

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

**MISSION SUNDAY 1977**

**Pope Paul VI**

**FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF MISSION SUNDAY**

**L'Osservatore Romano**

**EVANGELIZATION: JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT  
AND LIBERATION**

**Bishops and Priests of Manila**

**MARIAN DOGMAS WITHIN VATICAN II'S  
HIERARCHY OF VALUES**

**Frederick Jelly, O.P.**

**THE CATHOLIC PRIESTS:  
DEHUMANIZED OR SUPERHUMAN BEING?**

**Bishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P.**

**THE MYSTERY OF MARY  
AND THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD**

**Marie-Joseph Nicolas, O.P.**

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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## Need For Missionary Formation

It makes us feel great when we are told that by Christian vocation all of us are missionaries. But what does this amount to, existentially, practically, if we do not undergo missionary formation?

Many Christians — including religious Brothers and Sisters and Priests — do not even know what exactly a Christian missionary is. For many do not know what Christian "mission" is, and how it is distinguished from other tasks in the Church or of the Church. For others, the mistake lies in identifying missionary activity with anything done towards the social, cultural, political or cultural development of the so-called "Third World".

No less than the Pope invites all of us to re-read the more recent documents on the missions and evangelization, especially the Second Vatican Council Decree "Ad Gentes" and his apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi", for "in these may be found ample material for a better understanding of the missionary nature



of the Church, the true meaning of evangelization, and what should be the method, manner, quality and purpose of missionary formation today" (Message for Mission Sunday 1977).

The Pope takes pains to make sure that each and every Catholic will be formed as a missionary. To this end he says that "the whole of Christian education, from the first catechism for the reception of the sacraments to the study of theology, should be approached in a perspective of the universal mission. For this is not an added decoration, a marginal element or an accessory, but a constitutive dimension of our Catholic faith." In the practical level he wants that "this missionary formation be given not only through conferences, schools, books and courses, but also through retreats, spiritual exercises, prayer meetings, and especially through living contact with missionaries who have worked in the field and who have practical experience of the demands and problems of evangelization".

Clearly seeing the key role of priests and religious, the Pope wants their formative years to have a "missionary inspiration and orientation... because if this element should be lacking in the training of the most responsible people, such as the priests and those who bind themselves by vows to try to live a life of perfection, then it would be difficult to give a missionary formation to the whole people of God".

By what marks can we tell whether or not a person has received a missionary formation or not? If he wants to cooperate effectively in various forms — prayer, sacrifice, financial aid, personal service, temporary involvement at different levels, permanent and total consecration — to proclaim the Gospel and plant the Church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root, then we can say that missionary formation has left its mark on him. But if he remembers the non-evangelized people only once a year, on Mission Sunday, or only when reminded by the picture of a poor child in Africa or China, then he has not been touched by the missionary spirit.

It is time for each and every one of us to ask ourselves: am I generous in the service of the Gospel? Am I doing my part to make my Church the Church of all men? If anyone cannot say "yes" to these questions, he is most certainly in need of missionary formation.

## In This Issue

**Mission Sunday** is given prominence in this issue because this year marks the fiftieth time it is observed. Besides, the **Pope's message** for this year's Mission Sunday is an urgent call for all of us to undergo missionary formation so that we can "evangelize man's culture and cultures... in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots..." We must make this call resound in every corner of the Church.

Complementing the documents coming from Rome is the Position Paper issued by the Bishops and Priests of the Archdiocese of Manila on **Evangelization, Justice, Development and Liberation in the Archdiocese of Manila Today**.

Another topic that takes the limelight in this issue is the life of priests. Bishop Legaspi asks whether a priest is a **dehumanized or a superhuman being**. Cardinal John Wright reflects on the **Perennial Concept of the Priesthood** and Mario-Joseph Nicolas examines the **Mystery of Mary and the Ministerial Priesthood**.

October being a marian month, it is but fitting to have articles on the Blessed Virgin. Aside from the one already mentioned, we also have the Pastoral Letter of Cardinal Julio Rosales on the **Sixtieth Anniversary of the Apparitions at Fatima**, and the theological reflection of Fr. Frederick Jelly on the **Marian Dogmas Within Vatican II's Hierarchy of Values**.

The Apostolic Nuncio's comments **On Basic Christian Communities** serve as a good follow-up of the articles we previously published on this topic. The article of Pedro Rodriguez on **Vatican II Eleven Years Later** invites our readers to extend their reflections on the impact of the great Council of our times.

Our readers will find here two documents that shed light on questions people ask: should children be brought to their **First Communion before going to Confession**? could good Catholics opt for **Cremation** instead of burial?

We have again taken the liberty of publishing a double issue (October-November). Some of our readers have expressed preference for this over the separate monthly issues. If the feedback becomes strong, we might make this our regular policy.

## MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI FOR MISSION SUNDAY, 23 OCTOBER 1977

- "Our recommendation for Mission Sunday this year is that it should stress the need for missionary formation..."
- "Only a thorough training which leads to generous dedication of oneself will create the conditions for a new and flourishing missionary era... And this is a goal that we would point out not only to future missionaries but to all: priests, religious, seminarians and laity..."
- "A serious preparation is needed for all workers for evangelization, and this means in fact, for each member of the People of God, for the whole Church is missionary..."

Dear Brothers,

Dear Sons and Daughters of the Catholic Church,

The Message that we send you, as usual, for Mission Sunday, conscious of our duty to promote evangelization, begins this year with a reference to an outstanding woman saint who gave, and who still gives, to the Church a strong missionary impulse: Saint Theresa of Lisieux. Just fifty years ago, she was proclaimed, along with Saint Francis Xavier, the special patroness of the Catholic Missions (cf. Decree of the S. C. de Propaganda Fide, 14 Dec. 1927). During these past fifty years there have been countless missionary vocations, and mission-aid for the important work of the spread of the Gospel has been generous to the point of real sacrifice on the part of many of the faithful. At the start of all the great missionary periods one finds the presence of some saint who gave the Church a new apostolic impulse and that is why we have called to mind the well-known Carmelite Sister.

• • •

Are we perhaps now at the start of another new period? Is a further stage in the work of evangelization about to develop? In the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, published just before the end of the Holy Year, we said that the Holy Year "enabled us to see better than ever the needs and the appeals of a multitude of brethren... who await from the Church the Word of salva-



tion" and we urged "a programme of pastoral action... for these years which mark the eve of a new century", a programme which would have "evangelization as its basic feature" (cf. no. 81).

Yes, on the eve of the third millennium of Christianity, we can expect a new phase in the preaching of the Gospel, a phase marked by the demands of authenticity, unity, truth, fidelity and apostolic charity: "The world paradoxically, despite innumerable signs of the denial of God, is nevertheless searching for him in unexpected ways and painfully experiencing the need of him—the world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible" (*Ibid.*, no. 7). Therefore, "what matters is to evangelize man's culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots) in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et Spes*" (*Ibid.*, no. 20). "It is a question", we said, "not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas... but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and model of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation" (*Ibid.*, n. 19).

### URGENCY OF MISSIONARY FORMATION

If such, today, should be the scope of evangelization, if such should be its impact on modern culture, our recommendation for Mission Sunday this year is that it should stress the need for **missionary formation**. "A serious preparation is needed for all workers for evangelization" (*Ibid.*, no. 73), and this means in fact, for each member of the People of God, for "the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God" (*Ad Gentes*, 35). Only from this formation will follow effective cooperation, in its various forms: prayer, sacrifice, financial aid, personal service, temporary involvement at different levels, permanent and total consecration.

Sometimes one hears the word "mission" used loosely to include any good action especially of social benefit. But, if the whole apostolic action of the Church springs from Christ's own mission, we must not forget or undervalue the essential aspect of this mandate: the mission "ad gentes" (Mt. 28:19, Mk. 16:15, Lk. 24:47). On this point, what the Second Vatican Council repeated, in accordance with tradition, remains valid: "The specific purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the Church

among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root" (*Ad Gentes*, 6). Missionary activity, therefore, is not any and every activity undertaken in the so-called "Third World". If this were so, it would lose its special character, and its very existence would become precarious, for many countries in which the Church has not yet taken root do not belong, or soon will not belong, to the "Third World".

There is need, therefore, for apostles trained especially for mission "*ad gentes*", in accordance with the criteria laid down in the Council Decree of that name. If they are trained for this special task, with a developed sense of universalism, based on a true feeling for human and ecclesial values, then we shall have new apostles who will turn even difficulties into so many opportunities for evangelization. Only a thorough training which leads to generous dedication of oneself will create the conditions for a new and flourishing missionary era. And this is a goal that cannot be improvised but must be pursued courageously in prayer, study, reflection, dialogue, commitment. And it is a goal that we would point out not only to future missionaries but to all: priests, religious, seminarians and laity.

### GUIDELINES FOR MISSIONARY FORMATION

For guidelines in this important field, we would suggest first of all a re-reading of the more recent documents on the missions and evangelization, especially the above-mentioned Council Decree *Ad Gentes* and our Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In these may be found ample material for a better understanding of the missionary nature of the Church, the true meaning of evangelization, and what should be the method, manner, quality and purpose of missionary formation today.

Taking these texts as read, we would then add that the whole of Christian education, from the first catechism for the reception of the sacraments to the study of theology, should be approached in a perspective of the universal mission. For this is not an added decoration, a marginal element or an accessory, but a constitutive dimension of our Catholic faith. Nor do we refer to a merely theoretical education, for the whole process should lead to a positive commitment of persons and Christian communities to the cause of evangelization. This missionary formation should be given, not only through conferences, schools, books and courses, but also through retreats, spiritual exercises, prayer meetings, and especially through living contact with missionaries who have worked in the field and who have practical experience of the demands and problems of evangelization.

From such a formation will come a greater number of missionary vocations, with better selection and a more consoling rate of perseverance. It should not, therefore, be lacking in training centres, seminaries, religious houses, novitiates and parishes, and should have as its guiding principles generosity in the service of the Gospel and openness to Christian universalism.

A special aim, and an important one to achieve, is the missionary inspiration and orientation to be given to all priestly vocations and all forms of consecrated life. For this purpose there exists the **Pontifical Missionary Union**, which (as we said in our Apostolic Letter *Graves et Increscentes* of 5 September 1966) is "the soul of the Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies". If this element should be lacking in the training of the most responsible people, such as the priests and those who bind themselves by vows to try to live a life of perfection, then it would be difficult to give a missionary formation to the whole People of God.

We hope that this formation will be promoted, too, by historical research and specialization in missiology. These sciences can be most useful in making known the great missionaries of the past and in investigating the basic principles that are the source of apostolic zeal. We hope, finally, that there will be no lack of initiatives to found or consolidate centres for missionary animation and study, to circulate missionary publications and to use the modern means of communication.



Today, more than before, we see a need for zealous apostles who do not lose themselves in useless discussion or sterile questions, but who consecrate their whole life to the universal mission, sowing "not doubts and uncertainties... but certainties that are solid because they are anchored in the Word of God" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 79).

This is the formation that we confidently expect from those who are preparing themselves for the apostolate or who are already engaged in it. To these aspiring missionaries, to the missionaries already in the field and to all the sons and daughters of the Church who assist them with prayer and sacrifice on the occasion of Mission Sunday, we gladly impart the encouragement of our Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, on the Solemnity of Pentecost, 29 May 1977, the fourteenth year of Our Pontificate.



## CONFESSION AND FIRST COMMUNION OF CHILDREN

The following is an unofficial translation of a letter "On First Confession and First Communion", released on 19 May by the Sacred Congregations for the Sacraments and Divine Worship and for the Clergy.

Even though the declaration *Sanctus Pontifex* was published on 24 May 1973, by both the Sacred Congregations for the Discipline of the Sacraments and for the Clergy (cf. AAS 65, 1973, 410), nonetheless, in some parts of the Church and in some catechetical centres, dissension and doubts still remain about the ecclesiastical discipline which regards children's receiving the sacrament of penance before they receive their First Communion.

Many inquiries and requests have come to this Apostolic See from bishops, from priests, and from parents. An apostolic religious institute which exercises its ministry in many countries posed the question explicitly whether, after the promulgation of the declaration, it was allowed, 'as a general rule', to receive First Communion without previous confession in those parishes in which this had become common practice.



Moreover, recent information gathered by the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship has proved the need of inculcating the Church's norms regarding these questions and provide the occasion for explaining once again, and thus answering a felt need, the mind and force of this declaration. This is done by giving an official reply to the question, which the religious institute had proposed (cf. below).

It is certainly not necessary to explain the reason for publishing the decree since all realize what grave disturbance was created by some opinions based on psychological and pedagogical reasons, by which the traditional doctrine of the Church was almost overturned. However, one must keep in mind that, while before the decree, *Quam Singulari* (cf. AAS II Vol., p. 579), according to common opinion, children who reached a certain age could be admitted

to confession, but not to receive Communion, now on the other hand, it affirmed that children could go to Communion, but that it is not fitting to make confession precede this sacrament.

Already according to the decree, *Quam Singulari*, the origin of that regrettable custom was seen in not having defined the age of discretion for receiving the sacraments: "The abuses which we censure spring from this, that the age of discretion was not properly or correctly defined and that some assign one age for confession, and another for the Eucharist". For this reason in n. 1 of the section of the decree that lays down dispositions, it is decreed that there is only one age for these sacraments and that when it is reached, the obligation begins of receiving both according to the designated order, i.e., confession before Communion.



"The age of discretion both for confession and for Communion is the age in which the child begins to reason, i.e., around the seventh year, either before or after. From that time begins the obligation of satisfying both the precept of confession and of Communion". (Note: It is not necessary to add that the strict obligation of confession should be understood according to the traditional doctrine of the Church).

That confession should precede Communion is clear from the order in which these two sacraments are named in the decree, as well as from the fact that the disapproved abuses regarded not the admission to confession but rather, admission to Holy Communion.

The need for safeguarding and protecting worthy participation in the Eucharist has compelled the Church to introduce a norm in her discipline and pastoral practice that confession should precede Communion and in this way of the right of the faithful—both of adults and children—to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation is recognized.

Moreover St. Paul's admonition (cf. 1 Cor. XI, 28) truly establishes a directive norm which regards even children. Therefore these also, before receiving the Holy Eucharist, should examine themselves. But often the child is not able to examine his conscience clearly and surely by himself. This will be done more easily and safely if he avails himself of the help of a priest confessor. In fact there are many children who feel troubled by small and unimportant things while there are others who ignore and pass over more serious faults.

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The precept of canon 854 of the Code of Canon Law in which the judgment about the sufficient disposition for First Communion belongs to the priest could not be observed if the child did not go to confession before Communion.

In this matter one must also keep in mind that many fine pastors have learned from their catechetical and ministerial experience the great usefulness and saving power which first confession has in the life of children if it is carefully prepared, properly adapted to their age and their capacity to perceive spiritual things and carefully administered.

When he arrives at the age of discretion, the child has the right, in the Church, to receive both sacraments. It would be an absurd and unjust discrimination and a violation of his conscience if he were prepared for and admitted only to Holy Communion. It is not enough to say that children have the right to go to confession *if this right remains practically ignored*.



When children are sufficiently instructed and are aware of the special nature of these two sacraments, it will not be difficult for them to go first to the sacrament of Reconciliation which — in a simple but fundamental way — arouses in them the awareness of moral good and evil and aids them to bring a more mature disposition to their happy meeting with Christ. The basic persuasion about the need of the greatest purity for receiving the Eucharist worthily if prudently instilled in children right from the time of their first Communion will accompany them for the rest of their lives and will lead to a greater esteem for, and a more frequent use of the sacrament of Reconciliation. The Roman Pontiff taught this in the letter he wrote through the Secretary of State on the occasion of the 26th Liturgical Week celebrated in Florence: "The Holy Father gives special consideration to the confession of children and, especially the first confession which should always precede their first Communion, even if they are fittingly separated by a period of time. For from that early age, should begin the preaching of penance which offers a more fervent foundation later on for living faith both in receiving the sacrament as well as in giving proper direction to one's Christian life".



It can be observed that in many nations particular conditions of society and culture are not a legitimate reason for establishing a different discipline. Human nature is essentially the same every-



where and the goals of spiritual perfection, which belong to the sacrament, are proposed equally to everyone. And indeed, children, in whatever circumstances of society and culture they live, if they can receive the Eucharist in a conscious way suitable for their age, can also have an equal awareness of sin and ask God's pardon in confession.

Finally, one must remember that the great renewal and greater vigour of the sacrament of Penance which is so necessary today and so desired by pastors in the universal Church, cannot come about unless it has its foundation and principle in the careful and fruitful preparation and reception of the sacraments of Christian initiation.

### OFFICIAL LATIN TEXT OF THE "DUBIUM" WITH AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SAME

The following is the official Latin text of the *Dubium* referred to in the above letter. This is accompanied by an unofficial translation in English.

**AD PROPOSITUM DUBIUM:** *utrum liceat post Declarationem diei 24 Maii 1973 adhuc antepone, per modum regulae generalis, primam Communionem receptioni sacramenti Paenitentiae illis in parocciis ubi his ultimis annis hae praxis vigerit:*

**SACRAE CONGREGATIONES PRO SACRAMENTIS ET CULTU DIVINO ATQUE PRO CLERICIS, APPROBANTE SUMMO PONTIFICE, RESPONDERUNT: NEGATIVE ET AD MENTEM IPSIUS DECLARATIONIS.**

*Mens autem Declarationis est ut elapso anno ab ipsius promulgatione omnia desinant experimenta recipiendi primam s. Communionem absque praevia receptione sacramenti Paenitentiae, ut ad spiritum decreti "Quam singulari" disciplina Ecclesiae restituatur.*

**Romae die XX mensis Maii, anno MCMLXXVII.**

To the doubt proposed: "Whether it is allowed after the declaration of 24 May 1973, to continue to have, as a general rule, the reception of first Communion precede the reception of the sacrament of Penance those parishes in which this practice developed in the past few years".

The Sacred Congregations for the Sacraments and Divine Worship and for the Clergy, with the approval of the Supreme Pontiff, reply: Negative and according to the mind of the declaration.

The mind of the declaration is that one year after the promulgation of the same declaration, all experiments of receiving first Communion without the sacrament of Penance should cease so that the discipline of the Church might be restored, in the spirit of the decree, **Quam Singulari**.

## PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Dilectio filio **SINCERO LUCERO BARCENILLA**, curioni paroeciae urbis Toledo City vulgo appellatae et intra fines Archidioecesis, quod humeris nostris est impositum, munere cuare eo intendimus, ut Ecclesiis particularibus quam aptissime consulamus, potissimum sacros iis praeficiendo Pastores, qui vita sua ac navitate apostolica gregibus maxima afferant incrementa spiritualia. Cum igitur providendum sit dioecesi Boronganensi, vacanti ex quo Venerabilis Frater Godefridus Pedernal Pisig regiminis officium deposiuit, te eidem praeponere statuimus, qui ad rem ornaris animi dotibus. Quocirca de sententia Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrorum Nostrorum SRE Cardinalium Sacre Congregationi pro Episcopis praepositorum, Apostolica Nostra potestate, te praedictae dioecesis **BORONGANENSIS** Episcopum nominamus et renuntiamus, omnibus cum iuribus et obligationibus, quae cum munere tuo ac dignitate conectuntur Permittimus quidem, ut episcopalem ordinationem extra urbem accipias a quolibet catholico episcopo, cui duo assistant eiusdem ordinis ac dignitatis viri una consecrantes, ad statutas leges liturgicas. Antea tamen tuum erit, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo professionem fidei facere atque ius iurandum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, adhibitasque formulas, rite signatas sigilloque impressas, ad Sacram congregationem pro Episcopis mittere, mandamus insuper, ut hae Litterae Nostrae clero ac populo legantur in Cathedrali templo dioecesis tuae, die festo de praecepto. Quos filios in Domino dilectissimus hortamur, utte, cuius pastoralis diligentiae sunt commisi, libentes accipiant, praeceptionibus tuis volentes obsequantur, incepta tua, in ipsorum bonum ineunda, alacres foveant. Demum divinae gratiae largitatem et Beatae Mariae Virginis praesidium tibi, ad tam grave officium gerendum ascito, ex animo precamur. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo octavo mensis Febrarii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo septimo, Pontificatis Nostri quarto decimo.

† **JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**  
Secretarius Status

**GODEFRIDUS MARIANI Proton. Apst.**



## DOCUMENT

### ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA

#### CIRCULAR ON CREMATION

On account of inquiries brought to Our attention on the matter of cremation, We have thought it opportune to communicate to Your Reverence, the following pastoral norms and guidelines of action in accord with the pertinent and more updated Church teachings and practices:

- a. The Church continues to uphold her marked preference for the burial of the corporal remains of the deceased, as sanctified vessels of the human spirit.
- b. The Church however allows cremation for a given reasonable and just cause, such as for reason of hygiene, public order, economy, or any sound private motive.
- c. The Church permits the administration of Sacraments, the pertinent Liturgical Celebrations and even Christian Burial in favor of those who previously signified their option to be cremated for a given reasonable and just cause.
- d. The Church forbids the upholding of liturgical rites and the like on the way to and / or from the place of cremation, as well as in the crematorium proper.
- e. The Church cannot but abhor and openly speak, if needed, against cremation when such is motivated by anti-christian posture or intent.

We herein enjoin the observance of the above pastoral norms and guidelines of action. Please feel free to consult Our Chancery Office in the presence of any positive doubt in their application to concrete cases.

✠ (Sgd.) JAIME CARD. L. SIN  
Archbishop of Manila

Manila, 15 August 1977.

# **PASTORAL LETTER ON THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APPARITIONS AT COVA DA IRIA**

**By**

**Julio Card. Rosales**

**To the Most Rev. Coadjutor Archbishop of Cebu,  
the Reverend clergy, secular and regular,  
the religious, Brothers and Sisters, and  
our beloved faithful.**

Grace and peace in the Lord.

This is year we are celebrating the 60th anniversary of the apparitions of our Lady at Cova da Iria in Fatima. We who consider ourselves faithful children of the Virgin Mary cannot let this year pass without paying her special homage of love and devotion. We offer the following reflections to those who want to live in closer union with Jesus Christ through the intercession of Our Lady of Fatima.

## **THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.**

The Blessed Virgin, conceived without sin, had dedicated her life entirely to God. We can see this in her answer to the archangel. What he revealed to her was a mystery. "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God".<sup>1</sup> All that she understood from the message was that she would become a mother without the intervention of man and that her child would have a uniquely significant place in the plan of God for his people. Her answer shows no hesitation at all in accepting God's will. "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say".<sup>2</sup>

This answer could not have been an acquiescence lightly given. It was a very serious assent. It would have needed time for reflexion had her spirit been unprepared. The appearance of the

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<sup>1</sup> Lk. 1, 35.

<sup>2</sup> Lk. 1, 38.

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angel was not an ordinary occurrence. His greeting even troubled her deeply. The message would so involve her whole life that she was forced to ask for a clarification.

So her full and ready assent could only mean one thing: that, though she was young in age, God's love dominated her whole being. She had placed her life in the hands of God. She loved, worshipped and obeyed him as only a creature without sin could so. The spontaneous acceptance of God's will was a proof and a result of that complete union with God. Her spirit was full of God. Now in her body she received the Son of God as a mother.

The Virgin Mary is the means and the place where the Son of God entered human history as Man. St. Paul affirmed this when he said to the Galatians: "When the designated time had come, God sent forth his Son born of a woman, born under the law".<sup>3</sup> This birth from Mary gives us full assurance of the true humanity and historicity of Jesus crucified and risen from the dead as Lord.

As a consequence of her divine maternity, the Virgin Mary became an active 'handmaid' in the work of her Son. The last Council says: "Embracing God's saving will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son. In subordination to him and along with him, by the grace of almighty God, she served the mystery of redemption".<sup>4</sup>

Her service as a handmaid can be seen in some instances in the Gospel. She brought her Son to the temple to be offered as a firstborn according to the Mosaic Law. Her most precious treasure, more precious to her than her own life, she offered to the Father happy that she could make a gift of the very life of her life. And on that occasion, Simeon linked Mary with the sorrowful redemptive undertaking of Jesus. "His words were a prelude of Calvary... In her immaculate heart united so closely to her child's, the struggle would be exceedingly fierce".<sup>5</sup>

At the marriage feast of Cana, the simple statement: "They have no more wine," implied a complete trust that Jesus would do something about it. Mary knew well her Son's heart, "and her intercession brought about the beginning of miracles".<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 4. 4.

<sup>4</sup> LG 56.

<sup>5</sup> Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. The Gospel of St. Luke, n. 2. 35.

<sup>6</sup> L. G. 58.

The Second Vatican Council says: "Thus the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and loyally persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross. There she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, suffering grievously with her only begotten Son. There she united herself with a maternal heart to his sacrifice, and lovingly consented to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth".<sup>7</sup>

She was with the Apostle after the ascension when they devoted themselves to prayer, until the Holy Spirit came to them on the day of Pentecost.

"Finally, preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exalted by the Lord as Queen of all, in order that she might be more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of Lords and the conqueror of sin and death".<sup>8</sup>

Having fulfilled her role as a handmaid in the work of her Son while she was still on earth, she continues now in her heavenly existence her loving service to Him. He continues his Mediatorship, his work of redemption. Loving him as she does, she cannot remain indifferent to his solicitude for the salvation of men. What she is, she is through Christ. What she does, she does through and for Christ. From this we conclude that the glorified existence of the Virgin Mary is that of faithful and loving intercession on our behalf for the glory of her Son's name.

Our Holy Father Paul VI said: "In the same manner that no human mother can confine her office to the begetting alone of a new human being, but she must also attend to his growth and education, so is also the role of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After she had participated in the sacrifice of the Son, cause of our redemption. She now exercises her material function in heaven to generate and increase the divine life in each of the redeemed human souls. This truth gives us reason for greatest joy, and at the same time, by the free will of the most knowing God, it is an explanatory part of the mystery of human salvation; therefore it should be held in faith by all Christians. But how does the Mother of God help to increase the life of grace in all the members of the Church? First of all, by her intercession which the most ardent charity arouses".<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> L. G. 58.

<sup>8</sup> L. G. 59.

<sup>9</sup> *Signum Magnum, Part 1.*



## THE APPARITIONS

It is because of the conviction that the Blessed Virgin Mary is fully interested in the salvation of the world that we believe that she at times appears to men. When our Lady visibly appears on earth, it is always God who acts. But God acts through his creatures. The Blessed Virgin has her part in the whole structure of God's salvific plan, through Christ in the Holy Spirit. A true apparition always summons men to Christ through prayer and conversion.

From all over the world we hear news of appearances of Our Lady. Are they authentic? Are they mere illusions? The Church is cautious in accepting an apparition into her common life of prayer. "The ultimate criterion of authenticity can only be a miracle which accredits the apparition. With the present-day scientific progress in psychology, anthropology and sociology, the discernment of such a miracle calls for the greatest prudence, animated by faith and expertise".<sup>10</sup>

The apparitions of Our Lady of Fatima have been attested to by miraculous events, meticulously examined for their genuineness.

Let us review briefly highlights of the events at Covada Iria.

The visions were seen by three children: Lucia dos Santos, age 10, her cousin, Francisco, age 9, and his sister, Jacinta, age 7. In 1916 they saw an apparition of an angel three times.

At noon on Sunday, May 13, 1917, a bright sunny day, the three children saw and heard two flashes of lightning. They gathered the sheep they were pasturing at a place called Cova da Iria, near the hamlet of Aljustrel, of the parish of Fatima, and started to drive them home. Suddenly on top of a small evergreen oak, they saw a dazzling light and, standing in the light, a lovely Lady. She wore a long white dress, and a mantle over her head and shoulders which reached down to her feet and was edged in gold. Her hands were joined before her breast and a rosary of white pearls hung from the right hand.

The Vision told the children to come on the 13th of each month to the same place and at the same hour, until October. "Then I will tell you who I am and what I want".

In July the Lady promised a great public miracle in October.

<sup>10</sup> Schmaus, *Sacramentum Mundi on Mariology*.

In October a crowd, estimated at 70,000, gathered around the Cova da Iria. Just after noon, the Lady came. She said to the children: "I am the Lady of the Rosary". and she continued to talk to them. When she was about to leave, she opened her hands which sent beams of light towards the sun. Instinctively Lucia cried: "Oh, look at the sun!" and the people looked up.

It had been raining but the rain had stopped and the clouds parted. The sun appeared like a silver disc very bright but without its blinding light. Suddenly the disc began to whirl casting off in all directions great beams of light of different colors. The whirling stopped after some minutes but it was repeated twice more. All this was seen within a radius of about 25 miles. Then the sun like a ball of fire seemed to come rushing down in a zigzag course toward the terrified multitude. Just as it appeared to be upon them, the miracle stopped and the sun resumed its normal course. Accounts of the event appeared in the newspapers of Portugal, some written by reporters who had come to scoff at the apparitions.

At the moment when this solar prodigy started the children saw three successive scenes beside the sun. First they saw the Holy Family, to the right of the sun Our Lady of the Rosary and at the left St. Joseph with the Infant Jesus blessing the world. Then Lucia saw at the right of the sun our Divine Lord and at the left Our Lady of the Seven Dolours. Finally our Lady of the Seven Dolours was replaced by Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Scapular in her hand.

### THE MESSAGE

After seven years of official painstaking investigation of the events of Fatima, a commission set up by the Bishop of Leiria made its final report in 1929. After one more year of study of the document, the Bishop finally published a Pastoral Letter on October 1930, in which he said: "We judge it well: 1. To declare worthy of credence the visions with which the children were favored at Cova da Iria. ... 2. To authorize officially the cult of Our Lady of Fatima".

Pope Pius XI several times publicly expressed his approval of the cult of Our Lady of Fatima. Pope Pius VII, in 1942, took part from Rome in the closing celebrations of the Silver Jubilee of Fatima.

On the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the first apparition on May 13th, 1967. Pope Paul VI went to Cova da Iria as a "humble pilgrim". That same day he gave to the Church an Apostolic

Exhortation entitled "Signum Magnum" (The Great Sign) on the Marian devotion at Fatima.

The devotion of Our Lady of Fatima is not an article of faith. But if we accept it in our life of prayer, we will certainly be "thinking with the Church".

In every apparition, Our Lady conversed mostly with Lucia, teaching, recommending what she wanted done and also answering her questions. "After 1917, new apparitions, entirely intimate, came to complete the previous revelations".<sup>11</sup>

From all that has been recorded of the words of our Lady, we get a triple message: the Holy Rosary, Penance and Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

#### A) THE HOLY ROSARY

In each and every apparition Our Lady urged the three children, and through them all the faithful, to pray the rosary devoutly every day. In fact Francisco could not see the Virgin until he started to recite the rosary. The children knew the rosary for they came from devout families. But Our Lady took the trouble of teaching them how to pray it properly.

The holy rosary is well known to us all and very many of us say it daily. In many families, it is recited together by parents and children as their family prayer. So you do not need a long explanation of the value of this devotion.

However we would like to remind you of the indispensable need of meditating on the meaning of each mystery as you come to it. The rosary is above all a meditation of the principal mysteries of the lives of Jesus and Mary. It is a school where you learn how Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption and how the Virgin Mary cooperated in this work of salvation.

Ordinary each mystery is announced or couched in a short sentence. But behind that short sentence there is a story found in the Gospels or proposed by spiritual writers. For example, the first joyful mystery can be understood properly only when one has read or has been taught verses 26 to 38 of the first Chapter of St. Luke. And the second mystery, from verses 39 to 56. And so forth.

After all, the primary purpose of praying the rosary is to attain a closer union with Christ through Mary. The better you

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<sup>11</sup> *The Marvels of Fatima, Gonzaga de Fonseca, S.J.*

know Christ the Lord, the more you will be motivated to live in close union with him. The better you know the Blessed Mother, the more you will love her for her motherly solicitude for you and for the world.

## B) PENANCE

During the Holy Year in 1975, I had again the privilege of visiting Sister Lucia in her Carmelite Monastery. In the course of our conversation, one of the things I asked her was: "What was mean by Our Lady when she asked for penance? What penance does she want?" Sister Lucia answered: "It is principally doing one's duty well, in the spirit of sacrifice". Then she added: "It sounds easy, but in reality it is not".

It is possible for one to take his duties lightly and neglect them or to do what is barely enough for perfunctory fulfillment. But that is not doing one's duty "well". The only way to do our duty "well" is to do it "the best we can", to put "our best" into as we do it. This means using all our capabilities in doing our work and improving our performance if we see that there is still room for improvement. This calls for a full dedication of our selves to our duties. This is not an easy task for we shall have to avoid those distractions that might make us fail in our work. Of course there should always be room for needed leisure.

Sister Lucia said: "in the spirit of sacrifice". One could do his duties well merely for human motives, for example, to seek promotion. There is nothing wrong with this. It is perfectly right for a person to look for advancement his earthly existence by honest means.

But when we say "in the spirit of sacrifice", we look beyond purely human motives and we recall what the Lord said: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps. Whoever would save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit does he show who gains the whole and destroys himself in the process?"<sup>12</sup>

Here the difficulties in doing your duties well are brought up to the spiritual level. You say "no" to yourself whenever you feel the inclination to be remiss in your duties. That is denying yourself; to deny is to say "no". The faithful, strict and devoted performance of our duties is a cross, but we have to bear it and follow Christ because he bids us to be his followers. Then the

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<sup>12</sup> Lk. 9, 23-25.



spirit of sacrifice enters fully into our daily life. St. Paul summed it up by saying: 'Whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of the Lord Jesus'.<sup>13</sup>

Of course penance is not limited to the performance of our duties. We are asked also to offer voluntarily other acts of penance and sacrifice in reparation for sins and for the conversion of sinners. In the very first apparition, Our Lady said to the children: "Would you like to offer yourselves to God to make sacrifices, and to accept willingly all the sufferings it may please him to send you, in order to make reparation for so many sins which offend the Divine Majesty, to obtain the conversion of sinners?" She repeated the same request in other apparitions.

In the last apparition Our Lady said: "Men must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins". Then with a more sorrowful air and with a suppliant voice she added: "Men must no longer offend Our Lord, who is already offended too much".

Lucia wrote on this message of penance: "The part of this last apparition which has remained most deeply imprinted on my heart is the prayer of our heavenly Mother begging us not to offend Almighty God anymore who is already offended too much. What a loving reproach is contained in these words what tender pleading! Oh, I wish I could make it re-echo throughout the entire world for all the children of our heavenly Mother to hear!"

My dear faithful, we know that our contemporary world is given to much self-indulgence, sensuality and dissipation. Perhaps among those who read this letter there are some who have gone this way of sinful living. The prophet Isaiah says: "Let the wicked man abandon his way, the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity on him, to our God who is rich in forgiving".<sup>14</sup> Our Mother in heaven is begging us to do penance for the sins of the world. Let us not close our ears to her pleading.

### C) THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

At the second apparition on June 13th, Our Lady said to Lucia: "You must remain longer on earth. Jesus wishes to use you in making Me known and loved. He wishes to spread in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart". Lucia relates that after speaking about her Immaculate Heart, Our Lady again stretched forth her hands, throwing on the children the rays of an immense light.

<sup>13</sup> Col. 3, 17.

<sup>14</sup> Is. 55, 7.

She held in her right hand a Heart surrounded by thorns which pierced it from all sides. The children understood that it was the Immaculate Heart of Mary, afflicted by all the sins of the world, which demanded penance and reparation.

In the third apparition, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is again mentioned. Lucia revealed afterward that the Lady also said: "I shall ask for the consecration of the world to my Immaculate Heart as well as a communion of reparation on the first Saturday of the month. If my requests are granted, Russia will be converted and there will be peace. Otherwise an impious propaganda will spread its errors through the world, raising up wars and persecutions against the Church. Many will be martyred, the Holy Father will have to suffer much, several nations will be wiped out". But Our Lady offered this consoling promise: "My Immaculate Heart will finally triumph."

Fr. Gonzaga da Fonseca, S.J., professor at the Biblical Institute in Rome, made a close study of all the documents relating to Fatima. In the sixth edition of his book, "The Marvels of Fatima", he says that the three principal practices of devotion that Our Lady asked in honor of her Immaculate Heart are:

1. The practice of the First Saturday. It consists of: a) the rosary; b) communion of reparation; c) reparatory prayer; d) some sacrifice made for the same intention. The intention is to make reparation to the Immaculate Heart for all the outrages and blasphemies of which it is the object on the part of sinners.
2. The practice of the Five Consecutive First Saturdays consists, in addition to the four exercises mentioned above, of: e) confession; f) keeping in the company of the Immaculate Heart by meditating for fifteen minutes on any of the mysteries of the rosary without actually reciting the rosary. The intention is the conversion of Russia. (One confession is enough for the First Friday and First Saturday, even if done on another day of the month. Communion should be received in the state of grace.)
3. Consecration of the world and Russia in particular to the Immaculate Heart of Mary by the Holy Father and all the Bishops.

On October 31st, 1952, Pius XII consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The reference to Russia is veiled but clear, for he said: "...there is not a house which does not honor your Holy Icon (perhaps today hidden and kept for better days)..."

In his Apostolic Letter "Sacro Vergente Anno" of July 7, 1954, the Holy Father was more explicit. He said: "...thus now we entrust and consecrate in a very special way to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, all the peoples of Russia in the utmost confidence that the wishes which We express will keep true peace, fraternal harmony, freedom for all..."

At the end of the third session of the Council in November 1964, Pope Paul VI renewed the consecration of the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary which Pius XII had made in 1942.

On that occasion he said further: "May the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary shine as an example for all Christians, of perfect love towards God and neighbor, lead us to the reception of the Sacraments of the Church, through which the souls of the faithful are liberated and defended from sin, urge us to expiate the innumerable injuries done to the divine majesty, and finally be the sign of unity and an incentive towards strengthening fraternal ties among all Christians in the one Church of Jesus Christ, which guided by the Holy Spirit, continues to venerate with sentiments of filial love the Blessed Virgin Mary as the most loving Mother".<sup>15</sup>

## RUSSIA

But why was Russia mentioned in particular by Our Lady? It was in April 1917, that Lenin returned to Russia to exploit the troubled situation following the abdication of the Czar. He was forced to flee the country in July but returned in October and, in November 1917, was able to establish the Bolsheviks in supreme control. Note the coincidence. About the very months and year that a well structured and institutionalized atheism let loose its venom on the world, our Lady was inaugurating at Fatima her spiritual crusade to defend her Children. When she talked of Russia, she was not speaking of Tsarist Russia but of the new Russia, the Soviet, the Volshevik Russia, which was being born. She was speaking of Russia of 1917, which to us now is not merely a country, but communism in general.

Today communism is winning the battle because those whom Our Lady wanted to defend refused in large measure to heed her voice. But she promised: "My Immaculate Heart will finally triumph".

Meanwhile the struggle will continue. Dialectical and historical materialism are simply incompatible with our belief in God. Communism is essentially atheistic, and it has been militantly atheistic

<sup>15</sup> *Signum Magnum*, Part III, 7.

from the outset. Marx believed that in a communist society religion would die of itself. But Lenin and Stalin were not content to wait for this inevitable disappearance but held that its extermination was necessary. Mao-Tse-Tung said, "It is necessary to rid ourselves of religion, the capitalists, and autocracy, these evil demons of the empire". There is no communist country where the Church is not under very serious siege one way or another, even if some semblance of religious practice is allowed.

In Peking, for example, there is only one Chinese priest allowed to say Mass in a small church, but he is never permitted to have contact with the Vatican. Whenever he is asked about religion, he answers in Latin: "I am not allowed to talk". In Poland Cardinal Wyszyński has revealed publicly the vexations he and the other bishops and clergy are subjected to in their determination to continue their pastoral work. He even had to sell church vessels to maintain his seminary because of the prohibitive taxes imposed upon it. In Russia the Orthodox Church is under the continuous surveillance and orders of the Commissars. In other communist countries the clergy and ministers have become little more than figure-heads of their Churches, unable to fulfill properly their ministerial duties. All kinds of limitations have been imposed upon their work under penalty of imprisonment or concentration camps, if indeed they are allowed to exist there at all.

Perhaps we might have the impression that this is happening far away, very far away from our shores. But the last communist seizure was that of Cambodia, only a year ago. There the "conquest of religion" is being implemented as usual.

In our country the communist movement has existed for many years. At present they call themselves the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) and their fighting force is called the New People's Army (NPA). As in other countries their ultimate purpose is to overthrow the existing government and replace it with their own regime, completely controlled by the Party, the Community Party.

One tactic used by communists everywhere in their initial drive to disseminate their ideas and to discredit before the people the existing government is the use of "fronts". These are organizations already existing or covertly organized by communists seemingly for good and noble purposes but actually to lend support to their party. The front's members are unaware that they are tools of communist propaganda since their own ideals are good in themselves and they sincerely want to attain these ideals. This is one powerful strategy of communist infiltration of popular movements.



Just before September, 1972, there were priests, sisters and lay leaders who were actively engaged in promoting social reforms. They belonged to many different organizations. They had seminars. And they held demonstrations asking for social reforms from the government. These priests, sisters and lay leaders were inspired by their sincere concern for the poor and the oppressed. It was very far from their mind to promote communism or become communist themselves. They just wanted to be good Christians.

But after a while, they learned to mouth communist slogans, and violence made its appearance in demonstrations they took part in.

What had happened? They had been infiltrated by clever red agents. In a very subtle way their seminars, their lectures, had been subjected to an orientation which could not be recognized at first sight as communist. And the demonstrations too were infiltrated by red elements, few but well trained.

One word which caused and is causing much confusion is "liberation". There is the phrase "liberation of the masses" used by the communists for class struggle. There is the "theology of liberation" used by some theologians, especially of South America, to give doctrinal support to their movement to free the people from existing feudalistic social conditions. This theology is tinged with Marxist thought. The word "liberation" has been used too by red agents in infiltrating Catholic Social action. These uses are obviously very different from the use of Paul VI who employed the word in his letter "Evangelii Nuntiandi" to explain the meaning and purview of genuine evangelization. He declares that although "evangelization involves an explicit message... about liberation", this "is **not** contained in the mere and restricted dimension of **economics, politics, social or cultural life**"; and "in order that God's Kingdom should come it is **not** enough to establish liberation, and to create **well-being and development**", since "the Church has the firm conviction that all temporal liberation, all political liberation — even if it pretends to be today's theology — carries within itself the germ of its own negation whenever... its final goal is not **salvation and happiness in God**".<sup>16</sup>

Just after the New Society was inaugurated, much of the agitation against the government disappeared from the eyes of the

<sup>16</sup> *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, nn. 29, 33, 35, — *Stess, ours*.

public, but this did not mean that the communist movement had stopped. The CPP and the NPA remain active, and some of their liberation front groups are also as alive as ever.

We have said all this about communism, my beloved clergy, Sisters and faithful, because you have to be warned against the subtle propaganda and infiltration of the communists even in the work of the Church. This does not mean that we have to stop our commitment to social action and the amelioration of the poor. It only means that we should be careful lest we become tools of the communist conspiracy in the country. If we have to pray to the Immaculate Heart of Mary for the conversion of Russia (communists), we cannot at the same time contribute to the growth of communism by becoming instruments of its propaganda.

We end this letter with the following exhortation of the Holy Father, Paul VI: "We exhort all the children of the Church that each and every one consecrate himself again to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of the Church and that they conform more and more their conduct to the divine will as they translate into their actual life the clearest meaning of this act of piety, and that they may serve Her as Her children by piously imitating the examples of their heavenly Queen".<sup>17</sup>

May the Lord and Our Lady of Fatima bless you all.

Given in the City of Cebu on May 13th 1977.

(Sgd.) JULIO R. CARDINAL ROSALES  
Archbishop of Cebu

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<sup>17</sup> *Signum Magnum, Part II, 8.*

## FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF MISSION SUNDAY OBSERVANCE

### *First observance*

The 50th anniversary of the institution of Mission Sunday was commemorated last year, with a special Mission Sunday Message signed by Pope Paul on 14 April, because 14 April 1926, was the date of the original rescript in which Pope Pius XI approved the observance of an annual day for praying for the missions, supporting them and contributing to them.

The first time that Mission Sunday itself was observed, however, was not in 1926 but the following year, on 23 October 1927, and so the 50th anniversary of the first observance of Mission Sunday falls this year, and, by a coincidence, it is also on 23 October. It may be noted, though, that the coming Mission Sunday is therefore the 51st in the series, and not the 50th.

The 50th anniversary of Mission Sunday should be a time for taking stock of all that has been accomplished for the missions over the past half century.

In 1927 the missions in Asia and Africa were still mission in the strict sense, whereas today they are mostly well-established local Churches. In 1927 there were eight local Asian Bishops (six of them Chinese) and no local African Bishops; today the local hierarchy is in authority nearly everywhere. In 1927 the sum raised by the first Mission Sunday was small compared with the \$50 million distributed last year by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, not to mention the sums distributed by the Society of St. Peter Apostle and the Holy Childhood—to speak only of the Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies (the fourth of these Societies, the Pontifical Missionary Union, promotes missionary awareness but does not collect funds).

### *Variety of themes*

It would be impossible here to detail the themes proposed for Mission Sunday during the past half-century, but we will list briefly the themes proposed by Pope Paul since the beginning of his reign

In 1963, in his first Mission Sunday Message, Pope Paul spoke, on Vatican Radio, of his "urgent and most pressing duty of promoting the spread of the Kingdom of God" and saluted missionaries as most dear to him in a special way. Behind the missionaries, he said, "all those who have received from God the gift of faith must stand shoulder to shoulder in a compact army". He recommended the Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies (PMAS) as the best means of giving practical financial support to the missionaries.

The 1964 Message was signed, not by His Holiness, but by Archbishop Sigismondi, Secretary of Propaganda Fide. He recalled Pope Paul's appeal of the previous year and explained the nature and purpose of the Mission-Aid Societies.

The 1964 Message was signed not by His Holiness, but by Archbishop Sigismondi, Secretary of Propaganda Fide. He recalled Pope Paul's appeal of the previous year and explained the nature and purpose of the Mission-Aid Societies.

### *Message broadcast*

The 1966 Message was also broadcast by His Holiness on Vatican Radio. He stressed the theme of love—the love for all mankind taught us by Christ—and said: "One cannot sleep soundly, knowing that many souls will remain far from God because the missionaries lack those material aids which a very slight sacrifice on our part would be enough to provide. One cannot enjoy the indeed wonderful advances in economic and social life, knowing that thousands of sufferers, leper-victims, undernourished and hungry beings, amongs: whom innocent children predominate, are condemned to death because they lack the elementary resources with which, on the contrary, others abound".

In 1967 His Holiness said: "It is our wish that Mission Sunday be celebrated everywhere, in every diocese, parish, religious family, in every Catholic association and even in every young Christian community in mission territory". He said that, in spite of the Church's greater openness to other religions since the Council, missionary activity was still necessary, and this activity demanded fresh generosity—generosity that would express itself in missionary vocations and greater support for the missions.



In his Message for Mission Sunday 1968, His Holiness wrote: "The missions belong to us, to each of us, to each community of believers. Far distant in space, they should be close to our hearts". In appealing for support for the Mission-Aid Societies, he said: "We would do so with instinctive timidity, almost with uneasiness, if necessity did not impose it on us and if the Council did not admonish us not to be ashamed to hold out our hand humbly and to make ourselves beggars for Christ and for the salvation of souls. The needs of mission territories are immense, from all points of view. The call for schools, hospitals, churches, oratories, leprosaria, seminaries, training centres, rest houses, and endless journeys. What is particularly burden-some is not merely the construction of buildings but their functioning, which requires each year the spending of large sums".

### *Role of the People of God*

In his 1969 Message, Pope Paul stressed the new importance that the idea of Mission taken on for the whole People of God after the Council, "an idea that permeates the whole Church and each one of the faithful". All must back up the front-line missionaries, for whom the traditional qualities are necessary: "total donation of self; willingness to face danger; patience; generous, persevering effort even when it seems fruitless and when progress is slow; a spirit of sacrifice; the preaching of the Cross not only by word but by example, with a willingness to suffer one's own passion".

In 1970 Pope Paul, after pointing out that "Mission Sunday has rightly become an important event in the Church's life", went on to discuss the relationship between Evangelization and Development. "There is no doubt", he said, "that missionary activity is concerned primarily with evangelization and that it must maintain this priority both in the concept that inspires it and in the way in which it is organized and exercised". But, on the other hand, "it would be inadmissible for the Church's missionary activity to neglect the needs and aspirations of developing peoples and, because of its religious orientation, omit the basic duties of human charity. We cannot forget the solemn teaching of the Gospel on the love of our needy and suffering neighbour".

In 1971 His Holiness said that "Christ could have asked his Father and he would have given him at once 'more than twelve legions of angels' to announce his redemption to the world. Instead, Christ gave the task and the privilege to us... He deliberately left himself with no voice but ours to tell the glad tidings to mankind. We have GOOD NEWS... that God loves us; that he became man to share in our life and to share his life with us; that he

walks with us — every step of the way — taking our concerns as his own, for he cares about us; ... that he will bring us, if we allow him, to an eternal happiness beyond the bounds of human expectation ... We must invite all men to join the People of God, his Church, that ever-growing society of hope, which is able to look eagerly to the future without closing its eyes to the present; which indeed finds the present meaningful and valid and worthwhile because of its very relationship to that future, and is therefore able to involve itself in the present with all the more energy and conviction".

In 1972 His Holiness recalled the three anniversaries that were being celebrated that year: the 350th anniversary of the Sacred Congregation "de Propaganda Fide" (the 150th anniversary of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and the 50th anniversary of the raising to Pontifical status of the Mission-Aid Societies of the Propagation of the Faith, St. Peter Apostle and the Holy Childhood. In urging support once more for these Societies, he said: "All Christians are obliged to work for the missions in accordance with their means: some can do it by preaching or teaching, others by contributing money, others by contributing their time. And all are able to offer up for the missions their prayers, their tribulations, their joys and sorrows".

### *Missionary vocations*

The theme of the 1973 Message was missionary vocations. His Holiness noted the decline in priestly and missionary vocations, and appealed for young men and women to come forward with the same generosity as in the past to dedicate themselves to the missionary apostolate. He appealed also for the promotion of local vocations in mission countries, and said that local and foreign personnel should work together in harmony for the building up of Christ's kingdom.

The 1974 Message took its theme of Renewal and Reconciliation said His Holiness, "calls for a conversion, an openness, a drawing close to all of our brothers. And conversion obliges us, in the first place, to know them, since we must love them and likewise share with them the good things of a material as well as of a moral and spiritual kind. One cannot, in fact, conceive of a family in which some members starve and others have everything; in which some live exposed to the elements and others in comfortable homes; in which some have never heard of Jesus Christ and others have at hand all the means of salvation possessed by the Church".

In 1975 His Holiness addressed himself not so much to the world at large as to the missionaries themselves, who face new difficulties such as being resented at times in countries becoming more conscious of their national aspirations. "We would like", he said, "to confirm you in the certitude of your vocation: the Mission, that is the announcement of the Gospel to all peoples, is not outdated, it is no optional; it is based on the divine plan... Dear and venerated heralds of the Gospel..., be assured that your choice has not been mistaken, your efforts not in vain; your sacrifice, whatever its immediate result may be, has not failed... You are not alone. The Church is with you".

### *Missionary universalism*

In 1976 His Holiness signed his Message, as we said, on 14 April, the 50th anniversary of the rescript establishing Mission Sunday. He chose as his theme the missionary universalism of the People of God: "It was precisely the spread, among the People of God, of this doctrine of missionary universalism that was the first and most important aim assigned to Mission Sunday. The idea of missionary universalism is to be found everywhere in the Gospels". In all his Mission Sunday Messages Pope Paul recommended the Pontifical Mission-Aid Societies, and on this occasion he said: "It was in fact their missionary universalism that distinguished these Societies from the start and moved the Holy See to raise them to Pontifical status, making them the official instruments of the Church for the missionary cooperation of the People of God".

Finally, in his Message for next Mission Sunday, 23 October 1977, His Holiness has chosen the theme of missionary formation: "Only a thorough training which leads to generous dedication of oneself will create the conditions for a new and flourishing missionary era. And this is a goal that cannot be improvised but must be pursued courageously in prayer, study, reflection, dialogue, commitment. And it is a goal that we would point out not only to future missionaries but to all: priests, religious, seminarians and laity". And His Holiness reminds us again that it is not only the missionaries in the field who are involved but all of us: "A serious preparation is needed for all workers for evangelization, and this means, in fact, for each member of the People of God, for the whole Church is missionary". *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition) August 25, 1977, p. 2).

# ON BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

By

**Archbishop Bruno Torpigliani**

Addressing the Bishops of the Philippines gathered in Baguio, July 11, 1977, Archbishop Bruno Torpigliani, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, invited them to consider the following points in their deliberations on Basic Christian Communities, should they feel that these points are relevant to the varying situations in their dioceses:

1. The 'mind' and center of our Christian communities must be the Word of God, the name and teaching of Jesus Christ, not an ideological position or political objectives. An ecclesial community is a response of faith to the Gospel of Jesus; it is not held together by socio-political commitment, even when such a commitment seems to be equated with some form or other of Christian theology.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* has warned us that ideologies are constantly trying "to exploit the immense human potential" of basic Christian communities and to instrumentalize them for their own purposes. Thus this matter would seem to call for the vigilant prudence Our Lord urges on us: we cannot afford not to ask ourselves if ideological positions are little by little substituted in lectures, seminars, workshops, for the authentic message of the Gospel and the social teaching of the Church's magisterium; if there is an imperceptible sliding-over from the words of the Gospel to ideological slogans.

2. There is also present in various places in the world the "ever threatening temptation of systematic opposition and a hypercritical attitude" toward what is now so readily spoken of as "the institutional Church and the magisterium" — opposition and hypercriticism "under the pretext of authenticity". But once again, it is not rarely in the interests of an ideological position, whatsoever it may be, that these stances and these contestatory stands are taken.



3. Thirdly, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* enumerates at least two other temptations that small Christian communities everywhere often face: isolation from the local Church and its bishop, as well as isolation from the universal Church, and the temptation of Christians in these communities seeing themselves as the only authentic Church of Christ, the only authentic form of ecclesial community life today.

4. Fourthly, and in some ways most importantly of all, let me touch on the proper role of the ordained minister in the Catholic community — including of course, basic Christian communities — specifically on the role of the priest. Perhaps, some of you have spoken of the danger of what might be called “the dissolution of the role of the priest” in the present moment when the role of the laity in the Church is so much stressed. But as so often happens, there is a see-saw phenomenon in the Church’s life, and a change of emphasis may create the “near-dissolution” of what was once stressed perhaps too strongly.



Those who follow theological writing do not need to be told that in the last few years many articles and books have tried to restudy and re-clarify the role of priests in the Christian community, especially in relation to lay ministries and the so-called “new ministries” in the Church. Several episcopal conferences in Europe and in Latin America have issued joint texts on the ordained priesthood and its meaning in the Church today.

Some of the points stressed in these writings are, I believe, the following:

1. Surely, it is good that we have seen a renewed stress on the participation of all the baptized in the total life and ministry of the Church. Catechists, guiders of youth, marriage counselors, promoters and leaders of liturgical services, heads of Catholic Action groups, those in charge of Christian Family groups, sisters engaged in various community service, responsible members of parish councils — these are seen today as exercising genuine ministries in the Church, because they are committed to services for the good of others, exercised on the foundation of baptismal consecration and the grace that derives from it.

2. In the People of God, everyone should participate in the total life and ministry of the Church, but each one in accordance with their proper roles, as empowered by their consecration and mission,

in the measure of each one's proper competence. The Body of Christ is, in the mind of the Lord, an ordered community, and not run along anarchic lines.

The Church has taught, from the very letters of Paul and New Testament times, that the Church is an ordered, structured, organic reality. Thus, the ordained ministers, bishops and priests especially have their proper role by virtue of their sacramental ordination. For sacramental ordination, in the mind and will of the Church, places the bishop or priest in the Church within defined ranks — *ordo episcoporum*, *ordo presbyterorum* — which prolong, according to the distribution of powers and tasks committed to them by the Church, the office entrusted by the Lord to the ministry of the Apostles. It is not a question of an optional role in the Church, but of a constitutive, structural and structuring ministry, without which the Church cannot be the Church of Jesus Christ founded on the Apostles.

The ministry specific to the ordained minister is to prepare and form the faithful for their own ministry as laity, especially in the secular realms where they can and must embody and realize their vocation as Christians. The ministry of the priest is to promote unity and mutual collaboration within the community, not as a mere sociological reality, but as a community of Christian faith, of Christian hope, of Christian love, for the glory of God and Christ. It is not a ministry of merely secular leadership; it is a "doxological leadership". The priest's tasks is one of authoritatively presiding over and leading the community precisely as linked with the Gospel, the apostolic tradition, the catholic unity of the entire Church, the Christ-life in the world. He is the public witness and minister of the faith of the Church. He is the officially-chosen and publicly-designated guide in the sacramental life; he is the official animator of the living and active Christian love and unity of the entire community.

## **POSITION PAPER ON EVANGELIZATION: JUSTICE, DEVELOPMENT AND LIBERATION IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA TODAY**

The joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears of GOD'S PEOPLE today, particularly in the ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA, especially the part of those who are indigent, voiceless or afflicted, these too are our own joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears, as their Pastors and co-followers of CHRIST.

With the Gospel truths in mind, committed to the sole intent of proclaiming the GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION and thus continue the redemptive Work of CHRIST Himself in favor of men under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT with the love of the FATHER, at this point in history, we look closely at the signs of the times, reflect upon them in the light of the Gospel, and herein declare our consonant pastoral task and thrust.

Wherefore, with christian love and understanding towards all, with no ill-will towards anyone, we, PRIESTS and RELIGIOUS duly exercising our ministry in the ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA in full communion with the CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP thereof, formally issue this POSITION PAPER as demanded by the changed and changing times and existentially responsive to our priestly and religious vocation TODAY.

### **I: EVANGELIZATION**

We hold that the dynamic foundation and eschatological summit of EVANGELIZATION is to bear witness to GOD as revealed by JESUS CHRIST in the HOLY SPIRIT, to proclaim that through the Paschal Mystery of the same CHRIST, all men are offered salvation as a gift of grace and mercy from GOD that has its onset in this life and fulfillment in eternity, to preach hope in the New Covenant made by GOD in JESUS CHRIST notwithstanding our human limitations and sinful conditions, to build and renew consistently the community of GOD'S PEOPLE, the Church of CHRIST, sustained by the sacramental signs, with the celebration of the Eucharist as culminating point thereof.

We consider EVANGELIZATION incomplete if no account is taken of the unremitting interaction between the Gospel truths

and man's personal and social life, between the Gospel message made explicit in time and the different human situations equally realized constantly in time.

We see EVANGELIZATION as a dynamic link between GOD and man, between the salvation of man and human history. EVANGELIZATION is for man with a life here and now — although not only here nor only now — subject to social and economic questions that are the concern of JUSTICE and the factors of DEVELOPMENT.

## II: EVANGELIZATION AND JUSTICE.

We commit ourselves to the pastoral service and salvation of the TOTAL MAN — his liberation from evil that also find concrete expression in various forms of injustice that oppress his dignity as a person made to the image and likeness of GOD, redeemed by CHRIST, and endowed with BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS that remain inherent even to the poorest of the poor, the nameless, the yet unborn.

We look upon the CHURCH as definitely a Proclaimer of the primacy of the KINGDOM and the transcendency of man's salvation in JESUS CHRIST. However, she does not and must not restrict her divine positive charge and salvific mission in the strictly supernatural and purely religious sphere particularly during these critical times, by dissociating Herself from the manifold temporal vicissitudes of the men of today. To so restrict the evangelizing concern of the CHURCH would certainly be easier on Her and acceptable to those who either do not belong to Her fold or do not understand Her nature. This, nevertheless, would be untrue to the totality of Her calling as willed by her Founder, CHRIST, in the plan of redemption in conjunction with the plan of creation.

We treasure the christian concept of men as brothers under one and the same FATHER. We join their rightful claim to JUSTICE, to more human, more equal and more sound regard of their persons in themselves and in relation with one another. At the same time we unconditionally uphold the imperative of their conversion, those in social authority and those thereto subject alike, less the germ of the evil inclinations of the human heart ultimately destroy the very JUSTICE behind their otherwise rightful claim.

## III: EVANGELIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT.

We maintain that the EVANGELIZATION of man is profoundly related with HUMAN DEVELOPMENT whereas the eminently evangelical New Commandment of Love necessarily promotes the genuine



advancement of men in justice and in peace. Our love of neighbor, which is at the core of the Gospel, urges us to be at his side when he suffers oppression and needs temporal liberation therefrom so that he may ultimately experience his true dignity as a child of the FATHER.

We stand for a HUMAN DEVELOPMENT that is centered on the Kingdom of GOD, that is rooted in salvation through JESUS CHRIST, that is consequently open to the Divine Absolute and eschatological communion herewith on the part of the evangelized man.

We subscribe therefore to a HUMAN DEVELOPMENT premised on the evangelical concept of man, affecting his life in all its dimensions, demanding his conversion to a new man in JESUS CHRIST. While others may also ardently search for JUSTICE and avidly promote DEVELOPMENT pursuant to their own personal or ideological convictions, the CHURCH equally speaks for JUSTICE AND DEVELOPMENT only as these are intimately linked with EVANGELIZATION — never severed herefrom — as She has consistently done across the centuries through well known PAPAL SOCIAL ENCYCLICALS drawn from the Gospel Truths and written down for Peoples as the SOCIAL DOCTRINE of the CHURCH.

#### IV: GOVERNMENT.

We feel a manifest enticement to adopt either one of two radical opposing postures in our pastoral concern for JUSTICE and the DEVELOPMENT of the People in relation to their socio-political life. Some would want us to believe that the present GOVERNMENT were altogether unjust and oppressive. Others would want us to accept that the same were all noble and sublime. We subscribe to neither of these options.

We adopt the position of CRITICAL COLLABORATION with the present GOVERNMENT. We firmly support all government moves, interventions and programs that safeguard the fundamental rights of all particularly the less fortunate and underprivileged, that promote JUSTICE and DEVELOPMENT in their genuine concept and connotation. We denounce any action by the GOVERNMENT, by groups or individuals identified therewith, that violate basic human rights, conscience in particular, that obstructs the observance of JUSTICE and the realization of HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

We believe that the **CHURCH** and the **STATE**, while endowed with distinct identities and areas of competence, are nevertheless **BOTH** responsible to the **PEOPLE** in their various dimensions as **TOTAL MEN**. We also believe that **BOTH** should so continue their respective self-renewal that, progressively purified of their human negative features they may integrally collaborate and harmonize their actions for the **TOTAL WELFARE** of the **People**.

#### **V: LAITY.**

We confirm the long standing truth that the primary and ultimate task of transforming the **TEMPORAL ORDER**, of making it more just, human and christian, belongs to our **LAYMEN**, particularly those in position of social authority. We denounce Neo-Clericalism that usurps roles and functions proper to the **LAITY**, that absorbs purely lay competences, and arrogates to itself expertise belonging to others.

We are called for service to the **LAITY** in accord with the **GOSPEL**: to motivate and inspire when there is indifference or apathy; to instruct and clarify where there are doubts and uncertainties; to make people realize the different charisms proper to their state of life as **LAYMEN** in the **CHURCH**; to help them organize into Communities of Believers responsive to the demands and implications of the **FAITH** translated into their day to day living; to provide them the celebration of **GOD'S LOVE** and **LIFE** through the Sacraments; to sustain their pilgrim to the **KINGDOM** with priestly ministries.

We pledge an **EVANGELIZING MINISTRY**, wherein our very identity hinges, and wherefrom our own reason for being emerges, draws its strength and acquires its direction. We however denounce Clerical Triumphalism that admits no human limitation and claims immunity from human imperfection. We ourselves are members of a **PILGRIM CHURCH**, which, on the other hand, is never abandoned by **CHRIST**.

#### **VI: MINISTRIES.**

We categorically uphold **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**, the right to **WORSHIP GOD** in conscience and in truth, as an eminently fundamental human right that must be safeguarded without ambiguities and equivocal pronouncements. The **MINISTRY OF WORSHIP** constitutes an essential element of our priestly comit-

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ment to GOD and His PEOPLE, who, through personal and ecclesial prayer, recognize their CREATOR and dignify themselves as Creatures.

We unconditionally commit ourselves to PREACHING GOD'S WORD to MAN as a WHOLE, without departmentalizing his basic needs nor dividing his life, but with no prejudice either to the transcendence of the supernatural over the temporal, the primacy of the spiritual over the material. The MINISTRY OF FORMATION urges us to constantly update our pastoral knowledge, to be well aware of changing human situations, to consistently draw inspiration and courage from the GOSPEL TRUTHS and the SOCIAL DOCTRINE of the CHURCH, and to speak openly to GOD'S PEOPLE for the correct formation of their conscience as individuals and responsive members of society.

We value SERVICE rendered to man as concrete expressions of Christian Love and as an integrating part of our pastoral concern. Following the very examples of CHRIST and the consonant multi-faceted apostolate of the CHURCH through the ages, the MINISTRY OF SERVICE impels us to continue attending to the needs of FAMILY LIFE, YOUTH FORMATION, CATECHETICAL EDUCATION. At the same time, with due regard for their persons and with utmost respect for their basic human rights, we maintain our services to the poor, the disabled, the aged, the homeless, the sick, the prisoners, and others with legitimate claim to our pastoral attention.

### VII: ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL PROGRAM.

We regard our ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL PROGRAM as evident from the foregoing: our task and thrust integrated by the MINISTRIES of WORSHIP, FORMATION and SERVICE can only be cumulatively directed to EVANGELIZATION, JUSTICE and DEVELOPMENT in favor of GOD'S PEOPLE in the ARCHDIOCESE of MANILA, through PERSONAL and COMMUNITY pastoral approaches.

We respect PLURALITY of PASTORAL METHODS in our EVANGELIZING ACTIVITIES, depending on the different and concrete circumstances of places and persons concerned — without the least prejudice to the doctrinal integrity and pastoral prudence that must necessarily be the postulates of all our pastoral actions.

We denounce without reserve, in all our EVANGELIZING MINISTRIES, the tenets of VIOLENT MOVEMENTS, of ATHEISTIC COM-

MUNISM, of MARXIST DOCTRINE, of MATERIALISTIC SYSTEMS, and any ideology contrary to the INTEGRAL CONTENTS of EVANGELIZATION.

We stand in unity with and in support of all our CO-WORKERS for EVANGELIZATION, JUSTICE and DEVELOPMENT as declared in this POSITION PAPER and envisioned in the ARCHDIOCESAN PASTORAL PROGRAM. We shall exercise due caution and vigilance lest our truly christian pastoral commitment and ministerial endeavors be deviated by individuals imbued with a different conviction and ideology, to a direction and objective other than that we are pledge to.

We adhere to the spirit in which PAUL VI closed HOLY YEAR 1975 and prefaced his apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" — the spirit of RECONCILIATION — which according to him characterizes all evangelizing activities of the CHURCH. We believe that for the GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION to be effective for the man of the twentieth century, the WHOLE CHURCH must try to repair and bring back to unity the severed bonds between MAN and GOD (Gen. 3/24); between MAN and HIMSELF (Gen. 3/7-10); between MAN and MAN (Gen. 4/8); between MAN and NATURE (Gen. 3/17).

We know that divided among ourselves, we are weak, and isolated from one another, we are weaker. With the BOND OF LOVE for the FATHER, instilled by CHRIST through the HOLY SPIRIT, united we shall stand and in close ranks we shall do the EVANGELIZING WORK which we hold sacred and imperative.

We take courage, draw inspiration and find consolation in the covenant of CHRIST who vowed: "REMEMBER! I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS TILL THE CONSUMMATION OF TIME." (Mt. 28/20).

### SUBMITTED BY:

#### THE ASSEMBLY OF VICARS

(Sgd.) VICAR OF STO. NIÑO  
(Sgd.) VICAR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
(Sgd.) VICAR OF S. JOSE DE TROZO  
(Sgd.) VICAR OF O. L. OF LORETO  
(Sgd.) VICAR OF STA. CLARA  
(Sgd.) VICAR OF STS. PETER & PAUL

(Sgd.) VICAR OF ST. MARTIN DE  
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31 MAY 1977

CONFIRMED BY:

(Sgd.) CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF MANILA

1 JUNE 1977

## VATICAN II: ELEVEN YEARS LATER

By

Pedro Rodriguez

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"The doctrinal wealth of the Second Vatican Council has set the entire Church, the entire priestly People of God, on a new, supremely hopeful, track of renewed fidelity to the divine plan of salvation which has been entrusted to it".  
J. Escriva de Balaguer\*

### I

In 1969 Hubert Jedin, the well-known historian of the Councils, was asked what was the historical significance of Vatican II; he replied: it is not yet possible to position the Second Vatican Council into the history of the Church — simply because we don't yet know the extent to which its constitutions and decrees will shape Christian doctrine and life in the post-conciliar period. Five years after the Council, Pope Paul, addressing the bishops of the whole world, drew up a sort of balance sheet.<sup>1</sup> The Holy Father pointed out that, thanks to the Council, there had been development in liturgy, biblical studies, catechesis and theology. And yet, 'many of the faithful are troubled in their faith by an accumulation of ambiguities, uncertainties and doubts about its essentials. Such are the trinitarian and christological dogmas, the mystery of the Eucharist and the Real Presence, the Church as the institution of salvation, the priestly ministry in the midst of the people of God, the value of prayer and the sacraments, and the moral requirements concerning, for instance, the indissolubility of marriage or respect for life. Even the divine authority of Scripture is not left unquestioned by a radical demythologization.'<sup>2</sup>

\* *Conversations with Monsignor Escriva de Balaguer*, Shannon 1972, n. 23.

<sup>1</sup> Apostolic Exhortation *Quinque iam anni* (8 December 1970), translated in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition), 14 January 1971.

<sup>2</sup> *Quinque iam anni*.

## ASSERTING FREEDOM

It has been said that in present circumstances "faith has been made more difficult, because it is more exposed and less protected". How can that be the plight of the faith after what Alvaro del Portillo has called "the solemn magisterium of the entire college of bishops, meeting in the most universal of Councils that has ever taken place in the history of the Church"? Hubert Jedin has said that Vatican II is significant because it marks "the opening of the Church to the world". I agree. And yet I think that from the point of view of Christian living, of day-to-day Christian experience, Vatican II has a much deeper characteristic of which the "opening to the world" is just a symptom.

I refer to the Council's clear and conscious decision to recognise, right across the board, **the value of human freedom and the value of that freedom which is proper to a Christian**; or, to put it another way, the readiness of the Council to accept without reserve the lawful autonomy of the person **in mundo et in Ecclesia**, in the world and in the Church. And with that autonomy, everything that it involves. It is in this area I think that the patrimony of Catholic doctrine has really been developed: it is here the Council can have a profound effect on the effective aim of the Church. However, this great option for freedom is also the source of the ambiguities and deviations which have been so common since 1966; it is also the reason why the faith is beset by difficulty.

## A RESPONSIBLE FREEDOM

I say this because inseparable from this option for the values of freedom is that other option, the other side of the coin, as it were: the hierarchical Church, meeting in Council solemnly committed itself to use every means available to **proclaim the teaching of the faith**.<sup>3</sup> Here's what the Council said in its Message to the world: "We will strive to present to the men of our time the truth of God in all its purity and integrity, so that they can understand it and adhere to it wholeheartedly."<sup>4</sup> It makes sense: if a person is not well developed, well formed, if he does not make a real effort to assimilate doctrine, then human freedom becomes something illusory and purely carnal. The **responsibility** which is characteristic of the Christian's freedom derives from his maturity in the obedience of the faith: only faith sets freedom free, for with-

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 82.

<sup>4</sup> *Message of the Council Fathers to Mankind*, 21 October 1962.

out clear and solid doctrine in one's mind, freedom becomes mere choice based on sentiment and passion — doing whatever one feels like.

In other words these are the kind of questions we have to ask ourselves: This calling to action of free men: is it not too often understood as a shedding of personal responsibility? And this Christian autonomy which has been given recognition: has it not been used over a wide area of the Church to justify a kind of arrogant adolescent explosion? And this assertion that Church authority is a ministry a service, has it not been used in many instance to pressurise people to abandon the exercise of authority? Are we not witnessing a call (in the name of the Council) for a "democratization" of the Church which has nothing whatever to do with the letter or with the spirit of its documents? Has not this recognition of the autonomous values of the world been too often translated into an abdication of genuine religious spirit? On the other hand, have we not seen the growth of little groups here and there who appoint themselves spokesmen of orthodoxy and condemn the teaching and directives of the Council? In other words, has not the Catholic community (both pastors and faithful) shown that in fact, as far as one can measure it, it is incapable of assimilating the doctrinal and practical implications of the conciliar documents?

## THE TWO COORDINATES OF THE COUNCIL

Eleven years have gone by and one is inclined to the following tentative assessment: up to now the postconciliar period has offered us a development of the option for freedom (increasingly in aberrant forms) far greater than the option for a vigorous preaching of the faith. The result: an obvious immaturity among ecclesiastics and great perplexity in the body of the Church. Everyone is aware of this, be they Catholics or not.

But eleven years are nothing when it comes to assessing the impact of a Council. The history of the postconciliar period has only just begun: and history is made by men in response to God's appeals. Christians have to write history with their lives; they have to make two coordinates intersect: the coordinate of freedom (personal autonomy) and the coordinate of truth (asserting and preaching the doctrine of the faith). The good results of Vatican II can only be achieved where these two coordinates meet. The time has come I think when it is urgent to refer to the coordinate of truth: in other words the effectiveness of the Council is intimately connected with the responsibility with which the Holy See and the



bishops, who govern the Church of God, take on what I believe to be their principal task at the present time (it is their task, and it is also the main task of all the faithful): **to protect and preach by very means the doctrine of the faith.** For only truth can generate that holiness of life in which consists the freedom of the children of God. In the rest of this article I will look at what I have called the "truth coordinate" of the Council.

## II

In evaluating the Council on two solemn occasions — on the fifth and tenth anniversaries — Paul VI has stressed this very point.

### THE TRUTH COORDINATE

It is interesting that the Holy Father concentrates on doctrinal fidelity and on the responsibilities of bishops as teachers of the faith: nor does he disguise his concern on this score.<sup>5</sup> The document I am referring to exhorts **each** bishop to bear boldly and clearly the **munus** — the office — God has given him. In fact the bishops were described by Vatican II as **fidei praecones** heralds of the faith, as **doctores autentici**, authentic teachers who "preach the faith to the people assigned to them, the faith which is destined to inform their thinking and direct their conduct...they make it bear fruit and with watchfulness they ward off whatever errors threaten their flock".<sup>6</sup> They are, the Council says, endowed with the very authority of Christ and, when they teach in communion with the Holy Father, they are witnesses to divine and Catholic truth.

Consequently — and this is a very serious statement that the Council makes — the faithful are obliged to submit to their bishop's teaching in matters of faith and morals, when given in Christ's name, with a ready and respectful allegiance of mind.<sup>7</sup> The bishop's teaching, therefore, must not be replaced by a private magisterium, for "the teaching office of the bishops is for the believer the sign and channel which enable him to receive and recognize the Word of God".<sup>8</sup> It must not be inhibited or intimidated or seek refuge in some kind of nineteenth century liberal fatalism: "*laissez faire, laissez passer; le monde (l'Eglise?) va de lui meme*". No: the doctrine of the faith affirms that the Church does not go her own way: she has to be led by the Holy Spirit and by its structure, built on

<sup>5</sup> *Quinque iam anni.*

<sup>6</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 25.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Quinque iam anni.*

the Apostles who are succeeded in every generation by a body of men, of flesh and blood, namely the bishops. Therefore, even though we know that the Holy Spirit assists his Church — or, rather, because we know that — the faithful, and much less their Pastors, must not fall into a easy-going "providentialism" which saps all personal responsibility.

### CHARISM AND FREEDOM

The charisms of the hierarchy — just like the charisms to be found in the rest of the Church — do not work automatically: they are gifts inserted into a context where freedom and grace both play a part. Therefore the real, concrete, historical acts (or omissions) of the Pastors and of the faithful when it comes to spreading the Word of God are of very great importance. It is true that God does not lose battles, but history is not child's play or a kind of puppet show worked by strings manipulated in another world. God has committed himself to man definitively in Christ (the indefectibility of the Church) and his word cannot be linked to error (the infallibility of the Church: the Creed, dogmatic definitions). Both of these are compatible with the fact that the Church, the concrete historical Church, can be drained and impoverished through lack of the living nourishment of the Word (doctrine). And the real preaching of the redeeming Word of Jesus Christ in a particular moment in history cannot take place without a self-sacrificing response on the part of Christians to God's grace. The deepest reason for this is to be found in the mystery of freedom, so emphasized — as I have pointed out — by Vatican II.

When he was in prison St. Paul wrote: "there is no imprisoning the Word of God" (2 Tim. 2:9). But we also know that this Word has been entrusted to man's keeping: it runs the risk of man's freedom. So, it is possible that a pastor of souls may be tempted to manipulate the Word of God: falsifying it (rarely), "selecting" it or simply hiding it or saying nothing about it. History has been all types of manipulation of the faith; more recently it has taken the form of a long night of what could be termed "naive providentialistic hierarchism" which inhibits personal decision and is the product of cowardice laced with love of comfort.

### HISTORY BEARS WITNESS

Let me give you just two examples of this from Trent and its aftermath. Francisco de Vitoria, the great Spanish theologian, held a position on the relationship between pope and bishops which

emphasised the role and rights of the episcopacy, the divine organ of these functions. He was not what you might later have called a "papalist". And yet, in 1545, in the course of a lecture at Salamanca on a text of Saint Thomas Aquinas he complained somewhat bitterly of the passivity of the bishops of his time in response to the grave doctrinal situation created by Luther: "only one (of the bishops) has written against the Lutherans" he said, referring to Saint John Fisher, who had been martyred in England. That same year the Council of Trent began and over a period of twenty years issued its famous documents reasserting Catholic doctrine in the face of protestant errors: and asserting it, moreover, with the guarantee of infallibility. But neither these documents nor their infallible character could undo the damage done to souls by the passivity and in some cases the ignorance of the Pastors of the People of God. As Vitoria pointed out the most alert men were not to be found among the bishops.

But history also bears witness to what the vigorous faithfulness of a single bishops can do in this field. Leonardo Marini was one of the main drafters of the *Catechism of Pius V* and one of the key figures in the postconciliar period of Trent. In 1560, when he became bishop of Lanciano (the Council was still on) he used every means available to ensure the preaching of the doctrine of the faith in his diocese in order to stem the spread of erroneous teachings. When he began this work, the situation was as he described in a letter to the future Saint Charles Borromeo: "I have striven to teach the basic elements of Christian doctrine to my priests and I have found no one in the city — not even one priest, secular or religious — capable of helping me. Some years later Marini's diocese was a flourishing centre of the Catholic Reformation.

These two anecdotes show how the personal decisions of individual Christians — and particularly, and logically, of bishops — have a decisive influence on the development of salvation history.

### III

I would like now to show how the temptation to manipulate the Word of God, to adulterate the function of preaching, has its roots, paradoxically, in the very nature of that Word.

## THE TESTIMONY OF THE FIRST CHRISTIANS

The preacher of the Gospel, so the New Testament teaches us, cannot expect the applause of the world: he is not preaching a worldly-wise message which will go down easily; nor is he, to

use St. Paul's expression, "a philosopher of this world" (1 Cor. 1:7-20). What then is the Word of God? St. Paul gives only one reply: Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 1:13). And the preachers of the Gospel? They are ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20), ministers of God (2 Cor. 6:4), but abused, persecuted, calumniated (1 Cor. 4:9-12), taken for imposters, experiencing tribulation and need (2 Cor. 6:4-10), treated as the offal of the world, the scum of the earth" (1 Cor. 4:12). The Apostle is of course exaggerating; but what he says derives from his own experience and reveals a constituent, permanent of Christian preaching: **it is not well received by the ears of the flesh.**

True, God's Word is "good news" which fills one with joy (Rom. 10:15) but it also brings with it a judgment: it cuts—like a two-edged sword; "it can slip through the place where the soul is divided from the Spirit, it can judge the secret emotions and thoughts" (Heb. 4:12). Hence the world rebels against the word or rejects it in different ways: "Christ crucified is an obstacle to the Jews that they cannot get over, to the pagans it is madness" (1 Cor. 1:22-23). Why? Because the Jews want miracles and the pagans look for wisdom: in other words, the world — "the Jews and the Greeks" — in so far as it submits to sin and to the Prince of this world, seeks only instant, measureable success (prodigies) or a humanistic gnosis, a new theory which offers an explanation of the universe which has man as its stepping-off point (wisdom). So it is intrinsic to preaching that it should experience rejection — with all the interior and exterior pain which that implies for the apostle, and a **human** sense of the futility — the madness — of the Gospel as compared with the ideologies of success.

**The immediate temptation** is to water down the Word of God — (cf. 1 Cor. 1:17), to reinterpret it so as to "suit" it to the "mentality" of the listeners and thereby make it "acceptable". To put it another way, it is a temptation to seek applause, to be accepted and cheered by the world. Already in the New Testament we find Christian teachers — false teachers — who fall completely for this temptation, yielding to pressure from their environment: "the time is sure to come when, far from being content with sound teaching, people will be avid for the latest novelty and collect themselves as a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then, instead of listening to the truth they will turn to myths" (2 Tim. 4: 3-4).

But the dynamic of evangelical preaching has another basic dimension. When he gives the Word of God in all its integrity, yielding on nothing, the Christian apostle experiences something else alongside rejection by the world: the comforting and indes-



cribable experience of the sanctifying effectiveness of Christ. St. Paul puts it in this way: "for those who have been called, whether they be Jews or Greeks, Christ is the power and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1.24). For this word of God, given in all its purity, criticized and rejected by "the Jews and Greeks", is what builds the Church of God and consoles believers: "if it was God's wisdom that human wisdom should not know God, it was because God wants to save those who have faith through the foolishness of the message that we preach" (1 Cor. 1:21).

## TWO WAYS OPEN

We can see then, how this tension between God's wisdom and human wisdom is something **permanent** in the interior lives of the faithful, in the life of the Church and therefore in the experience of pastors and teachers also. It's always lying in wait, this temptation to water down Christ's word; that is to say, to interpret Christianity as an earthly ideology (wisdom) and as a method of bringing about effective change of society (prodigies).

And so the Pastors of the Church in their preaching to the **Christian** community are also subject to the temptation to "please", to seek the applause of the world-present-in-the-Church and therefore to abuse the Word, presenting it in a way that will meet the approval of the Jews and the Greeks. Yet if they bravely exercise the "service of the World" they will see that it does bear fruit in the hearts of the believers and they will feel supported and comforted by their communion with their brothers and by their obedience to that sovereign Word which ought find in every Christian a true liegeman.

To sum up: according to the New Testament, the genuine exposition of the doctrine of the faith involves:

- (a) presenting a vision of reality which is based on God and on his supernatural revelation;
- (b) rejection of the Word by the "world" — bringing with it rejection and persecution of the ministers of the Word;
- (c) a joyful and liberating acceptance on the part of believers: this is a consolation to the ministers and leads to "communion" and the building up of the Church.

But if the servants of the Word fall into the temptation of manipulating it in order to avoid rejection the Bible paints another picture:

- (a) instead of Christ's doctrine, a wisdom and methodology of worldly, success are preached using Christian "language";
- (b) applause and praise (pseudo-acceptance of the Christian "message") on the part of "the Jews and the Greeks" (the "world" inside and outside the Christian community);
- (c) perplexity and confusion among believers, disedification of the Church.

(The reactions throughout the world when the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on Pope Paul's express instruction, issued its recent **Declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics** — 29 December 1975 — is a very good example of what I have been saying. It is a clear case of "rejection" by "the Jews and the Greeks" — inside and outside the Catholic community — and joyful acceptance by the faithful. The Pope has gone on record that he has experienced rejection and persecution for preaching the madness of the Cross and at the same time he has had the joy of seeing Catholics of all walks of life thank him for having confirmed them in the faith).

### GOING TO THE CORE OF THE MATTER

In spite of the fact that they are diametrically opposed to each other, on the surface these two approaches look much the same: in both the Word is "offered", in both there is acceptance of the preacher's message; and the preacher can confuse the joy which the "words of encouragement" (Heb. 13:22; Acts 13:15) provoke in believers with the praise given by the worldly-wise to the preacher of an "acceptable" religious humanistic ideology. Some ecclesiastics see as a symptom of the current "spring" of the Church the fact that non-confessional newspapers pay so much attention to Church news: "See", they "say the whole world is looking at us"; "public opinion is waiting to see what the Synod does"; etc. This is partly true: yes, the papers do deal a lot with Church affairs. But what these ecclesiastics do not realise, or do not admit, is the radical ambiguity of this attention which the world is paying the Church. Undoubtedly, sometimes it does derive from man's desire for God, from his presentiment (which is the result of grace) that he can find in the Church something which the world cannot give. But this attention also and especially derives from socio-political interest: to "the Jews and the Greeks" the Church seems a key figure in the shaping of history. That is why the various ideologies try to "seduce" the Church, involving her in their projects; that is why they show such interest in the pull and drag that is going on in the Church. It explains why they follow so carefully the debates

in ecclesiastical assemblies: when looked at from a purely sociological viewpoint, even a debate on the relations between the Persons of the Trinity has startling significance for contemporary social, political and economic affairs.

The world will try again and again to tell the Church what she should be saying, and the Church is constantly under the temptation to say what the world wants to hear. If she does that, the ministers of the Word will appear to be accepted by the socio-political ideologies of the time. In a subtle way the Cross of Christ will be robbed of its power. And yet superficially this kind of preaching is the same as that of true preaching: the word has been effective; it has been accepted. But what really has been accepted?

### A TOUCHSTONE

I think there is a touchstone, a test of the objective quality of the ministry of the Word. This "discernment of spirits" can be done in two ways, both of which we can see in the New Testament. St. Paul gave us the first test when talking about the doctrinal deviations of the churches in Galatia: "I am only repeating what we told you before: if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from the one you have already heard he is to be condemned" (Gal. 1:9). For him the basic standard for assessing the ministry of the Word was: exact agreement of preaching with Apostolic Tradition. "I taught you what I have been taught myself:<sup>9</sup> this principle which defines the activity of the preacher constitutes the primary test of the quality of his service. The Church over the centuries (remember for example the *Commonitorium* of St. Vincent of Lerins) has enunciated and explained the faith in such a way that if preaching is not at one with earlier magisterium it is proof that the preacher's is an evil "spirit".

The second criterion comes from a saying of Jesus: "by their fruits you will know them" (Mk. 7:15:20). On the fifth anniversary of the Council, Paul VI put this very clearly to the bishops: "In the clash of conflicting ideas, the greatest generosity runs the risk of going hand-in-hand with the most questionable statements. "Even from your own ranks," as in the time of St. Paul, "there will be men coming forward with a travesty of truth in their lips to induce the disciples to follow them" (Acts 20:30); and those who speak in this way are often convinced of doing so in the name of God, deluding themselves about the spirit that animates them.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Acts 20:24; 2 Cor 5:19; 1 Thes 2:13.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 11:23 and 15:3.

In the matter of discerning the world of faith, do we take sufficient note of the fruits that it brings? Could God be the source of a word that would make Christians lose the sense of evangelical self-denial or which would proclaim justice while forgetting to be the herald of meekness, mercy and purity? Could God be the source of a word which would set brothers against brothers? And on the tenth anniversary he insisted on the need "to transmit to Christians not doubts and uncertainties born of an erudition poorly assimilated but certainties that are solid because they are anchored in the Word of God".<sup>11</sup>

#### IV

But 'let us unhesitatingly recognize that in the present circumstances the urgently needed fulfillment of this pre-eminent task encounters more difficulties than it has known in past centuries'.<sup>12</sup> The special difficulty derives from a well-known fact: the Church, in other times, "lived in close association with contemporary society, inspiring its culture and sharing its modes of expression";<sup>13</sup> whereas today you don't find this close association at least not on a world level; this means that a serious effort is required of us to ensure that the teaching of the faith should keep the fulness of its meaning and scope, while at the same time be expressed in such a way as to be able to reach the spirit and hearts of all men".<sup>14</sup>

#### THE DIFFICULTY OF THE PRESENT TIME

So, pastors of souls are in a difficult position nowadays when it comes to their fulfilling their role as genuine teachers of the faith. For the permanent temptation to manipulate the Word of God can be yielded to or cloaked by the need (which all of us feel and which the magisterium of the Church has itself pointed to) to express revealed truths in the idiom and style of the new forms of culture. Some people are obsessed by "new" theology, "new Catholicism", "new" pastoral methods, "new" interpretation: these, independently of what they contain, are taken to be the last word, the genuine vehicle of the truth.

This dialectic between "the old" and "the new" could lead Christians to betray the function of preaching in two ways: by "selecting" from the deposit of faith those aspects which accord with this

<sup>11</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 79: translated in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English edition), 25 December 1976.

<sup>12</sup> *Quinque iam anni*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* (Pope Paul's italics).

"new" outlook and keeping quiet about other aspects of the faith; and by "saying nothing" about expressions of Catholic doctrine and life which are put forward as being "new" but which betray the patrimony of the faith. In my view this "selectiveness" and this "silence" are the two ways of undermining doctrine most typical of the present time. Paul VI referred to them both in *Quinque iam anni*. As regards the first he said that "we must beware, in particular, lest an arbitrary selection should reduce God's design to the limits of our human views and restrict the proclaiming of his work to what our ears like to hear, excluding on purely natural criteria what does not please contemporary taste". As regards the second he said: "in the face of the ravages being inflicted upon the Christian people by the diffusion of venturesome hypotheses and of opinions that disturb faith, we have the duty to recall, with the Council that true theology "rests upon the written word of God, together with Sacred tradition as its perpetual foundation" (*Dei verbum*, 24). Dearly beloved brothers, let us not be reduced to silence for fear of criticism, which is always possible and may, at times, be well-founded".

### THE BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Now I would like to touch on the background to all this, as diagnosed some years ago by Monsignor Escriva de Balaguer. This is what he said: "Little by little it has come about that any defence of the faith, any drawing of attention to bad or dangerous teaching, any pastoral, disciplinary or doctrinal measure in this connection is instantly presented (with the collusion of all external and internal forces opposed to the Church, each harbouring the other) as an impediment to legitimate freedom, as an attack on the progress of knowledge, as causing grave damage to the dignity of the individual, as something reactionary and devoid of charity";<sup>15</sup> with the result that "a considerable part of the Christian people have been made afraid of seeming intolerant, reactionary, and narrow-minded.

And many who have the grave duty of proclaiming the faith unambiguously and of vigorously rejecting errors, have been gagged".<sup>16</sup> In effect, great pressure is exerted by the mass media on the Pastors of the Church, presenting them as "progressives" and "conservatives" depending on the subject under discussion. I might use this opportunity to say that this pressure is the most modern form of the way the world seduces the Church, seeking

<sup>15</sup> J. Escriva de Balaguer, Letter, Rome 19 March 1967.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*



"wisdom and prodigies" or (it's the same thing) asking her to give her blessing to hedonistic or neomarxist humanisms.

None of these categories — conservative, progressive, reactionary etc. — can ever be used to discuss the life of the Church. Listen again to Monsignor Escriva de Balaguer on this in 1967: "...I have always rejected the suitability and even the possibility of making classifications or simplifications of this sort. This divisions (into integrists and progressives) is at times taken to great extremes and perpetuated as if theologians (and the faithful in general) were destined always to be circling these opposite poles. As far as I can see, it seems to derive ultimately from the belief that progress in the doctrine and in the life of the People of God is the result of a perpetual dialectical tension. I, on the other hand, prefer to believe, wholeheartedly, in the action of the Holy Spirit, who breathes where he will and upon whom he will".<sup>17</sup> It is not difficult to see that the systematic and continuous use of this "polarisation mechanism" is leading the faithful to have a radically deformed understanding of what the Church is; this way of looking at things derives from parliaments with their left and right wings and from the tensions and confrontations which are to be found in society and politics. Yet all it is just a contemporary form of old dualism which only allows the mind to rest when it has discovered the "metaphysical principles" of good and evil. In the contemporary ideology of "progress" these principles are expressed as follows: the principle of good is advanced, progressive and renewing; the principle of evil is "conservative, reactionary and integriste ... If a pastor of souls or an ordinary member of the faithful lets himself be manipulated by this dualism, he in his turn will manipulate the Word of God, through an unconfessed fear of not being recognized as a member of the "vanguard".

#### THE NEED FOR AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

From another point of view, the characteristic of this way of looking at things is precisely its lack of historical perspective — it has no "intelligent understanding of history" (Paul VI). The result is that the Word of God is adulterated so as to be in line with "the signs of the times": the present time is erected into a kind of absolute and the message of salvation is impoverished. And what is "progressive" and "advanced" only appears to be so; and therefore the Church does not progress, does not advance.

<sup>17</sup> *Conversations with Monsignor Escriva de Balaguer*, Shannon 1972, n. 23.

Cardinal Hoffner of Cologne recently reminded his fellow countrymen of the theological interpretations given to national socialism. He was replying to the question: Ought not the Church, instead of repeating crystallized dogmatic formulae, accommodate her teaching to the thought and sensitivity of contemporary man?"<sup>18</sup> After explaining following John XXIII, the sense in which preaching ought to be adapted to suit normal language, he pointed out that the theory that traditional statements of faith were petrified formulae which need a New interpretation was the great programme for "curing" Christianity preached by Hitler's theorist Alfred Rosenberg. And indeed in 1933 and later years, as Nazism went from triumph to triumph, the "advanced" thing among Christians was to see national socialism as a "kairos of divine revelation", and the "progressive" theologians of the time, scrutinising "the signs of the times", argued that the Gospel of Christ would have to be expressed in terms of these new social phenomena. All this is rather amusing nowadays — or even horrifying — but as Hoffner writes, "anyone who thought otherwise then was immediately classed as retrograde and rejected as a conservative". Some of the most advanced theologians of today were among those retrogressives who couldn't grasp those wonderful "signs of the times" . . . And Pius XI's encyclical *Mit brennenden Sorge*, which condemned Nazism, was taken as a sign of the "immobilism" of the Catholic Church. At the very least this should make us wary of playing with these labels of "progressive" and "conservative" — and it should stress the need for the theological rigour and a sense of historical perspective.

These categories are very relative: there are "conservatives" who do not conserve — the corrode; there are "renewers" who do not renew — they vapourise. The only absolute is the Word of God: only it conserves and renews, integrates and progresses. And the Word of God is essentially relative to the People of God who have "an inalienable and sacred right to receive the Word of God, the whole word of God, of which the Church has not ceased to acquire deeper comprehension".<sup>19</sup>

## LOOKING FORWARD

What Paul VI said in 1970 is even more urgent today: "This is not the time to ask ourselves, as some would have us do, whether it is really useful, opportune and necessary to speak; rather it is

<sup>18</sup> *Unbehagen an der Kirchen*, Cologne 1971, p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> *Quinque iam anni*.

the time for us to take the means to make ourselves hard".<sup>20</sup> We can see that the body of the Church did not react vigorously enough to the Pope's call, because on the tenth anniversary of the Council, five years later, he would write: "Is it a crime against other's freedom to proclaim with joy a Good News which one has come to know through the Lord's mercy? And why should only falsehood and error, debasement and pornography have the right to be put before people and often unfortunately imposed upon them by the destructive propaganda of the mass media, by the tolerance of legislation, the timidity of the good and the impudence of the wicked? The respectful presentation of Christ and his kingdom is more than the evangelizer's right; it is his duty".<sup>21</sup>

"All the objectives of the Second Vatican Council", the Pope said on the same occasion, "are definitively summed up in this one: To make the Church of the twentieth century ever better fitted to proclaim the Gospel of the people of the twentieth century".<sup>22</sup> Today more than ever: we must shed our timidity and inhibitions and decide to explain to other men the secret which we alone hold, burdened with defectivity though we be. We must give up once and for all the dismal apologetics of "we, too" and face up to the mystery of Christ, what our faith is all about, the peace which the world cannot give itself because only Christ gives it; he is our peace: **Ipse est pax nostra**. Let us not forget that the new pentecost of the Church, which the recent Council so longed for, will be a will-of-the-wisp unless, along with a sense of personal freedom all of us — beginning with the bishops and priests — carry out our inalienable duty to know better and to spread the teaching of Christ's gospel. For these — freedom and teaching — are the two coordinates of the Second Vatican Council.

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<sup>20</sup> *Quinque iam anni*.

<sup>21</sup> *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 80.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 2.

# MARIAN DOGMAS WITHIN VATICAN II'S HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

By

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At the sixth international mariological congress, held in Zagreb during August of 1971, Reverend Eric Mascall, the very reputable Anglican theologian, began his presentation with the following statement: "From a theological and from an ecumenical standpoint, one of the most significant statements made by the Second Vatican Council is contained in the brief sentence in chapter two of the Decree on Ecumenism which says that 'there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths of Catholic doctrine, since they have different connections with the foundation of the Christian faith'."<sup>1</sup> In the course of this paper, I shall again be referring to his paper which considers the place of mariology in Christian theology and provides an excellent background for my topic. I propose to explore the theological and ecumenical significance of Vatican II's 'hierarchy of truths' with regard to the four Marian dogmas: Mary's motherhood of God; her perpetual virginity; the immaculate conception; and her glorious assumption.

Our principal task is to present these Marian dogmas within the perspective of their role in relation to the central truths of our Christian faith and the divine salvation. I submit that the "hierarchy of truths" teaching from the Decree on Ecumenism calls for a contemporary contemplation of Mary in close connection with the triune God revealed in the Incarnate Word, our Redeemer, and also in intimate relationship with the mystery of the Church, the members of His redeemed Body of which she is a part. According to this approach the dogmas of her divine maternity and perpetual virginity are given a Christocentric focus in the truths of revelation, and the dogmas of her immaculate conception and assumption take

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<sup>1</sup> E. L. Mascall, *The Place of Mariology in Christian Theology: An Anglican Approach*, in *De Cultu Mariano Saeculis VI-XI, Acta Congressus Mariologici-Mariani Internationalis in Croatia Anno 1971 Celebrati*, Vol. 2, *Considerationes Generales* (Rome, 1972) 125.

on more of an ecclesiotypical meaning in the economy of salvation. Let me insert immediately that this is said to emphasize the place of the Marian dogmas within the context of the "hierarchy" and not to exclude the Christocentric and ecclesiotypical character of all the truths revealed about her unique role in salvation history. As Otto Semmelroth observes: "There can be no conflict between seeing Mary as the archetype of the Church and seeing her in relation to Christ. She is the archetype of the Church only because her connection with Christ as His mother forms the basis for the share which the Church as Christ's bride has in His work. Conversely, a Christocentric view of Mary is incompatible with any individualist conception of Christ and His work; it necessarily considers Christ together with that mysterious body which He has acquired through His redemption and which is His Church".<sup>2</sup>

It seems to me that this is supported by the very title of chapter VIII in *Lumen Gentium*: "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the mystery of Christ and the Church".<sup>3</sup> We must come to contemplate Mary in her twofold relationship to the redeeming God and to redeemed humanity. This is the central consideration of our paper which consists of three sections; 1) an interpretation of Vatican II's 'hierarchy of truths'; 2) an application of its significance for the Christocentric and ecclesiotypical character of the four Marian dogmas; and 3) its ecumenical implications particularly pertaining to the problem about the dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption as requisite for a unity of faith in the one Church of Jesus Christ.

Before embarking upon the first section please permit me a few more introductory remarks. One is that this paper, a relatively brief presentation of several questions and problems, should be understood as primarily tentative, exploratory and so designed to simulate discussion. The very meaning of Vatican II's 'hierarchy of truths' is still far from being precisely determined, although the interpretation that I shall propose is mainly a reflection upon comments that are common to other theologians. Likewise, the second section on the connections of the Marian dogmas with the "foundation of the Christian faith" is intended to offer suggestions for further development. At the same time it should help provide criteria to explore the ecumenical possibilities in the final section of the paper.

In this context our Mariological Society is especially fortunate to have Father Avery Dulles as Discussion Leader for my

<sup>2</sup> O. Semmelroth, *Constitution on the Church*, Chapter 8, in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., 7 (New York, 1968) 286.

<sup>3</sup> *De Beata Maria Virgine Deipara in mysterio Christi et Ecclesiae*.



paper. A little more than a year ago, you will recall, he made the proposal that the Church lift the anathemas attached to the Marian dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption.<sup>4</sup> Father Dulles did this on December 6, 1974 at an academic convocation in Xavier University, Cincinnati, honoring the retired Episcopalian bishop of Southern Ohio, Bishop Hobson. In his address delivered on that occasion, he appeals to Vatican II's hierarchy of truths' as one of the reasons why such an important step is possible. You will also recall that out of this proposal much discussion arose. Unfortunately, at least in some places, such discussion generated more heat than light. The fact is, however, that Father Dulles' proposal deserves serious consideration. At our last annual meeting in Atlanta, early January of 1975, there was much genuine interest among the members of our Society to investigate its meaning and implications further. In this presidential address, Father George Kidwin spoke of it in terms of a challenge to the Marian theologian: "The question of Mary's Immaculate Conception and Assumption reaches to the core of the ever-present problematic of the efficacy of Christ's redemptive work in this present world".<sup>5</sup> Obviously, at last year's convention there was time for only the briefest of discussions about Father Dulles' proposal, although Father Eamon Carroll was able to enlighten us considerably by his own positive evaluation in reply to questions. It is my prayerful hope that our theological investigation today will serve to explore further its ecumenical implications.

#### TOWARD AN INTERPRETATION OF VATICAN II's 'HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS'

The context of Vatican II's conciliar teaching on the 'hierarchy of truths' is chapter two of the Decree on Ecumenism which deals with the practice of ecumenism. After stating the need to express Catholic doctrine integrally and warning against a false irenicism opposed to the authentic spirit of ecumenism, the council points out the importance of explaining our faith in a manner that is intelligible to our separated brethren and elaborates upon this by adding:

...in ecumenical dialogue, Catholic theologians, standing fast by the teaching of the Church yet searching together with separated brethren into the divine mysteries, should so with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility. When comparing doctrines with one another, they should

<sup>4</sup> A. Dulles, *A Proposal to Lift Anathemas*, in *Origins: N. C. documentary service* (Dec. 26, 1974) 4, no. 27.

<sup>5</sup> G. Kirwin, *Presidential Address*, in *Marian Studies* 26 (1975) 18.

remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists an order or "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relation to the foundation of the Christian faith. (*Italics mine*). Thus the way will be opened whereby this kind of "fraternal rivalry" will incite all to a deeper realization and a clearer expression of the unfathomable riches of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

Without saying so explicitly, the conciliar fathers identify the "foundation of the Christian faith" in the opening words of the very next paragraph in the decree: "Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in God, one and three, in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord".<sup>7</sup> The mysteries that form the foundation of our faith, therefore, are the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Redemption; all the other truths of Catholic Doctrine are hierarchically ordered in accord with their relation to them.

The statement of the council's teaching in the matter is simple and clear, but difficulties arise when we begin to pose such questions as: just what does the term "foundation" mean in this context? are the other truths of Catholic doctrine to be considered as flowing logically from this foundation?; is it primarily an order or "hierarchy" of importance with regard to beliefs necessary for salvation?; does the hierarchy vary with the changes of history? is the "foundation" alone sufficient for organic unity in the one Church of Christ? Despite the rather enthusiastic response given to the "hierarchy of truths" doctrine shortly after its promulgation in the Decree on Ecumenism (Nov. 21, 1964), remarkably little direct commentary has been written about its proper interpretation. O. Cullmann said in an article that appeared in April, 1965: "A point which... seems the most important in the whole scheme for the future of our dialogue... I consider this passage the most revolutionary to be found in any of the schemas of the present Council".<sup>8</sup> In 1966 a German Catholic theologian H. Mühlen wrote an article on its significance for the ecumenical dialogue and used the Marian

<sup>6</sup> "...in dialogo oecumenico theologi catholici, doctrinae Ecclesiae inhaerentes, una cum fratribus seiuinctis investigationem peragentes de divinis mysteriis, cum veritatis amore, caritate et humilitate progredi debent. In comparandis doctrinis meminere existere ordinem seu "hierarchiam" veritatum doctrinae catholicae, cum diversus sit earum nexus cum fundamento fidei Christianae. Sic via sternetur qua per fraternam hanc aemulationem omnes incitentur ad profundiorum cognitionem et clariorem manifestationem investigabilium divitiarum Christi." *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 11, trans. from *Vatican Council II: the Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, A. Flannery, ed. (Northport, N.Y., 1975) 462.

<sup>7</sup> "Coram omnibus gentibus Christiani universi fidem in Deum unum et trinum, in filium Dei incarnatum, Redemptorem et Dominum nostrum confiteantur..." *Unitatis redintegratio*, n. 12, trans. loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> O. Cullmann, *Comments on the Degree on Ecumenism*, in *The Ecumenical Review* 15 (April, 1965) 94.

dogmas as an example.<sup>9</sup> In 1968 an entire book was written on the subject by a Protestant, Ulrich Valeske, who gave some consideration to the controversial dogmas.<sup>10</sup> My own interpretation of what "hierarchy of truths" does and does not mean is based principally upon Archbishop Andrea Pangrazio's speech in first introducing the idea at the council, upon Johannes Feiner's commentary on the decree, and on Father Yves Congar's more recent reflections. These will be documented in their proper places along with such other theologians as K. Rahner and E. Schillebeeckx whose writings on related questions throw considerable light on this problem. As indicated at the outset of the paper, I shall also be drawing upon Eric Mascall's thoughts.

On November 25, 1963, Archbishop Pangrazio of Gorizia, Italy, in discussing the schema on ecumenism first introduced the notion of an order in professed truths with a view toward clarifying the unity already existing among the Christians of different churches. After examining his remarks along with Feiner's commentary on the decree, we can draw some clear conclusions about the "hierarchy of truths".<sup>11</sup> First of all, it is a "hierarchy" of importance with the mysteries that concern our final goal being in the place of first or central importance. And so we might add to the primary or central mysteries already indicated in the Decree on Ecumenism — namely, the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation and Redemption — God's merciful love toward sinful humanity, eternal life in glory, etc. The latter, however, would in effect be really explicitations of the mystery of Redemption. The other truths of our faith are on the level of means toward salvation, such as the seven sacraments, the hierarchical structure of the church, the apostolic succession, etc. Such secondary or peripheral truths in the order or "hierarchy" are not to be considered as unimportant or any less true and revealed. Archbishop Pangrazio remarked: "Although all the truths revealed by divine faith are to be believed with the same divine faith and all those elements which make up the church must be kept with equal fidelity not all of them are of equal importance".<sup>12</sup> The criterion for the ranking, therefore, is not in the theological note attached to the truth or the formal motive of divine Catholic faith

<sup>9</sup> H. Mühlen, *Die lebre des Vaticanum II über die 'hierarchia veritatum' und ihre Bedeutung für den oekumenischen Dialog*, in *Theologie und Glaube* 56 (1966), 303-335.

<sup>10</sup> U. Valeske, *Hierarchia Veritatum: Theologischgeschichtliche Hintergründe und mögliche Konsequenzen eines Hinweises im Ökumenismuskonkordat des II. Vatikanischen Konzils zum zwischenkirchlichen Gespräch*, (Munich, 1968).

<sup>11</sup> J. Feiner, *Decree on Ecumenism*, in Vorgrimler, *op. cit.*, 2, 118-123.

<sup>12</sup> Text in D. O'Hanlon et al. (eds.), *Council Speeches of Vatican II* (Glen Rock, N.J., 1964) 192.

required by a dogma, but in its closeness to the mystery of Christ which of course includes the mystery of the redeeming triune God. According to this norm, therefore, a revealed truth that has not been defined may be of higher status or value than one that is *de fide definita*. What touches the very core of our Christian faith as to its contents is the heart of the matter in the "hierarchy of truths".

We might note here that two major modes of speaking figuratively about the "hierarchy of truths" have emerged. One is linear which refers to primary and secondary truths in the order. The other is circular describing the truths in the "hierarchy" as central and peripheral in accord with the image of a series of concentric circles. While both are acceptable, the latter seems to have the advantage of conveying the idea of a more dynamic interconnection and interdependence among the truths of our faith. And so we shall speak of the primary truths as the **central** mysteries, and of truths in the second or third rank as **peripheral**. What is essential to our interpretation is that we always understand the doctrinal content of the peripheral truths in relation to the central mysteries of Jesus Christ and the redeeming triune God revealed in Him. At the same time, the peripheral truths are important as revealed mysteries or dogmas intimately connected with the triune God's loving plan for our salvation in Christ.

These peripheral truths of our faith have a double function in our Christian lives of contemplation and action: they throw greater light upon the meaning of the central mysteries of our faith and also help show their practical application to our daily existence as believers in the world. Being truths about the means toward our salvation, such as the sacraments, devotion to Mary and all the saints, etc. they often make more specific and concrete for us the depths of the central mysteries. Reciprocally, these truths at the center of our faith give direction to those on the periphery, preventing them from losing their true character as media of more profound realities in divine revelation.

In what sense can it be said that the peripheral truths in the "hierarchy" are derived from the central mysteries of our faith? Eric Mascall maintains that the latter are necessary conditions of the former which could not even exist without them.<sup>13</sup> For example, without belief in the Incarnation, the truth about the presence of Christ in the Eucharist would be meaningless or trivial. He sees this dependence as more than merely a logical relation between the central and peripheral truths. Truths of the same periphery are mutually

<sup>13</sup> E. Mascall, *op. cit.*, 126.



related as well as to all the other mysteries in the universe of revelation. This brings us to the complex problem of how dogmas develop in the living Tradition of the Church, a problem that we can only touch upon lightly in this paper.

Indeed the problem of doctrinal development in the Church's Tradition is one of those theological problems that always merges with mystery. For just how the Spirit guides the Church of Christ in the authentic development of our faith is at the center of the ecclesiological mystery. With Catholic belief we accept the magisterium as a **norm** of judging what is and what is not genuine growth in accord with the revealing Word of God. It is, however, a norm and not the agent or efficient cause of dogmatic development which is the believing community as a whole under the impact of the Spirit. In principle there ought not to be a conflict between the infallible teaching authority of Christ's Church and the content of the revealed truth to which we give assent. Historically, particularly in the polemical period between Trent and Vatican II, too much attention has been paid to the formal motive of believing (**qua creditur**) and insufficient consideration given to the salvific meaning and spiritual value of the dogma (**quod creditur**). One of the theological contributions of Vatican II's "hierarchy of truths" teaching is to restore the balance by putting the peripheral mysteries in perspective through their connection with the central mysteries. It too, therefore, must merge with the ecclesiological mystery of our developing faith in the Church. And so we must briefly consider a viable theory of development in dogma which provides a plausible explanation of the way in which the peripheral truths of our faith are derived from the central mysteries.

Yves Congar emphasizes the patristic penchant for beholding all the truths of our faith as clustering around a central mystery:

The strength of the writings of the fathers... lies in their synthetic character. For instance, when they speak of the Eucharist, they never do so without mentioning the idea of Redemption, the mystical body, the church, our divinisation, indeed, some evocation of the holy Trinity. It seems that all is in all. The special genius of the fathers — and of tradition — is that they always see the parts in their organic relationship to the center, which might be called the Christian mystery or the divinisation of man. Early Christian art drew from the same source of inspiration: in one way or another it always represented the mystery of our salvation.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Y. Congar, *On the "Hierarchia Veritatum,"* in *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in honor of the Very Rev. G. V. Florovsky* (Rome, 1973) 411.



He immediately adds that "...even the more representative thinkers of thirteenth-century scholasticism were vividly aware of a centering of truths around several main articles and thus of an organic structure both of faith and its confession, and of the revelation to which it corresponds".<sup>15</sup>

Congar investigates Thomas Aquinas as one of these representative thinkers and cites several references in his works which contain his distinction between the two categories within the truths of faith as primarily the object of revelation: those which are directly truths of faith by reason of their content (*directe, per se*); and those which are such indirectly through their connection with the former (*indirecte, in ordine et alia*).<sup>16</sup> Aquinas' criterion for the content of revealed truths in the first category, or those which are directly the object of revelation, is that they are the mysteries of man's salvation or the truths that are essential to his fulfillment in glory: "...illa per se pertinent ad fidem quorum visione in vita aeterna perfruemur, et per quae ducemur in vitam aeternam".<sup>17</sup>

With Congar we are looking at St. Thomas' thought here not to find an explanation of how dogmas develop, but for certain criteria of what is central in the "hierarchy of truths". Although the approach of a thirteenth-century theologian to the problem may appear to us as an artificial scholastic device and lacking in a sense of historicity, it still evidences in the best of our theological tradition an instinct to search for a *divine* logic in the truths of revelation. It is a tradition which helped pave the way for the teaching of Vatican I which mapped out the path of theological study and is itself pertinent to Vatican II's 'hierarchy of truths': "Reason, indeed, enlightened by faith, when it seeks earnestly, piously, calmly, attains by a gift from God some understanding, and that very fruitful, of mysteries; partly from the analogy of those things which it naturally knows, partly from the relations the mysteries bear to one another and to the last end of man".<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Com. in Sent.* II, d. 12, q. 1, a. 2; III, d. 14, a. 1, qa 1 sol. et ad 2; qu 2 ad 3; *Q. disp. de Veritate*, q. 14, a. 8, ad obj.; *S.T.*, I-II, q. 106, a. 4 ad 2; *Com. in Epist. ad Titum*, c. 3, lect 4; *Compend. Theol.* I, 2 et 185.

<sup>17</sup> *S.T.*, II-II, q. 1, a. 8 c.

<sup>18</sup> Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Filius*, April 24, 1870, chap. 4, trans. in *The teaching of the Church*, K. Rahner (ed.), (Staten Island, N.Y., 1967) 36. Italics in the text are mine.

While every theory of doctrinal development in the Church is *per se* provisional because the Spirit of God ever reveals Himself anew and, "his ways being inscrutable to us" (cf. Rom. 11:33), we can never reduce Him to our rules of logic, still there are some contemporary theologians whose theories seem to avoid the rationalistic excesses of the past and to preserve the inherent tensions of the mystery in good dialectical balance. One such theologian of our times is E. Schillebeeckx who, particularly influenced by Newman's ideas, has overcome the logicism and historicism of older theories and formulates a theory that looks to neither theological deduction nor historical research as such for the principle of development.<sup>19</sup> He states: "The Church wins its dogmas not by theological conclusions from Scripture, but by rediscovering its own living dogma in the Scripture".<sup>20</sup> The formal principle of development of faith must itself be supernatural and of faith; otherwise we are not talking about dogmatic development but a theological development.

Schillebeeckx's theory interprets the *senus plenior* of Scripture as meaning essentially that the Spirit in the original inspiration put into the text of the Bible as a whole, an objective dynamism, a prophetic expandibility, which the same Spirit guides the Church as a whole to explicitate in the course of her salvation history. Thus he explains that the later Marian dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption are formally revealed in the biblical theme of the "Daughter of Sion" and not just virtually revealed. The Church came to an explicit consciousness of such dogmas only gradually and in light of the fulfillment of this theme in herself as the New Israel. Most especially she has come to see its realization in her most fully redeemed member, Mary, the New Eve, mother and archetype of the Church.

Another theologian of our times whose theory of development has also wedded well theology and economy, ontological speculation and historical facticity, is K. Rahner. We shall discuss its application to the Marian dogmas in the next section of our paper.

With a view toward developing them further in their application to the Marian dogmas, we may list the principal points in our

<sup>19</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Revelation and Theology*, 1 (New York, 1967) 57-83.

<sup>20</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Exegesis, Dogmatics and the Development of Dogma, Dogmatic vs Biblical Theology*, H. Vorgrimler (ed.), (Baltimore 1964), 143.

interpretation of Vatican II's 'hierarchy of truths' as: 1) the "foundation of the Christian faith" is the central mystery of the triune God revealed in the incarnate Word, our Redeemer; 2) these revealed truths or articles of faith are on the level of the goal of our salvation in Christ, those we hope to see in glory; 3) the peripheral truths are no less true or revealed; 4) such revealed truths are on the level of the means toward our perfect salvation in eternal life; 5) they vary in this 'hierarchy' of importance, not by reason of theological notes as defined dogmas, etc., but through the closeness of their connection with the "foundation of the Christian faith"; 6) their main value is in illuminating the central mystery of Christianity as well as being transparent to its depth in daily life; 7) these peripheral truths are dependent upon and derived from the central mystery through a development in the Church's living Tradition of faith, worship, mission etc. which transcends human laws of logic without rejecting the contribution of theological and historical research. This summary replies to most but not all the questions posed at the beginning of this section. For we must first apply the "hierarchy of truths" teaching to the Marian dogmas before making any response to the ecumenical inquiry about their necessity for an organic unity of faith in one Church.

#### THE CHRISTOCENTRIC AND ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE MARIAN DOGMAS

For the special purposes of this paper, it will not be necessary to dwell at length upon the Christocentric dimension of the divine maternity. We shall examine this dogma as the revealed truth about Mary that is closest to the mystery of Christ, the foundation of our faith, primarily in order to establish the connection between the other Marian dogmas and the central Christian mystery. Mary's unique relationship to Christ as truly His mother is the basis of her being archetype of His Body, the Church.

St. Thomas' Christological interpretation of the "Theotokos" summed up the Christian Tradition established at the Council of Ephesus (431) which defined Mary's motherhood of God as a dogma of our faith. He clearly affirms the intimate connection between her divine maternity and the mystery of the Incarnation: "...humanitas Christi et maternitas Virginis adeo sibi connexa sunt, ut qui circa unum erraverit, oporteat etiam circa aliud errare".<sup>21</sup> In several other places, the Common Doctor teaches the same basic

<sup>21</sup> *Com. in Sent.*, III, d. 4, q. 2., a. 2.

truth of the necessity to accept the mystery of the "Theotokos" to avoid any subordinationist misinterpretation of the Incarnation.<sup>22</sup> But nowhere does he state his case more clearly about the intimate connection between the two dogmas than in the *Summa Theologiae* where the realism of the Marian mystery preserves and illuminates that of the Christological: "Cum igitur in ipso principio conceptionis fuerit humana natura assumpta a divina persona...consequens est quod vere posset dici Deum esse conceptum et natum de Virgine. Ex hoc autem dicitur aliqua mulier alicuius mater, quod eum concepit et genuit. Unde consequens est quod Beata Virgo vere dicatur mater Dei".<sup>23</sup> To call her God's own mother in a proper (vere) sense is indispensably associated with calling Him the Word incarnate, the humanity of God's own Son in person. Thus, for St. Thomas, Chalcedonian Christology could be preserved and developed only in conjunction with Mary's motherhood of God.

This fundamental truth immediately relates the Marian dogma of the virginal conception of Christ to the central mystery of our faith. Its Christocentric character stems from the fact that Mary's conceiving Christ without marital intercourse is a fitting witness to the divine transcendence of her child who has no human father since God alone is His Father.<sup>24</sup> Obviously such an argument of convenience in no way bespeaks a negative attitude toward human sexual experience in marriage. Other theological reasons of fittingness have been traditionally given for the dogma of Mary's virginity. These are ecclesiotypical and eschatological in character. Figuratively speaking, the Church is a virgin in her maternal role of bringing forth and nourishing the adopted brothers and sisters of Christ through her ministry of the word and the sacraments.<sup>25</sup> And so another dimension of Mary's virginity reveals her in her role as archetype of the Pilgrim Church. Finally, being in a special way the model for those who embrace the vow of virginity, of religious chastity or the promise of priestly celibacy, Mary inspires them to bear witness to the ultimate meaning of salvation history in the eschaton or celestial Church where there is no state of marriage.<sup>26</sup>

Let us note here that Mary's virginity is not a dogma of our faith by reason of a solemn definition of the extraordinary magisterium (*de fide definita*) but as a result of the constants witness

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Compend. Theolog.*, c. 222; *Summa Contr. Gent.*, IV, 34, 45; *Com. in Matt.*, c. 1; *Com. in Epist. ad Gal.*, c. 4, lect. 2.

<sup>23</sup> *S.T.*, III, q. 35, a. 4 c.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, q. 28, a. 1 c.

<sup>25</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*, A Pastoral Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary, NCCB, (Washington, D.C., 1973) 46, n. 124.



of the ordinary magisterium and the *sensus fidelium* within the living Tradition of the Church.<sup>27</sup> It is, therefore, one instance where a reveal truth within the "hierarchy of truths" can be endowed with a rich meaning for Christ and His Church without being solemnized by the Pope or an ecumenical council. We have merely suggested very schematically some of that spiritual wealth which, of course, has been further developed as in the extension of her virginal motherhood to include all the redeemed on account of her complete self-giving to God for the sake of his kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

Before examining in greater detail the more recent Marian dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption which have been solemnly defined, let us consider their foundation in the virginal "Theotokos". Here we have especially much to learn from the Eastern Churches in whose tradition the "Theotokos" has always been the central Marian mystery. As René Laurentin remarks:

The best representatives of this tradition never seem to lose sight of the fact that Mary's virginity, conception in holiness, and assumption, as well as her present relationship with mankind are precisely the virginity, sanctity, conception and assumption of the Theotokos, or in other words, a particularly privileged illustration of the mystery of the Redemptive Incarnation. However, let us not exaggerate. I am not arguing here for a mistrust of formulae, or for an impoverishment of concepts. ... Nevertheless, do let us see these formulae, always, in their most essential, most theological, most Christological light, the light that shines in the word, *Theotokos*. In this we contemplate the most sublime heights of Mary's glory, and, at the same time, the sign and human reality by means of which God actually entered into our tragic story to make of it a history of salvation. In this mystery of the *Theotokos* we see, finally, the relationship, all of grace and love, which God contracted with the holiest, the most receptive, and the most cooperative of all the redeemed.<sup>29</sup>

The words of the renowned mariologist state well the need for a certain hierarchy within the Marian dogmas, with the Theotokos as central, if we are to grasp the place of the Marian dogmas within the hierarchy of all revealed truths.<sup>30</sup> Eric Mascall asserts that all else about her in salvation history flows from the function of her divine maternity which makes her unique in the whole

<sup>27</sup> F. M. Jelly, *Mary's Virginity in the Symbols and Councils*, in *Marian Studies* 21 (1970) 89-92.

<sup>28</sup> E. Schillebeeckx, *Mary, Mother of the Redemption* (New York, 1964) 80-86.

<sup>29</sup> R. Laurentin, *The Question of Mary* (New York, 1965) 143.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. D. Deitz, *Hierarchy of Marian Truths* (to be published in *Marian Studies*, 1976).



human race and yet relates Mary to all as the most perfectly redeemed. "And therefore the whole purpose in the mind of God, from the moment in which He called Israel to be His people and indeed far beyond that in His eternal counsels, was that in Israel there should be a woman from whom God the Son could take human nature and who could become His mother. It is not therefore fantastic to suggest that Mary is, in a particular way, the type of the people of God, the Virgin Daughter of Israel".<sup>31</sup> Once again we see that the ecclesiotypical dimension of the Marian dogmas is intimately connected with and dependent upon the Christocentric dimension especially in her divine maternity.

When Karl Rahner begins to show how the defined dogma of the Immaculate Conception can be made understandable in the context of the totality of revelation, he immediately observes: "Mary is intelligible only in terms of Christ... It may indeed be said that a sense of Marian dogma is an indication of whether Christological dogma is being taken really seriously..."<sup>32</sup> In anticipation of Vatican II's 'hierarchy of truths' he wrote down his reflections on this dogma as a truth that grew out of the totality of the Christian understanding of faith. And in that totality Rahner concentrates upon the central mystery of Redemption. As the immaculately conceived, Mary is the most perfectly redeemed. In her is the clearest revelation of her Son's saving grace since in Mary it was always victorious. Of all the redeemed she alone was predestined with Christ since as His mother, she was intimately involved in the saving event of the Incarnation. Her consent to be His mother at the annunciation was completely free and truly cooperative not only in her own redemption but that of all humanity. The fact that she was filled with the triune God's favor made her consent no less free. For grace makes possible the very freedom of the good act.

In her experience grace was completely uninhibited. Her loving faith and obedience was totally responsive to God's word and keep it (cf. Lk. 11:28); and she was able to be completely open to God's plan of salvation because He who is mighty so highly favored her and accomplished such great things in her (cf. Lk. 1:28 and 49). The saving event of the redemptive Incarnation found its fullest expression in her by whom God's "yes" of merciful love was received so generously. In Mary we find only grace. There is no guilt in her. The real power of redeeming love is made manifest in Mary. Through her the triune God reveals to us the undivided personality, the one who concretely shows that through the redemptive Incar-

<sup>31</sup> E. Mascall, *op. cit.*, 135.

<sup>32</sup> K. Rahner, *The Immaculate Conception*, in *Theological Investigations* 1 (Baltimore, 1961) 202.

nation of her Son grace has an absolute pre-eminence over guilt even in our sinful world.<sup>33</sup> There is a profound sense in which her unique privilege of the immaculate conception makes Mary more one with us as redeemed persons. It witnesses to the truth that we are born into a world that is graced with the new creation of Christ even prior to our Baptism — our own being immaculately conceived in Him.

Although Mary was perfectly redeemed from the beginning by the grace of her immaculate conception, she came to receive the fullness of the redemption only with her glorious assumption. In faith, however, we behold one as the **normal** finalization of the other. We might even say that her immaculate conception was her assumption **originative** and her glorious assumption is her immaculate conception **terminative** — somewhat as we speak of grace in reference to the beatific vision as **semen gloriae**. Again Rahner sees this defined dogma of the assumption as "only really intelligible in the totality of the one saving Truth".<sup>34</sup> He relates the dogma "essentially and immediately" with two articles of the creed: the virgin birth and the resurrection of the Lord. This, of course, is its inherent Christocentric dimension.

Almost at once however, we can contemplate its ecclesiotypical significance since the birth of Christ through Mary was an eschatological event in that it was the definitive act of rendering the world into an irrevocably redeemed state. His resurrection resulted **normally** after dying on the cross because He is the Redeemer who initiated this eschatological event in the world. It is indeed fitting that Mary, the ideal representation of complete redemption who took such an intimate and necessary part in that event, be glorified in the totality of her human being. For us in the pilgrim Church who believe in the dogma of Mary's glorious assumption, the central mystery of our faith in the redemption takes on the added meaning that one of us redeemed — at least one of us — is already glorified. A promise already fulfilled even in just a single human person is a tremendous motive of our hope in the Lord. In fact, faith in the dogma of the assumption helps preserve our belief in the reality of the humanity of the risen Jesus. The American Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Mary makes reference to this in the context of the need for devotion to her and all the saints in glory.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> K. Rahner, *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in Our Spiritual Life*, in *Theological Investigations 3* (Baltimore, 1967) 140.

<sup>34</sup> K. Rahner, *The Interpretation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, in *Theological Investigations*, 1, *op. cit.*, 216.

<sup>35</sup> *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*, *op. cit.*, 32, n. 85.

**ECUMENICAL IMPLICATIONS OF VIEWING THE  
MARIAN DOGMAS WITHIN THE 'HIERARCHY'**

At this point it should be clear that to emphasize the Christocentric and ecclesiotypical character of the Marian dogmas is not only of considerable theological value for the faith-understanding of Roman Catholics, but must also be of some ecumenical significance. Focusing our attention upon their intimate relationship to the central mystery of our Christian faith certainly helps meet the traditional Protestant and Anglican objection that we have put Mary into competition with Christ as our one Redeemer and Mediator. For far from competing, the truths about her in salvation and revelation history truly serve to give greater intelligibility and spiritual value to our faith in Christ and redemption. Also the 'hierarchy of truths' approach to the mystery of Mary makes us take more seriously the primacy of the biblical revelation in understanding any truths of our faith. Particularly with reference to the more recent Marian dogmas have we been remiss in establishing the scriptural basis for our belief. This has alienated even our separated brethren among the Eastern Orthodox Churches who have traditionally sustained their deep devotion to Mary.

In the final section of this paper, I wish to explore the possibilities of an organic unity of faith without requiring adherence to the two Marian dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption, at least in the sense in which they have been interpreted by the Roman Catholic Church. As I stated at the outset of my presentation, the occasion for such an inquiry is Father Avery Dulles' proposal that the Church remove the anathemas which have been attached to these two defined dogmas. My intent here is not to discuss the juridical act of lifting them. This would seem both possible and desirable: possible because the Church does not have to anathematize in order to preserve unity of faith; desirable both for the sake of a clearer atmosphere of freedom in believing the Church's dogmas and for its ecumenical significance as intended by Father Dulles. But we must be concerned with the consequences of his proposal. For in his address Father Dulles is proposing much more than a juridical formality — as meaningful an ecumenical gesture as it might be — when he says: "It needs to be made clear once again, as it was in the first few centuries of the Christian era, that full ecclesiastical communion among professing Christians is the normal condition and that communion is not to be ruptured except for very serious deviations that call into question the basic

message of the gospel. It is inexcusable for the churches to be mutually divided by doctrines that are obscure and remote from the heart of the Christian faith".<sup>36</sup>

As a member of ARC (the Anglican/Roman Catholic dialogue in our country, I identify very strongly with Fr. Dulles' deep desire for Christian unity and also have been laboring long in the cause of sifting out what is and what is not essential for our oneness in Christ as an ecclesiastical communion. In light of this paper, however, I cannot say that the Marian dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption are "doctrines that are obscure and remote from the heart of the Christian faith." It seems that the 'hierarchy of truths' teaching can have a double effect ecumenically: one, definitely positive, in making our beliefs more intelligible to our separated brethren in light of the "foundation of our faith" which we share; the other, apparently negative, when a peripheral dogma assumes a new importance in the 'hierarchy' precisely because it may be necessary for the proper understanding of the central mystery. Then, it seems to me, that we must be careful "not to throw out the baby with the bath". And so we may have the responsibility of discreetly asking our separated brethren why such and such a Roman Catholic dogma is unacceptable to their faith in case the reason does touch upon the central mystery or "foundation of our faith". For instance, Rahner remarks in speaking about the assumption:

Perhaps the deepest reason why Protestantism rejects the new dogma is because really it is only aware of a theology of the Cross as a formula for reality here and now, and not a theology of glory; for Protestantism this is ultimately only a promise, and not something which exists 'even now', although it has not become apparent. But for anyone who believes that counter to all appearances the forces of the world to come have already seized hold of this world, and that these forces do not consist merely in a promise, remaining beyond every sort of creaturely existence, for a future still unreal; for such a one the 'new' dogma is really nothing more than a clarification, throwing light on a state of salvation already in existence, in which he has always believed. That this state of salvation should be attributed to Mary in its entirety and fullness will not seem an impossibility to someone who knows that this salvation was born of her in virtue of the consent of her faith and in consequence has had its most perfect effect in her. The 'new' dogma has significance not only for Mariology but also for ecclesiology and general eschatology.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> A. Dulles, *art. cit.*, 420.

<sup>37</sup> K. Rahner, *The Interpretation of the Dogma of the Assumption*, *op. cit.*, 226-227.



Let me remind you that, for the most part, I am speaking very tentatively in this section with the hope that greater light will be thrown on the problem during the discussion especially by Father Dulles. For instance, it does seem that Rahner's point about the Protestant reason for not accepting the dogmatic teaching on Mary's assumption does touch upon something central to our faith and so essential to organic unity.

Worthy of some special consideration is the approach toward a plurality of interpretations taken by Fr. E. J. Yarnold, S.J. in a University Sermon which he delivered at Oxford, March 7, 1971. Before getting into his proposal, he makes some telling preliminary remarks:

I am convinced that it should not be a matter of indifference to a Roman Catholic how his beliefs on the subject of Mary will strike other Christians. Loose thinking about a hierarchy of doctrines may encourage him to feel that the doctrines connected with Mary are of the second rank and therefore need be no obstacle to reunion. It is surely closer to the truth to say that there can be no such thing as an inessential article of faith, meaning by that term an article of faith about inessential areas of Christian belief. All articles of faith must be about Christ, about the way he saves, the way he reveals the Father and the way he sends th Spirit to his Church. The onus is upon Roman Catholics to show how articles of faith about Mary cast light upon the essential Christian beliefs about Christ. They can be Christian dogmas only insofar as they do this.<sup>38</sup>

Fr. Yarnold's theory about the possibility of more than one interpretation of a dogma within the one communion is based upon his belief that ordinarily there are two levels in every doctrine, a symbolic level and a theological level. He calls the historical or quasi-historical formulation of the doctrine its symbolic meaning, whereas the theological is the deeper meaning expressed through the symbolic and which concerns directly Christ and the Redemption. He believes that it is compatible with organic unity to have some members interpret the symbolic formulation literally while others are true to the one faith by accepting only theological meaning. For him the theological level of the dogmas of the immaculate conception and the assumption signifies:

that it is of faith that God's grace requires human cooperation provides the conditions which make the human response possible and fruitful, and results in sanctification, so that the holiness of the church will be verifiable in the lives of

<sup>38</sup> E. J. Yarnold, *Marian Dogmas and Reunion*, in *The Month* (London, June, 1971) 177.



its members, and will overflow from member; and finally that all that is truly of value in human existence continues after death, when it is transformed in heaven.<sup>39</sup>

I find Father Yarnold's theory fascinating and even courageous, if not daring. The concept is good logistically, but the way he applies it to the two Marian dogmas appears to be reductionist. I believe that the special effects of Christ's redeeming grace must have really happened in Mary; otherwise, the doctrines involved seem to be mere abstractions. Obviously, I am not speaking about a naïve or simplistic interpretation of symbolic faith-language in which the *via negativa* does not adequately preserve the mystery. But, as mysterious as is Mary's redemption (as well as ours), a real affirmation about the redeeming grace of Christ must also affirm something properly (literally and analogically) about her.

John Macquarrie, in a chapter about Mariology from his recent book on ecumenical questions, comes closer in my opinion to a more realistic theological interpretation of the dogmatic content of the immaculate conception. He preserves both the Christocentric and ecclesiotypical dimensions of the dogma in describing Mary's receptive type of righteousness. At the same time he does speak of the immaculate conception in terms of a real unique grace in Mary:

So what is negatively described as Mary's preservation from original sin means in an affirmative way her enjoyment of the divine grace. The moment had come when alienation was at an end, when mankind had been brought to the condition of being *capax Dei*, capable of receiving God on the gift of the Incarnation.

Perhaps it needs to be added that in all this we are thinking of Mary not as a private individual with a private biography (though she was that) but as a public figure, in the sense that we are interested in her as a moment in the story of humanity or, better expressed, a moment in the history of God's dealing with humanity. Mary is part of a corporate history, and also part of salvation history. She is on the one hand in solidarity with Israel, and brings that history to its culmination. On the other hand, she is the first member of the new Israel, the Christian church, and already prefigures it. She is that point in humanity at which incarnation could take place... Though they may express themselves differently, many who are not Roman Catholics recognize the truth in the words: 'Blessed be her immaculate conception!'<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>40</sup> J. Macquarrie, *Christian Unity & Christian Diversity* (Philadelphia, 1975) pp. 94-96.

In light of this last statement I should like to conclude my paper with the brief comment that the validity of expressing ourselves differently about the same dogma of faith can be of great value not only ecumenically but also theologically. For a plurality of forms regarding the one revealed truth among members of the same Christian church reflects the inexhaustible quality of divine mystery. Several good modes or forms of expressing the revelation — when each is faithful to God's word and its development in the Tradition — should bring out more clearly the many facets of the mystery in order to enrich our lives of Christian contemplation and ministry. Since Vatican II's teaching on the "hierarchy" of truth, one of the main criteria for the authenticity and spiritual value of doctrinal interpretation must be its transparency to the central mystery of our faith — the triune redeeming God revealed in Jesus Christ.

# THE CATHOLIC PRIEST: DEHUMANIZED OR SUPERHUMAN BEING?

By

**Bishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D.**

*(Speech delivered by the Very Rev. Fr. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, during the closing ceremonies of the school-year at St. Joseph Regional Seminary, Jaro, Iloilo on May 13, 1977.)*

I wish to thank all of you for having invited me to join you at this the closing exercises of the school-year at the Saint Joseph Regional Seminary. I am always very happy whenever I get an opportunity to talk to my fellow-priests and fellow-priests-to-be, for we speak the same language and face the same problems. Hopefully, through occasions such as this one, may be able to arrive at some viable solutions.

One of the main problems facing the priesthood today is the crisis of identity. Priests, it would seem, are going through some agonized soul-searching. They want to know who they are, where they are going, what their true mission is. The age of materialism that they are living in has only complicated matters and the permissiveness pervading the whole of society has made their plight even more difficult.

## Statistical Picture

During the last few years, there has been a universal and steady decline in the number of young men offering themselves and their lives to the priesthood. To make matters worse, there has been a parallel increase in the number of priests seeking official laicization or — in some cases — abandoning their priesthood without bothering to go through the procedure.

The official process of laicization is handled by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In 1971, the Congregation published some disconcerting figures:

In 1964, it received 640 requests for laicization. Two years later—or in 1966—that figure had risen to 1,418. And in 1969, it zoomed to 2,963. In the Archdiocese of Manila alone for the period between 1967-76, there were 46 petitions for laicization. If you add to these figures the number of priests who simply left the priesthood, the total becomes truly alarming.

### Causes of the Crisis

There are, actually, three principal reasons for these mass defections.

The first, and perhaps the least obvious because it is the most tenuous, is the barrage of “way out” theorizing on the theology of the priesthood that all priests are subjected to. Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been a great deal of writing and discussing on the theology of the priesthood. While some of the writing is sound, scholarly and in full conformity with Catholic teaching, a great deal has been just the contrary.

Certain theological writers and speakers have recently been advancing views on the priesthood which are contrary to the continuity of Catholic teaching, views which show a pronounced tendency to be ill-thought-out and unscholarly. The situation is aggravated by the fact that, precisely because of their bizarre nature, it is these views which get the most publicity.

From a thousand and one magazine articles, television interviews and news stories, people get the impression that the active, real and important thinkers are those who advance the most extravagant, the most far out ideas. Thus, the impression is created that traditional Catholic belief has been dumped into the theological trash can and replaced by something which is off-beat, but exceedingly attractive to many priests, particularly the wavering ones.

While these so-called theologians differ widely in the detail of what they say, their overall message is remarkably uniform: the Catholic priesthood isn't what we used to think it was. It has been transformed from a sacramental ministry into a social ministry. Its roots are not in the divinely instituted order but in the momentary, functional needs of a given congregation of believers.

You will remember, in this connection, an article which appeared in the “Commonweal” under the title “The Anonymous Priesthood”. Its author, Fr. John W. Glaser, S.J., tells us of a conversation which he had with a sister who had some difficulty in finding a priest to

say Mass for her convent at a convenient time. His advice was: she should say the Mass herself. He said there is no objective difference between the priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. Anyone called to Christian leadership is — by that fact alone — made into a "priest" in the fullest possible sense of the word. He or she, he pointed out, needs no ordination, no conferring of a special sacramental character and power. There is, in other words, no distinctive sacrament of Holy Orders.

This line of thinking is echoed in the book, "Why Priests?" by Hans Kung which was published in 1972. This widely read volume, we all know, has been wreaking havoc and confusion in the minds of both the clergy and the laity.

The second cause — as though the first one were not serious enough already — is the psychological tension that the priest has to face as he pursues his calling. As Psychoanalyst Margaretta K. Bowers wrote in 1963, "all through the ages, the clergy have suffered from the insurmountable contrast between their very real humanity and the transcendent requirements of their symbolic representation as the priest, the Incarnate Christ". The priest, alas, is a mere human being, not a superman. He can only react as a human being with ordinary human powers.

But, the demands of the priesthood being what they are, the priest, despite his limits as a human being, nevertheless is under strong and constant pressure to be more than this on a fulltime basis. The resultant effect, they say, is that the priest turns out to be a neurotic.

And that takes us to the third cause.

The priest was sent by Christ to the world where he has to exercise his ministry. He must devote himself to his people and must make himself all things to all men, in the Pauline manner (I Cor. 9:22). Without being aloof, he must maintain the austerity and the reserve demanded by his vocation under pain of forfeiting his dominance and losing his influence over souls. To do his duty for Christ in the world and yet not to be of the World — that is the existential tension of the Catholic priesthood.

But what are the attitude of the modern world with regard to the priest? There is a whole spectrum of feelings which extends from deep respect to downright hatred. Sometimes, this hatred which the world has for the priest takes the form of a scornful pity. Nietzsche gives us an example of this type of thinking. "They are captives", he said, "they are marked as indifferent; he whom they call their Redeemer hold them under his yoke. Ah, who will deliver them from their Savior?"



But even those who do not go so far as to hate or to scorn the priests adopt a posture of defensive uneasiness in the presence of one. This is because the priest's mere presence troubles their security. They know that he is the titled representative of an invisible world, a world full of mysteries. And this world frightens them.

This fear, in turn, is reflected in the quasi-instinctive fear of the priest. He is for them the living affirmation of the absolute, and they fear that he will invoke the demands of this absolute to prevail against them. They are apprehensive lest they will put Christ in the center of their lives. And this they do not want to do because they feel that Christ will disturb the balance of their materialistic existence. Thus, they tend to regard the priest as a disturbance, an intrusion into their lives.

There are times also when the priest is misunderstood. In the mind of the rich, the priest is the uphold of the established order. But, should he denounce the established order because of injustices committed on the poor, he baffles them.

To the poor, on the other hand, the priest is a stranger. He is on the side of the established order, and he does not know what it means to be poor and to earn a living.

Then again, the faithful do not see their priests only at the altar. They pass them on the street, they brush against them outside their ministry; they take note of their weaknesses, their character faults, their little idiosyncracies. It is only natural, therefore, that the faithful should judge them strictly on the human plane. And then the real problems begin.

### **The Root Cause**

All these are not new things. I am certain that, at different times and in various ways, we have been asked about them or we have asked them in the silence of our hearts. There is nothing wrong in that.

What is sad is that we have not stopped at asking the questions: we have begun to live by these questions.

Why is this? Many reasons can be given, all of them deserving of our closest consideration. But the root cause, it seems to me, is the weakness of our faith as priests. Perhaps I could go further and say that the root cause is the lack of faith among us priests.

As a minister of Christ who is conformed to his Master by the character of his ordination, the priest is also, by the very fact of his priesthood, the man of mystery. And if, by this title, fidelity is demanded of him, it is only on condition that he be a man of profound faith.

The testimony of Andre Soares in regard to Paul Claudel must be true of every priest: "As the sparrow is in the air you are in the faith. You breathe it in with every breath you take, and you exhale it again quite naturally."

Analogously, a priestly life denuded of faith would be completely incomprehensible, even to himself. He would, furthermore, be miserably unhappy in his vocation, for he would feel nothing but the privations, and he would be oblivious to the immense compensatory supernatural riches that the vocation should bring to him.

This is because the priestly ministry was given to the Church in the mystery of Jesus Christ. It was known from divine revelation, and it is understood in the Church. There is no other explanation of the "why" or "how" of the priesthood. We accept the fact of the priesthood in the context of divine revelation for, if we do not, we would have no lasting, authentic foundation for further development. The mystery of the priestly ministry, indeed, is not a question which can be answered by the criteria of human knowledge alone.

### What Is A Catholic Priest?

On the basis of this faith, we know that the priest is a tri-dimensional being.

There is, in the first place, the human dimension. The priest is taken from among men, and he is a man, with the virtues and the defects derived from man's nature, constitution and psychology, from the habits he has formed, the education he has received, the environmental influences to which he has been subjected. **Ex hominibus assumptus**, because the priest is the representative of men, the bearer of their infirmities, participating in their hopes, united with them in their feelings, passions, ideals and in the needs that make up the woof and warp of earthly existence.

He is not, therefore, a dehumanized being or a superman. He is not extraneous to human problems and conflicts, but a man called, "taken by God", and put in the service of men. He is not an isolated but a "consecrated" being.

Then there is the religious or sacred dimension. **Pro hominibus constituitur** in his **quae sunt ad Deum**. A certain separation is included in the concept of consecration which involves an entrance, a belonging to God's enclosures. This gives rise to consequences of a psychological, spiritual, social and even physical nature in the personality, life and ministry of the priest. The being-of-God is the preeminent value to him, both on the ontological plane, and in conscience, sentiment, behavior, relations and even in the way of judging, thinking, living, speaking and working.

Everything in the priest is the transparency of self that has not ceased to be human, at the conscious and subconscious level, but has been transfigured by the conviction of immanent faith, at baptism and on receiving holy orders. He is, indeed, a man who is aware that he is ordained, constituted in and for the things of God.

At the same time, he knows that he is so for others — **pro hominibus**. The priesthood, in fact and in the strict sense of the term, is correlative with the offering of the sacrifices and other oblations to God for men's sins. In the Christian economy, it is a question of re-offering or re-presenting to God, in the Mass, the one victim — Christ — who, giving Himself on the Cross, obtained once and for all the remission of sin, and new and eternal life for all men. But to announce this redemption to these men and help them to have access to the sources of grace and perennially to obtain remission of sins, then it is necessary for the priest to preach, to administer the sacraments, to give spiritual direction and pastoral assistance.

### Priestly Way of Life

It is in accordance with these three dimensions that we must work out our priestly way of life.

Because the priest is a being-for-man in the midst of men, he feels the need for brotherhood, solidarity and friendship with everyone. And he must overcome every insidious tendency towards angelism, pharisaism and isolationism.

Because he is a being-for-God, he must lead a consecrated life, a life belonging to God, a life of existential worship of God.

Because of the fact that he is a being-a-man-of-God in the service of men, it is necessary for the priest to be faithful to the religious and sacred sense of his mission: the celebration of the

Holy Eucharist, the evangelization of the world, and the remission of sins. In other words, he must instill a divine soul in the human world freed of evil and to make man a participant in God's kingdom.

### **Last Word**

This, then, is our priesthood. This is the priestly way of life. This is the priesthood which forms the goal of every seminary and of every seminarian.

Permit me now to address myself to the seminarians: On this your closing ceremonies for the 1976-1977 schoolyear I can wish you no better gift than that you will be able to perceive this vision of the Catholic priesthood. I have really told you nothing new, for I am sure the fathers in the seminary have told you the same things with more fervor and authority. But I have spoken to you in the spirit of priestly brotherhood, and I ask you to receive my words in the same spirit.

Good luck to you, and God bless you. Thank you very much.

## **FEATURES**

# **THE PERENNIAL CONCEPT OF THE PRIESTHOOD**

**By**

**Cardinal John Wright**

*Prefect of the S. Congregation for the Clergy*

Christ is the personification of the perennial concept of the priesthood. Nothing Christ did is inconsistent with that concept. Nothing any ordained priest does can change the essential concept of the priesthood of Christ. Christ is, in fact, our only priest by nature; He was born as priest; He is the High Priest of the New Law, who personally brings together in Himself God and man and thus reconciles both, which is the essence of priesthood.

All other priests, we who call ourselves and are rightly called **His** priests, are priests by delegation, ordination and privilege. We are participants, by God's mercy, and the call of the Church, in a priesthood which belongs exclusively and by its very nature to Christ and to Him alone. This is true whether our priesthood emphasizes intellectualism, cult, activism, pastoral work, ecumenism or whatnot.

The very notion of priesthood indicates why these things must necessarily be true. A priest is a bridge-builder between God and Man. He is a reconciler between creature and Creator. But no human can fulfill such functions on his own, nor can he possibly presume to an office so transcendent unless he be called as Aaron was and deputed by God Himself.

Christ, true God of true God, yet true Man as well, takes by His unique position a place between God and man, reconciling within Himself the natures of both. He is one at once with the Creator, being God, and with the creature, being man. In His person are reconciled all that priesthood exists to bring together. They are found in Him by the very circumstances of His being. Christ is a priest as I am a man. He was born a priest, something impossible in any case but His.

Hence it is that Christ, Who alone is holy, alone most high and alone Lord, is also alone a priest by nature and by right.



This is not to say that the priesthood of His ministers is the less a cause of wonder to ourselves or of edification and profit to others. Just as all sanctity is derived from His holiness but is not the less wonderful for that; just as all salvation comes from Him but is not the less desirable for that; just as all sovereignty derives from Him but is not the less sacred for that, so all priesthood is His, but not the less enviable a vocation for those called to share it.

### IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD

Quite the contrary. The very wonder of our priesthood lies of course, in its identity with His. Such power as we have to save our souls or to serve others derives from the divine power of Christ's priesthood shared by His priests.

The unicity of the priesthood of Christ provides a norm by which we can best judge the things which every other priest is called to do. All priesthood must be judged in its powers and its responsibilities by the priesthood of Christ. What is priestly and what is not; what is the work of a priest and what is not; what is the priesthood called upon to accomplish in our day and from what is it bound to abstain; all these questions are answered in the light of the life and the work of the sole priest, Jesus Christ.

It sometimes seems that we priests ourselves have a very limited idea of the nature of the priesthood of Christ. As a consequence, we are prone to have an inadequate and inaccurate concept of the extent of Christ's priestly activity, and this inadequate notion, in turn, seriously limits the scope of our own priestly aspirations, activity and effectiveness or it unduly expands them.

A simple point will exemplify what I mean. A stereotyped image of Christ the Priest is likely to be the picture of the Last Supper. At the very most, the concept of Christ as priest extends to the inclusion of the priestly action of Christ on Calvary. The Last Supper with the institution of the Mass, the Sacrifice on Calvary from which the Mass and all things are derive their supernatural efficacy, these are the usual ways in which even we priests frequently think of the priesthood of Christ at work.

Stereotypes are never more than partially complete and clear and are sometimes misleading. The stereotypes concerning the priesthood Christ and the range of its activity are subject to this same broad principle. Let no one misunderstand. It was, of course, at the Last Supper that Christ communicated His priesthood to us, making it available to the centuries and to generations

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of men through the ministry of other men who would be Christ's ministers. It was at the Last Supper that the priesthood of Christ came into being. Christ functioned as a priest at the Last Supper, but He had been a priest from the moment of the Incarnation.

### MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

It was in the first moment of His conception that Christ became a priest. From that moment He was a natural Mediator between God and man, a supernatural being reconciling creature and Creator. In this lies the essence of His priesthood.

Accordingly, all the facts of His life, those on Calvary supremely but all the others too, are priestly acts. If we wish to know the works of the priesthood, we must therefore focus our attention on the Eucharistic table of the Last Supper and on the altar of Calvary. We will also fix our attention on the sanctuary and on the Eucharistic table which, in the Holy Catholic Church, perpetuate the Last Supper and Calvary. But we must also seek Christ as a priest in all the other activities of His redemptive career on earth. A wider concept and deeper understanding of the priesthood of Christ will then be ours and the priestly actions of Christ will be appreciated the more. Perhaps the result will be an extension and an intensification of our own activity as priests.

Christ was a priest when He consecrated for the first time the species of bread and wine, but He was also a priest when He was found as a youth disputing with the doctors of His day and seeking to answer their questions on we know not how wide a range of subjects. He was a priest when He drove the money-changers out of the temple but this action, too, has been changed into a stereotype.

### ALWAYS THE PRIEST

Christ was a priest when, stripped of His garments, He offered Himself for the sins of mankind on the rude altar of the Cross, but He was also a priest when He sat by night in earnest conversation with Nicodemus, patiently and tolerantly presenting to an intellectual of His day the eternal wisdom of God.

Christ was a priest when He forgave sins and when He communicated to His Apostles the power to do the same, but He was also a priest when He sat by the well at high noon and conversed with the Samaritan, a woman not of His own race or tribe, an alien and a heretic, but the object nonetheless of the priestly ministrations and the friendly influence of Christ.

Christ was a priest when he defended His own authority, the sacred authority by which He preached, instituted His Church, established His hierarchy and give His authoritative mandate to His Apostles and priests, but He was also a priest when He deferred to the authority of Caesar and counselled His followers to be exact in the fulfilment of their civic duties in deference to the duly constituted authority of the state.

Christ was a priest when the angles came to minister to Him in the Garden of Gethsemani and, acolyte-fashion, bowed before Him in the moment of His solemn sacrifice, but He was also a priest when He played with the children by the roadside to the dismay and impatience of His apostles.

Christ was a priest on the road to Emmaus when He paused to break bread with the discouraged disciples and when He explained the Scriptures to them, but He was also a priest when He was present at the marriage feast of Cana, when He eased the natural worries of the friends of the young bride and when He joined in the rejoicing of her family and that of her spouse.

Christ was a priest when He promised to His apostles and to His Church that Holy Spirit of Truth the Paraclete, which He alone could promise and which it is the office of His priesthood to diffuse in the world, but He was also a priest when He consoled with sinners for His own divine purposes and when He fed the multitude so that they would have physical strength to listen to His word and implement it.

Christ was a priest when He communicated to us, authoritatively and with divine persuasion, the eternal truths of God, but He was also a priest when He had the experiences which could only be His as a man, the human experiences which are reflected in the manner of His teaching, His style and His phrasing, His figures of speech and examples, all the delicate poetry and sensitive prose by which He gave outward expression to the inward wisdom of His divine teaching.

The human experiences of Jesus, those of His boyhood, young manhood and mature life are reflected in His parables, similes and teachings of every kind. These tell us so much about Christ, the type of life He led, the multitude with all their hopes, problems and pleasures. It is well to remember that in all these experiences Christ was a priest,

**"LITERARY STYLE" OF CHRIST**

It is possible and permissible to speak of the "literary style" of Christ, since He taught in human words, appealing to human emotions and experiences in His teaching. The discourses of Christ do not reflect the mind of a man who dwelt in ivory towers or who secluded Himself in remote academic separation from those to whom He preached. Rather, the sermons and the conversations of Jesus reflect a mind which was intensely practical and which, humanly speaking, had prepared itself to preach to the people by close association with the people themselves.

His was a mind which knew the worry of the widow who had lost a small piece of money. It was a mind which knew the conversations of the market place, the talk of the hearthside in the kitchens of the poor, the games of the children who play and dance in the streets, the language of the shops, farms and fields.

The priestly mind of Christ was enriched by the eternal wisdom of God, to be sure, but it was a mind which meditated that wisdom in terms intelligible to people who had to put new wine in old bottles because they could not afford better; who were used to patching old garments with raw cloth because they had no better; who were close to beasts of burden, wedding feasts, sick beds, and all the joyful, sorrowful and glorious mysteries of the lives of ordinary people.

**THE OBEDIENT CHRIST**

It is important that priests note carefully all these characteristics of the mind of Jesus, because they demonstrate unmistakably that He was not merely a priest when He preached but also a priest when He had the experiences reflected in the very style and content of His preaching. They remind us that He was a priest when He went from the Cenacle to Calvary, but also when He went afishing.

Christ was a priest in His miracles, His sacramental action; above all, He was a priest in His obedience. Indeed it was by His obedience that He was made a priest. It was not by His wisdom, nor by His power, nor by His sanctity that Jesus was made a priest. It was when He bowed before the mandate of His Father, emptied and took the form of a servant, becoming obedient even unto death, that Christ became a priest. It is in our obedience that our own priesthood is born and brought to perfection.

### PRIEST TO EVERYONE

Such reflection on the priestly actions of Christ opens up refreshed vistas for the increased, extended and intensified use of our own priesthood, since it is always the priesthood of Christ communicated to us so that we may use it consistently with His original priestly example.

To whom, for example, was Christ a priest? He was a priest to His own, the apostles, disciples and immediate followers of His Gospel. But He was also to all those into whose lives He entered, no matter what the manner or capacity in which He touched their lives. **He was a priest to everyone.**

So must we be. We are called to be priests to our own parishioners and to those who turn to us for sacramental ministrations or to hear from us the preaching of the Word of God. But we must also be priests to the civil community in which we live to every shopkeeper whose store we enter, to every stranger who salutes us on the street and even to those who withhold their salutation, but who pass along our way, to donors and to "beggars".

To what, by way of further example, did the priestly interest of Christ extend? It extends, of course, to the sacraments which He instituted to the Gospel which He preached, to the immediate, direct and obvious interests of the Church which He founded. But it extended much further. It extended to everything which comes within the compass of His Father's solicitude and of the sanctifying power of His Holy Spirit. It extended to everything that His Father has made, and that means, directly or indirectly, to all things that are: in a word to the race of which He was a member and still is.

### UNIVERSAL CONCERN

The great pagan philosopher said that, being a human, nothing human was alien to Him. Christ could say that, being God, nothing He has made was beyond the pale of His divine interest and being a priest, charged to reconcile all things with God, nothing that needed the blessing of God or that came from the creative hand of God was beyond the realm of His solicitude.

We who are priests must say the same. There are proper degrees in the directness of our interest in things and there are inevitable, necessary and wholesome areas of special priestly concern or of a certain priestly reserve. But everything that is human,



everything that is the fruit of divine creative action, everything that needs God's blessing or the hallowing of His Holy Spirit is the object of true priestly interest. **The priestly activity of Christ was universal.** He expects that ours will be of a like scope, just so it always be priestly.

If our priestly activity be as universal and as all-embracing as that of Christ the Priest, what a world of opportunity for apostolic achievement invites our interest and our energies. There is so much to be done by priests who have such a concept of their priesthood and of the true scope of its activity.

Every area of life, thought and action calls for the consecrated help of priests thus Christ-minded in their understanding of the priesthood. So many classrooms and lecture halls, forums and publications, poorhouses and prisons, eagerly await the word spoken by Jesus in the midst of the doctors in the temple. So many conventions, clubs and public meetings are willing to hear the voice that Jesus lifted up in the market places and public squares.

So many young people, at the age in their lives where recreation is both natural and desirable, would welcome in their play the beneficent, friendly influence that the priesthood of Jesus made felt in the games along the roadsides of Judea and Galilee.

So many spouses, vexed by graver problems than a shortage of refreshments, need nothing so much as they need the strength, encouragement and kindness that the priesthood of Jesus brought to the marriage feast of Cana.

So many sinners far, far more anxious for absolution than the world supposes or they themselves may admit, will shed tears of mingled contrition and joy so often as one of us is prompted to repeat the message of hope that Jesus wrote in the sand for the encouragement of the sinful woman.

So many intellectuals, poets, professors and scientists, far from being antagonistic to the good news of the Gospel, are in fact wistfully awaiting the invitation to come even though it be secretly and half-embarrassed, to converse with Christ's modern priests as Nicodemus once came by night to consult with Him.

So many "outsiders," alien to our ways by reason of inherited prejudices and misunderstanding, would give much, very much, if those who shared Christ's priesthood would only share His manner, understanding and zeal as these were revealed in the conversation at the well between Christ, the sole Priest, and the Samaritan woman of old.

**NO NEW CONCEPT**

Nothing of what we have said here is in any sense new. **There is not needed a new concept of the priesthood**; in point of fact, any new concept would, by the very nature of things, be false and probably foolish. But there is needed a renewed appreciation of the old truth, the unchanging truth, concerning the priesthood and its scope. That priesthood is not really ours at all; it is Christ's and his alone. We have it by participation, by delegation, by ordination. It is ours to use only as its true Owner would wish and in the spirit in which He used it during the days of His life on earth.

The Gospels are written for all men, for all who seek the Way, the Truth and the Life. But they have a special usefulness for the priest. They are his **Vade Mecum**; they provide him with a rule of life, a perfect pattern for the proper use of the priesthood he is privileged to share.

If anyone ask what activities become the good priest, let him read the words and works of Jesus as these are contained in the New Testament. There he shall find his answer.

## **FEATURES**

# **THE MYSTERY OF MARY AND THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD**

**By**

**Rev. Marie-Joseph Nicolas, O.P.**

It cannot be unintentional that St. Luke mentioned the presence of Mary "with some women and with the brothers of Jesus" in the group of the hundred and twenty disciples gathered round the Eleven waiting for the Holy Spirit. Nor is it unintentional that the Gospel of John will state she was already there at the foot of the Cross on which Jesus was dying and that He had given her as mother to his beloved disciple. The presence and participation of Mary at the moment of the completion of the foundation of the Church, which the event of Pentecost was is part of her mystery. It is the natural consequence of the role she played in the carrying out of the Incarnation and Redemption. Jesus did not leave the earth without bequeathing his mother to his Church. Once more, therefore, Luke has discreetly used a feature of the Johannine tradition.

This sole and fleeting appearance of Mary in the Acts of the Apostles is followed, however, by her complete disappearance from the scene. When Peter gets up to raise the problem of the replacement of Judas, he does not envisage the possibility of a woman, either Mary or any other being chosen. "So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us — one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection" (1, 21).

Actually, the first witnesses of the Resurrection had been women, but Mary was not one of them, or at least that is not said. She is not even explicitly mentioned among the women who followed Jesus during his ministry. Nor among the ones whose name and memory have been preserved in the New Testament thanks to the letters of Paul or the events narrated by the Acts of the Apostles. Her testimony, it is true, can be sensed in the childhood stories which cannot be read without listening to her herself: "she kept all these

things, pondering them in her heart", in his fine book on "Jesus and his Mother" showed clearly that Luke must have received from Johannine circles echoes of Mary's confidences. And it is not an excess of imagination to see in her the inspirer of the evangelist of the World Incarnate.

### MARY HAD NO MINISTERIAL ROLE

But nothing in Mary's role within the Church was public, nothing can be likened to a participation in the kerygma. In the Church of Pentecost, Mary had no ministerial or hierarchical role. She did not preach, she did not administer the sacraments, she did not preside over the assemblies. She was not one of those entrusted with the "opus ministerii", thanks to which, according to the Apostle, the Church builds herself up, so to speak by herself until she reaches the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4, 12:13).

Why? The fact is that the Mystery peculiar to Mary implies not an exclusion, but a surpassing of the ministerial priesthood, because it lies at a deeper level, at the very source of everything that will be ecclesial participation. What seems not to belong to her, such as sacramental power, hierarchical authority and the mission of teaching, is ministerial only in relation to the acts themselves through which our salvation was accomplished. Mary cooperated in that directly and immediately. She was involved in the very things that are the foundation of the sacramental order, which she then entered humbly. She alone was associated with the original events of which the sacramental order is the reactualization. The very reality that the Eucharist signifies and contains, namely the body of Christ, began in her and through her. She was present and participant in the unique Sacrifice of which each Mass is the offering. Everything she lived sacramentally at the heart of the Church was only the deepening of what she had first lived in its historical reality. So there was a unique perfection, not comparable with any other, in her way of reaching reality through the sacrament. But her specific role was to be associated with the constitutive Reality, not to be the minister of the sacramental reactualization of the latter.

What is the priest, if not the sacrament, that, is, the sign and instrument of Christ coming to his Church to incorporate her in himself and shower grace upon her? A mere sign and instrument before whom Mary will keep to the end the place that was hers in the Incarnation and Redemption: the very place of the Church, of which she is the pure and perfect personal realization.

That does not mean that in this way Mary does not participate in the Priesthood of Christ. But it is in the sense in which this is said of the whole Church, of every Christian. As André Feuillet shows with deep insight in the above mentioned book, it is a question for Mary not of the ministerial priesthood, but of the common, universal priesthood. What is part of the very being of the Church and of every Christian is fulfilled in her, in fact, for the first time and in an absolutely perfect way.

### THE NEW CREATION

The Church is the creation of Christ: she is the new creation of mankind, but she is also the Bride, associated with the very act through which he creates her and saves her, having to take part with the complete offering of herself in the unique Sacrifice of which the Eucharist is the sacrament. Whether it is a question of the sacrificial offering of herself or of the irradiation of truth and grace among men, the Church is entirely, therefore, a priestly community, but whose Leader is Christ.

That is true of each of her members. But of none in the same way as Mary. She alone, in fact having participated in the Incarnation through her personal adherence and the very gift of her being, participated in the redeeming Sacrifice, of which that of the Church and of Christians is the imitation and continuation. Moreover, her personal sacrifice cannot be separated from that of Christ. She had no other human life to live and offer unto the last torture of Calvary than the human life of her Son. So that in the order of the common Priesthood, she is absolutely the first.

### WHO NOT WOMEN PRIESTS?

However, if the ministerial priesthood is surpassed in Mary by the very excellence with which the common priesthood is fulfilled in her, she is a supereminent model for it. As the Fathers used to say the Church begets the faithful, that is, in fact, she begets Christ in them, through the Sacraments and the Word, as Mary had begotten Christ in the physical being. So it is the same for the priest in his specific ministry as for Mary in hers: it would be of no use to him to be an instrument of Christ's presence and action or to exercise authority in his name, if he did not conform his soul and his life to Him whose sacrament he is. Similarly it would be of no profit to Mary, to her personal greatness and value, to be the Mother of Jesus, if she were not his Mother with all her



faith and her love, with all her soul. Just as grace accompanies her motherhood to give it all its strength of union with the World Incarnate, so grace accompanies the ministerial priesthood to give it all its strength of union and conformity with Christ. This shows the place Mary has at the very heart of the ministerial priesthood through her example, her intercession and her spiritual influence.

The situation of women as such in the Church cannot of course, be reduced purely and simply to the unique case of Mary. However deeply Mary's role in the work of salvation is bound up with her femininity, it is peculiar to her. Her extraordinary self-effacement in the Church which was set up while the very mystery of the Church was being fulfilled in her, befits her not because she is a woman, but because being a woman she is the mother of Christ and therefore associated with his deepest action at the heart of beings. This role is in keeping with her motherhood. To this degree and in this form, it belongs to her alone. It is certainly exemplary for all those who, according to the brilliant expression of Theresa of Lisieux, 'have wished to be, in the body of the Holy Church, the heart love'. But that is not specific to woman, just as action is not specific to man.

We know (or we say so better since Vatican II) that every Christian, even if he is not invested with a ministry, has a vital role to play in the transmission of faith in the celebration of the sacraments, in the evangelization of the whole human world. The Church's mission is carried out only through the inseparable interaction of the Christian people and the ministerial priesthood. With the action of the latter there must be united the life and action of those who have no authority, nor even anything that separates them visibly from secular things. How could we understand the development of living tradition and the history of the Faith without the action of the Holy Spirit in all the members of the Church? And in this field, which is that of the common priesthood in its active aspect, there must be no discrimination between man and woman in the Church, but just the complementarity of gifts and possibilities.

#### **SUPEREMINENT MODEL**

The status of woman in the Church is linked in the first place with that of the laity, within which her specific role should have even a more extensive field than in any other society, the things of God being above all the things of life. It is not to minimize the greatness of the ministerial priesthood and its value as union with Christ, to deny that it is a kind of superior realization of the

Christian status, whereas the latter is already priestly, albeit in a different way, and its excellence is measured by charity alone.

This has a bearing on the question so often posed today: why not for woman too? It is not a question here of dealing with this problem in all its range, but simply of asking ourselves whether the mystery of Mary cannot in some way throw light on it.

It is only too clear that it is absolutely not a question of applying to the organization of the Church what can be said of the role of woman in human society. The priesthood cannot be compared with any human social role. The ministerial priesthood on which alone is based all the authority that exists in the Church, is a "sacramental" priesthood: it is what it represents that measures what it realizes. What it represents, that of which it carries within itself the power is Christ himself, in his relationship to the Church. The problem is not to know if man is more gifted than woman to serve as an instrument for this action of Christ upon his Church. What is asked of his masculinity and of the type of relationship it creates between him and the world, between him and other human beings, is to represent Christ in his role as principle of grace, in the act through which he incorporates his Church within himself.

### THE MYSTERY OF MARY

The answer to that would be that woman represents the Church. And it is here that we find again the mystery of Mary. It was just as a woman that she was not only "utilized" for the Incarnation but also associated in her whole being with the Saviour of the world. And it is, therefore, the meaning of woman that is revealed in the mystery of the New Eve. It would not be fulfilled in the ministerial priesthood, but in an action more closely connected with the nature of woman and the power of reaching God and acting on human nature which is revealed in the mystery of Mary. We cannot say that the ministerial priesthood is reserved for men without thinking at the same time that the nuptial and material mystery of the Church is called to be fulfilled in every woman, as it was perfectly fulfilled in Mary first of all.

# HOMILETICS

by

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

## I. BIBLICAL NOTES FOR HOMILIES

### Solemnity of all Saints (November 1, 1977)

**First Reading:** Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

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

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

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

**Gospel Reading:** In this first of the five discourses in Matthew's Gospel, called "the sermon on the Mount", Jesus is introduced as the New Moses on another mountain (in contrast to Sinai), bringing law and revelation to completion in the perfection of love. The beatitudes present the new spirit demanded of all Christ's followers. Their motivation is not temporal but pertains to the

end-kingdom: possess the land (messianic blessings), be comforted (with God's victory over all evil forces), see God (in vision), be filled (with divine delights). All these are various aspects of salvation and fulfillment brought by Christ, but to be fully realized in the final Reign of God. The original number in Matthew may have been seven, for he shows a preference throughout the Gospel for that sacred covenant-number. The "meek" seems to be an explanatory marginal gloss of the "poor in spirit", thus reducing eight to seven, while the ninth is an elaboration of the present eighth. "Poor in spirit" are not the poor as such, but those who in the midst of their privation place all their trust in God, and are submissive to his will, the "anawin" who are Israel's poor but holy ones.

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

### Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (November 6, 1977)

**First Reading:** Second Maccabees 7: 1-2, 9-14  
**Second Reading:** Second Thessalonians 2: 15 to 3: 5  
**Gospel Reading:** Luke 20: 27-38 (or 27: 34-38)

**First Reading:** Second Maccabees is in its make-up not strict history, but inventive midrash. Accounts are woven around known personalities, with the express purpose of edification. In a remarkable anecdote of the arrest, barbarous treatment and unflinching fidelity of a mother with her seven sons in face of death, the author offers his readers the theology of martyrdom, and at the same time the firm belief in Maccabean times in the resurrection (even of the body). All who read this glowing account will be inspired to follow the example of these noble martyrs who rather would die than offend against God's Law.

**Gospel Reading:** The Sadducees belonged to the rich, worldly-minded priestly caste in Israel. They denied the resurrection (and in this they were at variance with the Pharisees). They thought that Jesus would be unable to solve their clever case built up on

"levirate marriage" of Dt. 25:5-10, which prescribes that a man must marry his deceased brother's wife in order to raise up offspring for him.

Jesus revealed their ignorance of the life to come. Marriage is necessary on this life for the preservation of the race, but in heaven all live forever as sons of God for God alone, and marriage is no longer needed. Christ then in his turn show up the false views of the Sadducees, by proving the fact of the resurrection: they themselves invoke the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But God is God of living persons, not of those who no longer exist. The patriarchs are alive and living for God.

**Second Reading:** An outpouring of prayer. First, it is Paul's inmost desire that the Savior and the Father himself enable them to live the Christ-life fully. Further, that the Good News be widely acclaimed, unhindered by the wiles of those who oppose it. And finally, that the Lord himself preserve them in the teaching enjoined by Paul. Not all have the faith, but the Lord himself will preserve it in the Church. In conclusion, a climaxing petition that they be ruled by God's love and Christ's faithfulness.

### Thirty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (November 13, 1977)

**First Reading:** Malachi 4: 1-2a (3:19-20).

**Second Reading:** Second Thessalonians 3: 7-12

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 21: 5-19

**First Reading:** A description of Judgment Day, symbolized by blazing fire which utterly purifies the world of evil (cf. Is. 30:27). The wicked will perish, insofar as their doings in this world is concerned. But just as the sun brings healing by its rays, so will he whom the sun symbolizes, namely, Christ who is the Light of the world (Jn 8-12), heal with righteousness all who accept his influence. Already in Second Isaiah (46:13), the Lord promised to "bring on his justice and put salvation within Zion", an evident reference to the Savior.

**Gospel Reading:** In all three synoptic gospels, the fall of Jerusalem and the consummation of the world are woven together in prophetic compenetration, since they are vitally related to one another, the former being the judgment against unbelieving Judaism, and the latter the judgment against the unbelieving nations. Moreover, the former is a prefiguring of the latter, so that details refer at times to both events with their own peculiar fulfillment.



Luke, however, clearly distinguishes the signs preceeding the fall of Jerusalem (false prophets and frequent wars) from the signs preceeding the consummation of the world. This would indicate that he wrote the gospel after the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), when the first signs had already been witnessed. The signs of the consummation are:

- 1) Universal war among nations bringing about chaos, combined with frequent natural catastrophes as well as great social upheavals symbolized by cosmic occurrences).
- 2) persecution because of the Christian faith.
- 3) betrayal by members of one's own family.
- 4) hatred by all fellowmen, and death martyrdom) for some.

The Christians by their steadfast endurance will win the victory (v. 19). They may not escape death, but eternal life is theirs for a certainty. They will have no difficulty responding to the charges against them (v. 15), for the Holy Spirit will stand by them with the right answer (Lk. 12:14).

**Second Reading:** In expectation of an imminent Second Coming of Christ, some of the converts at Thessalonika sat around idly wasting their time, and living off the charity of the community. Paul strongly rebukes this conduct. His advice is clear: If one does not work, he shall not be given to eat. Let everyone imitate Paul in this matter who gave himself up to daily manual labor, so as not to be dependent on anyone.

### Solemnity of Christ the King (November 20, 1977)

**First Reading:** Second Samuel 5: 1-3

**Second Reading:** Colossians 1: 12-20

**Gospel Reading:** Luke 23: 35-43

**First Reading:** After David had ruled over Judah for seven years, all Israel came to him and asked him to rule over them also. David in this passage eminently prefigures Christ who is King over the entire New Israel, the Church. His followers become uniquely one with him as members of his Body-Person, nourished by his Body and Blood. He shepherds them, feeding them in good pastures with the double, table of the word of God and the Eucharist. He is the Anointed One (Messiah), King of all mankind, having been anointed with the Holy Spirit himself (Acts 10: 38).

**Gospel Reading:** Jesus reigns from the cross (cf. Jn. 12: 32). The inscription, though intended in mockery, bears witness to the reality: he is King. Three groups are there: people looking on, including followers of Jesus (v. 27), the rulers who mock his Messiahship, the soldiers who mock his kingship. They offer him their common drink, sour wine, bitter as vinegar, the last thing offered the dying Savior.

In contrast is the witness of the good thief. He rebukes his blaspheming companion for his lack of piety in his dying hour. "God" is here the God of Israel. (He is not confessing Christ's divinity). He openly acknowledges Jesus to be innocent, and loudly professes his belief in him as Messiah-King. Jesus promises immediate reward, the reward of sharing his messianic glory. "Paradise" is a Persian word for garden and in Jewish thought it came to designate the place of the just after death. Here it symbolizes the happy state of union with God as given in Gen. 2 and as promised to the victors in Rev. 2:7.

**Second Reading:** First of all, Paul bids for a threefold thanksgiving: 1) For sharing the light of the saints, either the light of faith on earth, or the light in the end-kingdom; 2) for deliverance from the power and tyranny of Satan (darkness); 3) for being transplanted into the kingdom of God's beloved Son, in whom we have redemption (including all positive aspects) and forgiveness of sin.

Then there follows a superb description of the role of the Risen Christ: 1) As God-Man, he is the **perfect manifestation** of God's inner Being, revealing to mankind in his very character the thoughts and perfections of the Father, who is Love 2) the firstborn of every creature: not in the sense of temporal precedence, but in the sense of the title of primacy as in vogue in Israel. Christ enjoys **supremacy over all creation**. 3) He is the **creator and conservator** of the entire universe, which stands in a threefold relation to him: a) **in him** all were created: he is the center of unity and harmony as in Eph. 1:10. b) **through him** all were created: the peculiar preposition in Greek (*dia*) denotes exemplary causality. He is the divine Plan according to which the universe is created, God's Wisdom by which the Father made all things. c) **for him** all things were created as final goal, the glory of Christ. 4) He **antecedes** all creation and conserves all in being and harmony, being the means of world unity.

Paul now climaxes this replendent description of Christ with the statement that he is the head of the Church, his Body. For the ancients the head has various characteristics: 1) **the place of honor**: it is first and foremost: a) Christ is the beginning, a new

start for humanity; b) **the firstborn from the dead**: not only first to rise in glory, but source of glory for the entire Body. Thus also in the order of grace, Christ enjoys absolute supremacy. 2) the head possessed (according to the ancients) all the fulness to impart it to the body. It is preferable to take the fulness of Christ as the greatest concentration of sanctifying powers which derives from the divinity, and from this fullness the Body receives. c) The head exerts **special influence** over the rest of the Body: 1) he is the means of reconciliation (peace-maker) between God and man; the lack of harmony brought about by sin is removed and peace is restored. 2) He is Redeemer: his sacrificial death (blood) is the effective cause of this peace and harmony.

### **First Sunday of Advent (November 27, 1977)**

**First Reading:** Isaiah 2: 1-5  
**Second Reading:** Romans 13: 11-14  
**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 24: 37-44

**First Reading:** A messianic vision of the universal People of God flowing from all nations to the House of the Lord in Zion, the New Jerusalem, so eminently situated as to be inescapable. All nations will seek instruction and wisdom from the Lord, how to live in justice and peace with one another. Universal peace will finally be the outcome in the end-kingdom, with all basking in the Light that is Christ.

**Gospel Reading:** The Lord warns his disciples to be prepared for his Coming. Most people will be all taken up with everyday affairs, with no concern for that very vital event, just as they were utterly concerned in the days of Noah, when the flood came swiftly and unexpectedly. Men and women working at the same job seem no different externally to the eyes of men, but God sees the heart, that one is prepared for Christ's Coming and the other is not. There follows the little parable of the owner of the house. He never knows what time of the night the thieves might break in, so he must be constantly on the watch. Similarly, Christ will come when least expected and all must be constantly on the watch.

**Second Reading:** A very meaningful exhortation for the beginning of the ecclesiastical year. Paul reminds us that we are living in the "kairos", the new age ushered in by Christ's death and resurrection; now is the time for all Christians to live the Christ-life fully as they committed themselves in baptism. No time anymore for spiritual

lethargy (sleep), or the deeds of darkness (sinful excesses). Christ the Light has appeared and the new era progresses rapidly. Christ is the armor to don in the struggle with the world and the flesh. The Christian must identify himself more and more with Christ (put him on) as he awaits the Coming of the Lord.

## II. HOMILIES FOR NOVEMBER

### ETERNITY

**November 1, 1977: Solemnity of All Saints**

**The Human Situation:** When the great foundress of the discalced Carmelites, St. Teresa of Avila, was still a child, she was often found praying together with her little brother in the garden hermitage. Over and over they were repeating the words: "forever, forever, forever"! When asked what they were thinking about, they replied: "Eternity! It will never end. It lasts forever, forever"! Is it any wonder that a child with such deep reflections grew up to be the dynamic personality we know her to have been?

**The Good News:** Death is not the end of everything. That is a pagan outlook. The Christian believes in the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting. The lamp that seems to go out is relit with the Light that is Christ, who fills each of his faithful members with life that never ends. Jesus told Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, though he should die, will come to life; and whoever is alive and believes in me will never die" (Jn. 11:25). Death is the passageway to life eternal. That is why the saints welcomed death, for it united them to Christ who is the source of divine life in fullness. "I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance" (Jn. 10:10), he told his disciples.

Death is the end of our pilgrimage to our eternal home, the end of this short journey on earth, the preparation for the fullness of life promised to all seek to do God's will while on earth. In today's gospel, Jesus constantly motivates us to look ahead to the kingdom of God, to the vision of God, to the joys that await those who toil and suffer for him. Heaven was a reality for the saints and they longed to possess it forever. As a child, the Little Flower of Jesus, St. Therese of Lisieux, told her mother that she wished she would die soon. When scolded for this statement, the child replied in all simplicity: "Why, mother, then you would be with Jesus forever"! Eternity! How this thought urged countless men

and women down the centuries to be faithful to their baptismal commitment, to listen to the voice of the indwelling Spirit urging them on to ever higher goals. Yet how many today take time out to reflect now and then about eternity, or the reward of good living?

The Scriptures endeavor to describe this life in the world to come: We read in the book of Daniel: "The wise shall shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament, and those who lead others to justice shall be like the stars forever" (Dan. 12:2f). Or again in the book of Wisdom: "The just live forever, and in the Lord in their recompense; ... they shall receive the splendid crown, the beauteous diadem from the hand of the Lord" (5:15f). In today's first reading, we see the huge crowd before the throne and the Lamb, dressed in long white robes that they have washed in the sacrificial Blood of the Lamb, and holding palm branches in their hands, the symbols of victory (Rev. 7:9). They have come forth triumphantly from earth's tribulations, and now suffer no more. The Lamb shepherds them to the springs of living water, and God wipes every tear from their eyes (7:16f). And in the second reading, St. John tells us that "then we shall be like God for we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn. 3:2).

Our dear departed ones have left us for a while. They have joined that huge crowd before the throne and the Lamb. Their sufferings and trials are at an end. Though they may suffer some purification for a time, yet their eternity is assured, for they have lived with the faith in their hearts while on earth, and have suffered with Christ sharing his passion. Now they share his glory. In his high priestly prayer Jesus said "Father, all those you gave me I would have in my company where I am, to see this glory of mine which is your gift to me". (Jn. 17:24). And he will say to those on his right hand: "Come, you have my Father's blessing! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world" (Mt. 25:34). What a brilliant future opens up for the believing Christian who in this life endeavored to carry out the gospel message of love which he learned from his Lord and Master! This thought should animate us today as we honor our dear departed ones and pray for them. Let us also ask them to pray for us that we keep our eyes focussed on the promises of the Lord, which instill such hope into our hearts.

**Our Response:** The faithful departed are pleased with the honor and attention we give them today. But what pleases them most is our endeavor to carry out our Christian convictions, and live fully the Christ-life here below so as to join them someday in the blessed realm above.



## The Triumph of Martyrdom

**November 6, 1977: Thirty-Second Sunday**

**The Human Situation:** When in the early centuries of the Church they were leading St. Pionius to death for his Christian faith, the pagans were amazed that his step was firm and lively, his face radiant, and his whole disposition buoyant. "Don't you know you are going to your death" they asked him? "No", he replied, "I am going to begin life that lasts forever".

**The Good News:** No one can read the martyrdom of the Maccabean mother and her seven sons without being deeply moved. That a mother would goad on to death the very sons she bore in her womb and reared to that strong attractive age of young manhood, can only be explained by her staunch belief that to sin against God is far worse than death, and that death by martyrdom has the glorious triumph of resurrection. She did not even have the knowledge as all Christians do that Christ died and rose from the dead, yet her ardent Jewish faith gave her that immense courage to sacrifice her sons as well as her own life rather than offend God. Death was over in a moment. Eternal life would never end.

Such staunch faith can only be explained by the theology of martyrdom. A martyr does not die for the sake of dying, or because dying is a pleasant thing, or to win the approval of men! A martyr's death was often very cruel, even barbarous, prolonged at times by executioners to see if the victim would waken. A martyr gives up his life because he is witness to the truth even unto the shedding of blood. But there is in the martyr's heart strong conviction which nothing can shake, that God is all powerful and to die for him means to receive the reward of life everlasting. Christ is the life of a Christian, and as Christ died and rose again, so will the Christian, who lays down his life for Christ or the Good News, rise again in glory unending. Not only does the Christian die for Christ, but it is Christ in him who enables him to bear up in torment and anxiety until the crown is obtained.

When St. Stephen the first martyr was being stoned to death, he was given to see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing at God's right hand (Acts 7:56). This glorious vision of Jesus who had been mercilessly crucified gave him such courage that he died forgiving his persecutors, as the Lord himself had done before he died. St. Ignatius of Antioch begged the Christians in Rome not to plan an escape for him. He told them: "I am God's wheat; I must be ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may end as the pure bread of Christ". He was then thrown to the lions in

the Colosseum. In the sixteenth century twenty-six Japanese gave a glowing witness to their Catholic faith. There were 8 priests, 17 laymen (among whom was a boy of 6 years) and one catechist. All were fastened to crosses and pierced with lances. To the end they praised God singing joyfull from their crosses.

Of special inspiration is the African holocaust in the last century, when Charles Lwanga and 21 young boys were burned in an immense fire, but they died singing and praising God. They gave up their young lives rather than submit to the filthy desires of a homosexual king of whom they were house pages. In our own century we have the lovely example of Maria Goretti who at a very young age preferred fourteen stabbings from a lustful suitor rather than sin against her loving Lord to whom she had given herself in virginal love. Today she is celebrated on all the altars of the Church. There are many others who give us a sterling example: the martyrs during the English persecutions who were tormented on the rack and cut to pieces before they expired. In our own day more subtle and insidious methods are used to force the believing Christian to defect from his beliefs: the ugly brain-washings, the interminable and gruelling questionings, the blinding electric lights shining day and night, the threats and the lies, all to intimidate the victim to weaken. All these martyrs find hope in Christ as the Scripture encourages us "to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus who inspires and perfects our faith. For the sake of the joy which lay before him he endured the cross, heedless of its shame" (Hebr. 12:2f).

**Our Response:** There is also a bloodless martyrdom, and that will be the lot of far more Christians namely, to bear witness to Christ today in the midst of a world gone mad with pleasure, sex, and entertainment. To refuse to take the easier way out but remain true to Christian principles in all the events of life: these are the true confessors of the faith, and in heaven it may appear that at times such a prolonged life of fidelity was in truth a real martyrdom, and the crown is equally theirs.

### The Judgment of God (November 13, 1977)

**The Human Situation.** St. Vincent Ferrer narrates that a young man once came to him relating how he had dreamed he was called before the judgment seat of God, and the questions put to him filled him with terror. On awakening he found he was covered with a cold sweat. The first thing he did was to thank the Lord that it

was only a dream. But then he told himself that unless he changed his life, this might one day be his lot. So from that day on he resolved to lead a decent life and avoid all deliberate serious sin.

**The Good News:** It is an article of faith that Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead, as we openly profess each time we recite the Apostles' Creed. St. Paul wrote to Timothy: "In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, **who is coming to judge the living and the dead**, and by his appearing and his kingly power, I charge you to preach the word of God" (2 Tim. 4:11). And St. John tells us that God did not send his Son into the world to condemn him but that the world might be saved through him (Jn. 3:17). Yet, to be saved involves acceptance on our part of Christ, belief in the Good News and the carrying it out in our lives. Thus St. Paul charges Timothy: "Preach the word of God, stay with this task whether convenient or inconvenient, correcting, reproving, appealing... for the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2f).

The sin of the world is non-acceptance of Christ, unbelief. Mankind rushes on unconcerned that there is a judgment hanging over it, a judgment that will affect it for all eternity. The Scripture clearly states: "If we sin willfully after receiving the truth, there remains no further sacrifice for sin, only a fearful expectation of judgment, and a flaming fire to consume the adversaries of God. Anyone who rejects the law of Moses is put to death without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Do you not suppose that a much worse punishment is due the man who disdains the Son of God... and insults the Spirit of grace? We know who said: 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay', and 'The Lord will judge his people'. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebr. 10:26-31).

God will judge each one according to his works and without respect of persons. Rather it is man who judges and condemn himself, as St. John tells us: "Whoever does not believe is already condemned, for not believing in the name of God's only Son" (Jn. 3:18). This ought to make the inveterate and deliberate sinner tremble before the all just God and come to his senses. "Th judgment of condemnation is this" continues St. John, "the Light came into the world, but men loved darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds were wicked" (3:19). St. Jude writes that, "God will pass judgment on all men indicting the godless for every evil deed they have done, and convicting those godless sinners of every harsh word they have uttered against him" (v. 15). Th Lord himself is very stern in depicting the eternal lot of the damned when he says to them: "Out of my sight, you condemned, into that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mt. 25:41).

But as for those who are following the Light, St. Paul exclaims: "Who shall bring a charge against God's chosen ones? Will it be God who justifies? (evidently not). Who shall condemn them? Is it Christ Jesus who died and who was raised up, who intercedes for us? (certainly not!) (Rom. 8:33f). Nothing, says St. Paul, absolutely nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus, our Lord (v. 39). The lot of the just is the lot of Christ: they will share his glory forever.

**Our Response:** Let us take to heart the words of St. Paul: "The lives of all of us are to be revealed before the tribunal of Christ, so that each one may receive his recompense, good or bad, according to his life in the body" (2 Cor. 5:10).

### **Christ Reigns from the Cross**

**November 20, 1977: Solemnity of Jesus Christ, King of the Universe**

That the King of the universe would hang on a cross with arms outstretched, like a helpless criminal utterly subdued, is one of the great mysteries of divine love. How can man with his narrow and selfish ambitions comprehend it? Israel's leaders, representing all whose sole aim is power and domination, mock such a display of royalty. What worldly ruler would have guessed that the well-being of the whole world depended on the salvific death of this Jesus of Nazareth? St. Paul put it well: "None of the rulers of this age knew the mystery; if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:7). Pagan Rome's soldiery, representing the military whose might subdues the enemy by force, also mocks such apparent helplessness. Only the centurian who stood guard over Jesus on seeing the manner of his death, declared: Clearly this man was the Son of God (Mk. 15:39). Standing at the cross and looking on were the people, representing the vast crowd of mankind who do not understand this mystery of God's love, which has chosen such a paradoxical way to conquer the world of human hearts. Many shake their heads and are led astray. To them it remains a mystery.

And yet, the Crucified has conquered the world. He prophesied it when he said: "And I, once I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (Jn. 12:32). The faithful lovers of Jesus Crucified are represented by Mary and John and the holy women who remained loyal to the end, Emperor Constantine made the cross symbol of victory, when he placed the cross in his banner with the words: In this sign you will conquer. Even Julian the Apostate



Roman Emperor acknowledge the supremacy of the cross. As he lay dying on the battlefield, it is said that he threw his blood toward heaven, exclaiming: "You have conquered, O Crucified One!" Though the Cross is a stumbling block to many, St. Paul insists that: "we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and an absurdity to the Gentiles, but to those who are called, Christ, the Power of God and the Wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:23). Millions of Christians the world over adorn their homes with the crucifix, and find in Jesus Crucified their salvation, their help in distress, their joy in sorrow.

The power of God's redeeming love manifested itself to the utmost in the Crucified Son of God. The good thief was given the grace to see it, and he professed his faith in Jesus as Messiah-King of Israel. The good thief represents the repentant sinners who find their refuge in him whom mankind treated so brutally. He asks to share his royal glory. And to the repentant sinner, Christ extends his immediate love. With him he will share his glory. Repentant mankind will share the glory of God through the sufferings and death of the Crucified Son of God. Truly, Jesus reigns from the cross, and continues to conquer the hearts of men, drawing them to himself in suffering and love. "If anyone will come after me" he said, "let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me" (Lk. 9:23).

St. Paul of the Cross, the Founder of the Passionists, strove with might and main to make known to the Christian world the value of the cross. With cross in hand and arms outstretched, he preached about the sufferings of Christ, and his words seemed to pierce the stoniest hearts. Even hardened sinners came to confess their crimes. One soldier exclaimed: 'Father, I have been in great battles without ever flinching at the cannon's roar, but when I listen to you, I am deeply moved, and tremble from head to foot'. Thus he reached even those who were used to the terrors and slaughter of war. It is the mystery of Christ's love. It touches all hearts and brings them to the paradise of peace.

If we have enthroned Christ the King in our homes and in our hearts, let us remember that he is the Crucified King, and reigns from the cross. Only by sharing his cross here on earth, will we share his glory so that he reigns over us for eternity.

### Wake up, People of God!

**November 27, 1977: First Sunday of Advent**

**The Human Situation:** How often the Lord had warned his people that unless they reformed, they would all come to a disastrous end



(Lk. 13:35)! He even wept over Jerusalem and foretold its complete destruction because they failed to recognize the time of their visitation (Lk. 19:44). Loudly he lamented over the holy city: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often have I yearned to gather your children, as a mother bird gathers her young under her wings, but you refused me" (Mt. 23:37). Yet all his warning went unheeded. They did not listen to him, and went about with their worldly affairs until the Romans came, destroyed the city and led many off as captives.

**The Good News:** Today's gospel also serves an earnest warning to the New People of God. This time it concerns the Parousia or Coming of Christ as Judge in the consummation of all things. How often he exhorts all his followers to vigilance, to watchfulness, to awareness that he will come when least expected, like a thief in the night! Yet the majority will go about their affairs totally unmindful of the Master's words. He compares them to those living at the time of Noah: "In the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and being married, right up to the day Noah entered the ark. They were totally unconcerned until the flood came and destroyed them. So will it be at the coming of the Son of man" (Mt. 24:38ff).

Why is man more intent on the temporal and the ephemeral things of this earth than to use the lasting goods of the world to come? At least he can be expected to use the good things of this life to build a better world, to help his fellowmen in need, and to insure his own eternal salvation. But today more than ever, man is taken up with business pursuits, entertainment, recreation, news, and the pleasures of life. Great numbers give little or no thought to the warning of the Lord. Why? Because there is a great lack of faith. Jesus himself said: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find any faith on the earth"? (Lk. 18:8). Where faith is lacking, the mind of man is prone to the material goods of this world, in acquiring them for himself without any concern for his fellowmen. It is faith that opens up the vistas of the invisible and the reign of God to come. Faith channels our efforts in things of lasting value. Faith gives us that awareness of Christ and his kingdom, so that our lives on earth have lasting value.

Advent is the time for a new start. It is the time to set things in order and put first things first. As the Apostle tells us in the second reading: "It is now the hour for us to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the

faith" (Rom. 13:11). His main exhortation is to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, that is, to clothe ourselves with the aims and thoughts of the Savior. Then our lives will be correctly oriented, and our labors done in and with Christ Jesus. At any rate, we will be prepared for his Coming, whether it be in the Parousia, or his coming to take us individually to himself to be with him forever.

**Our response:** A custom that is spreading in our Catholic homes more and more is the Advent wreath with the four candles representing the four Sundays of Advent. This is a very praise worthy custom, for it reminds us each week as we light another candle that the great day of Christ's Birthday is nearer. And with that our rebirth in him. For Christ alone is our life, and only by putting on Christ can we feel secure of peace on earth and salvation in eternity.

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