

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

DOMINICAN GENERAL CHAPTER IN THE PHILIPPINES
Editorial

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
Congregation for Catholic Education

COMMENTARY ON THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL
Cardinal Gabriel-Marie Garrone

COMMENTARY ON EVANGELII NUNTIANDI
Bede McGregor, O.P.

**THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH:
TO EVANGELIZE OR TO DEVELOP?**
Bishop Leonardo Legaspi, O.P.

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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

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

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

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

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

Address all communication to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

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University of Santo Tomas
Manila, Philippines

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EDITORIAL

Dominican General Chapter in the Philippines

For the first time in history, the Dominican Order holds its General Chapter at the Dominican Priory of Sto. Domingo, Quezon City. More than 750 years have been needed to bring this supreme legislative body of the Order of Preachers to Asia. It comes here in an effort to really understand the life-situation of the Third World in relation to the preaching of God's Word by Dominicans. It seeks to assert in a newsworthy manner that the whole Order of Preachers, not only a segment of it, is involved in the concerns and aspirations of developing local Churches like the Church in the Philippines.

All Filipino Catholics should hail this milestone of Church history. It is certainly an important recognition by a world-wide religious body of the special role the Philippines plays in the evangelization of Asia and indeed in the solution of problems experienced by young local Churches all over the world.

Delegates (called "Diffinitors") from 39 Dominican Provinces assemble at Sto. Dominigo Priory on November 30. The General Chapter officially commences on December 1 with the celebration of the Mass of the Holy Spirit. After that the delegates roll up their sleeves to attend to the business of the Chapter. Much of this deals with internal matters of the Order.

Of public interest, however, are the scheduled discussions on the Dominican presence to the problems of the modern world, specially the questions of justice and human rights. All who are involved in Mass Media will do well to take an interest in the reports and discussions on what the Order is doing in this field of the apostolate. Church circles have a stake in the discussions on the doctrinal responsibility of Dominicans and on their missionary function.

No one should be surprised if the Third World Provinces come up with a strong voice at the meeting. The Africans, for example, have much to contribute. They have shown great sensitivity to their rapidly changing world. They had the boldness to give up parishes so that the dioceses wherein these are located could enjoy the fruits of missionary labors. In spite of their limited numbers and resources they have trained specialists for radio and television work, opened new apostolates and abandoned more stale ones. They are also very much involved in the effort to develop an african way of theologizing.

The Provinces working in the Asiatic-Pacific region (to which the Philippines belongs), will have something to share with regard to their experience in inter-provincial cooperation, specially in the setting up of a Center of Research on Oriental Religions. They will also have much to report on new forms of apostolate, like those touching on the evangelization of tens of millions of Chinese scattered throughout Asia.

Good news about Dominican Contemplative Nuns and active Sisters in this region will not escape notice. This year saw the coming of Dominican Contemplative Nuns to Taiwan and to the Philippines. A significant achievement was also recorded recently when a Federation of the eleven Congregations of Dominican Sisters in the Philippines was established.

The General Chapter is also expected to show renewed interest in the work of Dominicans among islamic peoples. The previous General Chapter, in 1974, already reflected on this, but there are many new developments to consider, brought into focus by the newly established Dominican Secretariat for Islam.

The Catholic Church in general but specially the Philippine Church will certainly be enriched by the Dominican General Chapter in Quezon City.

In This Issue

Some critics who are vocal about the need for changes in the Church's educational approach go to the extent of advocating for the dissolution of Catholic Schools. Others, however, have countered by saying that Catholic Schools in the past and at present have done and are doing marvelously well: so, why rock the boat? These two extremes are too simplistic. In reality, complex problems beset Catholic Schools and the solution to these problems necessitate some drastic changes which must, nevertheless, preserve the role of the Catholic School in the salvific mission of the Church. It is indeed timely that the Congregation for Catholic Education has taken the trouble to give us wise guidelines on the renewal of **Catholic Schools**. To put the document in proper perspective and to emphasize its message Cardinal Gabriel-Marie Garrone, Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education, shares some of his thoughts with us in his **Commentary** on the document.

Perspectives in Catholic Education cannot be divorced from a panoramic view of Evangelization. It is therefore fitting that this issue carries a **Commentary on Evangelii Nuntiandi**. We owe this to Fr. Bede McGregor, O.P., who has masterfully highlighted the main points of the very important document which was the outcome of the 1974 Synod of Bishops.

A Filipino Theologian in the person of Bishop Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., has his own contribution to make on the topic of Evangelization and Education. Our readers will surely benefit from reading his article on **The Mission of the Church: to Evangelize or to Develop?**

DOCUMENTATION

THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

*A Document issued by the
Congregation for Catholic Education*

1. The Catholic school is receiving more and more attention in the Church since the Second Vatican Council, with particular emphasis on the Church as she appears in the Constitutions **Lumen Gentium** and **Gaudium et Spes**. In the Council's Declaration **Gravissimum Educationis** it is discussed in the wider sphere of Christian education. The present document develops the idea of this Declaration, limiting itself to a deeper reflection on the Catholic school.

2. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education is aware of the serious problems which are an integral part of Christian education in a pluralistic society. It regards as a prime duty, therefore, the focusing of any attention on the nature and distinctive characteristics of school which would present itself as Catholic. Yet the diverse situations and legal systems in which the Catholic school has to function in Christian and non-Christian countries demand that local problems be faced and solved by each Church within its own social-cultural context.

3. While acknowledging this duty of the local Churches, the Sacred Congregation believes that now is the opportune moment to offer its own contribution by re-emphasising clearly the educational value of the Catholic school. It is in this value that the Catholic school's fundamental reason for existing and the basis of its genuine apostolate is to be found. This document does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatment of the subject; it merely proposes to state the premises that will lead to further fruitful study and implementation.

4. To Episcopal Conferences pastorally concerned for all Catholics whatever school they attend,¹ the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education entrusts this present document in order that they may seek to achieve an effective system of education at all levels which corresponds to the total educational needs of young people today in Catholic schools. The Sacred Congregation also addresses itself to all who are responsible for education — parents,

¹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education* "Gravissimum Educationis", 7.

teachers, young people and school authorities — and urges them to pool all their resources and the means at their disposal to enable Catholic schools to provide a service which is truly civic and apostolic.

1. The Catholic School and the Salvific Mission of the Church

The Salvific Mission of the Church

5. In the fulness of time, in His mysterious plan of love, God the Father sent His only Son to begin the Kingdom of God on earth and bring about the spiritual rebirth of mankind. To continue His work of salvation, Jesus Christ founded the Church as a visible organism, living by the power of the Spirit.

6. Moved by the same Spirit, the Church is constantly deepening her awareness of herself and meditating on the mystery of her being and mission.² Thus she is ever rediscovering her living relationship with Christ "in order to discover greater light, energy, and joy in fulfilling her mission and determining the best way to ensure that her relationship with humanity is closer and more efficacious"³ — that humanity of which she is a part yet so reaches its fullness in Christ.

7. Evangelization is, therefore, the mission of the Church; that is, she must proclaim the good news of salvation to all, generate new creatures in Christ through Baptism, and train them to live knowingly as children of God.

Means available for the Mission of the Church

8. To carry out her saving mission, the Church uses, above all, the means which Jesus Christ has given her. She also uses other means which at different times and in different cultures have proved effective in achieving and promoting the development of the human person. The Church adapts these means to the encounter with differing cultures and with man's progressive achievements, the Church proclaims the faith and reveals "to all ages the transcendent goal which alone gives life its full meaning".⁵ She establishes her own schools because she considers them

² Cf. Paul VI, *Encyclical Letter "Ecclesiam suam"*, 7.

³ *Ibid.* 13.

⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et Spes"*, 4.

⁵ Paul VI, *Allocation to Cardinal Gabriel Marie Garrone*, November 27th, 1972.

as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed.

Contribution of the Catholic school towards the Salvific Mission of the Church

9. The Catholic school forms part of the saving mission of the Church, especially for education in the faith. Remembering that "the simultaneous development of man's psychological and moral consciousness is demanded by Christ almost as a pre-condition for the reception of the befitting divine gifts of truth and grace",⁶ the Church fulfills her obligation to foster in her children a full awareness of their rebirth to a new life.⁷ It is precisely in the Gospel of Christ, taking root in the minds and lives of the faithful, that the Catholic school finds its definition as it comes to terms with the cultural conditions of the times.

The Church's educational involvement and cultural pluralism

10. In the course of the centuries "while constantly holding to the fullness of divine truth"⁸ the Church has progressively used the sources and the means of culture in order to deepen her understanding of revelation and promote constructive dialogue with the world. Moved by the faith through which she firmly believes herself to be led by the Spirit of the Lord, the Church seeks to discern in the events, needs and hopes of our era⁹ the most insistent demands which she must answer if she is to carry out God's plan.

11. One such demand is a pressing need to ensure the presence of a Christian mentality in the society of the present day, marked, among other things by cultural pluralism. For it is Christian thought which constitutes a sound criterion of judgement in the midst of conflicting concepts and behaviour. "Reference to Jesus Christ teaches man to discern the values which ennoble from those which degrade him".¹⁰

12. Cultural pluralism, therefore, leads the Church to reaffirm her mission of education to ensure strong character formation.

⁶ Paul VI, *Encyclical Letter "Ecclesiam suam"*, 15.

⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis"*, 3.

⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation "Dei Verbum"*, 8.

⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et Spes"*, 11.

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Allocution to the Ninth Congress of the Catholic International Education Office (O.I.E.C.)*, in "L'Osservatore Romano", June 9th, 1974.

Her children, then, will be capable both of resisting the debilitating influence of relativism and of living up to the demands made on them by their Baptism. It also stimulates her to foster truly Christian living and apostolic communities, equipped to make their own positive contribution, in a spirit of cooperation, to the building up of the secular society. For this reason the Church is prompted to mobilize her educational resources in the face of the materialism, pragmatism and technocracy of contemporary society.

13. The Church upholds the principle of a plurality of school systems in order to safeguard her objectives in the face of cultural pluralism. In other words, she encourages the co-existence and, if possible, the cooperation of diverse educational institutions which will allow young people to be formed by value-judgments based on a specific view of the world and to be trained to take an active part in the construction of a community through which the building of society itself is promoted.

14. Thus, while policies and opportunities differ from place to place, the Catholic school has its place in any national school system. By offering such an alternative the Church wishes to respond to the obvious need for cooperation in a society characterized by cultural pluralism. Moreover in this way she helps to promote that freedom of teaching which champions and guarantees freedom of conscience and the parental right to choose the school best suited to parents' educational purposes.¹¹

15. Finally, the Church is absolutely convinced that the educational aims of the Catholic school in the world of today perform an essential and unique service for the Church herself. It is, in fact, through the school that she participates in the dialogue of culture with her own positive contribution to the cause of the total formation of man. The absence of the Catholic school would be a great loss¹² for civilization and for the natural and supernatural destiny of man.

II. *Present difficulties over Catholic schools*

16. In the light of her mission of salvation, the Church considers that the Catholic school provides a privileged environment for the complete formation of her members, and that it also provides a highly important service to mankind. Nevertheless, she is aware of the many problems that exist and objections that are made

¹¹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education* "Gravissimum Educationis", 8.

¹² Cf. Paul VI, *Allocution to the Ninth Congress of the O.I.E.C.*, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, June 9th, 1974.

against Catholic schools sometimes regarding the very validity of their existence and their functions. The issue is really part of a much wider problem which faces all institutions as such in a society as the present characterized by rapid and profound change.

Objections raised against Catholic schools

17. In the debate about Catholic schools there are some easily identifiable central objections and difficulties. These need to be borne in mind if discussion is to be relevant to the actual situation and if teachers are to make a serious attempt to adapt their work to the needs of the contemporary world.

18. In the first place many people, both inside and outside the Church motivated by a mistaken sense of the lay role in secular society, attack Catholic schools as institutions. They do not admit that, apart from the individual witness of her members the Church also may offer witness by means of her institutions, e.g., those dedicated to that search for truth or to words of charity.

19. Others claim that Catholic schools make use of a human institution for religious and confessional purposes. Christian educators can sometimes run into the danger of a so-called proselytism, of imparting a one-sided outlook. This can happen only when Christian educators misunderstand the nature and methods of Christian education. Complete education necessarily includes a religious dimension. Religion is an effective contribution to the development of other aspects of a personality in the measure in which it is integrated into general education.

20. According to others, Catholic schools have outlived their time; — as institutions they were a necessary substitute in the past but have no place at a time when civil authority assumes responsibility for education. In fact, as the State increasingly takes control of education and establishes its own so-called neutral and monolithic system, the survival of those natural communities, based on a shared concept of life, is threatened. Faced with this situation, the Catholic school offers an alternative which is in conformity with the wishes of the members of the community of the Church.

21. In some countries Catholic schools have been obliged to restrict their educational activities to wealthier social classes thus giving an impression of social and economic discrimination in education. But this occurs only where the State has not weighed the advantages of an alternative presence in their pluralistic society. From such nearsightedness considerable difficulties have arisen for Catholic schools.

22. Allied to these points, objections are raised concerning the educational results of the Catholic school. They are sometimes accused of not knowing how to form convinced, articulate Christians ready to take their place in social and political life. Every educational enterprise, however, involves the risk of failure and one must not be too discouraged by apparent or even real failures, since there are very many formative influences on young people and results often have to be calculated on a long-term basis.

23. Before concluding these comments on the objections raised against Catholic schools, one must remember the context in which contemporary work in the field of education is undertaken, and especially in the Church. The school problem in our rapidly changing society is serious for everyone. The Second Vatican Council has encouraged a more openminded approach which has sometimes been misrepresented in theory and practice. There are difficulties in the provision of adequate staff and finance. In such a situation should the Church perhaps give up her apostolic mission in Catholic schools as some people would like her to do, and direct her energy to a more direct work of evangelization in sectors considered to be of higher priority or more suited to her spiritual mission, or should she make State schools the sole object of her pastoral activity? Such a solution would not only be contrary to the directives of the Vatican Council, but would also be opposed to the Church's mission and what is expected of her by Christian people. What follows emphasizes this fact.

Some aspects of schools today

24. To understand the real nature of the Catholic school one cannot divorce it from wider modern problems concerning schools in general. Apart from the ideas advanced by the promoters of de-schooling—a theory which now seems of minor significance—contemporary society tends to place greater importance than ever on the specific function of the school: its social significance (parental participation, increased democratization, equality of opportunity); its tendency to coordinate and eventually include the educational work of other institutions; the extension of the statutory duration of attendance at school.

III The school as a centre of human formation

25. To understand fully the specific mission of the Catholic school it is essential to keep in mind the basic concept of what a school is; that which does not reproduce the characteristic features of a school cannot be a Catholic school.

The general purpose of a school

26. A close examination of the various definitions of school and of new educational trends at every level, leads one to formulate the concept of school as a place of integral formation by means of a systematic and critical assimilation of culture. A school is, therefore, a privileged place in which, through a living encounter with a cultural inheritance, integral formation occurs.

27. This vital approach takes place in the school in the form of personal contacts and commitments which consider absolute values in a life-context and seek to insert them into a life-framework. Indeed, culture is only educational when young people can relate their study to real-life situations with which they are familiar. The school must stimulate the pupil to exercise his intelligence through the dynamics of understanding to attain clarity and inventiveness. It must help him spell out the meaning of his experiences and their truths. Any school which neglects this duty and which offers merely pre-cast conclusions hinders the personal development of its pupils.

School and attitudes of life

28. From this it is clear that the school has to review its entire programme of formation, both its content and the methods used in the light of that vision of the reality from which it draws its inspiration and on which it depends.

29. Either implicit or explicit reference to a determined attitude to life (*Weltanschauung*) is unavoidable education because it comes into every decision that is made. It is therefore, essential, if for no other reason than for a unity in teaching, that each member of the school community, albeit with differing degrees of awareness, adopts a common vision, a common outlook on life, based on adherence to a scale of values in which he believes. This is what gives teachers and adults authority to educate. It must never be forgotten that the purpose of instruction at school is education, that is, the development of man from within freeing him from that conditioning which would prevent him from becoming a fully integrated human being. The school must begin from the principle that its educational programme is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

30. It is one of the formal tasks of a school, as an institution for education, to draw out the ethical dimension for the precise purpose of arousing the individual's inner spiritual dynamism and to aid his achieving that moral freedom which complements the psychological. Behind this moral freedom, however, stand those

absolute values which alone give meaning and value to human life. This has to be said because the tendency to adopt present-day values as a yardstick is not absent even in the educational world. The danger is always to react to passing, superficial idea and to lose sight of the much deeper needs of the contemporary world.

31. Precisely because the school endeavours to answer the needs of a society characterized by depersonalization and a mass production mentality which so easily result from scientific and technological developments, it must develop into an authentically formational school, reducing such risks to a minimum. It must develop persons who are responsible and inner-directed, capable of choosing freely in conformity with their conscience. This is simply another way of saying that the school is an institution where young people gradually learn to open themselves up to life as it is, and to create in themselves a definite attitude to life as it should be.

32. When seen in this light, a school is not only a place where one is given a choice of intellectual values, but a place where one has presented an array of value which are actively lived. The school must be a community whose values are communicated through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its members and through both individual and corporative adherence to the outlook on the life that permeates the school.

IV. The educational work of the Catholic school

Specific character of the Catholic school

33. Having stated the characteristics of the Catholic school from the point of view of "school", we can now examine its Catholic quality, namely its reference to a Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ.

34. Christ is the foundation of the whole educational enterprise in a Catholic school. His revelation gives new meaning to life and helps man to direct his thought, action and will according to the Gospel, making the beatitudes his norm of life. The fact that in their own individual ways all members of the school community share this Christian vision, makes the school "Catholic"; principles of the Gospel in this manner become the educational norms since the school then has them as its internal motivation and final goal.

35. The Catholic school is committed thus to the development of the whole man, since in Christ, the Perfect Man, all human values find their fulfillment and unity. Herein lies the specifically Catholic character of the school. Its duty to cultivate human values

in their own legitimate right, in accordance with its particular mission to serve all men, has its origin in the figure of Christ. He is the One who ennobles man, gives meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers to its pupils.

36. If, like every other school, the Catholic school has as its aim the critical communication of human culture and the total formation of the individual it works towards this goal guided by its Christian vision of reality "through which our cultural heritage acquires its special place in the total vocational life of man".¹³ Mindful of the fact that man has been redeemed by Christ, the Catholic school aims at forming in the Christian those particular virtues which will enable him to live a new life in Christ and help him to play faithfully his part in building up the Kingdom of God.¹⁴

37. These premises indicate the duties and the content of the Catholic school. Its task is fundamentally a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel; the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian.

Integration of faith and culture

38. In helping pupils to achieve through the medium of its teaching an integration of faith and culture, the Catholic school sets out with a deep awareness of the value of knowledge as such. Under no circumstances does it wish to divert the imparting of knowledge from its rightful objective.

39. Individual subjects must be taught according to their own particular methods. It would be wrong to consider subjects as mere adjuncts to faith or as a useful means of teaching apologetics. They enable the pupil to assimilate skills, knowledge, intellectual methods and moral and social attitudes, all of which help to develop his personality and lead him to take his place as an active member of the community of man. Their aim is not merely the attainment of knowledge but the acquisition of values and the discovery of truth.

40. Since the educative mission of the Catholic school is so wide, the teacher is in an excellent position to guide the pupil to a deepening of his faith and to enrich and enlighten his human knowledge with the data of the faith. While there are many

¹³ Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* "*Gaudium et Spes*", 7.

¹⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education*, "*Gravissimum Educationis*", 2.

occasions in teaching when pupils can be stimulated by insights of faith a Christian education acknowledges the valid contribution which can be made by academic subjects towards the development of a mature Christian. The teacher can form the mind and heart of his pupils and guide them to develop a total commitment to Christ, with their whole personality enriched by human culture.

41. The school considers human knowledge as a truth to be discovered. In the measure in which subjects are taught by someone who knowingly and without restraint seeks the truth, they are to that extent Christian. Discovery and awareness of truth leads man to the discovery of Truth itself. A teacher who is full of Christian wisdom, well prepared in his own subject, does more than convey the sense of what he is teaching to his pupils. Over and above what he says, he guides his pupils beyond his mere words to the heart of total Truth.

42. The cultural heritage of mankind includes other values apart from the specific ambient of truth. When the Christian teacher helps a pupil to grasp, appreciate and assimilate these values, he is guiding him towards eternal realities. This movement towards the Uncreated Source of all knowledge highlights the importance of teaching for the growth of faith.

43. The achievement of this specific aim of the Catholic school depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behaviour. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other.

Integration of faith and life

44. The fundamental aim of teaching is the assimilation of objective values, and, when this is undertaken for an apostolic purpose, it does not stop at an integration of faith and culture but leads the pupil on to a personal integration of faith and life.

45. The Catholic school has as its specific duty the complete Christian formation of its pupils, and this task is of special significance today because of the inadequacy of the family and society.

It knows that this integration of faith and life is part of a life-long process of conversion until the pupil becomes what God wishes him to be. Young people have to be taught to share their personal lives with God. They are to overcome their individualism and discover, in the light of faith their specific vocation to live responsibly in a community with others. The very pattern of the Christian life draws them to commit themselves to serve God in their brethren and to make the world a better place for man to live in.

46. The Catholic school should teach its pupils to discern in the voice of the universe the Creator whom it reveals and, in the conquests of science, to know God and man better. In the daily life of the school, the pupil should learn that he is called to be a living witness to God's love for men by the way he acts, and that he is part of that salvation history which has Christ, the Saviour of the world as its goal.

47. Being aware that Baptism by itself does not make a Christian — living and acting in conformity with the Gospel is necessary — the Catholic school tries to create within its walls a climate¹⁵ in which the pupil's faith will gradually mature and enable him to assume the responsibility placed on him by Baptism. It will give pride of place in the education it provides through Christian Doctrine to the gradual formation of conscience in fundamental, permanent virtues — above all the theological virtues, and charity in particular, which is, so to speak, the life-giving spirit which transforms a man of virtue into a man of Christ. Christ, therefore, is the teaching-centre, the Model on whom the Christian shapes his life. In Him the Catholic school differs from all others which limit themselves to forming men. Its task is to form Christian men and by its teaching and witness, show non-Christians something of the mystery of Christ who surpasses all human understanding.¹⁶

48. The Catholic will work closely with other Christian bodies (the family, the parish and christian community, youth associations, etc.). But one must not overlook many other spheres of activity in society which are sources of information and in their various ways have an education influence. Alongside this so-called "parallel school", the school proper is an active force through the systematic formation of the pupil's critical faculties to bring them to a measure of self-control¹⁷ and the ability to choose freely and conscientiously in the face of what is offered by the organs

¹⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education*, "*Gravissimum Educationis*" 8.

¹⁶ Cf. *Eph.* 3, 18-19.

¹⁷ Cf. *Pastoral Instruction "Communio et Progressio"*, 67.

of social communication. They must be taught to subject these things to a critical and personal analysis,¹⁸ take what is good, and integrate it into their Christian human culture.

Religious teaching

49. The specific mission of the school, then, is a critical, systematic transmission of culture in the light of faith and the bringing forth of the power of Christian virtue by the integration of culture with faith and of faith with living. Consequently, the Catholic school is aware of the importance of the Gospel-teaching as transmitted through the Catholic Church. It is, indeed, the fundamental element in the educative process as it helps the pupil towards his conscious choice of living a responsible and coherent way of life.

50. Without entering into the whole problem of teaching religion in schools, it must be emphasized that, while such teaching is not merely confined to "religious classes" within the school curriculum, it must nevertheless, also be imparted explicitly and in a systematic manner to prevent a distortion in the child's mind between religious and other forms of education is that its aim is not simply intellectual assent to religious truths but also a total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ.

51. It is recognized that the proper place for catechesis is the family helped by other Christian communities especially the local parish. But the importance and need for catechetical instruction in Catholic schools cannot be sufficiently emphasized. Here young people are helped to grow towards maturity in faith.

52. The Catholic school must be alert at all times to developments in the fields of child psychology, pedagogy and particularly catechetics, and should especially keep abreast directives from competent ecclesiastical authorities. The school must do everything in its power to aid the Church to fulfill its catechetical mission and so must have the best possible qualified teachers of religion.

The Catholic school as the centre of the educative Christian community

53. For all these reasons, Catholic schools must be seen as "meeting places for those who wish to express Christian values in education".¹⁹ The Catholic school, far more than any other, must be a community whose aim is the transmission of values for living.

¹⁸ Cf. *Ibid.* 68.

¹⁹ Paul VI, *Allocution to the Ninth Congress of the O.I.E.C.*, in * "L'Osservatore Romano". June 9th, 1974.

Its work is seen as promoting a faith-relationship with Christ in whom all values find fulfillment. But faith is principally assimilated through contact with people whose daily life bears witness to it. Christian faith, in fact, is born and grows inside a community.

54. The community aspect of the Catholic school is necessary because of the nature of the faith and not simply because of the nature of man and the nature of the educational process which is common to every school. No Catholic school can adequately fulfill its educational role on its own. It must continually be fed and stimulated by its Source of life, the Saving Word of Christ as it is expressed in Sacred Scripture in Tradition, especially liturgical and sacramental tradition, and in the lives of people, past and present, who bear witness to that Word.

55. The Catholic school loses its purpose without constant reference to the Gospel and a frequent encounter with Christ. It derives all the energy necessary for its educational work from Him and thus "creates in the school community an atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love".²⁰ In this setting the pupil experiences his dignity as a person before he knows its definition. Faithful, therefore, to the claims of man and of God, the Catholic school make its own contribution towards man's liberation, making him, in other words, what his destiny implies, one who talks consciously with God, one who is there for God to love.

56. This simple religious doctrine is the corner-stone of the existential, Christian metaphysic".²¹ This is the basis of a Catholic school's educational work. Education is not given for the purpose of gaining power but as an aid towards a fuller understanding of, and communion with man, events and things. Knowledge is not to be considered as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others.

Other aspects of the educational process in Catholic schools

57. Whether or not the Catholic community forms its young people in the faith by means of a Catholic school, a Catholic school in itself is far from being divisive or presumptuous. It does not exacerbate differences, but rather aids cooperation and contact with others. It opens itself to others and respects their way of thinking and of living. It wants to share their anxieties and their hopes as it, indeed, shares their present and future lot in this world.

²⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education* "Gravissimum Educationis", 8.

²¹ Paul VI, *Valore dell'oblatore nella vita*, in "The Teaching of Pope Paul VI", vol. 8 (1970), p. 97.

58. Since it is motivated by the Christian ideal, the Catholic school is particularly sensitive to the call from every part of the world for a more just society, and it tries to make its own contribution towards it. It does not stop at the courageous teaching of the demands of justice even in the face of local opposition, but tries to put these demands into practice in its own community in the daily life of the school. In some countries, because of local laws and economic conditions, the Catholic school runs the risk of giving counter-witness by admitting a majority of children from wealthier families. Schools may have done this because of their need to be financially self-supporting. This situation is of great concern to those responsible for Catholic education, because first and foremost the Church offers its educational service to "the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from the faith".²² Since education is an important means of improving the social and economic condition of the individual and of peoples, if the Catholic schools were to turn its attention exclusively or predominantly to those from the wealthier social classes, it could be contributing towards maintaining their privileged position, and could thereby continue to favour a society which is unjust.

59. It is obvious that in such a demanding educational policy all participants must be committed to it freely. It cannot be imposed, but is offered as a possibility, as good news, and as such can be refused. However, in order to bring it into being and to maintain it, the school must be able to count on the unity of purpose and conviction of all its members.

**The participation of the Christian community
in the Catholic schools' work**

60. From the outset the Catholic school declares its programme and its determination to uphold it. It is a genuine community bent on imparting, over and above an academic education, all the help it can to its members to adopt a Christian way of life. For the Catholic school mutual respect means service to the Person of Christ. Cooperation is between brothers and sisters in Christ. A policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the Kingdom of God.

61. The cooperation required for the realization of this aim is a duty in conscience for all the members of the community — teachers parents, pupils, administrative personnel. Each has his or

²² Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis"*, 9.

her own part to play. Cooperation of all, given in the spirit of the Gospel, is by its very nature a witness not only to Christ as the cornerstone of the community, but also as the light who shines far beyond it.

The Catholic school as a service to the Church and to society

62. The Catholic school community, therefore, is an irreplaceable source of service, not only to the pupils and its other members, but also to society. Today especially one sees a world which clamours for solidarity and yet experiences the rise of new forms of individualism. Society can take note from the Catholic school that it is possible to create true communities out of a common effort for the common good. In the pluralistic society of today the Catholic school, moreover, by maintaining an institutional Christian presence in the academic world, proclaims by its very existence the enriching power of the faith as the answer to the enormous problems which afflict mankind. Above all, it is called to render a humble loving service to the Church by ensuring that she is present in the scholastic field for the benefit of the human family.

63. In this way, the Catholic school performs "an authentic apostolate".²³ To work, therefore, in this apostolate "means performing a unique and invaluable work for the Church".²⁴

V. The responsibility of the Catholic school today

64. The real problem facing the Catholic school is to identify and lay down the conditions necessary for it to fulfill its mission. It is, therefore, a problem requiring clear and positive thinking, courage, perseverance and cooperation to tackle the necessary measures without being overawed by the size of the difficulties from within and without, nor "by persistent and outdated slogans",²⁵ which in the last analysis aim to abolish Catholic schools.²⁶ To give into them would be suicidal. To favour in a more or less radical form a merely non-institutional presence of the Church in the scholastic field is a dangerous illusion.²⁷

²³ Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education*, "*Gravissimum Educationis*", 8.

²⁴ Paul VI, to Prof. Giuseppe Lazzati, Rector of the University of the Sacred Heart (Milan), in "The Teaching of Pope Paul VI", vol. 9, p. 1082.

²⁵ Paul VI, *Allocution to the Ninth Congress of the O.I.E.C.*, in "L'Osservatore Romano", June 9th, 1974.

²⁶ Cf. above, nn. 18, 20, 23.

²⁷ Cf. Paul VI, *Allocution to the Ninth Congress of the O.I.E.C.*, in "L'Osservatore Romano", June 9th, 1974.

65. At great cost and sacrifice our forebears were inspired by the teaching of the Church to establish schools which enriched mankind and responded to the needs of time and place. While it recognizes its own inadequacies, the Catholic school is conscious of its responsibility to continue this service. Today, as in the past, some scholastic institutions which bear the name Catholic do not appear to correspond fully to the principles of education which should be their distinguishing feature and therefore, do not fulfill the duties which the Church and the society has every right to expect of them. Without pretending to make an exhaustive inquiry into the factors which may explain the difficulties under which the Catholic school labours, here are a few points in the hope of encouraging some thought as a stimulus to courageous reform.

66. Often what is perhaps fundamentally lacking, among Catholics who work in a school, is a clear realization of the identity of a Catholic school and the courage to follow all the consequences of its uniqueness. One must recognize that, more than ever before a Catholic school's job is infinitely more difficult, more complex, since this is a time when Christianity demands to be clothed in fresh garments, when all manner of changes have been introduced in the Church and in secular life, and, particularly, when a pluralist mentality dominates and the Christian Gospel is increasingly pushed to the side-lines.

* * *

67. It is because of this, that loyalty to the educational aims of the Catholic school demands constant self-criticism and return to basic principles, to the motives which inspire the Church's involvement in education. They do not provide a quick answer to contemporary problems, but they give a direction which can begin to solve them. Account has to be taken of new pedagogical insights and collaboration with others, irrespective of religious allegiance, who work honestly for the true development of mankind — first and foremost with schools of other Christians in the interests, even in this field, of Christian unity — but also with State schools. In addition to meetings of teachers and mutual research, this collaboration can be extended to the pupils themselves and their families.

68. In conclusion it is only right to repeat what has been said above²⁸ about the considerable difficulties arising from legal and economic systems operating in different countries which hinder the

²⁸ Cf. *above*, n. 58.

activities of the Catholic school, difficulties which prevent them from extending their service to all social and economic classes and compel them to give the false impression of providing schools simply for the rich.

VI. Practical directions

69. After reflecting on the difficulties which the Catholic school encounters, we turn now to the practical possibilities open to those who work in, or are responsible for, these schools. The following more serious questions have been selected for special comment: organization and planning, ensuring the distinctive Catholic character of the school, the involvement of religious in the school apostolate, the Catholic school in mission countries, pastoral care of teachers, professional associations, the economic question.

The organization and planning of the Catholic school

70. Catholic education is inspired by the general principles enunciated by the Second Vatican Council concerning collaboration between the hierarchy and those who work in the apostolate. In consequence of the principles of participation and co-responsibility, the various groupings which constitute the educational community are, according to their several competencies, to be associated in decision-making concerning the Catholic school and in the application of decisions once taken.²⁹ It is first and foremost at the stage of planning and of putting into operation and educational project that this principle of the Council is to be applied. The assigning of various responsibilities is governed by the principle of subsidiarity, and with reference to this principle, ecclesiastical authority respects the competence of the professionals in teaching and education. Indeed, "the right and duty of exercising the apostolate is common to all the faithful, clerical and lay, and lay people have their own proper competence in the building up of the Church".³⁰

71. This principle enunciated by the Second Vatican Council is particularly applicable to the apostolate of the Catholic school which so closely unites teaching and religious education to a well-defined professional activity. It is here, above all, that the particular mission of the lay person is put into effect, a mission which has become "all the more imperative in view of the fact that many

²⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World "Gaudium et Spes"*, 43.

³⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity "Apostolicam Actuositatem"*, 25.

areas of human life have become very largely autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a certain withdrawal from ethical and religious influences and thereby creates a serious danger to Christian life".³¹ Moreover, lay involvement in Catholic schools is an invitation to cooperate more closely with the apostolate of the Bishops",³² both in the field of religious instruction³³ and in more general religious education which they endeavour to promote by assisting the pupils to a personal integration of culture and faith and of faith and living. The Catholic school in this sense, therefore, receives from the Bishops in some manner the "mandate" of an apostolic undertaking.³⁴

72. The essential element of such a mandate is "union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to rule God's Church"³⁵ and this link is expressed especially in overall pastoral strategy. "In the whole diocese or in given areas of it the coordination and close interconnection of all apostolic works should be fostered under the direction of the Bishop. In this way all undertakings and organization, whether catechetical, missionary, charitable, social, family, educational, or any other programme serving a pastoral goal will be coordinated. Moreover, the unity of the diocese will thereby be made evident".³⁶ This is something which is obviously indispensable for the Catholic school, inasmuch as it involves "apostolic cooperation on the part of both branches of the clergy, as well as of the religious and the laity".³⁷

Ensuring the distinctive Catholic character of the school

73. This is the framework which guarantees the distinctive Catholic character of the school. While the Bishop's authority is to watch over the orthodoxy of religious instruction and the observance of Christian morals in the Catholic schools, it is the task of the whole educative community to ensure that a distinctive Christian educational environment is maintained in practice. This responsibility applies chiefly to Christian parents who confide their children to the school. Having chosen it does not relieve them of a personal duty to give their children a Christian upbringing.

³¹ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* "Apostolicam Actuositatem", 1.

³² Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, "Lumen Gentium", 33.

³³ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* "Apostolicam Actuositatem", 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Bishop's Pastoral Office in the Church* "Christus Dominus", 17.

³⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* "Apostolicam Actuositatem", 23.

They are bound to cooperate actively with the school — which means supporting the educational efforts of the school and utilising the structures offered for parental involvement, in order to make certain that the school remains faithful to Christian principles of education. An equally important role belong to the teachers in safeguarding and developing the distinctive mission of the Catholic school, particularly with regard to the Christian atmosphere which should characterize its life and teaching. Where difficulties and conflicts arise about the authentic Christian character of the Catholic school, hierarchical authority can and must intervene.

Involvement of religious in the school apostolate

74. Some problems arise from the fact that certain Religious Institutes, founded for the school apostolate, have subsequently abandoned school work because of social or political changes and have involved themselves in other activities. In some cases they have given up their schools as a result of their efforts to adapt their lives and mission to the recommendations of the Second Vatican Council and to the spirit of their original foundation.

75. It is necessary, however, to reassess certain arguments adopted against the teaching apostolate. Some would say they have chosen a "more direct" apostolate,³⁸ forgetting the excellence and the apostolate value of educational work in the school.³⁹ Others would appeal to the greater importance of individual over community involvement, of personal over institutional work. The advantages, however, of a community apostolate in the educational field are self-evident. Sometimes the abandonment of Catholic schools is justified on the grounds of an apparent failure to gain perceptible results in pursuing certain objectives. If this were true, it would surely be an invitation to undertake a fundamental revision of the whole conduct of the school, reminding everyone who ventures into education of the need for humility and hope and the conviction that his work cannot be assessed by the same rationalistic criteria which apply to other professions.⁴⁰

76. It is the responsibility of competent local ecclesiastical authority to evaluate the advisability and necessity of any change to other forms of apostolic work whenever particular circumstances dictate the need for a re-assessment of the school apostolate, keeping in mind the observations above on overall pastoral strategy.⁴¹

³⁸ Cf. *above*, 23.

³⁹ Cf. *above*, nn. 38-48.

⁴⁰ Cf. *above*, n. 22.

⁴¹ Cf. *above*, nn. 70-72.

The Catholic school in mission countries

77. The importance of the Catholic school apostolate is much greater when it is a question of the foreign missions. Where the young Churches still rely on the presence of foreign missionaries, the effectiveness of the Catholic school will largely depend on its ability to adapt to local needs. It must ensure that it is a true expression of the local and national Catholic community and that it contributes to the community's willingness to cooperate. In countries where the Christian community is still at its beginning and incapable of assuming responsibility for its own schools, the Bishops will have to undertake this responsibility themselves for the time being, but must endeavour little by little to fulfill the aims outlined above in connection with the organization of the Catholic schools.⁴²

Pastoral care of teachers

78. By their witness and their behaviour teachers are of the first importance to impart a distinctive character to Catholic schools. It is, therefore, indispensable to ensure their continuing formation through some form of suitable pastoral provision. This must aim to animate them as witnesses of Christ in the classroom and tackle the problems of their particular apostolate, especially regarding a Christian vision of the world and of education, problems also connected with the art of teaching in accordance with the principles of the Gospel. A huge field is thus opened up for national and international organizations which bring together Catholic teachers and educational institutions at all levels.

79. Professional organizations whose aim is to protect the interests of those who work in the educational field cannot themselves be divorced from the specific mission of the Catholic school. The rights of the people who are involved in the school must be safeguarded in strict justice. But, no matter what material interests may be at stake, or what social and moral conditions affect their professional development, the principle of the Second Vatican Council has a special application in this context: "The faithful should learn how to distinguish carefully between those rights and duties which are theirs as members of the Church, and those which they have as members of society. Let them strive to harmonize the two, remembering that in every temporal affair they must be guided by a Christian conscience".⁴³ Moreover, "even when preoccupied with temporal cares, the laity can

⁴² Cf. above, nn. 70-72.

⁴³ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* "*Lumen Gentium*", 36.

and must perform valuable work for the evangelisation of the world".⁴⁴ Therefore, the special organisation set up to protect the rights of teachers, parents and pupils must not forget the special mission of the Catholic school to be of service in the Christian education of youth. "The layman is at the same time a believer and a citizen, and should be constantly led by Christian conscience alone".⁴⁵

80. In the light of what has been said, these associations, while being concerned for the rights of their members, must also be alive to the responsibilities which are part and parcel of the specific apostolate of the Catholic school. Catholic teachers who freely accept posts in schools which have a distinctive character, are obliged to respect that character and give their active support to it under the direction of those responsible.

Economic situation of Catholic schools

81. From the economic point of view the position of every many Catholic schools has improved and in some countries is perfectly acceptable. This is the case where governments have appreciated the advantages and the necessity of a plurality of school systems which offer alternatives to a single State system. While at first Catholic schools received various public grants, often merely conceded, they later began to enter into agreements, conventions, contracts, etc. which guarantee both the preservation of the special status of the Catholic school and its ability to perform its function adequately. Catholic schools are thereby more or less closely associated with the national system and are assured of an economic and juridical status similar to State schools.

82. Such agreements have been reached through the good offices of the respective governments, which have recognised the public service provided by Catholic schools, and through the determination of the Bishops and the Catholic community at the national level. These solutions are an encouragement to those responsible for Catholic schools in countries where the Catholic community must still shoulder a very heavy burden of cost to maintain an often highly important network of Catholic schools. These Catholics need to be assured, as they strive to regularize the frequent injustices in their school situation, that they are not only helping to provide every child with an education that respects his complete develop-

⁴⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church "Lumen Gentium"*, 35.

⁴⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity "Apostolicam Actuositatem"*, 5.

ment, but they are also defending freedom of teaching and the right of parents to choose an education for their children which conforms to their legitimate requirements.⁴⁶

VII. Courageous and unified commitment

83. To commit oneself to working in accordance with the aims of a Catholic school is to make a great act of faith in the necessity and influence of this apostolate. Only one who has this conviction and accept Christ's message, who has a love for and understands today's young people who appreciates what people's real problems and difficulties are, will be led to contribute with courage and even audacity to the progress of this apostolate in building up a Catholic school, which puts its theory into practice, which renews itself according to its ideals and to present needs.

84. The validity of the educational results of a Catholic school however, cannot be measured by immediate efficiency. In the field of Christian education, not only is the freedom-factor of teacher and pupil relationship with each other to be considered, but also the factor of grace. Freedom and grace come to fruition in the spiritual order which defies any merely temporal assessment. When grace infuses human liberty, it makes freedom fully free and raises it to its highest perfection in the freedom of the Spirit. It is when the Catholic school adds its weight, consciously and overtly, to the liberating power of grace, that it becomes the Christian leaven in the world.

85. In the certainty that the Spirit is at work in every person, the Catholic school offers itself to all, non-Christians included, with all its distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the spiritual and moral qualities, the social and cultural values, which characterize different civilizations.⁴⁷

86. Such an outlook overrides any question of the disproportion between resources available and the number of children reached directly by the Catholic school, nothing can stop it from continuing to render its service. The only condition it would make, as is its right, for its continued existence, would be remaining faithful to the educational aims of the Catholic school. Loyalty to these aims is, moreover, the basic motive which must inspire any needed reorganization of the Catholic school institution.

⁴⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education* "Gravissimum Educationis", 6.

⁴⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* "Nostra Aetate", 2.

87. If all who are responsible for the Catholic school would enjoy better conditions in which to function in the present, and would faithfully hand on its mission to future generations. They themselves, moreover, would most surely be filled with a deep conviction, joy and spirit of sacrifice, in the knowledge that they are offering innumerable young people the opportunity of growing in faith, of accepting and living its precious principles of truth, charity and hope.

88. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education to foster the full realization of the aims of the Catholic school, extends once more its warmest and heartfelt encouragement to all who work in these schools. There can be no doubt whatever of the importance of the apostolate of teaching in the total saving mission of the Church.

89. The Church herself in particular looks with confidence and trust to Religious Institutes which have received a special charism of the Holy Spirit and have been most active in the education of the young. May they be faithful to the inspiration of their founders and give their wholehearted support to the apostolic work of education in Catholic schools and not allow themselves to be diverted from this by attractive invitations to undertake other, often seemingly more effective, apostolates.

90. A little more than ten years after the end of the Second Vatican Council, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education repeats the final exhortation of the Declaration on Christian Education to the priests, religious and lay people who fulfill their mission in the Catholic school. It reads. "They are urged to persevere generously in their chosen duty, continuing to instil into their pupils the spirit of Christ: let them endeavour to excel in the art of teaching and in the advancement of knowledge. Thus they will not only foster the internal renewal of the Church, but will safeguard and intensify her beneficial presence in the modern world, and above all, in the world of the intellect".⁴⁸

Conclusion

91. This document in no way wishes to minimize the value of the witness and work of the many Catholics who teach in State schools throughout the world. In describing the task confided to the Catholic school it is intended to encourage every effort to promote the cause of Catholic education, since in the pluralistic world

⁴⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Declaration on Christian Education "Gravissimum Educationis"*, Conclusion.

in which we live, the Catholic school is in a unique position to offer, more than ever before, a most valuable and necessary service. With the principles of the Gospel as its abiding point of reference, it offers its collaboration to those who are building a new world — one which is freed from a hedonistic mentality and from the efficiency syndrome of modern consumer society.

92. We appeal to each Episcopal Conference to consider and to develop these principles which should inspire the Catholic school and to translate them into concrete programmes which will meet the real needs of the educational systems operating in their countries.

93. Realizing that the problems are both delicate and highly complex, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education also addresses itself to the whole People of God. In the economy of salvation we poor humans must confront problems, suffer their consequences and work might and main to solve them. We are certain that in the last analysis success in any venture does not come from trust in our own solutions but from trust in Jesus who allowed Himself to be called Teacher. May He inspire, guide, support and bring to a safe conclusion all that is undertaken in His name.

Rome, March 19th, 1977, the Feast of St. Joseph.

GABRIEL-MARIE Card. GARRONE,
Prefect

ANTONIO M. JAVIERRE,
Titular Archbishop of Meta Secretary

COMMENTARY ON THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

By

Cardinal Gabriel-Marie Garrone

Immediately after the Council, in answer to the wish of the post-conciliar Commission which was to interpret the conclusions of this Council, Pope Paul VI created a new sector for schools within the S. Congregation for Catholic Education.

A few months later, the Constitution "Regimini Ecclesiae" defined more precisely the mission of the new Office.

One of the tasks of this new organ was to be attentive to general questions arising around the Catholic School, in order to try to give them an answer. There was certainly no lack of questions, nor can it be otherwise for an institution which has to carry out its task in a continually changing world, and in one of the fields most sensitive to changes of all kinds: that of the education of youth.

However, the doctrine of the Church, affirmed again in the conciliar Declaration "Gravissimum Educationis", was perfectly clear and capable of constantly giving, to those whom difficulties might have discouraged or caused to doubt their mission, the firm guide-mark of the unequivocal will of the Church: "Among the various organs of education the school is of outstanding importance", the Council says... "It constitutes a centre in whose activity and growth not only the families and teachers but also the various association... and the entire community should take part. Splendid, therefore, and of the higher importance is the vocation of those who... undertake a teaching career" (G.E. 5).

The time seemed favourable and the appeal more pressing to the S. Congregation to call upon all those who are concerned about the Kingdom of God to return to the source, in order to renew their certainties, and to give a strong impetus to those who bear, in any capacity whatsoever — teachers, parents, Christian community — the burden of Catholic education. That is the reason for the document just published, which is entitled "The Catholic School". It aims expressly at encouraging "every effort to promote the cause of Catholic education, since in the pluralistic world in which we live the Catholic school is in a unique position to offer, more than ever before, a most valuable and necessary service".

NO EXHAUSTIVE THESIS

This text does not claim to work out a thesis, especially an exhaustive thesis, or to answer thoroughly the questions and objections that may be raised. Without technical pretensions, it intends to repeat forcefully that in our time the mission of the Catholic School remains as important in the eyes of the Church as it appeared in the eyes of the Council. Even more important is it, perhaps, in proportion as the duty becomes more urgent while "constantly referring to Gospel values" to contribute towards "building a new world — one which is freed from a hedonistic mentality and from the efficiency syndrome of modern consumer society". The Church hears the call to evangelization re-echo more loudly than ever. How could she fail to try to restore to a privileged instrument its inspiration and its impetus?

The document first sets the Catholic School in the mission of the Church, as the Council had also done. The Church must proclaim "to all ages the transcendent goal which alone gives life its full meaning". That is why she sees in the school "a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed". In the midst of Present-day pluralism "she participates in the dialogue of culture with her own positive contribution in a spirit of cooperation to the building up of the secular society", while respecting the freedom and the right of parents.

AT THE HEART OF THE TEXT

After listing rapidly the objections made against Catholic schools, and before dwelling as is fitting on their specific character, the document develops a little the basic concept of the school in general as a place of integral formation by means of assimilation of culture. In fact, "either implicit or explicit reference to a determined attitude to life is unavoidable in education..." A common vision, a common outlook on life, is demanded, for it is adherence to the standards on which this view of life is based that gives one the authority to be an educator".

But it is the educational work of the Catholic School which is at the heart of the text on the School. This should ensure "a synthesis of culture and faith, and a synthesis of faith and life: the first is reached by integrating all the different aspects of human knowledge through the subjects taught, in the light of the Gospel;

the second in the growth of the virtues characteristic of the Christian". The Catholic School is a meeting place for the Christian educative community. The document develops some essential aspects of the educational enterprise in a Catholic school and of the community effort that seeks to realize it. According to Pope Paul VI's expression, the School performs "an authentic apostolate". Those who work in it perform a unique and invaluable work for the Church".

The last part of the document recalls summarily some concrete aspects of the life of the School: its organization, its specific character, the place held by religious Institutes both in countries that are Christian from of old and in the Missions, the role of teachers...

One can see in the course of these pages how much the thought of the Sovereign Pontiff has remained continually attentive to the problem of the Catholic School. The vivid comments he has brought to this cause occur happily and frequently in the document proposed.

WORDS OF HOPE

The rapid survey of a text the simplicity of which may well conceal its riches, makes it possible to see what services it is called to render among those for whom the thought of the Church deserves consideration and for whom the will of the Church is a deep encouragement.

Addressing respectfully the Conferences, which will have the task of making known the principles recalled in this text and "of translating them into concrete programmes which will meet the real needs of the educational systems operating in their countries", the document then concludes with words of hope and faith:

"Realizing that the problems are both delicate and highly complex, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education also addresses itself to the whole People of God. In the economy of salvation we poor humans must confront problems, suffer their consequences and work might and main to solve them. We are certain that, in the last analysis, success in any venture does not come from the trust in our own solutions but from trust in Jesus who allowed himself to be called Teacher. May he inspire, guide, support and bring to a safe conclusion all that is undertaken in his name".

COMMENTARY ON EVANGELII NUNTIANDI

By

Bede McGregor, O.P.

Evangelii Nuntiandi is addressed to the whole church because the whole church is responsible for the evangelization of the modern world. It is an attempt to conscientize and activate the whole church with regard to a basic insight and insistence of the Vatican Council: the whole church is missionary by her very nature. It would be unfortunate if any section of the church were to neglect to study this document on the pretext that it does not really apply to them but only to specialized groups traditionally associated with evangelization.

Evangelii Nuntiandi is not simply an attempt to boost the morale of missionaries working in frontier situations amidst great difficulties and opposition. It is true that many of the problems discussed in the document have their origins in and immediate interest for individual churches in the Third World. Certainly, what Pope Paul has to say on Liberation Theology, Frontier Evangelization, Presence among and dialogue with non-Christians, the theology of the Local Church, basic communities, inculturation and indigenous theologies is of immense and urgent concern for missionaries. But he also discusses problems confronting the older churches of Europe and America. He examines the great questions of secularism and secularization, the modern forms of atheism and indifference, non-practising Catholics and de-christianization in its many contemporary forms. Besides, the opportunities and difficulties facing the global task of evangelization today are not sorted out according to clear-cut geographical areas. There is a growing universalizing of the basic questions raised in the discussion of evangelization today. For example, secularization is a problem in Asia as well as America and frontier evangelizations needed in Europe as well as the Far East, it is needed everywhere.

While the distinction between missionary and pastoral evangelization is valid and useful it must not be reduced to a radical separation. The two forms of evangelization are intimately con-

nected and mutually enriching. We are becoming more conscious of the need of pastoral evangelization for the future of missionary evangelization. Unless the quality and intensity of evangelization in the pastoral situation is improved the number of missionaries willing to preach the Gospel to those who have never heard it will continue to decrease. The deepening of faith through pastoral evangelization is the normal way of maturing a missionary vocation and a genuine commitment of a local church to missionary evangelization is the best way of gauging the authenticity of its faith and pastoral charity. Pastoral evangelization includes the promotion of mission awareness and missionary evangelization inevitably leads to pastoral evangelization.

Another great danger is to continue to think of evangelization as something done only by bishops, priests and religious. The laity form 99% of the members of the church and have the privilege and duty of evangelizing arising from their baptism, confirmation, marriage and above all their participation in the Eucharist. Vast areas of human life and activity, the greater part of our modern world can only come under the influence of the gospel through the evangelizing efforts of the laity. Somehow, this idea and truth must filter through to the whole church if the whole word is to be truly evangelized. It is certainly a central theme of *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

It would be a mistake to think that because the document covers so many problems and aspects of evangelization that it tends to be superficial in its treatment. This is not so. Very few recent papal documents have been prepared with so much prior consultation with so many different sections of the church over so long a period. On some questions it invites further study, research, and prayerful reflection but on all of them Pope Paul gives some guidelines that future theological discussion and pastoral practice cannot ignore. The commentary tries to focus on what is presented as firmly established because it was precisely to offset theological confusion and the consequent indecisiveness of pastoral commitment that the exhortation was written.

However this commentary has only a provisional task. It must be followed by more extensive studies on all the major themes. It seeks to provide some initial background material drawn from the various interventions of the bishops made at the Third Synod and also from statements by various national hierarchies either in preparation for the Synod or after the Synod. Also the commentary quotes extensively from other addresses given by Pope Paul on Evangelization since the II Vatican Council.

The commentary originated in a series of talks to various groups of priests, religious and layfolk who had not read the Exhortation

at the time. The talks had the desired effect of encouraging many of the listeners to read the document itself. Later, I gave further talks to groups who had read *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and many of them felt the need to re-read and study it. If this brief commentary which stays so close to the text continues to stimulate people to read and re-read the Pope's own words it will have achieved its purpose. It would be a pity if the Exhortation that covers so important a theme is neglected simply because of inadequate publicity and a lack of encouragement to read it.

Introduction

- 1.) Occasion of the exhortation: 1-3
- 2.) The nature of the exhortation: 3-4
- 3.) The importance of the exhortation: 5

Pope Paul mentions three distinct events as the occasion for writing the exhortation. First, he sees it as an appropriate way of marking the end of the Holy Year which was an intense pastoral effort on the part of the whole church to renew herself in a spirit of reconciliation with God and among men themselves. Secondly, the exhortation is offered as a way of marking the tenth anniversary of the closing of the Second Vatican Council. The one single aim of the II Vatican Council was to make the church of the twentieth century better fitted to communicate the gospel to the people of the twentieth century. Obviously, the document is not an attempt to assess the total impact of Vatican II but it does deal with the problems, approaches, and ongoing discussion of evangelization over the last decade and this is arguably the most important theme that can be examined anew since the Council. Thirdly, the Third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops provides the immediate, specific and fundamental reason for this Apostolic Exhortation.

It would be no exaggeration to say this papal document is an authoritative culmination of several years of intense study and discussion at all levels throughout the church since Vatican II. It sometimes goes beyond the teaching of the Council but always in continuity with it and never against it. Obviously there have been new questions and old questions posed with new emphasis or urgency and thus demanding different responses with regard to expression, emphasis and genuine development in thought and life in the church. Nevertheless, it does not attempt to answer questions that have been sufficiently treated in other authoritative documents but confines itself to matters raised in the preparatory phase and the actual Synod itself. In other words the document should be examined

as the authoritative response of Pope Paul to the special request made to him by the Synodal Fathers: "the copious riches which we have found in reciprocal communication could not be easily unified without jeopardizing its integrity. Having certainly become the richer through this experience we have preferred to offer to the Holy Father the integral fruits of our exchange with great confidence and simplicity and to await new impetus from him".

The spirit of the document is simply an attempt to give inspiration, new confidence and encouragement to his brother bishops and the whole church with regard to the central task of evangelization. He attempts to do this by facing the problems raised at the Synod, offering the church clarity and certainly in this time of uncertainty and confusion. He does not simply echo the findings of the Synod but exercises his special teaching charism as supreme pastor. Already in his closing address to the Synod he felt obliged by reason of his office to express reservations about certain views aired during the Synodal discussions:

We would not be objective if we did not note that some points need to be refined. Among the multiplicity of arguments treated we praise the spontaneity and sincerity that has been shown. Yet not all the elements are to be retained: some of them although justly emphasised in certain aspects, need to be placed in proper perspective. Some, especially among those that have come out of the "circuli minoris" must be better defined, nuanced, completed and subjected to further study. We cite some of the examples about which we would not be able to remain silent.

In the course of the commentary we will indicate the themes Pope Paul refers to and their background.

However, it would be a mistake to think that the exhortation deals only with controversial topics. In fact, there was a remarkable consensus at the Synod on most themes and this consensus does find support and confirmation in the papal teaching. Also the whole tone of the exhortation is fraternal, pastoral and meditative. There are positive theological guidelines given but also stimulus for further study and reflection. The primary concern is to re-awake interest in and zeal for the work of evangelization and this has been a recurring theme in the writings of Pope Paul both before and since this exhortation. If there is only passing interest in the document it simply indicates just how necessary it is to speak out again and again concerning this primordial task of the church to evangelize the world.

In the last paragraph of his introduction Pope Paul makes a stirring *cri du cœur* on the importance of evangelization and in many ways it provides the ultimate framework for every answer to every question on evangelization:

It has seemed to us of vital importance to make an exhortation of this because the promulgation of the gospel message is not something which the church may undertake or neglect at her discretion; it is rather the function and duty imposed on her by Our Lord Jesus Christ so that all may believe and achieve salvation. The gospel message is therefore, necessary; it is unique; it is irreplaceable. It does not admit of any indifference, or any accommodation to the principles of other religious beliefs or of any compromise, for on it depends the whole issue of man's salvation and in it are contained all the splendours of divine revelation. It expresses a wisdom not of this world and by virtue of its content evokes the spirit of faith — a faith which rests on the power of God. It is Truth itself and it is fitting, therefore, that the herald of that truth should consecrate to its cause all his time, all his strength and, if the occasion arises, his very life (No. 5).

*From Christ the Evangelizer to the
Evangelizing Church*

A. Mission of Jesus

1. **Jesus is the Good News: 6-7**
2. **The content of His Message: 8-10**
3. **His preaching and Witness of Life: 11-13**

B. Mission of the Church

1. **Evangelization: Specific task of the Church: 14**
2. **The Church: immediate effect of evangelization: 15**
3. **The Church: inseparable from Christ: 16**

The first chapter opens with a simple outline of the christological foundations of evangelization. It could not be otherwise even though there is nothing new, striking or controversial in saying that the meaning of evangelization will ultimately be understood only in the life, words and deeds of Christ. His Person and mission are paradigmatic for any work that would claim to be evangelization and any form of life that seeks to be evangelical. Moreover Christ is not simply an external model for the evangelizer, he is the intimate, effective cause of evangelization. Pope Paul continually refers back to these opening paragraphs on Christ as the central focus of evangelization when dealing with more controversial questions.

Several bishops at the Synod seemed to fear this Christ-focus would be absent from a Synodal document and made strong pleas for its insertion. For instance, Cardinal Roy, President of the "Concilium de laicis" and the Pontifical Commission "Justitia et Pax", expressed the hope that in drawing up the final draft of the Synod

Document the christological nature of evangelization would be emphasized. It should be announced first of all that Christ is always living and active in the church. (1) The mission of the Holy Spirit is to lead us to Christ. (2) The object of evangelical preaching is not a new revelation, neither is it a system nor a summary of historical events but the Person of Christ who was crucified and who rose again, the liberation and salvation of men. Christ alone, God and perfect man, can be said to be the basis, rule and object of all humanization (Sedos documentation: 74 n. 35, p. 742).

One gets the impression that the Christocentrism insisted on at the Synod and again in the Exhortation is not highlighted only because theological synthesis demands it but equally for pastoral reasons and urgency. If there is going to be a new interest, commitment and zeal in communicating the Good News to modern man, it will require not only a sound theological grasp of the nature of evangelization the contemporary world but a personal and collective return to communion with the risen Christ in the totality of our lives. This is simple gospel spirituality: "Without me you can do nothing". This obviously means more than saying: without a sound theoretical knowledge of Christ you can do nothing. If there was concern at the Synod about failure to talk of Christ as the centre of evangelization there was equal concern about the lack of talking to Christ as the principle of all authentic apostolic work.

Pope Paul equivalently says that evangelization is simply partnership with Christ and it cannot exist without close union with him. There cannot be authentic mission without at least an openness to mysticism and normally no mysticism without some form of asceticism; "through toil and suffering, through a life lived according to the gospel, through abnegation and the cross, through the spirit of the beatitudes" (n. 10). The central task of the evangelizer whether he be a parish priest or missionary without a christian community, whether he be a bishop or a lay person, is to enter into a personal, living friendship with Christ so that he may gradually come to pervade their total personal existence. Evangelization has already begun when there is union with Christ and continued fruitfulness is inevitable as long as he is given room in us. Evangelization is not simply doing something for Christ but doing it with him and in him and through him.

Most christians whether Catholic or non-Catholic and even some non-Christians can agree on the importance for the modern world of Christ and his mission. But agreement is not so easily reached concerning the mission of the church. However, Pope Paul, insists very strongly on the inseparability of the church from Christ and

forcefull rebukes those who in any way seem to consider the church apart from him. "There is thus a profound link between Christ, the church and evangelization". During the period of the church that we are living in, it is she who has the task of evangelizing. This mandate is not accomplished without her, and still less against her. It is certainly fitting to recall this fact at a moment like the present one when, sad to say, one hears people — one would like to believe they are well-intentioned, but they are certainly misguided — constantly claiming to love Christ, but not the church, to listen to Christ but not the church, to belong to Christ but outside the church. The absurdity of this dichotomy is clearly evident in this phrase of the gospel; "Anyone who rejects you rejects me" 10:16). And how can one wish to love Christ without loving the church, if the finest witness to Christ is that of St. Paul; "Christ loved the church and sacrificed himself for her" (Ep. 5:25) (n. 16).

In the last few years Pope Paul has been making frequent pleas to those within the church to refrain from excessive criticism of her. The fundamental reason for this plea seems to be the danger of people separating the church from Christ and thus failing to understand let alone love either Christ or the church, and consequently undermining the work of evangelization. There will always be a need for a love for the church which is critical but the love should be at least as evident, not only in word but in deed, as is the criticism. Pope Paul insists that the church is always in need of renewal and reform. Here, he expresses it by pointing out how the church needs to be constantly evangelized in order to evangelize with credibility. Metanoia or conversion is a never-ending task of the church. There is nothing new in the church's consciousness of the weaknesses and sinfulness of her members, what seems to be new is the growing blindness of some of her members to her goodness, grace, truth, beauty, love, to the presence of the dwelling among sinners who believe his mercy is greater even than our sinfulness. But if we incessantly stress the weakness of the church there may be many who will never discover the presence of the forgiving Christ within her and attain salvation.

The ecclesiology of this chapter is in direct continuity with that of *Lumen Gentium* and *Ad Gentes* as is evidenced by the lengthy quotations from these documents. It is only in later chapters that there is an attempt to develop or at least clarify certain aspects of teaching of Vatican II on the nature of the church, especially with regard to the theology of the local or particular church and its relationship to the universal church. Here we have the new familiar language for expressing the mystery of the church. She remains on earth as the sign simultaneously obscure and luminous, of a new presence of Jesus, of his departure and of his

permanent presence. She prolongs and continues the mystery of Christ and his mission in the world. She is therefore essentially an open and missionary church and "is never closed in upon herself". It is the whole church that is called to evangelize and "the work of each individual member is important for the whole". It is in this context that Pope Paul quotes with great enthusiasm the categorical statement of the Synodal Bishops: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the church". This task becomes more urgent not less urgent, with the rapid, vast and profound changes in contemporary society.

SUMMARY

Evangelization cannot be understood without reference to Christ as portrayed in the New Testament nor can it be understood or undertaken apart from the church because it is the essential mission of the church. The church is the normal, most immediate and most visible fruit of evangelization. It is not only man who lives outside the visible community in Christ who needs to be evangelized but the church herself needs to be continually evangelized and therefore evangelization must include both the pastoral ministry and the specifically missionary ministry — communicating the gospel to both christian and non-christian alike.

What is Evangelization?

It would be hard to exaggerate the importance of this question which has been discussed with such new intensity since the II Vatican Council. Pope Paul put the question very clearly in his opening address to the Synod: "It has been repeatedly said that this is an important and extensive theme. But let it be added that this theme is likewise bold and demanding, because it obliges us to study the nature in these turbulent years, of the real socio-cultural conditions of mankind in which and for which the church lives. It vividly touches our responsibility as pastors, because it asks us in a burning and we should say, provocative manner a specific question about the very reason for our existence in the midst of human society. Who are we? What are we doing? What should we be doing?"

Clearly the Synod was not simply discussing the question of new methods of evangelization to meet the new situation of the modern world. Nor was it simply a question as to whether the church should be evangelizing peoples or not — the mandate Christ was clear and beyond dispute. The question concerned the very

nature of evangelization that constitutes the primary task of the church, what activities could be truly classified as part of evangelization and what emphasis or priority should they be given in an integral or global description of evangelization. Pope Paul seeks to answer these questions so that no one can continue to appeal to theological confusion as an excuse for non-involvement or postponement in the task of evangelization. He does not offer the final word to these ongoing discussions but he does offer an indispensable word, he lays down certain elements that must be present for a true definition of evangelization. Before highlighting these essential elements in evangelization it may be helpful to outline the background discussion of them.

In the working paper for the Synod several different senses for the word "Evangelization" were mentioned as commonly understood today. Several more were suggested in the Synod itself: "In the first place, the term can mean **every activity** whereby the world is in any way transformed in accordance with the will of God the Creator and Redeemer". Those in favour of this meaning felt it gave status to the work of laity, religious and priests in secular areas. Teaching maths., running bingo, working in a factory, participation in legitimate recreation etc., **any activity** done with the right motive in accordance with God's will was genuine evangelization. Those opposed to this description of evangelization tended to think it was not sufficiently specific and not in harmony with the meaning given the term in Sacred Scripture. They claimed such vagueness lessened the urgency of tasks more closely connected with the actual Word of God, like preaching, catechetics, sacramental ministry etc. These various interpretations have many important implications and applications for the actual task of evangelization. Most priests or religious either at home or abroad could give examples of the difficulties. Are missionary nuns running a domestic science college engaged in evangelization? Is a parish priest in Ireland chairing a meeting of the local football club doing evangelization? Is it possible to draw the line anywhere between evangelizing and non-evangelizing work?

"Secondly the word is used to mean the priestly, prophetic and royal activity whereby the church is built-up according to Christ's intention". Those favouring this definition see it as safeguarding in a clear and indisputable manner the specific nature of the mission of the church; there is little danger here of confusing her tasks with those of the state or any other purely secular organization or activity. Those opposed to it see it as embodying too narrow an ecclesiology, one not sufficiently cosmic in its outreach and one that might appear indifferent if not opposed to the legitimate aspirations of mankind in the relatively autonomous social, political

and cultural spheres. The mission of the church is to restore all things in Christ and not simply to build-up the institutional church. Again, the practical implications of this definition are spelt out in the longstanding disputes concerning the relationships between humanizing and evangelizing and sacramentalizing and evangelizing.

Thirdly the term evangelization has been often restricted to meaning the first preaching of the gospel to those who have never adequately heard it before. A sharp distinction was made between preaching to christians and non-christians. It was suggested that to claim that preaching to Catholics in Dublin or New York was true evangelization might tend to lessen the urgency of evangelizing the two-thirds of the world population who are non-Christian. Sometimes the question arose in the form of contrasting ecumenism and the wider Ecumenism: what is more important, to evangelize non-Catholic christians or non-Christians? Some would say that the only acceptable evangelization in both cases was simple presence, dialogue and good relations. But the question remains concerning the obligation of explicit verbal proclamation of the gospel in relationship to the relatively new approach of simple presence and a dialogue that does not envisage conversion as its specific goal. Finally, one occasionally hears people ask why the church evangelizes at all today? Should she not first set her own house in order before resuming to convert, baptise and institutionalize others.

There seems to be no end to the difficulties that have been raised about evangelization in the last decade or more? How does Pope Paul deal with them? He answers by saying that there are certain elements that must be present in any valid description of evangelization but evangelization must not be reduced to any single one of them. "In the church's work of evangelization there are undoubtedly certain elements and aspects which are deserving of special attention. Some of these are indeed of such importance that they may at times be regarded as constituting in themselves the whole of evangelization. So evangelization has been defined by some as consisting in the proclamation of Christ Our Lord to those who do not know him, in preaching, catechetics, baptism and the administration of the other sacraments. But no such defective and incomplete definition can be accepted for that complex, rich and dynamic reality which is called evangelization without the risk of weakening or even distorting its real meaning. It cannot be fully understood unless all its necessary elements are taken into account". In the rest of the chapter he spells out what these essential elements are but he has already cleared up several of the big questions described above and raised in pre-Synodal and synodal discussions.

EVANGELIZATION AND CONVERSION

In recent decades there has evolved a theology of dialogue with non-Christians that sees mutual enrichment and understanding as its specific goal and not conversion. This would seem to be a legitimate approach and very intimately connected with evangelization at least in the sense that the most appropriate method of evangelization should be dialogical, even proclamation itself should be done in this context. And if one does not accept that proclamation should be dialogical in character at least the spirit and openness of dialogue is a necessary preparation for evangelization. However, the exhortation makes it clear that the precise aim of evangelization is conversion. The church, through all her members has an intrinsic desire to convert individuals, communities, the collective human condition. There is no evangelization without, at least, the desire to convert. The christian cannot hide this ultimate objective. Pope Paul writes: "The purpose of evangelization is therefore **precisely** this interior change and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs" (n. 18). The christian by a supernatural instinct seeks to convert everyone and everything to Christ. This re-emphasis on the seeking of conversion will have many practical repercussions. It will obviously affect missionary attitudes and approaches to Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and the followers of all the great world religions. It stress the importance of individual conversions thus balancing the idea that only village or community conversions should be sought. Still, it may remain true, that the best method of reaching, converting and sustaining the individual is to aim at community conversion. This theology of evangelization will effect pastoral approaches in the parish and our understanding of ecumenism.

However, the conversion which is the specific goal of evangelization must not be understood in a narrow sense as if it were simply a course of instruction leading to baptism and insertion into the life of the visible church. It is much deeper and wider: "All this may be summarised thus: Evangelization is to be achieved, not from without as though by adding some decoration or applying a coat of colour, but in depth, going to the very centre and roots of life. The gospel must impregnate the culture and the whole way of life of man, taking these words in the widest and fullest sense which they are given in *Gaudium et Spes*' (n. 20). Obviously this total mission of the church must be engaged in after the manner of

Christ, there must be no hint of unfair or unjust means and strategies; fidelity to Christ and the church require that no violence be done to religious liberty or the dignity of man.

EVANGELIZATION AND CULTURE

This section brings up a whole host of questions which are central not only in contemporary missiology but also in pastoral theology. Words like indigenization, inculturation, acculturation immediately lead us into the problems. Especially in Africa and Asia there is a constant complaint that the church is foreign and will never really make progress in these continents unless it adapts its ecclesial life to the local cultures, especially in liturgy, catechetics, methods of administration etc. The local churches want to be truly local without betraying their essential relationship with the universal church. The Asian bishops in a statement for the Synod say: "The local church is one with the universal church, one with the See of Peter, blessed by the same Holy Spirit, sharing in the same sacramental life, living on the same Body of Christ, believing in one God, one faith, one baptism — but it is a church incarnate in the people. It is native, springing out of local culture, with a reverence for ancient customs and traditions, speaking the local language, dressed in local clothing expressing immortal truth in images that the common people understand, and love. The church must be local in its songs, in its artistry, in its architecture, in its thought and language, in its ways of life. As God became one of us — to make us his own — his church in Asia must be Asian. God, when he came on earth, became man like us in all things, except sin. His mystical Body in Asia must become Asian, like the Asians in all things, except sin".

But the problems concerning the relationship of evangelization and culture are not confined to Africa and Asia. The cultural context in which evangelization must take place in Europe and the Americas presents enormous problems. At least since the turn of the century the cultural changes have been deep, rapid and violent. Technology, secularization, industrialization, "the scientific explosion", the mass media, international travel, affluence, socialism etc. have all played a part in the break-up of a culture that supported the faith to a great extent. These supports have gone and the church is faced with a totally different culture, with entirely new opportunities and difficulties for evangelization. The understanding of the socio-political-cultural world of today and tomorrow is going to play an important part in the re-evangelization of these continents but the mammoth task has only just begun. Even in Ireland where the church has such deep cultural and

historical roots, the culture is breaking up and christians must learn to live their faith in a new environment which some think will be indifferent if not hostile to the church. This may be to pessimistic a view of things but it is evident that the church in Ireland is no longer completely immune from the influences that have been felt in the churches of Europe.

It would have been impossible to cover all the difficulties, even the major ones arising out of the relationship between faith and culture, church and the world, unity and pluralism within the church and in society. Pope Paul simply sets down some principles. The gospel is not identical with culture and is independent of all cultures. But although independent of culture and cultures the gospel is not necessarily incompatible with them. The gospel is capable of permeating and transforming all cultures without becoming subject to any of them. Because of its incarnational character evangelization will inevitably borrow elements from the culture it penetrates and this fosters the building of the Christian community and enables Christians to feel even more at home in the church.

In practice what orientation should the missionary have in the face of the cultural heritages and developments he meets in other countries? Certainly, he must "respect, foster and preserve whatever is good and true and noble in them" and in so far as it is possible from **within** the culture and not from outside as an interested observer. This means he must learn the language, adapt to the customs, identify with the aspirations of the people in all spheres when this is compatible with the Christian faith. But is this the central task of evangelization with regard to other cultures and religious traditions? Is this enough for a Christian?

There are many especially in secular circles, who cannot see why missionaries should still be present in countries other than their own especially if they are agents of cultural change. We are sometimes told that God has willed not only a cultural pluralism but a religious one also, and it is arrogance to go in and try to Christianize others especially against their will. Given the nationalistic mood and movements in the Third World, the colonial connections of the past, the adverse propaganda that talks about the foreignness of the church in exaggerated terms etc., missionaries can sometimes become discouraged and wonder why they should stay on where they are apparently not wanted. Pope Paul while recognizing the difficulties holds firm on the principle: "the split between the gospel and culture is without doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must

be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the gospel is not proclaimed" (n. 20). Some may think this an over-simplification of the problems and therefore an insufficiently nuanced answer but ultimately we have to say as Christians that while the incarnational principle is operative with regard to cultures it is a **redemptive** incarnational principle and no culture, Christian, pre-Christian or post-Christian is beyond the need of constant purification and elevation in and through the death and resurrection transformation generated by the Paschal Mystery. It is not sufficient to Hinduize or Africanize the Christian faith; there is the greater clearer and more urgent obligation to Christianize Hinduism and Africa if they are to reach the full maturity of richness God intended for them. Of course, the need to re-evangelize Europe and North America is even more necessary if men like Toynbee and Muggeridge are right about the ultimate decadence of our post-Christian cultures. However the exhortation takes up these problems again in other chapters.

WITNESS OF LIFE AND EXPLICIT PROCLAMATION

One of the characteristic demands of people today is a demand for witness of life rather than an avalanche of words. In a society given to over-verbalizing "the wordless witness", "the silent proclamation", in and through our daily living, is especially effective. While Pope Paul does not say that we must limit our preaching only to what we are personally living, he does make witness of life an essential element in evangelization: "Above all the gospel must be proclaimed by witness of life" (n. 21). Certainly, God can use the words of a sinful preacher to save others just as sacraments are operative even when celebrated by a sinful minister. Nevertheless it would be hard to exaggerate the evangelizing effectiveness of witness of life: "here we have an initial act of evangelization" (n. 21) an irreplaceable one. It is helpful to quote some of the examples of witness which Pope Paul says are of special importance: "Other questions will arise, deeper and more demanding ones, questions by this witness which involves **presence, sharing, solidarity, . . .**" (n. 21).

In the last paragraph we have a firm approval of the theology and way of evangelizing through "presence" which was given such a special impetus by Charles de Foucauld and many other lesser known missionaries in recent times. It is a way that must become more and more imperative for the future. It is a way that modern man instinctively understands because of its authenticity, its reliance

on deeds rather than words. But however, sublime or difficult or necessary it may be it always remains insufficient. There must be a preacher: a proclamation of the gospel. The exhortation could not be clearer — see n. 22, par. 1. Witness of life and explicit proclamation (the text seems to imply explicit **verbal** preaching) are like two sides of the one task of evangelization. Both themes are treated again in the exhortation especially the necessity of witness of life but in continuity with *Ad Gentes* it is always coupled with the duty of verbal proclamation of the gospel.

EVANGELIZATION AND THE SACRAMENTAL MINISTRY

When missiologists ask the question whether the church should evangelize or sacramentalize they normally do not wish to suggest that the administration of the sacraments is not an essential element in evangelization but that to sacramentalize without having first evangelized is detrimental to a proper living and development of the Christian faith. Sometimes, they have in mind a situation like Latin-America where missionaries are overworked in the simple celebration of the basic sacraments and people remain ignorant of the significance of the sacraments and the essential content of the faith. Perhaps the apparent opposition between evangelization and sacramentalizing is more serious if one implies that the evangelizer need only preach the gospel and be more or less unconcerned with the planting of the visible church with its basic structures and institutions. The exhortation stresses that evangelization includes as an essential element entrance into the visible community of believers and continual participation in and celebration of the many other signs which unfold and prolong the sign of the church. However, in a later chapter Pope Paul stresses the need for a deep catechesis alongside the sacramental apostolate.

EVANGELIZATION, ACCEPTANCE AND APOSTOLIC INITIATIVE

It is not sufficient that the gospel be proclaimed, it must be listened to, interiorly accepted and assimilated. This acceptance includes not only the truths revealed by God in his mercy but adherence to a new programme of life. Evangelization is not fully developed unless there is entrance into the life of the visible church. The planting and building up of the church is an essential element of evangelization. Finally one has only been truly evangelized when he himself becomes an evangelizer. "This is the proof, the test of the genuineness of his own conversion. It is inconceivable that a man who has received the word and surrendered himself to the kingdom should not himself become a witness and proclaimer of

the truth" (n. 24). In other words the obligation to evangelize does not arise only from the external mandate of Christ but is part of the inner dynamism of faith and baptism and is the compelling sign that one has been truly evangelized and believes. The test of apostolic initiative will be a searching one for the individual Christian and Christian communities.

SUMMARY

It can be said that although the concept of evangelization is complex and still subject to further study and experimentation, certain elements have been established as irreplaceable and perennially demanded. But evangelization cannot be reduced to any single element however important it may be considered. Pope Paul lists the key elements as follows: The inner renewal of mankind and the whole created order, living witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the visible community of the church, reception of the sacraments, apostolic initiative.

The Message of Evangelization

1. God is Father: 25-26
2. Salvation in Christ: 27
3. A Message of hope: 28
4. A Message of touching the whole of life: 29
5. Evangelization, Liberation and Development: 30-36
6. The question of violence: 37
7. Specific contribution of the Church: 38
8. Evangelization and Religious Liberty: 39

The exhortation is not concerned with the old question raised in moral theology about the absolute minimum knowledge of the gospel required for salvation. Is knowledge that Jesus Christ is God sufficient or must man believe explicitly in the Trinity? This type of question retains its interest and importance but differs from the question of this chapter. Pope Paul simply wants to set out the essential themes of evangelization without which evangelization is seriously impoverished and distorted. There are secondary elements in the gospel message but there is also an essential content which must remain however much the expression of it may change or develop. The living substance of the gospel cannot be modified or ignored.

What is the vital core of the gospel which we must preach? First, God is not an anonymous or remote power, an abstraction. He is

Father. He is a loving Father. He loves the world in Christ through whom all things have their being and men are called to eternal life. God is our common Father and we are brothers and sisters to one another in God. In other words, the message is not some philosophical truth but "that we should be called children of God and so we are" (1 Tr. 3:1)

Secondly, "Evangelization will also always contain — as the foundation, centre and at the same time summit of its dynamism — a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ, the Son of God made man, who died and rose from the dead, salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy. This categorical statement must be seen against the backdrop of contemporary discussion in Catholic and Protestant circles concerning the meaning of salvation for today. Pope Paul spells out certain marks of Christian salvation. It is for all men and is a sheer gift of God. It goes beyond all temporal desires or needs having their origins in man. It cannot be restricted within the frame work of temporal existence. It is not therefore found in any purely socio-cultural-political goals. It is transcendent and eschatological salvation. It does, indeed, begin in this life but is fulfilled in eternity. This is the salvation that is offered through evangelization and no other. Here we have some of the principles with which Pope Paul will face many of the difficulties raised by the theology of liberation and development.

Since the salvation offered to man in Christ is transcendent and eschatological, evangelization will include the proclamation of an hereafter that is in continuity and discontinuity with our present situation. It is a gospel of hope — rooted in the promises made by God in the new Covenant in Christ. Pope Paul does not go on to list the articles of one of the more commonly known creeds of the church but stresses truths that apparently are not getting their due place in the preaching of the gospel. It is necessary to preach the mystery of evil and the active search for good. Perhaps, this is a reaction against certain evolutionary schemes of spirituality that do not sufficiently take account of the fact of moral evil in the world. Or perhaps, it is simply a response to the demand of several synodal fathers who felt that sin was being soft-peddled and the meaning of the suffering and death of Christ was consequently watered-down in the preaching of the gospel.

Certainly, the recurring insistence on the need to **preach the Church** as an essential part of evangelization in this document is provoked by the type of view that was summarized for the bishops in preparation for the Synod as follows: "Evangelization is the church's mission in the world. Some people however regard the

institutional church as a hindrance and consider that evangelization should be carried out with disregard for the institutional church. One asks what is the relationship between the ecclesial institution and the Christian promotion of individuals or even communities. One likewise asks to what goal should evangelization be primarily aimed: the building up of the church or the salvation of man?"

Another version of the same type of question about the church was put as follows: "Normally speaking, evangelization without the witness of ecclesial life can hardly be successful. Hence the fact that some hold that evangelization should be avoided until such time as the church is interiorly reformed and clearly appears as the sign of God in the world. The question arises whether the church ought to abandon the evangelization of non-Christians in order to devote herself to interior reform or whether reforming activity within and missionary activity without should co-exist and whether they are so closely connected that one cannot exist without the other". The exhortation makes it clear that the traditional teaching on the necessity of the visible church and her sacramental life cannot be an obstacle to evangelization but is central to it. "For in its totality, evangelization — over and above the preaching of a message — consists in the implantation of the church, which does not exist without the driving force which is the sacramental life culminating in the Eucharist" (n. 28).

Alongside preaching about the church and the sacraments the exhortation specifies the need of "...preaching likewise, and this is always urgent, of the search for God himself through prayer which is principally that of adoration and thanksgiving" (n.28). There are many encouraging signs throughout the church of a re-awakened interest and practice of prayer even in its more simplified forms of contemplative prayer but whether it is on a large enough scale to bring about the wide and deep renewal sought by the II Vatican Council and the present exhortation is not clear. Some say that there is only more writing, speaking and meeting about prayer but not an intensification of the life of prayer itself. But it is impossible to accurately assess a situation belonging to the innermost heart of men and women today. All we can ultimately say is that it is always an urgent and fundamental part of evangelization to get people engaged in prayer as a habit of life. A life of prayer is already an apostolic life as is evident from the contemplative life that the church honours so profoundly.

EVANGELIZATION, LIBERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The exhortation situates the discussion of the relationship of evangelization to development and liberation within the conviction that the preaching of the gospel must be seen to be relevant and

applicable to every sphere of the concrete life of man both personal and social. The gospel speaks of the pressing and topical issues of today, especially about liberation with all its implications and consequences. Liberation has been one of the major themes of Pope Paul's thinking and teaching in the last decade. What he says here has been said several times before and at greater length but now he brings together some of the more basic principles that must guide the ongoing discussion and which emerged from the Synod itself.

In the first place there is a strong re-affirmation of the commitment of the church to the task of liberation. The church has the duty of assisting at the actualization of liberation; she must give constant prophetic witness to it; she must ensure that it is complete. The involvement of the church in the work of liberation is not foreign to evangelization. Pope Paul echoes the now famous passage in the document of the Second Synod on Justice in the World when the bishops wrote: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or, in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation". The Commission for Justice and Peace with its branches all over the world is a structural sign of the sincerity of this commitment. It is important to keep this *de facto* support for liberation and development in mind when reflecting on the passages where Pope Paul feels obliged to offer criticism and warnings concerning the dangers and misconceptions apparent in some theories of liberation theology.

Secondly, the exhortation stresses the profound links between evangelization and liberation:

1. Anthropological links
2. Theological links
3. Evangelical links.

The anthropological links arise from the fact that the gospel is preached to men in their concrete situations and they are subject to socio-economic and cultural questions. The sciences covering these areas in the life of man need to be studied and their practical application and relative autonomy have profound influence on the methods and emphasis in the preaching of the gospel. The theological links arise because of the intimate connection between the mysteries of creation and redemption. They are inseparable and the full development and liberation of created realities can only be achieved ultimately through the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation of Christ. A theology of terrestrial realities must open

out to a theology of redemption and political theology has no ultimate significance if it excludes the eschatological finality of mankind and his struggles. The links between evangelization and liberation are most obvious and profound in the understanding and elaboration of the gospel imperative of Love. There is no love of God without love of neighbour and no love of neighbour which does not include justice, equality, truth and peace. Consequently it would be impossible to truly preach the gospel without concern for the full liberation and development of man and his world.

The message of liberation that the church proclaims has its origin in the Revelation of God to man and not in any ideological systems or political parties. The object of evangelization cannot be reduced to a man-centred goal or to the purely temporal order. The theology and practice of liberation that is included in evangelization must have a specifically religious finality. The text puts it very clearly: "It cannot be confined to any restricted sphere whether it be economic, political, social or doctrinal. It must rather embrace the whole man in all its aspects and components, extending to his relation to the absolute even to the Absolute which is God; it is based therefore on a clear concept of man, on a definite anthropology which can never be sacrificed for any reasons of strategy or custom or to achieve some transient success" (n. 33).

There are two extremes that Pope Paul assiduously avoids. He does not confine the mission of the church to some purely spiritual concern disassociated from the temporal problems of man. He also refuses to reduce the mission of the church to purely social, economic, or political objectives, however good these may be, since the proclamation of the Kingdom of God cannot be replaced by the proclamation of forms of human liberation. Although human liberation is linked with salvation in Christ the church can never identify them. It is evident in so many ways that liberation and development in the socio-economic domain does not necessarily bring about a greater openness to the gospel and the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, there are nations with a high level of material well-being that seem to have declined in spiritual sensitivity and religious endeavour.

In my discussions with various groups there has been a frequent question concerning the reasons why Pope Paul has so many fears and hesitations about human liberation or at least the theologies of liberation. First of all it must be admitted that Pope Paul is passionately on the side of the poor, of men and women who are under-privileged in any way and he is strongly, without reservations or hesitation, against any form of exploitation or oppression. But

judging from the exhortation he seems to attack the uses that liberation theology has sometimes been put to and the ways it has been formulated. Even a casual reading of liberation theology literature before and since the exhortation makes us aware of the type of danger Pope Paul seems to have had in mind. For instance, Ernesto Cardenal writes: "The church has a very important mission in these times in Latin America. I believe that its first responsibility is to preach communism. The greatest obstacle the revolution has in Latin America is a fear of 'communism' ... Communism is deeply Christian. Moreover, it is the essence of Christianity ... If Marxists need Christians for the establishment of socialism Christians need communism for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth..." In the light of the history of communism and the contemporary experience of the church in communist countries it is hard to see any truth in these and similar positions so often found in liberation theology literature. However, given the desperation that poverty often breeds one can understand how political leaders and thinkers are tempted to turn to Marxism as a possible solution to massive social injustice and oppression. But the church believes it is important and urgent to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving. However she considers it equally important that there be a real conversion of mind and heart in those who live in these structures or control them. Even the most ideal structures cannot work if the men working them remain selfish and closed to conversion.

THE QUESTIONS OF VIOLENCE

Given the fact of almost universal violence in one or other of its many forms it was inevitable that Pope Paul should re-iterate the Christian standpoint on the matter. Violence must be rejected. It is unchristian and contrary to the spirit and letter of the gospel nor is it in conformity with the dignity of man. It is also a fact that violence provokes violence and often brings into existence new forms of oppression, lordships and enslavement more difficult to live with than the forms it avowedly sought to eliminate. Pope Paul again exhorts against violence as he has done so often before by adding that violence can delay instead of advance genuine social uplift and a more just society. The peace movement in Ireland can find ample support for much of its message in the teaching of this short but meaningful paragraph.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CHURCH TO TRUE LIBERATION

What is the church **doing** about the liberation and development of man? The church has grown in her understanding of the manner and strictly evangelical means that belong to her in furthering the liberation of peoples. She is doing the following:

- (1) Conscientizing christians with regard to their duty in promoting the liberation of men.
- (2) She provides men with the motivation of faith and fraternal charity.
- (3) She provides an ever more profound and comprehensive social teaching.
- (4) The principles of her social teaching are a guide and stimulation for action, participation and commitment.
- (5) She inserts the struggle for liberation into the universal plan of salvation thus giving the whole movement an ultimate meaning and purpose.
- (6) By her presence in the movement and her guidance she offsets the dangers of the liberation of men being used by political systems for unworthy ends.
- (7) Finally, she works towards the fullest and deepest liberation — freedom from sin and promotion of the liberty of the children of God. The liberation that is the object of evangelization is the one announced by Christ and offered to man in the Paschal Mystery.

It is in the context of the debate on liberation and development that Pope Paul reminds us of the millions of Christians who are deprived of the basic human right of religious liberty. There is often an insinuation that the church is on the side of oppressors and exploitation, it should be pointed out that more often she can be identified more truly with the persecuted and those who have no real freedom: "The drama of fidelity to Christ and of the freedom of religion continues even if it is distinguished by categorical declarations in favour of the rights of the person and of life in society" (n. 39). The continued forced absence of bishops from Synods and other major meetings of national hierarchies is a constant reminder that the church understands the meaning of oppression, violence, powerlessness, and the lack of basic freedoms. It is important not to identify a wealthy minority of individual christians whether lay or clerical with the church as such and then condemn her. Nevertheless, there is always need for constant and deep reform and renewals as Pope Paul and the Synod Fathers frequently state.

The Means of Evangelization

1. Witness of Life: 40-41
2. Verbal Preaching of the Gospel: 42
3. Liturgy of the Word: 43
4. Catechetics: 44
5. Mass Media: 45
6. Personal Contact: 46
7. Sacramental Ministry: 47
8. Popular Religiosity: 48

WITNESS AND PREACHING

Pope Paul admits to some repetition in this chapter. By taking up once more the themes of witness of life and verbal proclamation of the gospel he seems to be making them the central message of the whole exhortation. He writes: "For the church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbour with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses' " (n. 40). This principle is certainly clear in the teaching of Vatican II but it could be argued that it is given greater emphasis here and therefore a development has taken place.

Apart from re-asserting that verbal proclamation is an essential and indispensable part of evangelization Pope Paul makes an important comment on contemporary findings in psychology and sociology. He admits that modern man lives in a civilization of the image rather than of the word and the transmission of the gospel must continue to adapt to these changes. He congratulates those who have experimented and are experimenting in these areas. But despite this new emphasis in contemporary culture and the fatigue produced by so much empty talk: the spoken word remains relevant "especially when it is the bearer of the power of God". Faith comes from what is heard. It is the Word that leads to faith and increase of faith. Consequently, the verbal proclamation remains perennially valid. This section of the exhortation must be of importance to all priests and religious who have made the verbal proclamation of the gospel the main diakonia they offer the church and the world.

This evangelizing preaching takes on many forms and the apostolic zeal of the preacher can shape them "almost indefinitely".

There is no limit to the pastoral opportunities for preaching the Word of God arising out of the innumerable events of life and the normal human situations. But Pope Paul gives a pride of place to the preaching of the Homily during the Eucharistic celebration but says the Mass is not the only appropriate moment for the homily. Thinking this emphasis on the homily might be proper to the exhortation without any antecedents at the Synod I checked all the interventions once more and discovered there was at least one intervention given solely on this point. Cardinal Wright argued that religious instruction in its traditional forms has greatly declined. In families religious instruction is almost entirely lacking. Catechism in schools, where it exists leaves much to be desired. In parishes the new life-styles have made the old afternoon catechism classes a near impossibility. Adult instruction is limited for all practical purposes to the Sunday homily and an occasional sermon during the administration of the other sacraments. Therefore apart from the intrinsic importance and nature of the homily, pastoral reasons make it urgent that it be given a high priority in the preaching of the gospel. Whether or not it was a reference to this long intervention of Cardinal Wright, the exhortation gives a long section to the Liturgy of the Word as a method of evangelization ending with the words: "the homily has a place and must not be neglected in the celebration of all the sacraments, at para-liturgies, and in the assemblies of the faithful. It will always be a privileged occasion for communicating the Word of the Lord" (n. 43).

CATECHETICS

The Fourth Synod of Bishops will have as its topic: "Catechetics in Our Time" but already in the Third Synod there was considerable discussion on the nature, purpose and methods of catechizing today. Pope Paul could scarcely bypass catechetics in a document on evangelization despite the extensive work done in this field through the General Catechetical Directory produced by the Congregation for the Clergy and the various National Directories. The writing of new catechisms and textbooks is taking place throughout the church both on the missions and at home and it presents many difficulties as well as opportunities. The controversy following the publication of the famous Dutch Catechism is only an example of the deep concern of the church in matters related to the actual teaching of the faith, whether to adults or young people. Here Pope Paul simply restates some well known principles, for instance: "the methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned;

they must seek always to fix in the **memory**, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life". This principle of necessary adaptation applies to all methods of evangelization and is the one Pope Paul opened this chapter with: "the question of methods of evangelization is permanently relevant, because the ways of evangelizing vary according to the different circumstances of time, place and culture, and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discovery and adaption" (n. 40).

THE MASS MEDIA

One of the striking differences between the exhortation and the Synodal debate on the Mass Media is the complete absence of any negative criticism in the exhortation. Here there is no blame assigned to the mass media for harm done to the church since Vatican II. Pope Paul says again that when they are put at the service of the gospel they can extend the area in which the Word of God is heard almost indefinitely. It has become a truism to state that it presents the task of evangelization with its most powerful and effective opportunity to reach everyone on earth. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the mass media are still one of the most neglected means of evangelization.

The mass media were not only attacked during the Synod, they were also defended and it may have been the defence that most influenced this document. A good example of sympathetic criticism came from Pedro Arrupe, the Jesuit General. He admits the serious shortcomings of the media but explains the reasons why they sometimes fail and the obligation of the church to remedy any failure that could be due to her approach to them: "There is no doubt that means of social communication are among the most effective to inform and to shape public opinion. Frequently these media are controlled by political or economic interests and the information they report, if not false is at least partial and incomplete, filtered and contaminated at the very source.

"Even when attempting to be objective those responsible for means of social communication frequently find themselves subject (as is very well expressed) to a triple tyranny which constantly overpowers them; the tyranny of **time**, which forces them to present their contributions within very reduced time margins, hindering them from working with sufficient calm and tact, particularly in complex and delicate matters; the tyranny of **interest**, which demands that whatever be said be interesting thus making the

selection of topics people tend to choose preferably those that "shock", arouse interest or cause surprise; the tyranny of **originality**, which forces them to say something that others have not said or which is in some way different.

"These circumstances and tensions explain in large part the inexactitude of information and the abundance of strange and scandalous cases and the sometimes deformed presentation of a fact or a point of information. The church can help so that the mass media of social communication can fulfill its tasks of forming healthy and objective public opinion if she collaborates with those in charge in a constructive plan: of sincerity and openness, of rapidity of information, of acceptance of criticism, and of greater use of the influential media".

PERSONAL CONTACT

Apart from a reference to the "apostolate of human relations" by Mgr. Perousse de Montelos there seems to have been no discussion at all of the personal contact so fundamental in the work of evangelization. This beautiful section seems to be a contribution proper to Pope Paul and his exhortation. It was also absent from the preparatory documents of the Synod coming from the various national hierarches.

Our Lord used this person-to-person approach himself. Alongside his constant preaching to the multitudes there was the personal dialogues with Nocodemus, Zaccheus, the Samaritan woman, Simon the Pharisee etc. Pope Paul says: "in the long run, is there any other way of handing on the gospel then by transmitting to another person one's personal experience of faith?" The exhortation says that sufficient praise can never be given to those priests who make themselves always available for this personal approach in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This personal concern for other is the root principle for all pastoral visitation and ministry. It would seem to me that in an age when anonymity and alienation are such common experiences especially in our urban and suburban areas the utmost emphasis must be given to personal contact. It is also a constant danger with the highly organized social and christian aid projects that donors or subscribers never come into personal relationship to the poor and thereby become impoverished themselves. Group therapy community discernment, team-work, joint ventures, shared experiences, however, valuable, necessary and fundamental can never replace the personal word, spiritual direction

and guidance. Evangelization is ultimately a communication of the gospel to an individual person as well as the building of a community of believers. Because of the almost universal presence of popular piety or religiosity throughout the church the Synod of Bishops discussed it carefully and positively. Pope Paul continues this approach. He admits the limitations of much popular piety. It is sometimes penetrated by religious aberrations and even superstition. Sometimes there is no real faith involved and it gives rise to strange sects and practices that are inimical to ecclesial unity. There are facts not only of the history of other religious but also of the history of christianity.

But there are positive elements which can be utilized with great advantage in evangelization. One finds heroic sanctity in this popular religion: a real thirst for God, remarkable generosity and sacrifice, deep interior attitudes, openness to others etc. It would be difficult to underestimate the positive values in this simple piety. Pope Paul sums up the requisite pastoral and missionary attitude by saying "Above all one must be sensitive to it, know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values be ready to help it to overcome its risks of deviation. When it is well oriented, this popular religiosity can be more and more for multitudes of our people a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ" (n. 48). Two qualities seem to mark the approach of the exhortation to this and many similar problems it raises, namely, reverence and discernment. There is always a presumption of good and positive values before pointing to possible dangers and limitations.

The Universality of Evangelization

1. **The Gospel for Everyone:** 49-50, 57
2. **First Proclamation of the Gospel:** 51-52
3. **Non-Christian religions:** 53
4. **Preaching to believers:** 54
5. **Preaching to non-believers:** 55
6. **Preaching to non-practicing believers:** 56
7. **Basic Communities:** 57-58

In this chapter Pope Paul reviews four of the major topics discussed at the Synod. (1) The first proclamation of the Gospel, (2) Non-Christian religions, (3) Secularization and secularism, (4) Comunidades de base (basic communities). But first of all he opens with an insistence on the limitless universality of evangelization. No one must be excluded. Sometimes the evangelizers and sometimes those to be evangelized have tried to restrict the work of

evangelization. Also public powers have opposed and prevented the preaching of the gospel but despite all obstacles from whatever quarters or in any form, the mandate of Christ remains: to the whole world, to all creation, to the ends of the earth, until the end of time — the gospel must be preached. The exhortation echoes the Synod that refused to limit the proclamation of the gospel "to one sector of mankind or to one class of people or to a single type of civilization". Nevertheless Pope Paul gives first priority to the first proclamation of the gospel.

FIRST PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL

There was considerable criticism of the preparatory phase of the last Synod. There was hardly anything said about the need for evangelization of those who have not yet heard of Christ. During the Synod itself this first proclamation was given some attention by African and Asian bishops but was still not given any special priority. The Synod certainly did not make primary evangelization its primary objective. This seems strange given the teaching of Vatican II and the world situation. Of the world's population of 3,645,829,000, only 669 million are Catholic. Many of these Catholics live in countries that are over 90% Catholic; e.g. Spain (98.9%), Italy (98.5%), Peru (97.9%), Columbia (97.1%) etc. However, nearly three billion people in other parts of the world are non-Catholic. Even when one adds Christians of all denominations together, over two-thirds of mankind still remain non-Christian. Two billion of these live in Asia, and a good number in Eastern Europe, but most of the rest live in Africa. Although Christianity is growing at a phenomenal rate in Africa, two thirds of the people in Africa have not been effectively evangelized. In a Synod given to the theme of evangelization in the modern world it remains difficult to understand why more attention was not given to missionary evangelization that is still awaited by two thirds of the world population that God so loves and sent his Son to redeem.

What does the exhortation say? It certainly improves on the debate at the Synod and gives first evangelization a fundamental importance and a certain priority. Those following a theology of non-Christian religions that tends to an exaggerated irenicism, may feel Pope Paul has not given sufficient status and understanding to these religions. On the other hand, those engaged in direct evangelization, in a permanent way of followers of the great religions may think they were not given the encouragement they desired from the Holy Father. Both camps would thereby do an injustice to this exhortation. There has been no published theological research nor any intervention at the Synod that would have justified a signi-

ficant difference of approach to the world religions than the one given by Pope Paul, nor could we have a stronger affirmation of the duty and need to evangelize by every possible means, men of other faiths. There seems to be an exemplary balance in the treatment of evangelization in the context of world religions. The present state of theological research into the Christian tradition on this question and the scientific understanding of world-religions does not seem to me to justify an alternative position at the level of papal teaching. But there are some interesting developments, if minor ones, on the teaching of Vatican II.

The idea of first proclamation is expanded to include not only non-Christians who have never heard the gospel but all children wherever they may be. First evangelization is addressed to innumerable people who have been baptised but live quite outside the mainstream of Christian life, it embraces simple people who have only an imperfect grasp of the faith and finally intellectuals who have abandoned the instruction they received as children and seek to know it in a new light. This widening of the idea of frontier evangelization will affect the understanding of the different forms of specifically missionary evangelization. For instance, it would seem from this description of first proclamation that Latin America and post-Christian Europe are now recognized as in need of missionary evangelization. However, it remains true that peoples who have **never** heard of Christ and would never hear of Him apart from the teaching of missionaries must be given preference.

NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

In continuity with the II Vatican Council and innumerable discourses Pope Paul tells the Christian of his duty to esteem and respect these non-Christian religions. The reasons for this positive appreciation are several and well known.

- (a) they represent the living expression of the spiritual lives of millions of people;
- (b) they embody the human search for God for thousands of years and which although imperfect is often made with the deepest sincerity and righteousness;
- (c) they have taught generations of people to pray;
- (d) they contain innumerable "seeds of the Word";
- (e) they constitute a true 'preparation for the gospel'.

Some theologians will say Pope Paul could have said more in praise of these religions and some missionaries may feel many problems arising from the theology of non-Christian religions have

not been faced, especially the question as to whether non-Christians are saved **in** and **through** their religions so that they may be truly called "ways of salvation". But I think Pope Paul says all that can be certainly affirmed at present and leaves the question open by saying: "theologians have **still** to study these important and difficult questions in the light of Christian tradition and the magisterium of the church so that new paths may be opened to missionaries both now and in the future which they may follow in their approach to non-Christian religions (53).

But esteem and reverence for non-Christian religions and the complexity of the questions that arise from them cannot ever justify missionaries from failing to evangelize them. Non-Christians have the right to hear the gospel preached to them in its entirety and missionaries have the **duty** to proclaim it to them. No future theology of non-Christian religions will ever be able to diminish this obligation to preach the gospel to non-Christians. Pope Paul insists on the uniqueness of Christ and the gospel, its universality and the fact that Christ established the only ultimately true religion: "In other words, our religion effectively establishes with God and authentic and living relationship which the other religions do **not** succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out to heaven" (n. 53).

In his opening address to the Synod Pope Paul summed up what has become the Christian view of other religions and the policy of the Secretariat for non-Christians: "Likewise we cannot omit a reference to the non-Christian religions. These in fact must no longer be regarded as rivals, or obstacles to evangelization, but as a field of lively, respectful interest and as the recipients of a deepening friendship". In other words the discovery of the riches of the world religions far from being a deterrent to evangelization is an incentive to it a realization that God goes before us and has already prepared the way. The non-Christian religions represent an invitation to evangelization for they are essentially preparations for it.

PREACHING TO BELIEVERS, NON-BELIEVERS AND THE NON-PRACTISING

The evangelization of these three groups are treated separately by Pope Paul and indeed the methods and approaches to each group will be different but there is a common and major difficulty arising in their evangelization, namely, secularism and secularization. Inevitably these themes have to be discussed because they have universal significance, since they are pervasive not only in the older churches but the younger ones too.

So despite the serious obligation and priority of evangelization of non-Christians the church can in no way neglect preaching to the faithful. In this context Pope Paul even stresses the need to give witness "to the fullness of revelation whose deposit she guards" to those who are not in full communion with the church. This is sometimes a common neglect in our commitment to Ecumenism. Later on the exhortation gives a full section to evangelization and ecumenism. In fact preaching to the faithful takes a special urgency in the modern world because: "The faith in these days often to contend with secularism and with atheism. It is challenged and threatened. Indeed it is often assailed and actively opposed. There is a danger therefore that it may be overwhelmed by these attacks or starved for want of spiritual nourishment unless it is constantly fed or supported". (n. 54). There is a temptation to think this general climate of anti-faith which the pope talks about is not present in Ireland and that therefore it is neither urgent nor realistic to take serious steps to reconsider the whole task of evangelization to enable people to live the gospel in a secularized culture and state. We can so easily under-estimate the rapidity of change in the religious traditions and commitment of the people. It would be naive to suppose that "the drama of atheistic humanism" and the spirit of secularism are completely absent from Ireland or have little or no influence.

A clear distinction is made between "secularism" and "secularization". — See n. 55 par. 3. From this a new form of atheism has evolved — See *ibid.*, par. 4. The secularization of contemporary society with its accompanying danger of atheistic secularism affects the lives not only of those who are evangelized but the life and work of the evangelizers. Pope Paul does not make the point in this exhortation but I think it is true that secularization has seriously affected the priesthood, religious life and apostolic groups, not only in their life styles but in inner attitudes and aspirations. The Synodal fathers made constant reference to this seecular culture of unbelief which is becoming to rapidly universal and provides the biggest single obstacle and opportunity to evangelization in the modern world.

The intervention of Cardinal John Dearden can be taken as a fairly representative statement of the mind of the Synodal bishops that finds an echo in this exhortation. "It is the historical and sociological meaning of secularization which has special relevance for the evangelizing ministry. In a sacral society religion provides the dominant mode of interpretation, since all aspects of life and all institutions of society are seen through a religious perspective. The emergence of secular society does not automatically or inevitably mean the demise, disappearance or irrelevance of religion, but it

does provide a new **context** and new **challenges** for evangelization. The essential challenge is that in a secular context the gospel constitutes only one world view among many competing interpretations of life; a secular society the religious perspective is no longer the assumed framework for undertaking personal and social existence.

Secularization involves this cultural shift from religion as the view of life to religion a view of life. The specific and unique function of religion in a secularized society is to continue its ministry of presenting and probing the ultimate value questions of life and to provide a framework of moral analysis and orientation in the face of the range of personal and social ethical issues being raised by the technology of secular societies. This significant task has implications for theology (how to formulate the faith), for liturgy (how we celebrate the faith) and for social life (how we practise the faith), understanding that justice is a constitutive element of the gospel.

"Secularization properly understood, constitutes a call to evangelization, not an obstacle or a threat. It demands that the church in being faithful to its fundamental mission be fully aware of the conditions of its ministry. Today, in many places, this means accepting secularity as the context for the call to conversion, then bearing witness to Christ by teaching and living in such a manner that people and societies are called beyond the secularity of their culture to the sanctity of the kingdom".

Pope Paul ends his treatment of evangelization in a secular context with a note of optimism and compassion. He acknowledges the many positive values and stepping stones to Christianity in the modern world and points out the sense of emptiness and nostalgia sometimes veils "a powerful and tragic appeal to be evangelized". Cardinal Conway made an intervention with a similar theme. He argued that between now and the year 2000, mankind **especially** in the developed well off countries will be suffering from a great hunger. It will not be a hunger for material goods but a hunger for hope, for a message which will give human life some real meaning. We have a beginning of this in the growing interest in prayer and meditation, in the reading of the gospels, of devotion to the life and teaching of Christ. The post-secular age will make a strong demand for a post-secular spirituality that will consist of a return to the fuller living of the gospel. A secularist culture will fall apart for it cannot satisfy the spiritual dimension of man.

Apart from preaching to believers and non-believers there is a special need to evangelize non-practising believer. Failure to practise leads so easily to non-belief and the task of re-conversion encounters considerable resistance. There is nothing new in the phenomenon

of lapsed Christians but there are special characteristics of the modern fall-off in the practice of the faith. Particularly noteworthy is the attempt to explain their lapsing in the name of greater interior religion, personal independence and authenticity. They present a particularly difficult problem because they feel they are one of the family, they know all the answers, have heard it all and found it wanting. But the problem they present cannot be passed over because it is difficult. Lapsed Catholics remain one of the great pastoral problems of bishops, priests, religious and lay apostles. Is it taken seriously today?

BASIC COMMUNITIES

The church seeks to fulfill the will of God who wants everyone to be saved and reach full knowledge of the truth. This universal nature of evangelization does not allow the church to restrict her preaching to small groups, to élite communities. Nevertheless within the context of universal evangelization she recognizes the great potential of evangelizing small communities who will in turn become dedicated evangelizers. Where and what are these basic communities?

In the pastoral exchanges of the Synodal fathers it emerges that such communities flourish more or less throughout the church. But there is a great variety of them, not only from one region to another but within the same region. Pope Paul describes only four general types of these communities.

(1) Some communities spring into existence in an attempt to offset the difficulties of big city parishes where there may be a danger of impersonal relations and anonymity that make the sense of the ecclesial community difficult to attain. Such communities can quite simply be "in their own way an extension on the spiritual and religious level — worship, deepening of faith, fraternal charity, prayer, contact with pastors — of the small sociological community such as the village.

(2) There are groups that are linked by age, culture, civil state or social situation: married couples, young people, professional people etc. They come together to help each other to a deeper living of the Christian life too.

(3) There are places where there is a shortage of priests and normal parish life is difficult. Basic communities have a vital function to play in these circumstances.

(4) There are communities that come together in a spirit of bitter criticism of the church. Even when they claim to remain

within the church despite their hostility and opposition to her they cannot be called without an abuse of language, ecclesial basic communities.

Pope Paul sets down eight conditions for a basic community to be truly ecclesial. The important conditions seem to be fidelity to the magisterium and communion with the local and universal church and the avoidance of a false elitism or a sectarian character. They must grow in missionary consciousness, fervour, commitment and zeal. In conclusion the exhortation gives positive encouragement to the formation of basic communities especially when these conform to the conditions summarized above.

The Evangelizers

1. **The Whole Church Evangelizes:** 59-60
2. **The Universal and Individual Churches:** 61-65
3. **One mission, pluralism of tasks:** 66
4. **Successor of Peter, Bishops and Priests:** 67-68
5. **Religious** 69
6. **Laity, family, young people:** 70-72
7. **Variety of ministries:** 73

THE WHOLE CHURCH EVANGELIZES

Since the II Vatican Council, statements concerning the essentially missionary nature of the church have become commonplace. We talk of the whole church for the whole world. Here, Pope Paul quotes Vatican II: "the whole church is missionary, the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the whole people of God". Slowly, the practical implications of this solemn teaching of the church are being worked out in the post-conciliar church. Alongside the groups who make the missionary task of the church their primary and full-time preoccupation and thus remain the animators and leaders in the universal mission awareness and commitment of the church, priests in the home dioceses are now given the opportunity to serve for a period on the missions and the possibility of growth in lay missionary involvement is being continually spoken about and encouraged. Still there is a long way to go before we can talk about a genuine and widespread renewal of the missionary vocation. At least, if the number of young people coming forward to dedicate themselves to the missionary enterprise is a valid criterion of renewal then we must admit that we are going backwards instead of surging forward. But this is true not only of Ireland but many other countries where there was always a great missionary tradition. In

paragraph 60 Pope Paul states a principle and two important conclusions: "First the week of evangelization is not a particular individual activity; it is essentially ecclesial. Accordingly, when the humblest preacher, be he catechist or pastor is preaching the gospel, assembling his little flock or administering the sacraments, he is acting on behalf of the church and his work is united with the evangelical activity of the whole church" (n. 60). From the ecclesial nature of every act of evangelization Pope Paul draws two conclusions:

(1) The individual evangelizer does not undertake his mission simply under his own initiative or personal inclination, he acts in the name of the church.

(2) Thus, he is not "the final arbiter of his evangelizing activity", he does not act simply according to his own ideas or perspectives.

These principles and conclusions bind not only individuals but groups too. Although the text does not give this example of the application of the principle it would seem true to say that individuals or groups should not decide independently of the local bishops and community what evangelizing tasks they should undertake or when and how they should enter or withdraw from a diocese. It is the whole church that evangelizes, each member exercising his proper task within the community and never independently of the rest.

THE UNIVERSAL AND INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES

There can be no doubt that the central theme of the third Synod was the local church. But it was precisely on this subject that Pope Paul felt the need, "above all", to warn the bishops that it needed to be "better defined, nuanced, completed and subjected to further study". The exhortation also takes a solemn stance at this point:

"Brothers and sons at this stage in our reflections, we must pause to consider with you another matter which is of particular importance nowadays". (n. 61). It will also be the question that will dominate theology in general and missiology in particular in the coming decades. It is interesting to note that Pope Paul does not speak of "local" or "particular" churches but of "individual" churches. Some commentators may feel that this complicates still further the terminological confusion as evident at the Synod. But there can be little confusion in the guidelines Pope Paul so firmly lays down on the two major issues:

(1) The relationship between the Individual and Universal Church.

(2) The problems underlying the work of Indigenization especially in the fields of Theology, Liturgy and Government.

The Universal Church was founded by Christ and by its nature has no boundaries or frontiers except those "of the heart and mind of sinful man". It is not the sum total of the individual churches. It is not "the more or less anomalous federation of the essentially different individual churches". Pope Paul seems to have been influenced by the trenchant and well known intervention of Cardinal Bengsch that went against the majority trend at the Synod. He argued: "the feeling for 'local-churdliness' and the reservations, or even rejection of 'universal-churchliness' points to a theological flaw. It is becoming more and more evident that the picture of a church, the Bride of Christ, the Mother-Church, the Church of all peoples, languages and races is fast disappearing. What is prominent instead is the local church, and what's more, the experienced community in fact, the so often quoted basic community. Meanwhile the unity of the universal church, becomes the unity of a United Nations Organization! This suits the Protestants of course, since they see themselves firstly as a church of the Nation ('Landeskirche'); for them, each National Church — and it alone — has *Ius Liturgicum*, and you have thus opened the way to the consistent development of a World Council of Churches". The church wherever it is planted and grows must not be deprived of its universal character, it must not be reduced to a regionalist or national church without horizon.

It is a question of balance; legitimate attention to individual churches cannot fail to enrich the church. Such attention is **indispensable** and **urgent**. It responds to the very deep aspirations of peoples and human communities to find their own identity more clearly. No Pope has ever stressed more frequently the need of the individual churches to maintain their proper character, indigenous riches and special contribution but if they cease to incarnate the universal nature of the Church they cease to be truly church. The responsibility of the Individual churches for evangelization is greatly facilitated by being able to draw on the universal heritage of the church and the universal church is enriched by the contribution of the individual churches. The principle of mutual enrichment, influence co-operation and co-responsibility emerges as a guiding principle that needs great discernment in its application.

What about the question of an African, Latin-American, Indian or Asian Christian theology? In his closing address to the Synod Pope Paul pointed out great dangers in this kind of developments and there is no change in his position in the exhortation. He explained at the Synod: "Thus we consider necessary a word on

the need of finding a better expression of faith to correspond to the racial, social and cultural milieu. This is indeed a necessary requirement of authenticity and effectiveness of evangelization; **it would nevertheless be dangerous to speak of diversified theologies according to continents and cultures.** The content of the faith is either Catholic or it is not. All of us on the other hand have received the faith of a constant tradition: Peter and Paul did not transform it to adapt it to the Jewish, Greek or Roman world; but they watched vigilantly over its authenticity and over the truth of its simple message presented in a diversity of languages (Acts 2:8)". In the exhortation he says the individual Churches have the task of assimilating the essence of the gospel message and transposing it, without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, into the language that their own people understand, then of proclaiming it in their language (n. 63).

What about indigenous liturgies and the widespread experimentation in this area? Again there is caution in the exhortation. Yes, there must be adaptation to local cultures, this is demanded by the nature of the case, but it must be done with **discernment, seriousness, respect and competence.** The same principle applies in the field of catechesis, secondary ecclesial structures and ministries. There is nothing new in these principles so one can only surmise that they have been re-affirmed so strongly because some of the individual churches may appear to be neglecting them. The problems involved in adapting a universal message to a local church are well summarised in the exhortation — See n. 63.

THE SUCCESOR OF PETER, BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

The whole church is called upon, consecrated and sent to evangelize. But different members have different evangelizing tasks. There is the one mission of the church and diversity of ministries within the one mission — all are important. First, comes the Holy Father, the successor of Peter. He is given the pre-eminent ministry of teaching revealed truth. He also possesses the fulness of power, universal and supreme, given to him by Christ for the pastoral government of his church. There were many declarations of fidelity to the Holy Father from the Synodal Fathers especially the African bishops. Presumably, they did not wish their desire for Africanization and decentralization to be seen as in any way lessening a loyalty to the Successor of Peter.

More than any other members, bishops and priests have the duty to preach the gospel. Priests are evangelizers not simply by

reason of any vows they may take or any other extrinsic title, but by reason of their priestly ordination and the power to act in the person of Christ. The sources of their spirituality both as pastors and missionaries lies precisely in their priestly life and ministry. Their claim and duty as evangelizers belongs to a different and higher order than that of religious who are not priests and is not reducible to the religious state although that state of counsels can be of great benefit to it. This is implied in the **special title**, insisted on by Pope Paul, and rooted in the priestly consecration that enables them to act "in persona Christi". Their whole life must take its unifying purpose from the task of evangelization: what identifies our priestly service, gives a profound unity, to the thousand and one tasks which claim our attention day by day and throughout our lives, and confers a distinct character on our activities, is this aim, ever present in all our actions: to proclaim the gospel of God (1 Thess. 2:9) (n. 68). The treatment of the role of priests may be short in the exhortation but it is given the first importance along with bishops in responsibility for evangelization of the modern world.

RELIGIOUS

The exhortation only briefly discusses the role of religious in evangelization but it goes to the heart of the matter. Their inner consecration is their privileged means of effective evangelization. Their lives must be a sign of **total availability** to God, the church and the brethren and in that order. The contribution of religious lies especially at the level of witness of life, which Pope Paul re-iterates as of prime importance in evangelization. It is in this context we can begin to understand the significance of making St. Therese of Lisieux the Patroness of the Missions — inner consecration and contemplation are not simply the beginning of mission but its highest source and activity. This is what religious must especially work at if they are to be true evangelizers. There are some fine words in praise of religious for their contribution to evangelizaion — See n. 69.

LAITY, FAMILY, YOUNG PEOPLE

Before the Synod there was a demand from some bishops that each of these sections be the central theme of discussion for the Third Synod. Their importance is obvious and eventually each of them will have to be given full-scale treatment at the highest level

The fourth Synod will deal primarily with the religious education of youth. However, despite the brevity of the treatment here and the lack of any development in the basic insights of II Vatican Council, there can be little doubt that a simple reminder of the basic principles is opportune and an exhortation to apply them more vigorously throughout the church is much needed, given the widespread lack of practical implementation in the last decade.

The proper sphere for the evangelizing activity of the laity is the vast world of temporal and secular realities which while maintaining their relative autonomy must be pointed beyond themselves and made open to a transcendent dimension and use. It would be difficult to exaggerate the role of the laity in consecrating the entire world to God — the restoring of **all things** in Christ.

The family is the universal church in microcosm, "The Domestic Church", thus embodying in itself the various aspects of the entire church. The family must be regarded "as a centre to which the gospel must be brought and from which it must be proclaimed". The whole family are evangelizers and evangelized. An example of how little children can evangelize their parents might be the way some parents discover, as if for the first time, the meaning and beauty of prayer when they set about teaching their children to pray and listening to and being with them in prayer. The doctrines concerning Christian family life in all its aspects are fairly well known, the difficulty lies in translating them into reality and if this can be done the evangelizing effect on a neighbourhood would be immeasurable.

Young people must not only be evangelized, they must be evangelizers, especially to their own age groups. Given the enormous percentage of young people in the world today, their influence on society, the questions they raise, the future which depends on them, they must always be a special care of the church.

DIVERSIFIED MINISTRIES

Apart from their specific task in the sphere of temporal affairs "the laity must realize that they have been called, or are being called to cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, to extend and invigorate it by the exercise of different kinds of ministries according to their grace and charisms". These non-ordained ministries are not new but need to be newly discovered and developed. There was a super-abundant diversity of ministries in the apostolic church and the special needs of our times demand their reintroduction.

The exhortation mentions a few of them, catechists, directors of prayer and chant, preaching the Word of God, the social apostolate, directors of small communities, heads of apostolic movements and the care of the sick. Special mention is made of lay missionaries who give part or the whole of their lives to the service of the missions. It does not take much foresight to predict that the diversity of non-ordained ministries will become a wider and deeper pre-occupation of the whole church both in pastoral and missionary situations. The great need is proper formation and guidance of the laity by the pastors of the church.

The Spirit of Evangelization

1. **The Holy Spirit and Evangelization: 74-75**
2. **Witness of Life: 76**
3. **Ecumenism and Evangelization: 77**
4. **Demands of Truth and Love: 78-79**
5. **Objections answered: 80**
6. **Conclusion: Mary, Star of Evangelization: 81-82**

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND EVANGELIZATION

In the first chapter of the Exhortation Pope Paul seeks an explanation of the mystery of evangelization by looking closely at the Mystery of Christ and his visible mission to the world. He is the first evangelizer and evangelizes by every aspect of his mystery, his words and his deeds, By insisting on the centrality of the redemptive incarnation, Pope Paul offsets the two errors that modern Christians can commit, namely, a disincarnated Christianity and a Christless Christianity. In the final chapter, Pope Paul, explains evangelization in terms of the Holy Spirit and his mission and thus the total work of evangelization is seen as a continuation of the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The great emphasis on the Holy Spirit at the Synod represented one of the most heartening signs of renewal in the church and inevitably Pope Paul takes up the theme once more. Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who, today, just as at the beginning of the church, acts in every evangelizer who allows himself to be possessed and led by him. The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization but he is also the goal of evangelization. The Holy Spirit, the animator of the church is most active in the work of evangelization. Just as the work of evangelization was inaugurated by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost so it continues only through him.

The section on the Holy Spirit ends with some words of encouragement to further study of the nature and the manner of the Holy Spirit's action in evangelization today. But alongside study of pneumatology or the Theology of the Holy Spirit must be an unceasing prayer to him, since evangelizers cannot fruitfully operate without the Holy Spirit. Although he does not mention the charismatic movement or similar movements towards a more intense life of prayer in the church, it would not be an undue straining of the text to see a definite approbation of them, although with the ever-present counsel to prudence and submission to the guidance of the teaching church.

It is interesting to note the things which Pope Paul singles out as useful or good in themselves but useless without the Holy Spirit:

- (1) Modern techniques, however advanced they may be.
Evangelization is more than technique.
- (2) The most perfect preparation or formation.
- (3) The most convincing dialectic.
- (4) The most highly developed schemes on a sociological or psychological basis.

Evangelization cannot be reduced to the more skillful use of the social and psychological sciences.

WITNESS OF LIFE

Once more, Pope Paul takes up the importance of witness of life in evangelization. His words do not need any further comment — See n. 76, first two paragraphs.

ECUMENISM AND EVANGELIZATION

Divisions within the church and among the churches are a great stumbling block to evangelization. We should be able to find a meeting place beyond the tensions and difficulties: hence the stress on the need for unity, in n. 77, par. 3. It is not altogether clear but it seems the Pope is referring to the need for unity within the church itself and not simply between the churches. There has been so much harm done by the highlighting of the controversy within the church that the faithful have often been confused and there is a need to give united witness to the essentials of the faith and take the note of acrimony out of theological and pastoral discussions.

However, several synodal fathers felt that the Ecumenical movement was beginning to falter and needed a strong word of encouragement from Pope Paul to give it new impetus. Archbishop Bernardin, for instance, claimed: "Ecumenism is in danger today" The initial enthusiasm has waned for several reasons: (a) many are disappointed because concrete results seem few and insignificant; (b) many Catholics and Protestants suspect a subtle betrayal of their respective beliefs; (c) many are indifferent especially the young. Nevertheless, the ecumenical movement must go on. Not all criticism of ecumenical endeavours as they exist in the concrete is unfounded, but over-riding all defects is the will of Christ as expressed decisively in his priestly prayer at the Last Supper, calling for the unity of all who believe in him.

Pope Paul calls for an intensification of prayer for Christian unity. Also there must be greater collaboration in the work of evangelization based on the foundation of Baptism and the patrimony of faith that is common between the churches. The sign of unity is, in a special way the path and instrument of evangelization. The absence of unity impedes the work of Christ himself and scandalizes many who might otherwise embrace the faith. Consequently, it seems obvious that the future of evangelization requires for its fuller effectiveness a renewed effort at ecumenism. The faithful must not give way to discouragement in this difficult work, St. Paul assures us: 'Hope does not disappoint us' (Rom. 5:5).

THE DEMANDS OF TRUTH AND LOVE

After the brief section on Ecumenism Pope Paul exhorts all evangelizers to be characterized by a love and respect for the truth no matter what it may cost them. The description of the true evangelizer's commitment to truth in n. 78, par. 2 is especially applicable to those who study and teach the Sacred Sciences. It presents a beautiful Magna Charta for anyone who sets out in life as a disciple and servant of truth especially the First Truth which is God himself.

While still speaking of the inner conditions required of the preacher, Pope Paul stresses the need for the evangelizer to love those whom he evangelizes and quotes St. Paul's words to the Thessalonians as a programme of life: "With such yearning love we chose to impart to you not only the gospel of God but our very selves, so dear had you become to us (Thess. [1] 2:7-11). Among the signs of a genuine apostolic charity Pope Paul mentions the following among many others: (1) Respect for the conscience and

convictions of others, (2) not to offend or wound the other person, especially if she or he is weak in faith, by statements that may be true in themselves but because of a lack of understanding may bewilder or scandalize the faithful, (3) the effort to transmit to Christians certainties and not doubts or uncertainties. There seems to be a constant plea in the writings of Pope Paul to preachers, teachers and theologians to beware of sowing or spreading doubt or uncertainty in the minds of the faithful. Charity demands that we offer "certainties that are solidly anchored in the Word of God" (n. 79).

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

Before stating and answering some objections Pope Paul suggests that lack of fervour because it resides deep within the apostle is one of the great obstacles to a fruitful ministry. It manifests itself "in fatigue, disenchantment, compromise, lack of interest and **above all lack of joy and hope**. It is spiritual fervour that will enable the evangelizer to put aside the usual excuses that impede evangelization. "The most insidious of these excuses are certainly the ones which people claim to find support for in such and such a teaching of the Council". Thus Pope Paul not only speaks sternly to those who ignore the Council and refuse to submit to its teaching but he also rebukes those who attribute false teachings or trends to the Council.

It is sometimes objected that to impose a truth, be it that of the gospel or to impose a way, be it that of salvation, cannot be but a violation of religious liberty. Also, it is claimed that the whole world is saved by the following of a good conscience and therefore the gospel does not necessarily have to be proclaimed. Lastly, the world and history are filled with the "seeds of the Word". Therefore it is an illusion to claim to bring the gospel where it already exists in the seeds that the Lord himself has sown.

The trenchant reply of Pope Paul is that the evangelizer does not **impose** anything on the conscience of another, he simply **proposes** a radical alternative "without coercion or dishonourable or unworthy pressure". He hits harder by asking: "And why should only falsehood and error debasement and pornography have the right to be put before the people and often unfortunately imposed on 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?" (n. 80). The respectful proclamation of the gospel is the right of the evangelizer and his duty. It is also the right

of his fellowmen that they can hear the gospel preached to them. Furthermore, and this must strike the Christian conscience profoundly, others may be saved through God's mercy without the preaching of the gospel but will those called to evangelize be saved if they neglect the preaching of the gospel through negligence or fear or shame. It is God's will that mankind hear the gospel through the ministers of the gospel. Thus, Pope Paul ends with a final plea to foster deep interior fervour or enthusiasm that nothing or nobody can quench. There cannot be any valid excuse for failing to evangelize — "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel" (L. Cor. 9:16).

CONCLUSION

It is becoming customary to conclude papal teaching with a reference to Our Lady, not simply as a formality but because she is, in fact, associated in an intimate way with the total work of redemption in all its aspects. There would be a real incompleteness without due recognition of the role of Mary in salvation history. This would be especially true of a document claiming to be a substantial treatment of the subject of evangelization. Mary presided over the preparation for the preaching of the gospel at Pentecost by praying with the disciples in the cenacle. She who is the Mother of Christ the great evangelizer and the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, the primary agent of evangelization must necessarily be concerned with whatever furthers the work of the Son and the Spirit. Rightly does Pope Paul call her the Star of Evangelization and bids all Christians to put this fundamental work under her special care and protection.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH: TO EVANGELIZE OR TO DEVELOP?

by

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

One thought that will come to the reader's mind after studying the title of this article is that we will discuss a very fundamental and complicated topic of ecclesiology: the mission of the Church.

Fundamental, because upon its understanding lies the authenticity, validity and efficacy of our entire ecclesial ministry. The serious state of confusion evident in the field of apostolic activity today is largely due to an initial misunderstanding as to the nature and limits of the mission of the Church in the world. Assuming the autonomy of the temporal order, what forms of intervention may the Church adopt in the temporal order without her arrogating to herself a kind of competitiveness in the world's activity which would be harmful to the Church's own stability? If our perception of the mission of the Church is not correct, or is confused, then we should not be surprised in finding around us many apostolic movements of evangelization that tend to turn into anti-religious movement, or simply secular movements or simple social renewal. Neither should we complain on the other hand to find at the other extreme of the spectrum apostolic movements that have become self-enclosed, isolated from the concrete concerns of the world and reduced to fostering a loveless, lifeless spirituality.

Complicated, indeed also, judging from the innumerable literature in forms of articles, books, magisterial documents and pastoral letters, etc. dedicated to the elucidation of this theme. One easily recalls *The Church in the Modern World*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Mater et Magistra*, *Pacem in Terris*, *Octogesima Adveniens*, *Justice in the World*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

But in discussing the mission of the Church, we should not forget that the man who is to be evangelized is not an abstract being but subject to social, political, economic and cultural elements.

When the church evangelizes man, she also evangelizes the personal and collective consciousness of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs.

According, even before any discussion of the mission of the Church, we should first draw away the curtains and throw a general view of the stage in which we find ourselves today.

Spatio-temporal scenario

First let us take a look at our contemporary society.

Immediately we are told that in our society two pre-eminent aspirations are evident: the aspiration to equality means that every man, first of all wants to grow to that full personhood through which he becomes, and can see himself, as truly equal of every other man. It means that he is the subject and agent of his own destiny. The aspiration to participation means that every man is given access, given the possibility to participate in the decisions, activities, movements which involve and affect his own life, and the lives of those he is responsible for.

But are these aspirations being fulfilled? I need not repeat to you the scandals of inequities and alienations obtaining in the world and even in our own countries. We all know that 75% of the world's resources are controlled and consumed by the third humanity who are in the so called highly developed technological sector of the world. We all know the painful realities of poverty within our country.

What is the role of the Church in the realization of these deep aspirations of men? Is it to evangelize or to develop? Is it to evangelize first or to develop first?

But does the world want the service of the Church in the first place? For man drunk with the new found power in technology, has embarked on a movement of complete liberation. To a wider understanding of the mysteries of the universe and his own mystery, we know that there is a growing tendency to acquire a marked self-sufficiency of thought and a more complacent narcissism of self-determination. The satisfaction of his aspirations, which still torment him, in spite of everything, is not postponed to a hypothetical day of God that is to come. He expected it from man's day that has already arrived. To an equally hypothetical redemption coming from outside, he prefers a "lay" redemption which he can carry out by himself, by activating and harnessing the energies immanent in nature.

It seems therefore that the modern world shuns all contact of necessity with the Church. It refuses and even contests her presence; and with all the impetus of hopes considered to have been deceived hitherto.

What then is the role of the Church here? To a society that is man-centered and temporal oriented, what effect will and appeal to look beyond time and himself have? Will they listen to our appeal for conversion? Will they heed our invitation to look at the horizon of eternity? to the throne of God where redemption lies?

Asian Scenario

Let us look at our own region — Asia.

There are definite events happening in the Asian region which, on close reading, point to a very interesting conclusion: that now, more than ever before, Asia is becoming the pivotal region where events will have an impact on the future world.

Consider just a few examples:

Communist China is confronted with a changing of the guard with the death of Chairman Mao, there is a bitter rivalry between the pragmatic moderates and the Maoist radicals. What is the future of China?

We all know that whatever happens in China will profoundly and directly affect the nations of East and Southeast Asia. All ten countries in South-East Asia live in the shadow of China. Three of them — United Vietnam, Laos, and Burma — have common borders with China. Two others — Singapore and Malaysia have huge populations of Chinese descent. Most of the countries — including ours — have Maoist guerilla movements.

In response to this developments, small countries in SEA, are banding themselves together for the purpose of consolidated economic and social actions. This is the ASEAN. But at the same time, we are witnessing a most significant development in the geopolitics of Asian nations: the forging of relations by Asian nations hitherto considered rigidly anti-communist with communist countries, both Western and Eastern notably the USSR and the People's Republic of China. One dramatic example is the case of our country. In a time span of barely 12 months, our Government has signed diplomatic and commercial relations treaties with the People's Republic of China, Cuba, the Soviet Union and all socialist states of Europe, and only months ago with the United Vietnam.

It is said that the reason behind this move among Asian nations is to prove that they have come to political maturity. In other words, these Asian nations have begun to see themselves as nations with all the implied prerogatives and responsibilities, ready to accept the risks of the decisions they take, and taking such decisions on their own counsel, rather than on the prompting of others.

In the case of our country, this move was dictated by two pragmatic considerations? (1) the search for new and favourable markets, better prices for our products. International trade therefore. The other is (2) the need to establish a viable environment for the country's exploration of marine resources, or the exploration of our continental shelf. For this, it is said, we need the good will of our neighbours who must concede to us what is our right, as we must concede to them what is theirs by right.

Where does the Church fit in this scenario? The military and political dominance of Communism in our region means the growing impact of its ideology in the region and in our country. Is the Church of the Philippines prepared to meet the challenges of an aggressive and powerful marxist ideology? Are the bishops, the clergy and the laity sufficiently schooled in this ideology to meet them in an open arena of combat?

And if we consider this in conjunction with the growing alienation of our civilization from the Church, the godless technological mentality pervading our times, what are our chances of coming out victorious?

Growing State Intervention

Another issue is what John XXIII called socialization. This refers to those daily-increasing interdependence which have brought multiple forms of social ties into the lives and actions of the State, which penetrates deeper and deeper into matters which are intimately personal and therefore important and delicate.

Sociologists tell us that this growing States intervention is dictated by the need to have rigorous planning. In developing countries, even more than in the others, this planning integrated into an overall economic plans seems to be a *conditio sine qua non* of progress. The State, the holder of the purse-strings and protector of the common good, is compelled in the name of urgency and a rational organization to assume a certain control, if not management of the more basic services of the nation. In other words this intervention appears indispensable for the sake of stability, continuity and a co-ordination of efforts.

In countries having recently acceded to independence there is another reason for state concern in most basic fields of society. In order to be strong, these young States have a tendency to assert their authority so as to build up national unity, on account of the urgency and vastness of the tasks to be carried out. It is therefore normal that the State should temporarily at least exercise a greater authority and encompass a wider field of action than would be traditionally attributed to it.

As so we find that:

— Many industries have been nationalized and more are areas, once the exclusive domain of the private sector are now being gobbled up, so to speak, by the government. All this, it is claimed, is in the name of public welfare. In a way, there is some valid basis for this. The private sector has been guilty of abuse of private property, equating this with liberty and human life. In an effort to distribute income and wealth equitably, the government has come in to infuse a public use concept of private property.

But the private sector has come with legitimate complaints. These include the propensity of the government to compete directly with the private sector in such areas as marketing, financing, production, physical distribution, and import-export.

In our country, this is most evident in the field of education, and of higher education in particular. As you are all aware of approximately 92% of the students in our higher education are in private Universities and Colleges against 8% in the State Universities and colleges.

Since 1972, the government has been going all out to expand the State educational system, by pouring in more funds to state schools, while at the same time, taxes are being levied on private educational institutions.

What are the impacts of this aggressive intervention of the State in all affairs? I am not sure if I am being pessimistic, but I believe that the impact will be deplorable for the Church and the Catholic Universities and colleges.

As regards the Church, I foresee that one of the implications will be a long-term tendency towards a decrease in stature, influences and participation in national policy-making, as both her religious and lay representatives occupy less and less leading positions at the top. It can be said that up to 1971 practically every responsible position in the government was occupied by graduates of the Catholic Universities and schools. Since the declaration of Martial Law, there appears to be a considerable effort to fill vacancies in

the government almost exclusively with graduates of State Universities. As was expected, this situation is creating a deep impression on the students, who feel that if one wishes to have a future at all in the government, a State University diploma is a must.

For the Church in the Philippines there is undoubtedly a trend towards a position of disadvantage and weakness in influencing the solution of social issues such as population control, human settlements, social welfare, labor manpower development and education.

A more serious impact, I think, is less contact, credibility and, consequently, less influence with the young due to the increasing secularisation of society plus the growing alienation from the Catholic educational institutions.

Another implication for the Church will be increasing competition from the Communist sector because of their presence here, the impact of their projects in this country's young population. I am convinced that in the next decade we will meet this problem, if not earlier.

At the same time, the priests and nuns will have their hands full in the years ahead, and we know that unfortunately fewer youths are entering the religious vocation yet they will be most needed in the future.

As regards to the Catholic Schools in our country, the following deserve some consideration:

(1) The growing cadre of state-educated leaders will replace the Catholic school educated leaders in national positions of power and influence, particularly in government, business and industry, service institutions, the military organization, civic and social movements, labour movements and diplomatic positions.

(2) This will affect the capability and efficiency of the Catholic Schools to preach and propagate the doctrines and practices of Christianity.

(3) As the State system expands, more capable and intelligent students with leadership capabilities will switch to State Schools, attracted by various incentives. These State resources will compete with the Catholic Schools in offering excellence in teaching, research and community services.

The Mission of the Church

What is the mission of the Church in the Philippines in this concrete situation? It is obvious that it is fundamentally the same mission of the Universal Church. And what is this mission of the Church?

Evangelization

It is to **evangelize**, i.e., to proclaim the good news of Christ concerning the Kingdom of God, to promote God's glory through the spread of His Kingdom and to obtain for all men that eternal life which consists in knowing the only true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ. This is what Vatican II means when it says: "Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the lead of the befriending Holy Spirit" (GS 3c).

This evangelizing responsibility rests with the whole Church and all its members by virtue of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist (AD Gentes, 35). Here we find the authentic equality among all with respect to the common effort to build up the Body of Christ (LG nos. 7, 32).

Divine faith then is the fundamental requirement on the part of man. As a responsible being, an image of God in his own right, man must personally acknowledge the significance and the efficacy of the mission of the Son. He must believe that God re-establishes in Christ man's possibility of knowing and loving the three divine Persons. And that by faith he becomes an adoptive son of God.

Consequently, evangelization in its basis, nature, finality is specifically **religious**. Fundamentally the Church has one single mission: to pour out God's light and life on all the dimensions of man's personal and social existence. This religious finality must therefore inspire and define the way in which evangelization should be organized and exercised. Outside that religious goal and character she can claim no divine commission nor authority nor competence.

This is not to say however that the Church does not have any function in the temporal order; it only means that whatever she does must have specifically a religious goal and inspiration. It only means that the specific function of the Church is to communicate to civil society the light and inspiration that wells up from the Gospel rounded vision of man and humanity.

Negatively it means that any compromise reducing the Gospel to please men would be a renunciation of their real service, because it would be an abdication from Christ's service. If the Gospel were dissolved into a cultural or social or political ideology, with the consequent reduction of faith to a mere religious ethics or pragmatic cooperation, the contribution of the Church to the progress of mankind, if not completely superfluous, would certainly not be original nor creative. In fact after an ambiguous welcome, which is usually granted more to weight of numbers than to the force of

truth, it would be judged as an attack, though an unsuccessful one, upon the inalienable autonomy of the temporal order. The words of *Evangelii Nuntiandi* are very much to the point:

"We must not ignore the fact that many, even generous Christians who are sensitive to the dramatic questions involved in the problem of liberation, in their wish to commit the Church to the liberation efforts are frequently tempted to reduce her aims to a man-centered goal; the salvation of which she is the messenger, would be reduced to material well-being. Her activity, forgetful of all spiritual and religious preoccupations, would become initiatives of the political or social order. But if this were so, the Church would lose her fundamental meaning. Her message of liberation would no longer have any originality and would easily be open to monopolization and manipulation by ideological systems and parties. She would have not more authority to proclaim freedom as in the name of God. This is why we have wished to emphasize in the same address at the opening of the Synod, "The need to restate clearly the specifically religious finality of evangelization. This letter would lose its reason for existence if not were to diverge from religious axis that guides it: the Kingdom of God, before anything else, in its fully theological meaning..."³²

Development

But at the same time, we should state clearly that the religious finality of evangelization does not exclude her interest in the temporal order. In the contrary she is totally concerned for the development of men, or rather for the total development of man. After all development, in the words of *Populorum Progressio*, means the integral development of the whole man and of every man. And man's authentic and integral development finds its source and summit in Christ, whom the Church preaches (AA 8).

How does the Church fulfill this function? The answer of GS 42 is: "...out of this religious mission itself comes a function, a light, and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law". In other words, she serves mankind precisely by fulfilling her religious mission. In sharing the development of man, she evangelizes. Evangelizing while indeed religious in nature, by that every fact is and supremely human.

In the temporal order, the Church insures that the presence of God which can be felt more or less at all levels of experience, will reach man's inner life and restore him to his complete authenticity as a creature of God redeemed by Christ.

As the examiner of the signs of the times, the Church helps man to navigate more securely in the search for his true identity. Because of the contemporary presence of the Church at every moment and expression of human existence, this enables her to examine the signs of the times and interpret them in the light of the Gospel. In this way, she provides men with the answer to their questions in a way adapted to every generation (GS 4, 11). By means of this evangelical generation from within she is able to pick up the divine waves present in the phenomena of every age. In the same way it permits her to point out the dangers concealed in those phenomena and encourage the opportunities they have to offer.

Theological Basis of this Temporal Involment of the Church

There is then no opposition between evangelization and development. While there is distinction, there should be no confusion, separation and opposition. They are part of a single divine plan and are ordered to a single goal which is the perfected Kingdom of God.

The fundamental theological basis is that temporal things, when purified, strengthened and elevated by the evangelizing act of the Church, are essentially ordered to the Kingdom of God. In the divine plan, temporal realities contribute efficaciously to the realization of the salvific work of the Church. (CD 12 b).

The dogmas of Incarnation and the sacramental signs and gestures illustrate this theological principle. In the mystery of Incarnation we find "the assumed human nature, seperably united to the Word, serves the Divine Word as a living organ of salvation" (LG 8). In the sacramental signs and gestures, we find the most common temporal realities elevated to be vehicles of sacramental grace.

The Holy Father in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (31) illustrates this same thing as applied to the linkage between evangelization and development:

"Between evangelization and human advancement — development ad liberation — there are in fact profound links. These include links of an anthropological order, because the man who is to be envangelized is not an abstract being but is subject to social and economic questions. They also include links in the theological order, since one cannot dissociate the plan of creation from the plan of Redemption. The latter plan touches the very concrete situations of injustice to be combatted and of justice to be restored. They include links of eminently evangelical order, which is that of charity: how in fact can one proclaim the new commandment without promoting injustice and in peace the true, authentic advancement of man?"

Development — Share with the Temporal Power

Obviously the promotion of development is not the sole responsibility of the Church; it is not even proper and specific role. It is the specific task of politics, economics, cultures and civilization. The progress in the temporal order is the proper goal of the human community with its political, economic, social, and cultural organization. It is the specific task of the statesman, economists, sociologists, scientists, and technologists; all these, if they are able to carry out their task, must in their own field enjoy autonomy and follow their own principles (LG 36; GS 36; AA 7). The Church however, participates in this work of civilizing society with her eyes on the Gospel, knowing that all human culture misses its true end without the Gospel.

The oft-quoted Synodal text: "of itself, it does not belong to the Church, in so far as she is a religious hierarchical community, to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic, and political spheres for justice in the world" (Justice in the World of 1971 Synod of Bishops, p. 15, should be understood in this context.

All it means is that the management of political, social and economic matters is, as such, the competence of the appropriate political, social and economic institutions or agencies. But it does not exclude that the Church should proclaim the Gospel message of love and justice by word and deed; recall the ethical principles and norms that should govern the establishment of a just social order; assist those who have responsibility and competence in the political, social and economic and cultural spheres to arrive at practical solutions to problems of justice by contributing her own understanding from her specific angle of vision, of the inner nature of these problems.

Specific Tasks

These, in a more general terms, are what I see to be included in the mission of the Church today, as it was yesterday and will be tomorrow. But missionary prudence dictates various modes of implementation depending upon the diversity of circumstances which in turn create differing missionary situation. What can be the more specific task of our Church in this time and place?

I personally believe that, among other things, the following require our immediate attention:

Firstly, the deepening and strengthening of our religious life, our faith. I say this because our society is fast becoming a highly pluralistic community, while at the same time entering into the

technological community. There is nothing wrong with these developments of course, but still ten years from now will be a different and changed society. And I ask: are we sufficiently prepared to cope with these new set up? When I say "prepared", I mean principally our religious faith, the Filipino Catholics. Will our present apostolic organizations, our pastoral methods prove as effective in this new situation as it has proven in the past?

Frankly, I have my doubts. They say that "our people's Faith is simple; their attachment to the Lord is sincere; their love for the Church lacks any kind of sophistication; they are inclined to devotion and there is a noticeable increase in the reception of the sacraments as a means of fostering a fervent Christian life. All this is God's gift and at the same time a witness to the work of evangelization done in the past and continuing to be done today". (CBCP Pastoral, Evangelization and Development, 1973).

But how long can we expect this situation to continue? Will that simple faith suffice in a more sophisticated and highly technological society? Can it survive in an intensely pluralistic society? If there is, as Paul VI so stated in EN, 31, an anthropological link between evangelization and development, then our answer would seem to be, at best, a doubtful attitude.

The first task then of our Church is to deepen and strengthen this religious life and faith of our people to enable it to withstand the changes that will surely come to our society.

Secondly, the development of our own priests. For the need of the Church of today, more than any other times in the past, is good priests. Good not only in the purity of sanctity, not only in the intensity of their commitment to their calling and their love for the Church and their thirst for souls, but also in their knowledge of the teachings of the Gospel. For indeed how can we expect a strong community of the faithful if its leaders are weak? How can there be a deep religious life when there is a marginal knowledge of our faith?

I may add to this that I see a great urgency in a deeper knowledge of two things: marxism and oriental religious and cultures. The first because of its pervading presence in world today, and the second because of our growing consciousness towards pluralism and regionalism.

Thirdly, a need to look deeper into our seminaries. The reason I think is quite obvious. If we need good priest, then we have to form them well. And the seminary is, at least until now and it seems for a long time to come, the only and proper place where priests are formed.

There are many things of course being done during the formation period within the seminary. But I wish to emphasize here two main things: **one** is the development of **pastoral** charity which will enable them to grasp quickly and intelligently how human society is changing, to interpret the signs of the times, and to unite their interior life with their external activity in the light of God's will (PO 14). The other is their intellectual development which will prepare them to proclaim the teaching of the Gospel effectively make it part and parcel of the culture of modern man.

CONCLUSION

The Church then must evangelize. She must also share in the task of development. While, in the doctrinal level there should be no tension between evangelization and development, we all know that in the practical level such tension exists. Balance between the two is not easy to find. It is not even clear just where it should lie in the here and now. The realization of this desired balance takes time, serenity, maturity, love, study, dialogue, and a great deal of prayer. It will be possible only if we are disposed to make a serious effort to accept the teachings of the Church. To act hastily, foster suspicion, generalize from isolated cases, make accusations, alarm and disquiet those in authority, create an atmosphere of party or schism: All this will settle nothing at this historical moment which is ours.

Let me conclude therefore by quoting from the homily of Paul VI on the first anniversary of the closing of the Council.

"The other error which is opposed to the fidelity we owe the Council would be to fail to recognize the immensely rich teaching and providential power of renewal which comes from the Council itself. We ought to be ready to grant the Council this initiatory power and not to think of it as the ending of something. For, while it is true that historically and in its subject matter Vatican II is a complement and logical conclusion to Vatican I, it is also a new and original act which opens new and wonderful paths for the Church, by reason of its interval development as well as the relationship it fosters with our separated brothers, with the adherents of the religious, and with the modern world in all its magnificent complexity, its fears and its anxieties".

HOMILETICS

by

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

I. BIBLICAL NOTES FOR HOMILIES

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (December 4, 1977)

First Reading: Isaiah 11: 1-10
Second Reading: Romans 15: 4-9
Gospel Reading: Matthew 3: 1-12

First Reading: The third in a chain of Emmanuel-prophecies (7:14; 9:2-7; 11:1-9). All is not lost for the dynasty of David (Jesse's son) even though it should be reduced to a mere remnant (stump). The ideal David will arise, the messianic bud, full of God's Spirit, manifesting those practical virtues that befit the ideal King. To the poor and the helpless he will be understanding and impartial, but to the impious, an avenging judge. Perfect justice will be as close to him as a garment, and his reign will inaugurate universal peace. This is symbolized by the wild and domesticated animals living in harmony. In this new Paradise, the serpent will not be harmful. Evil-doers will be excluded because all will know (that is, carry out) the will of God. And in these blessings, all the nations of the world will share. The final fulfillment of the prophecy pertains to the end-kingdom.

Gospel Reading: The greatest of the prophets prepares God's People for the Coming One. John the Baptist is his herald, like the heralds of old, announcing the coming of the king and demanding that the roads be straightened out. In this case, the preparation is spiritual,

straightening out the crookedness of the heart. It is accomplished by metanoia or interior change of heart. Only then can the Messiah-King extend over them the reign of God.

Like Elijah of old (2 Kgs. 1:8), John is the rugged ascetic, but his example draws the crowds like a magnet. He demands repentance, and he excoriates the hypocrisy of those who merely conform exteriorly. Hence his strong language to those who were insincere, just like Amos and Hosea did in their days. His apocalyptic wording is replete with graphic metaphors such as ax and root, fire and fan, granary and chaff. No one can presume on rank or file on the Day of the Lord's reckoning. All need metanoia.

John foretells the twofold task of the Coming One: 1) he will immerse (baptizo in Greek) not only into water but into the new Spirit, which will result in a profound transformation such as is brought about by fire. 2) But he will consume with the fire of judgment all those who refuse his purifying and transforming action.

Second Reading: At the outset (15:1), Paul is encouraging those strong in the faith to be patient and understanding with those in the community who are weaker. Christ's example ought to suffice: he was exceedingly long-suffering in his dealings with various sorts of persons, including his own disciples, at times so obtuse. Even the examples of patience of the prophets can afford inspiration since they too were intended for the new People of God.

The goal of all Christian striving is peace and harmony in the Spirit of Jesus for the glory of the Father. Although Jesus submitted to a ministry among the Jews with all its requirements, yet his salvific work embraced and benefited all nations, as Paul shows by quoting several passages of the Old Testament. This unifying factor in Christ's saving action ought to be the guideline for the Christian community.

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION (December 8, 1977)

First Reading: Genesis 3: 9-15, 20
Second Reading: Ephesians 1: 3-6.11-12
Gospel Reading: Luke 1: 26-38

(The readings are explained in Bol. Ecl. Oct. 1975, 722f or Sept. 1976, 670f).

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (December 11, 1977)

First Reading: Isaiah 35: 1-6a.10

Second Reading: James 5: 7-10

Gospel Reading: Matthew 11: 2-11

First Reading: A buoyant description of liberated Israel returning in a new exodus from the temporary exile of Babylon, but prefiguring in the last analysis a liberation of God's People from spiritual tyranny through the Savior. The "glory of the Lord" which accompanied Israel and brought her back to the Promised Land, prefigures the glory of the Lord to be seen in full in the Incarnate Word (Jn. 1:14), who has become our Savior. He comes to deliver man from all the evils resulting from sin. As Israel of old had every reason to exult and rejoice in her liberation, so all the more the new People of God in the advent of the Savior.

Gospel Reading: The inquiry of John is not merely placed on the lips of his disciples by him for their instruction. John himself can honestly be searching for light. His announcement of the Coming One was one of fiery judgment and retribution (cf. 3:12), in line with many utterances of the ancient prophets. But Jesus was not manifesting anything of the kind. John was not aware that his first Coming was one of humility, pain and death, and only then would he come in judgment.

In his response, Jesus refers to the other side of the prophetic picture of the Coming One, given in today's first reading and also in Is. 29:18f; and 61:1. Here he is the One who comes to heal and to impart manifold blessings, above all to the poor in Israel (the anawin). With this in mind, his present ministry ought not prove a difficulty in accepting him (v. 6).

How highly Jesus esteems John is now evident from his eulogy. He is characterized by Jesus as the man of strong principles, the rugged ascetic, the immediate forerunner and herald of the Messiah. No one else enjoyed such a role and such honor. Yet **he functions only as one who prepares**, not as one already possessing the blessings of the Kingdom. When the "mystery of Christ in us" becomes a reality, every member is identified with Christ, and functions as another Christ for his fellowmen. Only then will the words of Jesus become clear that the least in the kingdom is greater than John.

Second Reading: James reminds his readers that the present era is one of patient waiting in preparation for the Lord's Coming. Daily trials and even persecution are to be borne patiently, after

the example of the ancient prophets, if they are to merit reward. All impatient grumbling and complaining will receive a different retribution. In prophetic perspective, the Parousia of the Lord is always near as motivation of warning and hope.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(December 18, 1977)

First Reading: Isaiah 7: 10-14

Second Reading: Romans 1: 1-7

Gospel Reading: Matthew 1:18-24

First Reading: King Ahaz, of the royal House of David, was threatened by a coalition-plot of Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel to dethrone him (7:6). Isaiah, God's mouthpiece, is sent to confirm his belief in the permanence of the Davidic dynasty, as prophesied by Nathan to David (2 Sam. 7:12-16). David's dynasty was to produce the ideal King, the Messiah. Yet faith in Yahweh is requisite (v. G). Ahaz need only ask for a sign in confirmation. But Ahaz places his trust rather in the power of the Assyrians and sends to them for help. Notwithstanding Ahaz' faithless designs, the prophet gives a solemn sign, not merely to Ahaz in person, but to the entire House of David: the messianic prophecy of Nathan stands: the ideal King will inherit the throne of David, and the sign of God's special intervention is the Virgin conceiving the Emmanuel that is "With-us-God!" (implied is: who can withstand us?).

To see Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, as the promised child continuing the dynasty of David, can only be a partial fulfillment of the prophecy. The prophet's eye goes further. In fact, it is most improbable that such a solemn sign would refer to Ahaz's child at all, after his drastic refusal in unbelief. What the prophet's word foretells is the Emmanuel-King born of the Virgin Mother by God's special intervention. Mother and Child are the great sign of salvation for the People of God, as intended by the Holy Spirit. This is the conviction of Mt. 1:22, followed by Christian tradition for centuries. Yet, the sign is given in prophetic perspective and in contemporary molding.

Gospel Reading: The main thrust of this passage is to point out the paternal role which Joseph is to have toward the Child of Mary. The Child is not from the union of the marriage of Mary and Joseph. This is crystal clear from the wording of vv. 16, 18 and 25. Yet, he is born **in the married union** of Mary and Joseph, and so Joseph has a unique relation to Jesus and will even use his paternal right to name him.

The infancy narratives of Matthew are specially chosen for their theological import, and without emphasis on factual details. The doubt of Joseph could be the literary device used by the Early Church to convey the theological reality of the Virgin-Birth of Jesus, and also the fact that the Davidic origin of Jesus stems from Joseph.

In popular etymology, the name "Jesus" means "Yahweh saves" or "Yahweh is salvation". By the wonderful birth of Jesus, God's hand in man's salvation is evident. His is a new birth for all mankind. His role is to be Savior, as was Yahweh's name toward God's People of old. "Emmanuel" is a symbolic name instilling greatest confidence, since it means: "With-us-is-God!" Matthew sees the Isaian prophecy of 7:14 fully realized in the person of Jesus, who is God incarnate in our midst, and thus Emmanuel in the fullest sense. His birth is unique as befits his person, but it also manifests God's intervention in the salvation of mankind.

Second Reading: A solemn opening salutation, in which Paul utilizes the conventional ancient letter writing form, but fills in with deep doctrinal content:

1. **Paul:** a threefold description: **Servant** or slave of Christ that is, one totally given over to his service. **Apostle**, the special calling to be his missionary envoy. **Set apart:** the particular designation to preach the glad tidings.

2. **The Good News:** promised of old in the prophetic books. In content, they revolve around the person of Christ, God's Son become our brother as David's descendant. His divinity became manifest through the powerful working of the Spirit within him, but above all through his resurrection.

3. **Paul's commission:** was received directly from Christ (the Damascus encounter). It embraces all nations, to bring them to submit and accept the revelation of God concerning Christ by means of Paul's preaching. The readers (Romans) are among those called to share the call in holiness.

4. The conclusion of the salutation: describes the choice gifts of the Spirit flowing from Father and Son: the loving-kindness of the Father in his immense favors (grace) and the shalom-peace won by Christ in his manifold messianic blessings.

THE SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY (December 25, 1977)

(For the biblical notes of midnight mass, see Bol. Ecl. Oct. 1975, 725f; for those of the mass at dawn, see Bol. Ecl. Sept. 1975, 764f)

MASS DURING THE DAY

First Reading: Isaiah 52: 7-10

Second Reading: Hebrews 1: 1-6

Gospel Reading: John 1: 1-18 (or 1: 1-5.9-14).

First Reading: The prophet exults to hear the glad tidings of salvation for Zion, deliverance from Babylonian exile, announced by the herald, and taken up by the watchman on Jerusalem's ruins: Yahweh himself has shown his power. He himself is her redemption and her salvation for all the world to see. That this prefigures the coming of Christ as Savior of all God's children is evident.

Gospel Reading: The prologue of St. John's Gospel is a sublime hymn which prefaces the Gospel proper, and introduces the main themes of the subsequent chapters: The Word-made-flesh, Light and darkness, Life, new birth, witness. It can be conveniently divided into three waves of thought (1-5. 6-13. 14-18) which climax in the third.

A. First Wave: The divine Word in his personal relations: 1-5.

1. **"Word":** manifestation of the divine mind, perfect image of the Father who speaks. He is personal, divine, eternal, yet distinct from God (the Father). This is clear in v. 18. The opening verses contrast with the opening verses of Genesis.

2. **Architect of the universe** (v. 3). Through him: not as a subordinate instrument, but as the Wisdom-plan of the Father's mind, the blueprint for all creation. Through this Wisdom, God continues to reveal himself in the works of man.

3. **Source of divine life** for man (v. 4), for he himself is the Life (14.5). He shares his life with men by revealing his being to them (as Light).

4. **Savior of mankind** (v.5). Darkness signifies the powers of evil, and men estranged from God. The conflict between Light and darkness issues in favor of the Light who is always victorious. In his Light, men see the Way.

B. Second Wave: The divine Word rejected or accepted (6-13)

1. **Witness to the Light:** John the Baptist is the lamp showing forth the Light. The Light was to be accepted through the witness of men. John is the first mentioned, but the witness theme runs throughout the gospel. To bear witness was the entire reason of the Baptist's call.

2. **The Light not acknowledged.** By his coming into the world, the divine Word became the Light for all men. But men were blinded by the darkness. One can note here a tinge of sadness in the Evangelist's hymn.

3. **The Light rejected::** His own People who had been prepared for centuries for his coming reject him (developed in 3: 19ff and 12:27)

4. **The Light received** (12-13). Those who accept him for what he really is (believe in his name) are enabled to share his divine life by a rebirth in God. The triple negative excludes a natural birth from all angles, and denotes a spiritual birth, virginal in character, modelled on Christ's virgin-birth. A hint at the spiritual motherhood that will be proclaimed in 19:26. (Jerusalem Bible has the singular verb here and refers the birth to Christ's).

C. **The third wave.** The divine Word in fullest manifestation.

1. **The Splendor of the Incarnate Word.** Word-made-flesh is the marvel of the Incarnation. Jesus is both God and man. The fact stands out clearly all through the gospel, but its theological explanation was left for the Church to clarify as time went on.

Made his dwelling: literally pitched his tent: an allusion to the Tabernacle of old, a transitory manifestation of God's presence. Now God in his Son has entered man's very flesh and blood, to dwell with man permanently. He is one of us! The glory rested over the Tabernacle, a symbol of God's presence, but the fullness of God's presence is now evidenced in the words and deeds of Jesus. He is filled with enduring love (grace and truth) of an eternal covenant.

2. **His supereminence** is borne witness to by the Baptist (v. 15). He is eternal.

3. **Source of every blessing** (v. 16f). The gifts of God's love in the old covenant were partial and limited. In Christ they are complete and enduring.

4. **Revealer of God's intimate Being.** As Son, he is closest to the Father, in the union of interpersonal love, and he alone can reveal God to us. The community on earth ought to be modelled on this communion of love.

Second Reading: These opening verses of the letter to the Hebrews describe Christ, the Son of God, as the climax of all revelation. He completes in his person that which many prophets had supplied in part. He is both the exemplary cause of the universe, being God's Wisdom-plan for the entire creation, as well as its rightful heir, for all was made for his sake. He is the perfect image of

the Father in all his glory, and he holds all things in existence by his mighty power. Having accomplished his Paschal Mystery, he was exalted to the Father's throne far above all other created intelligences. A series of psalm passages bears this out. It is highest pedagogy for the liturgy to give this exalted picture of Christ on this day when he is a Babe in his Mother's arms.

II. HOMILIES

MAKE STRAIGHT THE CROOKED PATHS

Dec. 4, 1977: Second Sunday of Advent

The Human Situation: Recent statistics tell us that four hundred and sixty million people today are starving. One billion cannot work or play, and have no energy or joy, because they lack essential nutrients that provide healthy bodies and give normal strength. They live and go to bed every night with pangs of hunger. Thousands of the hungry die every day.

The Good News: Advent is the time to balance the books: not our financial accounts, but the spiritual accounts where our works of mercy are recorded. How much have we done to help others in their misery and utter need? Christ came two thousand years ago to bring peace and joy to mankind, but when millions are starving and more than that lack the energy to live a normal life, then the Christian world should ask itself what it is doing to build a better world, a world in which the goods of everyone are more equally shared. It is not merely a matter of the richer nations rectifying the situation. Let each Christian take a good look at himself to see how responsible he might be for the needs and sufferings of those in his immediate vicinity or of those over whom he is responsible.

What are the crooked paths that the herald in today's gospel would have us straighten out? They are many and various, but today we will do well to turn our attention to the material goods of life. One crooked path is surely greed, that insatiable striving to accumulate ever greater amounts of money, regardless of whether it is needed or not. Another is waste, a great deal of waste in the form of food, clothing, light, water and luxuries in general. A crooked path is likewise reckless spending on commodities not at all necessary nor even useful for decent living or for our state in life. A further crooked path is the devious transactions and shady

projects that bring in plenty of increase of wealth but leave the soul burdened with sin and guilt. A crooked path is finally extravagance in our homes or possessions in general. And all this while millions of our brothers for whom Christ became a Babe and died on the cross die of starvation!

Is not this perhaps one of the reasons why many Christians do not experience the full impact of the Christmas peace on the birthday of him who came to bring peace and the love of God to mankind? Why is it that the celebration of the Birthday of Christ has no lasting effect on their lives? The crooked paths were not straightened out, the spiritual preparation for the renewal in Christ was not made. Much money was spent in Christmas decorations, greeting cards, expensive gifts, but little thought was given to works of mercy for the poor, the needy and the hungry.

On Judgment day, when the King calls all to his throne, he will say to those on his left hand: I assure you, as often as you neglected to do these works of mercy to one of these least ones, **you neglected to do it to me**". And these will go off to eternal punishment (Mt. 25: 41.45). It is on account of sins of omission that many will not attain to life eternal with the blessed. They have enjoyed life of earth to the full with little or no concern for the countless hungry mouths at their gates (Lk. 16:20), the many sick or imprisoned, those shivering with cold in the winter nights till death snuffs out their lives, the homeless and the street-urchins who had no one to care for them. Then it is too late to balance our spiritual books where are works of mercy are recorded. But now it is not too late. "As often as you neglect to do these things to one of these least ones, you neglect to do it to me!"

Our Response: A man of high standing decided once and for all to discontinue sending the usual greeting cards to relatives and friends, because, he said, after one glance they are thrown away anyway soon after Christmas. Instead, he used the money for a worthier purpose. Perhaps it is not possible to do away with all the customary things in vogue, but is it not possible to reduce the extravagant amount of spending at Christmas time on such ephemeral matters hardly appreciated, and forward that amount saved to worthy causes that help build a better world, and guarantee the Savior's approval for life eternal?

MARY THE HAPPY BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH

Dec. 8, 1977: Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

The Immaculate Conception is the principal patroness of the Philippines. We are reminded of this by our Bishops in their

pastoral letter "Ang Mahal na Birhen" of February 1975. Therefore today is for all of us a day of great joy, in which we turn to our Immaculate Mother and sing her praises, asking her help and protection on our country, our parish, our homes and ourselves. But it is also an occasion to enter more deeply into the Mystery of Mary, as brought out in the Apostolic Exhortation of our Holy Father on Mary in February 1974, where he states: The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception is a joint celebration: 1) that of Mary's immaculate conception, 2) of the basic preparation of the Coming of the Savior, and 3) of the **happy beginning of the Church without spot or wrinkle**. It is this third point to which we direct our attention.

Mary is the happy beginning of the Church. In her very person she is the embodiment of the Church. What Mary is, God wants his Church to be. We are the Church. So God wants us to become more and more like his Mother in the salvific work of her Son. It is St. Paul who writes: "Christ gave himself up for the Church, to make her holy... to present to himself a glorious Church, holy and immaculate, without stain or wrinkle or anything of that sort" (Eph. 5:26f). In alluding to those very words, our Holy Father shows that we, the Church, are to become more and more free from sin, immaculate like Mary. In heaven there is no remnant of sin. All are immaculate. But on this earth there is ever an on-going process toward holiness. That is why there is a continual appeal in the liturgy for metanois, change of heart, renewal.

Mary is the Mother of Christ, the first Christopher or Christ-bearer. Again, every Christian is to be a Christ-bearer. He is bringing forth Christ in himself by ever closer contact with Christ in thoughts, word and deeds. He is bringing forth Christ in others by means of the sacramental character of his words and deeds, letting the face of Christ shine on others and thus engendering in them an increase of the Christ-life. Mary brought forth Christ physically and bodily, the Church bears him spiritually and sacramentally. To bring Christ to the world is the great mission of the Church and of every one of her members.

Mary is the Virgin-Mother, the Virgin of virgins. Her virginal purity is reflected in the purity of faith that all true members of the Church profess openly and gladly, despite the many insidious attacks made on it today. After the homily each Sunday and Feastday, the whole body of Christians rises to profess the faith handed down unadulterated from Apostolic times. It is a fact that those who remain close to Mary have always retained the pure faith of their forefathers.

Mary kept in her heart all the things that happened to Jesus while on earth, pondering them in her heart over and over. Who was it that treasured more his sayings, his parables, his exhortations? Who endeavored better to obtain insights into his symbolic wonders and signs? This is what the faithful are doing from Sunday, and from day to day: listening to the word of God or reading it in the scriptures, and pondering over those same deeds and words of Jesus to experience their dynamic influence on their lives. In listening to the introductory remarks of the celebrant at the mass or to the homily, the Christians are walking in the footsteps of their Mother, who did that very thing when her Son spoke to the crowds.

Mary is the Mother of sorrows. Valiantly she stood at the Cross, suffering with her Son and cooperating with him in the salvation of the world. This is likewise the role of the Church: to labor and suffer with Christ for man's salvation. Mary offered him to the heavenly Father at the altar of the Cross, and the faithful offer the same Victim to the Father through their priests at the daily celebration of the Paschal Mystery

In her Assumption into heaven, Mary has gone on ahead, being taken up body and soul into heaven to lead the way to the rest of the children of God. Our final goal is total blessedness with Christ in glory, and that we will share with our Mother when our life's course shall have come to an end. In all things, Mary is the happy beginning of the Church. It is up to us, the members of the Church, to complete the blueprint of the Marian mystery of the Church. Not only do we rejoice on this day, the solemnity of our Blessed Mother's immaculate conception, but we give her great pleasure by our endeavor to live the life she led on earth, one of total openness to the Spirit of Jesus, one of full conformity to the will of the Father, and one of pure and unadulterated love toward Christ the Lord, the Savior of mankind. God gave her to us as our Mother. She can obtain for all of us what we need to reach our goal.

HE CAME TO HEAL

December 11, 1977: Third Sunday of Advent

The Human Situation: Lenin, the father of Communism, made this statement in his last illness: "I have made a great mistake. Our main purpose was to give freedom to a multitude of oppressed people. But our method of action has created worse evils and horrible massacres. You know that my deadly nightmare is to feel that I am lost in this ocean of blood, coming from innumerable

victims. It is too late to turn back now, but in order to save our country, we should have had men, **just ten men, like Francis of Assisi**. With ten such men we should have saved our country". Men like Francis of Assisi! Men who conquer the heart by the example of their meek and holy lives!

The Good News: John the Baptist was expecting a Messiah who would be the fiery avenger of evil, a powerful Messiah-King who would restore Israel's fortunes and deliver the anawin, the poor ones of Israel. Yet, as time went on it became evident that Jesus was doing nothing of the kind. There was nothing of the fiery avenger of evil in his actions, no word of instigation that he was about to lead Israel to her long-awaited triumph. On the contrary, Jesus presented himself in an entirely different fashion. "Learn of me" he said, "for I am meek and gentle of heart" (Mt. 11:29). His great interest was in the common man, his troubles, his ailments, his children. He instructed them about God's reign in their hearts, demanding an interior change of attitudes, and showed them that all commandments were an amplification of the one great commandment of love of God and neighbor.

While the great ones in Israel wondered and chafed, Jesus spent hours and whole days with the poor, the uneducated, the tax-collectors and those whom the religious leaders despised as sinners. He healed the sick, cured the handicapped, took interest in children, had time for lepers and beggars. Was this the long-awaited Messiah-king of Israel? Even Nicodemus was perplexed good man of faith though he was. Why does he come in a manner so contrary to all our expectations? (Jn. 3.1).

Why? Because Christ came first of all not to judge mankind and punish evil doing, but to bring salvation, to heal the wounds of mankind. He made it clear to all that God was their Father, and had sent him with a message of love. He was not intent on punishing their transgressions if only they would hearken to his message and receive him. For God is Love. That is why Jesus became man's brother, put his hand on the sick and the possessed, cured the blind and the lame and caressed the children with greatest love. He understood the gnawing emptiness in the heart of the sinner, and welcomed all who came to him with repentant heart. The incarnate Son of God was making known to all men the depth and the breadth and the height of the universal love of his heart, the love that was the perfect image of the Father's love for all men.

Man had a lesson to learn. It is not difficult to steer clear of the common troubles of the poor, to avoid their problems and their distress. One can busy himself with many other seemingly listened to the sinners he had compassion on those in distress.

He went out of the way to be available to them. He came for that very purpose: to heal the wounds deep in the heart of man. There would be a glorious Coming, when he would judge the world and render to each his due, but now he was The Savior of fallen, needy man.

Francis of Assisi followed Christ to the letter. He was a savior for his time and circumstances. Lenin was right: if he had had just ten men like Francis of Assisi, there would have been no bloodshed, just a marvellous transformation of poor, needy man into other Christs who were content to toil and suffer like Christ did, and serve their fellowmen in love. Jesus came to heal the world with love. He will come again to judge the world with justice.

Our response: Everyone can ask himself: If he were on earth at the time of Jesus, would he have recognized the Promised Savior in Jesus of Nazareth? Would he have chosen to be in his company, in the midst of his merciful healings, participating in his long-drawn-out labors of preaching and instructing the crowds, and coming to the aid of the poor who could offer him nothing of this world's goods in return? But this is the real Christ, and this is the genuine Christian.

REACH OUT TO WELCOME CHRIST

December 18, 1977: Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Human Situation: The Russian novelist Tolstoy tells the story of a peasant in the depth of depression. A friend told him to seek help from the Bible. He agreed somewhat reluctantly, but as he read on, his interest grew. One morning he heard the Lord telling him he would pay a visit to him on the following day. Eager and expectant, the peasant set the table for his promised guest and waited. The only ones who came were peasants: a tramp, a housewife with problems, and a young mother with her infant. At day's end the peasant was disconsolate and murmured: "He never came". But the Lord spoke to him again telling him that he was the tramp, the housewife and the young mother. What he had done to the least of Christ's brothers and sisters, he had done to Christ.

The Good News: When Joseph in obedience to the angelic message, welcomed Mary into his home, he also welcomed her Child in great faith. He is the model for all subsequent believers who welcome the same Child of Mary in faith, even though he is hidden from their eyes. Jesus living in Mary is the archetype of Jesus living in every member of the Church. He who receives even a little child in his name, receives Christ. And whatever is done

to the least of his brothers, is done to him. And whatever we neglect to do to the least of his brothers, we neglect to do to him (Mt. 25: 40.45).

As the Birthday of the little King draws near, what better way to prepare for it and celebrate it than to reach out and welcome Christ in the persons of all whom we daily contact: our relatives and acquaintances, especially those with whom we find it rather difficult to get along. In faith we reach out to welcome Jesus in the person of the maid, the chauffeur, and all those who work for us one way or another. We reach out to welcome Christ in those who are over us and those who are subject to us. In faith we show them respect and love, for Christ lives in them. At times it will perhaps take much courage and prayer to reach out and welcome Jesus in those for whom we feel no natural inclinations. But our hope of glory is the mystery of "Christ in us" (Col. 1:27), and genuine Christian virtue consists precisely in this that see in all others Christ the Lord.

St. Joseph grew daily in the knowledge and affection for the great mystery that is the Person of Christ whom he had welcomed to his little home. Only gradually did he come to know in depth the implications of the mystery. So too the Christian grows in the knowledge and appreciation of the mystery "Christ in us". He realizes more and more that deep down in the heart of every Christian Jesus is accomplishing his salvific work, and extending the blessings of his Paschal Mystery. The peasant in Tolstoy's story did not recognize Christ in the visitors that came to his home, but he really was there. Many seek to find Jesus amid much pomp and noise and he is not there. They will find him if they firmly believe that he really lives in the heart of every baptized person, and desires to live in the hearts of all men, regardless of creed or belief. It is for us to reach out and find him, welcome him, and treat him with respect, love and hospitality.

Our response: There are many ways to reach out and find Christ. You may suffer some setbacks, some rebuffs, but in the end the Babe of Bethlehem will smile at you from the depths of men's hearts and make you experience his all-embracing love. You can give him no better birthday gift than endeavoring to reach out and find him where he really is: in the hearts of his brothers and sisters.

THE GLORY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

December 25, 1977: Christmas Day.

(The prologue for the gospel of the mass during the day offers ample material for a homily, and the outline is found in the biblical notes for Christmas).

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