

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

PANORAMA 1978

Editorial

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ASIAN COLLOQUIUM ON MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences

ON HANS KÜNG'S 'BEING A CHRISTIAN'

Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger

SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

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CULTS AND RITUALS OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN BIKOLS

Jose Calleja Reyes

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EDITORIAL

Panorama 1978

To put into practice the biblical advise to "read the signs of the times", it has become customary for the Synod of Bishops held in Rome to reflect on the panorama of the Church since the previous Synod, and look forward to the next one. It is good for us to follow this example as we begin a new year.

In the past three years the Church has given special attention to the collaboration of the laity with their pastors. Worthy of special mention is the increasing number of lay people deputized to distribute the Eucharist, recruited to teach religion in schools, and assigned to lead the liturgy of the Word in the absence of a priest.

As a result of the 1974 Synod on Evangelization, there is an increased awareness of the importance of every Christian's involvement in the apostolic mission. The Holy Year celebrated in 1975 deepened the bonds of unity which link all Catholics with the Holy See of Rome. It also made people more aware of the need for penance and reconciliation.

In the Economic, Sociological and Political fields, the Church has shown greater interest in the whole man. It has taken a strong stand in the defense of the poor, while insisting that violence must be avoided. The human rights of all must be safeguarded or restored.

Looking to the area of particular difficulties of the Church today, we can see the need to develop SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES in such a way as to remain united to the local Church as well as the Universal Church. Many obstacles still have to be overcome to make the participation of the faithful in the LITURGY "full, conscious and active". Indigenization in this matter still calls for critical appraisal.

Making the SACRAMENTS true encounters with Christ is a very keenly felt problem. Efforts have to be intensified towards more fruitful administration of the sacraments of Confirmation, Matrimony and the Anointing of the Sick.

Churchmen are ill prepared to respond to **YOUTH'S QUEST FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE**. Too few are able and ready to satisfy the growing hunger of young people for the authentic spiritual life taught by the Bible.

Many Christians are troubled by uncertainties about the **MEANING OF LIFE** and the **TRUE MORAL VALUES**. This is specially true in matters affecting the Family, Sexuality, the Right to Life, etc.

The **LACK OF PRIESTS** continue to be a serious problem, although in some regions a good number of young men are responding generously to God's call. **LAY PEOPLE** who wish to be active in the parish apostolate, catechesis, apostolic and charitable works are still not adequately trained.

The Church has not yet sufficiently harnessed **COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA**. Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, makes a strong appeal for greater Church presence in books, magazines, radio and television.

ECUMENICAL CONTACTS with other churches have progressed, but not yet to the point of "spiritual ecumenism" — not yet to the extent of thoroughgoing doctrinal agreements and uninhibited fraternal love.

The threat of **SCHISM** casts its shadow on the Church due to the stubbornness of Bishop Lefevre to submit to the **AUTHORITY OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL**.

It is clear that in the coming years **the main lines of action** of the local Churches are: liturgy, sacramental life, catechesis, the charitable activity of the community and its members.

Moreover, to disperse the clouds of confusion on moral issues, theologians must work more closely with the Magisterium of the Church to find the best way to present the authentic Christian Ethical Norms for modern life-situations.

The Church's Social Doctrine, which resolutely rejects both the Marxist doctrine of dialectical materialism and class struggle and the liberalistic and individualistic theories current among capitalists, needs forceful proclamation and creative implementation. Otherwise, Church leadership in this field will become more and more relegated to the background.

Many today expect the Church to give guidance to mankind in the pursuit of international understanding and good will, peace and the true amelioration of the human society. Can the Church meet th challenge?

The year 1978 will surely bring with it many opportunities for advancement as well as many obstacles to progress as the Church pursues its salvific mission. We invite our readers to pray so that opportunities would be utilized to the full and obstacles reduced to insignificance.

In This Issue

The much awaited document resulting from the **Asian Colloquium on Ministries** has finally seen light. The Colloquium was held in Hong Kong almost a year ago. It ended without a document ready for release. The papers produced by the Colloquium piled up so high that it was impossible for the body to summarize them in a matter of days. However, a Committee was formed to work even after the delegates had dispersed, and it finally produced a satisfactory document reflecting the important matters taken up at the Colloquium. New Ministries were the focal point of the deliberations, but it became necessary to see the traditional ministries of Bishop, Priest and Deacon in a new light. Similarly, it was necessary to talk about Women in ministry and about Basic Christian Communities whose development call for new forms of ministry. Significantly, the document we now offer our readers manifests how Asians are theologizing on present vital questions arising from the fast changing life-situations of the Church in Asia and all over the world.

As a birthday gift to the Pope upon his completion of 80 years the Philippine Hierarchy issued a **Pastoral Letter** inviting our people to love our Holy Father and follow his doctrinal guidance. This takes special importance in the context of such developments as Hans Küng's book, "On Being a Christian", which disregards the voice of Magisterium. Two outstanding theologians, **Joseph Ratzinger** and **Hans Urs Von Balthasar** share with our readers their serious objections to many of Küng's viewpoints.

The theme of **Small Christian Communities** returns to our pages this time as a result of the reflections of an Irish missionary who specialized in Biblical Studies, John Purcell, C.Ss.R. We hope his insights will encourage our readers to follow the development of this new thrust in the Church.

In honor of the Quadricentennial of the christianization of **Bicolandia**, we give our readers the beginning of a series of historical essays by a bicolano, Mr. Jose Calleja Reyes.

PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili Frati **BENVENUTO S. TUdTUD**, Praelato Sedis Iliganensis, ad Maraviensem translato, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Cum nuperrime constitutae praelaturae Maraviensi aptus omnino esset praefiendus sacer Pastor, visum est Nobis eam posse tibi, Venerabilis Frater, assignare: navus enim impigerque praelaturam Iliganensem adhuc fovisti. Audita igitur hoc super negotio sententia Venerabilis Fratris Nostri **S.R.E. Cardinalis Praefecti Sacrae-Congregationis pro Episcopis**, apostolica qua pollemus potestate te vinculo solvimus regendae Ecclesiae Iliganensis teque ad **Maraviensem** transferimus, datis iuribus iustis obligationibusque impositis quae ad novum officium tuum pertinent. Ab iterandis autem fidei catholicae professione atque iureiurando fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, lege ecclesiastica praescriptis, eadem potestate Nostra te eximimus, contrarius quibuslibet haud obstantibus. Mandamus insuper ut haec Litterae Nostrae clero ac populo in praelaticio templo tuo ex more publice legantur, die aliquo festo de praecepto; quos dilectos filios hac oblata opportunitate hortamur ut non solum te qua debent reverentia observent, verum etiam mandatis tuis obtemperent tuisque faveant pastoralibus coeptis, quae ad propiorum bonum ineunda esse existimaveris. Maximopere enim prorsunt oves inter earumque pastorem animorum concordia atque consociata opera. Votis denique te, Venerabilis Frater, prosequimur optimis, ut, renovatis quasi viribus gravissimum tibi commissum munus exsequi pergas deque pastoralibus operibus tuis quam maximi proveniant christianorum coetibus fructus. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimoquinto mensis Aprilis, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo septimo, Pontificatus Nostri quarto decimo.

† **JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**
Secretarius Status

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton, Apost.

PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili Fratri FERDINANDO CAPALLA, Episcopo titulo Grumentino, electo Praelato Sedis Iliganensis, salutem et Apostolicam benedictionem. Vacanti ob translationem Venerabilis Fratris Benvenuti Tudtud praelaturae Iliganensi cum esset idoneus admodum praeficiendus sacer Praesul, qui eam gubernaret, visum est Nobis eam tibi rite destinari posse. Praeterquam enim quod necessariis animi ingenique dotibus clare praestas, magnam etiam pastoralium rerum agendarum peritiam consecutus es, navus hucusque impigerque in Davaënsi archidioecesi Auxiliaris Episcopus. Audita igitur sententia Venerabilis Fratris Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Praefecti Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, apostolica potestate Nostra te nominamus hisque sub plumbo Litteris renuntiamus Praelatum sedis **Iliganensis**, datis iuribus obligationibusque impositis, ad novum munus tuum pertinentibus. Mandamus insuper ut hae Litterae Nostrae clero ac populo in praelaticio templo tuo publice legantur, die aliquo festo de praecepto; quos dilectos filios hortamur, ut te debita reverentia accipiant tibi que pareant, ut patri amantissimo obsequuntur filii. Ad te praeterea quod stricte aetinet, scias tuum esse, antequam obire officium accipias, iusiurandum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, teste quovis rectae fidei Episcopo: ab iteranda autem professione fidei catholicae te eximimus, contrahi quibuslibet non obstantibus. Et te denique hortamur, Venerabilis Frater, ut husque tecum consideres quod tibi sit patris et ductoris et rerum divinarum magistri impositum officium. Quod ut maxima cum crediti procurationi tuae populi utilitate explere valeas, supernum in the Dei auxilium impetramus. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo quinto mensis Aprilis, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo septimo, Pontificatus Nostri quartodecimo.

† JOANNES CARD. VILLOT
Secretarius Status

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton. Apost.

PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili Fratri **SALVATORI LAZO** Episcopo titulo Seliensi atque in archidioecesi Tuguegaraoana hactenus Auxiliari, electo Auxiliari Episcopo sacri Praesulis archidioecesis Novae Segoviae, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Nihil impensius curantes quam ut satis omni dominici gregis portioni ubique terrarum degenti provideamus, idcirco existimamus non esse cunctandum, quin exspectatio impleatur legitima Venerabilis Fratris Joannis C. Sison, Archiepiscopi Novae Segoviae, qui ob potiora pastoralia negotia magis in dies augescentia, postulavit ut sibi Auxiliaris daretur Episcopus. Quapropter Nos, confirmantes sententiam Venerabilis Fratris Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti, Apostolica Nostra potestate a superiore officio te solvimus, Venerabilis Frater, teque nominamus Auxiliarem Episcopum Archiepiscopi Ecclesiae Novae Segoviae iuribus ornatum tui officii propriis, de quibus per Apostolicas Litteras "Ecclesiae Sanctae" cautum est, quae motu proprio die VI mensis Augusti anno MCMLXVI editae sunt. Nostrum interea est tibi enixe suadere ut, semper sentiens cum Ecclesia, magno animo te agas et eo quo vales ingenio quam maxime prosis sacro Praesulis ac Pastori cui mitteris auxilio. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die duodecimo mensis Maii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo septuagesimo septimo, Pontificatus Nostri quarto decimo.

† **JOANNES CARD. VILLOT**
Secretarius Status

JOSEPHUS DEL TON, Proton, Apost.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE ASIAN COLLOQUIUM ON MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION

After two years of preparation the Asian Colloquium on Ministries was finally realized and held in Hong Kong last February 27 to March 6, 1977.

Sponsored by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and with Bishop Patrick D'Souza as chairman, the Colloquium drew 114 participants from Asia, including some experts and observers from other countries. They were led by the Central Committee of the FABC, which is composed of the Presidents of the member Episcopal Conferences.

By the grace of Our Lord the FABC is proud and grateful to present and publish these Conclusions of the Colloquium.

The committee entrusted by the Plenary Assembly to prepare in final form the Conclusions was faithful to the amendments that were approved and carefully considered the other suggestions given. Hence, our regrets that the publication suffered a delay.

We join the wish of the delegates to the Colloquium that this opus may help the "particular Churches" in Asia, the members especially of FABC, and those in other continents, in their mission of evangelization and human development, as we affirm our loyalty and devotion to the See of Peter and to the universal Church.

+ MARIANO G. GAVIOLA, D.D.
Titular Bishop of Girba
Secretary General, FABC

Manila, Philippines
May 10, 1977

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1. It was as long ago as October, 1974, during the days of the Synod of Bishops on the theme of Evangelization, that the initiative was taken by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC)

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to hold this Asian Colloquium on Ministries in 1977. It was born out of a gradual realization there that the Church must move along these lines, if it is to become more effectively a sacrament of salvation in the times in which we live.

2. More than two years have gone into the preparation of this Asian Colloquium, with background papers by experts in different fields that provided the theological context and the experiential reality of the Church's ministries. We have thus had the opportunity of coming to this meeting well aware of the issues involved and adequately prepared to discuss them in a meaningful way; yet honest enough to recognize our own limitations and our inability to find suitable answers to all the problems facing us.

3. What has encouraged us in our search and helped us to persevere in our endeavours has been the realization that the Holy See, in pursuance of the renewal initiated by the II Vatican Council, has herself taken the first steps in reconstituting the ministries of the Church by suppressing the sub-diaconate and "minor orders" and instituting the two ministries of lector and acolyte. At the same time she has invited the bishops of the world, through their Episcopal Conferences, to request the Apostolic See to institute new ministries, if the establishment of such offices are thought to be necessary or useful.

4. We think of this our Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church as the response of our Episcopal Conferences of South, South East and East Asia to the invitation of the Holy See. With these Conferences we live in fraternal communion, fully aware that each of them will be strengthened and supported by the other members of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in their common endeavor to make the ministries of our Churches more relevant to our times and better suited to meet the needs of our peoples. We are also aware of the very different situations obtaining in our various countries. In view of this diversity it will be for each Episcopal Conference to take the decisions that will best answer the needs of the particular Churches.

5. These conclusions, addressed as they are to the member Conferences of the FABC, are offered as mere suggestions. Hence, they have no binding force; nor are they meant to be imposed on any member church. It follows too that this Statement of Conclusions is also at the disposal of other Churches, should they find it helpful. The proposals contained in these Conclusions are not meant to be understood as implying any measure of compulsion; they are recommendations made, as such, with a view to providing assistance to those churches that may find them useful.

PART I: BACKGROUND**A. Asian Situation at Present**

6. **The Asia of today** to which the Church has to minister is a continent where more than half of the world's people live. It is a "continent of the young" where more than half of the people are below twenty-one years of age.

7. It is curious blend of ancient cultures still visible in many areas and of modernity as seen in bustling metropolises, among the biggest in the world. Immensely diverse in race, color and creed, Asians can, nevertheless, recognize common values and aspirations that enable them to have a common Asian identity. Along these values are close family ties, smooth interpersonal relationships, religiosity, etc. Our common aspirations are the eradication of the glaring economic inequalities that characterize nearly all Asian societies and participation within small person-oriented communities.

8. In the aftermath of independence from colonial powers most Asian countries have yet to find stable political structures suitable to their history and culture — an Asian brand of participative leadership. This effort is made more difficult by economic, military and political power brought to bear on them by others.

9. Asia is the cradle of most of the world's great religions. At the same time its religiosity is being shaken in the face of stark poverty and shameful inequalities of life styles. Thus, the young and modernizing elite tend increasingly towards agnosticism, secularism and materialism. Others, especially the poor and the oppressed, the studentry and the intellectuals, tend to look to revolutionary ideologies for hope.

10. These, then, are among the challenges to Christians in Asia. In these "signs of the times" may be discerned what the Spirit is saying to the Churches of Asia. It is a momentous hour, a decisive moment of grace (*kairos*), calling Asian Christians to contribute their faith-reflection towards the growth of Asian peoples to fuller personhood and a human community.

11. **The Christian Church in Asia** is extremely small in number, less than 3% of the total population. Nearly half of the Catholics of Asia are found in one country, which itself suffers from a dearth of ordained ministers. This is not to say that this small Christian population of Asia is without a significant influence in Asian society, especially in the field of education, health and social services. Nevertheless, it is largely looked upon as somewhat foreign to the Asian scene in its religious expressions, symbolism and organization.

12. The situational challenges to the Christian Church in Asia may be summed up thus:

In religious matters: how to preach the good news of Jesus to our brethren so that the Church may be and appear to be the sacrament of salvation and a community of love.

In relation to the world religions: how to enrich its own Christian identity and life by opening itself to the great religious traditions of Asia in inter-religious dialogue; and together with them, how to practise religion and promote moral and religious values in a way that will contribute to the total human development of our peoples.

In economics: how to contribute to the eradication of stark poverty by an authentic dialogue of life with the poor of Asia without fostering materialism.

In social life: how to preserve the authentic values of person-alism and family life in the face of urbanization and technological progress.

In political matters: how to help our people find an Asian style of authentic participative leadership in government at all levels.

In cultural matters: how to find their own national and Asian identity, by blending ancient and modern values and in face of the future ahead.

B. A Vision of Things to Come

13. The Asian World and the Catholic Church. Though we are still too close to the events that have brought us where we are, we can already anticipate a basic fact: we are fast approaching one of the most decisive turning points of world history and church history in Asia. Asia, with 60% of the planet's population, will at the turn of the century be the most populous, but probably also the least Christian continent in terms of numbers. If Asian Christianity is not by then the leaven in the dough of the new Asia that is taking shape, it runs the risk of being wiped out in the dramatic events which might take place within the next few decades.

14. This vision leads us to two conclusions:

i) **For the Asian world:** the coming decades will not be a period of idyllic "peace" but of a gigantic crisis. Asia will be in great ferment. If their right to the common heritage of this earth is denied Asians, they may attempt to secure it by force, leading to conflicts of cataclysmic proportions.

ii) **For the Asian Churches:** the decisive new phenomenon for Christianity in Asia will be the emergence of genuine Christian com-

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munities in Asia — Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, communicating their own Christ-experience to others. The consequences will be tremendous not only for the ministries the Asian Churches will have to perform but also for all aspects of their life. We should beware of seeing our future mission in categories that belong to the past, when the West shaped the Churches' history. If the Asian Churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future.

15. In this perspective, among the various challenges and needs to be met by the Church we could indicate three **priorities**:

16. i) **Evangelization.** The mission of the Church is primarily to lead men to repentance, and to a turning of the heart to Jesus as Lord. The Second Vatican Council, the Synod of Bishops in Rome and the Bishops of Asia have all insisted on evangelization as the highest priority in the mission of the Church.

17. ii) **Serving the Kingdom of God in the Asia of Tomorrow.** Asia will be the testing ground for religions. A big question remains unsolved for us: will religion in Asia remain free for the next twenty-five years? Will hostile powers wipe out religion from many parts of Asia? Will authoritarian and dictatorial regimes clamp down on it with serious restrictions, like the prohibition of mission work or conversion? These are no longer mere fears in more than one country of Asia but sad realities. The trend in most of the Asian countries points in the direction of a serious curtailment of religious freedom. If this is true, can our present approach to and training for ministries really be carried on in forms that will not prepare us for emergency situations which may become the normal case in many an Asian country, even should religious practice theoretically still be free? Have we not to create ministries that take the new situation into consideration and to find ways and means, as the first Christians did, to spread the Good News under trying conditions?

18. iii) **The Social Question.** As a consequence of preaching the Good News and working to spread the Kingdom of God, the social question is the third priority to be met by the Church among its needs and challenges. This will be a matter of life and death for the continent. There is no doubt that Asia will play the final act in the great human drama where man oppressed man and murdered his brother as Cain did to Abel, though both were the children of the same heavenly Father. It would be utterly unchristian if the Christian Churches in Asia would dispense themselves from contributing their best to the solution of the social question. If Christianity finally won the victory over the entire hostile Roman Empire, it was not by proclaiming theories and creating organiza-

tions but by the blood of the martyrs. As long as the ministers of the Churches in Asia — whatever ministry they fulfil — are not prepared to be martyrs for justice but are satisfied to live a life outside and above the life of their fellowmen, their impact will be mighty little. The mission of the Church in Asia was never more urgent and decisive than today. All we have to do is to start doing what Jesus did: "to preach the Good News" — not only by words but by deeds, and to do this with all the demands of the Gospel on Asia.

19. The Asian Churches will find themselves in a strange position in the years to come. They will have to wage a two-front war and will find other religions both as allies and as opponents: as allies in their fight against atheistic and antitheistic humanism; as opponents to Christianity's claim for the uniqueness of Christ and His Church's mission. It would be unrealistic to expect mass conversions in the present situation. And yet the Asian Churches will have an opportunity they never had for the last 1600 years. They have now to resume the dialogue with the world religions that was broken off once Christianity became the majority religion of the Old World. Now that Christianity has again become a minority religion both in the former "Christian countries" and in the world at large, to begin this dialogue anew will be the great call of the Lord to the Churches in Asia. We must now start collecting again the "seminal reasons" (*logoi spermatikoi*) in modern man's old and new religions and integrate them into a new synthesis of the Gospel as it is experienced by today's man. This will lead to a new era of theological reflection, liturgical creativity and new forms of religious life — a new era that will make the Catholic Church for the first time really "catholic" by introducing into its life the riches of all nations, as the riches of some have been introduced into it in the past. No doubt this will not take place without hesitation and danger, insecurity and uncertainty. But this was always the price the Church had to pay in its greatest hours when a new age was being ushered in. It should not deter us in any way from going ahead.

20. **The conclusion** that emerges from this vision and reflection is obvious. Identifying and analyzing the signs of the times is our task, if we want to discover the path the Lord of History wants His Church in Asia to tread. But the correct interpretation of the facts can only be given to us by the Spirit of the Lord and it will be heard only by those who are attuned to His voice. For too long we have been accustomed to plan building up the Kingdom of God in Asia in our own way — and therefore with little success.

C. Theological Perspective

21. Faced as we are with the present situation of the Asian Continent and keeping before our eyes an uncertain and challenging future, we take a fresh look at the mission of the Church in our Asian context. The Spirit of the Lord is present to our Churches, calling them to continue His service to the world. He calls them to become, each in its own context, the embodiment of His own self-emptying and self-giving, that from death new life may arise. The Spirit urges them to renew their self-understanding and to project a new image, to read the signs of the times as signs addressed to them by the Lord Himself, to be discerned through the Spirit as the signs of His own active presence in the world and understood as part of His saving design, operative even today in our midst. In our desire to renew our vision of the Church's mission we turn to Jesus Himself.

22. "God so loved the world... that He sent His only Son into the world not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved by Him" (Jn. 3, 16-17). To save, to liberate the world was the mission of Jesus, who "came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many" (Mk. 10, 45), that is, for all men. No one served as He did, Who is the one minister of mankind. Jesus fulfilled His ministry by emptying Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death on a cross (Phil. 2, 7-8). To follow Him means dying to oneself for the sake of the Gospel — a Gospel which announces that the Spirit stirs people to preach the good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, give sight to the blind and liberate those who are oppressed (Lk. 4, 18). Jesus Himself is always with His followers to the close of the ages (Mt. 28, 20). Through His followers He continues to make all things new till all men will share in the communion of life which in God Himself exists among Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

23. Established as Lord and Christ when His Father raised Him from the dead (Acts 2, 36), Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on His disciples by Whose power they would become His witnesses (Acts 2, 8). It is this gift of the Holy Spirit that brought the Church into existence — a Church that would endure to the end of time and carry her mission to all the corners of the earth (**Lumen Gentium** 4). The Church, as a pilgrim people, continues the mission of Christ Himself, and so she must conform to the model of humble service set by the Master. For "just as Christ carried on the work of redemption in poverty and persecutiton so the Church is called to follow the same route that she might communicate the fruits of salvation to men" (**L.G.** 8). The Church, then, is a communion in the Spirit, a community of sharing and fellowship of witness and service.

24. Historically conditioned as Jesus of Nazareth Himself was, the Church has to fulfill her mission in each particular situation and culture. This is to say that her mission is bound by the same law of incarnation as is implied in the mystery of Christ Himself, which she signifies. Universal in intent, the Church's mission needs to be actualized by becoming incarnate in particular human situations. This is the mystery of the "local Church"; in Asia this is the mystery of the Asian Churches.

25. Each local Church is determined by her human context and lives in a dialectical relationship with the human society into which she is inserted as the Gospel leaven. Since each local Church should embody into that context the task entrusted to her by the Servant Lord, she has to discover time and again what ministries and what ministerial structures she requires in order to fulfill her mission to offer to a human society the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ and to enable the members of that society to become what God intends them to be. Each local Church, in order to be viable, needs to become fully responsible and must have the legitimate autonomy which her natural and harmonious growth demands.

26. Asian Churches then must become truly Asian in all things. The principle of indigenization and inculturation is at the very root of their coming into their own. The ministry of Asian Churches, if it is to be authentic, must be relevant to Asian societies. This calls on the part of the Churches for originality, creativity and inventiveness, for boldness and courage. Our Churches are called upon to take into their hands their own destiny not in an attitude of self-sufficiency and independence but with a deep sense of responsibility for the here and now. In their effort to give an adequate response to their calling they will be strengthened by the power of the Spirit whose promptings they must follow in fidelity and loyalty to their vocation and to the Lord.

27. Since Christ's mission is universal, all local Churches are called to live in communion with each other. This bond of unity, visibly expressed in the college of bishops presided over by the Bishop of Rome, implies that the search of each Church for ministries adapted to her needs is subject to verification and testing by the other Churches. In this bond of union lies the guarantee of the true apostolicity and catholicity of each local Church. The same bond will ensure that she will never depart from the basic ministerial structure given to the Church by her Founder.

28. But, as the life of the apostolic Churches of which the New Testament gives us the authentic record testifies, fidelity to the basic structure imparted to the Church by Jesus Himself does not

militate against a variety of organizational structures. The apostolic Churches equipped themselves with various modes of organizational and ministerial structures in response to local needs and situations. This creativity in the Spirit shown by the early Church remains with the Church of all ages and places. It must be emulated today by the Churches of Asia. Our Churches can no longer be satisfied with maintaining imported models inadequate for the fulfillment of their mission. Rather, it is their task to devise new structures ordained to meeting their own situation in Asia today in all its newness.

D. Concept of Church Ministry and Ministries

29. It seems necessary to clarify the theological terms which are being used here with regard to Church ministry and ministries.

i) The Church's universal ministeriality

30. By this term we understand that the Christian mission is incumbent on the entire Christian community of each local or particular Church in its own situation and human environment. Just as the whole Church is missionary, so is it ministerial in its entirety, for all her members participate in the common mission, though in various ways. All Christians are called to serve as Christ did. The Church is a communion of service in which, even though there are a variety of functions, services and ministries, all persons are equal, coresponsible and interdependent. It is within this context and against this background that the various distinctive ministries of the Church find their *raison d'être* and their specific character.

ii) Charisms — Services — Ministries

31. **Charisms** are enduring gifts of the Spirit given to Church members to be put to use in services and ministries. Endowed with them, different members render different services, thereby contributing, each in his or her own manner, to the Christian mission. All Christians are charismatic by vocation and in virtue of their baptismal consecration but not all are engaged in the ministry of the Church in the same manner and with the same intensity. We term **services** those ways of sharing in the Church's ministeriality which are undertaken spontaneously and on occasions. They are already in their own manner an expression of the Church's service (*diakonia*) and indeed indispensable for the Christian presence in the world.

32. **Ministries** apply more properly to those services which Church members undertake with a certain stability and exercise on a sufficiently broad basis, thus sharing formally in the Church's responsibility to signify the presence to men of Christ's saving action.

All such ministries must be recognized by the community and authenticated by it in the person of its leader. Thus every service ministry of the Church suppose a charism but not every charism blossoms into a ministry.

iii) Ministries conferred by "installation"

33. The services, based on personal charisms and rendered by lay people with a certain stability and on a sufficiently broad basis, are established today by the Church as ministries. The installation of lay people into those ministries supposes the recognition of their charism and services by the community and its confirmation by its leader.

34. It must be clearly perceived that ministries of lay people are in no way "clerical"; nor are lay people who exercise them set apart from the community. On the contrary, these ministries belong to lay people as lay people and are exercised by them in their own right. Lay ministers are not auxiliaries of priests; their legitimate freedom of action must be ensured while at the same time collaboration with ordained ministers is to be preserved. Nor is the installation of lay people into ministries to be viewed as an undue institutionalization of services rendered by them. It is not a juridical institutionalization but an official recognition gratefully given by the community to services exercised by its members.

iv) Ministries conferred by ordination

35. The apostolic ministry of leadership belongs to the essential structure of the Church. It is now embodied in the college of bishops, into which individual bishops are inscribed by episcopal ordination. From the early tradition the ministry of leadership, whose specific function is to signify in the community the Headship of Jesus Christ over His Church, has taken on two additional forms in the ministries of the presbyterate and the diaconate. Common to the three forms of the ministry conferred by ordination, though differently realized in each, is a charism of unity and spiritual leadership.

v) Sacramental and non-sacramental ministries

36. Thus there arises in the Church's structure a distinction between those ministries which from the early tradition were conferred through ordination and a laying on of hands and those into which community members were installed without ordination. They correspond to the ministries which today we call sacramental and

nonsacramental respectively. Distinct as they are, the sacramental and non-sacramental ministries are interlated and interdependent, for all are, even if differently, true expressions of the Church's *diakonia* in the world.

vi) **Office and Authority**

37. **Office** is a defined role of service based on a charism within community with leadership-authority attached to it. **Leadership-authority** in the Church signifies the Headship of Christ in the community of faith. Those offices which represent the Headship of Christ in the community of faith are given by appointment and characterized by ordination.

PART II: CONTEXT OF MINISTRIES

A. The Mystery of the Church Realized at Various Levels

38. The reality of the Church becomes actualized in diverse ways at various levels; this is the mystery of the "local church" in its many forms. Among these, Vatican II has signaled out the "**particular Church**" or **diocesan community** as having special ecclesial significance. This special significance is due to the presence in its midst of the bishop, by whose ministry of unity and presidency the diocesan community is linked in space with all other Churches and in time with the Church of the apostles. According to Vatican II the constitutive elements of the particular Church of the diocese are a community of believers, the Holy Spirit in whom they are gathered, the Gospel which is preached in their midst, the Eucharist which they celebrate, and the bishop who, as "visible principle and foundation of unity" (L. G. 23), exercises among them his teaching, sacramental and pastoral ministry (**Christus Dominus** 11; L. G. 26). At the source of all these elements is to be found the transforming paschal experience or the saving encounter with the Risen Lord, which makes men believers. Likewise, the whole process of Christian experience of the community creates within it an irresistible urge and dynamism to open itself to society by means of a powerful witness through humble service in love, and to other Churches by means of sharing. This creates the ecclesial bond of fellowship between the Churches.

39. This special ecclesial reality of the "particular Church" or diocesan community notwithstanding, other modes of Christian assembly operating at lower levels have their own significance in the Church's life which must be neither overlooked nor underestimated. The traditional **parish community**, while it needs to be open to the

diocese because apostolic communion is fully expressed at that level, nevertheless embodies the mystery of the Church in a genuine sense, inasmuch as it is endowed with the life organs, the priestly ministry included, which the day-to-day life of the community requires. In a true sense, its ecclesial reality is even more basic and fundamental than that of the diocese, for it represents a living organism with proportions more conducive to community living and shared witness.

40. In some areas a form of Christian community living has developed which is termed the **"Basic Christian Community"**. It must be said that these small communities operating at a still lower level than the parish, allowing for even deeper human and Christian relationships, are the most fundamental ecclesial realities, provided they too are equipped with proportionate services and ministries, including the priestly ministry. This amounts to saying that, while these communities need to be linked to the ministry of the bishop, they nevertheless embody the mystery of the Church in their own right; they are in a true sense "local Churches". In reality, the closer to life, the more "local" the Church is. Incomplete therefore as Christian communities at the grass-roots level may be, they are nevertheless the most basic reality in the Church's life. In this sense the term "basic communities" by which they are called is not without theological significance.

B. Developing Basic Christian Communities

41. In parts of Asia today the need for forming Basic Christian Communities is becoming more strongly felt. The people are expressing their need for some kind of basic social grouping whose members can express real interpersonal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging. Many different forms are evolving leading to a fuller participation in Christian living. These groups are not the only way of participating in the life of the Church; still the Spirit seems to be moving the Church strongly in this direction.

42. These Basic Christian Communities have arisen as a response to different needs and situations, such as:

i) Existing parish structures sometimes are not conducive to intensive Christian life. They can become inadequate to ministering to the growing needs of people.

ii) Our people are too many and too spread out for the number of priests available to minister to them.

iii) The people need a sense of belonging and support especially in a non-Christian environment.

iv) People are taking more and more responsibility for their Church and are responding to new ministries to serve their small Christian communities.

v) There is growing urgency for genuine Christian witness in community among the ideological struggles taking place in Asia.

43. These Basic Christian Communities have been developing in the rural areas among the villages and out-stations. There are also neighbourhood or block groups in the towns and cities, as well as interest groups, professional groups and age groups, in all of which people come together to deepen their faith commitment.

44. A group of people is described as a basic community when the number of members is such that they can really know one another, meet with one another, relate to one another. The members are not too far apart to come together fairly frequently. There is a certain degree of permanence among the members. There is also mutual caring, sharing and support. The community strives for common goals and concerns. There is unity and togetherness.

45. A basic community becomes a Christian community when its inspiration, model and center is Jesus, the Risen Lord. There is openness to the charisms of the Holy Spirit, a praying and worshipping together. The members of the community share the Word of God, integrate it into their daily lives and proclaim it to others. "No Christian community, however, can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4). Thus the members of the community must have the Eucharistic celebration as the source of its Christian life. They struggle with their own sinfulness and selfishness and continue working together, helping one another in building a community of peace, based on justice, freedom, truth and love. For the pilgrim Church that we are, community building is a never-ending process.

46. These Basic Christian Communities are raising questions about leadership styles in the Church. Bishops and priests must learn to listen to the voice of their people. The local Christian community leaders have also to develop a style of leadership that fits the culture, attitudes and values of their local situation. We believe that shared participative leadership can be promoted as a style for our Basic Christian Communities where there is consultation, dialogue and sharing. Thus the people will feel responsible for and part of the decision-making process in matters that affect the whole community.

47. Leadership roles in the Christian communities are slowly emerging. Among the important services and functions that are developing are community leader, minister of the Eucharist, prayer leader, catechist, treasurer, social worker, youth leader, educator, facilitator or harmonizer of differences etc.

48. Basic Christian Communities also have their problems and difficulties. There is the possible danger of their becoming too inward-looking and too exclusive. Hence the need for a continuing reflection process on their lived experience within the larger community. They have to be linked to the local parish, diocese and the Universal Church. Among other dangers there may be within the groups themselves situations of unrest and destruction that prevent the community from growing. There may also sometimes be rivalries and conflicts about leadership.

49. But the basic fact is that today in our Asian context we are in the process of re-discovering that the individual Christian can best survive, grow and develop as a Christian person in the midst of a self-nourishing, self-governing, self-ministering and self-propagating Christian community.

50. Hence we formulate the following recommendations:

i) There should be an exchange of experiences and developments of Basic Christian Communities among the different countries of Asia.

ii) We should promote leadership styles that fit the local Asian context, keeping in mind national, regional and even local needs.

iii) The leaders of the Church at all levels should exercise participative leadership and promote such styles of leadership as a means to further man's dignity and freedom.

iv) We should study the problem of providing the Eucharistic celebration for our Basic Christian Communities.

PART III: FORMS OF MINISTRY AND TRAINING

51. Churches of Asia are called not only to emphasize and actualize their ministerial character at all levels of life from the grassroots to the universal level but also to **articulate** and give **expression** to this mission by creating new forms of ministries, alongside the existing ones. This call is primarily urged by the specific mission they assume in the varying religious, cultural and socio-economic situations of our countries.

52. Fortunately, the response to this call is facilitated by post-Vatican II ecclesiology which promotes a wider and more flexible structure of ministries and the enrolment of lay people as full-fledged members of the ministerial church, contributing their own charisms to its life and growth. Hence, it is the duty of the Churches of Asia to identify their present and future needs and also to recognize and encourage the corresponding charisms with which the Lord never fails to endow His Churches. Such discernment and recognition of charisms in individuals do not dispense the rest of the community from its obligation to be ministerial but rather help articulate and give expression in a concrete manner to possibilities of ecclesial services by lay people. Thus ministries will become nerve centers of life for the ministerial action of the community.

53. The servant Church can never adequately exercise her ministeriality through one uniform type of ministry. Various forms of the one ministry of the Church — the salvific ministry — must come into operation in order that the Church may respond adequately and meaningfully to the various needs of the milieu in which she exists. Just as the nascent Churches of the apostolic age instituted ministries according to the various needs of times and places the present Churches of Asia are called by the Spirit to institute new ministries adapted to place and time. They are encouraged in this effort by the new awareness they have acquired of the role of the laity and their charisms. The exact form of these ministries will depend to a great extent on the local situations in our countries.

A. Ministries of Lay People

54. Most of the needs for service that emerge in our Asian context could be met effectively by calling on lay people with special charisms to exercise ministries. Those called in this way will, in virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation and for the benefit of the community, exercise in a public manner some aspects of the Christian's triple function of priest, prophet and pastor.

55. Depending on the types of needs that call for services and the emergence and spontaneity of charisms in the community, various forms of services could be recognized with due stability as ministries for lay people. However, in the recognition of services as ministries there is need for prudence and caution. Not every charism or service needs to be recognized as ministry but only those which the life and growth of the community require to be exercised with stability, continuity and responsibility. Hence the local Churches should not be over-hasty in recognizing new ministries,

while at the same time being aware of the urgent call for services in the community and alert to the emergence of charisms and talents among the laity. It is the duty of the Churches, especially of those exercising leadership in them, to be sensitive to the needs of the place and attentive to the emergence of corresponding charisms.

56. The institution of ministries for lay people should not be impeded by the fear of increasing the financial burden of the diocese or the parish. If the need of the community is felt as a just one and the genuineness of the charism is duly discerned, then the means for due maintenance of the minister will be found. The more the community grows in awareness of its felt needs and of the services rendered by lay people exercising a ministry, the greater will be its sense of obligation to support them. The whole Church — bishops, priests and laity — needs to be gradually but unceasingly educated and urged towards this responsibility.

57. Against this background it is obviously not possible to indicate *a priori* which and how many ministries should be instituted for lay people. This will depend upon place and time. Ministries will emerge gradually according to the needs of a particular community in the very process of its growth. Nevertheless, by way of example, we mention the following:

58. i) **Evangelist:** In a non-Christian context this ministry assumes a special importance. It could be entrusted to those who have the ability and dedication to share the joy of the Good News with their non-Christian brothers and sisters.

59. ii) **Catechist/Preacher/Religion Teacher**

This ministry already exists in many parts of Asia under different names. It is necessary for educating the Christian communities in faith. There could be specialists for different groups of people, as children, youths, adults, workers in urban areas, etc.

60. iii) **Ministry for Liturgy and Liturgical Animation/Prayer Leaders/Acolyte/Lector/Cantor**

These will mainly focus on the services rendered around the Table of the Word and the Table of the Bread.

61. iv) **Ministry of Family Apostolate**

This ministry is geared to the fundamental call of both the human and the Christian community. The service of the Church is needed to help build this unit into one of love and communion able to provide in the most favorable manner for the needs of growing children. The minister will also guide people to solve modern problems of family planning and population.

62. v) Ministry of Healing/Health Services/Health Education/Counselling

Persons selflessly dedicating themselves to serve the sick, the invalid and the aged in the community by their visits, qualified advice, counselling, or physical help. We think here of Catholic doctors, nurses, attendants and counsellors for various types of needs caused by the pressures of modern living.

63. vi) Ministry of Inter-religious Dialogue

Persons knowledgeable in the tradition of other religious communities and in contact with their concrete religious life could be given a special ministry of inter-religious dialogue. They would promote mutual understanding and appreciation between the living faiths of the world and, together with the members of those other religious traditions, foster concerns for men and society as these spring from a faith commitment.

64. vii) Ministry of Social Concern/Social Leaders/Community Service Peace Officers/Peacemakers

Persons who can help the community to be aware of its social and civil duties and needs and organize their resources to overcome the evils of social and civil life. Those who have the ability to focus the attention of the community on social injustices or needs of the community and harness the forces within the community in the light of human and Christian principles, in order to lift up the poor and unfortunate, to help drug addicts, prostitutes, unmarried mothers, etc.

65. viii) Ministry for Youth/University Students/High School Students/Campus Leaders

Able young people with a charism for leadership among youth, sensitiveness to youth problems and anxieties could be trained to infuse human and Christian principles and ideals into these areas of concern, open youth centers, plan realistically for youth, provide recreational facilities for youth, take care of delinquents, etc.

66. ix) Ministry to Workers/Farmers/Other Occupations

The specific character of the problems related to work and workers, their inhuman conditions of work, their unjust wages and sufferings, their oppression by unjust means — all these in our countries call for good Church leaders among the workers themselves. They would be trained to tackle labor problems and conditions.

67. x) Ministry for Education, Formal and Non-Formal/Adult Education/Social Education/Literacy

Especially in rural areas and small communities where there is a lack of means and concern for education and thereby the growth of advancement of the community is impeded there is urgent need for education regarding basic needs to better life and human conditions.

68. xi) Community Builders/Community Leaders/Presidents of Rural Communities / Basic Community Leaders / Organizers / Rural Leaders/Rural Development Workers

Many of our Asian countries are dotted with smaller communities which are isolated or surrounded by a non-Christian majority. These urgently need the services of at least one leader for the purposes of feeding them with the Word of God, enlightening them with the fundamentals of human living, organizing them into society life, building them into a community, etc. The community has a right to at least one minister for its minimal existence and initial growth.

69. xii) Ministry of Communication/Mass Media/Group Media

The importance and impact of the communications media — T.V., cinema, radio press — urge us to have specially qualified people to educate groups and communities to make better use of these media, to influence these media with human and Christian principles and to fight against the possible evils inherent in them.

70. xiii) Ministry of Pastoral Community Leadership

Persons recognized to collaborate with the parish priest in his pastoral care for the community by assisting him in his traditional functions in the community — by visiting families, the sick, and by organizing community activities.

B. Formation for Ministries of Lay People

71. Since they are a concrete expression of the common ministeriality of the community, ministries of lay people have the community itself as the matrix of their formation. The awareness which a community will have acquired of its ministerial role will ensure the necessary conditions for the formation of its ministers.

72. The very character of the person (his charism, talents and maturity) and the situational needs of the place or region will determine largely the **type of formation**. In training lay people for ministries, if we are not to fall into past errors in this area of formation, the following tendencies should be noted:

73. i) Because of the specific character of the layman a clerical (or celibate) formation that ignores the demands and responsibilities of a lay situation (family and profession) and alienates him from his context of life should be avoided.

74. ii) Since a lay minister is found already possessing a charism for a specific function in a particular community or situation, a uniform or streamlined training may not produce the desired results. Such a training may be an obstacle preventing the operation of the charism.

75. iii) The lay minister remains a member of the Christian community. Neither his specific gift for service nor its ecclesial recognition raises him above the other members. Hence, he should be trained to live **with** and **among** others as a true brother. He has no power to lord it over others but only to render a service as an expression of his charism.

76. iv) He is a man **for** the community. The charism that is in him obliges him to make the best use of it, not for himself but for the good of the community. Hence, formation is intended to bring into focus his specific gift and to make him discover ways and means of using it so as to respond to the needs of his community.

77. The **formation program** should be clearly Christ-centered enabling the candidate to develop a deep personal relationship with Christ which will lead him to an ever-growing commitment to Him through study, personal prayer and contemplation. This Christ-centeredness will give him a Christian vision of life and the ability to live Christian values. This will equip the lay minister to practise a true Christian discernment in the situations in which he or she may find himself or herself.

78. The planning and structuring of the formation program should be based on a study, analysis and understanding of the concrete situation, prevailing conditions and actual needs of the community which the lay minister is called to serve. This involves an awareness and evaluation of the existing social, economic, political, cultural and religious situation of the local community.

79. The **method of formation** should be experiential and concrete rather than only abstract and theoretical. It should consist in a continual movement from actual experience or action to a communitarian reflection and evaluation, and then move on to new action.

80. The actual formation will be continuous, consisting of three stages:

81. **1st stage: Helping to emerge.** The future lay minister will be helped to emerge within the community. Opportunities of general apostolate will be provided to identify the persons with charisms, to know their situation and their relation to the community. These are basic to the next stage of formation.

82. **2nd stage:** The person selected to be a lay minister could ideally undergo training at two levels, basic and specific:

83. i) **Basic Training** geared to:

- realizing one's vocation as lay minister and one's consequent relation to the community, to other ministers and to one's bishop.
- improving one's human qualities of leadership, communication, human relations, team and group work, etc.
- acquiring basic knowledge regarding the language culture, religions and history of the people and region.
- helping towards a better understanding of the Word of God, the Church, Sacraments and Liturgy.

84. ii) **Specific Training**

This is closely related to (a) the charism already discerned in the person and (b) the felt needs of the community.

For this training the person could be enrolled in an institution for a brief period of intense preparation or attend lectures conveniently scheduled to suit the laity. The prospective lay minister must learn the fundamental elements of his specific field of service and the techniques of operating within it. For example, the catechist lay minister will become familiar with the Word of God in its kerygmatic presentation and should acquire techniques of preaching to groups, youths, adults, etc. The lay minister of social concern will learn fundamental principles of social justice, how to conscientize the community to a social awareness of injustices, how to mobilize them for action against social evils, etc.

8. In organizing both the basic and the specific training, resources of personnel and institutions of various dioceses could be pooled together.

86. **3rd stage: Continuing or In-Service Formation**

This is an absolute requirement for the lay minister. Given the fact that the service performed by the minister is largely motivated, specified or determined and then evaluated by his or her situation, some form of assistance should be provided at the regional level to revise, evaluate and vitalize his or her services by means of conferences, discussions and reflections. Periodic renewal is also required for the continuing spiritual growth of the person of the minister.

87. **Inter-relationship with the Community.** The minister's family as a whole should be involved to some extent as a supporting group

in the ongoing formation of the minister. Properly oriented to the ministry, the family should also provide a climate conducive to fostering priestly and religious vocations among some of its members.

88. Given the newness of the forms of ministries for lay people and the need for their growth and development, ministers should constantly keep in mind the great importance of an ongoing dialogue, consultation and interaction with their community. Only if this is done, will the community itself come to realize that those ministries are gifts of God to the community itself and that the lay ministers are one with it enjoying among brothers and sisters both rights and duties. Only then will the community readily accept the services of its ministers as done in the name of the Church and develop as well a sense of its being responsible for maintaining them to the best of its ability.

C. Women in Ministry

89. In Asia today the growing awareness of the basic equality of women and men, together with the realization of their complementary roles and functions both in society and in the Church, is a sign of the times. The Asian context demands that special attention be given to women in ministry. This must be based on the recognition of their fundamental equality in the Church's universal ministeriality.

90. The aptitudes and charisms of woman enable her to participate in areas of ministry especially suited to her. Her special capacities to love and give life make her receptive, sensitive and reflective, thus equipping her for a more person-oriented ministry.

91. Because of the important role the Asian woman plays in the family, her participation is of very great importance in the Asian context. In certain cultural settings only women can reach out to other women and exercise a meaningful ministry among them. The Church should consider very seriously ministry to women by women. It is woman who can most influence members of the family. She plays a singular role in the formation of values and attitudes and in the up-bringing of the family. Hence her importance in the transmission of faith, in building Christian families, in family planning, in the preparation and enrichment of marriage. In short, our Asian reality demands the presence and activity of women in all spheres.

92. Their sharing in the decision-making processes of the Church will bring a new dimension to the life of the Church. Their participation in theological reflection will enrich the understanding of the Christian mysteries in relation to human situations.

93. In the light of the above, the missionary situation of the Church in Asia makes imperative the inclusion of women in the ministry. Hence, taking into account their special charisms, women must be recognized as full partners and their sharing in the ministry accepted as their duty and right.

D. The Ministry of Deacons

94. Vatican II has restored the diaconate, once seen only as a transitory ministry which had become almost exclusively a stepping stone to the presbyterate and now is understood to be a permanent ministry exercised in its own right. The Apostolic Letter **Ad Pascendum** of Pope Paul VI has provided norms for the implementation of the reform. The response to this conciliar reform has differed in various parts of the world. In Asia some Episcopal Conferences have in principle made the reform their own in accordance with the conciliar document (L.G. 29), leaving the implementation to individual bishops. Other Episcopal Conferences have thought it expedient to postpone introducing the reform until such time as the experience of other Churches with the permanent diaconate would have proved positive. The ensuing situation is that, apart from a few isolated attempts which must be placed on record with appreciation, the restoration of the permanent diaconate has not yet become a reality in the Asian Churches.

95. The difficulties raised against the restoration of the ministry of deacons are partly theological, partly of a practical nature. It is often argued that deacons are not necessary because lay people can without ordination do all that belongs to this ministry, including preaching the Word, assisting at the Liturgy and performing various services of charity. Nor are they really useful, for deacons cannot in any way substitute for priests in the presidency of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation. Hence the ordination of deacons appears as unwarranted "clergification" of services rendered by lay people. The answer to these difficulties must be sought along the following lines: people exercising de facto the ministry of deacon should be recognized as such by the community and given the sacramental grace conferred by ordination, which the Church attaches to their specific service. The practical difficulty is the financial burden which would be imposed on dioceses if to the ranks of the clergy were added permanent deacons for whose remuneration adequate provision would have to be made. This difficulty, however, can be overcome by fostering in Christian communities a sense of responsibility for the maintenance of ministers who serve them.

96. Another important reason for the lack of enthusiasm with which the restoration of the diaconate has met seems to be that the

significance of the ministry of deacons in the life of the Church, and more particularly its relevance to the Asian context, have not been sufficiently perceived. Hence the need to rethink the meaning of the diaconate in the context of our Churches.

97. It is the commitment of the Church to the service not only of fellow Christians but also of fellow men at large that is embodied in a particular manner in the office of deacon. The early tradition found a model for it in the "service of the tables" mentioned in Acts 6, 3. In keeping with this basic intuition of early tradition the specific significance of the ministry of deacon seems to be in the Church's service to society. It does not merely consist in a human commitment to social uplift and liberation; rather it is the embodiment today of Jesus' own service to make men and human society whole. The deacon's office both pledges and embodies the Church's own commitment to the urgent task of building up a new society. This ministry of service is symbolized in the deacon's special role in the liturgical life of the Church, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, but the significance of his ministry lies primarily not in the liturgical and sacramental realm but in the sphere of Christian service to society.

98. If this is a role of the diaconate in the ministry of the Church, its relevance to the Churches of Asia should become apparent. Those Churches, though placed in very diverse situations, must all convey the Christian message to human communities in the process of self-realization and development, in keeping with the demands of a truly human quality of life. In this context it seems to become imperative for the Christian mission to engage in a particular manner in the ministry of service, responding to basic human calls, such as that of social justice. The ministry of deacon, then, is perhaps an important organ for the fulfillment of the mission of the Churches in our Asian countries.

99. We envisage two types of deacons, depending on the needs of local communities:

i) Deacons as ministers of unity and spiritual leadership of the Church in her social concern. Those who are involved, on a sufficiently stable basis, competently and responsibly, in the leadership of the social services of the Church could be ordained deacons and made responsible in the field of Christian social concern.

ii) Deacons as leaders of basic communities. Though they cannot substitute for priests, they can exercise in those communities the spiritual leadership corresponding to their ministry.

100. When we speak of deacons we have in mind men, married or unmarried, who may be full-time or part-time workers, depending on the needs and circumstances of particular Christian communities.

101. The relationship of deacons to presbyters and bishops needs to be clearly perceived; the early tradition established a close bond between the exercise of the ministry of deacon and that of bishop. This bond, however, is not exclusive, for the deacon may in many instances have to exercise his ministry in close relation to the presbyter. What matters here is that, while deacon and presbyter operate with the legitimate autonomy required for the exercise of their ministries, communion and co-operation be maintained between all ordained ministers — a communion which it is the bishop's task to preserve and foster.

102. **Formation.** Since the ministry of deacon embodies in a special and unique manner the Church's mission of service to the world, the formation of future permanent deacons should be geared to the goal of preparing them for this involvement in service. Candidates for this ministry should be selected from among persons already providing Christian witness through the exercise of leading functions in spheres of service. The training for this ministry will have to be adapted to the state of life and conditions of work of the candidates. In particular, it will be of great importance not to segregate them, by prolonged periods of absence, from the very communities in which they already exercise their service. Consequently, their training in professional skills, human relationships and doctrinal matters will have to be largely of the nature of in-service training, eventually supplemented by periods of limited duration in special pastoral centers.

E. The Ministry of Presbyters

103. The specific function of the presbyter in the Christian community is that of unifying spiritual leadership. This is how the presbyter signifies and represents in a special manner the Headship of Jesus Christ over his Church, sharing thereby in the ministry of the bishop. This function of the presbyter expresses itself in his proclamation of the Word, his presidency at the liturgical celebrations, especially the Eucharist, and in his pastoral care and concern. In these various tasks he is at the service of the community, building it up into a Christian fellowship and providing it with spiritual guidance as he participates in the bishop's commitment to his flock.

104. The role of the presbyter is to inspire, to encourage, to foster initiatives, and to help charisms to develop. After the pattern of Christ the Good Shepherd, Whose saving action he makes present

to his flock, the presbyter is sensitive to its diverse needs, especially those of the underprivileged and the poor. He is quick to come to their assistance and to be present to them in moments of crisis, not content with showing solicitude but being deeply involved in their life and sharing their lot. His one concern is to form his community into a living sign of the presence in the world of the Risen Lord Who assumes and heals all human situations and brings to fulfillment all hopes and aspirations. The prophetic role of the presbyter, then, consists in building up a committed Christian fellowship as a prophetic sign of the future kingdom already operative in the world.

105. Since this is the role of the presbyter, it becomes evident that no Christian community can live its normal life without the presbyteral ministry being exercised in its midst on a permanent and residential basis. The life of the Christian community must find its climactic expression in the celebration of the Eucharist. We are, therefore, faced with the realization that in the present pastoral situation or due to prevailing circumstances, innumerable Christian communities in Asia are in the absence of a local presbyter, deprived of their legitimate right and prevented from attaining their natural growth. This realization urges us to suggest that serious consideration be given to the possibility of acknowledged leaders emerging from basic communities of various types being made eligible for ordination to the presbyterate. These leaders will normally be people exercising a secular profession. If and when they are ordained, they would, therefore, exercise their priestly ministry on a part-time basis.

106. Apart from this specific need of providing presbyters for communities where there are no presbyters, the need is also felt for a diversification in the exercise of the presbyteral ministry. This is largely due to a sociological phenomenon which is rapidly growing, namely that of homogeneous groups based on various human factors and cutting across existing pastoral units now determined by geographical boundaries. Presbyters specialized in ministering to such homogeneous groups will be needed to help them form communities in which they will develop a true sense of Christian belonging, while integrating themselves into the larger communities of which they form a part. This way of operating will greatly enrich the potential of the pastoral clergy of the area, thereby contributing to the revitalization of the larger communities themselves.

107. **Formation.** To cope with the specific needs arising from the diverse modalities in which the presbyteral ministry needs to be exercised it is clear that a corresponding diversification is required in the training of candidates.

108. With regard to the formation of prospective presbyters emerging from basic communities it is essential that entirely new forms be sought and means be devised to give such men an in-service training in the Faith. Christian living and pastoral guidance without their having to break contact with their people. This in-service training should be complemented by sessions of study at special pastoral centers.

109. With regard to the formation of presbyters in general it will entail serious renewal in the light of the needs and stresses of today's communities. The pastoral ministry must more and more be viewed on a "professional" basis. Preaching the Word of God, presiding at the liturgy and furnishing pastoral guidance require new skills on the part of presbyters. They should, therefore, learn the techniques of effective communication and inspiring celebration and also the art of promoting truly human relationships. More important still is that they be deeply identified with their people, sharing their joys and sorrows, their anxieties and aspirations. Added to these skills is the need for candidates for the presbyteral ministry to be adequately trained for the exercise of their future coordinating role as pastors in team ministries.

F. The Ministry of Bishops

110. The mystery of the Church becomes fully incarnate in a human situation by the presence and exercise in a local community of the ministry of the bishop. The bishop, as a member of the episcopal college, is the rallying point by which the community is constituted a "particular Church" and the visible sign of communion of that church with all the other particular churches — a communion presided over by the successor of Peter. The specific charism of unity and spiritual leadership finds its full expression in the local Church in the ministry of the bishop. This is how the bishop signifies and represents in a special manner the Headship of Christ over His Church.

111. The image of the bishop, therefore, is after the model of Jesus Himself, that of the Shepherd of His flock, Who did not come "to be served but to serve" (Mk. 10, 45). He exercises His ministry "not as domineering over... the flock" (1 Pet. 5, 3) but in the spirit of the "suffering servant of Yahweh" (Is 52, 53), offering His life for His sheep. His concern is eminently pastoral rather than of an administrative nature; and so His priority of interests is vested in persons.

112. The bishop's function in particular requires him to foster, sustain, and encourage the pastoral initiatives manifested by the members of his ecclesial community. He will consider it his main

task to discern the voice of the Spirit speaking through his people, to listen to His promptings even as he helps them to interpret His voice and leads them to respond to His call.

113. On the part of the bishop this task calls for a deep sense of responsibility in the discharge of his function. It also requires a freedom of action, unhindered by the pressures of organizational structures. Moreover, there are times when the bishop will be called upon to proclaim boldly the gospel message in the face of adverse circumstances, exercising the prophetic function of his ministry in the context of concrete challenges. All this indicates that a deep renewal of the episcopal ministry is called for, if the bishop is to be the effective sign of unity in the ecclesial community and the guiding spirit of the Christian mission in the world.

PART IV: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIFE AND STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

114. The development of varied forms of ministries heralds a new era in the life of the Church in Asia. More people will be reached. Their needs will be better met. More communities will be served. Their support and continued growth will be facilitated. Christians being served, as well as those Christians rendering services, will deepen their realization and their appreciation of **being Church**.

The world at large will see the Church more clearly as the **Servant Church**, a true, living, vibrant witness to Christ. The world will hear more distinctly the Good News, Christ's message of salvation. Christ's presence in the midst of Asia's teeming millions will be felt more strongly.

115. This hoped-for era brought on by the development of varied forms of ministries, as in all periods of growths and change, demands of the People of God an openness to new horizons, a flexibility to adapt new structures, a creativity to explore new avenues. It challenges every Christian, be he or she bishop, priest, religious sister or brother, lay woman or man, to look more closely and reflect more deeply on his or her personal identity, present role, status and function, relationship with the people he or she serves, indeed his or her very being a Christian.

116. This era likewise challenges all groups of Christians to examine the very nature of their communities, to ask whether or not they are true Christian communities shaped in the pattern given in the Acts of the Apostles. It motivates them to work intensively at imitating that pattern more and more. In particular, it challenges

the women of Asia to come forward and take their rightful place of service in the community. It challenges the local Churches to be more deeply sensitive to the needs of their people and to be more acutely aware of their social, economic, political and cultural context. It challenges the whole People of God to be more fully involved, more participative, more outward looking, more responsive and more self-giving, thereby bringing about a style of leadership that underscores genuine corresponsibility.

117. All this poses basic questions. What will be the impact of the new ministries, and of the new focus of priestly ministry, on the Church of today? What are the implications of these winds of change for the existing ministries? Will the new vision of the Church, called for by Vatican II and spelt out here in some of its many implications, find the community of God's people prepared for this crossing over from the status quo of yesterday to the concretization of new ideals for tomorrow?

118. This new face of the local Church will become more and more explicit in the measure in which each local community of God's people discovers itself more deeply, united in prayer in the Risen Lord and giving concrete expression to His new commandment of love in its day-to-day living. In order to become a reality this new vision of the Church needs to pervade all relationships, and attitudes of clergy and people, thus becoming incarnate in a spirit attitudes of clergy and people, thus becoming incarnate in a spirit commitment of all to the mission of the Lord.

119. The emergence of ministries by which lay people take up responsible functions in the Church may precipitate a new crisis of identity for those priests who as of now are engaged primarily in works which do not strictly pertain to their presbyteral ministry. On the other hand, it may also lead them to re-discover the "heart of the priesthood", which is one of unifying spiritual leadership.

120. The permanent deacon will not undermine the authority of the priest, if both remember that their ministries are complementary services to the community. A supportive attitude from both priest and people will help the deacons who will have to assume the task of being in a special manner "the sacrament of ecclesial commitment to social uplift" — a task which finds its apt liturgical expression in the Eucharistic celebration when the deacon brings the gifts of the community to the altar. The same supportive attitude will be needed in the case of deacons assuming in basic communities the spiritual leadership corresponding to their ministry. It is only with proper planning and preparation of all concerned that the ministry of deacons will be smoothly and effectively reintroduced, to take again its rightful place in the ecclesial context.

121. The ministries of lay women will give fuller expression to the partnership of the sexes in the manifestation of God's love to the world and lead to a fuller representation of the community in the mission of the Church, both within and beyond the Christian fellowship. In the Asian context in particular, women in ministries will bring the presence of the Church more directly into the lives and homes of Asia, hitherto only insufficiently reached because of social differences and the particular patterns of many of our Asian societies.

122. Even independently of the introduction of new ministries but much more so when these come into operation, there is urgent need for all ministries to be exercised in a team as a sign of co-responsibility and cooperation. **Team ministry** will not become effective unless both clergy and laity have radically changed their attitudes.

123. This concept of team ministry, with the presbyter as the center of unity, bringing coordination and exercising spiritual leadership, calls for far-reaching changes and adaptations in the preparation imparted to future presbyters in the seminaries of tomorrow. Not only will our seminarians need to receive adequate academic formation but also the inclusion of new disciplines will have to be considered for urgent implementation. The priest of the future will have to deal more closely with people. He will be called upon to work shoulder-to-shoulder with the lay ministers on his team. This necessitates an updating of the formation he receives in the seminary. Human relations and inter-personal relationships, so necessary for his work, will occupy a larger part of his formation program which must be adapted to the needs of the pastoral setup of the future.

124. Within this program, in fact, provision will have to be made for the seminarian to experience the kind of coordinating ministry he will have to exercise later. This cannot be achieved merely by the addition of academic subjects in the seminary curriculum. Rather it calls for an experiential acquaintance with the kind of work he will have to engage in later and with the inter-personal relationships it involves.

125. Hitherto the seminarian has been exposed to reality during the period sometimes known as "regency", when he was given an interval in his academic formation to be involved directly in pastoral work for the duration of a year or two. The seminarian of the future will need a much greater and more frequent exposure to

such reality. Through the main part of his formation he will have to be in contact with real-life situations and called upon to work with people. Only thus will he be adequately prepared for team ministry.

126. Moreover, the addition of qualified and carefully selected lay members to the seminary staff cannot but bring an enrichment to the seminarian's formation.

127. What is true of the change in seminary formation applies as well to renewal programs destined for all priests. In service training for the priests of today will become an essential requirement in view of the changeover to forms of team ministry. A thorough updating of our priests along the lines of the new disciplines to be introduced in seminaries; refresher courses and exposure to the experience of working in teams, as these are provided today by guided pastoral work in formation institutes for new priests: systematic courses with well-oriented inculturation programs — all these will in the future have to become part of the regular ingredients of continuing education and refresher courses for priests.

128. To ensure careful and appropriate formation geared to the changing demands of the ministry, every experimentation will have to be followed up by a full and frank assessment of the attempts made. A continuous revision of training programs will be required.

129. These adjustments and changes do not in any way imply destroying the forms we have grown accustomed to; they arise from an exercise of greater participation in the life of the Church and from our willingness to go where the Spirit is leading us, in an attitude of openness and humble expectancy.

130. We can envisage that the eventual implementation of those changes will have to take place at the local level through a phased program of preparation and action. Choices will have to be made regarding the ministries which best answer the needs of various regions, dioceses and communities. These choices will require a process of discernment on the part of our Christian communities, together with their leaders. As we submit our findings to the whole Church for consideration, we wish to express again our firm conviction that the Church will continue to grow into her true self only if the love and service of Christ become more evident to all men. This conviction has given us a sense of urgency with regard

to the Church's ministry and ministries and we hope that this will spread and develop as we come to a better understanding of the meaning of the Church and her mission today.

CONCLUSION

131. Thus, gathered together here in Hong Kong in a spirit of fellowship, mutual concern and prayerful reflection, we have examined this most important aspect of the Church's life, her ministry and ministries, in all its manifold facets, against the background of the Asian scene. Even as we proceeded to do this, we have been aware of the needs of the hour and of our mission to make the Church of Christ present to the teeming millions of our Asian countries, faced as they are with the many problems and stress of life today.

132. We are aware of the implications and consequences that new ministries are bound to have for the whole life of the Church. We are also conscious that further research and study are required in order that our renewal may respond to the needs of our Asian countries in these difficult times. We are equally conscious of the need for wider consultation and for the education of the entire Christian community, if we are to make Christ present effectively in the world today. In this regard we recommend that similar colloquia be conducted in each of our Asian countries, especially where this has not been done so far. A suitable follow-up on previous meetings is equally important.

133. In a spirit of humble service we wish to offer our Conclusions to the member Episcopal Conferences of our Asian Federation. As we present these to them, we are painfully aware of the absence of our brother bishops and the members of their teams from those countries where trying circumstances prevent them from being represented here: Burma, the People's Republic of China, the Khmer Republic, Laos and Vietnam. We wish to assure their Churches that we are united with them in prayer and in that closely-knit fellowship of the Mystical Body of Christ which we have so tangibly experienced in this gathering of love over the past few days. To those Churches too in a very special manner, we lovingly offer as a service the fruits of our life together and of our common reflection here in Hong Kong.

134. As we present these Conclusions as well to our sister Churches around the world, we count on their support and understanding even as they in their own particular manner and against the background of the needs of their peoples are engaged in their own prayerful reflection on the same issues, so vitally important for all the Churches if they are to meet the needs of our times. In a spirit of loyalty and fellowship we also look in the task before us for understanding and continued guidance on the part of the Holy See, mindful always of the bond of unity that binds us to the Successor of Peter.

135. We pray that the spirit of service which has inspired us to look for new opportunities to make the Risen Lord's presence more and more manifest among our brothers and sisters in Asia today may continue to inspire our efforts hereafter. May the Lord help us to be ever faithful to our mission in the world, truly open to the presence of His Spirit in our lives, eager to extend to all men His own ministry — He who taught us by His example of service.

136. Aware as we are of the difficulties that surround our undertakings, we put our trust in the assistance of the Lord, hoping to answer His calling, our eyes lighted with courage as we rely on the strength that comes only from Him. In Him do we place our hope, in Him do we seek our assurance through the difficulties that will beset our path. For we know that our work, as our message, is not ours but His, and we trust in His Word as even today He tells us, "I am with you always".

PASTORAL LETTER OF THE PHILIPPINE HIERARCHY ON THE HOLY FATHER

On September 26 of this year our Holy Father Pope Paul VI will reach the venerable age of 80. The whole Catholic world (and we are sure many others) will greet him with filial affection, and will offer prayers of gratitude to God, that in this age of numerous, unprecedented problems, He has given us a wise, courageous, fatherly and saintly pastor. The people of the Philippines wish to add their greeting and prayers to those of the rest of the world and to salute the successor of St. Peter. The successor of Peter! Consider what the title implies.

The Primacy of Peter

Peter even in the time of Christ already enjoyed an undefined primacy among the twelve. He is mentioned more often than the other Apostles; all the evangelists agree in according him a certain **de facto** leadership, a special intimacy with Christ. This prominence, begun in the life of Christ and obviously intended by Him, became sharper after the Ascension when Peter appears as the acknowledged head of the infant Church.

Christ showed himself the author of this primacy especially in three remarkable incidents. Best known of these is the familiar scene recorded in the 16th chapter of St. Matthew. The passage is as follows:

Jesus put this question to his disciples: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" And they said: "Some say He is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets". "But you", he said, "who do you say I am?" Simon Peter spoke up, "You are the Christ", he said, "the Son of the living God". Jesus replied, "Simon, son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you. You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth, shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven".¹

¹ Matt. 16, 13-19.

Powerful though this statement is, more powerful even are the words of Jesus to Peter on the lake shore after the resurrection, because they were conveyed in the shepherd-image so familiar to the Jewish mind and so identified with authority. Three times our Lord drew from St. Peter a profession of love and three times our Lord answered: "Feed my lambs" "Look after my sheep", "Feed my sheep".² The rest of Christ's followers, the apostles no less than those of humbler rank were placed in Peter's charge. He was to lead them, guide them, nourish them.

This explicit mandate at the lake shore echoed a promise previously given at the Last Supper. At that most important moment, when Christ was making his final disposition for His Church, he addressed himself to Peter. "Simon, Simon, Satan has not got his wish to shift you all like wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail and once you have recovered, you in your turn must strengthen your brothers".³ This prophecy is all the more remarkable because it was uttered in the context of the warning of Peter's falls. Notwithstanding his lamentable manifestation of weakness, Peter would still remain the rock.

The Primacy of the Pope

These gifts were obviously not intended only for Peter in his life time. They were for the Church and so would pass on to the successors of Peter the Bishops of Rome. Not much is known about the early Roman Church but it is significant that whenever this church appears, the role is a general superintendence over all Christians, an exercise in other words of the primacy. A striking indication of the well-established position of the Bishop of Rome was the authoritative intervention of Pope Clement in the Church of Corinth about the Apostle was still alive, and his Church of Ephesus was nearer to the erring community.

The Second Vatican Council therefore voices the sense of Sacred Scripture, Catholic belief and history when it says:

In this Church of Christ the Roman Pontiff is the successor of Peter, to whom Christ entrusted the feeding of his sheep and lambs. Hence, by divine institution he enjoys supreme, full, immediate and universal authority over the care of souls. Since he is pastor of all the faithful, his mission is to provide for the common good of the universal

² John 21, 15-17.

³ Luke 22, 31-32.

church and for the good to the individual churches. He holds therefore a primacy of ordinary power over all the churches.⁴

One cannot escape the earnest intent of the Council to guard against any misunderstanding or any minimizing of this important truth. The Pope in his own right has authority that is **supreme**, over all the churches. It is **full**, over everything pertaining to them. It is **immediate**, directly touching all members including bishops. It is ordinary, by the very reason of his office and not delegated to him.

If our Lord's impressive words, the tradition of the Church and the words of the Council tell us something very important about the Pastor, they also tell us something important about the sheep, the whole membership of the Church of which the Pope is the head, rock, key-bearer and shepherd. All without exception are called upon to render Peter's successor the respect and obedience due to his high position as Supreme Head of the Church.

The Roman Curia — The Pope's Instrument

Obviously the Pope is not able alone to transact the complex business of governing and instructing the Church. "In exercising supreme, full and immediate power over the universal Church, the Roman Pontiff makes use of the departments of the Roman Curia. These, therefore, perform their duties in his name and with his authority for the good of the Church and in the service of the Sacred Pastors".⁵ These departments should therefore be accorded the respect and obedience their position demands.

Pope Paul VI has been concerned to make these auxiliaries more efficient and more sensitive to the needs of the whole Church. Following suggestions of the Second Vatican Council he has internationalized the Curia⁶ and recruited for it an impressive number of men who have had pastoral experience in governing dioceses in various parts of the world.⁷

Synod of Bishops

A second instrument to help the Pope in his government is the Synod of Bishops which the Fathers of the Second Vatican

⁴ Second Vatican Council. Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops in the Church (*Christus Dominus*) no. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 9.

⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 10.

Council wished to see created to help the Sovereign Pontiff. This desire was incorporated in the Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishops in the Church.⁸ Pope Paul responded quickly to the wishes of the Council Fathers and issued a directive setting up the body. The Synod is another indication of the increased influence of the Bishops in the Post-Vatican II Church. At the same time it exemplifies how this influence in the individual bishop is dependent for its realization upon communion with the whole body of bishops under the Holy Father. In other words the synod is an expression of what is called collegiality, by virtue of which every bishop even in the remotest diocese of the world is a bishop of the universal Church, and hence bound to concern for that Church and for all the Churches. Pope Paul's quick response to the Council's request for an Episcopal Synod is only one indication of his warm desire to work in great fraternal accord with his fellow bishops throughout the world. He has consistently promoted dialogue and consultation with them, and left to them wide powers to make decisions in problems of their local Churches. In a word he has moved sincerely in the direction of the enhanced episcopal image of the Post Vatican II Church. And all this without in the least sacrificing the prerogatives of his office.

The Teaching Office of the Pope

A very important way in which the Pope and the Bishops exercise their care for all the Churches is through the "magisterium" or teaching office of the Church. The Second Vatican Council says:

The Lord Jesus after praying to the Father and calling to Himself those whom he desired, appointed twelve who would stay in His company and whom he would send to preach the Kingdom of God.⁹

This was the foundation of the authentic teaching office in the Church whereby these twelve and their successors, the bishops, taught and teach with authority the truth of Christ's kingdom. This official teaching office continues to our day. The bishops as a body have succeeded to the college of Apostles set up by Christ. The Bishops are the divinely appointed teachers of the truths of Christ, but they can only exercise this function in union with the Pope.

The Pope however may act alone and requires neither the consent of the bishops nor the approval of the faithful. This

⁸ *Ibid.*, no. 5.

⁹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) no. 22.

power is inherent in the primacy by which he is supreme shepherd over all members of the flock without distinction.

The Second Vatican Council says:

In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has supreme and universal power over the Church, and he can always exercise this power freely.¹⁰

If the Pope is vested with this tremendous responsibility and commission from God, the faithful throughout the world will hold his teaching in the highest respect and will accept and implement it loyally. The Council says:

The faithful are to accept his teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent of soul, even when he is not teaching *ex-cathedra*.¹¹

These words of Vatican II remind us that the Holy Father exercises his authentic teaching, namely his official communication of Catholic truth and practise, on two levels. There are the so-called *ex cathedra* pronouncements, "when in the discharge of the office of pastor and doctor of all Christians, by virtue of the supreme apostolic authority he defines a doctrine regarding faith and morals to be used by the universal Church".¹² Obviously few of the Holy Father's statements are meant to bear this solemn character. Nearly always he exercises a less solemn but still authentic, i.e., authoritative, form of teaching, which the Council tells us is to be received with religious assent of soul. An example of this was the Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae* on the Regulation of Births.

The Pope — Principle of Unity

In that most solemn moment of Christ's earthly sojourn, at the Last Supper, when he offered what has been described as his "priestly prayer", he was very much preoccupied with unity among his followers: unity among those to whom he was then bidding farewell, unity among those who would later join them:

Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us... I pray not only for these, but for those also who through their words will believe in me. May they all be one. Father, may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you... That they may be one as we are one.¹³

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, no. 19.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, no. 25.

¹² First Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution: *Pastor Aeternus* D. 3074.

¹³ John 17.

Our Lord's earnestness is very striking. It would be impossible to express in warmer and more energetic terms the unity that Jesus asks for all the faithful. Nor did Jesus fail to provide a visible principle of unity.

The First Vatican Council had already told us what it was, and the Second Vatican Council repeated this teaching:

The Roman Pontiff as the successor of Peter is the perpetual and visible source of the unity of the bishops and of the multitude of the faithful.¹⁴

It need not be said that we live in times when this unity is greatly strained. There are several ways in which men may depart from unity. They can reject some truth proposed by the Church. Or they can refuse obedience to the Pope. In past centuries men have left the Church by open declarations of dissent. In our day unity is subject to a more subtle and a more pernicious threat. Men reject the teaching authority of the Church but meanwhile continue to hold ecclesiastical positions, to frequent the assemblies of the faithful and to preserve the outward forms of Catholic life. But in as much as they are in conflict with the Pope, they are dead branches. Inevitably this division within the Church occasions confusion to many souls. To these souls, we say what St. Ambrose said: The Pope is the principle of unity. Follow him. *Ubi Petrus ibi ecclesia*. Where Peter is, there is the Church.¹⁵

Conclusion

Catholics throughout the world love to address the Pope as Holy Father. In this title they blend that reverence and familiar, filial love so appropriate for Christians in their relations with him who stands to them in place of God, the Heavenly Father. The "world" does not love the Holy Father. Christ foretold of his followers that the "world" would hate them.¹⁶ It is not strange if this is verified in the case of the Pope.

But if there are some who find the Pope unacceptable, there are millions who love him for his unceasing efforts to be father and friend to all classes and all peoples. We in the Philippines

¹⁴ *Pastor Aeternus* D. 3051; *Lumen Gentium*, no. 23.

¹⁵ *Enarrationes in 12 Psalmos*. Rouet de Journal *Enchiridion Patristicum* 1261.

¹⁶ John 15, 18.

remember with joy his presence among us in 1970, and we are only one of the nations to which, both as Cardinal and Pope, he has journeyed in order to show his warm interest and affection. During his Pontificate, and even before it, he has manifested a special concern for the young churches of Asia and African. And finally he has engaged in tireless dialogue with the leaders of other religions in a sincere ecumenical exchange. This universal love reaching out to all men will be remembered as one of the marked characteristics of his Pontificate.

His eightieth birthday will be an occasion for us in the Philippines to examine and renew our own love to rejoice with him and to express our thanks to God for giving him to us precisely in these days when the People of God need clear, firm, consistent, fatherly leadership.

Let us pray for our Holy Father, Paul VI: may the Lord preserve him, and give him life, and make him blessed upon earth, and deliver him not up to the will of his enemies.

For the Catholic Bishop's Conference
of the Philippines:

+ JULIO R. CARDINAL ROSALES
President

September 8, 1977

Feast of the Nativity of Our Lady

ON HANS KÜNG'S 'BEING A CHRISTIAN'*

By

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Küng's efforts to link the Church's central belief with a Christ soberly grounded in the sources deserves unqualified recognition. To this extent his book towers over that second-rate literature which, like theological scrub, overruns the ground. But at the centre point his book does not express what the Church believes.

Hans Küng's latest success has become so well known that it needs no introduction. The book's qualities, without which it would never have achieved such popularity, have been set before a wide public in a whole series of reviews. There is his impassioned and vibrant language, the wide span of this new attempt at a **summa** (20), the presentation of a vast subject-matter in a text which always remains intelligible and perspicuous, openness for everything modern while rejecting political extremism, the basic positive "feel" of the whole, the well-apportioned doses of tolerance to all sides and resounding cracks at the "official Church" — all these things will endear the book to many. I would like to add something which I have not found in reviews so far, although in many ways it seems to me to be the most important thing: the feeling of **affirmation** which the reader experiences having read the book. He is affronted by nothing which would disturb the plausibility of his habits of life and of thought. He finds that he can be a Christian without impairing plausibility; indeed, the reader will find that he, the reader, is after all the right kind of Christian, as opposed to those who have been trying to spoil his Christianity for him. The resumé of Küng's **summa** concludes: "No Christianity at the cost of humanity" (German text. The English translation reads "Being Christian cannot mean ceasing to be human" (p. 601). No, being a Christian does not cost anything...the author would certainly reject this conclusion, yet is not this a basic constituent of his book, seeking as it does to persuade people to be Christian? Let us take a closer look.

* Translated from the *Theologische Revue*, Munster, by Seán ÓhEarchai published here with the kind permission of the editor and of Monsignor Ratzinger. The German title of the article is *Christsein — Plausibel Gemacht*: "Being a Christian — made plausible".

MAGNIFICENT PASSAGES

Whatever one's attitude to Küng, there are magnificent passages in his book. The Introduction itself. "The Challenge of Modern Humanisms" (25-56) is an impressive testimony to a vast amount of reading, and exhibits a striking openness and many layers of thought. His critique of Marxism is convincing by its undogmatic manner and the way it gives credit to what is positive, illustrating the negative elements from the inner contradictions of Marxism itself, and not extrinsically. Yet if one takes this together with the application in the concluding part (esp. 565-570), one is left with the feeling of half-heartedness, the impression of an attempt to remain well-disposed to everything modern — with appropriate gestures to the left and to the right — even where it is self-contradictory. This may well be an impressive balancing-act, but ultimately it does not seem to me to be particularly illuminating. Typical of his attitude is the sentence "One would be better advised, therefore, not to propagate a 'theology of revolution'..." (570). Why "better not"? The question is, is it true or false? Can we combine, reconcile Yes and No with a "better not"?

However, let us go on. The chapter which Küng devotes to the "Proofs of God's Existence" strikes me as the best in the book, although I am unhappy about the way he interprets "natural theology" and *praecambula fidei* in the worst possible sense — as nonsense — and thus is able to reject them (84): the ecumenical mind certainly can do without such a cheap tribute. What Küng is doing in this book is, in fact, precisely "natural theology", properly understood. His aside is superfluous, for the way he himself moves the dimension of transcendence into the horizon of human thought and life is as rational as it is compelling. The chapter on the world religions (89-116), too, seems accurate in its basic orientation and a step forward in comparison with the hackneyed standpoints which had proliferated on the basis of the optimistic *a priori* of the Council era. It remains questionable, of course, as in all such endeavours, whether it is feasible in a few pages to say anything very significant and precise about the content of the great religions and its relationship to the content of Christianity. So for example, I find the following sentence hardly accurate: "Then Hinduistic Brahmanism can be seen as 'reformed' Vedic polytheism, Buddhism as reformed Brahmanism, Islam as reformed Arab Animism" (93). Doubtless all great religions are reforms of antecedent religious forms, but the relation between the pre-existing substratum and the new development is so diverse, especially in the case of the three instances cited, that his highly abbreviated

formula cannot be said to make any adequate sense, I regard what is said on p. 112 on Mission as unsatisfactory; the *raison d'être* of Mission goes much deeper than being the "catalyst and crystallisation point" of the values of the other religions.

RETURN TO THE HISTORICAL JESUS

The kernal of the book is its thorough presentation of the figure of Jesus. Here we see the resolute following-through of that reversal of theological thought which lay at the root of the Dutch Catechism: all the arguments which, since Schweitzer, Barth and Bultmann, have been raised against using the 'historical Jesus' as a theological datum, have utterly disappeared. In a volte-face which would have delighted Harnack, the whole of theology is built once again on the "historical Jesus" — or reduced to him, as the subsequent ecclesiology and eithics show. The few pages in which Küng justifies this return to the 19th century by no means suffice even to begin to do justice to this problem — and no one should know that better than a man who began his theological career under the sign of Barth. Küng's reason for his decision is disarmingly simple: he says that it is possible to answer the question of the historical Jesus "unless...one doesn't see the wood for the trees, unless...one doesn't see the consensus through all the differences!" (159).

Now I too am of the opinion that in fact the New Testament confronts us with the figure of Jesus with a far greater clarity and conclusiveness than one might think from listening to the verdicts of the Bultmann school. But that in itself does not solve the question of the relationship between historical certainty and the certainty of faith, whether or not historical certainty can become the measure of the certainty of faith: this was precisely the dispute between the young Barth and his old master, Harnack. Now Küng also assures us that the historic-critical method of Jesus-research cannot create faith and faith's certainty (161). Yet the method of his book goes in a different direction, for with the assurance of one who knows, what does the author set against the "Christ of devotion", the "Christ of dogma" the "Christ of the fanatics", the "Christ of the literary men" (126-144), but the "real Christ" (145ff.), whom he quite naturally regards as the "historical Jesus", i.e. the Jesus who is discovered by historical reconstruction. Nor does he mince matters with regard to the Christ of devotion or the Christ of dogma. From the lofty platform of 20th Century academics he asserts, for example: "As we saw, the Jesus of history is not identical with the Christ image of traditional dogmatics.

Nor is he identical with the speculative idea of Christ fostered by German Idealism with its orientation to the Gospel of John. (158).

I see the central problem of the book in the methodological question which I have only touched on here. Who substantiates faith's claim? The historian? Küng says No. Who then? No answer is given. The Church is out of the question, but so is the Bible: "the question whether and how the Bible itself is inspired word is far less important than the question whether and **how man himself allows himself to be inspired by its word**" (467). As far as one may attempt to reconstruct a theory of faith from Küng's individual utterances one gets the impression that faith results from a combination of basic confidence and historical and practical evidence. This is a highly fragile form of assurance which certainly cannot stand up to any considerable demands made upon man's thought and practice; from the very outset, the commitment to plausibility is the governing law here.

STRANGELY EMPTY

Küng draws an attractive picture of Jesus, with the brilliance of a man who "thinks that being a Christian is a particularly good thing" (20-1) and who endeavours to show why in his portrait of Jesus. What may have surprised many people in Herbert Braun's book on Jesus (1969) is evident here too, from quite a different angle — namely that, in spite of the considerable reduction in material available for a picture of Jesus, as established by the source-criticism of the last few decades, an astonishing amount is left, still revealing something of the physiognomy of an extraordinary figure. And yet the centre of this figure seems strangely empty, without genuine depth. The core of Küng's picture of Jesus is found in his conclusion that Jesus is "provocative on all sides" — against "establishment" (Moses), against revolutionary world conquest by force (Mohammed), against the "emigration" of the monks (Buddha), against aristocratic ethics and moral compromise (Küng Fu-Tse, Pharisees) (177-213). The juxtaposition of contemporary early-Jewish movements and the great religions which he makes at this point — in order to situate Jesus in the history of religion and thought — is bound to seem highly dubious. Above all, however, the positive content of this "provocation" is pale indeed. The "true radicalism" which, according to Küng, Jesus taught, "the centre from which the provocations issue", is "the radicalism of love", "which, in its blunt realism, is fundamentally different from the radicalism of an ideology". (262) That is true. But in order to be a "blunt realism" it must exhibit more definite features than mere provocation. Otherwise there is the danger of indulging in merely verbal victories, of using formulas lacking all content. Jesus himself anyway, not being a lawyer, made his unconditional appeals and left it to others to realise them in particular situations... Hence

there is no need of exceptions, excuses, privileges or dispensations from the law" (248). How serious is the talk of the "unconditional will of God" now?

GOD AND MAN

Let us get to the basic question, the question of the relationship between Jesus and God, or put classically, the divinity and humanity in Jesus Christ. Küng conscientiously strives to expound the radically theological character of the word and the figure of Jesus: what is at stake in the confrontation with Jesus is ultimately the question of God and nothing else. (294). He also takes pains to demonstrate the unity of Biblical faith in God in Old and New Testaments and at the same time the absolute commitment of this faith to the figure of Jesus (295-318). In order to guarantee the uniqueness of Jesus he is also concerned to maintain the kernel of the ancient confessions of faith regarding the person of Christ (450). But at the same time he nurses an insurmountable abhorrence of metaphysics, or what he regards as such (cf. e.g. p. 444ff.). This linked with the fact that, for him, final knowledge, the certainty of absolute, radiant truth, is not only an impossibility but a something utterly repulsive, because for him this idea is once and for all associated with a picture of ecclesiastical authority and its guaranteed, binding character; and that is precisely what he has declared war upon.

However, where the question of Being and the idea of an ultimate certainty available within the community of faith are both proscribed, access to the ancient confessions of faith is already barred. For the question of Jesus' being man and God is a question about Being; it is not separable from the question of the Trinity. But who would have the temerity to maintain such things about God without the full authority of the community's faith, which reaches beyond the evidence of the individual's thinking? At such a moment the doctrine of the Trinity becomes sheer presumption; unless there is a guarantee higher than one's own powers, the doctrine can be no longer held — to this extent there is an intimate connection between belief in the Trinity and ecclesiology, between confessing faith in God and believing with the Church; this connection is both historical and material. Küng's efforts to link the Church's central confession with a picture of Jesus soberly grounded in the sources, and to demonstrate the unity of both, in the context of our understanding of existence, deserves unqualified recognition; to this extent his book towers above a great deal of that second-level literature which, like theological scrub, as it were, overruns the grounds and generally fouls the air we breathe. But this is no reason to over-

look the fact that his attempt at a synthesis has failed, and that as a result there can be no doubt that, the central point, his book does not express what the Church believes.

The confession that Jesus is truly God and man is watered down to the (only superficially) forceful affirmation: "That God and man are truly involved in the story of Jesus Christ is something to be steadfastly upheld by faith even today". (449). The expression "true God" is consequently translated thus: "All statements about divine sonship, pre-existence, creation mediatorship and incarnation — often clothed in the mythological or semi-mythological forms of the time — are meant in the last resort to do no more and no less than substantiate the uniqueness, underivability and unsurpassability of the call, offer and claim made known in and with Jesus, ultimately not of human but of divine origin and therefore absolutely reliable, requiring men's unconditional involvement". (449). Here uniqueness at the level of Being is (consistently) reduced to uniqueness at the level of calling; for Being is substituted "involvement" — between these two ideas lies an abyss. Corresponding to this is Küng's new Christological title which for him take the place occupied in the faith of the New Testament and the Church by the word "Son" — namely, "the advocate" (291ff, et passim, e.g. 313, 317, esp. 449). Here a primal human word is supplanted by an insipid semi-legal term which has nothing to say either to heart or mind a term which moreover, when applied to God, is decidedly "mythological".

THE TRINITY

Küng sets to work far less conscientiously in the doctrine of the Trinity than in the Christology for which it forms the indispensable presupposition. (472-477). What connects both section is a lofty scorn for the more exact kind of studies in the history of dogma. The results of those studies contradict Küng's whole position, both in his overall approach and in his scattered incidental observations — in Trinitarian matters he employs an ironic tone which is absent from his Christology. For example what Küng says on p. 474 about the iconography of the Trinity betrays a thorough misunderstanding of the icons of the Eastern Church, which represent the appearance of the three man to Abraham as an event of saving history — they do not represent the Trinity as three men; what is said on p. 475 about the *filioque* is as inaccurate as his views on Eastern and Western trinitarian doctrine. Similarly his off-the-cuff assumption of the succession of binitarian and trinitarian formulae (468) has long been untenable in the light of modern scholarship. However, I will not go into these matters in further detail here, but refer

to a review of Küng's book being prepared by A. Grillmeier for *Theologie and Philosophie*. What remains, for Küng, an authentic statement of trinitarian doctrine over and above the christological relationship between God and Jesus, is a reflection on the Spirit, which is summed up thus: "The Spirit is the presence of God and of the exalted Christ for the community of faith and the individual believer. In this sense God himself is manifested through Jesus Christ in the Spirit". (477). I confess that, taking into consideration everything which comes before and after, these are for me empty formulae, mere gestures of deference to tradition without any recognizable real content. But can anything else be expected when trinitarian belief in God has already been confronted with the ironic question "Or is the triadic (or binitarian?) element as such supposed to be the distinctive Christian reality ('central mystery', 'basic dogma' of Christianity)?" (473). If, in drawing up his theology Küng had been rather more in touch with Church life, he would have been aware that the real anchor-point of the doctrine of the Trinity is Baptism. In Baptism the Christian decision defines itself as theocentric and trinitarian, but at the same time trinitarian faith is an entering-in to the Baptism of Jesus and thus into his experience of God — which plumbs its deepest depths in the Cross. If Küng had realised all this, he could surely not have asked himself such a cheap question.

THE RESURRECTION

From the vast field of Christology, and leaving aside many other things, I turn to the chapter on the Resurrection; partly because this is concerned with the central confession of New Testament faith in Jesus, and partly because, again, it mirrors very clearly the book's fundamental decisions and that half-heartedness of the "better not" which seems to me characteristic of it. The structure of what he says here is very similar to what we found in his discussion of the Chalcedon issues. Here too I would wish to hold Küng down to that basic core without which it is impossible to use the word "resurrection" in a meaningful way; but here again he is afraid to come into conflict with opinions which claim to be modern — his courage vis-a-vis the "left" is markedly less developed than his courage vis-a-vis the "right". The things he says on pp. 363ff. on the empty tomb are mere excuses, lacking any historical credibility: no one has ever explained to me — nor is it clarified in these pages — how it would have been possible to preach the Resurrection in a town where those concerned, who were put in the wrong by this message, would only have had to point the way to the tomb. Speaking of a position which expressly rejects the Resurrection and the appearances, deducing faith in the Resurrection solely from

Jewish martyr-theology and thereby in fact making a mockery of the very word "Resurrection", Küng writes: "This explanation of the origin of the resurrection faith is not to be lightly set aside". (371). The writer who at other times fights so hard in the cause of straight thinking concludes here with astonishing sophistry showing the reader how to see the thing this way (371ff.).

The deepest reason for this theology's utter lack of contour vis-a-vis the "left" becomes visible on p. 375, namely, quite simply, in Küng's "modernity", i.e. in the dogmatic character which, for him, the plausibility of the modern consciousness has acquired. Here he takes up again the central idea of his chapter on 'Miracles' (226-238), which is that we must "reject all supernatural interventions nullifying laws of nature" (376). Now the alternatives are set up in such a way that one has no choice; who, faced with the alternatives of "supernatural intervention" and "laws of nature", will seriously opt for the former? But if we move aside these categories, we see something more fundamental: the question is really whether God himself, as subject, can act in the world or not. The question is whether the matrix of reality is so closed that it can only operate as it must, or whether it is open to the Spirit, the Creator. The question is whether or not the material world is insulated from God's influence and restricted to the categories of "meaningfulness". Mere plausibility, which in any case works with a totally uncritical concept of natural law, has no room for resurrection as a concrete event. That is why, in spite of his indisputably good intentions, what Küng actually says about the Resurrection of Jesus sounds so frightheningly weak: "In death and from death he died into and was taken up by that incomprehensible and comprehensive ultimate reality which we designate by the name of God". (358).

THE CHURCH

Whereas in the area of Christology and the doctrine of God Küng struggles, as we saw, to reach a synthesis with the Church's confession, he has created an unambivalent system of relations in his conception of the Church, separating himself with passionate emphasis from the Catholic conception. He defines Church as: "the community of those who have become involved in the cause of Jesus Christ and who witness to it as hope for all men". (478). If the Church wants to serve the cause of Jesus Christ, it can never be... the Church of... officials". (483). It will be remembered in this context that Küng, in his collection *Fehlbar* (Fallible) got Walter von Loewenich to defend him against the attack which resulted from his *Infallible?* (An Enquiry London 1971). Von Loewenich maintained that, although Küng's theology was not Catholic in

the sense of what applied "twenty years ago", it could well be Catholic in the sense of a "Catholicism of the future", freed from "doctrinal juridical constriction" (177). With regard to the first part of this judgement Loewenich spoke as a historian; in the second part he spoke as a Protestant theologian who would wish a future Catholicism to be a more or less high-church variation of Protestantism. If one applies Loewenich's view to the stage of development of *On being a Christian*, it must be said that this "Catholicism of the future" has become even more shapeless; in its understanding of the Church and in its constitutional form it is nearer to free-church concepts than to the classical Reformation churches. The benevolent words which Küng finds to refer to the Pope's "pastoral primacy" (494-520) do nothing to change this impression.

Welded into the ecclesiological section of the book are large parts of a text which caused somewhat of a stir at the time, namely a memorandum of the university ecumenical institutes on "Reform and recognition of church ministries", and also the document "Against discouragement in the Church" of a few years ago, which was signed by a considerable number of theologians. I cannot conceal the fact that I find this text highly objectionable, although I know that friends and colleagues whom I value and respect have joined his side. I find it a monstrous arrogance when he says that there is hope "Because the Church's future has already begun" (529). In what way has it begun? As a result of the efforts of those who have created new groupings? It would be a ridiculous and foolish assertion even if it were nearer the truth than it is. Furthermore: who or what is the Church after all? Is it a business concern which makes its own future by creating new technologies? Is it a party or a society which can draw up new constitutional models, or is it a community of faith which either lives in dependence on Christ, or else is nothing? And how pathetic is his second argument, that there is hope "because the Church cannot hold up the development of the world and because the history of the Church itself goes on". (529). Is progressive development so magnificent that, simply in virtue of its moving forward, it is automatically a reason for hope? Does the Church's hope really lie in not being able to help up the world, or does the world's hope lie in being held, sustained by the Church? For me, this section deconstructs astonishingly how quickly all perspective is lost once the will to survive becomes paramount.

ETHICS

A few more remarks on the last part of the book, dealing with ethics, I regard it as the weakest part of the whole book. Although the introductory approach to the topic makes a good impression by

its discretion and many levels of thought, the Christological part by striving to synthesise modern historical insight with the faith handed down, and the ecclesiological part at least by its vehemence and radicality, in **this** part one feels plunged altogether into tepid water. I will try to show the contradiction which, in my opinion, characterises the whole by referring to two central points.

First of all Küng demonstrates in the most stringent manner that an unconditional claim can only be founded on the unconditioned — that ethics can only be grounded theo-logically (534ff.). But then in the succeeding argument (ultimately of course as a logical consequence of his concept of revelation, the basic starting-point of his method) this unconditioned withdraws to such an extent that it can no longer form the foundation for anything and thus the unconditional validity in fact is defined with these words: "Relative validity means therefore nothing more than validity appropriate to the situation". (537).

Then — and this is the second point to which I want to draw attention — Küng tries to provide some concrete foothold for an ethical statement which has been evaporated into intangibility, by personalising the norm and seeing it as presented to men concretely in the figure of Jesus. In this way he intends to unite (in a judicious and theologically significant manner) what is distinctive in the Christian ethic, its free realism, and its most concrete demands fulfilled by the free creativity of man who as a creature, is ever new. "As a concrete, historical person, Jesus possesses an **impressiveness** which is missing in an eternal idea, an abstract principle, a universal norm, a conceptual system". (546). "As a concrete, historical person, Jesus displays a **realizability** which makes ideas often appear to be unattainable ideals, norms unrealizable laws, principles and systems unrealistic Utopias". (458). "Jesus therefore acts as the authoritative concrete person..." (548). Here Küng the theologian confronts all secular ethics with a triumphal gesture in the confident possession of a visibility and a realizability which they lack; but he becomes more reticent shortly afterwards when he has to say that it is impossible to discover what is distinctively Christian — in particular in the case of ethics — by looking at Jesus' preaching, the Sermon on the Mount, and then making a direct translation to the world of today (550).

He still clings to the maxim "not significance, but he himself" (551) — which makes one wonder how the person can be apprehended without a significant content. And a little later even this is dissolved: "for someone who enters seriously on the way of Jesus Christ, the cross is set apart from any cheap copy, any heroic

imitation, which might be supposed to produce security. His cross remains incomparable, his abandonment by God and man unique, his death unrepeatable. Even for Paul imitation of Christ does not simply mean "copying the individual features or the total impression of the earthly Jesus" in order to become more and more like him". (575-6). The answer to the ethical question, which the figure of Jesus was supposed to supply, evaporates into vagueness and becomes a "situation ethics".

In the end, consequently, God's Ten Commandments are put on the same level as traffic lights, as "norms...without which a society cannot live". They are all subordinate to the vague super-norm, to "serve man" (561). So it is not surprising that two fundamental biblical categories are missing which are in fact corner-stones of the New Testament message concerning men's way, namely repentance and martyrdom. It is well said, issuing indeed from the Christian "centre", when Küng writes: "that, in both good and evil, man never under any circumstances gives up his absolute trust". (587). But he gives only half the picture, omitting the fact that this confidence presupposes that the door is always open for man to repent, and that man knows that he always has access through the crucified Christ. There is no mention in this book of the New Testament definition of Christianity as the gift of repentance unto life (Acts 11, 18; cf. 5,31; Heb. 12, 17). The particular situation and "what is right in the situation" has become such a dominant concern, the slogan "everything for man" has so occupied the foreground, that any priority of faith over life, over human well-being, has ceased to be conceivable. Thus although Küng advocates "respect for the tradition of the great martyrs of Christianity", all notion of the imitation of the Crucified involving a fundamental readiness at any time for martyrdom has disappeared.

POLEMICS

The spice in a book is its polemical quality — polemics is, as a matter of fact, an ancient Christian literary genre and in the early modern period was even at times a theological discipline, gradually mellowing into apologetics and then fundamental theology. As we have already noted, Küng has sprinkled this spice in a masterly manner throughout his whole book in the form of powerful cracks at the "official Church" and its "court theologians" ("moderately modern theologians"). There is no objection to that, although one must ask oneself whether a Christian today ought to exhibit his polemical courage on other points as well. Sometimes one has to smile at his broadsides, sometimes they make one think; but at

other times they provoke counter-attack, for instance when his sarcasm is too crude or his irony is left in the air for want of truth. Here I adduce three examples.

The first passage arouses amusement rather than anger. On p. 686-7 Küng informs the reader that at this point he had planned to "devote a special section here to prayer, meditation and Christian worship (in particular, the Sunday act of worship). The tiresome disputes forced on me afresh by Rome cost me at least two months of working time and working energies in the final, decisive phase of producing this book, which could not be made up in view of the tight schedule. The section planned therefore had to be dropped: a victim of the policy of the Roman Inquisition". I fear that the reader, by this time a little weary from 600 pages of Küng, will hardly feel like being angry with this "policy of the Roman Inquisition" for having relieved him of the burden of more pages. Moreover the reader may remember that Küng's book *Infallible?* (to which he here refers) bore the subtitle "an Enquiry", so it cannot have been so unjust to throw the question back in order to take up an (invariably time-consuming) dialogue.

More serious and significant is a second example: "Anyone in Germany under the National Socialist regime who confessed publicly that there was still as formerly only one authoritative 'leader' in the Church could be understood — if not by the Catholic or Lutheran episcopate, then at any rate by Karl Barth, the 'Confessing Church' and the Synod of Barmen — just as well as those Christians who almost two thousand years earlier confessed before the Roman tribunals that 'Jesus is Lord'." (389). This sentence is historically and in fact a monstrosity, irresponsible capitalizing in a matter which is far too serious. Regarding the "Lutheran episcopate" it must be pointed out that at that time there was no such episcopate as a juridically and theologically defined entity; the construction of new church constitutions after the interruption of the First World War was at that time not complete, and had by no means resulted in a thoroughgoing episcopal solution. But even where it existed (n.b. with varying constitutional significance), the alienation of which Küng speaks did not come about through the episcopate, as W. Maurer has shown: "The synods became the scene of arbitrary power; and the leaders of the party which had become master of the synods usurped the bishops' names in order to embellish their un-Evangelical, politically-based power. It was the bearers of spiritual office who opposed them at that time.... who saved the Evangelical office of bishop".

As far as the Catholic episcopate is concerned, a preliminary but not unimportant task would be to indicate the countless clear judgements given, from Cardinal Faulhaber's famous Advent sermons in December 1933 to the sermons of Bishop von Galen during the War; between these two comes the Encyclical of Pius XI **Mit brennender Sorge**, the text of which was prepared by Cardinal Faulhaber — all statements which were understood very well by both Nazis and faithful, and which meant the concentration camp for not a few priests and brought practically all of them into conflict with the organs of the State. But at a deeper level it must be said that the problem to which the Synod of Barmen and the resulting Confessing Church responded — namely the rise of the "German Christians", who turned Church and Creed to political ends and had begun to make them instruments of Antichrist — could not enter the Catholic sphere in the same manner, because the integrity of dogma, and its anchoring in a Catholicity concretised in the Pope, excluded the possibility of manipulating the Church in the way. In its own way the Synod of Barmen supplied the evangelical Church, undermined as it was by the exploited synods, with those qualities which were present in the Catholic Church by its dogma and the sacramental character of the ministry. The grotesque twist in Küng's statement is, however, no accidental polemical clumsiness; it is ultimately the consequence and the expression of his misunderstanding of what "Church" is.

A last example takes us to the final question as to what the book is saying as a whole. In Küng's view "In the last five hundred years — to go no further back — no solemn doctrinal statement has been issued by Rome on the critical question of what Christianity really means, what the Christian message really implies, any more than on the Mafia or on the force of the seventh commandment in its own country". (88). The first thing which disturbs me here is the Teutonic arrogance which takes delight in sitting in judgment over others; I am disturbed by the frivolity with which a weighty assertion is made in such an off-the-cuff manner. When the Council of Trent spoke about justification, for instance, was it not dealing with the real meaning of Christianity? Has not the Second Vatican Council tried to do this afresh in its long text on: the Church in the modern world? And is not the profession of faith, in the liturgy of Baptism and the Eucharist, always a precise enunciation of what is central to the Christian message, of what it really mean? And is it not both right and necessary to translate the concrete appropriation of this profession into terms of human life? This is

done on the one hand by theology and on the other by catechesis, whose specific and irreplaceable task is to interpret what the profession of faith presents.

THE CENTRAL CHRISTIAN IDEA

But let us ask what, for Küng, is the really central Christian idea. He gives a kind of definition in two places. First of all he distinguishes, by comparison with the other religions, what is unique in Christianity; then again he gives a definition at the end of the book, in a kind of "short formula", the first draft of which he had presented to the Brussels Concilium Congress. In the first case he says: "Christianity exists only where the memory of Jesus Christ is activated in theory and practice". (126). The formula may suffice if one understands the word "memory" in a deep enough sense, but I do not think that this is the case here. For two pages earlier it is said that a meal celebrated by Christians and Moslems in Kabul in which prayers from the Christian and Sufi traditions were used, would not be a Christian Eucharist, but "it would be a Christian eucharistic celebration only if it specifically recalled the person of this Jesus Christ". (124). To think about Jesus is neither alien nor impossible for a Moslem; Küng would need to be much more concrete and precise here to achieve real clarity. Küng's "short formula" goes like this:

"By following Jesus Christ man in the world of today can truly humanly live, act, suffer and die: in happiness and unhappiness, life and death, sustained by God and helpful to men". (602).

Like most modern "short formulas" this passage differs from the confessions of the ancient Church by the way it seems to stand on its own as an objective statement, apparently independent of the speaking subject, whereas the traditional confessions are expressions of a decision and link their content to this decision: "I believe". By means of this "objective" formulation Küng is claiming for his sentence an evidence which he can in no way substantiate, however fine it may be for a believer — and I must say that, taken within the context of faith, I find it an attractive formulation. But however attractive and true I find it from the standpoint of my "I believe" it cannot satisfy me. If it is attempting to express what is essentially Christian, then I think it is too timid, too anaemic, too abstracted from the destiny of the totality of the world.

In this context I recall one of Küng's quotations which illustrates with painful clarity this strange diffidence of "modern" Christianity: "But does a reasonable man **today** want to become God?" (442). My answer is — Yes: there has seldom been a time when men have been so radically determined to be God. Ernest Bloch has used the **eritis sicut deus** as the key to his future-oriented interpretation of the biblical legacy, activating his revolutionary leaven against those forces which would retard the process. In doing so he has only reproduced the deepest impetus which underlies the emancipatory passion of our century. The object of this striving is a freedom from the limits involved in being human; it cannot be satisfied with anything less than divine status, which is why its whole critique is so radical, even to the extent of nihilism. Any Christianity which would offer man less than "being God" is too modest; it may commend itself by a surface plausibility, but in the struggle for man to which we are exposed its answer remains insufficient.

A LETTER TO A FELLOW-PRIEST

by

Hans Urs von Balthasar

Basel, February 12, 1976

Reverend and dear confrere:

You ask for my opinion on Hans Küng's new book "On being a Christian".¹ You observe that many Christians and even some priests, are made insecure in their Catholic faith by reading this book. Willingly and in as lucid a form as possible I answer you, though the immense amount of problems raised in the book cannot be dealt with in an adequate way in a few pages. So I have to bypass many points which Küng doubtlessly saw in a correct way and formulated in the catchy manner that is so characteristic of him. Thus, I have to concentrate on the root of the matter.

It sounds very promising when Küng announces in the foreword, that the book is to help those people "who do not want to remain at the childhood stage in their faith, ... who can no longer find any final anchorage in infallible formulas of Scripture (Protestants), of Tradition (Orthodox), of the Magisterium (Catholics)" (p. 19). He promises to offer an introduction "to being a Christian: not only to Christian teaching or doctrine, but to Christian existence, action and conduct" (p. 20).

But from the long and troubled prehistory of this book we know that for Hans Küng, there are no 'infallible formulas' or "statements" which would oblige the believer, whether they would be founded on Scripture, or on Tradition, or on the Magisterium. Consequently, the phrase "not **only** to Christian teaching and doctrine" can mean only "not at all to Christian teaching and doctrine". The quotation reveals that Küng goes beyond both orthodox Protestantism (possibly toward a liberal one), the Eastern Church with its understanding of Tradition and the Catholic Magisterium which would not have the authority, to offer "final anchorage".

¹ Hans Küng, *On Being a Christian*. Translated by Edward Quinn. Collins, St. James's Place, London, 1977, 720 pages.

This shows in the first line that these churches, in so far as they still retain something like a dogma obliging the religious conscience (I avoid the term "infallible") have to be considered as antiquated. We are, therefore, not far off the mark, when we add, that "being a Christian" must not be understood ontologically (in a dogmatic sense) as the bestowal of the grace of divine sonship by means of the sacraments, but in the ethical sense; this conclusion results from the subsequent concepts of "action and conduct".

At this point Hans Küng could raise two objections. First, that his book is only for those who have grown beyond "the childhood stage in their faith", for those who "can no longer find any final anchorage in infallible formulas". He does not intend to disquiet people who are content with the childhood stage in their faith and its formulas. He has shown his liberal attitude in the NZZ² by standing up for Ecône. But apart from the fact that Küng and Ecône are allies in their struggle against Rome, we must not overlook that it appears desirable for Küng — and not alone for him — that Christians should grow beyond "the childhood stage in their faith" if this should be a faith in formulas merely learnt by heart. Christians ought to be able to give an account of the content of their faith in a reflective manner.³

The book ought to concern, therefore, all Christians. To all of them, Küng offers a new criterion of truth, a criterion which is above "the infallible formulas of Scripture, of Tradition, of the Magisterium". We shall come to know of what this means for Küng.

His second objection could be against the term Dogma whose significance is debatable, especially in ecumenical dialogue. For a Catholic Christian this concept is intimately connected with an ecclesiastical authority which has the power (biblically "exousia") to present to the believers a definite, central aspect of divine revelation — as it results directly from a word of Scripture, or as it has been further clarified by Tradition, or as it has been even explained by the Magisterium — as objectively binding content of Catholic faith. Those Protestants who do not attribute to Tradition and Magisterium the same authority but still want to retain the word Dogma and Dogmatic Theology, give them another, more vague meaning.⁴ For them Dogma is not Scripture; it is the

² The daily "Neue Zürcher Zeitung." (Translator's note)

³ If it is to be more than a vague sentiment then this faith should certainly be thought of and expressed in sentence-form.

⁴ Cp. e.g., W. Pannenberg, What is a Dogmatic Statement? in: W. Pannenberg, Basic Questions in Theology. Volume One. SCM Press Ltd., London, 1970, 182-210.

answer of the Church to a word of Scripture. In their church there is no such authority which could demand absolute assent which could determine what this answer means and what it does not. Therefore, Protestant dogmatic theology seems to me nothing but the proposal of an individual theologian to what his church should accept and proclaim as content of Christian faith.

Fundamentally, Han Küng's book is also such a proposal, whether at all with what Catholic theology calls Dogma, which was always for the Church the basis of all personal "being a Christian".

Neither can it have anything to do with what Protestant dogmatic theology (as orthodox) wants to be, because Küng does not place himself "under the authority of the word," in so far as this word speaks the absolute truth and makes absolute claims. First of all, he places the word of Scripture, even and especially that of the New Testament, under the scrutiny of the historical-critical method. Generally speaking, only selected words of the synoptics on the Jesus of history find favor in his eyes. He suspects that almost all writings of Paul mythologize simple historical facts. This holds even more true of John, whose "theology" appears only as an ideological superstructure on what Küng declares to be normative. In the critical selection of synoptic texts which he considers valid for a truthful image of Jesus, he applies the method of minimalism: he eliminates everything which could be called into doubt by anyone for any reason. From the fragments of the synoptics which remain, he composes a colorful image of Jesus which sparkles in active polemics in every direction: Jesus was against the Law (which means: against the ecclesiastical establishment; he was against the use of power (which means he was against Political Theology); he was against leaving the world (which means, he was against monasticism and religious life); he was against a self-protecting piety (which means, against a compromising moralism).

But what was Jesus positively? Küng insists on the title "public advocate of God" which he repeats incessantly and to which he adds about twenty synonyms. If we look more closely at this expression it becomes obvious that Küng's formally undogmatic image of Jesus is also materially, because he has separated the figure of Jesus from all those relations which, taken together, from

the Catholic dogma "Jesus, the Christ". From this central content of faith everything grows organically that forms Catholic dogmatic theology.

In the first place, in Küng's mind the relation of Jesus to the Old Testament is extremely poor and almost completely negative. Jesus' message of freedom is directed, first of all, against all forms of a religion of the law, against all forms of an ecclesiastical establishment. In this way he depicts Judaism at the time of Jesus. As a matter of fact, Küng takes over and continues the Lutheran dualism between Law and Gospel. This obscures the fact that Jesus is also the fulfilment of the divine promises in the Law — not only of those found in the prophets.

The designation of the man Jesus as a mere earthly "advocate of God" (even if God "justifies" his cause by his resurrection) has disastrous consequences for the traditional doctrine of the Trinity which is based on Scripture. The scriptural assertions of Jesus' divinity, a pre-existence and incarnation are rejected as mythologoumena. If one would continue to speak of a "Trinity" inspite of this, it would consist of a personal God (called Father), of a man with a special vocation, and of a spirit which would be merely an aspect of the personal God as active in the history of salvation.

Küng, finally, also severs the bonds which, according to the permanent doctrine, exist between Jesus and the Church. That Jesus did not found the Church has been asserted by Küng in earlier books.⁵ The ontological continuity between the Jesus of history and his (mystical) "Body", his "Spouse", his "Fulness", which Paul held in virtue of his doctrine of the redemption and the eucharist, can only appear in the theology of Küng as the product of an over-heated phantasy. Because, if Jesus is not God (even though he belongs closely to God's history with mankind) the very core of the dogmatic doctrine of the redemption, the pre-Pauline

⁵ The Church was, evidently, not founded by Jesus in the way in which formerly a naive dogmatic theology thought it could prove, e.g., by the explicit institution of the individual sacraments, or even of an office that was distinguished in different stages. Jesus is the Word of God not only in his public life, but completely in his death and resurrection. Thus the procession of the Church from him began and was prepared for in his public life, and found its completion on the cross and during the 'forty days.'

"pro nobis", the ontological Deputy for sinners on the cross, cannot be taken in its full meaning, as the primitive Church did.⁶

But then the whole dogmatic substructure collapses on which, from the very beginning an existentially lived Christianity, "being a Christian", has been built. I remind you only of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Why should I be ready to give my life for a mere strap of God? How should a statement like that in Gal. 2:19-20 not appear as mere fanaticism? The leading examples of the saints appear then all more or less as illusions. I must not mention the evangelical counsels and celibacy which Hans Küng attacks with ever greater vehemence as "against nature". If Küng cannot and will not engage himself for the cause of Christ as presented by the existing Church — but at most by a "church" which is to be structured according to the norms of the historical-critical method — one has to agree with Dorothee Soelle who reproaches Küng that he does not take anyone's side (except his own) since he takes also a clear stand against political theology.⁷

It is superfluous to say that, where the bridges to Catholic and Protestant-Orthodox dogmatic theology have been broken (even if one is still sympathetic to some of its theses) a dialogue between Küng and the Eastern churches is a priori meaningless. Everything that is dear to Orthodoxy, — "holy Tradition", the material understanding of the liturgy, the high esteem for monasticism, for the contemplative life, for negative theology, for the "theosis", the emphasis on the divinity of Christ, the surpassing role of the Mother of God in the history of salvation, the general importance of the saints, — is for Hans Küng a falsification of the authentic image of Jesus as he has detected it. From this point of view, there can hardly be a presentation of the image of Jesus which is less ecumenical than that of Hans Küng. But he may perhaps answer to this objection — as he did in the case Lefèvre — that the existence of this particular form of "being a Christian" did not disturb him in the least. Ecumenical dialogue is, if it is to be fruitful, a tri-lateral conversation of the Catholic Church with the Eastern churches (including the pre-Chalcedonian churches), and with those churches which originated in the 16th century reformation. Küng's book does not offer any basis for such a dialogue.

⁶ I dealt with this theme, which is for me the central issue, in an article which appeared in the volume of collected articles "Diskussion ueber Hans Küngs 'Christ sein' ". Matthias-Gruenewald-Verlag, Mainz, 1976, 83-94 ('Crucified for us').

⁷ D. Soelle, Hans Küngs Hang zur Mitte [Hans Küng's Centrist Tendency], *Lutherische Monatshefte* 14 (1975), first fasc.; also in *Merkur* 28 (1974) 1187 ff.

Here and there "On Being a Christian" offers fascinating reading; one is impressed by the force of the language, and by the tenacious labor invested in the book. A reader who does not take a closer look may think that after a perhaps excessive and destructive criticism, the criticized elements would be re-inserted — in a purified form — in their proper place. In the end everything would seem to have found its proper balance in a synthesis which could be demanded from a modern Christian who has grown beyond the "childhood stage in his faith." This may be so if this modern Christian thinks that the entire traditional understanding of the Catholic Church concerning the place of Scripture, Tradition, Dogma and the Magisterium should be completely revised and could be relativized. But then he has to be aware of what kind of decision he has made and which no-man's-land he has entered. But some Christians, even theologians, think the center is where they have taken their stand, also in the Church.⁸

Dear confrere, these few remarks are obviously no more than a superficial pointer. They are no substitute for a thorough discussion of Küng's book. They are intended as a marker in a scenery wreathed in mist, and this is the ecclesiastical scenery today. Many people — not seldom also those in higher places — have not the courage to tell the plain truth.

No wonder that many, especially lay people, loose their orientation. The nice story of Odysseus and the Sirens is again and again of pressing actuality in our days.

With kind regards,

yours sincerely,

Hans Urs von Balthasar

(Translated by H. J. Graf, S.V.D.)

⁸ So far I have seen only negative, or at the very least, highly critical reviews of Küng's book written by serious theologians. Compare among other J. Ratzinger, "Christ sein — plausibel gemacht," *Theologische Revue* 71 (1975) 353-364. — G. Dejaifve, "Être chrétien selon Hans Küng", in: *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 97 (1975), March issue. — Positive are especially those reviews which the author himself ordered in the great dailies. Such reviews will doubtlessly be prepared against the book "Diskussion" as soon as it has been published. Very accurate, impartial and balanced is the book of Karl Lehmann on "Mysterium Ecclesiae" with a documentary appendix on the Roman procedures concerning Küng's book "The Church" and "Infallible? An Inquiry", in: *Nachkonziliare Dokumentation*, Band 43, Paulinus-Verlag Trier, 1975.

SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

by

John Purcell, C.Ss.R.

INTRODUCTION:

Mention of Small Christian Communities (SCC) is now very common. We find it, v.g. in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul and in the documents of many national hierarchies in South America, in Africa and in Asia. Recently, in June 1977, the Bishops of the Philippines declared: "We endorse the resolution of the National Convention of the Lay Apostolate to adopt the formation of Basic Christian Communities as the new thrust of the lay apostolate throughout the country".

The Gospel emphasis on love invites us to look at those immediately around us — not those far away. "A man who does not love his brother that he can see cannot love God, whom he has never seen" (1 Jn. 4,20); this applies equally well to one's neighbour, as distinct from someone more remote. We belong to each other. We are like the parts of a body that suffer and rejoice together. Together we live or together we die. Texts like those can be multiplied from the pages of the New Testament. And what emerges clearly is that they take on flesh and blood in the context of the small christian community.

PILIPINO CONTEXT:

The structure of Filipino society is based on small communities at Baryo and Sitio level. Political, economic and cultural life find a firm anchor in the small community, but the same was not true of the Church. The Church was looked on as being far away; it was seen in terms of the parish church, the parish centre and the parish priest, or in terms of the Bishop and the diocese. Late in the day, perhaps, we now realize that the small community is the place where Christianity comes to life and begins to have meaning for people.

In the Filipino context the small community is there already. We find them in Baryos, Sitios and in squatter areas. They stretch from urban to agro-industrial to rural conditions. These communities are already in existence. The members know each other emotionally and meet each other face to face. This is the sociological community. The question that faces us is how to christianize it; how to make it also a faith community. This can only be through evangelization, catechesis and organization. These were the methods used by Jesus; these were the methods that were so successful in the early Church.

ECONOMIC CONTEXT:

The SCC is geographical; it is a neighbourhood gathering. This situation is greatly dependent on economics. The neighbourhood solidarity of the masses is conditioned by their poverty. The vast majority of the people are poor. Their living conditions are poor. They are often squatters. They have the same problems in housing, marketing, health, roads, water, schools, work or lack of it. Their houses are open and readily accessible. All of this creates a certain sense of solidarity and of community among groups of families in the same area. Their lives are thrown together and they have a lot in common. Obviously, when a family is liberated from poverty, they are free to choose their own friends, recreation, schools and civic associations; they become mobile. A subdivision does not have the same sense of community as a squatter area.

This has a lot of significance for the Church and for the apostolate. The community is already there. Let us find ways and means to make Christianity a dynamic force in the community, the source of inspiration and motivation, the centre of unity and cohesion. In our communities there are plenty of destructive forces at work — selfishness, vested interests, power struggles, distrust and suspicion. Can the presence and example of Christ be a superior force to these harsh and dehumanising elements. "Where sin abounded, grace did more abound". "I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly".

No one can pretend that our small communities are perfect, even as sociological communities, and much less as faith communities. It is true, however, that there is community there, there is a certain degree of intimacy not psychologically possible in urban centres or among a crowd of people. But the weaknesses on both the socio-

logical and faith levels are similar. The people tend to be passive, very dependent on the priest or on the Baryo Captain, and this is quite the opposite of the fullest development of the human potential of each member which is our vision for the SCC.

MEANING AND DIRECTION:

There is a tendency, perhaps, to take this title, SCC, and use it to describe what we have already. Like a country that becomes independent and changes only its flag. But we cannot too easily identify the SCC with existing programs which are only partial and sectional, v.g. K.S.P. or adult catechetics. Neither is the SCC an instrument for achieving something else. When we use the term SCC, the focus is always on the community in its total life; the SCC is the Church itself in all its vitality and dynamism at grass-roots level.

How do we describe the SCC? Without going into details we can say it means a setting which promotes more vital christian living. People no longer form an anonymous mass, they become individual persons, identified with a group. There is emphasis on the equality of all, a sense of brotherhood, people's basic rights. People are encouraged to think for themselves, to express their own views, and to take part in decision-making affecting their lives. Being a christian should help relationships within the community. There should be a community approach to analysing and solving community problems. The SCC should add up to better living in every sphere. We need to have a vision, but we must also be realistic in our perceptions. The flowers and fruits of the SCC need to be fertilized with knowledge, leadership, technical skills and know-how. The Kingdom of God may be within us, but this does not dispense us from dedicated work for its coming.

Different models of development have not been spectacularly successful. The development decade in Latin America left the gap between the rich and the poor wider. The same is happening now in the Philippines. Development of resources, technology and know-how and the increase of the GNP — all of this is development, but not of necessity development of people. A worker has to put in more hours of labour now to buy a kilo of rice or a shirt than he did six years ago. A new approach to development is necessary. We have to think of initiative from within the under-developed

nations and classes. We have to think of self-development through the destruction of the powerful and subtle forces of manipulation and exploitation, both foreign and domestic. The place to begin is where the people are, i.e., in their small communities.

The present emphasis of the Church on SCC is undoubtedly new. We can trace the ancestry of this new arrival right back to the early christian communities of apostolic times. We can identify it here and there along the roads of history down the centuries, but there is still a newness about it; it is a product of our times. The conditions of the modern world have produced the documents of Vatican 2, the Encyclical Letters of Popes John and Paul, the documents of the Filipino Bishops, and the thrust of the Church today towards justice and peace, human rights and human dignity.

Equality and participation are central ideas. The Church is the People of God. At the risk of oversimplification we can say that formerly, the Church was Hierarchy without community, whereas now the vision we have is one of community with ministerial structure, the ministers coming from within: the self-governing, self-nourishing and self-sustaining community. The SCC develops its own structures, economics and laws of membership — all closely related. But we cannot make more than Gospel demands on anyone. Otherwise we stand condemned by the Gospel and by St. Paul who insists, "A man is justified by faith, and not by something the law tells him to do" (Rom. 3, 28).

The SCC is the place where our vision of the Church can be realized and where human and christian values can be struggled for. This is where the command of Christ to love one another begins to take on meaning. Can you love people you do not know? The hardships and sufferings, the indignities and injustices, to which people are subjected, — all of these become more personal when the people of your immediate community are affected, i.e. people you know and love, those with whom you have so much in common.

ROLE OF ORGANIZATION:

The SCC is an offspring of our times, but the offspring of a long and distinguished ancestry. It is a vision that has significance for the Third World where poverty is a way of life for the masses of the people. From the christian point of view, the SCC is now

the focus of the Church's ministry; we take people as they are in their communities, with all the problems of the concrete situation, alienating and divisive forces, ethnic and cultural differences, and we try to make the Church the unifying force in these communities, the focal point of love and service, of justice and peace.

The methods at hand for Christianizing Small Communities are evangelization, catechesis and organization. The two former have long been with us, but what is more new is the element of organization. The discovery of the printing press was a secular development, but it had profound implications for the Church. In a similar way, social psychology has given us new insights into, and understanding of, the dynamics of community. Encounter, which takes place in groups and in small communities, has been described by Carl Rogers as the most significant social invention of this century. We have now new tools to hand for developing the SCC; expertise in using them will come from constant practice. The analysis of issues and problems within the community and action on these problems — enlightened by the word of God and accompanied by reflection and prayer, these give us the basic approach towards organizing the SCC.

Formerly in our parishes we had a lot of catholic organizations, v.g. the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic Women's League, etc., but we had little or no community organization. Here we touch on the new element in the thrust of the Church today towards the SCC. There is now a new vehicle to ride, that of organizing communities. Let us not be alarmed that the vehicle may have some marxist markings. People may ride the same kind of vehicle while travelling in opposite directions. And as Christians we knew the direction in which we are headed. Our SCC is gathered around their Chapel, and on top of this stand the Cross of Christ, Saviour and Lord.

HISTORY

CULTS AND RITUALS OF THE PRE-CHRISTIAN BIKOLS

By

Jose Calleja Reyes

A man needs to believe and to love, he needs a goal towards which to steer his actions, to formulate for himself a purpose, to see something more beyond matter and noise, he needs in short an object worthy of his being and faculties.¹

In the primitiveness of their society, the pre-hispanic Bikols were moved by this human instinct and longing and they manifested this sentiment externally in their primitive cults and rituals.

This paper attempts to portrays the beliefs of the pre-hispanic Bikols — their ancient cults and results as seen by a Franciscan missionary in the early 19th century.²

The religious beliefs of the pre-christian Bikols was founded on the notion of a god of good and a god of evil. Under this central belief was a hierarchy of lesser dieties depending on whether they were in league with the god of good or the god of evil.

God of Good Cult and Rituals

Gugurang was the supreme god of good, benign benefactor of their villages, defender of their homes, who protected them from the evil snares of the "aswang", an evil spirit who was believed to be the god of evil. The general belief amongst them was that

¹ Jose P. Rizal Essay, "Doubt", Quotations from Rizal's Writings, p. 109.

² P. Fr. Jose Castaño, "Breve Noticia Acerca del Origin, Religion, Creencias y Supersticiones de los Antiguos Indios del Bicol".

W. E. Retana, Archivo del Bibliofilo Filipino, Vol. II. Interpretative translation by Jose Calleja Reyes.

"Gugurang" always listened to their supplications on matters were for their good benefit as well as to their entreaties to avenge their enemies.

"Batala" was a special being inferior in power to Gugurang whose mission was to provide peace to a village under its special care. Thus it was believed that the village that enjoyed peace and was successful in its wars was due to the influence of a "Batala" which "Gugurang" has assigned to it as its custodian.

The ancient Bikols also believed in less inferior beings sent by Gugurang to look after them. These beings they called "Catambay" whose specific mission was to care solely for an individual as distinguished from the "Batala" whose mission was to care for the entire village.

The hunter, too, had a special protector called the "Ocot" This being lived in the thick forests and whistled to indicate the place of the hunt.

The fishermen, too, have their spirit protector they called "Magindan" who by its cries and signals on the water indicated the place where there is an abundant catch.

The external manifestation of this cult of the ancient Bikols was seen thru their various rituals.

There was a special ritual for "Gugurang" which was called "atang". The place where the atang was usually offered was called "gulanggulañgan". The gulanggulañgan, made of bamboo and coconut leaves was the sacrificial temple of the ancient Bikols. The atang was the highest form and the most sublime sacrifice to Gugurang done as thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest and to implore Gugurang for more abundant harvests. The atang consisted in offering to Gugurang the best of the fruits of the land which was called "himoloan". The offerings were brought to the gulanggulañgan and placed on an altar table made of bamboo called "salañgat". On the "salañgat" they would put innumerable kinds of food. The native priestesses called "Baliana" would intone the primitive encantations followed by body shiverings and contortions. The womenfolk gathered around would then sing the "soraque" reputedly a beautifully enchanting song dedicated to Gugurang. The rites over, the people consumed the food offerings in a wild dancing feast.

God of Evil Cult and Rituals

The cult for the god of evil, the aswang, on the other hand depended on the purpose for which they were invoked.

The "Hidhid" was a kind of exorcism resorted to whenever a public calamity like famine or pestilence afflicted a village. The "baliana" performed the "Hidhid" ritual to exorcise the aswang believed to have brought the calamity and to force it to abandon the village in order to end the famine or the pestilence. The "Hidhid" was also performed on a sick person believed to be under the evil spell of the aswang. The exorcism is performed by putting the leaves of the "buga" (betel nut) on the head of the sick. The baliana moved around the sick person dancing, shivering and contorting, uttering encantations against the aswang so the latter will go and abandon the sick person. If the sick is cured, they would say that the ritual was effective. However, if the sick died, it was said that the aswang wanted to bring the sick person to the "gagamban" here to suffer horrible torments.

Another ritual for the aswang was the "Hogot". It was believed that when a datu in the village died, the aswang will seek the entrails of the deceased. To prevent this, a favorite slave of the datu was killed and his entrails was offered to the aswang as substitute.

Belief in After Life

The ancient Bikols believed in an after life. The good eventually will go to the side of Gugurang to receive the reward for their heroic deeds in a place called "Camurawayan" where peace and rest await them where as the bad will go to the side of the aswang in a fiery place called "gagamban" to suffer the punishment of their evil deeds in suffocating flames.

Cult Ministers

The ministers of the cult of the ancient Bikols were called "Asog". They used necklaces of precious stones, and collars and for their ministry they used to dress as a woman and acted in the manner of a woman in their movements and in their speech.

The ridiculousness of their appearance and their wit caused much merriment among the participants in the tribal rituals. It was the custom among the "Asogs" to remain unmarried to prepare them better for their religious ministry.

There were also women ministers called "balianas". The balianas were the women of the tribe who were the most shrewd, libertine and seductive. The baliana, aside from officiating in the tribal rituals listened to the complaints of the members of the tribe and in their behalf invoked and entreated the anitos for guidance on the specific matter on hand.

Ancestor Worship

The most common of the cults of the ancient Bikols was anito worship devoted to the spirit of deceased elders. An anito was the spirit of a beloved person who in his lifetime was distinguished for his valor or goodness done to the family or to the village. An anito which was privately revered by a tribal family was called "Tagno" and usually engraved in an image called "lagdong" and placed in a revered place in their habitation called "moog". The anito which was considered as a village benefactor was called "parangpan" and was enshrined in a conspicuous place in the village. When a maguinoo died the natives performed the ceremony for the dead called "Pasaca" which consisted in preserving and keeping unburied for a long time the remains of the dead, until a big feast called "abatayo" was celebrated to extol the qualities of the deceased during his lifetime.

In order that the remains will not deteriorate, they embalmed the dead in their own primitive way — by removing the entrails. This done, the body was placed between two halves of an "agul" tree the inside of which had been hallowed out. The tree-coffin was then sealed tight with the sap of the "dangkalan" tree. Strangely but truly, no foul odor emitted from the tree coffin which was left unburied for sometime.

The "basbas" was a rite for the dead which literally meant the washing of the dead. It was their common belief that those who have died are impure, more so those who died because of sickness and that unless purified they would suffer great torments inflicted by the aswang. The purification rites was performed by the balianas, who fastened at the end of a short pole the aromatic leaves of

the **lucban**. The pole was soaked in perfumed water and struck at the various parts of the body of the deceased accompanied by the ritual song called "katumba".

Once the purification rites were made it was believed that the anito of the deceased journeyed freely in the beautiful valleys and the luxuriant forests of their settlements. Should a misfortune befall the village, they called upon the most celebrated of their anitos, and implore him with reverential respect by way of sighs and shouts to cast away the malaise. In order to hasten the grant of their petitions they performed the "**dool**" which was to abstain from eating foods which they usually like to eat.

They also have the child ritual called the "yocod" which was to offer the young child or infant to the anitos of their deceased ancestors by tossing and passing the child from one hand to another rapidly in any part of their dwelling. It was believed that once the aswang heard the ritual it will allow the child to come under the protection of the anitos.

Nature Cult and Rituals

The ancient Bikols were also nature worshippers.

The "Halia" was a feast dedicated to the full moon to prevent the "baconana", a horrible monster from devouring the moon and leaving them in perpetual darkness. The feast was performed with the wild beating of the "gimbals" and the "balalong". The womenfolk of the tribe assembled in two files and commenced singing encantations in praise of the attributes of light of the moon; they would also praise the moon in making the night as bright as day but enchantingly cooler than the light of day.

The early Bikols also had great reverence for the rainbow which they called "hablong-dawani". They believed that it was the exquisite tapestry of a very famous weaver called Dawani who was the mother of all weavers in ancient time.

As earlier said in the opening statement of this paper, "man needs to believe and to love, he needs a goal towards which to steer his actions, to formulate for himself a purpose, to see something more beyond matter and noise, he needs in short an object worthy of his being and faculties".

In the primitiveness of their society, the pre-hispanic Bikols were moved by this human instinct and longing and they manifested this sentiment in their primitive cults and rituals.

The pagan idols — the grotesque rituals — were incidental matter. The essential thing was that **they believed** and **they loved**.

These metaphysical gifts of primitive faith and primitive love in the Bikols' pagan soul were not destroyed nor obliterated by conquest and subjugation.

When the light of the true faith and the true love was brought to them by the early Christian missionaries, their being was naturally prepared to receive these added gifts which only purified and perfected what they already had. As one lover of the Bikol soul has aptly said — "grace builds on nature, it does not destroy it. Supernatural virtues are the further flowering of the natural virtues aided by the light and the strength of God's grace".³ This explains the rapid and enviable conversion of our forebears to the true faith — an amazingly rapid transition from animistic to Christian worship — an event we are happy to celebrate now, 400 years after its humble beginnings.

And as further proof of the naturalness of many of the ancient Bikols' beliefs and customs, some Bikol Christian festivals and practices today still bear a vague image of the beliefs and customs of 400 years ago.

To cite a few, the picturesque "Tumataruc" ni "San Felipe Santiago", a dance-song-oratory festival in the town of Minalabag in the province of Camarines Sur still depicts traces of the ancient Bikols' incantations and supplications when the brightly costumed performers sing in perfect rhyme and meter their song-prayer beseeching God to help the parist priest and the fiscal to fulfill their duties well; that long life be given to the town councilors and police; that good fortune be given to the citizens; that the treasury coffers; that the town judge render his judgment fairly and justly. The "Tinagba" harvest festival celebrated annually in the City of Iriga on the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes which consists in offering the first best produce of the land and any product from the people's toil is another Christian practice that is reminiscent of the "atang" sacrificial ritual to Gugurang. The "responso comun" wherein the folk people offer prayers to deceased ancestors thru the parish ministers for a small token fee is a clear vestige to this day of the offering and remembrance rituals of the ancient Bikols to their

³ James J. O'Brien, S.J. "The Character of the Bicol People". The Rainbow Magazine, October, 1966.

anitos (deceased ancestors). The present day deep devotion of the Bicolanos to the souls in purgatory is another Christian flowering of the early Bikols' ancestor worship. The procession of the "Aurora" wherein the participants sing of the excellencies of the Blessed Virgin is a Christian practice with folk traditions as its underlay. The "hablong-dawani" expression of ancient time is now even corporated in a "dalit"⁴ to the Virgin of Peñafrancia which figuratively says —

"An gabos nañgasabi
ica an hablon-dawani
na an damát ó an peste
saimong pinadadai".⁵

There are many more which we shall omit for the moment. It can be said safely, however, that the Church allows and fosters their continuance. For the Second Vatican Council, 13th Chapter of its **Constitution on the Church**, says — "The Church — fosters and takes to itself, insofar as they are good, the ability, riches and customs in which the genius of each people expresses itself".

Thus the Bicolanos today are still essentially the god-fearing Bikols 400 years back. They are also trying to reach the same Supreme Being as their ancient pagan forebears did, the only difference is that the path they are treading now is the true way which Christ Himself has pointed out in these words — "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life".

⁴ Prayer in verse.

⁵ Historia o Aguiagui Can Para-Milagrong Ladauan ni Nuestra Señora de Peña Francia. P. Francisco Gainza, p. 108 Reprint Manila 1926.

COMMUNICATION

ON SMALL CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

Dear Father Editor,

The enclosed article on Small Christian Communities* concerns a much discussed theme at present, especially here in Davao and around Mindanao. It contains the result of my own reflections, readings and experience in these communities. I send it in the hope that you may be able to publish it in the Boletin Ecclesiastico as a help to the ongoing discussion about Small Christian Communities. I notice that recent issues of the magazine deals with contemporary issues like the ministry of women, human rights etc. In conclusion I wish you all success in the apostolate you are exercising through the pages of the magazine, and I pray that the Boletin may continue to be a force in the development of the Filipino Church.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) **FR. JOHN PURCELL, C.Ss.R.**
Mother of Perpetual Holy Parish
Davao City

* See p. 68 of this issue.

HOMILETICS

by

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

I. BIBLICAL NOTES FOR HOMILIES

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

(January 1, 1978)

First Reading: Numbers 6: 22-27

Second Reading: Galatians 4: 4-7

Gospel Reading: Luke 2: 16-21

(Explanation of these readings can be found in Bol. Ecl. November 1975, pp.803f, and October 1976. pp. 751f).

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

(January 8, 1978)

First Reading: Isaiah 60: 1-6

Second Reading: Ephesians 3: 2.3.5-6

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2: 1-12

(Explanation of these readings can be found in Bol. Ecl. November 1975, pp. 804f and October 1976, pp. 752f)

FEAST OF THE SANTO NINO (Philippines)

(January 15, 1978)

First Reading: Sirach 51: 8-12

Second Reading: Colossians 3: 12-17

Gospel Reading: John 14: 6-14

(Explanation of these readings can be found in Bol. Ecl. November 1975 p. 807)

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (elsewhere)
(January 15, 1978)

First Reading: Isaiah 49: 3.5-6

Second Reading: First Corinthians 1: 1-3

Gospel Reading: John 1: 29-34

First Reading: The second of the "Servant-Songs" of Deutero-Isaiah continues to depict the role of him whom God had chosen from his mother's womb to be his special instrument. Not only will he bring the remnant of Israel to the Lord, but his mission is world-wide: he will bring salvation to all the nations. In v. 3, the word "Israel", if genuine, identifies the People of God with the Servant as their ideal representative. But it could also be a marginal gloss, since the People of God are mentioned in v. 5 as "Jacob" and "Israel".

Gospel Reading: What the Baptist meant by the phrase "Lamb of God" would well have acquired new depth when presented by the Evangelist to his Christian readers decades later. He had witnessed the Lamb's sacrifice on Golgotha and identified him with the Paschal Lamb (Jn. 19:36). Yet closest to the thought of the victim-lamb is Is. 53: 5-7, where the Lamb takes the sins of all upon himself. "Sin of the world" are all the sins of mankind considered as one great offense against God which the Lamb removes by reconciling to the Father those who accept him.

Though born after the Baptist, Christ's pre-existence marks him as superior to him. To recognize the adult Jesus as Israel's Messiah, a sign was given to the Baptist: that of the Spirit in the form of a dove investing him with the spirit of his ministry. Then John realized that the prophecy of Is. 42:1 had come true. Jesus is Spirit-filled, and in turn, he will aim to invest others with the self-same Spirit. His death will be the price he must pay.

Second Reading: Paul uses the current form of letter-salutations giving first his name, then that of the addressees, and finally a greeting, but he fills each of these parts with Christian depth of meaning:

- 1) He is a genuine apostle, by God's special choice (will). Sosthenes is not merely a secretary but considered a co-author of the letter.
- 2) "Church" is from the Greek verb *kaleo*, to call out, and designates the chosen assembly of God, as was Israel of old. At baptism they are incorporated into Christ, who becomes their justification and their holiness (cf. 6: 10). Theirs is a calling to be a

holy people as was Israel's. Together with all other Christians, they worship Christ as Lord, Christ's divinity being a fundamental tenet of their profession of faith.

- 3) "Grace" is God's abundant favors poured out on his chosen ones. "Peace" includes all the blessings brought by Christ: forgiveness of sins but especially the gift of the Spirit and its consequent well-being.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (January 22, 1978)

First Reading: Isaiah 8:23 to 9:3

Second Reading: First Corinthians 1:10.13-17

Gospel Reading: Matthew 4:12-23 (or: 4:12-17)

First Reading: Isaiah foretells a bright future for the land of Galilee, (represented by the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulon) which had suffered greatly under the devastating invasion of the Assyrians (733 B.C.). The seaward road is that leading from Damascus down through Galilee to the Mediterranean. Galilee will witness an event which will bring immense joy to everyone, for the long-awaited ideal King will come at last and bring deliverance from the hand of the oppressor. He will be the great Light that blots out the gloom of darkness.

Gospel Reading: At first the evangelist sees the Isaian prophecy of the first reading fulfilled in Christ the Savior. He is the Light that enlightens all. Jesus made his headquarters at Capernaum in Galilee and entered upon his public career there in earnest. He takes up the identical theme of John the Baptist in 3:2: metanoia, an inner change of heart will be necessary if God is to reign over them and they become members of his kingdom. Jesus came to establish that kingdom. He sets about at once creating disciples by his messianic power. One word suffices: Follow me! Two pairs of brothers respond at once. They indicate by their actions the ideal dispositions for the following of Christ: spontaneous commitment and wholehearted detachment from even the closest kin.

There follows a summary of Jesus' ministry which leads up to the crowds that will be the audience for the sermon on the mount (ch. 5). Teaching takes the first place, then preaching the message of the kingdom, and finally deeds of curing the evils of man.

Second Reading: An appeal by Paul for unanimity in the community. Over-enthusiasm for certain preachers was threatening peace and harmony. Paul reminds them that Christ alone is their

source of salvation. In him all must be one. In him alone have they been incorporated in baptism, and it matters little who did the baptizing. Paul's role is that of herald of the Good News, and his message was not clothed in the oratorical skills of the worldly wise, lest credit be given to him instead of to Christ, whose death won the Spirit whereby all conversion is imparted.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME **(January 29, 1978)**

First Reading: Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

Second Reading: First Corinthians 1: 26-31

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:1-12

First Reading: A word of encouragement for the "anawim", the poor ones in Israel, that is, the lowly of heart who are not held in esteem by the great ones in the land yet place their entire confidence in Yahweh, despite all hardships. They are the faithful remnant, repentant and chastened by adversities. They seek earnestly to do the will of God by keeping his commandments. He will protect them and grant them peace and prosperity.

Gospel Reading: In the "sermon on the mount" the first of the five discourses in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as the New Moses on the Mountain, bringing law and revelation to completion in the perfection of love. The whole sermon is the charter of Christian living and the beatitudes are the gateway to it. Christ takes a definite attitude against current views regarding riches, power and domination, as well as suffering. The beatitudes present the new spirit demanded of all Christ's followers. It is the "anawim", the poor ones in Israel who put their trust in God, who are pronounced blessed, as are the gentle, the pure of heart, the peace-makers; values that are totally different from those of the great ones in this world.

The motivation of the beatitudes is not temporal but looks forward to the end-kingdom: Possess the land (messianic blessings), be comforted (with God's victory over evil), see God (in direct vision), be filled (with divine delights), the reign of God (final fulfillment in God). All these are various aspects of salvation brought by Christ but to be fully realized in the final end-kingdom or complete reign of God over the just. An additional ninth beatitude (v. 11) seems to be an elaboration of the eighth. Also the "meek or lowly" may

be a marginal explanation of the "poor in spirit", thus leaving the original number of the beatitudes in Matthew to be seven, the covenant number preferred by Matthew throughout his gospel.

Second Reading: Paul makes it clear that rank and file mean nothing to God, who gives the gift of faith to whom he pleases, among whom are the slaves, the uneducated, the despised and lowly of this world. Sanctification and salvation are God's work, and no one can boast of accomplishing it by his own efforts. All holiness, wisdom and supernatural gifts (which includes the final redemption in the body's resurrection) come from the one source: Christ Jesus.

II. HOMILIES

MOTHER OF CHRIST (World-peace homily follows)

January 1, 1978: Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God.

The Human Situation: There is a word which is a treasure to each and every one of our hearts, and to the hearts of all the children of Eve, be they rich or poor, young or old; and that priceless word is: Mother. It is the first heard on the lips of an infant, it means everything to the innocent child, it is locked in the breast of a youth, it is the last word on the lips of a dying soldier on the battle-field. So noble so tender, so precious is that word that even the Son of God became a babe and lisped the word: Mother!

Pope Paul the Sixth's "Apostolic Exhortation" reminds us that the restored solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, on January 1st, is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in the mystery of salvation. Mary's Motherhood of Jesus has a real meaning for each member of the whole Christ. Just as Mary nourished, cared for, protected and brought up the Child Jesus in his mortal life so now she cares for each of the members of his Body in a spiritual manner during their pilgrimage on earth. Our heavenly Mother is all intent on our growing daily in the Christ-life, so that we become truly like her Son more each day. For that reason she has been given to us as Mother and Mediatrix before the throne of the Most High. And her power with her divine Son knows no limits.

It is helpful to remember that as Mother of Christ, Mary was largely responsible for the development of his human personality, its various traits and characteristics. Do not the Gospels show us his exquisite kindness, his care and concern for others, his intuitiveness and marked sensitivity? From whom should he learn all this

but from his mother during the long years at Nazareth? He developed like any other child and learned these traits from being in constant company of the most perfect Woman the world has ever known. His first great teacher was his Mother as it is the case with all other children. His doctrine he brought from heaven, but his human traits he took from his Mother. This is why he has given her to us as Mother and model. We too can learn from her as he did: to be open to the needs of others, to be considerate toward all classes of people, to be indulgent toward the wayward, the poor and the needy.

The human side of Jesus is often overlooked. We refer everything to his divine person and that is correct, but we must not forget that he is truly and in every sense a man, and hence was a babe, a child, a boy, a growing youth, a young man, all the time growing in wisdom and knowledge before God and man. He learned from those around him. From Mary he learned his prayers, his good habits, his attractive ways, his serenity, his love for the anawim, the poor ones in Israel. Can you not picture mother and son together in their little home at Nazareth, learning the psalms together, studying the Law, reading the prophets, pausing over special passages, and praying together? Can you not see them walking to the top of the hill on which Nazareth was built, contemplating the blue skies, the vast expanse, the beautiful valleys below? Or again, smiling at the little children as they pass, enjoying the innocent laughter of boys and girls at play; or stopping to say a word of encouragement to a young mother or an aged grandfather? Jesus is truly human in every respect, though he is sinless. The Motherhood of Mary ought to bring home to us that human aspect of his personality.

This is the Mother he gave us! Now reigning in heaven she awaits us to join the great divine family, the brothers and sisters of Jesus. As Queen of heaven and Mother of the entire Christ she is spending her heaven most concerned for each one of her children, because in the vision of God's love she sees all our needs, all our concerns, all our helplessness. And the Mother will not rest till the children are safe at home in the mansion of their Father with their elder Brother, their divine Kuya, Jesus God and Savior.

Our Response: On our part, let us rely on her maternal help and intercession. Let us go to her as children to the best of mothers, for her power with her divine Son is without limit, "Never has it been known that anyone who fled to her protection was left unaided". Give Mary a part in this new year, and you will invariably come closer to Christ.

PRINCE OF PEACE

January 1, 1978: World-peace Sunday

Isaiah the prophet saw him in the distant future: "A child is born to us, a son is given to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:5). Micah prophesied that "his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth; he himself shall be Peace" (Mi. 5:3). At his birth the angels brought the message: "Peace on earth to those whom God's favor rests" (Lk. 2:14). At his departure from this world he told his disciples: "Peace" is my farewell to you, "my peace is my gift to you; I do not give it to you as the world gives peace" (Jn. 14:27). And Paul declares categorically: "It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him, and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, making peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). This is God's Son, who suffered death on the cross that all men be one in the peace and love of his Spirit.

Where then is the world-peace which Christ came to bring to the nations? Why are wars and hostilities aggravating the situation from day to day? Why do we read so frequently that the nations are edging closer from day to day to another and terrible world war? "Peace, peace, they cry, but there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). Why? Because they have not hearkened to the only Person who has been sent from the throne of the Most High to grant peace to the nations: Jesus the Savior. Have the nations adopted his laws of justice and love? Have the families of man taken to heart the Good News of Christ the Lord? Have the people listened to the voice of Christ's Vicar on earth and followed his directions? Or have they not rather gone their own ways, endeavoring to solve their multiple problems with little or no thought of Christ and his message of salvation for man?

What is needed in this new year of the Lord is a return to Christ and his principles: a carrying out of social justice as the Vicars of Christ in the past many decades have continually stressed. What mankind needs is the practical carrying out of Christ's commandment of love in all the ramifications of daily life: in the family, in the factory, in the offices and the workshops, in the parish and in every community. "There is no salvation in anyone else" St. Peter himself tells us in the Acts of the Apostles (4:12), for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved".

Today we are asked to pray for world peace, and to beg God to send down his Spirit of healing who will heal the wounds of

the nations, the wounds of peoples, the wounds of individuals, so that peace reign in our midst. What man cannot accomplish by himself, God can bring about by his all-powerful Spirit. Perhaps the good Lord wanted the nations to realize that despite all their endeavors to bring about peace in this world, they failed to do so, because they relied on the strength of man instead of the power of God. If mankind humbly admits his inability to accomplish that universal peace for which all men long, and will humbly turn to the Father of all in unanimous prayer, the all loving Father who sent his Son as the Peace of the world, can bring about a miracle of peace by means of the same Prince of Peace and his all-powerful Spirit of Love. For this we pray today. My God grant it!

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

January 8, 1978: Solemnity of the Epiphany.

The Magi opened up their treasures and offered the little King in his Mother's arms: gold frankincense and myrrh. They had found him whom their hearts sought and now they offer him the best they have. We too wish to offer the little King on this day our treasures: the gold of our love, to acknowledge him as the king whom we wish to reign over us; the incense of our worship to acknowledge him as the Son of God to whom we owe allegiance, homage and adoration; the myrrh of our sufferings and trials to acknowledge him as our crucified Savior, whose cross we are willing to share.

It was only after long searching and many trials that the Magi found Christ. So it will be an on-going process for each one of us, in order that the little King really reign over the individual heart as he deserves to and wishes to. The main obstacle to this reign of Christ is self. Self is the stumbling block. It deadens all. Like a massive coat of ice, it weighs one down, freezes the heart, stiffens the limbs, benumbs the senses; there is no warmth, no energy, no life. Self is the greatest obstacle to the reign of Jesus over him.

That is why Jesus will tell his followers: Deny yourself. Do not give in to your many whims and evil inclinations. If a man loses his life in this world, he will gain it forever. A serious endeavor to let Christ reign over the heart will tackle the obstacle of self-love head-on, and set about to remedy it by practical self-denial. The heart over which Christ reigns will manifest genuine interest in others; it will show concern for the poor and the needy;

it will be impelled by the Spirit of Christ to put itself at the service of one's fellowmen as Christ did. Then indeed, self is no longer the dominant motivating power in a person, but the Spirit of Jesus.

The second gift we offer to the Christ-Child today is the incense of our worship in earnest prayer. Our Emmanuel is God-with-us, God become one of us. We worship him by proclaiming him as Son of God and Savior in the Eucharistic sacrifice regularly and punctually on Sundays and feastsdays. We worship him by fidelity to our religion by always being practical Catholics in our total behavior, and active members in our parish or community. We worship him by our community prayers and public acts, such an act of piety in passing a church, or our prayers before and after meals. We worship him by our many personal and private prayers, made at times in visiting the Blessed Sacrament, or at home with the family or other groups. Our God is near. Our Emmanuel is with us. We will be loyal and devoted to him all the days of our life, and gladly profess our Catholic faith.

The third gift we offer the Christ-Child today is the myrrh of our sufferings. They may in the form of trials or disappointments; they may be in the form of sickness either our own or of those near and dear to us; they may be in situations which cause us much pain and concern but which we cannot change. By this spiritual offering of bitter myrrh, we profess our faith in the Crucified, and in the redemptive value of suffering with him. Even as a babe of eight days, Jesus shed his blood in the circumcision. And all during his preparatory years he was the lamb being reared for sacrifice. With Paul then we will glory in the cross of Jesus Christ, by whom we are crucified to the world and the world to us (Gal. 6:14).

Today is Epiphany or **manifestation of Christ**, our King, our God and our Crucified Savior. He has manifested himself to the Magi, and he has manifested himself to us. We in turn wish to manifest him to the world around us by our solid Catholic faith, our undying hope in his promises, and by our universal love which manifests best of all the Spirit of Jesus reigning in our hearts, and coming to the aid of our fellowmen in need.

JESUS IS HIS NAME! (Second Sunday homily follows)

January 15, 1978: Feast of the Santo Niño (in the Philippines)

The Human Situation: It was during the last war. The troops were being shown a movie and the hall was filled. But the movie was long, slow-moving and tiresome. The troops were bored.

Suddenly a child's voice was heard crying, loud and clear. The troops cheered. All eyes were turned to see who had brought in a child. Their hearts were stirred by the voice of a child crying. They thought of their little ones at home. Again it was a child that had warmed them that night.

The Good News: Joseph was told by the heavenly messenger that Mary was to have a son and he was to name him Jesus, because "he will save his people from their sins" (Mt. 1:21). So on the eighth day after his birth, Joseph gave the Santo Niño the name Jesus. And from that day on, the name of Jesus began to be pronounced on the lips and in the hearts of men, first by Mary and Joseph and a handful of relatives and acquaintances, then, as he entered his public life and his fame grew, on the lips of hundreds of his countrymen, and finally the name of the Santo Niño filled the whole world and is on the lips and in the hearts of millions every day. St. Bernard sang long ago: "No word is sung more dear than this no name is heard more full of bliss; no thought brings greater comfort nigh, than Jesus Son of God most high!"

In Hebrew, the name "Jesus" has the meaning: Yahweh is Savior, and it is the role of Savior that was given to him by the Father in heaven. He was sent to save men, save them from their sins, deliver them from the Evil One, deliver them from the consequences of sin which are sickness, suffering, friction, hatred and war, and finally death. St. Peter declared openly before the leaders in Israel: "There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved" (Acts 4:12). And Savior he has proved himself to be. By his death and resurrection he snatched us from the powers of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his love (Col. 1:13).

No one expected the long-awaited Messiah to come as he did. The psalmist depicted him as the Mighty One girded with a sword, riding on triumphant in splendor and majesty (45:4). Isaiah saw him as the Wonder-worker God-Hero, Father-forever, Prince of Peace (9:5). Ezekiel was over whelmed by the vision of one like the Son of Man but vested with the glory of God, surrounded with fire and lightning (2: 26-28). Daniel marked him as the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven and receiving dominion, glory and kingship from the Ancient One (7: 13f). And even though Isaiah spoke those memorable words: "A child is born to us" (9:5), who would have dreamed that it was a a babe, as the Santo Niño, he would be welcomed into the hearts of millions! As a babe conquers the hearts of everyone so has the little Santo Niño captured the hearts of our people. To him they bring their homage today and

their offerings in a manifestation of love and loyalty. If he has come to our shores in this form he is happy to be received as a Babe, and to be enthroned in the hearts of both children and adults alike as the Santo Niño.

Yet, if we have enthroned the Santo Niño in our hearts, what does he expect of us? He expects us to walk the way of simplicity and childlike sinlessness as he did on earth, with full confidence in God his Father in the various trials of life, forging ahead with trust in the God of love who sent us his own Son to be our Savior King. "Is it possible", cries St. Paul, "that God who did not spare his own Son but handed him over for the sake of us all, will not grant us all things besides?" (Rom. 8:32). With full confidence then, let our hearts be set on doing the will of the Father, and together with the Santo Niño tend toward our heavenly home, with our divine Brother and Savior to lead the way safely and happily.

THE LAMB OF GOD (elsewhere than in the Philippines)

January 15, 1977: Second Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Human Situation: A workingman on a roof made a slip of the foot and fell at considerable height to the ground below. It would have meant certain death but just at that spot a lamb was grazing. The lamb was crushed to death but the impact of the man's body was broken by the body of the lamb. The man lived, but he owed his life to the lamb who had died in his stead.

The Good News: The lamb is a favorite theme with the sacred writers and it is especially St. John the Evangelist who refers to Jesus as the Lamb of God both in the Gospel and in the book of Revelation. It is not merely because a lamb is a symbol of what is innocent harmless and endearing that it is singled out to depict the Savior. There are biblical passages both in the Old Testament liturgy and in the prophets that bear out special features of the lamb as referred to Christ.

Daily in the Temple liturgy an innocent lamb was offered as a holocaust or whole-burnt offering. A holocaust stresses the victim-character of the sacrifice. The life of the lamb is sacrificed in place of the life of man, and is offered to God in his stead. Such a sacrifice could never expiate sin nor really appease the Most High, but it did act as a reminder of the need to offer oneself wholly to God, and of making expiation for sins committed. Moreover, it prefigured the real victim-sacrifice of the Lamb of God to come.

A very special offering was the annual sacrifice of the pass-over or paschal lamb. It had to be a yearling, without blemish. It had to be slaughtered and the blood applied to the doorposts of every home of God's people. Then it had to be roasted entirely by fire, and its flesh eaten together with unleavened bread. Thus it was a sacrificial meal. None of its bones were to be broken (Ex. 12). St. John sees the real Paschal Lamb in Jesus hanging on the cross. His legs were not broken by the soldiers, and St. John sees the prescription of the paschal lamb of old fulfilled in Jesus (Jn. 19: 33:36). St. Paul also saw clearly in the paschal lamb our Victim-Savior, for he declared: "Christ our passover has been sacrificed. Let us celebrate the feast not with the old yeast, that is corruption and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:7f). Everytime we celebrate the Paschal Mystery in the eucharistic sacrifice, we offer anew the Lamb of God to the Father and partake of his sacred flesh. His blood is our protection and our salvation.

Perhaps the most striking passage concerning the victim lamb of God is in the fourth song of the Servant of Yahweh, where it is dramatically portrayed how the Lamb of God was chosen to be the victim for the sins of mankind. "Like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth. He was pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins; upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole, by his stripes we were healed. We had all gone astray like sheep, each following his own way; but the Lord laid upon him the guilt of us all" (Is. 53: 7.5.6) "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" cried the Baptist. It is no wonder that the Beloved Disciple fostered a special affection for this theme that he had learned from his master, the Baptist.

In the book of Revelation, the Beloved Disciple develops the glorious aspect of the Lamb of God. There he is immortalized. He ransomed men for God by his sacrificial death (5:9). His blood flowed for the reparation of sin (7:14; 12: 11). He shares the throne of God in the midst of the whole heavenly court (5: 6f). He receives divine adoration and homage from angels and men (5: 11-13). He overcomes all evil powers (17:14) and is the victorious King of kings and Lord of lords (17:14). In the New Jerusalem he takes the place of both the Temple and the Lampstand (21:22f). From him flows forth the river of living-water, the symbol of the Spirit imparted to man (22:1). His servants will be with him always and forever. They shall see him face to face and bear his name on their foreheads (22:4). They shall be his possession for all eternity.

Our response: We owe everything to Christ the Lamb who was slain for us. If he had not died for us, we would never had obtained

life eternal. He is the victim-sacrifice for our sins and those of the entire world. We can be mindful of his love when we recite the "Glory to God in the highest" on Sundays, or in every Mass at the triple "Lamb of God" and in the words just before the reception of Holy Communion. But above all, let us follow the Lamb in pure and virginal faith handed down by the Apostles of the Lamb, and go wherever he goes, for he leads to the one and only goal given to man: the Father (Rev. 14:4).

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND

January 22, 1978: Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Human Situation: When there was a gold rush in California in the middle of the last century, thousands left homes and families, coming to live in a totally new place. They had to labor daily for many hours, always hoping to be a lucky person to find a fortune in gold. They changed the comfort of their homes and the joys of family life for the privations and primitive conditions in their newly found quarters. There were many risks, and dangers both from the side of Indians as well as thieves. But they persisted. All for the kingdom of wealth and money!

The Good News: Jesus does not promise us the goods of this world. His kingdom is not of this world (Jn. 18:36). But it far surpasses anything this world can offer, for it is a kingdom of lasting values and eternal possession. Never was the heart of man satisfied with merely this world's goods, and it never will be. Man has also immortal spirit in him, and the spirit needs spiritual values to give it satisfaction and fulfillment. Christ offers just such values: full forgiveness of his sins, reconciliation with his God and Father, peace of heart, the stupendous gifts of faith, hope and love, a goal beyond this life with all its fleeting pleasures and short-lived success. In a word, man needs spirit, man needs God. St. Augustine said it long ago: The heart of man is not at rest until it rests in God.

But in order that God reign over man's heart, each person must undergo a change. It is not merely some external ceremony or some garment to be worn, but an interior change of heart, metanoia, repentance. Man is aware that he has sinned and God is the enemy of sin. Repentance is what man needs: an awareness that he has offended his loving God and Father, by doing his own will instead of that of God's. He has helped to crucify the Son of God who became our Brother and died to atone for our sins; he has grieved the Holy Spirit whose holy temple he is destined

to be. True repentance is interior and brings about a real change, so that the heart is once more childlike, ready to listen to what his God and Father wants him to do, ready to welcome God and respond to his call of friendship and a community of love.

Often, this deep sense of repentance manifest itself in exterior deeds, though this is not essential. Some go barefoot on a pilgrimage to a shrine, or make an offering to the Lord which deprived them of something they liked. Others impose on themselves a period of fasting or give up certain luxuries for a time, such as certain lawful pleasures, means of entertainment, idle recreation. An excellent manifestation of a true change of heart is to spend more time in prayer with God, and in good works for one's fellow-men. The desire to live the new spirit of metanoia has even led some to enter upon another state of life where they can serve God and man more fervently.

When God begins to reign in the heart of man, real changes take place in him. Mat Talbot was an alcoholic. But once he took the message of Christ seriously: "Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand", he broke his bad habit and became an ardent lover of the Eucharist. Today his cause for beatification is up in Rome. Many a youth has broken with sinful habits and started on the path that leads to true happiness and lasting success. Any number of men and women are in the calendar of saints who once were deep in the throes of sinful ways, but, touched by the Spirit of God, they went in for a genuine change of heart, in order that the reign of God blossom forth in their hearts: Paul, Augustine, Magdalen are but a few examples. Today, Christ's invitation invites us also: "Repent; reform your lives; the kingdom of God is at hand"!

Our response: Experience teaches that no matter how much we possess, no matter how much we enjoy the good things of this life, they leave us in the long run empty at heart. Something more is needed if man is to be truly happy. That one thing is God. Open wide the heart, and let God reign over it. But first give signs of true interior compunction and repentance.

HOW BLEST ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT!

January 29, 1978: Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

The Human Situation: Martin de Porres is a saint well known and loved today. But he belonged to the poorest of the poor. He was an illegitimate child of two races, deserted by his white father and despised by his black mother. He had no childhood. Not to be

wanted or loved can produce a twisted, tormented, ruthless individual. But Martin became none of these things. Somewhere in those early years of neglect, abuse and loneliness, Martin found infinite Love. It was hard to grasp at first that God really loved him, that he would never desert him as his earthly father had done, and that he had a loving heavenly Mother in Mary to whom he could pour out his young heart in confidence and love. Martin began to be filled with great love of Christ and his fellowmen. He devoted himself to the most menial tasks for a lifetime. But after his death the Church raised him to the altar of the saints. God had meant everything to Martin. He truly reigned in him.

The Good News: Jesus does not pronounce as blest the poor as such, but the lowly classes, who are crushed in their oppression and need, yet meekly bow before the will of God and trust in his powerful love to help them. This is truly a revolutionary statement on the part of Jesus. The poor are no longer looked upon as cursed. On the contrary, if they humbly bear their condition, they are really blest, and the blessing consists in possessing the kingdom, but that even the poor will, despite the opposite view of the haughty of this world who despise the poverty-stricken masses, which make up such a great portion of mankind.

This outstanding trait of poverty comes not only from the lips of Jesus but from his very life. He made no attempt to disguise the hard-working peasants, and he himself was known as the carpenter. In those days that designated any kind of rough woodwork in a town, for the needs of common people. The economic conditions of his time did not show up the poverty of Jesus as something exceptional or excessive. There were no middle-class people, only the rich and the poor. Jesus did not preach the social and economic conditions of Israel as an ideal; it was simply taken for granted. But he offered the greatest hope to the great masses of the poor whose life was one of privation and hard labor, by his uplifting idealism. How blest are the poor in spirit, he said! The kingdom of God is their possession!

In his public life he showed his love for simple poverty by not accepting any income even by earning it through teaching or healing. His simple attitude toward wealth was that it constituted an obstacle in reaching the kingdom, and by itself it could never obtain it. In his parables he sees the well-to-do refusing to come to the banquet, and the poor brought in from all the paths and byways (Lk. 14:15). As highest ideal in following him he put as first requisite to distribute all one's goods to the poor. When he died, he had nothing of his own in this world's goods. They laid him in another man's tomb.

Being poor in spirit is an attitude of heart. It can only be acquired by listening to the Spirit indwelling in us and urging us on to ever greater deeds. Every century is witness to thousands of men and women who have found strength in their condition of life, in the thought that there awaits them a better world and real possession in heaven. That is why Christ is the great drawing card for so many on this earth. By word and example he showed them where true happiness and true riches lie. He would be the first today to improve social conditions wherever possible, yet he knew "that the poor you will have with you always" (Jn. 12:8). But he raised their minds and hearts to hope for better things.

It is remarkable that at Lourdes in France, and Fatima in Portugal, and in more recent apparitions, Our Lady has always appeared to children of poor, hard-working people, as if she were at home with those who are simple and content with little. This too is a lesson in itself. Being unhampered by many of the worries and activities that occupy those in comfortable situations, they can turn more to God and his Kingdom already in this life. The Lord knew well what he was saying when he uttered that first of the beatitudes: Blest are the poor in spirit!!

Our Response: If our state in life is not one of the anawim, and God has blessed us with the goods of this world, we can at least be detached from them, use them well, and realize that they cannot in themselves bring us true happiness here below, nor by any means the blessedness of the heavenly realm.