

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

**LET'S LIBERATE LIBERATION THEOLOGY**  
Editorial

**IF YOU WANT PEACE, DEFEND LIFE**  
Paul VI

**THE MYTHS OF MEDELLIN**  
Cesar Santos

**TODAY'S CHALLENGE**  
Ambassador Antonio C. Delgado

**THEY KNEW HIM IN THE BREAKING OF BREAD**  
Bishop Francisco Claver, S.J.



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## EDITORIAL

# Let's Liberate Liberation Theology

The Theology of Liberation has fallen into discredit because many of its chief proponents have turned out to be marxist activists more than Christian Theologians. In the words of Pope Paul VI, "They would reduce (the Church's) aims to a man-centered goal; the salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material well-being. Her activity, forgetful of all spiritual and religious preoccupation, would become initiatives of the political and social order. But if this were so, the Church would lose her fundamental meaning. Her message of liberation would no longer have any originality and would be easily open to monopolization and manipulation by ideological systems and political parties. She would have no more authority to proclaim freedom as in the name of God" (Evangeliū Nuntiandi, no. 32).

Yet, the Theology of Liberation, when maintained as a true THEOLOGY and not as an anthropology or sociology or political philosophy — when it keeps an "evangelical vision of man, of things and of events"; when it inserts the Christian struggle for liberation into the universal plan of salvation — is a valid basis of Christian commitment in the modern world.

No less than the Holy Father says, in agreement with the Bishops who gathered last year for the Synod in Rome, that "the Church . . . has the duty to proclaim the liberation of millions of human beings, many of whom are her own children — the duty of assisting the birth of this liberation, of giving witness to it, of ensuring that it is complete. This is not foreign to evangelization" (Evangeliū Nuntiandi, no. 30). "The Church is certainly not willing to restrict her mission only to the religious field and disassociate herself from man's temporal problems" (Ibid. no. 34).

We should not suppress (or oppress?) Liberation Theology. We should just make sure that it is authentic Theology. This means that we must liberate it from the clutches of wrong concepts. In particular we must insist that liberation 'cannot be contained in the simple and restricted dimension of economics, politics, social or cultural life; it must envisage the whole man, in all his aspects, right up to and including his openness to the absolute, even the divine Absolute'. (Ibid. no. 33).

Complete dissociation from violence is a must for the survival of orthodox Theology of Liberation. "The Church cannot accept violence, especially the force of arms — which is uncontrollable once it is let loose — and indiscriminate death as the path to liberation, because she knows that violence always provokes violence and irresistibly engenders new forms of oppression and enslavement which are often harder to bear than those from which they claimed to bring freedom" (Ibid. no. 37).

In the Philippines the government has started to deplore the existence of a so-called "Christian Left". Our first impulse is to deny the existence of such a group, but upon reflection we realize that it exists. It is not as big or as important as the government would like people to believe, but just the same we cannot close our eyes to it. Doubtless it is a sign that among us there are liberationists who have become so engrossed in human forms of liberation that they have forgotten other aspects of Christianity, and lost their balance.

Let us not fall into the bottomless pit of a marxist ideology of liberation. Let us, instead, through faith, hope and love, liberate the ideal of liberation from the grip of marxism and develop a true Theology of Liberation.

## In This Issue

Peace is the goal of Liberation. This thought should enrich our reflection of the true meaning of Liberation and Peace. It is not just by accident that this issue of the **Boletín** has articles on both Peace and Liberation.

**If You Want Peace, Defend Life**—if you want to be liberated, defend life. What Pope Paul VI says about Peace can indeed also be said of Liberation.

Liberation and Hope also go hand in hand—at least, if we speak of the Christian type of Liberation. Pope Paul VI has expressed his **Confidence and Hope for the Church's Future Despite Today's Difficulties, Divisions.**

Liberation Theology is subjected to blistering scrutiny in Cesar Santos' article on **The Myths of Medellin.**

Archbishop Frondosa's **Homily** swings us to a more peaceful aspect of Church life, but Ambassador Delgado's address to the CBCP puts us face to face with **Today's Challenge.** This is also the topic of Bishop Claver's address to the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, U.S.A., but he takes his cue from the biblical event wherein the disciples **Knew Him in the Breaking of Bread,** and gives us a sampling of Liberation Theology.

**Two Letters On Bernard Haring** provides a study in contrast. The Reader will find it hard to decide what side to take.

Our homiletics section gives pastors material for their sermons up to the end of the year.

## **PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI**

Venerabili Fratri JOANNI NILMAR. Episcopo titulo Zapareno, ad cathedralem Sedem Kalibensem translato, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Studium pascendi totius dominici gregis nos impellit, ut eius portiones sacris Pastoribus committamus, quorum sapienti salubrique ductu eae proficiant in Christianae vitae semitis. Cum ergo providendum sit dioecesi Kalibensi, non ita pridem conditae, et adhuc suo carenti Praesule, te statuimus eidem praeponere, qui ut Auxiliaris Tagbilarani Antistitis sacrorum pastoralis sollicitudinis non obscura dedisti specimina. Quae cum ita sint, nos, audita sententia Verabilis Fratris Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Praefecti Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, apostolica nostra potestate vinculo te solvimus Ecclesiae titulo Zaparenae atque ad dioecesim KALIBENSEM transferimus, datis iuribus impositis que obligationibus, cum dignitate et officio tuo conunctis. Te quidem lege professionis fidei iterandae eximimus, volumus autem, ut, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo, ius iurandum des fidelitatis erga nos et Successores Nostros adhibitamque formulam, pro more signatam sigilloque impressam, ad praedictam Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittas. Mandamus praeterea, ut hae Litterae Nostrae clero ac populo legantur in dioecesis tuae templo cathedrali, die festo de praecepto. Quos filios carissimos monemus ut te tamquam patrem et magistrum animarum suarum libenter suscipiant, tibi praecipienti obsecudent, incepta pastoralia ineunti faveant. Denique velimus audias Sanctum Augustinum populum de ordinatione Episcopi alloquentem: Praepositi sumus, et servi sumus: praesumus, sed si prosumus — Sermones post Maurinos reperti, XXXII, Romae 1930, p. 565. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die tertio mensis Junii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo sexto, Pontificatus Nostri quarto decimo.

**JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Status

**GODEFRIDUS MARIANI**  
Proton. Apost.

## PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Ad perpetuam rei memoriam. Quas Venerabilis Frater Bruno Torpigliani, Archiepiscopus titulo Mallianensis idemque in Insulis Philippinis Apostolicus Nuntius, ad Nos adhibuit preces, antea audita Episcoporum Conferentia Insularum Philippinarum ut videlicet diviso praelaturae Cotabatensis amplissimo territorio alia ibidem excitaretur ecclesiastica circumscriptio, eas Nos, Evangelii nuntiandi causae favere cupientes, exaudiendas esse censuimus sententia igitur exquisita sive Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrorum S.R.E. Cardinalium Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praepositorum, sive locorum Ordinariorum, quorum negotium interesset, sequentia decernimus. Territorium praelaturae Cotabatensis ita disponimus, ut eodum, exceptis provinciis vulgo “Maguindanao” et “Sultan Sa Kudurat” alia ratione hoc ipso die ordinatis, novam praelaturam constituamus, ab urbe vulgo “Kidapawan” appellandam KIDAPAVANENSEM, cuius sedes in eadem urbe erit itemque praelaticium templum, ad quam dignitatem sacram paroecialem aedem attollimus, ibi exstantem, Deo dicatam in honorem B.M.V. omnium gratiarum Mediatrix. Conditam praelaturam sufraganeam facimus metropolitanae Sedi Davaënsi, eiusque Praelatum eiusdem Ecclesiae Metropolitanae. Mensam praelaticiam constituetur Curiae emolumentis, fidelium sponte oblatis pecuniis bonisque ei obvenientibus ad normam canonis 1500 C.J.C. Ad Seminarii alumnos quod attinet servantur normae iuris communis, prae oculis habitis in primis decreto Concilii Vaticani II “Optatam totius” et peculiaribus Sacrae Congregationis pro Institutione Catholica regulis. Praestantes vero sive animi sive ingenii virtutibus iuvenes Romae mittantur, apud Pontificium Collegium Philippinum, aptius philosophicis theologicisque disciplinis imbuendi. Quod denique spectat conditae praelaturae regimen, administrationem, Vicarii Capitularis electionem aliaque id genus, quae sacri canones praescribunt, ad amussim servantur. De clericis autem sic iubemus, ut ei Ecclesiae censeantur adscripti, in cuius territorio beneficium vel officium ecclesiasticum habeat; ceteri vero, itemque seminarii tirones ei, in qua legitim domincilio degant. Acta et documenta praelaturam Kidapanavensem respicientia, ad eius Curiam a Cotabatensi transferantur, in tabulario religiose custodienda. Haec quae praescripsimus ad effectum adducat Venerabilis Frater Bruno Torpigliani, quem diximus, vel ab eo delegatus sacerdos. sueta quae



documenta exaret et ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittat. Has sub plumbo Litteras ratas esse volumus, contrariis quibuslibet non obstantibus. Datum Romae, apud |S. Petrum, die duodecimo mensis Junii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo sexto, Pontificatus Nostri tertio decimo.

**JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Status

**SEBASTIANUS CARD. BAGGIO**  
S.C. pro Episcopis Praef.

**JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton Apost.**

## **PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI**

Dilecto filio FRIDERICO ESCALER, sacerdoti Societatis Jesu, electo Praelato Kidapavanensi atque Episcopo titulo Girensi Tarasil, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Est in Romanorum Pontificum officio et instituto positum, ut magnas curas Ecclesiis particularebus intendant idoneos sacros Praesules iisdem praeficiendo. Cum igitur in praesenti consulendum sit Praelaturae Kidapavanensi, quae, hoc ipso die erecta, suo caret Pastore, mentem ad Te convertimus qui huic muneri aptis animi mentisque dotibus commendaris. Quocirca, audita sententia Venerabilis Fratris Nostri Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti, apostolica Nostra potestate Te nominamus Praelatum Kidapavanensem simulque Episcopum vacantis sedis titulo Girensis Tarasil, datis iuribus congruisque impositis oneribus, cum dignitate tua atque officio coniunctis. Tibi vero permittimus, ut ordinationem extra Urbem accipias a quolibet catholico Episcopo cui duo adsint eiusdem ordinis episcopalis viri consecratores, ad statutas leges liturgicas. Antea tamen tuum erit, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo, catholicae fidei professionem facere et iusiurandum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, adhibitasque formulas, usitato more signatas sigilloque impressas, ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittere. Mandamus insuper, ut hae Litterae Nostrae clero ac populo in praelaticio templo tuo legantur, die festo de praecepto. Quos filios dilectos cohortamur, ut te non solum libenter suscipiant, factum animarum suarum parentem rectorem, magistrum, sed etiam praeceptionibus Tuis pareant coeptisque pastoralibus faveant. Ceterum haec verba Sancti Leonis Magni Tibi proponimus perpendenda: — Ad omnium . . . fidelium decus atque utilitatem redundat, cum talis habetur antistes, cuius plurimi et adiuventur praesidio, et incitentur exemplo — Epist. XLI; PL 54,816. Demum valere Te iubentes, divinae gratiae abundantiam et maternum Virginis Mariae adiutorium Tibi vehementer precamur. Datum Romae apud S. Petrum, die duodecimo mensis Junii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo sexto, Pontificatus Nostri tertio decimo.

**JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Status

**JOSEPHUS DEL TON**  
Proton. Apost.

## POPE PAUL VI TO THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS

### CONFIDENCE AND HOPE FOR CHURCH'S FUTURE DESPITE TODAY'S DIFFICULTIES, DIVISIONS

On 21 June, the Holy Father received the Sacred College of Cardinals, who presented to him their good wishes for his approaching name day and for the beginning of the fourteenth year of his Pontificate. Paul VI delivered the following address.

We are grateful to the Cardinal Dean for his words, always amiable, of good wishes, and to all of you, our venerable brothers of the Sacred College, who once more have expressed to us through him your sentiments of devotion and affection. May the Lord reward you for this comfort you give us: thank you, therefore! And thank you for the expert, assiduous and tireless collaboration that you offer us in the universal government of the Holy Church; and for the noble effort to put into practice better and better, and complete, the great heritage of the Second Vatican Council as well as that of the Holy Year, which still shines with unfailing strength on our horizon.

The custom of this traditional meeting offers us every year the opportunity to dwell for a moment on the necessities and the problems of ecclesial life. It is true the celebration of the recent Consistory has already given us an occasion to confide in you the concerns that the heavy weight of the Sovereign Pontificate inspires in us today. Yet it does not seem to us out of place to recall again, almost as the continuation of that extraordinary circumstances, albeit shortly afterwards, common attention to what forms the constant object of our pastoral concerns: we mean the main necessities of the Church at the present moment.

The Church! She is our constant love, our primordial care, our "fixed thought!" The life of the Church, in all its manifestations both inside her and in her multiple relations with the world was the main subject of the Second Vatican Council, which unified her interests and tendencies, making them converge as in one majestic channel. So, too, illustration, increase and defence of that same life are for us the first and principal guiding motive of our humble Pontificate. So we have wished, so we will continue to

wish, until the end! We cannot love Christ if we do not love the Church. We do not love the Church unless we love her as the Lord loved her: *Dilexit Ecclesiam et seipsum tradidit pro ea* (Eph. 5, 25).

Among these necessities of the Church, with which our spirit is most concerned, we would like to indicate some today as the ideal continuation of what we said to you on the occasion of the Consistory which we have just recalled.

### **To promote the internal union of the Church**

In the first place is the need to foster and promote more and more the internal union of the Church. *Ut sint unum* (J. 17, 22) was Jesus' prayer. It was the sacrificial prelude to his redeeming passion, a presage and warning, in the seriousness and solemnity of the extreme hour, regarding those lacerations which would try, over the centuries, to attack one of the essential prerogatives and constituents of the Church herself, unity. Today, as in other periods of doctrinal confusion, but perhaps more than ever on account of relativism, communion within the Church is in danger, for some people. This relativism sometimes gathers, absorbs and adopts all the centuries-old errors of a reason, intoxicated with itself and broken away from a secure relationship with God. Yet this relationship is the only one that guarantees its autonomy and dignity.

It is therefore necessary to return to the sources, and to stress forcefully and indefatigably that anyone who moves away from the Church, from her Pastors, her doctrines, her moral norms, puts himself of his own accord outside the ecclesial communion. We said so clearly in the Consistory address it is necessary to avoid opposite extremisms, both on the part of those who appeal to tradition to justify their own disobedience with regard to the supreme Magisterium and the Ecumenical Council, and on the part of those who uproot themselves from the ecclesial *humus*, corrupting the genuine doctrine of the Church. Both of these attitudes are a sign of undue and perhaps unconscious subjectivism, if it is not, unfortunately, one of obstinacy, stubbornness, and imbalance. Such positions wound the heart of the Church, Mother and Teacher.

But there is also another danger to emphasize and to avoid: misunderstood pluralism. In our Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, we recalled that "it devolves on the Christian communities to determine — with the assistance of the Holy spirit, in communion with the responsible Bishops . . . the choices and commitments that

should be taken to carry out the social, political and economic changes which are seen to be urgent and necessary in many cases" (A.A.S., 63, 1971, p. 403). But it must not be forgotten, however, that—and we emphasize it in answer to authoritative requests, made insistently—the efforts to seek and promote an improvement in the situation of society must always be opportunely coordinated and wisely regulated and adapted to the requirements of the real good of the whole community. For this purpose, the individual Bishops have the duty, in the work carried out in this connection in their own dioceses, to preserve with their *Confrères* close communion, unity of doctrine and full harmony of pastoral policy, so that their action will be clear and efficacious. The coordination of common action, in fact, normally carried out within the individual Episcopal Conferences, is necessary not only for the protection of ethical and religious principles, but also for their application to concrete cases, in the temporal sphere (cf. *Pacem in Terris*, A.A.S., 55, 1963, pp. 300 f.).

It is a question, that is, of internal cohesion. Without this one cannot have efficacy of applications and continuity of fruits, but one rather is left with unfaithfulness to unity and to the truth of faith or condemnation to vain sterility or exterior activism without coordination, and often without beneficial effect or duration. And this cohesion calls for great virtues: in the first place that "*oboedientia et pax*", which the motto of Baronio, adopted amid such general approval by our Predecessor John XXIII, recalls to everyone with extraordinary effect. But that is not all: it is necessary to add collaboration, fervour of spirit, humility of mind, generosity of commitment purity of intention and consistency of works.

### Primacy of interior life

To continue and complete what we have said so far, we have the following: among the present-day needs of the Church, it seems to us still necessary to stress today the indispensable necessity and priority of solid interior and personal virtues. The Church cannot certainly be constructed with rhetoric, or with the search for publicity, or with conditionings of public favour or the applause of others. Anyone who was content with these things, would be building on sand (cf. Mt. 7, 26 f.), and would certainly not be building up the Church.

The Holy Year, which we have celebrated, was an extraordinary reminder in this connection, both with the example of prayer and interior recollection given by the pilgrims, and by the teaching of those great, topical, very human figures of Saints and Blessed, whom

we proposed to the veneration of the whole human family. It was a persuasive and repeated invitation to interior, personal, religious and exemplary life. It emphasized that only in sincere quest of God, carried out with prayer, repentance and the *metanoia* of the whole being, can the true success of Christian and apostolic life be ensured, and the first and ever-living appeal of the Lord to holiness be put into practice: *Impletum est tempus, et appropinquavit regum Dei; paenitemini et credite evangelio* (Mk. 1, 15), *Estote ergo vos perfecti sicut et Pater vester caelestis perfectus est* (Mt. 5, 48).

The world of today needs this presence and this testimony on the part of Christians. Ours is a world which threatens to collapse under its own contradictions: the crazy consumer society and blatant social inequalities, that violence which destroys institutions and the apparent incapacity to resist it, half-hearted resolutions and and weakness in putting them into practice, pornography cloaked in so-called ideas of "liberation", and put in the service of gigantic economic exploitation, drugs, etc. Amid the rampant conflicting interests, harmful to man's true good, it is necessary to proclaim again in a loud voice the great words of the Gospel, which, alone, have given men light and peace, in other similar upheavals of history.

#### The "civilization of love" is at work

We wish one word to resound in a special way for the present necessities of the Church, that of hope, of confidence. Yes, we are confident. It is true that the Church is going through a difficult moment: *foris pugnae, intus timores* (2 Cor. 7, 5). But has it not always been like this? Whenever did the Church not suffer? And when and where she suffered, did there not always spring up more luminous and joyful fruits? That is: maturity of faith, purification of spirits, greater awareness of personal responsibilities, increase of vocations, growth of sacramental life, a blossoming of saints. It is true that, as we have said, today a seed of disunion has crept into some fringes of the ecclesial community. It is true that doubt and ambiguity have seeped in here and there. It is true that the Church is suffering in certain countries for lack of religious freedom. But it is equally true that "the civilization of love", the one we desired as the fruit of the Holy Year, is at work.

Yes, we have confidence. We know that our sons, especially those tried by misfortune, will suffer and persevere: *si exprobramini in nomine Christi, beati eritis* (1 Pt. 4, 14); *etsi quid patimini propter iustitiam, beati!* (ib. 3, 14). This confidence springs

from the divine promises: both because the Holy Spirit is in the Church, is the soul of the Church, vivifies, supports and guides her, and does not abandon her for the Church is his; and also because Christ's words are true: "and behold, I am with you all days, even unto the consummation of the world" (Mt. 28, 20). "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (ib. 16, 18). The faithfulness of the majority, the desire for authenticity, prayer and active charity, which is seen in all walks of life and particularly among the young; the signs of a consoling revival of priestly and religious vocations; missionary fervour and animation; all these are good signs for the future.

### **The relationship between the Church and the civil authorities**

These considerations on the internal problems of the life of the Church in our days cannot make us forget that there are other external ones, which also influence, sometimes to a considerable extent, her possibilities of action and her very existence in one country or other, in a given historical period. Such problems are derived from the relationship between the Church and the civil authorities.

The bi-millenary history of the Church in the various regions of the world has known multiple forms of this relationship. They range from the initial ones of open hostility and violent persecution—which were repeated so often in the course of the centuries and are repeated, unfortunately, even in our days, though with different methods—to those of underhand struggle or indifference, and then to the relationship of positive agreement or friendship and mutual collaboration.

The Church—as was recalled with particular insistence by the recent Second Vatican Ecumenical Council—does not lay her real trust in human aid or in the help of the power of the State, but in God, in his Spirit which vivifies her and in the presence, of which she has been assured, to the end of time, of her own Founder who can even draw from ordeals and persecutions elements of strength and progress. She does not ask for special protection or a situation of privilege for herself.

\* \* \*

The Church needs and desires only just freedom. She asks it for herself, the freedom of good, by her own, congenital right. She asks it for her sons, as for all men, in the name of the sacrosanct

and inalienable rights of the human person, in the name of man's dignity and his divine vocation to fulfill himself in fullness of truth and in the exercise of that responsibility that no human power, neither society nor the State, can take from him.

These principles find increasing support and acknowledgement in the fundamental constitutions of the individual nations and of the international Community. But they do not receive, however, an equal faithful application in the practice, and sometimes in the legislation itself, of not a few countries.

If we now consider the panorama which can be contemplated in the world in this connection, in particular as regards the Catholic Church and the religion of Christ, it is necessary unfortunately, to point out that there are many situations in which limitations, inadequacies and, often, open injustice, call for deploration and denunciation.

\* \* \*

There is no need to recall here in detail the recent or present-day histories to which we are referring: histories of passion and great heroism. If we refer to them, though merely mentioning them, it is to avoid the impression that the Holy See has forgotten them or accepted them with the passing of the decades. Above all it is to assure our sons who have been and continue to be victims, that their faithfulness is not unknown to us and that we always keep in mind their hidden sufferings, just as we share their hopes and prayers.

Sometimes the ordeals of the Church are connected with general situations which have nothing to do with religion directly, though it suffers the consequences in a painful and dangerous way. This occurs for example, when internal difficulties, or problems bound up with civil strife or war between neighbouring peoples, cause suspicions to fall and limitations to be imposed on the action of the Church. This is so even in cases where the Church, and in particular the Church of missionaries, who because of their foreign origin are most exposed to this risk, restricts her action to the purely religious and spiritual field.

But a phenomenon has influenced negatively and characteristically such a large part of the relationship between Church and State, between religion and civil society, in recent decades, in vast regions of Europe and Asia. To these others have been added later, though far less numerous and extensive, in Europe, America and



Africa. This phenomenon has been the coming to power of political forces which have included in their ideological foundation and in their practical programme — particularly the so-called strategic one — the liberation of humanity, according to them, from what they call religious alienation.

The history of these relationships, which have similar characteristics and motivations, in spite of the differences imposed or prompted by the different concrete situations, is sufficiently known — at least in its essential lines — because it is so recent in fact contemporary.

During our whole Pontificate we have followed the history of these relations, not only with the passionate interest and anxiety dictated by our ministry and the love we bear the Church and the very countries which have been and are the theatre of these events, but also with the attempt to correct their course in the direction of justice. We have followed them first and foremost with prayer, to which we again invite the whole Christian Community, and then with negotiations or with dialogue, to use the current term. This dialogue, carried out by our immediate and capable collaborators, is an active and indefatigable, patient and frank dialogue, as firm in the affirmation of the principles and the rights of the Church and believers, as it is ready for honest and sincere agreements reconcilable with them.

It is not our intention to draw up balance sheets here today. In any case it is only in a historical perspective, one that is, illuminated by what is usually called the philosophy, and even more the theology, of history that it is possible to try to work them out correctly.

We would just like, when confirming our commitment and that of the Church, founded more on hopes and divine promises and on charity for all than on the persuasions and wisdom or human forces, to express publicly the sorrow in our heart at the fact that some vast portions of the world ruled by Marxist regimes continue to remain closed, not just to agreements, but even to contact with this Apostolic See.

May these sentiments of ours find an echo which, at the right moment, will open new ways for meetings. These, in our conviction and intentions, would be aimed not only at serving and purposes of the Church, but also at collaboration in the service of the great causes which associate, in fears, in aspirations, in responsibilities, all the peoples, great and small, of the world.

At these meetings which, taking place on our name day, occur in the middle of the year, it has been our habit to cast a summary glance, in addition to the life and the problems of the Church, also at the most significant situations of international or national life.

Today we lack time. But it would seem to us that we were failing in our duty as Father if we did not at least express our participation of heart and prayer—and where it is possible for us, also of action—in the sufferings of populations and in the difficulties which lie along the way to fair and peaceful solutions—difficulties which continue to disturb countries near us or far from us geographically, whether in the still tormented Northern Ireland, or also in the Eritrean territory, or in the southern part of Africa, and especially in these very days—in South Africa.

*Theme of the 1977 World Day of Peace*

## **"IF YOU WANT PEACE, DEFEND LIFE"**

For the Tenth World Day of Peace, in 1977, Paul VI has chosen a theme that straightway forces us to ask ourselves: "Do we want peace?"

### **IF YOU WANT PEACE . . .**

Are we not resigned rather to a society and civilization without peace?

For some this is due to discouragement at the failures and the returns to barbarism; the most they hope for is that the gathering storms will break only after their time.

Others are convinced that, scientifically speaking, war is an inescapable structural law of history. They coldly decide, then, to live with war as an integral factor of life in society or at least of the unprecedented change that our suffering generation is passing through.

Still others, including Christians, can see no other solution to the disorder and immorality breaking over our planet than the great cataclysms that are announced daily. They see in them a just punishment for the collective sin of mankind, mankind's cross and mankind's one salvation.

Lastly there are those who would willingly fit in with any policy or any type of society whatever, provided that life goes on without posing so many problems and, above all, without disturbing their interests or comfort.

Obviously we are not here dealing with this "established order", this false peace, but with true peace, which, going beyond "non-war" or even, though it be with great effort, in the midst of extinguished or renewed conflicts, manifests the joint search for a set of social

cultural and spiritual values, aiming at greater justice, security, solidarity, participation, creativity and fraternity.

This is the peace — if at any rate we believe in it, want it and work for it — that the Holy Father relates to life in the 1977 theme.

For peace and life go together. Each is the sign of the success of a society, of its health, it is the proof and measure of its growth, the reason, the true law behind human history and its salvation.

Each influences the other. Peace protects and develops life. Life provides peace with its content and "subjects".

### DEFEND HUMAN LIFE

Life is the first and most precious of man's possessions.

The world life is not taken in this theme for the next Day of Peace in its broad sense: man's temporal and immortal existence. It is taken in the more limited sense of his physical, or rather his mental and physical life. For his conscience, his freedom and his spiritual nature place him radically above animal life, although he participates fully in that life.

To defend life is therefore to respect and protect this unique living being. In short, to vary the phrase applied in the Encyclical **Populorum Progressio** to development: "to promote the good of every man and of the whole man" (**Populorum Progressio**, 14), to defend life is to defend and promote, in this human person endowed with an "exalted dignity" (**Gaudium et Spes**, 26, "the good of every living being and of the whole living being."

This is an immense programme: it involves both all men, whether already existing or yet to be born, taken as a sum of individuals or as a single whole, and each one's mental and physical integrity.

Yes, life must be defended, for it suffers the contradiction of being at one and the same time appreciated, exalted, sought for and aided, and on the other hand contested, negated, attacked, injured or suppressed. There are frequent and worldwide manifestations of national and international solidarity when rescuers run risks in order to save a sick person or evacuate a threatened village. But the same aeroplanes used in the service of life are then, if necessary, changed into fighting machines.

It would take too long to list the present burning problems regarding human life. But they can be grouped in summary and somewhat arbitrary fashion, in three categories, each of which has the more or less corresponding essential demand: **defend life; heal life; promote life.**

## I — DEFEND HUMAN LIFE

- A) In the first group, which come under the heading of defending, we must first distinguish the **attacks that are aimed at or in fact involve the deaths** of millions of human beings, whether adults or in process of growth.

Here there come to the fore three attacks that are basic in themselves and in relation to peace: war, abortion and hunger.

Without life there is no peace: peace is first and foremost absence of death, carnage, extermination, wounds and destruction. To lose life is to lose peace. To kill life is to kill peace. **Life has the same enemies as peace.**

### 1. War

The most striking, ancient and universal enemy is war. Whether it takes the form of spontaneous conflicts without rules, or pretends to, the character of a juridically recognized institution for the defence of the existence and rights of a society, war seeks to nullify and defeat the opponent by recourse to arms—increasingly perfected and murderous arms.

We have no intention here of dealing with this question in itself. It has often been considered and has given rise to a great number of studies, documents, moral judgments and activities. Let it suffice to recall the resolute rallying calls of the teaching of the Popes: “War on war” (Pius XII) and “War never again” (Paul VI at the United Nations, 4 October 1965). The Second Vatican Council echoed these two rallying calls and John XXIII’s appeal in **Pacem in Terris**, and asked us all to “resolve our disputes in a manner more worthy of man” than “the age-old slavery of war”.

But how can we say “**War on war**” (and on the armaments race that maintains or provokes it) without at the same time saying “**War on death**”, without giving life the right to live, without taking every step that life may live — that human

life (health, growth, movement, thought, feeling, activity, love, procreation, creativity) without which nothing is possible. **If war is death's other name, life is the other name of peace.**

## 2. Abortion

The question of "life" is all-inclusive, logically, psychologically, morally, ontologically. To despise, threaten, negate, reject and kill life in its beginning is to run the risk of despising, negating, eliminating the lives of adults. To be for abortion and to advocate or promote war is equally a contradiction.

To separate war and abortion as question of two different kinds is illogical and unjust. Two weights, two measures, according as the severity of moral condemnation is applied to one or the other alone.

But to separate them is also ineffective, for both war and abortion bring into people's thought and behaviour, in an increasingly arbitrary manner, the right of life and death, as if they were at man's free disposal. War puts at the free disposal of one group of humans the right to kill the combatants (and often the non-combatants) of the opposing country, the right to make its own citizens lose their lives (professional or conscripted army) and the right to impose on them the moral obligation to kill.

Liberalization of abortion gives either the mother or the father or the couple or society the right, the power and already for whole peoples the duty to suppress the child that has been conceived.

We should link with the principle, legislation and practice of abortion another very serious attack on life, **sterilization**, whether of the man or the woman, whether individual and voluntary or especially collective and obligatory.

Many arguments are advanced and will continue to be advanced to try and justify these refusals of permission to live. Some of them refer to dramatic situations, especially when these problems of conscience deal with a conflict of duties, between the child's life and the mother's or, on the collective level, between the respect due to the child who has been conceived and the legitimate anxiety felt by certain people in positions of political responsibility at a population growth in danger of increasing the number of starving people.

Here again we must inevitably mention the great **population problem**, although it is clearly too vast a subject for these pages meant only to present the 1977 theme. But we

must at least recall the basic reason for insisting on the respect due for human life, namely, the incalculable risk of a chain of exterminations contained in forgetfulness of the sacred character of life. We have already experienced the disastrous consequences of that risk. Firstly, collective exterminations: genocides, ethnocides, pogroms, cremation furnaces, death camps. Or again: voluntary or obligatory eugenics aimed at suppressing the old, the incurably ill, the physically or mentally handicapped, or certain racial, ideological or religious categories, without speaking of the genetic manipulations and modifications, with which the general public is less familiar.

The same distinction that is today invoked to justify the elimination of unborn children because they are unwanted or judged to be undesirable is invoked by theoreticians or politicians for all discrimination, whether on the basis of race, colour, sex, nationality, class, ideology or belief. It is all one, whether life is respected or despised, from embryo to genocide.

Finally, we cannot pass over in silence other forms of this forgetfulness or disdain for life that are fed by the dramatic fare offered daily by press, radio and television: terrorist attacks, murderous sabotage, armed assaults, murders and deliberate suicides.

### 3. Hunger

For more than twenty years public opinion has been awakened to the problem of underdevelopment and in particular of world hunger. But for various reasons interest is concentrated at present (and it is a very good thing) on the political and the social and cultural aspects of development rather than on the hecatomb of human lives caused by famine, malnutrition or thirst. The past decade has given scientific evidence of the seriousness of the water question and of the scandal of wasting what should maintain and save life.

"Defend life": this call in the 1977 theme should help to call attention to this culpable forgetfulness by the better-off countries and also by those who make certain demands and follow certain lines of conduct on the international level. Otherwise they will incur the reproach that Christ applied to the evil rich man with regard to the poor Lazarus (Lk. 16:20) and will also add a further risk to peace, for an injury to life is an injury to peace.

**B) Defend human life against what injures, weakens or dishonours it.**

Among the attacks that do not normally kill but "violate the integrity of the human person," the Council named "mutilation, physical or mental torture, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions . . . all these things and others of their like are infamies needed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonour to the Creator" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 27).

Paul VI, soon after, continued and completed the diagnosis and list: "violence, reprisal, terrorism, police torture, drug traffic, kidnapping . . ." (general audience of 25 March 1970).

**But it was with quite special strength that he condemned torture:**

"We have the painful duty of calling upon men of good will to reflect upon certain happenings in today's world . . . Cases of torture, for example. They are spoken of as a widespread epidemic in many parts of the world . . . Now torture, that is, cruel and inhumane police methods, used to extort confessions from the lips of prisoners, is to be openly condemned . . . it is inadmissible, even though it be used for the purpose of exercising justice and defending public order . . . It must be disowned and abolished. It offends not only the physical integrity but also the dignity of the human person. It degrades the sense and the majesty of justice. It arouses implacable and contagious feelings of hatred and revenge" (general audience of 21 October 1970).

Finally, we must bring before the bar of our consideration the following attacks on the integrity of human life that are being carried out in many countries: **the penal and prison system:** arbitrary judgment and detention, illegal proceedings, protracted imprisonment; bad conditions of the detainees and their families from the food, health and social points of view, inhumane interrogation, corporal chastisement, brain-washing.

Special must be made of psychiatric hospitals, and of any practices aimed at the mental disintegration of the internee or his compliance with the very system which oppresses him.

These physical assaults on liberty are cruelly multiplied in our time: kidnapping, the taking of hostages, hijacking. More-



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over there are drugs, alcohol and substances which have a stupifying and dehumanizing effect on people.

The bond between peace and respect for life can be seen here in all its clarity. Can a society, a nation, be at peace when its "thinkers" are beaten and attacked, robbing them even of their thought, their will and their convictions?

### II — HEAL LIFE

A lot could be said and a lot must be done in the context of the theme of the year 1977 about the relation between peace and human life in this area of the "ministry of safeguarding life" (GS 51). The majority of modern states have created a Ministry of Health. To fight against disease, to extend life expectancy, to make provision for the handicapped, but above all constantly to improve hygiene, housing and food is surely to create a climate of serenity and peace. *Gaudium et Spes* outlines the principal requirements of today "for leading a truly human life" (GS 26).

### III — PROMOTE LIFE

The same must also be said about the promotion of life: the problem of its "responsible transmission" (GS 51); cultural problems: "Persons and societies thirst for a full and free life worthy of man . . ." (GS 9). In this aspiring to a better "quality of life", there figures very prominently all that is denoted by the word **ecology**: man's proper relationship to nature, the management of his **environment**; the development of his physical and aesthetic potentialities; the concern to go beyond the stage of a consumer society to a new level of values and to an ideal higher than that of selfish pleasure.

There again, coincidence is revealing. We should reread, for example, the admirable definition in *Pacem in Terris* of a true society at peace. "We must think of human society as being primarily a spiritual reality." Hence "... men have an immediate grasp of spiritual and intellectual values . . . And that is not all . . . They recognize that their relationship with God forms the very foundation of their life — the interior life of the spirit, and the life which they live in the society of their fellows."

These tasks take our theme naturally to its very summit and beyond, in the light and in the grace of the Risen Christ and of the salvation, temporal and spiritual, which he is bringing to the world today, as he did yesterday and will tomorrow.

### THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF FAITH

In this context we will confine ourselves to mentioning simply a few landmarks. One can find a more ample treatment of this theme "Peace and Life" in the other preparatory documents of the 1977 Day of Peace: biblical references, the Votive Mass for the occasion and the selection of texts from the Magisterium of the Church.

To conclude and clarify the preceding reflections, here are some remarks.

1. God is life and the sole Lord of life and death (Wis. 16:13). The Father gives this life, shared in love by the Three Divine Persons, to men as the crowning act of the creation of the world: "Increase and multiply" (Gen. 1:28). This life, spoiled by sin but saved and divinized by the redemption of the Son — the Word of Life (1 Jn. 1:1), the Resurrection and the Life (Jn. 11:25), the Way and the Life (Jn. 15:6)— is communicated to men as a river (Jn. 7:37) and as bread (Jn. 6:33), in and by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 3:5).

It is this life, coming from God, which begins and is incarnated in the life of time, the life of the flesh (the Word was made flesh — Jn. 1:14). Hence its inestimable value. "Human life is sacred" (*Mater et Magistra*, AAS 5 [1961] p. 447).

Responsibility for and the service of this life, of which God is the constant and inexhaustible source, the Lord hands over and delegates to man.

2. This recalling of the broad outline resolves a basic contradiction which arose in the proceeding pages. Life was seen there as an absolute value because in no circumstances may man destroy it. But how then does one reconcile that with the teaching and attitude of Christ: "Anyone who tries to preserve his life will lose it . . ." (Lk. 17:53); "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends" (Jn. 15:13); "The good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep" (Jn. 10:11); "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3). "He . . . has washed away our sins with his blood" (Rev. 1:5). And this revelation is developed in the whole of the New Testament.

It is one thing to kill another or to commit suicide for one's own sake: another to die, to undergo death so as to save the life of others, their bodily or spiritual life. ". . . (Jesus) gave his life for us; and we too, ought to give up our lives for our brothers" (1 Jn. 3:16). Human life is created in the image of the life of God; it is not kept selfishly, it is given.

And in being given, life is not lost. The life of the body is not an absolute. It is of relative value, ordained for eternal life already begun on this earth. To lose body is not to lose one's being.

And in the same way, to kill the body is not an absolute evil "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mt. 10:28).

Nonetheless, the life of the body has so great a value, by reason of its origin, its function and its mediation at the heart and summit of the cosmos, that its destruction or the attacks to which it is exposed, constitute an exceptionally grave misfortune or evil. Only the dignity, the importance, the urgency of the causes which one must serve or defend can justify the risk or the sacrifice that is involved: to defend the weak or the innocent, to intervene between combatants, to risk a fatal illness so as to attend the sick, or finally, to accept martyrdom so as to witness to one's faith. To give one's life to one's neighbour, is not to rob God of it or to steal it from him, but rather to restore to him mastery over it. So the circle is completed without any contradiction.

3. The enlightenment of faith defends human life against its own negation.

"Life must be defended; life is the greatest blessing of all." From this affirmation, many of our contemporaries — many among ourselves — are tempted to conclude: physical life is the only good. It must therefore be preserved and defended at all costs. Because it is the only life we have, they reply (two thousand years after the Corinthians whom St. Paul quoted): "If the dead do not rise, then let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32).

This little phrase contains all the hedonism, all the materialism of today, all the philosophy of the "consumer society"; all the Malthusianism also, both national and international, with regard to birth control but also with regard to economic, political and social policies aimed, cost what it may, at safeguarding the privileges of the better-off peoples. "To be little so as to have much": that could be their motto.

The raw light of the Gospel saves life, by preserving it from self-idolatry, and from the adoration of the body: fear of living, the refusal to serve, to undertake risk and involvement, at the service of others or of the community.

Reference to the Passion and the physical death of Christ frees man today from the limitations of his wealth. Life nowhere appears so sacred as in the sacrificing of it.

4. The light of faith resolves finally another difficulty arising from the "price of life": that of what moral conduct to adopt. And this is true above all in the pastoral domain, notably for the two great questions of war and abortion.

How is one to respect life to the degree that the Church demands, in a world in full process of change and development? How is one to bear witness to it? How can one uphold it? How is one to resolve situations involving so many persons and so many non-Christian and often also non-human factors? How is one to reconcile all that with the absolute and universal character of the divine commandment, which is "objective" and the immediate application of that commandment which the Church urgently asks us to make (civic campaigns against abortion, etc.)?

It seems that here again the reflection of faith and the experience of the Church make important contributions towards a solution.

In the first place with regard to the opposition or the tension between the objective (the moral Law) and the subjective (conscience). In effect, whatever may be the paths of personal maturation which the Lord alone can finally judge, there are levels below which one cannot objectively allow oneself to fall. It is the role of the moral law to affirm this as a very condition in the search for ethical values.

As far as concerns the "movement" when the divine law "Thou shall not kill" can be applied, everything should be done to make it now. And it can be now, by gaining ground little by little. But when will these patches of fidelity to God's Law be linked up? When will they form a continuous territory? When will war cease to be a legitimate means — or juridical means — to settle conflicts, as the Council and the Papacy so insistently demand? When will abortion cease to be practiced and advocated?

Only God knows. In the meantime, the Christian finds both comfort and hope in the Christian understanding of history and of time. We are simultaneously both in the "already" of the eternal Kingdom — it is already "among us" (Lk. 17:21) — and in the "not yet" — the kingdom is not yet fully realized in our time. Its building up is gradual, uneven and unforeseeable. There is no need to be surprised at the slowness of public opinion in understanding, accepting, practising, a "way of living more worthy of man"; but neither is there and need to resign oneself to it. Neither discouragement and resignation nor impatience and presumption. A Christian's activity in the field to peace and life, as in all the other spheres of his existence, follows this line of fidelity both to humility and to hope.

## **FEATURES**

# **THE MYTHS OF MEDELLIN**

**By**

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### **Brewing the Myths**

From 1967 to 1968, groups of priests in six or seven South American nations, with memberships ranging from twenty to eighty, saw in the 2nd Conference of Latin American Bishops (that was to be held in Medellin, Colombia, on Aug. 1968) the occasion to spread their ideas on a continental scale.

These ideas were very simple: to substitute in preaching and pastoral work the doctrine of the Church for an "evangelization of social consciousness" and an "authentic pastoral ministry of liberation" — to use the words of the group ONIS (Oficina Nacional de Informacion Social), which was organized in Peru in March 1968.

Some of these ideas, although toned down and colored by their proponents through express affirmations of the supernatural character of the Christian faith, found their way into the conclusions of the Medellin conference.<sup>1</sup> Ever since August 1968, these groups, together with others organized up to 1972, used the name of Medellin to lend prestige to their views, now brought to their radical conclusions and openly affirmed.

Discerning this evolution, some Latin American bishops explained that these were not the conclusions of Medellin. But the landslide of confusion had begun: Medellin — now transformed into a myth by clerical activist groups — became a re-interpretation of the Church for Latin America, a re-interpretation not unlike the errors advocated by some groups for the whole Church under the guise of Vatican II. It was a complete break from tradition, a new theological trend, a new Pentecost without the Holy Spirit.

It is difficult to deduce a clear body of doctrine from the many pronouncements and declarations made by these groups (Christians for Socialism, Golconda, ONIS, Priests for the Third World). What we have is a repetition of general affirmations and utopian visions presented as though they were imminent — **myths** is a more fitting and accurate word to predicate of these views.

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<sup>1</sup> By Medellin conference is meant the 2nd General Conference of Latin American Bishops, held in the city of Medellin (Colombia) from Aug. 26 to Sep. 6, 1968.

### Creating the Latin American Church

"We have faith in God, in men, in values and in the future of Latin America." Thus ends the **Message to the Latin American Peoples** which introduces the conclusions of the Medellin conference. The particularly Latin American flavor of this line is emphasized in some conclusions which make mention of the "Latin American man" in need of having a "new image", and of the "proper vocation of Latin America". Economic and social problems — present all over the world, in both developed and under-developed countries — are presented as proper of and specific to Latin America, and are discussed in very general terms, without distinguishing the diverse situations and idiosyncracies of each country. As a spiritual image of the entire Latin America, the conclusions spoke of a "Latin American Church": "The Latin American Church, meeting at the 2nd General Conference of its Episcopate, centered its attention on the man of this continent, who lives in a decisive moment of its history" (p. 41).

Four years later (April 1972), in the final document of the meeting of Christians for Socialism, we witness a translation of the broad nationalistic flavor of Medellin into more specific terms: "Christians committed to socialism recognize in the national and continental proletariat the vanguard of the liberation of Latin America." (**?Consecuencia cristiana o alienacion politica?**, Santiago de Chile, 1972, p. 180 — a compilation of documents of groups of Chilean priests favoring or disagreeing with the positions of the Christians for Socialism). The logical outcome of this reduction is clear: Latin American socialism becomes the mission of the Latin American Church.

The "real" Latin America would consist of the oppressed class — the same class "subjugated" by the **conquistadores** since the 16th C. with the blessing of the "Church of before". Thanks to Marxism, Latin America is **now** supposed to have found her culture, suppressed as it were for four centuries; and a new Latin America has emerged. It is for this "new Latin America" that the new "Latin American Church" is being born.

The whole masonic campaign launched since the 18th C. against the Church's efforts at evangelization in America, is taken up and out-classed by this novel ideology of a new socialism and a new Church.

### But the Church is Universal, not Regional

On the other hand, the Church founded by Christ is only one — the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church with its visible head in the Pope. It is doctrinally erroneous, therefore, to speak of a Latin American Church as if it were something different from the Church in any other region of the world.

In June 1973, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops released a statement containing the following lines: "There is only one Church: the Church of Christ . . . the affirmation of the catholicity of the Church which, in turn, implies the other marks, including its apostolicity. Union with Rome, the Apostolic See par excellence, is particularly most necessary in this post-Conciliar period which suffers from the presence of schismatic elements within the Catholic Church; while, on the other hand, there are some who advocate the promotion of ecumenism and contact with non-Catholics, Christians and non-Christians, especially with socialist-marxists. This is true of various Latin American nations."

The statement includes an important and valid clarification on CELAM: "It is necessary to add that the expression **Latin American Church** has no meaning; the Church does not exist without a hierarchy endowed with authentic jurisdiction over the community. CELAM (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano) has no authority whatsoever over the churches in the various nations of the continent. Conclusion: the expression **Latin American Church** — an expression borrowed from terminologies or schismatic movements, at least in fact — ought not to be used; the expression **Catholic Church in Latin America** ought to be used instead" (cf. *Documentación Católica*, July 15, 1973).

In some quarters, these admonitions of the Holy See were left unheeded. The Medellin Conference was summarily converted into a myth and a source of myths. Among these, the ff. are more widespread: the myth of secularization, the myth of liberation, the myth of Christian revolution, and the myth of the priest-leader.

### The Myth of Secularization

The myth of secularization is not a "Latin American creation". It was to be found in Europe and North America even prior to Medellin. It is interesting to note that these groups of Medellin<sup>3</sup>, vehement defenders of whatever is "properly Latin American", have — by adopting this myth — accepted an idea imported by some foreign priests who came to Latin America with the original intention of aiding the pastoral work.

<sup>2</sup> The Medellin Conference was held under the auspices of the CELAM.

<sup>3</sup> Whenever the groups of Medellin are mentioned here, reference is made to a number of clerical groups — in some cases with the participation of the laity and representatives of different religious denominations — which have appeared in Latin American countries in recent years. Born either before or immediately after the Medellin conference, these groups share a similar view in the manner of defining their **pastoral** work. All these groups invoke the conclusions of Medellin as doctrinal endorsements of their arbitrary positions. Thus their general classification here under the name "groups of Medellin".

What is **secularization** as used in this context? Secularization carries two general mutually-related aspects: one negative, the other positive. Negatively, it points to the gradual doing away with whatever refers to and fosters the sacred, supernatural or "vertical" dimension of the Catholic faith; so as to substitute it — and this is the positive aspect — with a basically temporal, human or "horizontal" dimension.

There are several phenomena nowadays which, in varying degrees, reflect these two trends. To cite an all-too-familiar example of the desacrilization process (another term for secularization), we have the doing away with the religious habit and priestly cassock, which are frequently disparaged as being old-fashioned and traditional. There is somehow a stigma of inferiority attached to being a plain, ordinary priest — a priest, that is, who attends exclusively to the care of souls by saying Mass and administering the sacraments; to be as "lay" as possible seems to be the "in-thing" for the "modern" ecclesiastic. An even more serious phenomenon is the oblivion cast nowadays on sin and the sacraments, especially the sacrament of penance. Although I speak from personal experience, I do not think it rash to generalize in this regard: today, seldom do most people hear about mortal sin and venial sin, about the importance of personal, auricular confession (which, by the way, is still the proper manner of administering the sacrament), about the life hereafter, about the Blessed Trinity, about Our Lady. Instead, we hear much talk about "social awareness", "liberation", "freedom from oppression", "social justice", etc.

The conclusions of Medellin, although not explicitly affirming the tenets of secularization, easily lend themselves to such an interpretation: "Up to now," we read in the conclusions, "we have been principally concerned with a pastoral work both static and conservative, based on an exclusive emphasis on the sacraments without previous instruction on the Gospel... A religious spirit of vows and promises, of pilgrimages and countless numbers of devotions, based on the reception of the sacraments, especially baptism and the first communion, having hardly any real influence of christian life... These cults tend to be deformed and mixed to a certain extent with a by-gone religious heritage in which tradition exerts an almost tyrannical power; the danger of their easily being influences by magical practices is a real possibility" (pp. 115 & 117).

Taking up and interpreting these views (which are, at best, prejudiced and all too one-sided), the groups of Medellin proceed on to "denounce the sacramentalistic superstition" and push the need of discouraging the piety of the faithful which they regard as inimical to the true task of evangelization. Secularization, they maintain, must needs be preceded by this anti-catechetical campaign since the traditional faith is deeply rooted in the mentality and popular devotion of Latin American



folk. But once this estrangement from the faith is attained, the ground will be fertile for a full blossoming of secularization in the continent.

With the coming of secularization, the next phase of the campaign will consist in affirming the need of conducting the "Latin American Church" along lines which would better foster her "credibility" for modern man — the need, that is, of involving herself in the task of "liberating" Latin America. The Chilean newspaper *Pastoral Popular* affirms: "This is the great challenge that now faces the Catholicism popularized among ourselves: either to conserve the sacred gestures which, although valid, are incapable of expressing all the liberating power of the Gospel; or to incorporate ourselves into the dynamism of this people who feel Catholic in their more oppressed and enlightened sectors, and who have begun the process of liberation, at times in open criticism against the official sectors of the (ecclesiastical) Institution."

Against this myth of secularization — which, as we have seen, has yet to be fostered in Latin America — we should remember that given the frequent use of the sacraments and the manifestations of Christian piety already present in Latin America, the real mission of the Church, the mission of all Christians, ought to be an efficacious catechesis aimed at deepening their knowledge of what they already do. In spite of constant claims at being spokesmen of the majority, the groups of Medellin continuously insult the faith of the common people. "While they try to discover the slightest trace of truth and goodness in an atheist and in a non-Catholic, (the groups of Medellin) ruthlessly condemn all the good will, the good intention, and the simple but sincere devotions of simple people who only want to get closer to God," wrote Cardinal Rossi of Brazil, prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of the Nations (cf. *Le Religion*, Caracas, May 23, 1974).

### The Myth of Liberation

There is at least one reason which explains the refusal of these clerical groups to carry out their specific pastoral mission, which is to help the other Christians know and love God more: the distortion they make of the meaning of the word *liberation*, always used in Scripture synonymously with the Redemption from the slavery of sin wrought by Christ, but which they now employ in strictly human and temporal terms.

The conclusions of Medellin, invariably used in the narrow sense given to them by these groups, easily bring about confusion. Statements like the following are read among the conclusions: "We are in the verge of a new historical epoch of our continent, filled with the longing for liberation from all servitude" (p. 42). "A silent clamor rises from millions of men, asking their pastors for a liberation which no one helps them to attain." (p. 207).

Translated by the groups of Medellin, the above terminology is converted into the following: "We try to enable the 'militant' Catholic faithful — whom we prefer to call worshippers — first of all, to arrive at the liberating conclusion that the sincere Christian ought to be as atheistic as the most extreme atheist is in the Marxist sense. For 'to believe' in the genuine Christian sense of the word, has no meaning in the abstract and metaphysical viewpoint of philosophical idealism, but in the concrete and ethical perspective of historical theology" (Report of the Cuban delegation in the 1st Latin American Meeting of Christians for Socialism).

The Jesuit priest Arroyo, in the opening remarks of the above meeting, said: "Revolutionary Christians have some points very clear. Their first task, if they want to be consistent with the Gospel, is to fight for the liberation of the oppressed; that is, for the liberation of workers and the nations, exploited by international capitalism. There is no need to expound here the tenets of the theology of liberation, which spring from this continent of great social unrest and which have been confirmed in Medellin by the Latin American bishops. The starting point of this theology is not a philosophical reflection on human nature in general (as is the case with vague Christian humanism) or the interpretation of Revelation as given by the Church; for the Christian revolutionary, reflection starts with the consideration of the oppressed state Latin American people unjustly suffer. Christ is at the forefront of this history of struggles, victories and defeats, giving it its ultimate meaning in the attainment of liberation. A Christian perceives and realizes this liberating action of Christ the moment he commits himself to a practical identification with this people on the march" (*Consecuencia cristiana* . . . pp. 159-160).

The myth of liberation maintains that the Christian Faith ought not to be preached whilst there exist conditions of injustice in the distribution of economic goods in the world, unless we limit this preaching to only one thing: the necessity of a "radical change in the structures", which would bring with it the solution of all injustice.

### **Influence of Marxism**

Thus, the theology of liberation poses the problem in a typically Marxist fashion: economic alienation is considered the root of all other alienations, for the reign of liberty follows once economic alienation is overcome. This position conceals an essential tenet of Marxism, however: religion, too, disappears together with economic alienation. For a Marxist, religion is the most obvious illusion man "fabricates" when he is alienated by a non-Marxist economic system.

The groups of Medellin refuse to draw the logical conclusions of their position. And the reason is clear: were they to do this, they would not be able to use existing ecclesiastical institutions (parishes, associations

of the faithful, seminaries, etc.) to spread their doctrines; they would not be able to enjoy the protective umbrella of the Church, and in general, avail of the popular credit given to things of religious nature — a credit which is afforded so long as God is spoken of (and which disappears when the spiritual trimmings of a movement are removed, and its purely human, political and temporal motives disclosed).

The myth of liberation implies that mere socio-political remedies are sufficient to solve all human misery. These remedies, moreover, are either vague (What exactly does "radical change of structures" mean?), or mean an essentially Marxist position incompatible with religion, and with historical consequences against human liberty and freedom of conscience — a fact evident in Communist regimes.

This position also asserts that Christianity has been wrongly taught from the very start, for the expansion of the Church throughout its twenty century lifespan has never coincided with the total and final eradication of human miseries. The groups of Medellin brush aside the apostles, the Popes from St. Peter to Paul VI, the work of thousands of canonized saints and many others who, although not canonized, have lived a holy life on earth. In the light of this new vision of Christianity, all this is either superfluous or downright wrong.

In order to continue using the "Christian label" which these groups tactically employ to their advantage, they, therefore, claim that it is necessary to return to the very beginnings of Christianity, to the actual figure and work of Christ, to the Gospels — but this time re-read in human terms, re-read that is, in terms of social revolution.

### The Myth of Christian Revolution

This re-reading of the Gospel brings the proponents of Medellin to the ff. conclusions: prescinding from the question of Christ's divinity (they appear uninterested in making a definite stand here), these groups of Medellin regard him a popular leader, the oldest and most spiritual example of a revolutionary totally dedicated to the cause of economic and social liberation.

They gloss over or ignore the Gospel passages which speak of humility, meekness, pardon, love of enemies, reconciliation among men. They shelve the fact that "only one thing is necessary", viz., personal sanctity, which we have to seek above all other things. They naturally do not know what to make of the ff. words of our Lord: "My kingdom is not of this world."

Other passages of Scripture are also contrary to their position. The first apostles, for instance, admonished the early Christians to respect their political leaders: "For love of the Lord, then, bow to every kind of human

authority; to the king, who enjoys the chief power, and to the magistrates who hold his commission to punish criminals and encourage honest men. To silence, by honest living, the ignorant chatter of fools; that is what God expects of you." (I Peter 2, 13-16). And Christ's words to Pilate cannot be any clearer: "Thou wouldst not have any power over me at all, if it had not been given thee from above" (John 19, 11).

In truth, to defend the myth of Christian revolution, one must not simply "re-read" but actually "re-write" the Gospel, avoiding or toning down all reference to the supernatural; and at the same time campaign for the institution of a new group or Church of men dedicated to the profession of a "radical change of structures".

Although the term "revolution" nowhere appears in the conclusions of Medellín, when the groups of Medellín speak of **revolution**, they unequivocally mean an alliance with Marxist political groups. "Emancipation", "complete development", "liberation", are the terms employed in the conclusions of Medellín. But re-translated by the groups of Medellín, these expressions are substituted by the clearer and more straight-forward term "revolution".

Golconda, one of the said groups, takes the exhortation of the Medellín conclusions "to make decisions and promote projects only on the condition that we be willing to carry them out as our pastoral commitment, even at the cost of sacrifice" (p. 42), and translates it into 16 "guidelines for action". The third guideline reads as follows: "We ought to commit ourselves more to the various forms of revolutionary action against imperialism and the neo-colonial bourgeoisie, avoiding merely contemplative attitudes which only serve to justify these evils" (from the final document of the meeting of Golconda, Dec. 1968).

The position of the Christians for Socialism is even more explicit: "The alliance between Christianity and the privileged classes explains in a large way the historical forms that the Christian conscience takes. Thus, it is necessary that Christians take a definite stand on the side of the exploited, in order to shatter this alliance. And verifying theory in practice, (this definite stand) will permit us to re-discover a renewed Christianity that will, in a creative way and in an effort of evangelical fidelity, re-gain its original spirit of conflict and revolution." (*Consecuencia cristiana* . . . , p. 186).

The document *Al encuentro de Cristianos por el Socialismo* (published in 1972 by the Manuel Larrain Foundation in Talca, Chile), ends with the ff. words: "Because you 'cannot serve God and mammon' (Lk. 16) and 'whoever tries to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake shall find it' (Lk. 9); because 'when Christians dare to bear a revolutionary testimony, the Latin American revolution will be invincible' (Che Guevara)" (*Consecuencia cristiana* . . . , p. 231).

The Gospel has been re-written... with the help of Che Guevarra. Whatever does not follow this line will be summarily dismissed as "sacramentalistic" and "alienating" because it will only serve the interest of the "privileged class".

### The Myth of the Priest-Leader

If Christian revolution must be carried out, who will do it? The groups of Medellin invariably assign this role to the "Latin American people". Acknowledging that the expression "Latin American people" is too general, however, these groups add that the people must be politicized in order to ably carry out their revolutionary mission.

One of the documents of the Medellin conference was entitled **Pastoral Work with the Elite** (*Pastoral de elites*), clarifying that "the idea elite merely has a descriptive meaning and refers to the principal agents of social change, without any value judgment nor class connotation attached to it" (p. 123, footnote). In this sense, elite refers to any professional group: managers, intellectuals (*profesionales liberales*), technicians, laborers, peasants. All these elite groups have to be "politicized".

Here is where the priest comes in. "On us pastors of the Church falls the task of educating the consciences, of inspiring, stimulating and aid the orientation of all initiatives that contribute to the formation of man... of encouraging and supporting all efforts of people to create and develop their own base organizations, to demand and consolidate their rights, and to seek true justice" (p. 75; the underlined words are not found in the original). This concern is addressed to the priests, "who occupy central positions in the present situation of change" (p. 167). "The Latin American world is making a gigantic effort to accelerate the process of development in the continent. In this task, the priest plays a specific and indispensable role" (p. 173).

In one of the conclusions of Medellin, however, the ff. qualification is added (p. 174): "In the economic and social order, and principally in the political order, where diverse, specific options are studied, neither the decision, nor the leadership, nor the planning of solutions are directly incumbent upon the priest." This clarification was left unheeded, and the contrary affirmation was immediately upheld by the groups of Medellin: not only was it the responsibility of priests to involve themselves in these questions; but without the priests, the "Christian revolution" and "liberation of Latin America" would be impossible.

The leader of the Group of 80 priests from Chile who prepared the Latin American Meeting of Christians for Socialism, the Jesuit Gonzalo Arroyo, writes: "We believe that the teaching of the 2nd Vatican Council and of Medellin allows us to reject the figure of the priests who is separated from society, who is exclusively dedicated to purely spiritual and pastoral concerns, estranged from the great political inspirations which motivate the people, and who leaves the laity alone to temporal and political concern" (*Consecuencia cristiana* . . . , p. 261). Another priest of Chile adds: "We believe it imperative as part of our mission as priests, to help men realize that they are victims of a socio-economic system which leads fatally to the division of humanity into exploiters and exploited and to the destruction of all men, reducing both exploiters and exploited to slavery . . . I believe it my duty to contribute as best I can to the construction of a socialist regime where fraternity and democracy are not mere theories, where human dignity finds equal respect in everyone, and where unjust structures are demolished — structures that render illusory the liberty of the oppressed, especially the poorest among them, to whose service I have consecrated myself and for whose sake I have received my mission from the Church" (*Consecuencia cristiana* . . . , pp. 267-269).

The political leadership of priests has been fostered and supported by Marxist groups, with an intention similar to that which motivated other political groups to do the same on other occasions. Whatever be to the contrary, priests exert a lot of influence among Catholic folk; the common people always listen to the priest and believe what he says. And as Latin America is generally Catholic, the loud applause given by Marxist groups to priests affiliated with their views is clearly understandable.

Before proceeding further, it is important to note that side by side with a praiseworthy element of veneration for the priesthood (an essential feature in every Christian, learned or not) in the above attitude of common folk, there is a dangerous element of doctrinal ignorance, too: the ignorance that priests, as priests, do not have authority in fields where no unique "Christian solution" is to be found. The vast panorama of temporal concerns is replete with examples of these. Outside the God-given domain of faith and morals, there are many things that the Magisterium of the Church leaves to the free discussion of men. The content of the faith and the norms of morality can never be changed since they have God, and not man, as author. (The function of the Magisterium consists in keeping this deposit whole and entire, and transmitting the same to men in all its purity and integrity.) But outside the realm, Catholics enjoy

complete freedom. They act with personal responsibility, in the manner dictated by a well-formed conscience.

Curiously enough, the groups of Medellin do not correct this ignorance, nor do they criticize it for its being superstitious or paternalistic. On the contrary, they foster it and use it at the service of their political schemes.

The minority guerrilla groups backed up by Marxists in some areas of Latin America might have succeeded in carrying through their designs had they had the popular support through the recommendation of the priests. This was the tactical motive behind the following words of Che Guevarra: "Christians," he wrote, "ought to opt definitely for the revolution, especially so in our continent where the Christian faith carries great weight among the popular masses." According to Che Guevarra, "Christians up to the present have permitted reactionaries to utilize their doctrine." And when we find these words in the final remarks of the concluding document of the 1st Latin American Meeting of Christians for Socialism, we are but witnessing the spectacle of a group of priests who permit an instrumentalization of the faith at the service of Communist political groups.

The myth of the priest-leader has not had any important political repercussion in actual events of society in Latin America: neither in countries labelled "reactionary". The effects are more felt on the personal level, however: the disappearance of specifically sacerdotal activities and, in many cases, the abandonment of vocations. In isolated cases where this myth gained some importance, it has been at the cost of the confidence the people (who hardly know a thing about "theology of liberation") traditionally have afforded priests. The groups of Medellin have vehemently denied the accusation of their being "left-wing clerics". It is difficult to deny, however, that these groups take advantage of existing institutions (which are traditional), using them according to the manner they personally choose, and drawing them away from the faith of the Church. All this at the expense of the faithful (who confide in them and obey them because they see in them the priest for all eternity, not the political activist) on whom they try to impose their re-hashed version of Christianity.

### **Faith and Myths**

The myths of Medellin make two reductions: first, the reduction of the Catholic Church in Latin America — the Catholic Church, that is, whose presence is also established in the whole world, above any political or

cultural differences — to the **Latin American Church**, thereby initiating a schismatic process which, viewed from the faith, has only one ultimate outcome: a serious rupture of Christian unity. Secondly, the reduction of two orders (the natural and supernatural) to only one: the natural order which in turn, is reduced to a purely material order in an unqualified adherence to the tenets of Marxist materialism. This, I would say, is the true process that leads to the emancipation of Latin America.

Nowhere in the Gospels nor in official texts of the Magisterium do we read that the Christian faith promises to bring a permanent state of total justice and peace on earth. Christian faith does not say that this earthly bliss will never come to pass; but neither does it affirm that it will. While the Church insistently preaches the need of living the Christian virtues (charity, justice, humility, temperance, prudence, etc.) in both its personal and social aspects, it reminds us, too, that the earth is not our permanent dwelling place. The hope of heaven is not an alibi for the conditions of injustice in the world, as some groups of Medellin apparently lead us to believe. To live without justice is not to live as a Christian ought. This does not mean, however, that Christian living is to be equated to a human effort in establishing social justice; man has many other duties to God and his fellowmen which are not exhausted by the practice of this virtue.

What Marxism affirms — directly or through its “ecclesiastical” subversion — is erroneous, because of its claim that Christian life is identical with social justice. Nor should we believe that socialism is part of the virtue of justice. It is well known that for Marx, neither the term nor the idea of justice had any meaning at all. For him, justice is an empty word, although a useful instrument to win over the idealist Socialists who spoke in ethical terms.

The myths of Medellin, like all myths, are gross oversimplifications. They lack intellectual rigor and a thorough understanding of actual conditions. On the other hand, the faith cannot be reduced to a mere slogan, for the faith assures us that the root of all evil — both personal and social — is sin, the offense against God. The affirms, therefore, that it is necessary to have a continuous personal struggle against sin, a struggle that she enjoins us to express in terms of charity, justice and understanding for our fellowmen. Contrary to Marxism, the faith does not present the earth as the final resting place of mankind; but she does present it as the setting of a struggle — an interior struggle, which demands that man constantly deny himself until death for the love of God.



This simplification explains why the groups of Medellin want to achieve the "radical change of structures" not in the span of one generation, but in a few decades. In the light of the new events in Chile in Sept. 1973, if we read the writings of the Chilean priests who publicly supported the socialist-communist regime of Allende, we will once more understand that the logic of historical events cannot be explained with the mathematical rigor and precision that Marxists claim to do. From a Christian viewpoint and prescindendo from political considerations, the most important thing to bear in mind is the extent of the spiritual harm we cause the Christian faithful when we try to transform their faith into a political program exposed to the vicissitudes of history.

The gravity of the distortion becomes unbearable when what is taught as doctrine of faith (or as a requirement of it) is not only an opinion but the very corruption of the faith itself — what in Christian terms has always been called with a very clear name: heresy.

In this level of the faith, we understand better the deception and gravity of this fabrication of myths. This may seem to be a mere personal error, perhaps in good faith, on the part of the proponents of this doctrine. Objectivity, however, it is an affront to God and a serious attempt against the liberty of Christians, against their right in the Church to demand of the priests the fulfillment of their social duty to teach the Catholic faith and administer the sacraments.

Today, as always, the Christian faith is contrary to any kind of mythology. To be consistent with the faith, a Christian must point out the insidious fraud — in teaching and imposing Marxism in the name of Christ, making use of the sacerdotal office to propagate it. The Catholic priest has, in conscience, the obligation of preaching the Gospel, the Good News of Christ, in all its integrity and purity.

# **HOMILY OF ARCHBISHOP ANTONIO F. FRONDOSA AT HIS INSTALLATION**

(ROXAS CITY, MARCH 16, 1976)

I rejoice that on this occasion I behold the happy union of two events which are dearest to the heart of every Christian Bishop, — the highest approbation upon his work given unstintedly by the Vicar of Christ Himself, joined with the chorus of affectionate congratulations of the Clergy and faithful of the Diocese.

There are two goals in life toward which the work of a bishop naturally tends. He needs every day of his life to feel that whatever he does has the approval of the Holy See. His office as a Bishop of the Church is so momentuous and so fraught with such enormous consequences not merely for the present, but in a certain sense for all times that his own opinion or judgment of what he does or does not do is relatively insignificant. For the flock is not his, but Christ's, and neither his mind, nor heart, nor conscience can rest tranquilly unless he feels in perfect union and absolute concord with the mind and heart of Him who rules the whole Church.

Thank God my early training in the seminary under the Vincentian Fathers and my whole life's experience have only constantly strengthened that conviction of faith, and today, in my eight years as a soldier, after forty years of priesthood, and twenty four as a bishop, through sheer and absolute conviction, my filial devotion to the head of the Church has full possession of my mind and heart as the only defensible ground upon which to think or act in relation to my duty toward my Clergy and people.

If today I were called upon to say why Christ's Vicar has lavished upon me so many and so great proofs of his affection and regard, the only answer I could give is this, that he has read the most secret motives of my heart and soul, the one mainspring which has guided me in all I have done or attempted to do, namely, the most simple and implicit confidence in the guidance of Peter's successor, and the most absolute determination, so far as in me lay, to model my regime as a Christian bishop along the lines of his slightest wish in whatever concerned faith or morals, or the discipline of ecclesiastical life.

I am not unaware, and I glory in the fact, that my constantly outspoken adherence to the Holy See is widely known. No one who has followed my public utterances can pretend to ignore it, and the speech of my lips has been only the faithful interpreter of the

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sentiments of my heart. It could never matter in the least to me what others thought about my attitude or action once I was sure that the Bishop of Bishop's had given his approval.

Naturally, now that Paul VI has set the seal of his very highest approbation upon my Episcopate, that, next to God's final approval of my life, shall ever remain to me the most sacred thing on earth.

Through all the vicissitudes and varieties and faults of my career, and many there have been, this one consolation I can always cherish, — that whatever as layman or priest or prelate, in whatever position, lowly or high, I have never received a single reproof from those set over me as responsible guides of my conduct and action; and outside of this, the mere opinion of those who were not my legitimate guides or guardians has never given me the slightest concern.

My elevation to the rank of an Archbishop is another and this time a supreme indication to me that my heart and mind are set toward the right direction, and because of that I am, as I may well be, supremely happy and content. But now your presence here today, my brothers in the episcopacy, my dearly beloved priests and faithful, add to this grand consolation that other element of satisfaction and joy which makes a perfect combination. My happiness is all the greater in this, that you rejoice in it. Not unfrequently, the Bishop of a Diocese must be content with one, the higher and nobler one of these consolations. Often for a time, and even for long periods, misunderstandings and misinterpretations, and even unruly obstinacy on the part of some of his Clergy, may leave the void of a great affection filled only with care and solicitude. Times are when he must content with the knowledge of hard duty done, leaving to the future a just and genuine appreciation of his regime. For men are only men after all.

It is often almost inevitable that the men in the busy streets and byways of life fail to see or to understand the point of view of one who sits in the watchtower. His point of view is surer and highest, but the clamor in the streets may often weaken the sound of his voice. It has not been so here. The traditions of our priesthood in Capiz have been healthy and sound, and so, from the very beginning, I have met neither obstacle nor difficulty. What I have counseled has been followed, and what as Bishop I have deemed it a duty to enact and decree has been duly obeyed. The result is what we see all around us.

With all modesty, the splendid condition of this Diocese, parochially and organically, is well known throughout this region, and, I may now dare to say it with pride, perhaps throughout the country.

I see here today priests old in service and those whose ministry has scarcely begun. Each has his duty to the other, and the example of each is bound from the very nature of things to affect the other. For we are all one family and there can be no isolation, as there can be no independence. The mistake of the old often is to resent the passing of old condition; mistake, I say, for that is attempting to keep out the sea with a wall of sand.

The secret of a perfect life is to accept the inevitable, to welcome the future, and be a part of it even while we respect the past. Every pastor of souls is but a tenant, not a householder. The very house he himself has erected will serve for a habitation for future pastors he cannot even know. To act as if his house, his church, his parish were his property and not his simple lease is at best shortsightedness. All these things will still be here when we are low in the dust. It is only simple, simple foresight to thank God for whatever we have been able to do for him and His Church, to be grateful for the honors and privileges we enjoyed in their service, and then not stand stubbornly as a stumbling-block, as if we could prevent what we cannot change, but to give to the very end our waning powers and our heartiest good will to those who step by step are mounting the hill, whose steep sides we have already begun to descend.

To those who are young, who have just taken on the dignity of pastor, or those younger still who are entering the field of Christ's beautiful vineyard filled with high ideals and noble aspirations, the example of those gone before you, and those older than you in service, must be a salutary influence. They have fought battles of which, as yet, you know nothing. Use to the utmost the powers and the faculties which God has given you to win souls and defend His Church.

The generation of today demands more of you, for have received more. You, by your zealous and earnest preaching and teaching, and by your holy administration, must fill to overflowing the material edifices reared by those who have preceded you. They built; you must conserve and ornate, else you will, for less, not more than they.

Let the bond of peace and holy unity bind together young and old, so that your Bishop, proud and happy, may sit like the father of a great family where harmony and concord reign. A family filled to overflowing with high faith and holy deeds and fraternal affection, a family which shall constitute a noble part of the kingdom of God on earth, His Church universal, whose visible Sovereign is Rome's Holy Pontiff, and whose invisible King is Jesus Christ, reigning forever in the glory of His Eternal Father.

## TODAY'S CHALLENGE

*(Address delivered by Hon. Antonio C. Delgado Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to the Holy See, at a meeting of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines on January 30, 1976, at Baguio City.)*

Your Eminence, Your Excellencies, The Apostolic Nuncio:

I am deeply honored by the invitation, extended to me personally in Rome in your behalf by the President of this Conference, Cardinal Rosales, to speak to you today.

For I am aware — particularly now, after having purposefully held a series of consultative talks with key officials in the Roman Curia — of the tremendous power for service, both in the spiritual and in the temporal orders, which a Bishops Conference like yours could and should generate. It is the consensus of the prelates I have consulted that you, together, could well be a powerful dynamo of grace, of prudent discernment, of harmony and goodwill — an evangelical force to lead the people of God towards the “ordered procession of peace, civilization and justice.”

### Point of View

I speak to you today as a representative of the civil government. As Ambassador to the Holy See, I stand for His Excellency Ferdinand E. Marcos and his administration before this most ancient and revered of courts. As such, among all the civil servants in our government, I am expected to be among those who should be most in contact with you. It is an integral aspect of my task to listen to His Holiness and to read his messages, to meet and exchange impressions with the key officials of the universal Church and the duly accredited diplomats from other countries and to pass these on to proper authorities.

And so I am here today, not as an instant expert in theology or canon law, but as one who, in a short span of less than four months, has been deeply impregnated by the spirit of the Vatican. And I should like to share my impressions with you, for it might just be possible that a businessman like me could add a certain freshness to Papal messages, which you would be inclined to interpret largely from individual diocesan viewpoints. St. Catherine of Sienna, once a counsellor of the Pope and now considered as the patroness of diplomats, once said: “El Papa manda sobre todos pero

ve como uno." And thus the need to inquire from others and to listen to others because other views might help in our own discernment and enlightenment.

A few point stand out in my mind as worth sharing with you:

One : The Philippines as a "vanguard" in Asia-Pacific;

Two : Christianity as "salvation also on the earthly and human levels";

Three: The imperatives of unity and "reconciliation".

Let me explain.

### **Vanguard in Asia-Pacific**

#### **Challenge.**

Regarding the first point, I should like to share with you how impressed and touched I was when, after telling His Holiness that the Philippines is the "fortress" of the Faith in Asia, he instead challenged and invited our nation to be "in the vanguard" of the orderly procession of peace, civilization, and justice. His Holiness' words had an unerring logic. There is something static in a fortress. It is strong and sturdy, to be sure, but it is associated only with a defensive function: as a bastion to guard a treasure or to repel the attacks of enemy forces.

But a "vanguard" is more than a mere stationary defender. One associates a vanguard with forces in motion. The vanguard initiates, inspires, leads, guides, and charges towards continuing and purposeful goals.

Is it possible that His Holiness has given us this challenge because we as a people have given him, and other peoples in the Church, the impression that having been given the light of the faith, we are content bask in the glory of the name "Christian"?

#### **Active Force.**

His Holiness probably wishes to impress on us that Christianity is not a treasure to be hoarded in the ground and defended in a fortress. Christianity is a force that must be alive and vigorous, and allowed to grow and spread, not only within our limited community, but through the rest of the world. And this growth should be not only *extensive*, in terms of numbers, but also *intensive*, in terms of the quality and strength of Faith.

There is an old saying that a tree is known by its fruits. His Holiness, implies this is in referring not only to the tree of Faith,

but also to its fruits of peace, civilization, and justice. He tells us that if our Faith is as healthy and strong as it should be, we must have these fruits to show — and the seeds of these fruits also fecundate the hardily-cultivated fields of Asia-Pacific.

### Civilization

In his challenge to our country to be in the vanguard, the Holy Father has placed the word "civilization" between peace and justice. Could it be that he wished to indicate that peace must first be achieved for civilization to flourish and grow, and that in the end, justice must prevail — for without justice we would lose peace and eventually destroy civilization? Mons. Benelli has also repeatedly stressed to me that peace and justice are "useless each without the other". How then could we here strike this balance between peace and justice through Christian civilization?

It might be pertinent at this point to mention that I found a consensus among those I consulted that they see in the CBCF, not only a moral authority or an appeal body, but also as the provider of the necessary "equilibrium" in our society.

Civilization in its deepest meaning is an attitude of mind and spirit which must always be open to growth—to the various aspects of culture and knowledge and ways of action that could enrich the human individual and the society to which he belongs. The antithesis of civilization, to my mind, is stagnation and decay. When people resist the agents of growth and are merely content to live on the achievements of the past, then they cease to grow, and civilization passes them by.

### Missionary Vision

To be truly a vanguard, it is important—that we as a nation develop a missionary vision; that we be imbued with the spirit of compassion and a driving desire to help peoples who are more in need.

"Bear witness", Cardinal Rossi urged, "not only to mainland China, where the mass celebrated in Pilipino in Peking was a propitious *apertura*, but also to the Chinese in the Philippines, in Taiwan and Hongkong, and in the rest of Southeast Asia." What an impact could be created, he told me, if more Filipino missionaries could replace the European and American missionaries in Hong Kong which could well be the point of re-entry for the Church into the mainland.

I am aware, of course, that we have been sending increasing numbers of Filipino missionaries to foreign lands in recent years, but we could send more. I have been told that missionary vocation as experienced in other countries, has attracted more priestly vocations to take care of the pastoral needs at home.

### **Mission Seminary**

Propaganda fide is seriously studying the feasibility of providing help for a regional mission seminary in the Philippines to prepare workers for Asia-Pacific. I understand that we do have a seminary in Tagaytay which is now preparing men for the Philippine Mission Society. This is a matter which CBCP could discuss with propaganda fide in terms of collaboration and support, so that there could be a coordinated effort in utilization of manpower and resources.

### **Colegio Filipino**

Another most significant project which the Philippine Bishops could reinforce towards the development of the vanguard spirit among our people is the Colegio Seminario Filipino in Rome. The Colegio has done extremely well, considering its meager finances since its establishment fourteen years ago. Right now, there are four Indian priests residing there with twenty-two Filipinos. I have been told that in past years, there had been other Asian, African, and American residents at the Colegio.

The CBCP might wish to consider how to maintain and enhance the Colegio's image as a center for an "elite ecclesiastical corps," in the same tradition that some colleges of Oxford and Cambridge are known for the scholars they have housed. Only carefully selected priests screened thru strict and rigorous criteria should be admitted to the Colegio and should be required to go through a seriously devised program of activities that would compliment the students' academic load in the universities where they are enrolled, and eventually totally complete their preparations for ecclesiastical leadership in their field of competence. There should also be time frames within which to complete their preparations. Iron-clad assurances should be given them that when they return home, they will be assigned to responsibilities and challenges relevant to their training in the Colegio. This might well justify our dream of a Colegio Filipino which will be a moulder of future scholars, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, not only for the Philippines, but for the Asia-Pacific. But, and this is the big BUT,



how can a recruitment program for candidate-priests from other countries be encouraged and supported? Would a Regional Missionary Foundation be the answer?

### **Representation in the Curia**

The Colegio could also be the most logical source of outstanding Filipino material for significant positions in the Roman Curia! It has often grieved me to note the very paltry representation of the Philippines—in comparison to other Asian countries—in the Roman Curia and even in Liturgical events in the Vatican. As the only Catholic nation in our region, we deserve a stronger voice in the universal Church, and certainly one way of obtaining such a voice is through our intellectually-gifted priests in key positions in Rome. It is their Bishops who, in adopting outward-looking attitude and setting aside insular, though understandable considerations, should encourage these talented priests to join the Vatican service and recommend them strongly for appointment. The success of these men would bring much honor to our country and our people and assuredly win manifold graces for their dioceses, and even possibly inspire more vocations. God can never be outdone in generosity. I am sure the Apostolic Nuncio would be a very valuable collaborator towards this end.

### **Radio Veritas**

Another potent means for bearing witness, not only to the Faith, but also to our identity as a Christian people, is Radio Veritas. I can almost imagine a Radio Veritas—invigorated by the support of all the sectors of Philippine Society—exercising a profound influence upon our neighbors, in the remote villages of China and India, of Vietnam and Micronesia. "Reach your neighbors," to echo the words of the Holy Father. And what better way to reach them in their most receptive moments than through programs which they wait for and choose in preference to other broadcasts? This might just be a dream now but it can be a reality if we could generate a more generous inflow of financial support from those among us who are truly convinced of our people's providential role and responsibility as a vanguard in our part of the world.

I might mention that the Holy Father showed great and special interest in Radio Veritas when during the private audience immediately after my presentation, he waived aside the script and protocol and made me, family and staff, sit down and he spoke of only 2 subjects:

1. The 4 generations of Delgados who were then present.

2. Radio Veritas whose vital importance to the Evangelization program in Asia he underscored and emphasized in strongest tears.

### **Earthly and Human Levels**

Regarding the second point — that Christianity is “salvation also on the earthly and human levels” — I am glad that the Bishops of the Philippines are becoming more aware of the influence of temporal concerns on the spiritual life of the individual. For we achieve our spiritual ends, not in isolation from our material and social environment, but in the midst and through the help, of just such an environment. It is this realization that has given the Church in the Philippines the impetus to initiate and develop human and community development projects, from small-scale business and cooperatives to large-scale housing projects, like Bishop Gaviola's share and care.

### **Bishops-Businessmen Conference**

It is this same realization that brought about the formation of the Bishops-Businessmen's Conference, whose meeting in a few days I hope you will attend. There is indeed much to learn from the disciplines of other vocations and professions, including that of the businessman and professional manager. Since a Bishop must be, not only the spiritual shepherd of his people, but also the administrator of his diocese's resources, it would be to his advantage to be familiar with the techniques of resource-marshalling, cost-control, and benefit distribution. He would also need the secular skills of marketing, promotions, and advertising in order to enliven the Faith among his people. These skills our Bishops and their priests could develop by attending courses and seminars at our respected management schools like the Asian Institute of Management, the Development Academy of the Philippines, or those initiated by BBC.

### **Civil Government**

One area on the earthly and human level, where the Bishops of the Philippines could be most helpful is that of civil government. Please do not jump to conclusions. I am not about to suggest that our bishops and priests seek public office for themselves, or interfere in the functions which properly belong to civil authorities. The Holy See has repeatedly urged caution on this matter. The separation of Church and State must be religiously observed and diligently preserved. But Churchmen do have definite roles to play — even if such roles are becoming increasingly wider in scope be-

cause of the needs of the times — and it is most prudent for this conference to try to discern and define the frontiers of such roles.

Without actually becoming involved in partisan politics, there are many ways by which bishops can indirectly foster the health of our civic society. And this leads me to the third point, which I think is of tremendous importance in our day. I speak of unity and "reconciliation".

### Unity and Reconciliation

The theme of the Holy Year that has just ended was the need for reconciliation and unity — not only with ourselves and with God, but also with our fellowmen. The Holy Father frequently stressed this theme in his messages during the last year.

This theme is most important, timely and relevant for us in the Philippines today. It is imperative for us to reconcile our intellects and our will to the objectives which our President has set forth for our people. You and I are well-aware of the great strides which our people have taken in terms of discipline and self-reliance since 1972. We as a people finally become aware of our excesses and have realized that we can achieve nothing worthwhile as long as we engage in unresolved and endless debates leading nowhere. We have set for ourselves certain economic and social goals, and we have come quite close to achieving them.

In the context of continued national development, the CBCP could be a very significant force for discernment and unity. A former President of the Latin-American Episcopal Conference compares the Bishops Conference to a car. Bishops he says must know when and how to accelerate, but at the same time they should know when and how to put on the brakes.

The fresh painful lessons of Portugal and Lebanon, the danger signs of the times in Italy and Spain, the ominous and frightening threat of Angola — and let us not forget what has just happened to our neighbors in Indo-China and what is happening in our own land in Mindanao — all these spur us to seek unity and harmony even more urgently. Cardinal Baggio, in interpreting for me the Pope's Message for the Day of Peace, repeatedly exhorted: "Dialogar, pacificar, colaboracion en vez de confrontacion. La rivalidad debe ser descartada, sobretodo rivalidad contra el gobierno. Buenos motivos no justifican peleas. Es mas logico y paternal el trabajar en harmonia. El interes universal debe prevalecer."

In this spirit our spiritual leaders could rally — our people to be united in efforts to achieve the legitimate goals of our government,

since such goals could give the country a milieu of order and peace and material progress which will help foster spiritual growth among our people.

### Dialogue

There are no perfect systems in social life. The New Society makes no claims to being an all-perfect institution. But it will work better with the help of all. Our task, therefore, should be to see the viewpoint of the others and how we could help each other not with hostile recrimination, but with constructive suggestions thru ever-increasing dialogue.

This conference of Bishops could be the very instrument of dialogue with our civil authorized to discuss with candor, in a friendly and open-minded atmosphere and effectively resolve whatever misunderstandings may exist; where principles and objectives could be clarified and constructive programs could be planned.

Fortunately, in our country today, unlike in many others, the doors to dialogue are still wide open. Our government and civil authorities have demonstrated in many ways that they are willing to listen and that they welcome constructive suggestions. In how many countries in the world today can Bishops meet in a conference such as this? We are free to meet and discuss for the common good of our people. We are free to call the attention of our leaders on certain points of disagreement — provided it is done with the framework of the established order. Let us take advantage of the opportunities granted to us, rather than waste time wishing futilely for the pie in the sky and gain nothing thereby.

### Conclusion

To sum up these impressions which I have endeavored to share with you today, let me say that if we are to be truly a "vanguard" in the orderly procession of peace, civilization, and justice" in our part of the world, as the Holy Father exhorts us, we must strive first of all to reconcile ourselves in a milieu where spiritual values harmonize with our objectives in the earthly and human levels — and vice versa. Only thus shall we achieve an integration in ourselves and unity among our people. Only thus can we reach out and share with our neighbors these precious blessing of our christian civilization.

And lastly, favor me with your prayers.

Thank you.

# THEY KNEW HIM IN THE BREAKING OF BREAD

by

**Bishop Francisco F. Claver, S.J.**

- \* If the world today were one giant Eucharistic feast — an **agape** such as the early believers celebrated in their pristine Christianity — I am afraid it will be one deserving the kind of stinging rebuke Paul directed against the Church of Corinth:

**When you hold these meetings, it is not the Lord's Supper that you are eating, since when the time comes to eat . . . one person goes hungry, while another is drunk . . . Surely you have enough respect for the Community of God not to make poor people embarrassed.**

**(1 Cor. 11:20-22)**

- \* For the sad fact is, at the Table of Life, we share most disproportionately indeed. Some go hungry. Others are besottedly full. The quality of the bread we eat is according to the wealth or penury we bring with us to the Table. And we eat only with people of our kind. We do not, as Paul sorrowfully writes, have enough respect for the Community of God. We embarrass the poor outrageously.

## OUR WORLD

- \* And so we do. We have never had it so good. We also have never had it so bad. "We — people, that is. Men and women of all races and nations, of all creeds and cultures. You and I, and billions of others who are unaware and possibly couldn't care less that we are gathered here in the City of Brotherly Love for this International Eucharistic Congress. And "good — bad": I use these words in terms of human living; of the things that help make us more human or less human; of needless luxury and equally needless destitution; of the human spirit and the things that men do to one another to debase or ennoble that same spirit.

- \* This is our world. A world of plenty and want, of staggering riches and even more staggering poverty. And into this confused and confusing world comes the Stranger seeking to pitch His tent among us: Christ, the Eucharistic Lord, He who said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John, 10:10), and who still, in mystery, remains with us in the form of bread to nourish that full life.

### LIFE TO THE FULL

- \* The full life, in greater and greater abundance? For only a few or for the many? Whatever He meant, the Christ that we honor in this Congress deliberately wants us to hunger for life and hunger for it mightily with insatiable yearning. And I am not too sure that He was speaking principally of a **spiritual** hunger, a hunger of the soul, not so much of a physical hunger, a hunger of the body. He was addressing Himself to living men and women of His time, as He now does to men and women of our time. And His message is the same: "**Have life, have it to the full.**" He spoke of life in its unity, its wholeness. The life of the spirit, certainly, but the life of the body as well. Let us not, as I firmly believe Christ did not, separate the two.
- \* This is why we can talk of man's hunger for bread, for material bread, in the same breath that we talk in this Congress of hunger for the finer things of the spirit. Today we looked into the enormous problem of world hunger. We tried to understand its manifold implications for us Christians of the late 20th century and although this Congress is not the instrument for arriving at concrete proposals for the resolution of the problem. I am afraid we will be making a mockery of our faith if we remained once again merely on the level of words and did not begin to look ahead towards individual and corporate action. The modes and possibilities of action taken in faith are myriad. These we leave to the measure of your faith and the breath of your imagination. Let me in this brief moment, then, speak of the kind of people I believe must be involved in the action we speak of.

### THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE HUNGRY

- \* These people are the hungry of the world. The destitute, the famished, the powerless. The burden of action is on them. Hunger for bread, for food for physical sustenance, hunger in its world-wide dimensions this will not be satisfied except by people who

are hungry, literally and in every way hungry. And I do not mean only the hundreds of millions who are mal-nourished and starving. I also mean the well-fed, the complacent, the comfortable. These too must be hungry, be made to be hungry, if world hunger is to be eased at all.

\* This is utter nonsense? It probably is. But I will say it again: **Hungry people will not be helped except by themselves and by other hungry people; the problem of world hunger will not be solved except by more hunger.** I use the words "hunger" and "hungry" in admittedly ambiguous senses, figurative and literal and every other way. And I do so of set purpose. We are talking of people and the totality of life. The problem of hunger, when we come down to rock-bottom reality, is a people-problem, and it cannot be adequately solved nor begin to be solved except in a total-life approach. Hence the vagueness, the confusion, the complexity.

\* But we must start somewhere. I suggest we start where hunger is, where people are—the hungry multitudes, the poor that Christ said we will always have with us. I do not presume to speak for them, but I have this gut-suspicion that even as they stretch their beggar hands out for the crumbs of bread from the groaning tables of the economically blessed of this earth, they are, paradoxically, begging to be left alone.

\* "Leave us alone," I hear them pleading. "Leave us alone to do our own thinking and striving, to do our own fighting even—if fight we must for food for our shrunken bellies. Leave us the initiative of action that must be ours even in our beggary. And once have taken that initiative, even while we take it, then come in with your charity, come in with your helping hand. Do not degrade us further by feeding us—and making us feel less human for the very feeding. For it is not food alone that we seek. We seek food, yes, but we also seek your support, your concern, your standing up for our rights—to live and die like men. Not like animals. Not as pawns of big government or big business. Not as mere objects of pity for the conscience-salving giving of people who fatten on our very hunger. We ask to share in your bread. We ask also to share in the humanity that bread nourishes, in the spirit that enables you to have more and be more. For the acid truth is, because we have less, we are less."

### HUMANNESS

\* Hard words. Bitter words. But only if we believe starvelings have heads empty of thought simply because they have bellies empty of food. Only if we believe the hunger that debases

them wipes out all their rights to humanness. Only if we believe we are indeed more human than they, possessed of more rights than they — because possessed of more bread.

- \* For the unadorned truth is, when we talk of hunger for bread, for basic, essential food, we are really talking of an even more primordial and all-encompassing hunger for humanness, for all that makes for that humanness: a hunger for justice; a hunger for concern, for sharing; a hunger for love, for security, for peace; a hunger for the dignity of God's people.
- \* Your own Declaration of Independence, the bi-centennial of which you celebrate this year, says the same thing in a different way:

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

- \* Parenthetically, I would like to insert here a question one of my American missionaries wrote to me to be posed to you:

“Do Americans still believe in this words, and do they believe they apply to all men or just to themselves?”

From the observable operations of American-based corporations in the Philippines, he says he doubts the words apply to the people of the Third World. I wonder if you share his doubt.

### THE POLITICS OF HUNGER

- \* In any case, the above words of your Declaration of Independence force us to confront not only the economics of hunger but also its politics (something the Church in general avoids like the plague). Too often has man's hunger for bread — and the terrible suffering that goes with it — been made the plaything of politics, local and international. Too often has development (the supposedly surefire panacea for hunger) only meant undevelopment, more suffering, more hunger. And all too often has foreign aid to developing nations meant rehumanization: the manipulation of suffering for the advantage and gain of the strong; the exploitation of the hungry (in economics they call them “cheap labor”) for the production and enjoyment of wealth other than by the hungry producers themselves.
- \* I am not merely parroting here the angry tirades of leftist zealots who put the blame for all the world's ills on the unmitigated



evil that they say the capitalistic system is. I can cite very concrete cases, and not just "cases" but flesh-blood people in our God-forsaken Bukidnon, in parishes and villages like Kiokong, Pangantukan, Pontian — places you will never hear of again, people you will never meet in the flesh. Second class citizens, these people, in their own native land, reckoned of less worth to encumber the earth than cattle and pineapples and sugar-cane. These things are dollar-earners in the all-important export trade to the First World, of paramount money value in a predetermined monolithic march towards progress — and progress as defined by the interests of big multinational businesses. But the people? They are only means towards that progress. Expendable. Cheap. Others luxuriate in the fruits of their labor — but they? They starve.

- \* Citing these "cases", I do not by any means extra-polate from a few isolated instances to an over-generalized, and therefore false, world-wide condition. What we hear and observe happening in other countries of Southeast Asia, of Africa and South America, are depressingly, distressingly familiar to us who have to try to make the Gospel meaningful in a world of deadening oppression, in a world of demeaning hunger.

### DESPAIR AND HOPE

- \* The picture is dark indeed. And we discern nothing in it but scheming and selfishness, manipulation and exploitation of men, by men. And the implication is it is the rich and the materially well-off individuals and classes and nations, that are scheming and selfish, manipulating and exploiting, sheerly, because power is on their side. But we also know that the suffering poor, the hungry and starving, the weak of this world — they too can be just as selfish, just as exploitative and oppressive.
- \* And admitting this, we can only despair? The problem is too vast, too complicated, too impersonal? The structures of greed and injustice too overpowering? And yet despair is not the Christian response. It cannot be. In this spirit-sapping gloom, hope all of a sudden becomes the imperative, operative virtue, the hub around which we must move and be as Christians, as Church. From hope as our anchor-point we can look at world hunger. And we can act.
- \* So the problem is too vast? We narrow it down. It is too complicated? We simplify it somewhat. It is too impersonal? We make it deeply personal. And the structures of greed and in-

# COMMUNICATION

## TWO LETTERS ON BERNARD HARING

Dear Fr. Editor,

The following quotation is taken from the book called "Shalom: Peace" by Fr. Bernard Haring. Writing under the heading, "The Pill", he says:

"In my opinion, since this question has been discussed for so long under the eyes of the authority of the Church, everyone can freely follow his own conscience. There are two probable opinions. Whoever is convinced that the rigid opinion is right is obliged to follow it in his own conjugal life. But even if a moralist is convinced that only his position is right, he has to be ecclesial, he has to be loyal to the other part of the Church and therefore cannot impose his opinion as if only his party, his faction, were the Church. He honestly has to inform the married couple that there are disagreements, that a perfect certainty for one of the other opinion has not been achieved, and that the church until now has allowed a freedom of choice; hence everyone can follow his own conscience. Then he can say, "My personal opinion is that it is not allowable, but I do not have the right to impose my personal opinion when the matter is being discussed by renowned and reputable Catholic theologians."

This statement coming from a well-known Theologian amazed me. Recent Popes and Vatican Council II have been clear on this matter, as is seen by the following quotations:

### 1. Pope Pius XI — Casti Connubii (1930)

"Each and every marriage act which in its exercise is deprived by human interference of its natural power to procreate life is an offense against the law of God and of nature."

2. Pope Pius XII — Address to Italian Society of Midwives (1951) — “Any attempt on the part of the husband and wife to deprive their marital act of its inherent force or to impede the procreation of a new life, either in the performance of the act itself or in the course of the development of its natural consequences, is immoral.”

3. Pope Paul VI — *Humanae Vitae* (1968) — “Every act that intends to impede procreation must be repudiated, whether that act is intended as an end to be attained or as a means to be used, and whether it is done in anticipation of marital intercourse, or during it, or while it is having its natural consequence.”

4. Second Vatican Council — Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern World, — “Sons and daughters of the Church . . . may not undertake methods of regulating procreation which are found blameworthy by the teaching authority of the Church in its unfolding of the divine law.”

I also sent this quotation to His Eminence Cardinal Knox, Prefect of the Sacraments and I enclose his reply (July 1976):

SACRA CONGREGATIO  
PRO SACRAMENTIS  
ET CULTU DIVINO

Prot. n. 1384/76

Reverend and dear Father Hurley,

Having consulted the competent authority, I am now in a position to provide the following comments on the quotation forwarded in your letter of the 30th June last.

The experts of undoubted competence who were consulted point out that the statements in the quotation are based on the erroneous assumption that the doctrine being discussed is doubtful. This is manifestly untrue, since the Magisterium of the Church has spoken so clearly and so often on the absolute illicitness of the use of the “pill” for contraceptive purposes.

Theologians therefore who defend contrary positions set themselves in opposition to the Magisterium of the Church, and

do not constitute the sufficient reason for departing from the Church's teaching (cfr. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, especialy Ch. 111, n. 25).

The fact that the Magisterium may not have expressly intervened in the face of such opposition signifies neither approval, nor even recognition that their theories are acceptable opinions. In the face of such opposition, in fact, the Magisterium has continued to repeat the teaching of "Humanae Vitae".

I trust that these comments will prove helpful.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

(Sgd.) **JAMES CARD, KNOX, Pref.**

Dear Father Rivera,

As a faithful reader of, and a long-time contributor to, the Boletín Eclesiástico, I'm taking up your invitation to write something good about Father Bernard Haring.

There would surely be a general consensus that his influence in setting Moral Theology in its Scriptural roots was a pioneering and decisive landmark in the history of that sacred science. This influence culminated in Vatican II, where he is credited with a considerable formative part in preparing the most far-reaching of the Council documents, 'The Church in the Modern World'. It could be safely said that what Yves Congar was to 'Lumen Gentium' and the 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity', Bernard Haring was to *Gaudium et Spes*.

To claim any papal disapproval of Fr. Haring from the Pope's over-ruling his Commission's opinion on 'Humanae Vitae' (a document, by the way, that Fr. Haring accepts) is completely baseless. Why, if that be so, did the Pope choose Bernard Haring from the many possible prelates and clerics as the priest to conduct his (the Pope's) annual retreat?

A heartfelt admiration for Pope Paul VI, who could well emerge in history as Paul the Great, does not remove the possibility (and, on occasion, the duty) of humble, respectful dissent. If a corrupt, self-serving, political party, cynically claiming the name Christian, can hoodwink the Pope into seeming to commend them; if rear-mirror-driving moralists can persuade the Pope to sign a document that fails of its purpose by sheer overkill, dissent (to one who can discern) is a virtue, and refusing to do so, an act of cowardice.

I'll waste none of your precious space protesting complete loyalty to the Papacy and the present Pope — past numbers of your magazine amply prove both.

Pray for Father Haring, yes. Be very cautious about his views, NO.

Yours in Christ's Priesthood,

(Sgd.) DAVID J. TITHER, C.S.S.R.

# HOMILETICS

by

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

## I. BIBLICAL NOTES

### SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

(December 5, 1976)

**First Reading:** Baruch 5:1-9

**Second Reading:** Philippians 1:4-6.8-11

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 3:1-6

**First Reading:** Addressed to those who were in Babylonian exile. Jerusalem, represented as a mother, is assured that her days of mourning (exile) are at an end. She suffered punishment for her sins, God's medicine to bring her to her senses. Now she will be adorned magnificently as the Bride of God for all the world to behold. She will even bear his name on her forehead (v. 2), that is, she will belong entirely to him and manifest to all the divine qualities of justice, mercy and peace. God himself will make the way smooth and comfortable for her children, so that they can return with ease. He himself is in their midst guiding them back with joy. Many of these thoughts are identical with Isaiah II (40:3f; 41:19; 49:22; 52:1) and Isaiah III (61:10; 62:3) and may well evidence literary dependence. This brilliant picture, in its adequate fulfillment, refers to the glorious Church of the New Covenant.

**Gospel Reading:** Luke places the ministry of John the Baptist in the setting of world history of the time, to emphasize the importance of the central fact of all history: the Coming of the Messiah-King. From this information, the baptism of Jesus occurred toward the end of 27 A.D. Annas was high priest according to the Law (the office was for life) but the high priesthood was put up yearly by the Romans to the highest bidder. Influential Annas managed to place five of his sons and Caiaphas his son-in-law in that office.

The role of the Baptist is that of a prophet proclaiming God's will to men. His message is one of repentance for sin, sin being the great obstacle to God's reign among men. Like the royal heralds of old, who demanded that the road be made level and smooth for the arrival of the king, John prepared men's hearts by repentance for sin, to remove all obstacles for the welcome of the Messiah-King, the Savior. Note the universal outlook: **all mankind** is to share his salvation.

**Second Reading:** Paul's letter to the Philippians is one of his most personal and intimate letters. Joy is the keynote. Paul rejoices at the fervor of his neophytes: how well they continue to live the Gospel-message and promote it by their deeds. Christ's Parousia ought to motivate them further, with God himself at work within them. Paul's great love for each one individually expresses itself in a superb Christological dimension, fulfilling exactly the command of Jesus in Jn. 1:14.

There follows one of Paul's deeply spiritual prayers: 1) that their love be continually on the increase, 2) that it lead to deeper awareness of the demands of the Christian calling, 3) with the result that they always opt for what is best, and 4) reach perfect holiness. It is Christ himself who is at work in them for the glory of the Father (v. 11).

## SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (December 8, 1976)

**First Reading:** Genesis 3:9-15.20

**Second Reading:** Ephesians 1:3-6.11-12

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 1:26-38

**First Reading:** Sinful man is not humble enough to admit that his sinfulness is the abuse of his own free will, but tries to shove the blame on others, even on God himself (v. 12). Yet God does not let man's bungling nor his pride ruin his plans. Man is called upon to struggle against the powers of evil (symbolized by the serpent), and God intends that his masterpiece (the man) win out in that struggle. Thus man is envisioned as striking a death blow at the serpent's head while the latter seeks to undo him. How this would come about would become clear in subsequent revelation. All victory over Satan is the work of Christ Jesus who took flesh of Mary "to destroy the devil's works" (1 Jn. 3:8). He chose a mother singularly blessed by God (Lk. 1:21), who in turn in the New Eve, Mother of all the living, that is, those who live the life of Christ

(Jn. 19:27). In a singular sense she is the Woman of Genesis, closely identified with the role of Christ, her offspring, in overcoming Satan. In her, Satan has no part., She is immaculate from the very outset.

**Gospel Reading:** In the annunciation scene, Luke, in a masterly fashion, presents the theological facts of the Incarnation of God's Son and his Birth from the Virgin, as well as Mary's voluntary and willing cooperation in the work of redemption, in a meditative narrative that clothes these facts in Old Testament prophecies and meaningful symbols. He chose the unusual greeting "Rejoice!" (instead of the usual "Shalom-Peace!") to depict Mary as Daughter Zion in person, the corporate personality reflected in Zeph. 3:14-17, announcing the Coming Savior. In place of her name (Mary), he uses the past participle of a verb denoting abundance (*charitōo*) and thus she is the "Highly-favored-one". Emphasis is on her messianic calling, for she is chosen as God's instrument to give the world its Savior. Those whom he chooses, God fits out with all his gifts and graces for their task, so that she is truly "full of grace" as a consequence of her calling. Mary will be unable to accomplish her task by herself. The Spirit of God will accomplish his masterpiece in her: the Christ-event with all its far-reaching consequences. As once the Spirit hovered over the waters to bring about the wonder of creation and the beauty of the universe (Gen. 1:2), and as once the shining cloud in the wilderness symbolized the powerful presence of Yahweh in Israel's midst (Ex. 40:34f), so here Luke describes the overshadowing of the Spirit on Mary, so that Yahweh becomes present in Mary in the fullest sense, namely in the beauty and wonder of Christ. He is one of our race, he is Mary's Son. The divine motherhood is the source and principle of all Mary's graces and privileges.

**Second Reading:** Paul's outburst of thanksgiving in a magnificent hymn to the Blessed Trinity (1:3-14) begins with the work of the Father who has fully blessed us in Christ, the well-beloved: a) by a divine election to be sinless and full of love, b) by adopting us to be his sons, c) by the outpouring of his favor, deserving of all praise. Our calling is to be sinless, Mary's privilege was sinlessness from the very outset. Mary was the first to hope in Christ (v. 12) together with those of her Jewish blood that followed him in faith. Her's was an election to sinlessness in a privileged manner, anticipated because of her Son.



**THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT****(December 12, 1976)****First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a****Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7****Gospel Reading: Luke 3:10-18**

**First Reading:** . . . A most encouraging prophecy. With four verbs Zion is urged to exult with all her heart: her salvation is at hand! The Lord has not only forgiven her and routed her enemy, but is himself in her very midst as mighty Savior and Leader. Renewed in love, Zion will be his great joy. Though the prophet may have a temporal liberation in mind, his prophetic eye looks beyond: "on that day" definitely refers to the messianic era and thus his prophecy refers ultimately to the Savior who "takes away the sins of his people" (Mt. 1:212) and renews them in his love. "He is in their midst" is literally in Hebrew "in her womb" and is fully realized when the Savior took up his abode in the Virgin Mary, the perfect embodiment of Mother Zion. Luke's greeting to Mary in 1:26 is a flashback to verse 14 of this passage.

**Gospel Reading:** In the ministry of the Baptist, Luke alone brings this scene, which singles out with special concern those who belong to the ordinary level of men. All men need to be prepared for the saving influence of the Coming One. How practical is the Baptist's advice in each case. His demands do not exceed the bounds of each group: sharing one's goods, honesty in business dealings, peaceful and uncomplaining conduct. By these means they will show that their repentance is sincere.

There follows the proclamation of the Baptist. He contrasts himself with the Coming One: 1) his baptism will not be merely with water but will immerse in the new Spirit, and like fire will purify and transform. 2) He is the Mighty Conqueror of Satan, while John is not even worthy to do for him the menial tasks of a slave. 3) He is the Judge who rewards and punishes justly. The winnowing fan was used on the threshing floor to separate the grain from the chaff. Both are images respectively of the good, destined for salvation, and the wicked deserving punishment. John's greatness lies in this thorough humility and utter commitment to Christ, whose person and role he recognizes to be far greater than his own.

**Second Reading:** The thought of the final triumph of Christ in his Parousia ought to fill the Christians with immense joy. There is no room for anxiety. Such selfless joy in Christ's Coming will affect others favorably. As to present problems, let them be put

put before the Lord with full confidence, with gratitude for favors past. The very Peace of God (perhaps an image of the Spirit) will be a protecting mantle over them, united as they are in Christ. The Risen Lord is always near to the believing community. That his final triumph is "near" is a relative expression, but his growing presence in the world (a further meaning of Parousia) is a constant source of joy.

## FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

(December 19, 1976)

**First Reading:** Micah 5:1-3 (Vulgate: 2-5a)

**Second Reading:** Hebrews 10:5-10

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 1:39-45

**First Reading:** A bright prophetic picture concerning the Coming One. Ephrath was the clan of David's father, and the town was named after him. Later it was called Bethlehem, which means "house of bread". Though insignificant when compared to other places of renown, it is destined to give Israel her Savior. David's royal line would suffer degradation for a longer period, but from that line the Mother of the Messiah will come. The reference is not merely to Mother Zion, for the whole passage is already talking about Israel (Judah) in general. It is the living person who is meant, the Mother of the Messiah-King, who is the perfect embodiment of Mother Zion. Her son will be Shepherd-King, guarding his people like a shepherd cares for his flock, equipped with the might of the Most High. His reign will be universal and peaceful, for he is the very embodiment of Peace. His origin "from of old" was thought by the ancient Fathers to be an intimation of his divine nature, but in the context it points rather to his ancient Davidic line.

**Gospel Reading:** Mary, carrying the divine Treasure in her bosom, undertakes a four-day journey from Nazareth to reach her cousin in need, living in the "hill-country", traditionally taken to be Ain-Karim, a village some kilometers west of Jerusalem. Mary's greeting becomes sacramental, for it is the vehicle of divine favors toward Elizabeth, who is thereupon filled with the Holy Spirit of prophecy. St. Luke's mention of the child "leaping in her womb" evidently carries a deeper meaning, as did the movements of Rebekah's twins (Gen. 25:22f). It is a sign of joy because of the nearness of the Savior.

Mary inaugurates those blessings which will be poured out in abundance on the Infant Church at Pentecost (where her own

presence is similarly effective). Filled with the Spirit, Elizabeth is in ecstasy (loud prophetic voice) and proclaims the source of all Mary's blessedness to be her Child. (Both phrases form part of the "Hail Mary"). Luke depicts Elizabeth as a faithful minister of the Lord singing before Mary, the Living Ark of the Covenant. This becomes clear by the double allusion: the Levites praising the Lord in song before the Ark (1 Chron. 16:4) and David's loud singing before the Ark (2 Sam. 6:5). Writing for his Christian audience, Luke also intends "Lord" (a messianic title) to be taken in its full divine import, for he uses the same word in that meaning in the very next verse. Mary's faith is highly extolled, making her the prototype of all who believe in (accept) the Coming One. This is taken up in the Magnificat: "All ages to come will call me blessed" (Lk. 1:48).

**Second Reading:** The author places on the lips of the Son of God as he took flesh of the Virgin, the words of the psalmist (40:7-9), which speak of the total immolation of himself to God, in place of all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant which of themselves were unable to reconcile man with God. Henceforth they are to be replaced by this one offering. That act of total immolation implied obedient submission of his will in all things to God's will, which included his sacrificial death on the cross. Then and there the New Covenant was inaugurated in the womb of his Mother. Then and there the total acceptance of the Father's will brought redemption and sanctification to man.

## THE BIRTH THE SAVIOR

(December 25, 1976)

(For the readings of midnight mass, see Bol. Ecles. of the previous year).

### Mass at Dawn

**First Reading:** Titus 3:4-7

**Second Reading:** Titus 3:4-7

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 2:15-20

**First Reading:** Preparations have all been made for the exiles in Babylon to return; all is in readiness. The Lord himself proclaims to all the nations that the Savior comes to Zion to renew her. He brings the nations as spoils of victory and trophies of battle. They will be named the "holy People of God" and Zion will be called "the One whom all seek out and flock to". This was initially fulfilled

with the exiles returning to Jerusalem, but its adequate realization pertains to the Coming of the Universal Savior.

**Gospel Reading:** The shepherds represent the "anawim" in Israel, that is, the poor of Yahweh. God reveals to them the Christ event mentioned in v. 11: "This day in David's city a Savior has been born to you, the Messiah and Lord". Three titles declare who this Child is: The Savior, the Christ (Messiah, Anointed One), the Lord; each title given by Luke its full Christian import for his Christian readers. Salvation is the outstanding theme of Luke's Gospel and he uses the verb "to save" thirty times in his Gospel and Acts.

What the shepherds found is the familiar scene known to every man, woman and child today, though it is credited to St. Francis of Assisi to have popularized the scene. Seeing the child in a cavern, in no crib of his own but a feeding trough for animals, the shepherds understood the sign given to them: it is the sign of dire poverty and detachment from the goods of this world. They understood that the Savior and Messiah would be poor and be the Savior of the poor. Mary's heart becomes the treasure-house for all these happenings of the divine child. As the Church in miniature, she continues to reflect on them, drawing out their in-depth significance for all men.

**Second Reading:** A great change in sinful mankind (v. 3) has been wrought by the Coming of the Savior. He himself is God's goodness incarnate. His saving action is entirely one of merciful love, in no way merited by man. We participate in Christ's saving action by Christian baptism, wherein we are granted an entirely new start, a rebirth, with all past evil deeds forgiven. What is more, the Holy Spirit himself is given us in abundance (lavished on us), making us enjoy all the rights as heirs to eternal life. The indwelling Spirit himself is pledge of that. But since it is a new start, a rebirth, the Christian is expected to work diligently toward the goal, renewed in Christ.

## FEAST OF THE MOST HOLY FAMILY

(December 26, 1976)

**First Reading:** Sirach 3:3-7, 14-17a

**Second Reading:** Colossians 3:12-21

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 2:41-52

**First Reading:** The Lord himself it is who gives the place of honor and authority to parents. Thus at the very outset the author pinpoints the reason for the fourth commandment of Ex. 20:12, and

expatiates on the many benefits accruing therefrom: 1) atonement for sin, 2) such a dutiful son will be well provided for by the Lord, 3) he will have offspring of his own to gladden him, 4) his prayers will be heard, 5) he will have a long life, 6) he will shine with the virtue of obedience. Particularly touching is the last exhortation to take care of parents when they become old and feeble-minded, and perhaps not easy to handle: Be kind. Be considerate. Do not grieve them. Do not despise or revile them. Admirable advice also for our own day!

**Gospel Reading:** Luke alone gives us this appealing scene. Boys were obliged by Law to attend the Passover feast in Jerusalem when they had reached the age of thirteen. But parents took them along before that to accustom them to observing the Law. The feast lasted seven days. Since groups travelled in caravans, it is likely that the boys travelled together, and Jesus' absence would not be noticed at once. It could have been discovered on the evening of the first day, a second day being needed for the return trip and the finding taking place on the morning of the third. But Luke may also be using the expression as a veiled symbolic allusion to the three days in the tomb.

It is not said that Jesus was teaching the doctors of the Law. He was in their midst, in the outer courts of the Temple, carefully listening and asking explanations. This is normal for any boy but what amazed them was his intelligent questioning and answering, his grasp of the Law. The reaction of Mary and Joseph was one of great relief but at the same time perplexity at the Child's action. He had never caused them any worry or pain before and this behavior was very mysterious. Mary's question is most natural for a grieving mother who had lost her boy. She had said: "your father and I" but he responded with a clear reference to his Father whose House is the Temple, showing a deep consciousness of his being, and manifesting a special relation to Yahweh, God of Israel. This is the only word of Jesus recorded for the hidden years.

It ought not be surprising that Mary and Joseph did not understand what he was about. Nothing had been told them that he would leave home and begin his mission earlier than the usual time prescribed by the Law, which was thirty years. So his response left them puzzled. Nothing can be concluded from this passage about Mary's knowledge or lack of knowledge concerning the real personality of her Son. It was his actions that puzzled her, actions of a Boy that even to her remained a mystery. In the knowledge of that mystery Mary grew daily. Mystery will always surround the Person of Christ.

Jesus now continues his hidden life all through his later teens and on through the twenties. When youth chafes to get going, obedience was the hallmark of those years. He followed all the daily customs of prayer and work that devout Jews were used to. The Father looked down with pleasure as the Boy grew both corporally and spiritually in the years of development. Many kept pondering all these things and drawing from them their deeper meaning.

**Second Reading:** A particularly rich passage of St. Paul describing the believing community one in Christ and the Spirit. They are the New Israel chosen and holy (Ex. 19:5f) and beloved (Hos. 2:21), blossoming forth in all those Christian virtues that marked the life of Christ on earth. This is what he kept demanding of his followers as can be seen from the sermon on the mount (Mt. 5-7). Love, the acme of perfection, is the bond bringing all things together. The simile is still stronger. It is like a garment that covers all. Special mention is made of sharing with one another their insights in the word of God, and also of community singing. Three times gratitude is emphasized. In depicting the ideal Christian community, and the ideal Christian family, the passage can hardly be surpassed.

## II. HOMILIES

### THE CALL OF GOD

(Second Sunday in Advent: December 5, 1976)

**The Human Situation.** Carlo Carretto was National President of Catholic Youth in Italy after World War II for six years. At the age of forty-four he heard the summons of a divine voice which said: Leave everything and come to me in the desert. I do not need your action. I want your prayers and your love. And Carlo said: Yes! He joined the Little Brothers of Charles Foucault, and lived as religious priest among the poorest of the poor in the regions of the Sahara desert. He has found God as well as his fellowmen as he never dreamed of before.

**The Good News:** John was not a self-made prophet. He did not put himself up as someone to be esteemed, a man of great importance, a liberator of the down-trodden. It was God who called him. The word of the Lord came to John like to the prophets of old, summoning him from his life of solitude and asceticism

to prepare the way for the Coming One. The call of God pressed him into service and it remained the ruling force of his entire life. It demanded much of him, but God knew his man. Despite his great following and popularity, he always remained humble in his own eyes, protesting that he was not even worthy of doing the most menial tasks for the One who was to come after him. How well he resembles the great Jeremiah of whom it is written: "The word of the Lord came to me thus: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you . . . whatever I command you, you shall speak. See! I place my words in your mouth" (Jer. 1:4ff).

John is the last and greatest of the prophets. They foresaw the Coming One and foretold what pertained to his person and role. John saw him with his own eyes, and spoke to him with his own mouth, pointing him out to his disciples with his own finger. Like the prophets before him, John's prophetic role was to interpret the mind of God for man, to exhort his fellowmen to be true to their covenant-commitment, and to proclaim what the Most High wills man to do in a given situation. The present situation demanded action because the Coming One was at hand. John is like the royal heralds of old, who went ahead to prepare for the arrival and reception of the king. The road had to be made smooth and level. John's message was to prepare the hearts of his fellowmen by preaching repentance for sin. He made use of an external rite, that of baptism by water, in order that his audience show their sincerity in admitting their sinfulness. This public act would more easily stir up the inner heart of man to true repentance.

Sin is the greatest obstacle for the reign of God to take hold of the heart of man: above all, the sin of pride. So John preached humble repentance. But repentance is no small task. It involves the whole of man. First of all, man must humbly acknowledge that he really is a sinner and has need of a Savior, and this is often hard for man to do. Then too repentance is not merely some external act of penance, but a thorough turn-about and change of attitudes that are often deeply entrenched in the heart of man. The heart that clings to selfish habits, sinful ways, immoral company or places, is asked to break off definitely and resolutely and to turn to God: God who is all-holy, all just and yet all merciful and loving. To accomplish this task man will need the helping hand of God's merciful kindness, for he will find that he is unable to accomplish this leap alone. God will gladly extend a helping hand (actual grace) if he but plead for it in sincere prayer. Then the inner way is smooth and level for the Savior to enter in and to reign there.

John the Baptist was ever true to his calling, even when it meant resisting the sinful ways of kings like Herod Antipas and the woman the king lived with in adultery. He was true to his calling even when it meant that he should fade into the background to give way to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. He was true to his calling even when it meant a martyr's death at the suggestion of an adulterous woman. But the entire Christian world holds him up as the great friend of Christ the Bridegroom, who prepares the hearts of men for the yearly renewal of his birth.

**Our Response:** Advent sincerity means taking the message of John the Baptist to heart in our own situation. A renewal in the Spirit of Christ can only be brought about by a humble recognition of one's need of a Savior and his healing action. There must be a real endeavor to smooth out the hills of pride and petty ambition, to mend once and for all the potholes of relapses, the crooked dealings with others, the narrow and unfair judgments of others. When the path is smooth, the Savior gladly enters in. If he calls to greater deeds of renunciation, the example of John can be a great incentive to be faithful witness (martyr) to the end.

## I AM THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

(December 8th, 1976)

In the little town of Nazareth in Galilee, the Good News was first proclaimed to Mary the Maiden. In the quiet solitude of the Virgin's home, the annunciation scene takes place. God manifested himself in the Old Covenant in the Tabernacle and in the Temple by the Cloud of Glory, but in the New and everlasting Covenant, he came to make his home among men, and we would see his Glory in the Incarnate Word of God (Jn. 1:14). Mary's own person is that home, for in her he deigned to dwell in the fullness of his Person, the Second Person of the Trinity. Mary became the living Tabernacle, the living Temple of God's own Son.

But the dwelling place that the Son of God chose to be his own must be well fitted out, replete with divine favor. It must be the unquestioned object of divine love, and adorned with all that is pleasing to God, for it is the New Paradise for the New Adam. There could be no least breath of the venomous Serpent in that Paradise, no entrance to anything evil. Here is the Woman who in the very essence of her person is to be the direct opposite of Satan and sin. The Mighty God himself had established that opposition at the outset when he said: "I will put enmity between you and the Woman" (Gen. 3:15). If this word established an



enduring enmity between Satan and mankind in general, then all the more between the archenemy of Mankind and the most perfect flower of our race, the perfect Woman, Mary most holy. For long centuries God's People of old yearned for that chosen Woman, who like Jael would smite the head of the Canaanite king single-handed (Jdg. 4:21) or like valiant Judith destroy the power of their mighty enemy (Judith 13:18). In the battle against Satan, God's chosen Mother must needs be the very opposite of sin and evil, for God himself is all-holy (Is. 6:3) and he chose her for his Mother. How else shall we visualize this choice of divine predilection but in terms of sinlessness, be it the goal of God's chosen people at large (Eph. 1:4) or the living reality of its most perfect representative, the very embodiment of the perfect Church? Well does the author of the Song of Songs exclaim.. "You are all-beautiful, my beloved, and there is no blemish in you" (Cant. 4:7), or again: "One alone is my love, my dove, my perfect one;. . . who is this that comes forth like the dawn, as beautiful as the moon, as resplendent as the sun?" (Cant. 6:6-7).

"I am the Immaculate Conception" said Mary to the child Bernandette at Lourdes. It is as if she said: I am human nature at its best, untarnished by sin, unspoiled by evil concupiscence, without flaw from the very start, flooded with divine light and love (grace) which makes man pleasing in the sight of God. Mary is the Chosen One whom the angelic messenger addressed in awe: "Rejoice, O Highly Favored One; the Lord is with you!" (Lk. 1:28). She is like the Woman in the heavenly vision of the book of Revelation, clothed with the sun, that is, invested with the full flood of divine power so as to foil the red dragon in his attempt to crush her and destroy her Son, standing victoriously on the moon, crowned with twelve stars, the unconquered Queen of the universe. Mary has never known sin; she was never overcome by evil. Nothing sinful ever marred her beautiful personality: never a vain glance at her own startling beauty of soul, never an impatient word, never an uncharitable remark, never a covetous longing for the things that satiate the concupiscence of the eyes or of the flesh or the pride of life. Mary is immaculate, without blemish, though like us in all the needs and vicissitudes of life.

And this is our Mother. This is the goal that God has placed before his Church, that the entire People of God look to her to become more like her daily. In the Immaculate Mother, the children see their own destiny, and are fired with new hope and new courage. Instead of pin-ups of movie actresses or certain other persons, let us place the lovely image of the immaculate Mother in our homes, in our rooms, in our jeepneys and cars which are at our disposal, for the image of the Perfect One, the Immaculate

One, can be a great deterrent from sin, and a powerful incentive to become more like her daily, thus realizing our own calling more fully, as St. Paul tells us 'to be immaculate and without blemish before God in love' (Eph. 1:4).

## **REJOICE, THE LORD IS NEAR**

**(Third Sunday in Advent: December 12, 1976)**

**The Human Situation:** For five days two men struggled over rugged mountains in an attempt to escape from Communist China. They avoided militiamen by dropping off a sheer precipice into tree-tops twenty feet below. On the eighth day they let themselves down into the sea by means of vines gathered from tree-trunks, and swam five hours to safe shores. Utterly exhausted they crawled ashore, and, finally assured of safety, they trembled with joy, tears rolling down their salty cheeks. They had reached their goal and their joy knew no bounds. They were safe in good hands.

**The Good News:** Today, the liturgy is replete with expressions of joy. It is called the Joyful Sunday, for it is an anticipation of the festive joy of the Birthday of the Savior, which is so near. In the first reading the prophet can hardly contain himself for joy. Four times he exhorts the People of God to "shout for joy, shout aloud, rejoice, exult with all your heart". The responsorial psalm takes up the refrain: Sing and shout for joy! Then, in the second reading, St. Paul re-echoes the same theme: "Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord! Always be happy in the Lord!" Truly this is the Sunday of expectant joy, and one cannot help catching the spirit of joyous exultation.

St. Paul himself gives us the reason for it: The Lord is very near. First of all, in the liturgy of worship, the celebration of the birthday of the Christ-Child is near. Children are full of expectation. Grown-ups of all walks of life are making preparations. And although the worldly-minded are bent on merely a material and external celebration of Christmas, the true Christian realizes that the core and source of all this joyous preparation is the birth of the Savior. Putting first things first, a genuine Christian will keep the birth of Jesus foremost in mind, and the renewal in his Spirit as the primary goal of Christmas. The true Christmas spirit does not rest on mere externals. It is not merely satisfied with the material side of Christmas. Real Christmas joy will only come from reconciliation with God which was brought by the Christ-Child. It is the lasting joy of the spirit.

But there is another reason for joy in the Church's liturgy. Advent reminds us again and again of the Coming of Jesus in final triumph, to reward each of his faithful followers as only a generous God can do. The whole Christian world awaits his Coming with expectation, and the very thought of this long-awaited victory fills the heart with joy. For it will mean an end to wars and suffering, an end to injustice and crime, an end to poverty and frustration. It is a selfless joy, for it is centered in Christ the Savior, who out of great love for us went through all the stages of this mortal life, to make us eternally happy. We rejoice that he will finally come into his own, to receive the acclamation of all mankind as he deserves. He comes also to reward everyone who has faithfully carried his cross with him. There is every reason then to be filled with joyous expectation. It is like the joy of a family whose eldest is a successful athlete in the Olympics, and they await his return to share his joy and the reward.

There is still another reason for joy today in the Christian living of the Mystery that is Christ. And that is his very Presence, the divine Presence of the Risen Lord who as our Emmanuel, God-with-us, is in our midst and will be with us till the consummation of the world. His presence is a dynamic one, a presence that is powerful against every attack of the Evil One, a presence that energetically urges the weak and inconstant heart of man to ever greater deeds of goodness and love, to fight against all odds and finally to triumph with the power of the Spirit. Being aware of this constant presence of Christ in our midst imparts a deep and stabilizing joy, a joy which is the gift of his Spirit (Gal. 5:22), which enables the Christian heart to live his baptismal commitment gladly until Christ comes in glory.

**Our response:** If we give priority to the spiritual aspect of the feast we are about to celebrate, our preparation and celebration of it will engender in us spiritual joy, which will have a lasting effect on our lives. This is the real joy of Christmas. This is the joy mentioned so often in today's liturgy. Can we take hold of it and make it a part of ourselves?

### REACHING OUT TO THOSE IN NEED

(Fourth Sunday in Advent: December 19, 1976)

**The Human Situation:** A well-known army chaplain met a young lady on the street late one night and said to her: "My child, aren't you out late? Don't hurt Jesus. He loves you." These words made a lasting impression on the young woman who was already living

in sinful ways. But she continued leading her sinful life. Later it led her to capital punishment. To the exhortations of the chaplain to make her peace with God she remained defiant. But suddenly the words of the army-chaplain came back to her, and she asks to see him. It is the hour of grace. She returns to God, receives the last sacraments and dies peacefully at the hands of public justice. One never knows what a simple encouraging word can do.

**The Good News:** When Mary heard that her cousin Elizabeth was already six months with child, she went at once to assist her, for Elizabeth was advanced in age and would decidedly need her help these last months before the birth of her child. Even though Mary had just become the most blessed Mother of the long-awaited Promised One, she did not become self-centered, all wrapped up in the marvellous event that had taken place within her, but deemed it her duty to go in haste and serve her aged cousin in her emergency. It was the Spirit of Love that urged her to forget herself and to hurry to help those in need. Mary is the first Christopher or Christ-bearer (for that is what the name Christopher means), extending help where help was wanted. Filled with the Christ-life, Mary blossomes forth at once in the deeds of mercy and love prompted by the Spirit.

What happened when Mary arrived at the home of Elizabeth was totally unexpected. Entering the house, Mary greeted Elizabeth with the usual Hebrew greeting: Shalom-Peace! Peace be with you! This greeting was accompanied by the customary embrace. But at that moment things began to happen. The Presence of the Lord in Mary, his living Tabernacle, is the signal for John in the bosom of Elizabeth to leap with joy, as David did before the Ark of the Covenant when it was being brought up to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6:5). Elizabeth moreover is filled with the Holy Spirit and cries out with loud prophetic voice, acknowledging Mary to be the one chosen as Mother of her Lord. Mary in turn sings her song of praise, the Magnificat, which resounds daily from the lips of thousands all over the world. Mary had set out to be of assistance to Elizabeth in her daily temporal needs, but the Spirit of God, fully possessing the Virgin-Mother, made use of her greeting and her gestures to convey the higher gifts of God. Mary's words and actions become sacramental, and in them we already envisage the future plan of Jesus to convey his spiritual gifts by simple words and deeds of his ministers in the sacramental actions, which impart rebirth and healing, strengthening and fortifying. The words of man become the vehicle of God's favors in the sacramental actions of Christ the Lord.

How fitting it is these last days before Christmas to follow closely in the footsteps of the Virgin-Mother and go to the aid of

those whom we know are really in need! It may be a mere greeting, or a helping hand to the sick, the crippled or the elderly; it may be a visit to those who are lonely and forsaken; it may be a sharing of gifts to make a poorer family have something to give their dear ones on Christmas. The Spirit of God can also make our words and actions sacramental, and bring sunshine into homes that were dark and dreary, cold and lonely. He can make use of us to impart his own deeper spiritual gifts by enlightening minds that were darkened by sin and neglect, and moving hearts that were long away from Christ and his sacraments. Others can see for themselves the goodness of God reflected in those who come to do to them as Mary did to Elizabeth. It may result in a return to the faith and to the sacraments after being away for a longer period, or at least it may give new light and hope to those who had almost lost faith in man and hope in God.

Those in charge of business or manufacturing stores ought to be willing to make a sizable sacrifice this week in order to really come to the help of those that need food, clothing and other articles of decent living. They can be brought to the schools or to the parish to distribute, or to charitable organizations that care for the needs of others. God has given us all things in his Son. He became poor so we could become rich in God; then one ought to glory in giving much of his goods to those who have little or nothing, so that they too may enjoy the spirit of love at Christmas, the birthday of God's greatest Gift to Man.

**Our response:** It is often surprising how much we can really do if we want to, to lighten the burdens of others. Hospital bills can be paid quietly and unobtrusively for those who have great difficulty in paying them. The same with grocery bills, board and lodging, rent, medicine, and the like. If the Lord will reward even a cup of cold water given to one of his little ones (Mt. 10:42), how much more will he reward the generous gifts of those who try to make others happy on his Birthday, the day on which he gave himself without reserve to each of us!

## LET US GO TO BETHLEHEM

(December 25th: Christmas, Morning Mass)

When the shepherds had heard that the Savior, their Messiah-King, was born, they decided at once to go over to Bethlehem, which was not far from the fields where they were guarding their flocks. As they hurried over, they were eager to see what had been announced to them. What did they find? They found their long-

awaited Savior as a new-born Babe lying in the same kind of feed-trough in which they always placed the food for their sheep and their lambs. Amazement must have been their reaction. Did they realize that Jesus was the Lamb of God who had come to save them from their sins, to deliver them from the enemy, and to impart to them the many blessings which the Savior was expected to bring? Did they realize that one day he would be the Food put before the flock of God? What they saw was a new-born and helpless Babe. At first he would have to be cared for and reared as a lamb with great tenderness by its mother-ewe. Only then could the Lamb of God give himself for the salvation of men.

What joy must have been theirs to think that they were privileged to be the first ones to know Israel's Savior! Not the authorities in Jerusalem, not the wealthy merchants and Sadducees of the priestly caste, not the learned scribes and Pharisees, not even the people of Bethlehem who had no room for him in their homes. But they, simple shepherds, honest and God-fearing men, tending their flocks daily with loving care, and eking out a livelihood by the sweat of their brow, they were the ones who were granted this privilege. Then they understood that God loved the poor. His Anointed One was poor, born into a poor peasant family, born in the unassuming town of Bethlehem, in a cavern used to shelter animals, without the usual comforts of the parental home and crib, and wrapped in swaddling cloths like any other babe. They understood that though the poor of this world are often of no account in the eyes of the wealthy and powerful, yet God is very near to them, for he chose to dwell among them as one of them: poor among the poor! This was the sign! And they understood. And they were the happy messengers of these glad tidings.

The sight of the Babe of Bethlehem lying on straw in a manger intended for sheep is also most appealing to all Christians today of every rank and life. Children love to visit the belén and adults are not less eager to do so. Their Christian faith tells them that the Child whose image lies in the manger is not only the Anointed One, the Messiah of Israel, but the Son of God who became our Savior and our Brother to give himself to us with all the love of his Sacred Heart. Though he was rich, he became poor to make us rich in divine blessings (2 Cor. 8:9). The earth and all that is in it are his, for he created it all, but as a little Infant, he is content with so little. Man is often not satisfied even if he acquires many things, and the reason is: God has made him for higher things. He is made to possess God himself. But he will only possess God if he opens wide his arms to welcome the Infant King with faith and love, so that he can reign over his inmost being, and thus possess the pledge of Eternal Life. From the Child in the manger we can

learn that true joy and happiness does not depend on how much of this world's goods we possess. It depends on our accepting the Gift of the Father and modelling our lives on his. This is the rebirth and the renewal that Christmas ought to bring about within us, for this will us true peace and lasting joy.

To all of us he has given so much, both in the things of earth and in the realm of the spirit. Our joy will be greater if we share them with those who are less fortunate. We want to make ourselves available to the needs of others, not to every man or woman who holds out the hand on the street, for this may be organized racketeering, but to those whom we know to be truly in need. You may not be asked to take into your home a little baby which is placed often at the doorstep of Welcome Houses, but you can share what you have to make other happy on the Birthday of Jesus. Remember, there is only One Child: the Child Jesus, for he lives in the hearts of all men of good will. He himself has said: "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving" (Acts 20:35). He ought to know. His joy on this day is in giving Himself to everyone of us.

### THE HIDDEN JESUS

(December 26, 1976: Feast of the Holy Family:

Jesus, Mary, Joseph)

**The Human Situation:** An elderly woman had lost her own child in the war, the son she loved so dearly. Her friends thought she would be inconsolable for she idolized her boy. They were astonished to hear that she had adopted another child, even of a different race. She gave him everything that her own son had owned. There was no doubt that she loved him very much. Her face was always radiant with joy. One day a neighbor accosted her: I never thought you would put another boy in your son's place. I have not, she answered simply. There is only one Boy: Jesus, the son of Mary.

**The Good News:** There is something very appealing about the hidden years of Jesus living at Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. A boy in his middle teens is usually the picture of health and energy a young man in his twenties is the pride of his people. Those formative years are ordinarily years of athletics, competition and achievement both in the physical realm as well as in the intellectual. Young men carry off the medals in the tournaments, win applause for oratorical and similar contests, graduate with flying colors, obtain their degrees and then settle down for a happy union in marriage, or opt for some profession.

Jesus in Nazareth had the same human nature as all of them, the same energy of any normal boy, the same urge for achievement and accomplishment. Yet nothing is related of these years except that he went down with Mary and Joseph to the little home of Nazareth and was subject to them, and that he progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and man (Lk. 2:51f). But these few words can tell us very much. They tell us that the Lord chose to lead a very ordinary and normal life all those years. He let nothing extraordinary manifest itself that would in any way anticipate his great powers of perception, of healing, of proclaiming the message of salvation with dynamic effect. No one ever surmised his hidden greatness. He had amazed the doctors of the Law in the Temple, but he preferred now to remain hidden and silent. Later on, in his public appearances they were astounded at his abilities and asked: "Where did he get all this"? (Mk. 6:2). But now he remained unnoticed.

Would it not have been easy for him to lighten the burdens of the Holy Family by providing for their needs in some unusual, extraordinary way? Or even by the astuteness of his mind? But he did not. He wanted to share all the burdens and inconveniences of everyday life with his fellowmen. He incarnated himself into our life on earth, and he wanted to live exactly as all others lived, so as to sanctify the common labor of the workingman and the toil of the housewife, the daily drudgery of those whose work remains the same day after day for years and years. He showed us that God is in the midst of the laborers and that his own Son wanted nothing more all those years than to live the ordinary life of everyman, though with the highest motives of Love of God, atonement for the sins of his fellowmen, and constant intercession for them.

How easily he could have let himself "shine" in the synagogue-services, so that all would have been full of praise and adulation! How easily he could have discovered better ways for Joseph to improve his workmanship, or for Mary to prepare his meals and his garments with more skill. He refrained utterly from any such procedure, for it would have been a far cry from the genuine humility and simplicity that he was determined to be the model and exemplar of. The time would come when he would begin his public mission and then he would utilize every technique to win over the crowds, and every means to heal the bodily and spiritual ailments of man. But now he willed to remain silent and obedient. It was pride that ruined God's plan for man at the outset. It would be humility and obedience that repaired and renewed all things.

The other angle of his development in these hidden years was that "he progressed steadily in wisdom and grace before God and men". This is his spiritual and intellectual progress. He willed to



develop normally like any other young man does, until full maturity is reached. First in line for Jesus would be his spiritual progress. We can be sure that he was very attentive when Joseph or Mary read the word of God to him from whatever Old Testament scrolls they could obtain. When he was old enough he pored over them and learned them fairly by heart, as is evidenced by his knowledge of them in his public life. At his mother's knee he had learned his prayers, chiefly the inspired psalms of Israel, and now with Joseph and Mary he would spend the time of prayer in deep reflection on the love of God as expressed throughout the sacred books. How the heroes of Israel fired his imagination! How the valiant warriors especially David urged him to deeds of valor for his people! Above all, the plan of God for himself and for all Israel became clearer as he continued to glean from the sacred writings the hidden designs of the Most High. In the psalms he found expression for all his aspirations, and like every Israelite, he knew how to fit them into every given situation. This comes to the fore in his many sayings later on, but especially as he lay dying on the cross, where he keeps repeating several psalm-verses that pertain to himself.

How often and how long Jesus spent in personal and prolonged prayer in these hidden years is not known. But if later in his public life he often went aside to pray alone, or spend the night in prayer, we can be assured that he spent much time in communion with the Father during these formative years at Nazareth. That habit was acquired there at Nazareth and it lasted all his life. A further source for his contemplation was God's marvellous universe, which he loved as the work of his Father. He found God reflected in all things around him: in the flowers and the trees, in the skies and the stars, in birds and animals and all living things, but above all in man himself, God's image and masterpiece: in the innocence of children's eyes, the bloom of youth, the vigor of manhood, the loveliness of womanhood, the wisdom of old age, and also in all the accomplishments of the human mind and heart: music, art, techniques. This was his Father's world and he loved every bit of it, though he knew how to use it as means to a higher end.

**Our Response:** When the moral standards of man have sunk low, and social life itself has reached the limits of permissiveness, the example of the Son of God who became our Brother can bring man again to his senses and lift him to higher ideals. Only let him ponder on the Mystery of the Hidden Jesus, and endeavor to put into practice what Jesus did for some thirty years. He knows what is best for man of any age, of any time and place. He alone is our Savior who shows us the way. Indeed, he is the Way!

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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**BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS**, Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and is printed at U.S.T. Press, Manila, Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946.

Subscription Rates (Effective January, 1976). Yearly subscription in the Philippines:

	1 Year	2 Years	3 Years	4 Years	5 Years
Glazed Newsprint	P30	P55	P80	P105	P130
Bookpaper	P35	P60	P85	P110	P135

Price per copy, P4.00. Abroad, \$12.00 per year. Back issue, \$3.00. Subscriptions are paid in advance.

Communications of an editorial nature concerning articles, cases and reviews should be addressed to the Editor. Advertising and subscription inquiries should be addressed to the Business Manager. Orders for renewals or changes of address should include both old and new addresses and will go into effect fifteen days after notification.

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