to God (symbolized by the "sealing" which denotes ownership, for kings placed their zeal on their documents and possessions). They are described by the foundation number of both Israel and the Apostolic Church, the symbolic twelve denoting completeness, twelve being squared and multiplied by the cube of ten, the number of fulness. In a second vision, God's People stands triumphant before his throne, breaking forth in exultant praise of the Lamb to whom they owe their victory. Only by his passion and death (Blood) were they able to be born anew and by continued effort be delivered from all evil. Hence the palm of victory and their undying gratitude.

**B. Gospel Reading:** In this first of the five discourses in Matthew's Gospel called "the sermon on the mount", Jesus is introduced as the New Moses on another mountain bringing law and revelation to completion in the perfection of love. The beatitudes present the new spirit demanded of all Christ's followers. Their motivation is not temporal but eschatological: possess the land (the messianic blessings), be comforted (with God's victory over evil), see God (in direct vision), be filled (with divine delights). All these are various aspects of salvation and fulfillment brought by Christ but to be fully realized in the final Reign of

God. The original number in Matthew seems to be seven, for he shows a decided preference throughout the gospel for that sacred number. The "meek" may be an explanatory marginal gloss of the "poor in spirit" and the ninth is an elaboration of the eighth. "Poor in spirit" are not the poor as such, but who in the midst of all their privation place their entire trust in God and are submissive to his will, the "anawim" who are Israel's poor but holy ones.

**C. Second Reading:** All through this letter the Beloved Disciple breathes an atmosphere of love, and here he also infuses sentiments of profound hope. Divine sonship shared with God's own Son is the Christian's supreme boast. It is already possessed but its complete fruition will be in the eschatological kingdom, where God reigns supreme, and will consist in the direct vision of God as well as perfect conformity with Christ. Such a goal is worth every effort to steer clear of sin. No matter if God's children are not recognized here below for what they are. Neither was God's own Son!

## COMMEMORATION OF ALL THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED (Nov. 2, 1975)

**Gospel Reading:** John 11: 17-27.

The image of Martha as the active type of woman is familiar from Luke 10:40, but in this passage we are given to see also the woman of great faith who is fearless in professing it, regardless of what the bystanders thought. Her faith in the resurrection (which she shared with her fellow-Jews) is confirmed by Jesus with a singular clarification: He himself is the focal point of all resurrection, its cause and source. He who possesses Christ, already possesses eternal life (1 John 5:20c). This is called realized eschatology. Martha's spontaneous profession of faith in the person of Jesus is one of the finest witnesses of the fourth gospel: Messiah, Son of God, the Coming Savior. How well this reflects the faith of the Early Church!

## FEAST OF THE DEDICATION OF THE LATERAN BASILICA

(Nov. 9, 1975)

**First Reading:** Isaiah 56: 1-6-7

**Second Reading:** Ephesians 2: 19-22

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 5: 23-24

**A. First Reading:** This is the first poem of "Trito" or "Third-Isaiah" (56-66), apparently a different writer than Deutero-Isaiah (40-55), and supposing a later situation in Israel. It is a renewed invitation to an

earnest interior conversion, in preparation for the imminent "salvation" of the Lord. What pleases the Lord is above all that his servants love him and keep his covenant, regardless of their national origin (foreigners v.6). God's House is intended for all peoples (v.7b), and twice it is called by the exquisite epithet "house of prayer", an epithet which deeply imprinted itself on the mind and heart of Jesus (cf. Mk. 11:17 and parallels, at the cleansing of the Temple.)

**B. Gospel Reading:** In the sermon on the mount various sayings of Jesus are woven together. Concerning anger Jesus is aware that certain conditions upset human relations with resulting flare-up of anger which can seriously grieve the offended party. With the primacy of love in mind, Jesus stresses the duty of reconciliation, which is even a pre-requisite before hoping to offer pleasing worship to the Father of all. To drive home his principle, Jesus prefers to exemplify it by a graphic description taken from Jewish cultic worship. His purpose is to show the supreme importance of fraternal love rather than the literal carrying out of the example proposed.

**C. Second Reading:** Paul describes the community as a spiritual building (they are the living stones as in 1 Peter 2:5). The New Testament apostles and prophets are the foundation, while Christ is the most important part of the structure (which is either the cornerstone holding the parts together or the capstone crowning the whole edifice and completing it.) They form with Christ a holy Temple for he is the Living Temple of God where the Spirit of God dwells. The identical Spirit dwells in them as in Christ, and in that Spirit one with Christ they offer loving worship to the Father, as members of God's household and fellow-citizens with the saints in heaven.

### THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (November 16, 1975)

**First Reading:** Proverbs 33: 10-13, 19-20, 30-31.

**Second Reading:** First Thessalonians 5: 1-6

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 25: 14-30 (shorter reading: 14-15, 19-20).

**A. First Reading:** An alphabetical poem in which each verse begins with a consecutive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. It is a eulogy on a worthy wife. Coming at the very end of the book of Proverbs it was thought by the scribes to correspond well with the image of Wisdom at the beginning. A good wife is to be esteemed beyond all material gain, and is a constant asset to her husband. She is ingenious and industrious, knowing well how to provide for her family's needs. But she is also mindful of the needs of others, less fortunate than herself. More deserving of praise than passing beauty is a good wife's religious spirit.

intent on doing the will of God. Whatever she brings to the city-gates for marketing is readily appraised. Her wares are of the best.

**B. Gospel Reading:** In the parable, a wealthy man before going abroad entrusts larger sums of money to various servants with the evident purpose that they are to increase his possessions by means of investments and other ways during his absence. Industrious servants, devoted to the Master's cause, set to work at once while a lazy fellow is unwilling to exert any effort or run any risk just to increase the master's goods. The Master on his return, highly pleased with the former, makes over to them both profit and principal (cf. v.28), and entrusts them with greater responsibilities as a reward. But the slothful fellow, who insolently resorts to self-defense is severely punished, being deprived of portion, position, and any share in the Master's house and goods. His sins of omission are punished as severely as more positive sins (cf. Mt. 8:12; 24:51). The lesson is clear: personal responsibility for gifts received will be demanded of all God's servants. Christ expects of us proper and diligent use of all our "talents" (both natural and supernatural gifts), and will reward accordingly. Neglect and laziness in this matter merits the most dire results. V.29 indicates that the gifts given are really not ours till we use them for the benefit of others. By using them we increase them, by neglecting them they come to naught.

**C. Second Reading:** Paul knows nothing about the time of the Parousia except that it will come unexpectedly (image of the thief in the night) and suddenly (image of birthpangs). Watchfulness is the word. They are not sons of darkness but sons of light, for Christ is their light. Living in this Light, they will not be overcome by the assaults of darkness. As sons of light, let them be ever alert, active in good works, until the Day of the Lord dawns, and then he will vindicate his saints.

## SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING

(Nov. 23, 1975)

**First Reading:** Ezekiel 34: 11-12. 15-17.

**Second Reading:** First Corinthians 15: 20-26a.28

**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 25: 31-46

**A. First Reading:** Israel is a theocracy, that is, Yahweh is her proper King. This comes out well in the present prophecy of restoration where Israel is depicted as the flock of God himself. The Hebrew word for "rule" is identical with that of "shepherding a flock." Characteristics of the Good Shepherd are 1) personal care 2) arduous concern 3) affording proper food and rest 4) performing all manner of loving

service. Jesus made the image of the Good Shepherd his own in Mt. 9:36 and Jn. 10:14.

**B. Gospel Reading:** A unique picture found nowhere else in the Gospels. The scene is the Last Judgment. Christ is enthroned as King, amid the entire heavenly court, and all mankind is before him. Yet he is Shepherd-King and judges who are his sheep and who are not (symbolized by the Palestinian custom of separating sheep from goats at the end of the day). The sheep (Christ's true disciples) are judged accordingly as they carried out the commandment of brotherly love. Raison d'être of this command is the indwelling of Christ in his members. Faith in Jesus and his Gospel message is not mentioned explicitly but it is supposed, yet the point that is clearly made is that faith needs to express itself in action. Life on earth is the time to make decisions that last for eternity. The reward is inestimable: inheriting the Kingdom! Those who did not carry out the commandment of love (which they had heard preached from the housetops innumerable times,) are ranked with the evil spirits, and that for all eternity!

**C. Second Reading:** In apocalyptic language, Paul presents a vivid description of the last events: Second Coming, resurrection to glory of all who belong to Christ (he precludes from the rest), destruction of every last power hostile to God (completing the oracles of Gen 3:15 and Ps. 110:1), and the handing over of the Kingdom by Christ to the Father. Meantime, all mankind and the entire universe (all things) are gradually subjected to the Risen Christ (the ideal Man of Ps. 8:7 and Hebr. 2:9). His resurrection includes the resurrection of all who are one in him, just as the offering of the first fruits includes the offering of the whole harvest. Once God has subjected all hostile powers to Christ, then Christ in turn will hand over the Kingdom to the Father, resulting in the eschatological Kingdom of God, the Grand Finale of God's supreme Reign of love uniting all in love.

## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(November 30, 1975)

**First Reading:** Isaiah 63: 16b-17; 64: 1-3b.8

**Second Reading:** First Corinthians 1: 3-9.

**Gospel Reading:** Mark 13: 33-37.

**A. First Reading:** Very fitting at the outset of Advent is the prophet's humble prayer of deep longing for forgiveness in regard to Israel's past guilt. He longs for the end of exile and appeals to Yahweh as father and redeemer of his People Israel, (father in the Old Testament collective sense). Since the Hebrew mode of thought did not distinguish in God, various relations of his causal actions to their effects, it ascribed

Israel's hardening of heart to God himself, though it was clear to all that the blame lay with Israel herself. We would express it thus: Why withhold your help from us so that we continue to wander from you? Why not pour out your grace in abundance so that we turn to you anew? The prophet's plea for divine intervention would liken it to a searing fire to destroy all Israel's enemies. Noteworthy is the deep sincerity and intensity of the prayer.

**B. Gospel Reading:** A warning note for watchfulness. Vigilance is especially necessary since the moment of the Second Coming is known only to God and it has not been revealed. Even Christ was given nothing to reveal concerning the time. "Son" in v. 32 may refer back to "Son of man" mentioned shortly before in v. 26, and be a reference to Christ's human knowledge before the Resurrection, which seems to have been limited. The little parable of the vigilant servants awaiting their master's return is a vivid reminder that each and everyone of Christ's servants should be about their duties, ready for the Master's Second Coming whenever it happens. It would be disastrous if his sudden coming would catch some off guard. These warnings are not only spoken to the leaders but to all disciples: v. 37.

**C. Second Reading:** "Grace and peace" are Paul's usual greeting. Grace (charis) is God's favor, manifested in the blessings he bestows in Christ. Peace (shalom) denotes reconciliation with God and harmony among men. Paul thanks God for the rich outpouring of the charisms of speech in Corinth (cf. 14:26), and sees in that a confirmation of his mission. But he wants their interests to be rather in Christ's glorious Coming for which the charisms are merely preparatory. More important is inner sinlessness in preparation for the Parousia. It is Paul's conviction that God himself will prepare them properly by keeping them close to Christ, whose friendship (fellowship, koinonia) they already enjoy.

## II. HOMILIES

**November 1, 1975: Solemnity of All Saints**

### LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS!

**The Human Situation:** Expectation of some impending benefit brings with it joy and endurance. An athlete undergoes hours of disciplined training daily with the happy thought of victory to be won. A woman in labor suffers patiently with the happy thought of the babe to be born. A miner in the depth of the earth can more easily endure his heavy labor

with the thought of the evening meal and respite with wife and children. In Lourdes, hundreds of sick wait long hours daily till it is their turn to take the cold baths that bring healing to so many. Fortunate is the man who can let himself be buoyed up with genuine hope for a better world. He will inspire his environment with courage and not gloom and despair. If hope and expectation play such a notable part in human situations, how much more in the great task of winning the crown of eternal bliss!

**The Good News:** It is the saints who are mankind's true leaders. They are the real heroes who inspire men to do great deeds, for they have a clear vision of the hierarchy of values. Their one aim was to belong entirely to God and to conform their lives to that of his Son who became mankind's Brother and Savior, to lead it triumphantly over every hurdle and in every battle to complete victory over the powers of evil, even death itself. With the Lamb leading the way, they are sure of the outcome. On the power of his death and resurrection they rely to win the combat. This means renouncing their own way of life and following his, as he presents it to us in today's gospel reading.

The beatitudes present the new spirit which Jesus demands of all who follow him. They are radical and truly revolutionary in thought, and are in fact a protest against what many both at that time and in our own days consider happiness. Men think that riches make them happy. Jesus pronounces the "anawim" happy, the poor ones of Yahweh, of no account in the eyes of men, often down-trodden and oppressed, but who put their whole trust in God. Theirs is not a kingdom of ephemeral and passing riches, but of heavenly and lasting treasures. They have every reason to be happy.

Men consider those fortunate who are in power, for they command, they impose their will on others, they dominate. Jesus pronounces those blessed and happy who are meek and submissive in this life to all God's providential arrangements. It is they who will possess the earth in its glorified state of transformation, they are the ones who will rule with Christ in the kingdom of the Father. Men consider those happy who are boisteriously gay, enjoying all manner of pleasure and entertainment. Jesus calls those happy and blessed who soberly recognize the evils in the heart of mankind, and do penance for its evil ways, begging God's mercy on sinful man, and work hard to build a better world.

Thus Jesus continues to astound his followers with his revolutionary ideas. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst not for food and strong drink, but for holiness which makes man truly fulfilled and perfect. Blessed and truly happy are the pure of heart whose single aim is to please God and not merely to gain the favor of men. Blessed are those who bring about peace between adversaries, for they share the very role of Jesus himself. Happy are even the persecuted for justice sake,



for in turn they shall be the really great ones in the eschatological kingdom where God reigns supreme. Thus Jesus constantly lifts up our minds and hearts to seek the values that really count, the things that please God most. His own motto on earth was: "I always do those things that please the Father" (Jn. 8, 29). This too was the aim of the saints. With him and through him they conquered. Now they enjoy the divine sonship of the full.

**Our response:** The beatitudes deserve to be taken seriously. It is not correct to think that the sermon on the mount is merely giving counsels which we may follow but need not. On the contrary, the entire sermon on the mount is nothing but a detailed elaboration of the commandment of love which Jesus is constantly driving home with many varied comparisons, examples and figures of speech. We ought to ponder the beatitudes long and often, for they are like an entrance portal to the whole sermon. Looking into this mirror, we see Jesus in his true colors. And we also see at the same time whether we have perhaps wandered far from his ideal set for us. Blessed are we if we follow his saints in living his dynamic principles. Then we too shall reign with the saints forever in the mansions of the Father.

**November 2, 1975: Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed**

### THE LIFE TO COME

**The Human Situation:** People are very grateful if you remember their birthday, or feastday, or some special event in their lives. You thought of them! That is what mattered. It does not have to be an expensive gift. Even a few sincere lines of well-wishing are often a boost to morale, like a shot in the arm to an ailing person. You took the trouble to take time out to write those few lines. How much more endeared you become to them! Our dear departed ones are also most grateful to us when we remember them especially on this day.

**The Good News:** Why is there a huge turn-out of our Christian People to the cemeteries on All Souls' Day? Are they there merely to honor the remains of the faithful departed and to bedeck their graves with garlands of flowers? There is much more to it than that. It is a witness of our Christian People in the life to come. Our dear ones are not dead. They are very much alive, alive in Christ who is the Resurrection and the Life and with whom they form One Body, One Mystical Personality. Death is not putting out the light of life. It is merely extinguishing the lamp because Christ the Light has begun to illumine, our dearly departed ones with the effulgence of his glory.

This is the very core of our faith, which we profess every time we recite any of the creeds: I believe in the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting! Christ has conquered death and risen from the dead to life that is glorious and immortal. All who live the life of Christ on earth are destined for the same eternal life and glory. St. Paul tells his Corinthian converts that if there is no resurrection from the dead and if "our hopes in Christ are limited to this life only, we are the most pitiable of men" (1 Cor. 15:19). An Epicurean pagan will enjoy life to the full, for he has no belief in any future life. But that is not the clear message of the New Testament on many of its pages.

A Christian is one who in his very baptism, was immersed in the Paschal Mystery of Christ (Decree on the Liturgy, no. 6). He received the Holy Spirit of God in the sacraments of initiation who is himself the pledge of immortality (Rom. 8:11). Again and again he is fed with the Bread of Life who solemnly promised: "He who feeds on my Flesh and drink my Blood, has life eternal, and I will raise him up on the last day (Jn. 6:54). Thus the Christian looks forward in hope for life that is everlasting, for although he may enjoy the goods that God has given him in this life, he knows only too well that "we do not have here below a lasting city." Thus the Christian looks for life that is everlasting, when Christ will come in glory to repay each man according to his conduct (Mt. 16: 27). Christian hope for a better world and for life that is lasting gives energy and stability to his endeavors. Then life has meaning, for Christ our Savior has conquered suffering and death, and has risen from the dead to be himself our Resurrection and our life, as he clearly stated to Martha in today's gospel-reading.

**Our Response:** All Souls' Day is one on which we gratefully remember our dear departed ones. What will help them far more than our decorations on their graves is our prayers and the Holy Sacrifice. Flowers die and garlands fade, but prayer and sacrifice have a lasting effect that gives them much consolation. They will also be highly pleased if this day is a reminder to us of our Christian commitment and the challenge of a Christian life, in that we resolve to make good use of the time still allotted to us in this planetary existence so that we too come to enjoy the full transformation in Christ for which we are destined. Then we too shall be reunited with all our dear ones, when "God will wipe away every tear from our eyes, and there will be no more death or mourning, for the former world has passed away." (Apoc. 21:4). This is very well brought out in the prayer for the deceased in the third Eucharistic Prayer of the Mass.

**November 9, 1975: Feast of the Dedication**

### **COME LET US WORSHIP THE LORD**

**The human situation:** Before any special program, we all rise to sing the national anthem. In doing so, we experience a certain "togeth-

therness" as one nation, one people. At a birthday party, everyone shares the joy of the birthday celebrant, participating in the songs and speeches, as well as the food and drink offered. It is a response of love to the invitation to share the birthday celebrant's loving-kindness, and by doing so we share the joy and love of all the participants.

**The Good News:** In unsurpassed love, our Lord and Savior invites us to celebrate his paschal mystery with him in the Eucharist. We are invited to the House of God, to a special meal, a sacrificial meal, for Christ himself is both Sacrifice and Food for all who participate. We sing because it is a joyful celebration, recalling not only his loving death-offering, but also his glorious resurrection and exaltation at the Father's side. We sing because we experience the togetherness of the People of God. We participate in the entire "program" of readings, songs and prayers, because we are convinced that together with Christ our Divine "Kuya" we are offering the Father perfect worship and praise. Truly, it is a "mystery of faith" which does not always affect our bodily senses sensationally, but surely deepens our inner spirit in the solid virtues of faith, hope and love.

Formerly, people often came for miles just to be present at the Mass. They understood little or nothing of the Latin, perhaps even little of the sermon, but they came, they often stood throughout the entire service and they went home refreshed in spirit. Why? Because these people had faith. What mattered to them was not the externals of liturgy, but the firm belief that Christ was present in a special sacramental way, Christ who was their personal Savior, Christ who had given his life for them, and now gave himself again to them as their Sacrifice and Communion. They did not come merely because of some obligation hanging over them and threatening punishment for omission. They came out of deep love, because they were aware that the Mass was the central act of worship which they willingly gave to God, and it was the source of their strength in the battle of life.

Today, when a much fuller meaning of the Mass has been preached from the housetops: that it is the celebration of Christ's Paschal Mystery, that it is a sign of love and unity between God and man and between all Christ's brothers, that it is the living Memorial of the Passion, Death and Glorification of Christ the Lord, many seem utterly oblivious of the wonderful closeness of the liturgy to the minds of all, and of the great progress in the understanding of the theology of this mystery. Today, when the Mass is brought right down to the faithful in the vernacular, in multiple new readings from the Scriptures, in very meaningful newly-composed prayers recited by the presiding celebrant, in the full participation granted to the faithful in prayer and song, in sharing intercessions, and assuming new roles, what do we find? Many young people often excuse themselves from Mass, for they have been told by "liberal" educators that "it is not a serious sin to miss mass

on Sundays" as if law and obligation were the motivation that moves millions of Christians each Sunday to enter the House of God and join the Family of the Lord. Or again they will say "they don't get anything out of it" or "they don't feel like going": selfish motives that at once place them in a definite category. Can anyone really go through life with such motivations?

Come, let us worship the Lord with joy and gladness. If Christ has sacrificed his all for us, one hour out of 168 hours in a week is woefully little to return a response of love to him. And remember, it is a house of prayer, not one of gossiping and talking, frivolous behavior or attitude of boredom. Christ will drive out from his Father's House those who desecrate it.

**Our Response:** Every Catholic should know that the Mass consists of two main parts, the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist, and know how each part proceeds. This holds good especially for college students, who seem to be the least conversant with the parts of the Mass in this Post-Vatican period. Their contribution is not merely a few centavos dropped in a bag, but the participation of their whole being, expressed in praying and singing with full voice, listening attentively to the readings to catch God's message for them, entering into the mystery that is Christ's love, by offering themselves with and through him to the Father, and then completing the action by worthily receiving him into their hearts in Communion. This is the response of love Christ expects from all those for whom he so willingly died, and now lives in the Eucharist until the consummation of the world. This is the worship which each Christian is entitled through Baptism into Christ to give the Father. This is the Gift offered to the Father which wins the abundance of the Spirit for all who participate in faith and love.

**November 16, 1975: Thirty-Third Sunday of the Year**

### **GOOD USE OF TIME AND TALENT**

**The Human Situation:** Laziness never produced great men and women. For sure it never gave the Church her saints. Hard work and persevering effort are always needed to accomplish anything worth while. No one will climb the ladder of success without a constant good use of time and talent. Many an artist and musician whose works are the boast of mankind today had to work long hours and often amid much privation to make ends meet, dying even sometimes in penury. Think of Mozart and Schubert! Had they given up and taken life easy, had they whittled away the time, we would not be enjoying their operas and overtures today. Habits of diligence planted in early years bear abundant fruit if pur-

sued with constancy. Before reaching the top position, Abraham Lincoln had to taste failure and defeat. But he kept employing his talents to the full.

**The Good News:** If the master in today's parable expected his servants to put to good use the "talents" (money) received from him, and amply rewarded their industriousness, all the more is the Savior of men desirous that each member of his Body exercise to the utmost the gifts received, be they natural abilities (which now go by the name of "talents" or supernatural charisms. It is no small task that lies ahead for the Church of today to establish the Kingdom, to build a better world, to bring the benefits of Christ's salvific work to all men. Each in his or her own way can contribute to God's over-all plan for fulfillment in his Kingdom. The housewife in her diligent care of the household and her concern for those in need, as shown so well in the first reading of today. Family fathers in their daily toil to raise and educate their children. Business men and professionals in their endeavor to serve the people better. Scientists experimenting again and again to improve the conditions of mankind. Statesmen working for a lasting peace. Those in authority truly devote to their task, so that peace, harmony and well-being be the lot of those under them. Teachers and educators aware of their responsibility toward their pupils. Students setting to work to master their subjects in order to apply them in later life for the benefit of family and country. Ideal youth who realize that they will be the leaders of tomorrow. All these will succeed only partially if they do not utilize the gift of time and the talents given them by God.

God himself is at work in each of his creatures to bring about the best end-results. But that supposes that each and everyone utilizes his potentialities. We are co-creators with God building up his universe. That is his magnificent plan for man. Moreover, Christ imparted his own Spirit to everyone of his members, in a diversity of ways, all to build up the Body in all perfection (1 Cor. 12:7). The possibilities for little man are innumerable, provided he set to work and make good use of what God has given him.

To each one is allotted one short life on earth. Shall it be wasted only to end in frustration? Recreation is a healthy requisite, but happy is the man who knows how to budget his time. Countless hours are wasted on worthless movies, TV shows and useless reading, when the same facilities can offer much of the best, if we choose to select. The lazy servant in the parable was severely chastised because he never even started to use his potential. He was entirely disowned.

**Our Response:** Personal responsibility is the lesson of today's gospel reading. Time and talent are God's special gifts to man and man is expected to make use of them. The decision lies with each one. But then the individual must also take the consequences. Why not choose what ennobles and rewards?

November 23, 1975: Solemnity of Christ the King

## KING OF LOVE

Perhaps nowhere in the Bible is the Coming of Christ in glory described so dramatically as in the apocalyptic vision of the book of Revelation, chapter 19: "The heavens were opened, and as I looked on, a white horse appeared; its rider was called 'Faithful and True'. Justice is his standard in passing judgment and in waging war. His eyes blazed like fire, and on his head were many diadem... The armies of heaven were behind him riding white horses and dressed in fine linen, pure and white. Out of his mouth came a sharp sword for striking down the nations. He will shepherd them with an iron rod; it is he who will tread out in the winepress the blazing wrath of God the Almighty. A name is written on the cloak that covered his thigh: 'King of kings and Lord of Lords' ". In this symbolic, apocalyptic vision the message is clear: Christ will come as the great Victor over all the powers of evil and over all the powers of evil and over all those who have refused to follow the Lamb beckoning to them in his love all during their lifetime. Now he comes as Judge, with justice he will judge all mankind. All evildoers will experience the wrath of the all-holy Son of God, King of kings and Lord of lords.

At last Christ Jesus comes into his own. How humble and silent he had remained as a child, how quietly submissive as a youth and all during his passion. How unassuming all through the centuries as he remained silent in our tabernacles and on the altar of sacrifice. He emptied himself and asked nothing for himself except the love of our hearts. For he is king of love. But now he comes in the glory of his Father. He is seated on his majestic throne, with millions of courtiers and faithful servants ready to do his least bidding. All power is given in heaven and on earth to him to exercise as King of the universe. He comes to judge the living and the dead.

In one sweep of his discerning mind, the judge separates those who are his from those who have forfeited that privilege. The norm that turns the scales is love, love shown toward Christ's brothers and sisters in whom he dwelt by becoming one of us: You visited me when I was poor and lonely, you bought my medicine when I was sick and quietly paid my hospital bills. You shared your food with me and saw to it that my children did not shiver in the cold. You encouraged me when I was on the verge of despair and got me a job when I was out of work so long. You rescued me when I was high on drugs and gave new meaning to my life. You defended me when I was unjustly accused by malicious men, you pleaded my cause when I was about to be ousted from my boarding house. You loved me in the retarded child and you cared for me in the sick old woman. You really lived my Gospel message. Christianity for you was not

merely external celebrations, conventions, and discussions. Religion for you was not merely the external manifestations of piety, but consisted in loving God by going out of your way to love his children who are all my brothers and sisters. Love was the key-word of your lives.

Then his piercing glance will fall on the wicked in anger: Selfish ingrates! You never thought of anyone but yourselves. You clothed yourselves with the best you could find in the most expensive shops. You had not want at your tables, no lack of drinks for your parties. Your main aim was to increase your wealth, your holdings, your fortune. For me you cared not at all, except in some superficial carrying out of external obligations. Your heart was far away from the poor man down the street, from the widow and her children, from the orphans and the starving millions of the earth. All your life you lived apart from me and my saving message of love. Now you have chosen your eternity apart from me. I cannot reign over you for you never chose me during your lifetime to reign over you as king of love. Depart into eternal hellfire, prepared for the devil and his angels.

Christ is the King of love, but love means action, love means sharing, love means giving. If he is to reign over us for all eternity, let the message of his love penetrate us deeply during life: What you have done to anyone of these, the least of my brothers, you have done to me.

**Our Response:** We may not be able to show our love for Christ's poor in extraordinary ways. We may not be able to join this or that group who devote themselves exclusively to works of mercy. But there are many ways in which we can share what we have with others, if we really have love. It is said that "love is not love till you give it away". The widow's mite in the Gospel story was very small but in the eyes of God it was very great (Lk. 21). Whatever we do, be it a smile, a word of greeting, or an offering, remember, it is Christ himself at the other end of the line receiving it.

**November 30, 1975: First Sunday of Advent**

### VIGILANCE

**The Human situation:** Only because the top narcotic investigation officers are extremely alert today, are they able to detect and arrest some of the cleverest drug-smugglers in their ugly traffic. To be able to make a big haul, they are constantly on the watch for the smallest clues. It pays off. Had the German army officers been more on the alert that fateful evening, the allied invasion of D-day in France would have been another story. Guards are posted at the residences of important personages. Their alertness in doing their duty may spell the safety of those concerned.

**The Good News:** Our Lord related several parables with the theme of vigilance. He wanted his followers to fight laziness torpor and carelessness in reaching their goal. These defects are farthest from the splendid example given by the Savior of men, who purposely let himself be born in a workingman's family and preferred hard labor to idleness and ease; he could spend whole nights in watchfulness and prayer (Lk. 6:12) and would rise early in the morning to be able to pray (Mk. 1:35). Christ was a man who knew no sluggishness.

Why should the Christian watch? He must be on his guard to receive the Lord, for he does not know the hour of his coming. Watchfulness is the characteristic attitude of the faithful disciple who longs for Christ's glorious return and waits for it in lively hope. The alertness will include a certain restraint in the use of the goods of this world: "Be on your guard lest your spirits become bloated with indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares. The great Day will suddenly close in on you like a trap" (Lk. 21:34).

But is not the Parousia or Second Coming a remote possibility at the present time? That is just what we do not know. God has not chosen to reveal it. But the clear gospel message is that it will come suddenly like a blitz-krieg and entirely unexpected. Many are not aware of this dire warning of Christ. That is why the new liturgy has put the theme of the Parousia in the forefront, mentioning it after the consecration, as well as in the eschatological petitions of the Our Father, and in the embolism after the Our Father. She wants us to listen to the guiding warning of the Savior.

Alertness on the part of the Christian will ward off the enemy, as St. Peter tells us: "Stay sober and alert. Your opponent the devil is prowling like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, solid in the faith, realizing that the brotherhood of believers is undergoing the same sufferings throughout the world (1 Pet. 5:8-9). A Christian who is vigilant will not come under the spell of Satan's allurements, and will be ready at all times for the Coming of his Lord and Master, even though it be an individual encounter at the end of one's life, when for that individual the Parousia begins to be realized.

**Our Response:** Advent is the time to listen to the words of the Lord in the book of the Apocalypse: "Wake up! Strengthen what remains... If you do not rouse yourself I will come upon you like a thief, at a time you cannot know." (Apoc. 3:2-3). "Maran atha" the watchword of the Early Christians (1 Cor. 16:22), meaning: "The Lord is coming!" What hope that ought to instill in us, what new vigor! As St. Paul tells the Roman: "It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent. The day draws near. Let us cast off the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light... Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 13: 11-14)