

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD
Editorial

TO LIVE IN CHRIST JESUS
American Hierarchy

THE POOR IN OUR SOCIETY
Mother Teresa of Calcutta

RIZAL, THE CITIZEN
Bishop Cirilo Almario, Jr., D.D.

BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES
Ted Gresh, M.M.

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Overcome Evil with Good

"Evil days are here again!" some prophets of doom might announce sensationally. To prove their point, they may mention the water shortage, the higher prices of commodities, the rash of fires, the breakdown in the peace negotiations in Mindanao, etc., etc.

The horizon would be painted even more darkly. The international headlines scream about the growing power of Communism in Italy and Spain, the continuing troubles in Ireland and Lebanon, the wars in Africa, the continual crises in Pakistan and in Latin America.

Within the Church we still have to cope with our lack of material and financial resources and properly trained personnel to carry out projects of charity and justice; the problem of striking a balance between the extremes of apathy on one hand and radical revolution on the other hand to come up with a unanimously accepted Church policy on social questions; the seeming breakdown of discipline in liturgical practices and religious practices. Rome has not yet extinguished the rebellion of Bishop Lefevre who plans to continue ordaining priests who will propagate opposition to Vatican II reforms; nor has it gained a better position in the war against abortion; nor has it stemmed the criticism against its declaration rejecting the ordination of women to the priesthood, etc., etc.

Faced with these disheartening developments and prospects, our leader, Pope Paul VI, remains undaunted and maintains an attitude inviting us to raise up our hearts — *sursum corda*.

Just recently he said: "Our human and Christian sensitivity is wounded by the disasters of these days . . . The sadness of this hour,

which reveals the returning infirmities of the human world, make us suffer immensely, but they do not make us fear, they do not make us despair."

He continued: "Easter... is still a school of moral fortitude and a source of hope for us. It lets us know, in fact, that from the very adversities of life, with Christ the divine Redeemer, master and brother, there may spring a new stimulus, an inexhaustible encouragement..." He said that "our civilization which, by itself, can dream and prepare new plans of progress, but cannot carry them out by itself," can still find its saviour in Jesus Christ.

"We must all be stronger and better, sustained by faith and prayer," said the Pope. "We must make the sorrows and difficulties that torment our difficult path as subject of invincible optimism, giving God the Father our humble confidence." He believes that we can give "new reasons, new forms" to God's transcendent but true religious ideal, and in this way it can "affirm itself and spread in the reality of human contingencies."

The Holy Father concludes: "For this reason we do trust in the wisdom of experts and no less in the idealism of the young. And we call upon everyone, with Christ's Cross in his heart, to overcome evil with good (Romans 1:21)."

In This Issue

Like a swimmer eager to enjoy the coolness of a pool to escape the summer heat, modern man quickly strips himself of traditional moral values. But after soaking himself in the water, he eventually feels the need to put on his clothes again. He might want to change his clothes, trying on new ones. Even when he feels like going naked for a while, sooner or later he covers himself.

It may not be wholly appropriate to liken moral values to clothes — for, after all, clothes are external while values are internal principle — but there are valid points in the comparison. And so we

can say that the American hierarchy examines man's new clothes in their Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life, "**To Live in Christ Jesus**". This is set in the American milieu but it enunciates principles and insights that should be shared by all Christians today.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta shares with us her reflections on the evangelical spirit that animates her work among **The Poor in Our Society**. "Jesus comes to us as the sick and the homeless, he comes to us in the distressing disguise of the poor." She admits that "many times I have received much more from the poor than I have given to them" because they are rich in spiritual gifts. To those who say that she is spoiling the poor by serving them for free, she says, "Who has given more freely than God himself? I think it is good to have one religious society spoiling the poor, because everybody is spoiling the rich".

Cardinal Pironio admits that we are living in difficult times but "It is useless to bewail the fact. But it is even more useless, and more disastrous, to wish to ignore it as if everything were going well, or to let ourselves be absolutely crushed as if nothing could be solved." For this reason, he believes, it is necessary to meditate again on hope. This is the topic of his **Meditation For Difficult Times**.

Rizal too, lived during difficult times which gave him insights on faith in God, love for the fatherland, courage to defend one's rights, discipline and obedience to law, respect for parents and elders, gallantry to women, good manners, humility of spirit, moderation of habits, and cooperation for the common good. Bishop Cirilo Almario develops these themes in his article on **Rizal, the Citizen**.

Basic Christian Communities used to be considered as a controversial movement in the Catholic Church. Time and experience, however, have clarified some of the issues raised against them. More and more Bishops and priests consider them as positive factors for thoroughgoing evangelization today. Father Ted Gresh, M.M., who is deeply involved in the training of leaders for **Basic Christian Communities** gives us a Sociological Perspective on this phenomenon.

PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM. Precibus accedentes venerabilis fratris Brunonis Torpigliani, Archiepiscopi titulo Mallianensis atque in Insulis Philippinis Apostolici Nuntii, qui, post auditos conferentiae earumdem Insularum Episcopos, id ipsum ab Apostolica Sede petiit, censuimus e territoriis praelaturae Iliganensis, quae amplissima sunt, aliam excitandam esse ibi locorum praelaturam. Quapropter, ex sententia Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrorum S.R.E. Cardinalium qui Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praesunt, summa Nostra potestate haec decernimus et iubemus. E praelatura Iliganensi tantum territorii distrahimus ut pleno iure alia efformetur, MARAVIENSIS appellanda, cuius hi sunt fines: in septemtrionali plaga celtra duarum provinciarum, vulgo — Lanao — confinia, lingula territorii ex — Illana Bay — procedens ac inter septemtriones et orientem porrecta, urbes ac munispia amplectens vulgo cognominata Karomatan, Nunungan, Tangkal, Munai, Pantao et Baloi, ac provincialim confinium attingens locum vulgo Kapai dictum, in quo limites conveniunt cum praelaturae Maraviensis finibus, cuius reliquum territorium omnem meridianam provinciam — Lanao — complectitur. Sic constitutae praelaturae sedem in urbe — Marawi — collocamus, praelaticium vero templum in paroeciali sacra aede ibidem exstante, Deo sacra in honorem B.M.V. Auxilii Christianorum, quae exinde propriis privilegiis fruetur. Ordinarius vero sacer Praesul, praeterquam quod iusta iura habebit, congruis etiam obligationibus tenebitur, ad iuris communis normam. Praelatura Maraviensis suffraganea erit metropolitanae Sedi Cagayanae, sic ut euis Praelatus eiusdem Sedis Archiepiscopi metropolitano iuri obnoxius erit. Mensam praelaticiam constituent curiae emolumenta, fidelium oblationes et bonorum pars, quae ei obvenient ex praescripto canonis 1500 C.I.C. Ad seminarii alumnos quod attinet, religiosis disciplinis rite imbuendos, servantur normae iuris communis, prae oculis praesertim habitis decreto concilii Vaticani II — Optatam totius — et regulis a Sacra Congregatione pro Institutione catholica statutis. Selectos autem seminarii alumnos, ut philosophicis theologicisque disciplinis amplius imbuantur, Romam mittantur apud Pontificium collegium Philippinum. Quod praeterea attinet ad conditae praelaturae

regimen, administrationem, vicarii capitularis electionem aliaque quae sacri canones praescribunt religiose serventr. His Litteris ad effectum adductis, sacerdotes Ecclesiae illi censeantur adscripti, in cuius territorio officium vel beneficium ecclesiasticum habeant; ceteri autem sacerdotes, clerici seminariiue tirones ei, in qua legitime degant. Acta denique et documenta praelaturam Maraviensem spectantia ad eius curiam ex Iliganensi transferantur, in tabulario custodienda. Haec quae praescripsimus ad affectum adducat Venerabilis Frater Bruno Torpigliani, quem diximus, vel ab eo delegatus sacerdos, confectique negotii sueta documenta exaret et ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittat, rite signatas sigilloque impressas. Hanc vero constitutionem apostolicam nunc et in posterum efficacem esse et fore volumus, contrariis nihil obstantibus. Datum Romae, apud S. Perum, die vicesimo mensis novembris, anno Domini millesimo nogetesimo septuagesimo sexto, Pontificatus Nostri quarto decimo.

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COMMUNICATION

In due compliance with the directive from the SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH in its letter dated 21 February 1977 bearing Prot. N. 13/37, it is herein formally communicated that in the manifest absence of a dispensation, the CANONICAL MARRIAGE entered into by the REV. VICTOR M. CRUZ of the Diocese of MALOLOS and illegitimately assisted by the REV. ANTONIO T. DEL ROSARIO of the Archdiocese of SAN FERNANDO at the MANILA HILTON CHAPEL on 30 December 1976, is AB INTIO NULL AND VOID.

Furthermore, it is herein publicly communicated that by disposition of the same SACRED CONGREGATION, the REV. VICTOR M. CRUZ has incurred in EXCOMMUNICATION by strength of CANON 2399 CIC for such an ATTEMPT, while the REV. ANTONIO T. DEL ROSARIO has merited SUSPENSION by virtue of CANON 2364 CIC for such COMPLICITY.

Msgr. Benjamin L. Mariño, P.A.
Chancellor

8 MARCH 1977, MANILA

TO LIVE IN CHRIST JESUS

A Pastoral Reflection on the Moral Life

The following is the final text of the collective pastoral letter "to Live in Christ Jesus" adopted by the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishops on 11 November during the bishops' semi-annual general meeting.

I.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

We wish to share our faith with you. We wish to speak of its power, of the great hope that is in us, of the Spirit that has been poured into human hearts. We wish to discuss some moral questions of our day which affect the dignity of human persons and to respond to them in accordance with what we have seen and heard concerning the word of life. "What we have seen and heard we proclaim in turn to you so that you may share life with us".¹ We also address these words in charity and respect to our fellow Christians and to others who, although they do not share our religious beliefs, may wish to know our vision of the moral life and our perception of many of the critical issues of our day.

Christ, Our Life

We believe the meaning and destiny of our lives are most fully revealed to us in Jesus of Nazareth, whom we acknowledge as Son of God made man, Saviour and Lord of creation. In Him are revealed two great truths: who God is and who we are. He tells us that God, whom we are to love and serve above all else,² loves us more than we can hope to understand and offers us His love irrevocably. As St. Paul says: "Neither death nor life, neither angels nor principalities, neither the present nor the future, will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ

¹ 1 Jn. 1:3.

² Cf. Dt. 6:5; Mt. 22:37.

Jesus, our Lord".³ Jesus Himself is the new covenant, the sacred and enduring bond, between God and ourselves.⁴

"Whatever came to be in him, found life . . . any who did accept him he empowered to become children of God".⁵ Christ, in whom God and man are most perfectly one, manifests in the world God's hidden plan to share His life with us, to pour out His own Spirit upon all flesh,⁶ so that we who were formed in His image should be called and be children of God,⁷ addressing Him in truth as Your Father.

Christ also reveals the response which we are to make to our calling and gives us the power to make it. This is the power of God's own Spirit. "All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God".⁸ Jesus lived and was led by the Spirit as the dynamic force of His life.⁹ As Son of God made man, He loves not only His Father but each human being. He teaches us that love of God and love of neighbor spring from the same Spirit and are inseparable.¹⁰ "If anyone says, 'My love is fixed on God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar".¹¹ We are to love all human beings, even our enemies, as we love ourselves;¹² even more, we are to obey Christ's new command to love all other as He has loved us.¹³

By this commandment Christ tells us something new about God, about love, and about ourselves. His commandment to love is new not simply because of the scope and unselfishness of the love involved, but because it calls us to love with a divine love called charity, as the Father, Son and Spirit do. This call carries with it the inner gift of Their life and the power of Their love, for Christ does not command what is impossible.

Christ's life is one of total obedience to the Father in the Spirit. His obedience entailed hunger and thirst and weariness, obscurity and rejection, suffering and death. Yet in accepting the suffering which came to Him as He walked the way of loving obedience, Jesus did not deny His humanity but realized it perfectly. In giving His Son the glorious victory over death, the Father showed His pleasure with the Son's loving obedience.¹⁴

³ Rom. 8:38-39.

⁴ Cf. Words of Institution, Eucharistic Prayer II.

⁵ Jn. 1:4-12.

⁶ Acts 2:17.

⁷ 1 Jn. 3:1; Ga 4:5-7.

⁸ Rom. 8:14.

⁹ Cf. Lk. 4:14.

¹⁰ 1 Jn. 4:12.

¹¹ 1 Jn. 4:20.

¹² Cf. Dt. 6:5; Lv. 19:18; Mt. 22:37-40; Lk. 10:25-28.

¹³ Jn. 15:12-13.

¹⁴ Phil. 2:9-11.

His life challenges the lives we lead. He began His ministry by calling us to change our lives completely.¹⁵ His very first word summons us to turn away from sin, turn toward God, and receive the gift of the Spirit.

Sin and Grace

We must recognize the brutal reality of sin. It is different from unavoidable failure or limitation. We all fail often through no fault of our own, and we all experience human limitations, among which the ultimate limitation is death. It is a sign of maturity to be able to accept our limitations and discover meaning in our failures.

Sin is different. It is a spirit of selfishness rooted in our hearts and wills which wages war against God's plan for our fulfillment. It is rejection, either partial or total, of one's role as a child of God and a member of His people, a rejection of the spirit of sonship, love and life. We sin first in our hearts, although often our sins are expressed in outward acts and their consequences.¹⁶

There is vast goodness in our world, yet sin's effects are also visible everywhere: in exploitative relationships, in loveless families in unjust social structures and policies, in crimes by and against individuals and against God's creation. Everywhere we encounter the suffering and destruction wrought by egoism and lack of community, by oppression of the weak and manipulation of the vulnerable; we experience explosive tensions among nations, ideological, racial, and religious groups, and social classes; we witness the scandalous gulf between those who waste goods and resources and those who live and die amid deprivation and underdevelopment — and all this in an atmosphere of wars and ceaseless preparations for war. Ours is a sinful world.

"But despite the increase of sin, grace has far surpassed it".¹⁷ God remained faithful to His love for us, sending His own Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh"¹⁸ into the midst of this sinful world. Jesus, 'who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned',¹⁹ accepted in Himself the full force of our sins, of the powers of darkness at large in the world, and of all the suffering which fidelity to God entails. So that by His obedience many might be made righteous,²⁰ He was faithful unto death. This was His final, irrevocable act of absolute self-giving in love to God and to us.

¹⁵ Cf. Mk. 1:14-15.

¹⁶ Cf. Lk. 6:43-45.

¹⁷ Rom. 5:20.

¹⁸ Rom. 8:3.

¹⁹ Heb. 4:14.

²⁰ Rom. 5:19.

Christ's offer of love and life is valid forever. Transcending space and time, He is present to all and offers to each the life that is in Him. It is freely offered, there for the taking, unless in our freedom we choose to reject His call and not to be united with Him.

Because of sin we are helpless if left to ourselves, unable even to do the good we know and truly wish to do.²¹ But God, who loves us and is faithful to His promise, saves us from sin through Jesus. Through baptism we enter into Christ's saving death and are buried with Him; through baptism we enter into His saving resurrection; through baptism we are united to His body and share in His Spirit. We who have been baptized in Christ are to consider ourselves "dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus".²² "Since we live by the spirit, let us follow the spirit's lead".²³

Conversion

Even so, our final triumph over sin is a lifelong task. Christ's call to conversion is ever timely, for we still live in a sinful world and the power of sin is strong in us. "My inner self agrees with the law of God, but I see in my body's members another law at war with the law of my mind; this makes me the prisoner of the law of sin in my members".²⁴

As disciples of Jesus who accept Him as our way and desire to love God and each other as we have been loved, we must acknowledge our sinfulness. We have to undergo conversion: "profound change of the whole person by which one begins to consider, judge, and arrange his life according to the holiness and love of God".²⁵ In a special way we engage in a continuing process of conversion through the Sacrament of Penance, in which our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled with God and with the community of faith. We are to live the paschal mystery, which we proclaim at Mass: Dying, He destroyed our death and, rising, He restored our life".²⁶ This paschal mystery is central to Christ's life and mission and to ours as His disciples.

Living in His spirit, we must deny ourselves, take up the cross each day, and follow in His steps.²⁷ Christ's atoning sacrifice is,

²¹ Cf. Tom. 7:11-15.

²² Rom. 6:11.

²³ Ga. 5:25.

²⁴ Rom. 7:22-23.

²⁵ Pope Paul VI, cited in the Rite of Penance, 6a.

²⁶ Cf. Memorial Acclamation, Roman Sacramentary.

²⁷ Cf. Lk. 9:23-24.

in Cardinal Newman's words, the vital principle in which the Christian lives, and without which Christianity is not".²⁸ As brothers and sisters of Jesus who are also His followers and members of His body, we must accept suffering and death as He did, and in so accepting them share His life. If we have been united with him through likeness to his death," so also "through a like resurrection" we shall be raised from the dead by the glory of the Father.²⁹ By our union with Christ we have already begun to share that risen life here on earth.

Fulfillment

All of us seek happiness: like, peace, joy, a wholeness and wholesomeness of being. The happiness we seek and for which we are fashioned is given to us in Jesus, God's supreme gift of love. He comes in the Father's name to bring the fulfillment promised to the Hebrew people and, through them, to all people everywhere. He is Himself our happiness and peace, our joy and beatitude.

Of old the divine pattern for human existence was set forth in the decalogue. And Jesus said: "He who obeys the commandments he has from me is the man who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father".³⁰ In the beatitudes³¹ Jesus, our brother, promises us the dignity of life as sons and daughters of God, the eternal enjoyment of a destiny which we now grasp imperfectly and which has yet to appear in its glorious fullness. Through these beatitudes, Jesus also teaches us values we must cherish and qualities we must cultivate if we are to follow Him.

Living these values by the grace of Christ, we possess in some measure even now the fulfillment promised to us. As God's reign takes root within us we become "gentle and humble of heart" like Jesus³² through deeds done in holiness, and thus "a kingdom of justice, love and peace is furthered in this world".³³

Guidance in Christ

God reveals to us in Jesus who we are and how we are to live. Yet He has made us free, able and obliged to decide how we shall respond to our calling. We must make concrete in the particular

²⁸ *Parochial and Plain Sermons* V, 7.

²⁹ Rom. 6:5; cf. 6:4.

³⁰ Jn. 14:21; cf. 15:14.

³¹ Mt. 5:3-12; Lk. 6:12-26.

³² Mt. 11:29.

³³ Preface of Christ the King.

circumstances of our lives what the call to holiness and the commandment of love require. This is not easy. We know, too, that our decisions may not be arbitrary, for 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' are not simply whatever we choose to make them. And so God gives us His guidance in manifold forms.

The human heart is alive with desire for created goods. Behind this desire is our longing for God. "A thirst is my soul for God, the living God".³⁴ Our desire for created goods and our longing for the uncreated good are not in contradiction, since Christ came to perfect our nature, not to destroy it. He is the goal to whom all creatures tend, for whom all creatures long, in whom all hold together.³⁵ Everything good and worthwhile in the adventure of a human life is such because it shows forth in some way the glory of God and points back to Him. Created goods and loves are His gifts, and they tell us of their giver and His will for humanity. Though all other goods draw us in part to our perfection as individuals, members of human communities, and stewards of the world, union with God is the supreme and only perfect fulfillment. Those who follow Christ will value all that is truly human and be reminded by it of His call.

We rejoice in friends, in being alive, in being treated as persons rather than things, in knowing the truth. In this we are rejoicing in being ourselves, images of God called to be His children. Truth and life, love and peace, justice and friendship go into what it means to be human. Morality, then, is not simply something imposed on us from without, but is ingrained in our being; it is the way we accept our humanity as restored to us in Christ.

In giving us these goods and the desire for them, God wills that we be open to them and eager to foster them in ourselves and others. All these goods form a starting point for reflecting upon the meaning and purpose of our lives. In the life of every human person are reflected many elements of the "divine law — eternal, objective, and universal — whereby God orders, directs, and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community".³⁶ All these goods together bear witness to the existence of what is often called the natural moral law. No disciple of Christ will neglect these goods. We are not possessed of His Spirit, therefore, if we toss them aside with contempt, spurning the loving gifts

³⁴ Ps. 42-3.

³⁵ Cf. Col. 1:15-20.

³⁶ Vatican Council II, *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, 3, Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1-2, 91, 1 and 2; 94, 1.

of our Father; if we grasp at them selfishly and deny them to others; or if we make them, not their giver, the ultimate end and meaning of our lives.³⁷

Conscience

Even when we have become conscious of these fundamental goods and have cultivated an attitude of cherishing them in ourselves and others, more remains to be done. We still must decide how to realize and affirm them in the concrete circumstances of our lives. Such decisions are called judgments of conscience. In the final analysis, they take place in the "most secret core and sanctuary" of a person, where one "is alone with God".³⁸

We live in good faith if we act in accord with conscience. Nevertheless our moral decisions still require much effort. We must make decisions of conscience based upon prayer study, consultation and an understanding of the teachings of the Church. We must have a rightly informed conscience and follow it. But our judgments are human and can be mistaken; we may be blinded by the power of sin in our lives or misled by the strength of our desires. "Beloved, do not trust every spirit, but put the spirits to a test to see if they belong to God".³⁹

Clearly, then, we must do everything in our power to see to it that our judgments of conscience are informed and in accord with the moral order of which God is creator. Common sense requires that conscientious people be open and humble, ready to learn from the experience and insight of others, willing to acknowledge prejudices and even change their judgments in light of better instruction.

Followers of Jesus will have a realistic approach to conscience. They will accept what Jesus taught and judge things as He judges them.

The Church

Where are we to look for the teachings of Jesus, hear His voice and discern His will?

In scripture, whose books were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In prayer, where we grow in knowledge and love of Christ and in commitment to His service. In the events

³⁷ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 16.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ 1 Jn. 4:1; cf. 1 Cor. 12:10.

II

MORAL LIFE IN THE FAMILY, THE NATION,
AND THE COMMUNITY NATIONS

We turn now to three social clusters, three concentric communities, which provide the setting for human life and fulfillment in Christ: the family, the nation, and the community of nations.

In speaking of matters which bear upon these three communities today, we treat them as moral issues in light of the values given us by Jesus Christ and His Church, in whose name we proclaim them. We cannot here discuss every important issue. Moreover, we admit that in some cases the complexity of the problems does not permit ready, concrete solutions. Nevertheless, as teachers of morality we insist that even such complex problems must be resolved ultimately in terms of objective principles if the solutions are to be valid.⁴⁴

Our point of focus is the human person. "The progress of the human persons and the advance of society itself hinge on each other".⁴⁵ Every human being is of priceless value: made in God's image, redeemed by Christ, and called to an eternal destiny. That is why we are to recognize all human beings as our neighbors and love them with the love of Christ.

This love of neighbor, inseparably linked to love of God and indeed an expression and measure of it, is summoned forth first in regard to those closest to us — the members of our own families.

The Family

Every human being has a need and right to be loved, to have a home where he or she can put down roots and grow. The family is the first and indispensable community in which this need is met. Today, when productivity, prestige or even physical attractiveness are regarded as the gauge of personal worth, the family has a special vocation to be a place where people are loved not for what they do or what they have but simply because they are.

⁴⁴ Many of the matters treated here have been discussed in the detail in papal and conciliar documents, documents of the Holy See and the Synods of Bishops, and statements of national episcopal conferences. The references which follow note a few of the sources.

⁴⁵ Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 25.

⁴⁶ Cf. Gn. 2:24.

A family begins when a man and woman publicly proclaim before the community their mutual commitment so that it is possible to speak of them as one body.⁴⁶ Christ teaches that God wills the union of man and woman in marriage to be lifelong, a sharing of life for the length of life itself.

The Old Testament takes the love between husband and wife as one of the most powerful symbols of God's love for His people: I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy; I will espouse you in fidelity, and you shall know the Lord".⁴⁷ So husband and wife espouse themselves, joined in a holy and loving covenant.

The New Testament continues this imagery: only now the union between husband and wife rises to the likeness of the union between Christ and His Church.⁴⁸ Jesus teaches that in marriage men and women are to pledge steadfast, unconditional faithfulness which mirrors the faithfulness of the Son of God. Their marriages make His fidelity and love visible to the world. Christ raised marriage in the Lord to the level of a sacrament, whereby this union symbolizes and effects God's special love for the couple in their total domestic and social situation.

Jesus tells us that the Father can and will grant people the greatness of heart to keep such pledges of loving faithfulness.⁴⁹ The Church has always believed that in making and keeping noble promises of this sort people can through the grace of God grow beyond themselves — grow to the point of being able to love beyond their merely human capacity. Yet contemporary culture makes it difficult for many people to accept this view of marriage. Even some who admire it as an ideal doubt whether it is possible and consider it too risky to attempt. They believe it better to promise less at the start and so be able to escape from marital tragedy in order to promise once again.



But this outlook itself has increased marital tragedy. Only men and women bold enough to make promises for life, believing that with God's help they can be true to their word as He is to His, have the love and strength to surmount the inevitable challenges of marriage. Such unselfish love, rooted in faith, is ready to forgive when need arises and to make the sacrifices demanded if something as precious and holy as marriage is to be preserved

⁴⁷ Ho 2:21-22.

⁴⁸ Cf. Eph. 5:25-32.

⁴⁹ Cf. Mt. 19:20-12.

For the family to be a place where human beings can grow with security, the love pledge by husband and wife must have as its model the selfless and enduring love of Christ for the Church. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church. He gave himself up for her".⁵⁰

Some say even sacramental marriages can deteriorate to such an extent that the marital union dies and the spouses are no longer obliged to keep their promise of lifelong fidelity. Some would even urge the Church to acknowledge such dissolution and allow the parties to enter new, more promising unions. We reject this view.⁵¹ In reality it amounts to a proposal to forego Christian marriage at the outset and substitute something entirely different. It would weaken marriage further, while paying too little heed to Jesus' call to identify ourselves with His redeeming love, which endures all things. Its fundamental difficulty is that it cannot be reconciled with the Church's mission to be faithful to the word entrusted to it. The covenant between a man and woman joined in Christian marriage is as indissoluble and irrevocable as God's love for His people and Christ's love for His church.



Since the following of Christ calls for so much dedication and sacrifice in the face of strong, contrary social pressures, Christ's Church has a serious obligation to help His followers live up to the challenge. In worship, pastoral care, education, and counseling we must assist husbands and wives who are striving to realize the ideal of Christ's love in their lives together and with their children. Young people and engaged couples must be taught the meaning of Christian marriage. Married couples must have the support and encouragement of the Christian community in their efforts to honor their commitments.

It remains a tragic fact that some marriages fail. We must approach those who suffer this agonizing experience with the compassion of Jesus Himself. In some cases romanticism or immaturity may have prevented them from entering into real Christian marriages.

But often enough "broken marriages" are sacramental, indissoluble unions. In this sensitive area the pastoral response of the Church is especially needed and especially difficult to formulate. We must seek ways by which the Church can mediate Christ's compassion to those who have suffered marital tragedy, but at the

⁵⁰ Eph. 5, 25.

⁵¹ Cf. Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 48.

same time we may do nothing to undermine His teaching concerning the beauty and meaning of marriage and in particular His prophetic demands concerning the indissolubility of the unions of those who marry in the Lord. The Church must ever be faithful to the command to serve the truth in love.⁵²

Children

The love of husband and wife finds its ideal fulfillment in their children, with whom they share their life and love. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage who in turn substantially enrich the lives of their parents.⁵³

Openness to children is vitally linked to growth in marital and family love. Couples have a right to determine responsibility, in accord with God's law, how many children they should have, and they may also have valid reasons for not seeking children immediately. But in marrying with the intention of postponing children indefinitely, some appear simply to wish to enjoy one another's company without distraction or to achieve an arbitrary level of marital comfort. This can mark a selfish entry into what should be an experience of generous giving. Even worse, children may come to be regarded as an intrusion and a burden instead of a gift. This may lead to a rejection of the children, particularly the disadvantaged child, either before or after birth.

In order to reflect seriously upon the value they assign children, couples should begin by reflecting upon their understanding of marriage itself. Do they believe God is with them in this adventure to which they have committed themselves? If so, their love will reach confidently toward the future and provide a setting in which new life can be generously accepted and take root and grow. Openness to new life, founded on faith, in turn will strengthen their love. They will come to see how the love-giving meanings of their love are joined in loving acts of marital intercourse, linked by a necessary relationship which exists not only on the biological level but on all levels of personality.



One need not always act to realize both of these values, but one may never deliberately suppress either of them. The love-giving meanings of marital intercourse are real human values and aspects of human personhood. Because they are, it is wrong to act delib-

⁵² Eph. 4:15.

⁵³ Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 50.

erately against either. In contraceptive intercourse the procreative or life-giving meaning of intercourse is deliberately separated from its love-giving meaning and rejected; the wrongness of such an act lies in the rejection of this value.⁵⁴

Some distinguish between a so-called contraceptive mentality — a deep-seated attitude of selfish refusal to communicate life and love to a future generation — and particular contraceptive acts during a marriage otherwise generally open to the transmission of life. Though there is a difference, even in the latter case an act of contraceptive intercourse is wrong because it severs the link between the meanings of marital intercourse and rejects one of them.

We ask Catholics to reflect on the value at stake here. The Church is not engaged in a mere quibble over means of birth regulation; it is proclaiming the value of the life-giving meaning of marital intercourse, a value attacked, though in different ways, by both the ideology of contraception and by contraceptive acts.

Pastoral sensitivity requires that we be understanding toward those who find it hard to accept this teaching, but it does not permit us to change or suppress it. We recognize that couples face increasing pressures in family planning. Contraceptive birth control results not only from selfishness and improperly formed conscience but also from conflicts and pressures which can mitigate moral culpability. Therefore, we ask our people not to lose heart or turn away from the community of faith when they find themselves caught in these conflicts. We urge them to seek appropriate and understanding pastoral counsel, to make use of God's help in constant prayer and recourse to the sacraments, and to investigate honestly such legitimate methods of birth limitation as natural family planning.⁵⁵ At the same time we urge those who dissent from this teaching of the Church to a prayerful and studied reconsideration of their position.

Our Christian tradition holds the sexual union between husband and wife in high honor, regarding it as a special expression of their covenanted love which mirrors God's love for His people and Christ's love for the Church. But like many things human, sex is ambivalent. It can be either creative or destructive. Sexual intercourse is a moral and human good only within marriage; outside marriage it is wrong.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Cf. *Humanae Vitae*, 12, 13.

⁵⁵ Cf. Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 52; *Humanae Vitae*, 24.

⁵⁶ Cf. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics*, December 29, 1975.

Our society gives considerable encouragement to premarital and extramarital sexual relations as long as, it is said, 'no one gets hurt.' Such relations are not worthy of beings created in God's image and made God's adopted children nor are they according to God's will.⁵⁷ The unconditional love of Christian marriage is absent, for such relations are hedged around with many conditions. Though tenderness and concern may sometimes be present, there is an underlying tendency toward exploitation and self-deception. Such relations trivialize sexuality and can erode the possibility of making deep, lifelong commitments.

Some persons find themselves through no fault of their own to have a homosexual orientation. Homosexuals, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights. They have a right to respect, friendship and justice. They should have an active role in the Christian community. Homosexual activity, however, as distinguished from homosexual orientation, is morally wrong. Like heterosexual persons, homosexuals are called to give witness to chastity, avoiding, with God's grace, behaviour which is wrong for them, just as nonmarital sexual relations are wrong for heterosexuals. Nonetheless, because heterosexuals can usually look forward to marriage, and homosexuals, while their orientation continues, might not, the Christian community should provide them a special degree of pastoral understanding and care.

Though most people have two families, the one in which they are born and the one they help bring into being, the single and celibate have only the first. But from this experience they, too, know family values. Love and sacrifice, generosity and service have a real place in their lives. They are as much tempted as the married — sometimes more — to selfishness. They have as great a need for understanding and consolation. Family values may be expressed in different terms in their lives, but they are expressed.

The Aged

The adventure of marriage and family is a continuing one in which elderly people have important lessons to teach and learn. Contemporary American society tends to separate the aging from their families, isolating kin in ways that are more than physical, with the result that the wisdom of experience is often neither sought, imparted nor further developed.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-10, 18.

⁵⁸ Cf. United States Catholic Conference, *Society and the Aged: Toward Reconciliation*, May 5, 1976.

Families should see the story of loving reciprocity through life's closing chapters. Where possible the elderly should be welcomed into their own families. Moreover, children have an obligation of human and Christian justice and love to keep closely in touch with aging parents and to do what lies in their power to care for them in their old age. "If anyone does not provide for his own relatives and especially for members of his immediate family, he has denied the faith; he is worse than an unbeliever".⁵⁹ The community should provide for those who lack families and, in doing so, attend to all their needs, not just physical ones. Here the Church has played and continues to play a special role. The elderly must be cherished, not merely tolerated, and the Church community, through parishes and other agencies, should seek to mediate to them the loving concern of Jesus and the Father.

Something different is involved, however, when the question is whether hopelessly ill and painfully afflicted people must be kept alive at all costs and with the use of every available medical technique.

Some seem to make no distinction between respecting the dying process and engaging in direct killing of the innocent. Morally there is all the difference in the world. While euthanasia or direct killing is gravely wrong, it does not follow that there is an obligation to prolong the life of dying person by extraordinary means. At times the effort to do so is of no help to the dying and may even be contrary to the compassion due them. People have a right to refuse treatment which offers no reasonable hope of recovery and imposes excessive burdens on them and perhaps also their families. At times it may even be morally imperative to discontinue particular medical treatments in order to give the dying the personal care and attention they really need as life ebbs. Since life is a gift of God we treat it with awesome respect. Since death is part and parcel of human life, indeed the gateway to eternal life and the return to the Father, it too, we treat with awesome respect.

The Family and Society

Marriage and the family are deeply affected by social patterns and cultural values. How we structure society, its approach to education and work, the roles of men and women, public policy toward health care and care of the young and old, the tone and cast of our literature, arts and media — all these affect the family. The test of how we value the family is whether we are willing to

⁵⁹ 1 Tm. 5:8.

foster, in government and business, in urban planning and farm policy, in education and health care, in the arts and sciences, in our total social and cultural environment, moral values which nourish the primary relationships of husbands, wives and children and make authentic family life possible.

THE NATION

Our nation is committed in principle to the inviolable dignity of the human person, to respect for religious faith and the free exercise of religion, to social and legal structures by which citizens can participate freely in the governmental process, and procedures by which grievancies can be adjudicated and wrongs can be righted. This commitment is a constant challenge, and at times we have failed to live up to its demands. Nevertheless, it remains possible to develop here a social order "founded on truth, built on justice, and animated by love".⁶⁰

The Individual and the Nation

While the ultimate and most substantive values inhere in individuals, individuality and community are inseparable elements of the moral life. So, for instance, honesty, courage and hope, which abide only in individuals can be fostered by freedom to learn, protection from violence, adequate income, and the availability of health care.

As followers of Jesus we are called to express love of neighbor in deeds which help others realize their human potential. This, too, has consequences for the structures of society. Law and public policy do not substitute for the personal acts by which we express love of neighbor; but love of neighbors impels us to work for laws, policies and social structures which foster human goods in the lives of all persons.

Respect for the Unborn

It is therefore as ironic as it is tragic that, in a nation committed to human rights and dignity, the practice of legalized abortion is now widespread. Every human life is inviolable from its very beginning. While the unborn child may not be aware of itself and rights, it is a human entity, a human being with potential, not

⁶⁰ Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 26.

a potential human being. Like the newborn, the unborn depend on others for life and the opportunity to share in human goods. Their dependence and vulnerability remind us of the social character of all human life: to live and thrive as a human being, each of us needs the help and support of others.⁶¹

To destroy these innocent unborn children is an unspeakable crime, a crime which subordinates weaker members of the human community to the interests of the stronger. God who calls us to Himself loves the helpless and weak; like Him we should affirm the unborn in their being, not close our eyes to their humanity so that we may more easily destroy them. Their right to life must be recognized and fully protected by the law.

While many today seek abortion of frivolous and selfish reasons, there are women who see it as a tragic solution to agonizing problems. They deserve society's help in meeting and resolving these problems so that they will not feel a need to resort to the inhuman expedient of abortion. Recognition of the incomparable dignity of all human beings, including the unborn, obliges us to assume loving responsibility for all who are in need. The Church must take appropriate initiatives in providing support to women with problems during pregnancy or after, and in doing so bear witness to its belief in human dignity.⁶²

Women in Society

As society has grown more sensitive to some new or newly recognized issues and needs (while at the same time growing tragically less sensitive to others), the movement to claim equal rights for women makes it clear that they must now assume their rightful place as partners in family, institutional, and public life. The development of these roles can and should be enriching for both women and men.

Even today some still consider women to be men's inferiors, almost their property. It is un-Christian and inhuman for husbands to regard their wives this way; they ought instead to "love (them) as Christ loved the Church".⁶³ Such un-Christian and inhuman attitudes are expressed in a truly degraded manner when they take the form of exploiting women for pleasure and financial profit through prostitution and pornography.

⁶¹ Cf. Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 51.

⁶² National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities*, November 20, 1975.

Efforts to win recognition that women have the same dignity and fundamental rights as men are praiseworthy and good. But the same cannot be said of views which would ignore or deny significant differences between the sexes, undermine marriage and motherhood, and erode family and the bases of society itself. Liberation does not lie in espousing new modes of dehumanization, nor in enslavement to an ideology which ignores the facts of human sexuality and the requirements of human dignity.

There is much to be done in the Church in identifying appropriate ways of recognizing women's equality and dignity. We have every reason and precedent for doing so, since our tradition has always honored the Mother of God and recognized Mary as the one in whom, next to Jesus Himself, human nature is expressed most perfectly. In canonizing so many women over the centuries, including our own country's St. Frances Xavier Cabrini and St. Elizabeth Seton, the Church has proposed them to both women and men as models of what it means to live the life of Christ. Thus we fully support constructive effort to remove demeaning attitudes and customs with respect to women, however, subtle and unconscious in origin they may be.

Respect for Racial and Ethnic Groups

The members of every racial and ethnic group are beings of incomparable worth; yet racial antagonism and discrimination are among the most persistent and destructive evils in our nation.⁶³ Those victims of discrimination of whom we are most conscious are Hispanic Americans, Black Americans, and American Indians. The Catholic community should be particularly sensitive to this form of injustice because it, too, has experienced prejudice and discrimination in America based on national origin and religion.

It is sometimes said to be pointless to lecture those who are not personally guilty of causing or directly contributing to racism and other ills of society. But the absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility. We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not caused, lest we become bystanders who tacitly endorse evil and so share in guilt for it.

It is also wrong to say that those whose energy and motivation have been sapped by social injustices bear sole responsibility for

⁶³ Eph. 5:25.

⁶⁴ The National Conference of Catholic Bishops and its predecessor, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, have often spoken on racial justice. Cf., for example, *The National Crisis*, NCCB, April 25, 1968.

bettering themselves. Instead, the struggle for a just social order requires program to undo the consequences of past injustices.

Law has an important role to play in the fight against racial discrimination. Just laws alert people that some deeds are forbidden and others are required if all members of society are to share equitably in its goods. Law may not be able to change attitudes, but they can deter those who might otherwise seek to violate the rights of others. By protecting minority groups and also those who wish to respect them and their rights, laws at least can foster actions and institutions essential to racial justice. Finally, and especially at a time when many are confused about morality, good laws can contribute to educating people to know right from wrong.

Thanks in great part to law and the courts, we have made progress in recent years in removing some social, political, and cultural structures which supported racism. But we are far from final success. For example, the principles of legitimacy, proportionality and restraint have sometimes been violated in law enforcement within our nation. Racial justice in such areas as housing, education, health care, employment, and the administration of justice must be given high priority. The Church, too, must continue efforts to make its institutional structures modes of racial justice while striving to eliminate racism from the hearts of believers by reminding them of what it means to be sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters in Christ. "There is no Greek or Jew here, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner, Scythian, slave or freeman. Rather Christ is everything in all of you".⁶⁵

Employment

Chronic unemployment is a strong factor paralyzing some groups in our nation. 'Minorities' are not its only victims. Women and young workers suffer disproportionately.

Behind the statistics of joblessness lie human tragedies. For example, the father who cannot feed his family, in desperation often lapses into a pattern of life whose effects spread in an ever widening circle: crime, the use of drugs, alcoholism, mental illness,

Blessed with God-given gifts that include creativity and imagination, the people of this affluent nation can and must find means by which everyone who is able to work can have gainful, productive

⁶⁵ Col. 3:11.

employment. If we settle for less we are allowing ourselves to be ruled by our economy instead of ruling it.⁶⁶

An injustice to which we have frequently drawn attention is the systematic exploitation of agricultural workers, many of them migrants.⁶⁷ These neighbors whose work puts food on our tables are often compelled to live without decent housing, schooling, health care and equal protection of the law. The economic risks of the industry they serve do not justify denying them the right to negotiate for their own protection and betterment. If exploitation is the cost of lower food prices, it is too high a price to pay.

Housing

In many American cities affluent and impoverished neighborhoods are divided mostly along racial lines. If this were a result simply of ethnic preference or the preservation of property values, we would still be concerned that genuine 'neighborhood' was being thwarted. But, in fact, the actions of government, banks and the real estate industry at times converge to deprive some racial groups of financing for housing and to manipulate real estate values for the profit of insiders, with the result that our cities remain divided and hostile. All Americans should be able to live where they wish and their means allow. Furthermore, while society must provide decent housing for the poor, public housing may not be used as a device for consistently isolating some groups from the rest of the community.⁶⁸

In saying this, we wish also to note the many human values preserved in ethnic neighborhoods, where people are united by a common culture, common origin, and sometimes even a common language other than English. Only when their boundaries become barriers and their values are cherished in ways that exclude others from participation do such neighborhoods become elements in a larger pattern of social strife.

Clearly, though, it is not just Americans of moderate means, whether in or out of ethnic neighborhoods, who should bear the burden of achieving racial justice. This is a duty of the well-to-do as well as the less affluent of suburbanites as well as city residents: in short, of all social and economic classes. We do not have

⁶⁶ Cf. United States Catholic Conference, *The Economy: Human Dimensions*, November 20, 1975.

⁶⁷ Cf., for example, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Resolution on Farm Labor*, November 16, 1973.

⁶⁸ Cf. United States Catholic Conference, *The Right to a Decent Home*, November 20, 1975.

answers to all the complex issues raised by specific measures for the desegregation of schools and neighborhoods, but we believe these reflections have a significant bearing on them.

Crime and Correction

People have a right and need to live in peace, yet one of the urgent issues in our country today is crime. Violent urban crime receives most of the attention, but the apparently growing amount of white collar criminal fraud and corruption is also ominous, for it indicates a collapse of respect for virtues such as truthfulness and honesty which hold society together.

In both categories, merely emphasizing sterner law enforcement while ignoring factors which occasion criminal acts will accomplish very little. Poverty and injustice, as well as our society's spirit of acquisitiveness, contribute to crime. Whatever, improvements may be needed in law enforcement and the administration of justice, society will not come to grips with the crime crisis until it seriously addresses these underlying problems.

Ironically, our penal system itself is sometimes a cause of increased crime. Long delay of trial and unequal application of the law are unjust and a source of increase in crimes. Often enough imprisonment only confirms inmates in criminal attitudes and practices. Sometimes prisons are also settings for gross violations of prisoners' rights. Prisoners, like the rest of us, are beings of transcendent value, and incarcerating them in prisons which dehumanize is a form of brutality. They have a right to protection against assault and against threats to their lives and well being. They have a right to proper food, health care and recreation, and to opportunities to pursue other human goods such as education and the cultivation of their skills. Reform of our nation's penal system in light of these and the other human rights of prisoners is urgent and long overdue.⁶⁹

The Nation and the Individual

We have spoken often of the need for just laws and wholesome public policies, for all that government can do to create a setting in which fundamental values are protected and can flourish in human lives. Among the other contributions which government should make to the creation of a more wholesome society are

⁶⁹ Cf. United States Catholic Conference, *The reform of Correctional Institutions in the 1970's*, November 14, 1973.

responsible, constitutional steps to stem the flood of pornography and of violence and immorality in the entertainment media. Yet we are aware of the limitations of government and the risk of seeming to suggest that it is all-important. Just laws and policies, taxes and programs, are necessary but they will not by themselves secure justice and peace. Such values must be built upon the foundations of good and dedicated individual human lives.

THE COMMUNITY OF NATIONS

Our allegiance must extend beyond the family and the nation to the entire human family. In Christ we are brothers and sisters of people whose faces we never see, whose names we cannot spell, whose customs are unfamiliar to us, but whose Father is our Father.

Human interdependence is constantly increasing in today's world so that many issues which pertain to human dignity call for the collaboration of a true community of nations.⁷⁰ Perhaps the central global issue of our day is how to create such a community out of a world of states. Pope John grasped the meaning of this challenge when he described the structural defect in the present situation: the lack of authority and institutions adequate to address the problems humanity faces.⁷¹ Most people agree about problems and their seriousness: hunger, environmental pollution, population growth, glaring disparities of wealth, and the persistent danger of war, to mention only a few. But agreement is lacking on ways to cooperate in dealing with them.

Believing that the human family is called to live in unity, we speak of two goals for the community of nations which will also help bring it into being: the development of peoples and peace on earth. From the perspective of the United States, both are best addressed in the context of power. Our nation's enormous military and economic power make it essential that we understand how power should be used in the pursuit of these goals.

The Development of Peoples

All power is from God⁷² and is an expression of His being. God uses His power on our behalf: by creating us and sustaining us in existence, by bestowing His gifts upon us, by enabling us to grow

⁷⁰ Cf. Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 26.

⁷¹ *Pacem in Terris*, 135.

⁷² Cf. Jn. 19:11; Rom 13:1.

in likeness to Him. As His creatures and children, we are to use the power He grants us for the good of others.

Power may never be used to attack the dignity of persons, to subjugate them, to prevent them from seeking and realizing the goods to which their humanity gives them a claim. Beyond this, the powerful have a duty to work positively for the empowerment of the weak and powerless: to help others gain control over their own lives, so that as free and responsible persons they can participate in a self-determining manner in the goods proper to human beings.

The powerful must therefore work for the liberation of the oppressed and powerless. Though liberation in the fullest sense is what "Christ himself announced and gave to man by his sacrifice," it is not possible to foster such liberation in oneself and others without also "promoting in justice and peace the true, authentic advancement" of humankind.⁷³

Our nation's power, wealth, and position of leadership in the world impose special obligations upon us. Americans have always responded generously to foreign crises involving immediate human suffering: to floods and droughts, earthquakes and famines and the ravages of war. This to our credit. But the obligations of which we now speak extend further. We must work creatively for a just international order based on recognition of interdependence. We must live by the principle that all nations and peoples are entitled to an equitable share of the world's goods as well as respect for their right of self-determination.

The values which comprise the international common good are threatened by existing patterns of international political and economic relations. Our lives policies, and patterns of consumption and production should be examined in light of their impact on other nations and peoples. Pope Paul has urged such examination: when so many people are hungry, so many families are destitute, so many enchained by ignorance, so many schools, hospitals and homes worthy of the name have yet to be built, all public or private squandering of wealth, all expenditure prompted by national or personal ostentation, and the exhausting arms race become intolerable scandals.⁷⁴

The discussion of international justice and of institutions for its realization has become more specific as a result of the call at the United Nations for a New International Economic Order. Its significance lies in its effort to change the language of the debate from

⁷³ Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 31.

⁷⁴ *Populorum Progressio*, 53.

that of aid and charity to that of obligation and justice. The traditional question about foreign aid has been how much we of the industrial nations would choose to give others within the framework of the existing international order. By contrast, discussion cast in terms of justice would examine the rules by which the system works — such things as trade treaties, commodity prices, corporate practices and making them more just. New rules would clarify obligations among the parties. Politically, they would be designed to improve the bargaining position of the developing nations in relation to the industrialized countries.

Such discussion of rules for relationships and the distribution of power on the international level may be new to us as Americans but the themes are familiar to our experience. The American tradition emphasizes that rules of fairness are central to a just political system. The developing countries argue that it is precisely rules of fairness in economic relations which do not now exist. Similarly, their quest for a new and more equitable form of bargaining power in relation to us echoes the drive for bargaining power by American workers over the last century.

Peace

We are also obliged as Americans and especially as Christians to reflect profoundly upon war and, more importantly, upon peace and the means of building it.⁷⁵

The Church has traditionally recognized that under stringent conditions, engaging in war can be a form of legitimate defense.⁷⁶ But modern warfare, in both its technology and in its execution, is so savage that one must ask whether war as it is actually waged today can be morally justified.

At the very least all nations have a duty to work to curb the savagery of war and seek the peaceful settlement of disputes. The right of legitimate defense is not a moral justification for unleashing every form of destruction. For example, acts of war deliberately directed against innocent non-combatants are gravely wrong and no one may participate in such an act.⁷⁷ In weighing the morality of warfare today, one must also take into consideration not only its immediate impact but also its potential for harm to future generations: for instance, through pollution of the soil or the atmosphere or damage to the human gene pool.

⁷⁵ Cf. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Human Life in Our Day*, II, November 15, 1968.

⁷⁶ Cf. Vatican Council II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 79.

⁷⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 80.

A citizen entering the military service is fulfilling a conscientious duty to his or her country. He or she may not casually disregard the nation's conscientious decision to go to war in self-defense. At the same time, no nation, our own included, may demand blind obedience. No members of the armed forces above all no Christians who bear arms as 'agents of security and freedom',⁷⁸ can rightfully carry out orders or policies requiring direct force against noncombatants or the violation of some other moral norm. The right to object conscientiously to war in general and the right of selective conscientious objection to a particular war should be acknowledged by government and protected by law.⁷⁹

With respect to nuclear weapons, at least those with massive destructive capability, the first imperative is to prevent their use. As possessors of a vast nuclear arsenal, we must also be aware that not only is it wrong to attack civilian populations but it is also wrong to threaten to attack them as part of a strategy of deterrence. We urge the continued development and implementation of policies which seek to bring these weapons more securely under control progressively reduce their presence in the world, and ultimately remove them entirely.

The experience of the last fifteen years shows clearly that it is not only nuclear weapons which pose grave dangers and dilemmas. We must learn from the moral and political costs, to ourselves and others, of conventional war as it was waged in Vietnam. With much of the world undergoing or approaching a period of deep and sometimes drastic change, there is need for restraint and for clear reflection about the purposes which can justify the use of force. The moral reasons and political purposes said to call for even conventional force of arms, besides being valid, must be clear and convincing before any commitment is made to a policy of force.

Today, however, the human family longs for peace which is more than the mere absence of war, peace rooted in justice and brought alive by charity. Such peace truly reflects Christ's vision of human life. Why is it so difficult to achieve?

Peace depends upon both the policies of states and the attitudes of peoples. A policy of peace can only be conceived and supported where a commitment to peace prevails. Cultivating this commitment and carrying forward this policy are intricate, delicate tasks. It is not that some among us desire war, but that those who speak

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁹ Cf. United States Catholic Conference, *Declaration on Conscientious Objection and Selective Conscientious Objection*, October 21, 1971.

in human lives and persons committed to Christian goals can pursue them without hindrance, without surrendering their rights, and with full opportunity to transmit their principles to future generations.

The obligation of creating these conditions rests in different ways upon different elements in society.

Upon government: to infringe upon the authentic rights of none; to create through the instruments of law and public policy conditions for the fullest possible flowering of the rights of all with particular attention to family values and family needs to seek a true community of nations with international structures able to address the real problems of today's world and work for the common good of all nations and peoples.

Upon business and industry, labor and the professions: to define their roles not in relation to narrow self-interest but in relation to the well being of all members of this society especially the poor and the vulnerable; to seek for all a good life encompassing a broad spectrum of values in addition to economic ones; to show by responsible actions that the common good can be realized in our nation without intrusion by the state into ever more areas of life.

Upon the media, education, and all who transmit information and help form attitudes: to be deeply committed to the truth; to be respectful of persons and scrupulous to avoid advocating or inculcating false and corrosive values; to be eager to foster such community-building values as justice, charity, and the understanding that all human beings have a claim upon the goods of human life.

Upon churches and religious groups: to give witness to their teaching by striving through their policies and practices to further the realization of human goods in the lives of all, those who are not their members as well as those who are to exercise a prophetic role in society by calling individuals, groups and institutions to be ever more mindful and supportive of authentic values.

With all this said, however, the most important thing is still unsaid. The values proclaimed by Jesus Christ are not expressed by structures and institutions if they are not lived by men and women. Jesus is not the way, the truth, and the life for corporate abstractions like 'government', 'business', and 'religious groups' but for human beings.⁸¹ Yet people live in and depend upon communities and social structures of many kinds; and so the reason for

⁸¹ Jn. 14:6.

cherishing moral values in families, nations, and the community of nations, as well as the test of how well they are fostered there are individual human lives lived according to God's will for us made manifest in Jesus Christ. For Christians the goal is holiness.

Because we have been made holy in Jesus, we are, He teaches us, also to be made perfect, "even as your heavenly Father is perfect".⁸² All of us are to be perfectly what we really are: living temples of the holy God. "All of the faithful of whatever rank or status are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity".⁸³ We are all challenged to grow in holiness "according to our own special calling" and above all by loving service, which guides and energizes all the paths of holiness.⁸⁴ To do this requires self-discipline and self-sacrifice. But it is possible in the strength of Christ and His Spirit which we share. Recognizing its possibility is a step toward making it real. We, your bishops, pray that these reflections will help bring this possibility more alive in our lives and the lives of many, will help open our hearts and yours, our brothers and sisters in Christ, to God's immeasurable love for us all.

St. John of the Cross tells us that at life's nightfall "we will be examined in love".⁸⁵ A life of faith is one measured constantly throughout its course in light of the love and life of Christ in us. When we come to die, much we have cherished will seem worthless, many things deemed urgent and attractive now will appear useless or worse. What will matter then is how much we love now and how we live in response to our Father's love for us.

The cross of Jesus Christ shows us the deficiency of other value systems. Jesus yielded up His life for us in perfect loving union with the Father's will and this is the meaning of His life which also gives meaning to our lives as His followers. If we can acknowledge selfishness as folly and self-sacrifice as victory, if we can love enemies, the vulnerable to injustice and in being so, still say that we have triumphed, then we shall have learned to live in Christ Jesus.

⁸² Mt. 5:48.

⁸³ Vatican Council II, *Constitution on the Church*, 40.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 42; cf. 35.

⁸⁵ *Spiritual Sentences and Maxims*, 57.

THE POOR IN OUR SOCIETY

by

Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa lives in Calcutta, India, where she has worked with the poor since 1946. Before that, as a member of a religious order, she taught for 17 years at a school for well-to-do girls in Calcutta. However, one day as she was traveling to Darjeeling for a retreat she "heard a call from God to give up all and follow him into the slums to serve him among the poorest of the poor." Shortly after this, penniless and alone, she entered the slums. Her work flourished and in 1950 she founded the Missionaries of Charity. The men and women of the Missionaries of Charity now operate 80 homes for the poor in 13 countries.

Several months ago a young university student joined the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta. The day after she arrived she was scheduled to accompany some of the sisters to our home for the dying. After mass that morning I gathered the group together before they left. "During the mass" I said, "you saw that the priest touched the body of Christ with great love and tenderness. When you touch the poor today, you too will be touching the body of Christ. Give them that same love and tenderness." When they returned several hours later, the new sister came up to me, her face shining with joy. "I have been touching the body of Christ for three hours," she said. I asked her what she had done. "Just as we arrived, the sister brought in a man covered with maggots. He had been picked up from a drain. I have been taking care of him. I have been touching Christ. I knew it was him," she said.

That young sister understood what Jesus meant when he said, "I was sick and you comforted me". Jesus comes to us as the sick and the homeless, he comes to us in the distressing disguise of the poor. He tells us in the gospel that as often as we serve the least of his people, we serve him (Matt. 26). "I was hungry and you gave me food," he said. And today he adds, "I am hungry not only for bread but for love and understanding." "I was naked and you clothed me," he told his disciples. And today he tells us, "I need more than just a piece of cloth to cover me; I need the cover-

ing of human dignity, respect and justice." "I was a stranger and you welcomed me", he said. And today, "I don't suffer just from a lack of shelter; I suffer the homelessness of being unwanted, abandoned, uncared for, and unloved."

When confronted with such poverty, people might think, "Oh, it is too difficult to love as Jesus asks us to love." Yet when we give to the poor, we receive abundantly in return. Over seven hundred years ago, St. Francis of Assisi prayed that he might not seek "so much to be loved as to love, for it is in giving that we receive."

Many times I have received much more from the poor than I have given to them. One night in Calcutta I went out with several sisters, gathered up four or five people from the street, and took them to our home for the dying. I took care of one of them, a woman in very bad condition. I did for her all that my love could do and then I put her to bed. As she lay down she held my hand, gave me a wonderful smile, and said, "Thank you." Then she died. I looked at her and thought, "What would I have done if I were she?" I knew the answer. I would have tried to draw some attention to myself. I would have said, "I am hungry," or, "I am cold," or, "I am dying." But she gave me her smile and her grateful love. She was great, beautiful in her giving. She gave me much more than I gave her.

The Bible tells us, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only son.' He gave his son; Christianity begins with giving. Jesus said, "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." And then he gave himself up for us. Because God gave so freely, we must never be afraid to give. But we shouldn't do so only from our abundance, we should give until it hurts. It hurt Jesus to love us yet he didn't hesitate to lay down all that he had.

Sometimes I smile when people say that we are spoiling the poor by serving them for free. Who has given more freely than God himself? I think it is good to have one religious society spoiling the poor, because everybody is spoiling the rich.

I know that it isn't easy to give freely. The Missionaries of Charity are able to serve freely only because our lives are woven with the Eucharist. We are not just social workers, we are men and women of prayer living in the heart of the world. That is why we begin our day with the mass, with Jesus in the Eucharist. We go forward with him every morning, and in the evening we return to him for an hour of prayer. To the surprise of some people, we haven't had to cut down on our service in order to pray.

Prayer is the greatest gift that God has given us because through it we love each other better and we love the poor with greater faith. Every day before work we say a prayer written by John Henry Newman (a 19th century Roman Catholic cardinal). It expresses the attitude with which we serve. "Dear Jesus," we pray, "penetrate my whole being so that all my life may only be radiant with yours. Shine through me and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus... Let me thus praise you, in the way that you love best, by shining on all those around me. Let me preach you without preaching, not by words but by my example ... and by the evident fulness of the love my heart bears for you."

Another reason why the missionaries of Charity are able to serve is that we commit ourselves to a life of poverty. We choose to live without material comforts because we want to know and to understand the poor. Our poverty frees us to love God and the poor with undivided love. Yet even though we live in poverty, many are attracted to our way of life. Our convent is filled to overflowing; in the past two months more than fifteen women have joined the Missionaries of Charity. I receive a steady stream of letters, many of them from affluent countries such as the United States, indicating that more and more people are hungry for God and are ready to sacrifice a comfortable life-style for him.

The other day I received a letter from a very well-to-do young woman. She wrote: "Jesus is calling me. I want to give everything to him." She said that she had visited other groups through which she could serve God, "but I discovered that they have everything that I have. If I join them," she said, "I will not have to give up anything." Like so many young people, she was ready to renounce the advantages her society offered in order to give herself completely to God and to his poor.

When we think of serving the poor, however, we must not think only of places such as India or Africa. It's not necessary to go far away to find the poor: I think we can find them by looking straight into our own homes. Do we know the poor among us, the poor in our families, in our neighborhood?

Recently, someone told me that a Hindu family with eight children had not eaten for a long time. I got some rice and went to them straightaway. When I arrived I could see that they were

suffering. The children's eyes in their little faces were shining with hunger yet the mother took the rice from me and left the room with half of it. When she came back I asked her what she had done. She told me that her next-door neighbors were a Muslim family with eight children. "They are hungry also," she said. That mother imitated Jesus, who broke bread and shared it with the multitude. She broke what little she had and shared her love with her neighbors. By the time I left her family, the eyes of those children were shining with joy because they were able to give their love to others.

What struck me about that mother was that she knew the poor in her midst. I wondered how many of us really know the poor. Do we know the poor in our own family? Maybe the members of our family are not hungry for a piece of bread, maybe they're not naked or homeless, but do any of them feel unwanted or unloved?

Some time ago I visited a home for the elderly in England. The people there had everything they needed, yet not one of them was smiling; they all sat looking toward the door. When I asked the woman in charge why they were so somber she said, "It's like this every day. They're waiting for someone to come and visit them. Day after day they wait and nobody comes. Their loneliness is eating them up." That loneliness, that homelessness is very great poverty.

There is another great poverty among us — that poverty of spirit that prompts someone to destroy the life of an unborn child. Every child has been created by God and in his image, yet some parents feel that they can decide whether or not their unborn child should live. I think that is tremendous poverty of love.

The young among us may be poor also. One night in London I saw a boy with beautiful long hair sitting on a curb. I said to him, "You shouldn't be here on the street on this cold night. You should be home with your parents." He looked me straight in the eye and said, "My mother doesn't want me because I have long hair." That was all. I reflected for a moment on his situation. Quite possibly, I thought, his mother is busy trying to combat the hunger of India or Africa; she wants to feed everybody but her own child. She does not know that there is tremendous poverty in her own home and that she is the cause of it.

If we want to serve the poor, let us look into our own homes. St. John wrote, "If you say you love God but you do not love your neighbor, you are a liar." Awhile ago, about 40 professors from different universities came to visit our covent in Calcutta. I talked with them awhile and then one of them said, "Mother, tell us something that will change our lives." I told them, "Smile at those with whom you live, those to whom you are closest." Immediately one of them asked me if I were married, as if to imply that if I were married I'd know that my suggestion was impossible. But I said, "Yes, I am married. And sometimes I find it very difficult to smile at Jesus because he can be so demanding."

I know it's not always easy to love those closest to us. In fact, sometimes I find it very difficult to smile at my sisters. It's much easier to smile at those on the outside than to smile at those on the inside. But that is where we can begin: in our homes. Let us make our homes like his home in Nazareth, that Jesus may come in and rest awhile. And when he comes he will bring peace, love and joy.

The Missionaries of Charity care for the crippled and the unwanted, the dying and the hungry, the lepers and the alcoholics. But the poor come to all of us in many forms. Let us be sure that we never turn our backs on them, wherever we may find them. For when we turn our backs on the poor, we turn them on Jesus Christ.

A MEDITATION FOR DIFFICULT TIMES

by

**Cardinal Eduardo Pironio
Prefect of the S. Congregation for Religious
and for Secular Institutes**

**"When all this begins look up, and lift up your heads;
it means that the time draws near for your deliverance"**

(Luke 21, 28)

**"I have said this to you, so that in me you may find peace.
In the world, you will only find tribulation; but take courage,
I have overcome the world".**

(Jn. 16, 33)

INTRODUCTION

1. When certain things happen, in the Church and in the world, it is logical that we should worry and suffer. We, at least, did not experience them so acutely and it seems absurd to us that they should occur after 20 centuries of Christianity. It would even seem as if the very life of Christians were losing its evangelical efficacy and were no longer "the salt of the earth and the light of the world" (Mt. 5, 13-16).

Men are killing one another, brothers though they are. There are a great many cases of kidnapping and death, hatred, persecution and violence. All this is causing fear and mistrust, anguish, sadness and pessimism. Why are these things happening? Is there no one who can tear us away from the temptation of violence and the paralyzing sensation of fear?

2. Even within the Church — the model up till now of the sacred and the inviolable, of the one really solid and stable thing — there has crept in contestation and criticism, disunion among Christians, the risk of secularism and the politicization of the Gospel, the confusion of many, the loss of one's identity in consecrated life, the danger of breaking the unity of doctrine and discipline. And all in the name of Jesus Christ and out of faithfulness to his Gospel!

In the meantime others, with lamentable superficiality, accuse the Church of having strayed from her essential mission of evangelization without understanding that the Church, in line with Christ, who was sent by the Father, has been consecrated by the Spirit to proclaim the Good News to the poor, freedom to prisoners and sight to the blind (Luke 4, 18). The Church must proclaim explicitly Jesus Christ the Saviour and the arrival of his Kingdom, call men to conversion and faith, and transform man and the whole of mankind (E.N. 18). But evangelization "would not be complete if it did not take account of the unceasing interplay of the Gospel and of man's concrete life, both personal and social" (E.N. 29).

* * *

3. We are certainly living in difficult times. It is useless to bewail the fact. But it is even more useless, and more disastrous, to wish to ignore it as if everything were going well, or to let ourselves be absolutely crushed as if nothing could be solved.

Whereas, behind all this — as we know infallibly through faith — it is God who is guiding history, it is Christ presiding over the Church, it is the Holy Spirit bringing forth in pain new times for the final creation. Although it is difficult to believe, it is irreversibly certain — both on the personal plane and in the life of our communities — that "when a man becomes a new creature in Christ, his old life has disappeared, everything has become new about him. This, as always, is God's doing; it is he who, through Christ, has reconcile us to himself" (2 Cor. 5, 17-18).

For this reason it is necessary to meditate again on hope. But very simply: without at present making a too technical analysis of the Word of God, or claiming to study thoroughly — historically and sociologically — the root of the evils. Others will do this with greater competence; they must do so.

I wish just to offer some thoughts, starting from the present sorrow, in the light of the Word of God. That is, to begin a simple meditation that will help, on the one hand, to accept the present reality, painful and poignant, and on the other hand, to discover here the providence of the Father, the passing of the Lord through history and the incessantly recreating activity of the Holy Spirit.

For this reason the attempt will not be made here to present an exhaustive study of the present situation or analyse all the texts of Holy Scripture. It is just a meditation aloud — which will help us all to get rid of paralysing fear and let the Spirit of fortitude penetrate into us, making us witnesses and martyrs — on Christian hope for difficult times.

4. It all amounts to this: to see how difficult times belong to the Father's plan and are essentially times of grace and salvation. To see, furthermore, how Jesus endured difficult times—essential for his redeeming mission—and how he overcame them through the paschal Mystery. The Magna Carta of Jesus to overcome difficult times is the Sermon on the Mount. The culminating moment is his death on the cross and his resurrection. His main exhortation is the call to universal love, the spirit of the beatitudes and the fruitfulness of the cross. In this way Jesus opens up for us the way to live difficult times with love and gratitude, and to transform them into providential times of hope.

* * *

5. As it is a question of a meditation, I would like to end this introduction with three clear and simple texts: of the Prophet, the Apostle and Christ.

Isaiah—the prophet of hope—tells us in the Lord's name: "Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of fearful heart, 'Be strong, fear not! Behold, your God... will come and save you'." (Is. 35, 3-4).

In Acts we read this sentence spoken by the Lord to St. Paul, the apostle of hope: "The Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you'" (Acts 18, 9-10).

Finally Christ—"our blessed hope" (Tit. 2, 13)—recommends serenity and fortitude for the inevitable and providential difficult times: "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" (Mk. 4, 40). "Take heart, it is I; have no fear" (Mk. 6, 50).

How necessary it is, for difficult times, to be sure that Jesus is the Lord of history, that he remains in his Church until the end and that he is journeying with us to the Father! How important it is to remember that it was precisely for difficult times that God promised his presence! "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. And lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mk. 16, 15; Mt. 28, 20). "You will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish (Luke 21, 12-18).

I

"Be ready to answer for the hope which you cherish"
(1 Pet 3, 15)

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, thou hast increased its joy" (Is. 9, 1-2).

6. On Christmas Eve the Liturgy invites us in this way to joy and hope. In this way Isaiah describes, in the painful darkness of difficult times, the coming of Christ, who is Light, Peace, the Covenant. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; ... and his name will be called... Prince of Peace" (Is. 9, 6).

Jesus Christ came to proclaim peace to us: "He is our peace... He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near" (Eph. 2, X4-X8). He came, above all, to bring us peace as the fruit of his Passover: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (Jn. 14, 27). The peace that Christ brings us is always the fruit of a cross. Christ makes "peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1, 20).

The whole Gospel is a call to interior serenity, to orderly concord among peoples, to the joy of brotherly charity. "This I command you, to love one another" (Jn. 15, 17).

But the Lord always announced difficult times: for himself and for us. Never did he preach easy or comfortable times to his disciples. On the contrary, he demanded from them a very clear option of poverty, brotherly love and the cross. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9, 23). To the scribe who felt superficially tempted to follow him. Jesus replies: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head" (Mt. 8, 19-10).

Jesus is "a sign that is spoken against" (Lk. 2, 34). The Christian takes his path: "a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him" (Jn. 13, 16). For this reason we must all necessarily live the Passion of the Lord and accept with serenity and joy the exigencies of our dedication: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you... Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master'. If they persecuted me, they will persecute you" (Jn. 15, 18-20).

All this, however, is illuminated with a note of realistic hope: "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy" (Jn. 16, 20).

* * *

7. It was always useful and necessary that there should be poor, strong men—with a great capacity of feeling, in the night, the approach of dawn, because they live open to the communication of the Light—who would transmit to their brothers the certainty of the presence of the Lord and of his immediate coming: "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt. 28, 20). "Surely, I am coming soon" (Apoc. 22, 20).

But prophets of hope are more necessary than ever today. Real prophets—men entirely possessed by the Holy Spirit—of real hope. That is, detached and contemplative men who live in poverty, fortitude and love of the Holy Spirit and who for this reason become serene and ardent witnesses to the paschal mystery: who speak to us openly of the Father, show Jesus to us and communicate to us the gift of his Spirit. Men who are able to appreciate the cross like St. Paul (Gal. 6, 14; Col. 1, 24), and therefore venture to preach to their brothers that the only power and wisdom of God is Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1, 23-24). The wisdom and power of men do not count: only the fruitfulness of the cross counts. All the rest is folly and failure in the eternity of God. Christ became for us "our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1, 30).

When everything seems to be collapsing—within the Church or at the heart of history—joy and hope spring up for the world. Christian hope arises from the inevitable and providentially absurd nature of the cross. "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Luke 24, 26).

But Christian hope is active and calls for patience and fortitude. Only the poor—the needy and the naked, the destitute, according to the world, but with complete confidence in an unfailing God—can really hope.

* * *

8. Our times, in the Church and in the world, are very difficult ones. For this very reason they are evangelical times. It means that the kingdom of God is near" (Lk. 21, 31). It is now that the true Christian is called "to give an account of his hope" (1 Pet. 3,

15); that is, to penetrate through faith and the Holy Spirit the scandal of the cross and draw from it the unshakable certainty of the paschal mystery in order to communicate it to others.

In difficult times fear, sadness and discouragement abound. Then violence multiplies. Violence is a sign of the obscuring of truth, of forgetfulness of justice and of loss of love. The periods in which violence multiplies are the most wretched and barren ones. It reveals clearly that the power of the spirit is lacking; for this reason the attempt is made to replace it with the absurd imposition of force.

Today we are living times of conflict and violence. Times, above all, in which everyone feels entitled to take the law into his own hands, because he believes that he is the only one that possesses absolute truth, that is, which is wholly faithful to the Gospel, and the only one that is struggling for human rights.

This is just one of the most serious risks, in difficult times: to think that one has already reached Christ definitively. This is a negation of hope, in the psychology and spirituality of St. Paul: "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but... I press on toward the goal" (Phil. 3, 12-14).

Another serious difficulty, for difficult times, is the defeatist attitude that it is impossible to overcome them. It is the fundamental loss of hope. The hope that the politician and the religious has, the mature man and the adolescent, the young worker and the University graduate. St. Thomas defines the object of hope as a future good, difficult but possible to obtain (S. Th. I II, 40, 1; II II, 17, 1).

For this reason a simple meditation on hope is more necessary than ever today. Not with the intention of consoling the superficial or lulling their conscience to sleep, but with the desire to encourage the bold especially the young. It falls to them, above all, to redeem tradition and build the new world in hope. "I write to you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 Jn. 2, 14).

9. I am thinking, as I write, of all Christians: they who, by the mercy of the Father, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, were born again to a living hope (1 Pet. 1, 3). Particularly of those who have been providentially marked by the cross and are called to bear witness to Jesus in extreme poverty in persecution, imprisonment and death. I am thinking especially of the

bishops and priests who are by definition, the primary witnesses to the paschal mystery (Acts 1, 8) and, consequently, the essential prophets of hope. I am also thinking especially of religious men and women (of all consecrated souls) who, by specific vocation, proclaim the final Kingdom. They are, by divine election, serene and luminous prophets of hope.

I am not thinking exclusively of a given country or continent. My view is the wider one of the suffering world and Church. The Pope and the bishops are suffering, as are priests and laymen, young religious and adults, the starving crushed peoples, statesman and the simple man in the street.

The times are difficult ones, absurd on the human plane. But it is necessary to be able to discover, appreciate and live with intensity the providential fruitfulness, never to be repeated, of this hour. It is not the hour of the weak or cowardly—those who chose Christ to obtain salvation or for the reward of the prize—but of men strong and bold in the Spirit. Those who have chosen the Lord for the honour of his name, the joy of his glory and the service of brothers. It is the hour of witnesses and martyrs.

* * *

10. Let us not be frightened by suffering; they are illuminated by the hope of new times: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom. 8, 18).

But it is not a question of living in resignation in the idle hope of new times, but of preparing them daily in charity and justice. Let the characteristic of these times of peace be "the joy of the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 1, 6). The God of all comfort "who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort to... Our hope for you is unshaken" (2 Cor. 1, 3-7).

Hope is necessary for difficult times. But the firm, creative hope of Christians which is based on "the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8, 39) and which demands in us poverty, contemplation and the fortitude of the Holy Spirit.

St. Peter exhorts the Christian of his time: "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right? But even if you do suffer for righteousness" sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear

of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Pet. 3, 13-15).

II

"Christ Jesus, our hope"
(1 Pet 3, 13-15)

11. A simple meditation on hope must begin by being a simple contemplation of Jesus Christ, "our blessed hope" (Tit. 2, 13). Above all in his paschal Mystery; it was there that Jesus overcome difficult times definitively. For this reason the Church now lives leaning on the cross and sings the certainty of her hope: "Hail, oh cross, our only hope" (Hymn for Vespers at Passiontide). Because the cross brings us definitively to resurrection: "Christ, my hope, rose from the dead" (Easter sequence).

What is interesting, above all, is to see how Christ overcame difficult times. For what is important in him is that he did not come to suppress difficult times but to teach us to overcome them with serenity, fortitude and joy. Just as he did not come to suppress the cross, but to give it meaning.

Christ is born in the fullness of difficult times. Mary is there. He comes to bring us freedom and make us sons of the Father in the Spirit (Gal. 4, 4-7). The fullness of times, in the Father's plan, is marked by the fullness of difficulties: acute awareness of sin, oppression and misery, desire and hope of salvation. Jesus is born then.

The first thing that Jesus reveals to us — as a way to overcome difficult times — is the Father's love and the meaning of his coming: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that those who believe in him may not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn. 3, 16-17).

For this reason, when Jesus is born, the Angel announces joy and hope. "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2, 10-1).

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Christ came to speak to us openly of the Father (Jn. 16, 25), to introduce us to the mysteries of the Kingdom (Mt. 13, 11) and indicate to us the path to true happiness (Mt. 5, 1-12). The Beatitudes are now the only way of changing the world and the clearest manifestation that difficult times can be converted into times of grace: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6, 2).

When Jesus wishes to teach us to live in hope and thus to overcome difficult times, he always points out to us three fundamental attitudes: prayer, the cross, brotherly charity. They are three ways of entering into joyful communion with the Father. For this reason they are three ways of feeling strong in him and experiencing the joy of serving our brothers. But when all is said and done the first and essential attitude to live and overcome difficult times is trust in the Father's love: "The Father himself loves you" (Jn. 16, 27).

The way for difficult times, in Jesus, is not fear, indifference or violence. On the contrary: it is the joy of love ("Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you", Mt. 5, 44); it is the balance and fortitude of prayer ("Pray that you may not enter into temptation", Mt. 26, 41); it is the fruitful serenity of the cross ("if the grain of wheat dies, it bears much fruit", Jn. 12, 24).

* * *

12. History marked the fullness of difficult times when Jesus was born. His redeeming incarnation was the fulfillment of the ancient hope and the beginning of the new and definitive hope. From the birth of Jesus—above all, from the time when, glorified at the Father's right side, he sent his Spirit over the world—we are living in the time of hope. It will be definitively consummated when Jesus returns to deliver the Kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15, 25-28).

St. Paul sums it up admirably in a text that we read, very significantly, in the Christmas Eve Liturgy: "For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us" (Tit. 2, 11-14).

That is, hope shines forth for the world when Jesus is born and dies for men. The way and the certainty of hope are quite different in God's plan and in human calculations. Hope, in the

mystery of Christ, begins by being humiliated, prostrated and death; for this reason the Father will glorify him and bestow on him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2, 7-9).

* * *

13. Christ felt fear, sadness and anguish, before the imminence of difficult times. "He began to be sorrowful and troubled" (Mt. 26, 37). "He began to be greatly distressed and troubled" (Mk. 14, 33). It is an agonizing fear, anguish, sadness. He seeks to overcome the difficult moment in the serene intensity of prayer as joyful communion with the Father's will: "And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground" (Luke 22, 39-44).

But the Lord feels the importance, the fruitfulness and the joy of difficult times: "Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say, 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, for this purpose I have come to this hour!" (Jn. 12, 27).

This does not mean that the Lord looks for trouble uselessly or wishes to anticipate his hour. "So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple" (Jn. 8, 59). He did not do so to escape the difficult times and because he wished to remove the cross from his shoulder; he did so simply "because his hour had not yet come" (Jn. 7, 30).

He will recommend the same generosity and wisdom before the cross to his disciples. He does not hold up the prospect of an easy way. He announces to them difficult times, while urging evangelical prudence: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt. 10, 16).

14. There are particularly difficult moments in the life of Jesus. Such as, for example, the rejection by his own people: "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not" (Jn. 1, 11). Such as the division among his disciples and the renunciation of some of them because of his "hard sayings", as they said. This must have been one of the most painful moments in our Lord's life: "After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (Jn. 6, 66).

But unquestionably Jesus' most difficult hour is the hour of his Passion. It was ardently desired by him, announced three times to his disciples, greatly feared, but intensely loved and accepted: "The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn. 12, 23-24).

RIZAL, THE CITIZEN

(Talk given by Bishop Cirilo R. Almario, Jr., D.D., CBCP Secretary General and Apostolic Administrator, s. p. of Malolos, at the 15th National Rizal Youth Leadership Institute, December 26-30, 1976, Baguio City).

It is with a deep sense of joy that I come to speak to you this afternoon on **Rizal, The Citizen**. I say "With a deep sense of joy", first of all, because the invitation came from a very close friend of mine, Atty. Celso Dimayuga of Lipa City, whose request I could not simply deny. Secondly, because it has afforded me an occasion to review again the life and thoughts of our National Hero. And thirdly, because this is an opportunity for me to render this little service to you, in my limited capacity, of course.

I would like to expound today, not so much on the life of Dr. Jose Rizal as a citizen, but more on his thoughts and ideas about good citizenship, which he faithfully applied to his daily life,

In many of his writings, Dr. Rizal has made very explicit his ideas on what it means to be a good citizen. First of all, he was concerned and more interested in the "development of an alert and intelligent citizenship". And by intelligent and alert citizenship, Rizal meant the indivisibility of ones fulfillment as an individual, with that of the country. A person, trained into making use of the faculties God has given him, not only for his own betterment but also for the betterment of others in the community, is to Dr. Rizal's mind, an exercise of good citizenship.

Specifically, Dr. Rizal cited the following qualities as components of good citizenship: faith in God, love for the fatherland, courage to defend one's rights, discipline and obedience to law, respect for parents and elders, gallantry to women, good manners, humility of spirit, moderation of habits, and cooperation for the common good. Allow me, in my little way, to touch on each of these points.

Faith in God

Rizal firmly believed that God guides the destiny of all men and nations. "I believe", he said in a letter to his parents, on July 14, 1892, "that wherever I go I shall always be in the hands of God, who has in His hands the destinies of men."

Faith is really what distinguishes men from one another. Between two rich men for example, the one who nurtures in himself, in his work and in his words, the love of God and faith in Divine Providence, uses his riches not only for his own personal comfort and satisfaction, but for the comfort and satisfaction of others as well. So unlike a rich man with no faith in God at all, who can sleep soundly in his air-conditioned room, and ride in his air-conditioned car, oblivious of what is going on around him, numb to the touch of a beggar's hand, deaf to the cries of people who ask for help. For this man, his wealth is his to enjoy; it is never a gift of God to share with others.

Again, between two poor men, the man who has chosen to allow the presence of God to prevail in his mind and in his heart, takes his poverty **positively**. He views his deprivation as a challenge to prove his worth as an individual, with the prospect of good possibilities. His faith that God is with him and in him, propels him to conquer the obstacles which drive him to his abject condition of poverty, to eliminate in his person those weaknesses which deter him to understand the real impact of his condition. Thus he learns, and in learning improves himself. On the contrary, to a poor man with less or no profound faith in God, poverty is looked at **negatively**. It is conceived as a punishment from a vengeful God, and therefore, the poorer he becomes, the more bitter he feels, and the less love he gives to God and to his fellowmen.

Faith in God is not something which can be measured by the number of times one prays, or the number of times one genuflects in Church. To Dr. Rizal, it is something which words cannot express, nor chantings can evoke. It is an aura of finding joy in man's struggle for honest existence, and seeking the fulfillment exuded by an individual in his dealings with his fellowmen, without deceit, without pride, without arrogance and exploitation.

Love for the Fatherland

Dr. Rizal singled out and emphatically stressed in the bulk of his writings, **love for the Fatherland** as a quality of good citizenship. Thus we read one of his verses: "sweet are the hours in ones native land..." and in his letters, sentiments abound with the overwhelming thought of **the Fatherland first, the Philippines first**... In his last letter written in Hongkong on June 29, 1892, addressed "To the Filipinos", he said:

I wish to show those who deny us patriotism that we know how to die for our duty and our conviction. What matters death if one dies for what one loves, for native land and adored beings? ...

I have always loved my poor country and I am sure that I shall love her until my last moment, should men prove unjust to me. I shall die happy, satisfied with the thought that all I have suffered, my past, my present, and my future, my life, my loves, my joys, everything I have sacrificed for love of her. Whatever my fate may be, I shall die blessing her and wishing her the dawn of her redemption..."

I know that every man is a member of a country, and as one among its citizens, is it too much to give to this country, the loyalty and the aspirations justly reserved for her?

Loving ones country is loving ones cultural heritage. It is trying to preserve the age-old traditions of the people, while looking far in the horizons for possible changes which can give the country a new vision of life, a new direction. Loving ones country may not always be expressed in the guise of a martyr's garb, but simply in the silent avowals of becoming good in ones works and aspirations, of contributing ones talents and ones efforts for the attainment of his country's goals.

Courage to Defend Ones Rights

"There are no tyrants, if there are no slaves", so admonishes Dr. Rizal. If people themselves allow others, especially foreigners to dominate their lives and trample upon their sovereignty as a people, then they are encouraging the emergence of dictators, or autocrats, of tyrants, whose sole devotion to the perpetuation of their personal glory and power, drives them to launch a program of intimidation, and in so doing, diffuse an atmosphere of fear and disunity among the people.

If a man has not been trained, or to put it in another way, if a man did not train himself, to defend himself from say, infringement of his rights as an individual, who will do it? How can dictators prosper and tyrants prevail, if people have trained themselves to speak up their minds at every brush of exploitation and loss of freedom? How can man manipulate another man, if has resolved to defend his rights at all times, and that of others?

Dr. Rizal's emphasis is on the right of each citizen to exercise his reason and commit his will in freedom, each and everyone, irrespective of status in life, profession or training. He wrote firmly: "God, the primal source of all wisdom, does not allow that man, created in his image and likeness, be deceived and hood winked, but wants us to use and let shine the light of reason with which he has so mercifully endowed us."

To know is not an end in itself but a guide to the setting of the direction of ones will. Thus Rizal advised the woman of Malolos: "Awaken and prepare the will of your children towards all that is honorable, judged by proper standards, to all that is sincere and firm of purpose, clear judgment, clear procedure, honesty in act and deed, love for the fellowmen and respect for God; this is what you must teach your children."

Here then is an added idea of Dr. Rizal of a good citizen: he is a person who perseveres to know the truth; to know in order that he may perform what is expected of him for what is just and what is good. A good citizen acts according to reason firmly and honorably in freedom.

Discipline and Obedience to Law

Dr. Rizal stressed the importance of discipline in the Filipino. He would decry his compatriots' preoccupation with gambling and too much social drinking as inimical to their work. He would unhesitatingly leave where temptations to stay, may hinder a less strong-willed man with offerings of romantic liaison, or economic wellbeing and fame.

This call for an internal development by discipline would again reverberate in the last pages of *El Filibusterismo* through the lips of Father Florentino, as he watched Simoun die:

"Where are the youth who will consecrate their golden hours, their illusions, and their enthusiasm to the welfare of their native land? Where are the youth who will generously pour out their blood to wash away so much shame, so much crime, so much abomination? Pure and spotless must the victim be that the sacrifice may be acceptable! Where are you, youth, who will embody in yourselves the vigor of life that has left our veins, the purity of ideas that has been contaminated in our brains, the fire of enthusiasm that has been quenched in our hearts! We await you, O youth! Come, for we await you!"

As to obedience to law and government authorities, Dr. Rizal said that this is a fundamental lesson in citizenship. It is the ability to accept oneself as a member of a group which is governed by laws and regulations.

Respect for Parents and Elders

Rizal has shown the greatest respect for his parents and elders. Even when he was in far away countries, he would express his love and concern for his beloved parents. I personally believe that

a man can be measured with how he regards his parents and elders. If a man can take upon himself to disregard the two persons who have borne him into this world, and disobey their good counsels, and instead of showing love, proffer them with disappointments and disrespect, how can he, in the same breath, intone higher ideals and sentiments? Is not consistency a reflection of good breeding? If one says, he has faith in God, love for his fatherland, and is a defender of his own rights and those of others, how can he become disrespectful of his parents and his elders, for whom pundits often refer to, as the eternal source of wisdom?

Gallantry to Women

The nobility of ones behavior is something which not every man is able although capable, to give. This is because galantry toward women is a product of good breeding. It takes roots in the early formative years of a child's development to adulthood. Dr. Jose Rizal has always emphasized, not only glaringly in his writings, but boldly in his behaviour, the gentlemanly attitude is to him, the most natural thing to do, since women are the first creatures "to stimulate the consciousness of men", and thus to her, a man should offer respect and courtesy.

Hidden behind the counsel of Dr. Rizal that a good citizen should be gallant toward women, is certainly the expectation from women, to cultivate their talents and their sensibilities and project a character of refinement and decency in such a way that men, in the words of Rizal, "may always hold them high with esteem and love".

Finally, as the trite saying goes: "A gentleman is a gentleman." You either have it or you don't. And ones training and breeding decide this nobility in ones behaviour toward women who are regarded as the weaker sex.

However, a word of caution should be made here, since many people misconstrue that galantry to women is flirtation and winning them. A man respects a woman, because she is his equal, another creature though with different psychology and make-up; she is similar to him, endowed too, with intellect and feelings. Galantry to women, according to Dr. Rizal, is behaving decently and honestly toward them because this is the proper relation between equals.

Good Manners

If I may be allowed to interpret Dr. Rizal's counsel on good manners, I must say that first and above all, good manners must be differentiated from good etiquette. That western import of behavior which tells a man to behave always nicely and charmingly to others in order to avoid displeasing them. Good manners, in the mind of Dr. Rizal, is treating every man — driver, employee, king, priest, teacher, beggar, laborer, with equal respect and trust, as befits human beings. Good manners is relating with everyone in consideration of their own intellectual capacity and feelings as persons.

Humility of Spirit

It is my contention that a man who has had a long reflection of his worth, of having a good time being at peace with himself, will have all the power within himself to subdue arrogance and project a humble personality. And it is Dr. Rizal, whom we can justly cite here as an example. Consider this man, who was a poet, nationalist, doctor, community worker, writer, scholar... having known his worth, having been privileged to have good and gentle parents who nurtured in him the respect and love for others. He never found it in his heart to be arrogant to others, to be vengeful and exploitative, even to his enemies. After all, the love for humanity is such a profound feeling which was implanted in his psyche, by his family, his friends, his teachers, that Dr. Rizal lived his brilliant life with the humblest of spirit only a noble man like him can demonstrate.

And certainly, it is not too much to recall the first example of Christ's birth in a manger, as the best example of humility. If I may say, Dr. Rizal is one man who has always shown an intense faith in Jesus Christ.

Moderation of Habits

Dr. Rizal was a well-read man. Perhaps it is true to opine that Dr. Rizal's counsel to the Filipinos to maintain moderation in habits had been influenced by the Greeks. For is it not the Greeks who echo the sentiment that "moderation is the only virtue". When man is easy prey to the excesses of living, one realizes how difficult it is to become balanced-headed in one's actions especially in situations where the forces of evil seem to be too numerous and too forceful. Indeed to Dr. Rizal, good citizenship can be attained with a modicum of temperance.

Here, Dr. Rizal was somehow indicating the tendency of Filipinos to go to the extremes. Is it not that to be hospitable, we go to the extreme of borrowing money just to give our best to visitors? Is it not that to show friendship and maintain it, we forget even loved ones and loyalties, in the name of what we call PAKIKISAMA? Is it not that in order to avoid telling the truth because we hate to displease others, we talk in superlatives, even to the extent of appearing dishonest? These are only some of the things which we can cite here as constituting what Dr. Rizal mean by lack of moderation in habits which should be corrected in order to be a factor in good citizenship. Let us examine ourselves and perhaps we will find that deep in the recesses of our character as Filipinos, Dr. Rizal's counsel is not only beneficial in our task of developing our character, but imperative toward the attainment of the goals which free people desire for themselves.

Cooperation for the Common Good

As the last component to the making of good citizenship, Dr. Rizal, being the true humanist and nationalist that he was, speaks of the common good. Perhaps here we can conceive of citizenship as equated with the consciousness of the common good. If the Filipino maintains that he has those deep religious avowals, that intense passion for the freedom of his country, and for the respect of ones parents, elders, children, women, the sick and the unprivileged, then, the Filipino will always behave, and act according to what is the good for all, the the common good: namely, justice for the exploited and the oppressed; comfort to the disenchanteds and the sick; freedom for the bound; friendship for the loveless; prosperity for the poor; opportunities for the unprivileged and finally, love to each and every individual who cannot find joy in the limitless bounty of God's earth.

Finally, to Dr. Rizal, a citizen must be ready to offer the ultimate sacrifice of all: to give ones life for his country, for though sweet may be the hours in ones native land, sweeter too the death for her, for such a death in turn becomes the life-giving breeze that sweeps her land.

Dr. Jose Rizal, the citizen complete, even at the doosteps of death, would say his farewell only to bid welcome to immortality: his end became a continuation of his country's becoming; his death, the breath of life of his society. And hours before his death, he would write:

Adios Patria adorada, region del sol querida,
 Perla del mar de Oriente, nuestro perdido Eden!
 A darte voy alegre, la triste, mustia vida;
 Si fuera mas brillante, mas fresca, mas florida,
 Tambien por ti la diera, la diera por tu bien.

Mi Patria idolatrada, dolor de mis dolores,
 Querida Filipinas, oye el postrer adios!
 Ahi te dejo todo: mis padres, mis amores;
 Voy a donde no hay esclavos, verdugos ni opresores;
 Donde la fe no mata, donde el que reina es Dios!

This, my friends, are the thoughts of Dr. Rizal on good citizenship.

May I close with this short story: There was once a painter who wanted to paint the most beautiful thing in the world, and not knowing what he would paint, he went around asking. And he met a priest and asked: "Father, what, for you, is the most beautiful thing in the world I can paint?" And the priest answered, "Faith, because as the Bible says, with faith you can even move mountains!" But then the painter said to himself, "How can I paint faith?" So he moved on and met a bride, and he asked, "What for you is the most beautiful thing in the world I can paint?" And the girl answered "Love, because as they say 'Love conquers all'." Again the painter said to himself, "How can I paint love?" So he continued, and met a soldier, and he asked: "Soldier, what for you is the most beautiful thing in the world I can paint?" And the soldier answered, "Peace, because I have never known peace in my lifetime." Again the painter asked himself how he can paint peace. Confused, he arrived home. And as soon as he opened the door of his house, his wife and children met him. And he saw faith in the eyes of the children; he saw love in the eyes of his wife; and he saw peace reigning inside the house. So he decided to paint the most beautiful thing in the world for him: **his own home.**

My dear friends: In the name of God and our country, in the name of Rizal and other national heroes, I invite you all to go with me one step further than that painter; and as citizens of the Philippines, imbued with the teachings of our faith and the thoughts of Dr. Jose Rizal, let us paint, not only one home, but a whole community, that is deeply christian and deeply Filipino, a community where true faith, true love and true peace reign supreme.

I THANK YOU.

THE SYDNEY MARIAN CONGRESS

Reflections of a visitor

Things are done differently in Australia. So at least it strikes the American visitor. The drive, of course, on the left side. Electric light switches flick downward to the on position. Water swirls counterclockwise as it drains in the washbasin. An impressive Sydney skyscraper circular in shape is called the Australia Square. To quote a Sydney-sider's description of the kangaroo. "When he stands up he's sitting down, and when he walks he jumps." Things are different.

"Happily different" could begin a description of the Sydney Marian Congress staged from 5-19 September throughout the oldest and most populous archdiocese of this very young and vast land. Elsewhere in the Catholic world a timidity of recent origin may still hobble celebration or public display if the Blessed Virgin Mary is the theme. Time and again one senses that a current of interest in Mary among Catholics, and of late among other Christians, is thereby being neglected. And the reason probably is a fear that public attention given to her runs the risk of being dismissed as dreadfully outdated. The organizers of the Sydney Marian Congress must have seriously weighed their chances of failure.

All-night vigil

As eighteen months of preparation drew to a close they had conclusive evidence that their risk had been well taken. Over a thousand worshippers gathered in Sydney's fifty-year old St. Mary's Cathedral on Friday night, September 3, at ten o'clock for an all-night vigil of prayer for the success of the Congress. They were led by the Marist Fathers who have long laboured in this quarter of the world. When song and prayer concluded at five o'clock Saturday morning hopes were high.

They were however to be outdistanced beyond the fondest imagining of the planners as the Congress opened on Sunday afternoon with Mass in the Cathedral. Long before the ceremony crowds in excess of 5,000 had packed the pews and aisles, overflowing out onto the front steps that lead up from the north end

of Sydney's elegant Hyde Park. It was the biggest congregation assembled in St. Mary's since the visit of Pope Paul to Sydney in 1970. This standard of comparison used then for the first time, was frequently evoked at other events of the Congress to describe its impact to the life of the Church of Sydney.

Hierarchy present

Because the meeting of the Australian National Episcopal Conference was being concluded that weekened, the 37 Australian Bishops and Archbishops were all present to concelebrate the Mass with the Archbishop of Sydney, His Eminence James Cardinal Freeman. Three other Cardinals were likewise in the sanctuary: His Eminence Cardinal Norman Thomas Gilroy, retired Archbishop of Sydney, Reginald Cardinal Delargey representing the Church of New Zealand and Timothy Cardinal Manning of Los Angeles, keynote speaker for the Congress.

By his participation Archbishop Gino Paro, first Apostolic Pro-Nuncio to Australia, brought to Sydney the presence of the Holy Father, whose Australian visit remains fresh in the memory of the entire populace. Later in the Mass the voice of Pope Paul himself echoed in the Cathedral as by recorded transmission he spoke a warm message of encouragement to the Congress.

Other visiting prelates brought to almost 50 the number of episcopal concelebrants of the Mass. Cardinal Manning, who had celebrated a morning Mass on television, gave his second homily of the day at the opening Mass in the Cathedral.

Only actual recordings could suggest the beauty of the music enhancing a liturgy already overwhelming in its solemnity. Incomparably joyous song echoed throughout: in the sanctuary from the Cathedral choir of some thirty boys and young men, in the balcony from an equal number of Conservatorium singers rendering Mozart's *Missa Brevis*, in the nave from the thousands who joined in the responses, acclamations. Our Father, and hymns of processional, communion time, and recessional.

"Help of Christians"

The hymn used for the recessional "Help of Christians, guard this land," was designated the Congress Hymn and would similarly conclude each of the liturgical events of the two-week Congress. In sweeping cadence and majestic minor tonality it addresses Mary with the title by which she is venerated as Patroness of Australia.

Already on Tuesday evening Congress participants joined the Lebanese community at St. Maron's Church in one of Sydney's suburbs for an evening Mass celebrated in the Maronite-Antiochian rite. The congregation heard in English a homily prepared by Archbishop Abdo Kahlife on Our Lady in eastern theology. After Mass the delicacies of the Lebanese cuisine prolonged a reception in the parish hall.

When the following Sunday arrived, a typically bright day in the early Sydney spring, the Irish community, approaching 5,000, jammed the Cathedral for a morning Mass. Bishop Cahal Daly, who had come from Ireland for the Congress, delivered an appropriately stirring homily and was joined in the concelebration of Mass by as many Irish priests of the archdiocese as could find replacements for Sunday parish duties.

Only hours later an equally large congregation of some 20 other cultural groups assembled for the afternoon Mass celebrated by Cardinal Freeman with the migrant chaplains as concelebrants. As the crowds for this "Ethnic Mass" spilled from Cathedral grounds onto Hyde Park, one appreciated the foresight of the planners in having accommodated two ethnic groups, the Irish and the Lebanese, in earlier Masses.

Well-planned colourful procession

The half-hour procession into the Cathedral included groups dressed in the colorful costumes of lands far away. They sang the verses of the Lourdes hymn in over a dozen different tongues, chorusing in unison the "Ave, ave, ave Maria". An impressively large number of children and young people swelled the congregation again to 5,000 or more. It included Croats, Czechs, Dutch, French, Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Slovenians, Spanish, Ukrainians, Vietnamese, and probably yet others. Within a five-hour period that Sunday St. Mary's Cathedral had thus welcomed some 10,000 worshippers at two successive Masses.

In a Cathedral packed beyond its capacity for the fourth time in the Congress, and surrounded by priests of the archdiocese as concelebrants, Cardinal Freeman offered the closing Mass on the afternoon of Sunday, 19 September. The Cardinal's warm personality came across yet more engagingly as in the homily he expressed thanks for a success beyond expectations. Without his needing to say it, one sensed that the wish contained in his pastoral had been realized—"that when the Congress is over we will be closer to her in love and understanding than ever before."

Demonstrations of Catholic life such as these Masses obviously had their origin in prayer for the success of the Congress. In fact, the prayerful preparation in the parishes throughout the archdiocese had culminated in a final week of prayer in the homes. A leaflet entitled "Family Preparation Programme" distributed at all Masses of the preceding Sunday provided prayers for each day from 26 August to 4 September.

But meticulous planning as well lay behind these impressive Marian celebrations. A hard-working committee of priests representative of the different geographic areas of the archdiocese had for over a year coordinated the details entrusted to religious brothers and sisters and to the laity of several organizations.

Literally tens of thousands of posters, prayer cards, leaflets, programmes, announcements, missalette excerpts, hymn sheets, etc. were on hand for each event of the Congress. They numbered more than thirty printings, each bearing the distinctive Congress symbol, a Madonna in contemporary style with the legend "Behold your Mother."

All-out preparations

The idea of the Congress originated two years ago with the Dean of St. Mary's Cathedral, Father Raymond Marsden, who early secured the sponsorship and enthusiastic support of the Archbishop James Cardinal Freeman. The Cardinal followed Congress planning from its earliest stages. A pastoral letter of his marked the opening day of the Congress. Not content simply to preside at the major functions, His Eminence was present every day at a Congress event in some locality. He was unsparing of his time and company in providing hospitality for the guest speakers from abroad.

Cardinal Freeman early made the decision to assume responsibility for the success of the Congress and, for securing maximum intensity, to stage it on the archdiocesan level rather than to propose it as a nationwide endeavour. Already other Australian dioceses have taken note of the Sydney Congress as a pilot project. Dioceses abroad, it may be surmised, will take heart at learning of the enthusiastic reception accorded by the Sydney faithful to this initiative of Marian devotion.

The Cardinal also supported the view that talks given at several regional centres would assure a more effective catechesis than addresses delivered to large audiences invited to some downtown Sydney location. Five Churches in the metropolitan area and three

on its outskirts were designated regional centres. The team of speakers rotated among these centres for five weekday nights during the two-week Congress.

The faithful assembled at these churches in gratifying numbers ranging in total from 9,000 to 14,000 for each of the five nights. In some of the centres the crowds so overflowed the seating and standing capacity, even through Sydney churches tend to be quite large, that closed-circuit television had to be provided to carry the ceremonies of the evening to an adjacent parish hall. At one centre concelebrants to the number of 57 joined the Cardinal in the evening Mass.

Prayers, lectures

On the two Marian feasts that occurred during the weekdays of the Congress, Our Lady's Birthday and the Feast of Our Lady's Sorrows, the half-hours talk provided at each regional centre was given as an extended homily at the feastday Mass. On the other three evenings it formed part of a meditated Rosary, one evening reserved for each set of mysteries. The Rosary meditations and recitation were led by laymen and laywomen, and the evening devotion concluded with Benediction.

Five basic half-hour talks were settled on by the planning committee: Our Lady in Sacred Scripture; Our Lady and the Church; Our Lady, Women, and Family Life; Our Lady and Personal Devotion; the Rediscovery of the Rosary.

To treat these topics on the five weekday evenings five speakers from abroad were invited, one appearing each evening at a regional centre. The same topics were presented by local speakers in the remaining centres.

The local speakers included the four auxiliaries of the Archbishop of Sydney — Archbishop James Carroll, Bishop Thomas Muldoon, Bishop Edward Clancy, and Bishop David Cremin — and Marist Father Patrick Abbott from Brisbane.

A generous layman underwrote the travel expenses of the foreign speaker. From Ireland came Bishop Cahal Daly of Ardagh and Clonmacnois long-time university and television lecturer, and from the United Kingdom Father John McHugh, author and lecturer at Ushaw College, Durham. The U.S.A. supplied three priests, whose background included terms as president of the Mariological Society of America: Carmelite Father Eamon Carroll, already known

in Australia, and Dominican Father Frederick Jelly, both from Catholic University, Washington, D.C., and Marianist Father Charles Neumann from St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas.

Ecumenical thrust

To further assure the ecumenical character of the Congress, American Dr. J. A. Ross Mackenzie of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond Virginia was on the team of speakers. His addresses treating Our Lady in ecumenical perspective were delivered before a general audience on the second day of the Congress as well as at a later seminar for religious brothers and sisters and another for priests and seminarians. His final audience comprised members of the non-Catholic Christian community gathered at a Salvation Army centre.

Special two-day seminars with a combination of five and six talks each were staged for religious brothers and sisters in the first week and for priests and seminarians in the second. A shorter seminar was provided for lay catechists. The audience at both days of the seminar for religious reached 1,300 and was marked by a specially generous share of the joy characteristic of the entire Congress.

Activities of the Congress were not limited to Marian doctrine and devotion. Events were included that illustrated Mary's place in the world of fine arts. A Congress-long exhibit entitled "The Madonna throughout the Ages" featured over 150 effectively displayed paintings and ikons. Visitors were guided through it by an eight-page catalogue, 3,000 copies of which were distributed to groups of visitors on the mid-Sunday of the Congress alone.

Outstanding choirs

In addition to their role in the liturgies the Cathedral Choir and the Conservatorium Singers joined for an unforgettably inspiring evening midway in the Congress. Motets from the most challenging of the polyphonic repertoire alternated with selections of Gregorian chant and Marian-inspired pages from classical masters and contemporary composers. Performed without applause until the end in a Cathedral packed for the third time that day, the

hour and a half programme was an experience of prayer as well as impeccable musicianship.

Choirs from the several ethnic communities rivaled with one another in a second Cathedral concert featuring Marian hymns of the nations on the second last day of the Congress.

An amateur troupes with a long tradition in the archdiocese gave several performances of "Bernadette," a dramatization of the Lourdes event, in the intimate atmosphere of the downtown Gene-sian Theatre. Again, as at the Cathedral concert of sacred music, the standards of performance were of professional quality. Both evenings left the visitor in amazement at the talent young Catholics in Sydney are blessed with.

St. Mary's Cathedral

In the heart of this oldest of Australia's cities St. Mary's Cathedral, of course, stands as an inescapable reminder of the architecture Mary has inspired on a continent hardly dreamed of in the age of the great European cathedrals. On hand each weekday morning and afternoon of the Congress ladies from the Cathedral parish conducted visitors on tours of the magnificent structure.

Completed just in time for the Eucharistic Congress of 1928, it stands on the site of an earlier cathedral destroyed by fire. In it are preserved many rich moments from the Australian Church's history. One of them is the tomb in the floor of the crypt where lies Father John Joseph Therry, first priest to come to Australia in the early 1800's as a missionary. Visitors heard described how Pope Paul, being conducted through the Cathedral in his 1970 visit, stopped to kneel and kiss the floor at this tomb.

Still other events marked the rich Congress calendar. There were special Masses for youth in some of the regional centres, a Mass attended by some 300 students from Sydney's three Catholic teachers' colleges, the civic reception accorded the international speakers in Sydney's Town Hall, to mention only a few more.

The overall impact of these two weeks of activity, one may safely suppose, will mark the Catholic life of Sydney in many ways. Catholic morale, for example, reached heights hard to equal, thanks to the Masses that assembled overflowing congregations at the

Cathedral on each of the three Sundays and, in another dimension, at almost all of the regional centres on the five weekdays.

An ecumenical awareness in Marian matters has likewise been heightened, as the media in reporting the Congress particularly attested.

Rightful pride

For those who attended all the events, laity as well as clergy and religious, the amount of Marian catechesis treated will provide substantial enrichment.

Marian devotion has been strengthened by the experience of joyous song and prayer together at the several Masses as well as in the mediated Rosaries and Benediction services.

A rightful pride has been stirred in the recognition of the appeal Mary has had for musical composers, architects, artists, and the world of the theatre.

Those who came to Sydney as participants in the Congress leave with an abiding share of the joy Mary has brought to everyone associated in this unique tribute to her. The remark Cardinal Gilroy is said to have made to a visitor to his home of retirement shortly after the Congress opened comes to mind: "The people of Sydney never let you down."

He could have said it to Our Lady herself.

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THE PHENOMENON OF BASIC COMMUNITIES: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

by

Ted Gresh, M.M.

The sociological data for this article comes mainly from two international surveys on basic communities conducted by **Pro Mundi Vita** and **IDOC-International**, a journal of documentation on human and religious renewal. They appear as a collection in our **New Wineskins for a Church in Ferment**, edited by the present writer.

The **Pro Mundi** survey provides us with some multi-disciplinary tools of analysis in studying basic communities. Sociologists, psychologists, theologians and other members of the social sciences discuss the basic community in primitive, rural and technological milieux. In all of these sectors, we can observe a conscious groping toward higher forms of personalization and socialization.

According to some, these communities form themselves into three fundamental categories: a) political or social action groups, b) alternative communities, c) communes. They are then analyzed in terms of a) activities and work, b) cultural and spiritual values, c) religious and devotional life, d) structure and composition of the group, e) types of communication and affective life within the group.

There is a discernible pattern of growth from a) the pre-communal stage, b) evolution into full community, c) a statement of conditions for survival, d) reasons for disbandment if and when it occurs.

Some "reality guidelines" are suggested in dealing with channels of communication, political factors, conflict, commitment and structural problems. Other problems dealt with are the need for human investment, the future of new forms of community and communities as agents of change in both affluent and under-developed areas.

From the **IDOC** survey, we have included articles on **communautes de base**, the kibbutzim, and an international analysis of new forms of community. The world-wide phenomenon of emerging

van Peursen, it is most striking that a clear distinction between subject and object is lacking. Everyone participates in everything".¹

COMMUNITY IN THE RURAL PRE-TECHNOLOGICAL CULTURE

With the introduction of agriculture and cattle-raising man learned to utilize nature, but this brought on a violent social and cultural revolution. These advances created the social nuclei from which the family, village and tribe emerged and formed a nation. Macro-structures made up of officials and hierarchy were developed to make the structure function. Thus an anonymous layer and network of social relationships was established and members became conscious of belonging to a particular class in the hierarchy. Contacts between groups were maintained primarily through the leaders. The leaders relationships to their respective community patterned itself after that of a father and son. The result was the feudal system.²

Intermediate or mesostructures. — At this stage of social evolution a variety of buffer groups or intermediate structure emerged. Within these groups, the individual found an answer to his deepest fundamental needs for safety and security. Nevertheless, he paid a price in terms of sacrificing part of his personal freedom which was restricted by the norms and traditions of the group. In return for greater personal contacts, intimacy and stability, he submitted to a certain degree of social control, conservatism and exclusivism.³

The Church in the pre-technological era. — Christianity emerged in the pre-technological era. From the sociological point of view an evolution could in the Church be observed from the **Church as community** (the meso-structure of the local communities) to the **Church as society** (the macro-structure of a centralized universal Church). It could be said that Jesus with his disciples formed a primary group, a micro-structure. When the number of Christians rapidly increased the primitive Church had to take on a further structuring. But each local church was still a genuine "community" with very close interpersonal relationships and with the aim of furthering the total well-being of its members, both their spiritual and their material well-being.⁴

¹ Ton Nuij, "New Forms of Community Life," in *New Wineskins for a Church in Ferment*, ed. by Ted Gresh, M.M. (Quezon City: Cardinal Bea Institute, 1976), p. 21.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23. (Italics mine.)

From church as community to church as society. — When the Constantinian church took over the social organization of the empire the church-community became the church-society. For many centuries thereafter the small local churches, the parish or monastic communities fulfilled the role of genuine communities and formed an intermediate community between the family and the huge church-society. Psychological and social balance was achieved through the utilization of medieval structures which paralleled those of rural or pre-technological society-at-large.⁵

THE COMMUNITY IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL OR INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY

The coming of industrialization brought in its wake another violent economic and social revolution. With the great technological advances came the tacit hypothesis that an increase in economic production and consumer good would make the consumer happier, but this did not necessarily follow. Since industry demands a great number of specialized operators and technicians concentrated in factories, industrialization led to urbanization and the flight from the country to the city.

The disappearance of mesostructures. — “An unforeseen result of this development has been the almost complete disappearance of meso-structures”.⁶ At this level of socialization real buffer groups no longer exist between the individual or his family and “the mass.” “Communities” give way to “organizations” which no longer engage a person’s total personality but only a particular aspect. The person may now belong to several organizations but each engages him from a different point of view.

Furthermore the social relations of an organization mostly arise along **external** paths, while in a community the person is bound to the group by bonds of affection, i.e., an internal bond.⁷

Internal relationships. — The international colloquium devoted much of its time to these internal relationships which had deteriorated in a climate of cold and anonymous society. “These relationships will have to grant greater latitude to the affective life and to corporal expression”.⁸ Many of the discussions centered around the repression of affective life and particularly, the repression of sexual life. Many of the participants were married people living

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ “International Colloquium on New Forms of Community Life,” in *New Wineskins*, ed. by Fresh, p. 12.

a communal life and they raised questions regarding the tension between the traditional expectations of the nuclear family and the new communities.⁹

Simply coming together. — Very often communes come to life through the very realistic situation of a boarding house, where people, mainly students look for a way to live their own, as well as a common life. Sometimes an experience of sexual promiscuity occurs but usually the couple is maintained in some manner as the basic unity. **All myths of a continuing promiscuity between men and women seem** (in Scandinavia as well as in the United States) **to end with a fixed couple.**¹⁰

External relationships. — External relationships treated in the discussions focused on the relationship of new communities to the society-at-large and to the Church. The conclusion was that large structures tend to dehumanize and alienate individuals.

Without going so far as to deny the usefulness and necessity for a certain amount of structuring, some asked whether it was not possible to reduce the latter to a minimum: ... It should be presupposed that structures must serve the common good and they must never constitute an aim in themselves, i.e., they should be subject to a revision when they cease to be functional. The ideal is to seek in dynamic structures possibilities for change and adaptation.¹¹

RESULTS OF THE DISAPPEARANCE OF INTERMEDIATE STRUCTURES

The disappearance of meso-structures has resulted in alienation, and a new neurosis. By **alienation** is meant man's experiencing of self as strange and ungenuine, a slave of bureaucracy, political or religious ideologies. The further emphasis upon "doing" rather than "being," has impelled man toward greater and greater degrees of specialization which also hamper his ability to participate fully in ordinary life experiences. Genuine interpersonal contacts are reduced to a close circle of friends so that when man ventures forth into a megapolis of huge apartment buildings, offices and factories, he feels **isolated**, an anonymous individual in an anonymous mass.

The security which he had previously found in interhuman relationships is replaced by the security of material prosperity. Transcendental problems such as the meaning of life, suffering,

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰ Leo Alting von Geusau, "Towards an International Analysis of New Forms of Community", in *New Wineskins*, ed. by Gresh, pp. 117-18. (Italics mine.)

¹¹ "International Colloquium," in *New Wineskins*, ed. by Fresh, p. 14.