

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS.

GOOD NEWS FOR THE BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE

Editorial

STATUTES OF THE APOSTOLIC UNION OF THE CLERGY

S. Cong. of the Clergy

PRIMER ON THE COMING ARCHDIOCESAN SYNOD OF MANILA

Bishop Oscar Cruz

GUIDELINES FOR A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Bishop Sincero Lucero

PHILIPPINE CATHOLIC BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE

Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P.

BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE TODAY

**World Catholic Federation
for the Biblical Apostolate**

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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EDITORIAL

Good News For The Biblical Apostolate

A big boost was given to the Biblical Apostolate in the Philippines in July this year with the establishment of the Bishops' Commission on the Biblical Apostolate and its agency, the National Catholic Bible Center.

This was the outcome of Msgr. Mario Baltazar's report to the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines on the world biblical assembly he attended in Malta, April 1978. Realizing that "only through a deeply rooted biblical spirituality can Christians play their specific role in the world and contribute towards the building up of a new society based on Christian vision and values," the Malta Assembly recommended "that every Bishop set apart a competent person in each diocese to animate, coordinate and promote the Biblical Apostolate and that steps be taken to coordinate his work at the national level."

Clearly, this is but a follow-up of the directives of Vatican II which, in its Constitution on Divine Revelation ("Dei Verbum"), emphatically wanted:

1. that "easy access to sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful" and to this end 'suitable and correct translations are to be made into different languages, especially from the original texts of the sacred book' (n. 22);

2. that "all the preaching of the Church must be nourished and ruled by sacred Scripture" (n. 21); that the study of the sacred page be "the soul of Theology" (n. 24), and that "by the same word of Scripture the ministry of the word" — which includes pastoral preaching, catechetics, and all other Christian instruction, especially the liturgical homily — "should take wholesome nourishment and yield fruits of holiness" (n. 24);
3. that "as many ministers of the divine word as possible be made able," through the help of biblical scholars, "to effectively provide the nourishment of the Scriptures for the people of God" (n. 23); and in the first place they must be "in touch with the sacred text itself through diligent sacred reading and careful study" (n. 25);
4. that bishop "give the faithful entrusted to them suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels" (n. 25);
5. that "prayer should accompany the reading of sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together" (n. 25).

Scattered efforts have been made in the Philippines to follow the directives of the Second Vatican Council. In 1967 the Bishops formed a Bible Translation Committee to cooperate with our separated brethren in Common Bible Translations. By now this effort has produced the New Testament in six Philippine languages.

To help priests make their homilies more biblical, publications, notably our own **Boletín Eclesiástico**, have given wide circulation to biblical notes for homilies. A weekly radio program to prepare priest and laymen for the Sunday Gospel Reading has been aired over DWRV (Radio Veritas) every Friday evening since 1972.

Guidelines for Scripture Study, Bible Service, and Bible Sharing have been published in "Good News" since December 1972 (interrupted in August 1976 but resumed in January 1978).

Dioceses have cooperated in the observance of Bible Week during the first week of Advent. Schools have revised their Religion or Theology curriculum to make it more biblically centered. Cateche-

tical groups have sent their catechists to biblical courses or organized Bible Seminars for them. Religious congregations have become Bible-conscious. A Catholic Bible Center was founded in Manila in 1971.

Bible Study and Prayer groups have proliferated throughout the country, especially in places where efforts have begun towards the building of small Christian Communities.

Still, there is a general feeling that not enough is being done to really fulfill the desires of Vatican II that the Bible occupy a central place in Christian life. Many complain of the lack of expert teachers in Scripture. Those who try to get along without teachers complain that they do not have materials for self-study. Countless persons are still at a loss on how to familiarize themselves with the Bible when they have so many questions about it. How many feel that they have nowhere and no one to turn to when they have doubts and difficulties raised by their Bible study!

The time is ripe — perhaps even long overdue — for the national promotion and coordinaton of the biblical apostolate. Hopefully, the new Bishops' Commission and the National Catholic Bible Center will succeed in their tremendous and urgent work.

SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO EPISCOPIS

S O R S O G O N E N S I S

D E C R E T U M

Romanorum Pontificum cura est, prout locorum temporumque adiuncta ac Christifidelium bonum id exigant, Sacrorum Antistitibus adiutores Episcopos assignare ut eis, quos ecclesiastica negotia premunt, congruentia ferant auxilia.

Cum Exc. mus P.D. Arnolphus Arcilla, Episcopus Sorsogonensis, attentis angustiis quibus premitur dioecesis, postulavisset ut Episcopus Auxiliaris sibi daretur, Summus Pontifex PAULUS, Divina Providentia PP. VI, eius preces benigne excipere statuit.

Quapropter de consilio infrascripti Cardinalis sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti, ad illud munus nominat Exc.mum P.D. Concordium Sarte, Episcopum titularem Thunusudensem, hactenus Auxiliarem Exc.mi P.D. Theopisti Alberto y Valderrama, Archiepiscopi Cacerensis, iuribus praeditum quae ad normam Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II, per Apostolicas Litteras "Ecclesiae Sanctae" Motu Proprio die VI augusti 1966 expeditas ad executionem deductam, huic officio competunt.

Idem Summus Pontifex praesens edi iussit sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Decretum, perinde valiturum ac si Apostolicae sub plumbo Litterae datae forent.

Contrariis quibusvis minime obstantibus.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, die 3 mensis octobris anno 1977.

SEBASTIANUS CARD. BAGGIO
Pref.

ERNESTUS CIVARDI
Secretarius

STATUTES OF THE APOSTOLIC UNION OF THE CLERGY

REVISED BY THE INTERNATIONAL
ASSEMBLY OF OCTOBER 1976

*and approved by the S. Congregation for the Clergy
on 1st of February 1977*

I. BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. The Apostolic Union groups together priests, Christ's ministers, who endeavour to help one another in the practice of their spiritual life and ministry (P. O. 13). Therefore its specific note is to foster priestly brotherhood as a help to apostolic life, i.e., a life of holiness and generosity to be pursued by mutual support in the 'presbyterium' (L. G. 28; P.O. 8).

2. In each local church the priests, united among themselves and with their bishop, the apostolic college and the Sovereign Pontiff, are a living sign of Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, at the service of God's people. Therefore they endeavor to be Christ-like in their spiritual and pastoral life. The Apostolic Union is meant to help them to live in this spirit and to foster it by aiding one another.

3. An active loyalty towards the Roman Pontiff, the bond of unity in the universal Church, and towards the episcopal body, is specially necessary to priests in order that they may be responsible and authentic collaborators of the order of bishops, both in the local and the universal church. Roman Pontifical and L. G. 28).

4. The diocesan priest is especially called to minister in a local church, whose first shepherd and sign of unity is the bishop. The members of the Apostolic Union will highly esteem the charism and ministry of the bishop and they will be eager to foster sacramental brotherhood and active collaboration with him and all priests (P. O. 8) in true and loyal dialogue based on mutual trust.

5. Sent to serve the people of God in the name of Christ, its Head, priests will be united with the people and they will make their needs their own; they will work together with lay people in apostolic service of the Church.

6. The Apostolic Union earnestly invites its members to live lives of pastoral charity according to these principles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; to foster the same feelings that the

Heart of Jesus had towards his Father and towards men. They should also strive to imitate the Blessed Virgin Mary's humble fidelity and readiness to serve, in her union with Christ. Priests and Victim, in the work of redemption.

II. SPIRITUAL GUIDELINES

7. Members of the Apostolic Union wish to practise their pastoral charity in the spirit of the gospel beatitudes. They desire to attach themselves freely to Christ, and in Him, in spirit of union, ever to help one another.

8. In imitation of Christ, they will practise poverty. For example, they will keep careful personal accounts and show genuine hospitality to others. They will be ready to share what they have and willingly devote their time to others, showing due regard for each and every one. They will use things for the purpose for which they were intended.

9. The priests of the Apostolic Union will cherish their celibacy as a sign of, and incentive to, their complete attachment to Christ and their pastoral openness to others.

10. Obedience will be practised especially by accepting the directives of the diocesan authorities, particularly of the bishop, according to the mind of the Church.

11. Members of the A.U. will endeavour to nourish their spiritual life at the twofold table of the word of God and of the Eucharist, in union with all priest and for the service of men.

12. In this spirit they will faithfully pray the Liturgy of the Hours, when possible in common, give due time to mental prayer and the attentive reading of the word of God. According to their inclination and opportunity, they will make a review of life in the light of the gospel.

13. Since the Eucharist builds up and unites the Church they will celebrate it even when the faithful are not present, and find in it the Christ-given strength which they need for their apostolic mission. They will regard it as the centre of their priestly life and of the whole Church.

14. They will willingly spend time adoring and contemplating Christ present in his love in the Eucharist.

15. They will examine their conscience in the light of the gospel and frequently have recourse to the sacrament of reconciliation. They will give due importance to spiritual direction. Every year they will make a spiritual retreat.

16. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Christ the Priest, will help them to lead their priestly life in a priest of filial trust.

17. Since brotherly charity and mutual help in the priestly life are the principal aim of our association, members will regularly take active part in the gatherings of the A. U., as well as in the various priestly meetings which concern them. Visiting their brother-priests, especially those most in need, will be a specially cherished form of this help.

18. Amid their pastoral duties they will set aside adequate time for study and needed relaxation.

19. Every year they will offer one Mass for the deceased members of the Union.

20. The national unions may define more precisely these guidelines for their members, especially as regards the frequency of the Union meetings. They may also devise a suitable method of self-examination on one's fidelity to all obligations.

III. SERVICES

21. In a spirit of brotherly charity and helpfulness, the A. U. offers its services, not only to the diocesan 'presbyterium', but also to the clergy at the national and even international level. Special attention should always be paid to the present-day needs and conditions of priests (P.O. 8).

22. It fosters especially the priest's interior life, and also the readiness to collaborate in common tasks in order faithfully to assist the hierarchy (L. G. 41; P.O. 13).

23. Above all it endeavours to promote and support its members' personal continued training.

24. Within the limits of its resources and opportunities, it promotes:

- spiritual retreats and recollection;
- priests' doctrinal, ascetical and pastoral updating;
- the training of promoters of priestly spirituality;
- the publication and spread of papers and other publications dealing with spiritual topics;
- help for priests in need (P.O. 18, 19; O.T. 22; Ch.D. 16).

25. It promotes and encourages the practice and experience of community life.

26. It offers its help to priestly, religious or secular institutes, as well as to lay associations which in a special manner show their concern for the life and ministry of priests.

IV. ORGANIZATION

27. The A. U. is a federation of local groups of priests, which unite in order to collaborate with the various organizations in the local church.

A. Local Organization

28. A local group of the A. U. is attached to a particular church, and it is at the service of the "presbyterium". It provides opportunities for prayer in common, mutual help and friendship.

29. Meetings take place regularly, as far as possible; they are times of prayer, sharing and reflection.

30. The group is organized according to its means, and it chooses for itself a moderator, who is to be helped by at least one of the members.

31. The moderator arranges for the meetings of the group and fosters good relations with the bishop, priests, deacons and lay people, especially those who hold responsible positions.

B. National Organization

32. In each nation the moderators of the local groups have regular gatherings and these constitute the national assembly. These meetings are held as often as convenient (every year or every three years); they are times of prayer, reflection and exchange.

33. The assembly is organized according to available means, and chooses a moderator, helped by councillors, to be at the service of the local groups.

The assembly considers the questions which concern the priests of its nation, and, if it appears useful, gives some precisions to the statutes of the Union.

34. The national moderator and councilors (who represent the various regions, ages and pastoral works) look into what is useful and relevant for the local groups. They help the erection of new groups.

They may propose plans for meetings and look for promoters in places and dioceses where groups do not yet exist.

35. The national moderator convokes the national assemblies and visits the local groups. He is responsible for the national publications of the Union, for relations with the Bishop's Conference and individual bishops, with priests, deacons and lay people who are involved in works at the national level.

(C. International Organization — Similar)

**LETTER OF THE SECRETARIAT OF STATE VATICAN
NOVEMBER 9, 1977**

TO

**THE MOST REVEREND TEOPISTO V. ALBERTO, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF CACERES, NAGA CITY**

ON

**THE QUADRICENTENNIAL OF THE EVANGEL-
IZATION OF THE BIKOL REGION**

Your Excellency,

The evangelization of the Bikol Region was a striking fulfillment of the command by Jesus Christ to make disciples of all nations. The quadricentennial commemoration is thus of great significance not only for those whose ancestors so readily responded to the call to the faith but also for the universal Church.

The Holy Father therefore joins wholeheartedly with the beloved people of the Bikol Region in thanking God for his gifts to them and, as Peter's successor, he praises the Lord, who in every age and clime raises up people to spread and deepen knowledge of him who is the way, the truth and the life.

Knowledge of Christ, the Word of God, is brought by words — words that pass from person to person, from tongue to ear and again from ear to tongue. This was the method chosen by him who had the words of eternal life, who "opened his mouth and taught" (Mt. 5:2), so that his listeners were "taught by God" (Jn. 6:45).

The response that we human beings are called upon to give to these words is faith: "faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ" (Rom. 10:7). Faith is the acceptance of God's word as God's word. Faith means receiving a knowledge that, although imperfect now, since it enables us merely to see in a mirror dimly, is destined to become the knowl-

edge of one who sees face to face. Faith is the knowledge of the one true God and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent, the knowledge that is eternal life (cf. Jn. 17:3) and the rejection of which brings condemnation (cf. Mk. 16:16).

Being part of the chain that brings God's word to mankind is thus a matter of life and death. It is a matter of life and death for each one whether he truly accepts in his inmost being the words of eternal life. It is a matter of life and death for others that these words should be passed on to them effectively: for "how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard?" (Rom. 10:14).

It is the Holy Father's prayer on this happy and auspicious occasion that the Church in the Bikol Region will not only grow in the knowledge of Christ but will also play an important part in passing on that knowledge to others.

As a pledge of these two graces, His Holiness cordially imparts to the episcopate, the other members of the clergy, the religious and all the faithful of the Bikol Region his special Apostolic Blessing.

With my personal good wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

✠ (Sgd.) JOHN CARD. VILLOT

**LETTER OF THE APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE
MANILA, PHILIPPINES, 6 OCTOBER, 1977**

TO

**HIS EXCELLENCY, MONSIGNOR TEOPISTO V. ALBERTO, D.D.
ARCHBISHOP OF CACERES, NAGA CITY**

ON

**THE QUADRICENTENNIAL OF THE EVANGEL-
IZATION OF THE BIKOL REGION**

Your Excellency:

His Holiness, Pope Paul VI, has learned with limpid joy that, four centuries ago, the Gospel of Christ was first announced by the intrepid missionaries of the Order of Saint Augustine in Bicolandia. His mind is pervaded with the mystery of the Church, the more so, since the Second Vatican Council in its dogmatic Constitution has explained it clearly to the words of Saint Cyprian: "The Church of the Lord sends forth its rays and they fill the entire world..."

The choice of the theme for this year-long celebration "Renewal in Christ" is undoubtedly motivated by the recurrent necessity of life; not only because of the inevitable exhaustion caused by the passing of time, thus exposed to decline and aging, but also due to a positive principle, progress, of which man is capable and his institution with him. This movement is produced in Christian life, which needs to be invited to renewal.

For the Church, her mission is to bring the Good News into all the strata of humanity and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new. It is impossible to accept, as the Supreme Pontiff says "that in evangelization one could or should ignore the importance of the problems, so much discussed today, concerning justice, liberation, development and

peace in the world. This would be to forget the lesson which comes to us from the Gospel concerning love of our neighbor who is suffering and in need".

It is fitting, then, that religious solemnities have been convoked by the Most Reverend Ordinaries of your Ecclesiastical Province to recall the memory of that momentous event to give praise and thanksgiving to God for the inestimable gift of the Faith and to solemnize salutary festivities as the Formal Opening of the Quadricentennial Celebrations of the Evangelization of the Bikol region.

By this grateful commemoration of the 400th year of the Christianization, may it not only revive the planting of the Cross, but also serve to make full preparations for the continuing preservation of so great a treasure, and for its being handed on, richer and deeper, to future generations.

As the Holy Father celebrates this achievement, full of virtues and values, with Your Excellency and your Suffragan Bishops, your priests, religious and people, in a union of spiritual and paternal affection, he willingly pledges his prayers on the happy anniversary and imparts to you all, his Apostolic Blessing.

I avail myself of the opportunity to renew to Your Excellency the sentiments of my deep esteem.

Sincerely yours,

(Sgd.) MSGR. CLAUDIO MA. CELLI
Charge d'Affaires a.i.

ARCHDIOCESAN SYNOD

PRIMER

By

Bishop Oscar V, Cruz, D.D.

A. NATURE

An (arch) diocesan SYNOD is basically an assembly of the representative People of God, convoked, presided and ultimately confirmed by the competent Local (Arch) Bishop to deliberate and pronounce on particular pastoral needs and dated concerns of the Clergy and the Laity of the (Arch)Diocese.

Notanda:

Save for the differences particularly in the question of the competent convoking Church Authority, membership, agenda items and the time prescribed for their convocation, as an (ARCH)DIOCESAN SYNOD is to an Archdiocese or Diocese, so is a PROVINCIAL COUNCIL to an Ecclesiastical Province, a PLENARY COUNCIL to several Ecclesiastical Provinces, an EPISCOPAL SYNOD to the Catholic Episcopate, and an ECUMENICAL COUNCIL to the Universal Church.

B. FINALITY:

An (arch)diocesan SYNOD is substantially motivated by the intent to promote the good of GOD's PEOPLE in the (Arch)Diocese, concretely in terms of the pastoral welfare of both the Clergy and the Laity therein as seen in the circumstances of time and place.

Notanda:

Unless there be reasons to the contrary, an (arch)diocesan SYNOD should be held at least every ten years precisely because the pastoral welfare of the Clergy and the Laity is affected by the changing circumstances of time and place. Irrespective of whether the SYNOD is given a prevalently reconciliative, educative or normative finality, its ultimate objective must be the good of the People of God, the Clergy and the Laity alike, of the (Arch)Diocese. All

synodal deliberations and pronouncements, being local and particular in nature, cannot but be within the framework of Common Law.

C. MEMBERSHIP:

An (arch)diocesan SYNOD, unequivocably headed by the Local (Arch)Bishop, is composed of membership under two categories: members according to law and members according to the discretion of the Head.

1. Members According to Law:

- a. Auxiliary Bishops and Vicars General.
- b. Cathedral Canons or Diocesan Consultors.
- c. Rector of the Major Diocesan Seminary.
- d. Episcopal Vicars and Vicars Forane.
- e. Duly elected Deputy from every Collegial Church.
- f. Parish Priests of the Synod City site.
- g. Duly elected Parish Priest from every rural Vicariate.
- h. Governing Abbots.
- i. Superior of every clerical religious Institute in the Diocese, designated by the Provincial, unless the Provincial House proper is situated within the Diocese and the Provincial himself prefer to personally attend the Synod.

2. Members According to Discretion

Primarily depending on the nature of the concrete Synodal agenda items and the prudential judgement of the Local (Arch)-Bishop, other members may be invited to the Synod such as the following expressly mentioned by law by way of examples: all Canons, Parish Priests, Religious Superiors and members of the Diocesan Clergy.

On the principle that an (arch)diocesan SYNOD is an assembly of the representative People of God, subject to the discretion of the same Local (Arch)Bishop, the following may also be invited to attend a SYNOD: lay religious Superiors in the Diocese, Rectors or Presidents of Catholic Universities and Colleges, Rector of the Diocesan Minor Seminary and Rectors of non-diocesan Major Seminaries in the Diocese, Diocesan Major Seminarians, Papal Awardees and the like, Presidents of Mandated Catholic Organizations, Parish Council Presidents of their equivalent, Civil Government Officials, Leaders of Basic Christian Communities and others.

Notanda:

Unless otherwise provided for in the instrument of invitation to the SYNOD, membership herein according to discretion carries the right to a consultative vote equal to that in favor of synodal members according to law. It is however a well established principle that there is but one synodal legislator, viz., the Local (Arch) Bishop.

D. SUBJECT MATTER:

An (arch)diocesan SYNOD should be clear and specific as to the concrete agenda items it aims to deliberate and pronounce upon as warranted by the circumstances of time and place, suggested by duly recognized sources, approved and/or determined by the Local (Arch)Bishop — but within the framework of Common Law always.

Synodal subject matters of deliberations and pronouncements may be conveniently titled under such generic headings:

1. Worship. Formation. Services.
2. General Policies. Persons. Sacraments. Temporalities. Procedures. Discipline.
3. (Arch)diocesan Organization. Diocesan Clergy. Clerical and Lay Religious. Diocesan Seminarians. Laity. Worship. Education. Missions. Communications Media. Ecumenical Affairs. Community Affairs. Temporal Affairs. Church and State Relation.

Notanda:

The nature and number of Synodal Commissions will depend on the nature and number of the duly determined synodal agenda items either under general headings as above said or under more limited or more specific titles if so desired, v.g., Catechetics, Pastoral Program, Parish Organization, Clerical Discipline, Youth Program, Family Life, Lay Apostolate, Ministries, and the like.

The significance and impact in time of a SYNOD largely depend on the determination or choice of its subject matter and the deliberative process made thereupon. To ask the right questions on the right issues is a salutary synodal guiding principle.

E. PROCEDURES:

An (arch)diocesan SYNOD usually follows four basic procedural steps, through decretal measures: Decree of Convocation. Decree of Formal Opening. Decree of Promulgation. Decree of Conclusion.

1. Decree of Convocation:

This instrument carries the general objective or goal of the projected SYNOD, specifies the place (the Cathedral as a rule) and time of the SYNOD celebration, and mentions in general lines the title for synodal membership.

Other Decrees immediately follow: Decree on the Constitution of Synodal Commissions. Decree on the Constitution of Synodal Procedures. Decree on the Constitution of Synodal Officials.

- a. **Synodal Commissions:** The instrument lists down the particular Commissions, usually preceded by a General Commission-Secretariat, with the Chairman, Members and Secretaries thereof specified.
- b. **Synodal Procedures:** The instrument determines the method or mechanics to be adopted on how the synodal inquiries, deliberations and votations shall be conducted particularly by the Commissions and the Synodal Members.
- c. **Synodal Officials:** The instrument names the persons duly charged with specific functions during General and Solemn Synodal Sessions, viz., the Synodal Promoter, the Scrutator(s), Notary (Notaries), Ceremonial Master (arrangements and liturgy).

2. Decree of Formal Opening:

This instrument carries the declaration that, everything thus being duly prepared, the SYNOD is formally opened with a Solemn Session — which may be followed by other Solemn Sessions prior to the closing one — on the date, time and place designated.

During the Solemn Sessions(s), aside from the confirmation or formal approval of the Synodal produce/recommendations by the Local (Arch) Bishop, this same Synodal Authority may solicit also the approval of his proposed or opted Consultors, Synodal Examiners and Synodal Judges by the Synod Members as provided by law — not unless other measures are already provided for locally, particularly with reference to the Consultative Board of the local (Arch)Bishop.

3. Decree of Promulgation:

This instrument carries two main content items, viz., the mandate to release to the public the documental produce of the

Synod as approved by the Local (Arch)Bishop, and the specification of the date when it would actually become effective.

4. Decree of Conclusion:

This instrument simply carries the statement declaring the Synod formally closed, together with suitable lines of gratitude to God and His People for their prayers/participation, and other appropriate exhortations relative to the synodal pronouncements.

Notanda:

The determination of Synodal Procedures, method or mechanics to be observed by the synodal members during their particular and general sessions constitutes a very important feature in the orderliness of the deliberations and in ascertaining the true mind of the majority when votes are cast.

F. WORKING SCHEMA:

An (arch)diocesan SYNOD may adopt the following simple but also effective Working Schema wherein the Synodal Commissions play the key role once the synodal subject matter or agenda items for deliberations and pronouncements have already been duly established:

1. Commission to Members:

All Synodal Commissions send questionnaire on their respective assigned subject matter directly to the individual Synodal Members. The responses are accordingly evaluated and the Commissions in accord thereto prepare their respective drafts.

Notanda:

The Commissions may send further clarifying questionnaires to the individual Synodal Members if so desired and deemed convenient for the better preparation of the draft.

2. Commissions to Session:

All Synodal Commissions one after another present their respective drafts to the Synodal Members gathered in particular or general (plenary) sessions as the case may be, for their votes of approval, rejection or amendment, until a majority affirmative vote (preferably two thirds at least) is obtained.

Notanda:

The Commissions would do well to qualify or specify their drafts with "First", "Second", "Third", etc., etc, in the event that successive drafts are prepared pursuant to the mind or vote of the Synodal Members in session.

3. Commissions to Local (Arch)Bishop:

All Synodal Commissions submit the drafts duly passed by the Synodal Members gathered in session, to the Local (Arch)-Bishop for his consideration and confirmation as the case may be.

Notanda:

The Commissions should regularly consult with the Local (Arch)Bishop in the preparation of the draft(s) to also know his mind on the agenda item concerned. The formal confirmation of the drafts or synodal documental produce by the Local (Arch)-Bishop may be done during the Solemn Session(s) of the Synod.

G. SYNODAL PRODUCE:

An (arch)diocesan SYNOD is usually expected to have and issue documental produce in line with the leadership-direction given it by the Local (Arch)Bishop possibly with the advice of his Council or Consultative Board.

Such documental produce can be mainly either educative in nature or normative in content — or a happy combination of both, in which case, the documents would first contain general (doctrinal) declaration of principles followed by particular norms of action, and ended at times with recommendations for future reference or feasibility study.

It is also quite possible that the SYNOD would see the necessity or convenience of creating or establishing new offices or functions, committees or departments in one or more (arch)diocesan pastoral endeavors. The pertinent synodal documental produce could carry such items by way of ordinances.

After the II Vatican Council, there is a distinct trend noticed in (Arch)Diocesan SYNODS to produce eminently pastoral documents with both ecclesiological and eschatological features that provide the premises of their normative contents which are reduced to essentials.

H. SYNODAL TIME TABLE:

An (arch)diocesan SYNOD would do well to follow as closely as possible a predetermined time table or schedule from its formal opening to the solemn closing: sufficient time allotments are given and observed in various basic steps of the opted working schema.

The synodal schedule should allow time as well for conferences by experts in subject matter for deliberation, sufficient dissemination of printed materials, and even spiritual renewal days for the Synodal Members if this be desired particularly prior to discussion and deliberation on difficult synodal agenda items that may acutely divide the said members during particular or general sessions.

Each step in the Synodal Time Table according to schedule is definitely a contributing factor to the ultimate goal and objective of the SYNOD in accord with the keynote address of the Local (Arch)Bishop during its formal opening and as generically expressed in the Decree of Convocation.

OUR COMMITMENT TO THE APOSTOLATE

**PASTORAL LETTER OF THE MOST
REVEREND SINCERO B. LUCERO, D.D.
BISHOP OF BORONGAN, SAMAR**

**TO OUR BELOVED PEOPLE OF GOD: THE CLERGY AND
THE LAITY**

GRACE, JUSTICE AND PEACE FROM OUR LORD, JESUS CHRIST!

We address this Letter to you, first of all, to extend with joy our fraternal and cordial greetings and to express our gratitude for the considerable works you have accomplished with extraordinary dynamism during these past years to fulfill the objectives put before you as APOSTLES.

Secondly, we wish to remind you once again, through this Pastoral Letter, on Christ's unceasing call to the APOSTOLATE, and to stress to you a sense of awareness of our COMMITMENT AS APOSTLES.

INTRODUCTION

Oftentimes we hear these words of Christ which we know and love so well: "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain."¹ This is Christ's call to the apostolate and it is addressed to us all who are chosen from thousands and thousands of human beings. What a special grace! What a singular privilege!

Moreover, the Holy Father, in his Encyclical "Mystici Corporis Christi,"² in calling upon all the members of the Church to collaborate in the building and perfecting of the Mystical Body of Christ, also reminds us — both the Clergy and the Laity — on our call to the apostolate. The Church, through his Holiness, only echoes the call of Christ.

¹ St. John XV:16.

² Cfr. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* a. 35, p. 24, 1943.

In the decisive words to His Apostles, Christ said: "You, therefore, must go out, making disciples of all nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all the commandments which I have given you."³ Here, Christ presents the nature of our apostolate; it is, in fact, the definition of the Church's mission.

In his address to the Second World Congress for the Lay Apostolate, Cardinal Pizzardo remarks that "the apostolate is the work of one who seeks to make known the Will of His Lord and Master, that is to say, to make Jesus Christ known and loved. Obviously, to make Him known and loved by others, we must first know and love Him ourselves; that is the indispensable foundation of the apostolate."⁴

The Council Fathers, in the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, define apostolate as "all activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of the goal for which the Church was founded: that by spreading the Kingdom of Christ everywhere for the glory of God the Father, she might bring all men to share in Christ's saving redemption; and through them the whole world might in actual fact be brought into relationship with him."⁵

Doubtless to say, the Council Fathers are only expressing the mind of God regarding the essentials of our apostolate but with a strong desire "to intensify the apostolic activity of the People of God."⁶

However, to have a better understanding and a clearer vision of our apostolate with new awareness and a new energy, this Pastoral Letter hopes to treat the matter in the perspective of God's Plan, of the Mission of Christ and His Church, of the living Organisms through which the Church's Mission is fulfilled, and of our Common Undertaking to Build Up the Parish (with its Council and Plan) into a Genuine Christian Community.

THE DIVINE PLAN

God has willed **the salvation of all mankind** and He decreed that this should be carried out **through Christ and in Christ**. The Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians,⁷ sees this predetermined plan of God for the salvation of mankind to be centered **through Christ**

³ St. Matthew XVIII:19-20.

⁴ *Laymen In The Church Texts*, Vol. I, p. 47, Rome, 5-13 October, 1957.

⁵ *Apostolate of the Laity*, No. 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 1.

⁷ Cfr. Eph. I:3-10.

and in Christ, and to be revealed in various ways: the call to be holy in Christ; the divine adoptive sonship establishing relationship with God the Father through Christ; the liberation from sin through Christ's death; the gift of faith in Christ bestowed upon the Jews and the Gentiles, and finally, the bringing of all creation under Christ's Headship.

Not satisfied with saving men, God has willed them **to share in Christ and through Christ in His very Life and Being and Sanctity:** "that you become sharers of the divine nature,"⁸ In other words, God has also willed our identification with Christ.

Moreover, God has willed them **to be united, around Christ, in a community.** He has formed for Himself "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a holy people."⁹ He has created for Himself a family, in which He is the Father and Christ the Elder Brother, whose members are one: "that they may be one, even as we are one."¹⁰ Such is the Holy Church of Christ, of God, She is filled with the fulness of Christ. She is the fulness of Christ.¹¹

Furthermore, God has willed that His Church should communicate **the fulness of Christ** to those who are still outside the fold,¹² those who are lost¹³ and even those who are already within "that they may have it to the full."¹⁴

Such is the Divine Plan of Salvation — CHRIST-CENTERED!

GOD'S PLAN IN THE COURSE OF SACRED HISTORY

Although the Church has Her origin in eternity, nevertheless, She belongs to history. She contains God's plan which must be unfolded and achieved in history.

When sin enters into history immediately after the fall of our first parents and consequently, the loss of divine life and other divine possessions), everything is orientated with **reference to Christ.** Thus, the Church is already present in the mind of God.

The Old Testament records many of them either in the form of a promise,¹⁵ or by types and figures, like the Chosen Men from the

⁸ 2 Peter I:4.

⁹ 1 Peter II:9.

¹⁰ St. John XVII:11.

¹¹ Cfr. Col. II:9; Eph. I:23.

¹² Cfr. St. John X:16.

¹³ Cfr. St. Luke XIX:10.

¹⁴ St. John X:10.

¹⁵ Cfr. Gen. III:15; XXII:18; XXVI:4; XLIX:10 Num. XIV:17; Deut. XVIII:15; 2 Kings VII:12-14.

days of Adam to the days of King David; like the Ark of the Covenant, the Paschal Lamb, the Manna and the Brazen Serpent; or through Prophecy.¹⁶

These biblical citations clearly point towards **One Person, the God-Man Jesus Christ**. For here, the transmission of the human flesh from which Christ will take His Body is already taking place; the physical and human environment in which Christ will be immersed and from which He will take His physical and human characteristics is already being formed; and the people from whom Christ will come are already chosen by a pact of friendly alliance established by God.

At last, "the Word became flesh and make His dwelling among us."¹⁷ The Second Divine Person of the Triune God, without ceasing to be God, takes a whole and complete human nature, that is, a human body and a human soul and unites it to His Divine Nature.

By the Fact that Christ enters into the human family, taking for Himself a human Mother, making Himself our Brother according to the flesh and making of us His brothers according to the spirit, a community is born: **The Church made visible to all**. And from the moment the Holy Spirit descend upon the disciples at Pentecost, the visible Church is made open to all peoples.

God's plan of love and salvation is, indeed, fulfilled in the various stages of Sacred History.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

Christ establishes the Church with a mission from the Father, He Himself, in several instances, defines such mission. Standing before Pilate, Jesus said: "The reason why I came into the world, is to testify to the truth."¹⁸ As a boy, in the temple, He replied to Mary: "Did you not know I had to be in My Father's business?"¹⁹ And again, in another occasion of His public life: "The Son of Man has come to search out and save what was lost."²⁰ "For I did not come to condemn the world but to save it."²¹ The Nicene Creed,

¹⁶ Cfr. Is. VII:14; XI:1; Mich. V:2; Osee XI:1; Dan. IX:24-27; Psalms XXI and LXVIII.

¹⁷ St. John I:14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* XVIII:37.

¹⁹ St. Luke II:49.

²⁰ *Ibid.* XIX:10.

²¹ St. John XII:48.

in the profession of our Faith, sums up all this: "Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven."²²

But Christ has to leave this world and to go back to His Father. In describing the pattern of His earthly life, He said: "I did, indeed, come from the Father, I came into the world. Now I am leaving the world to go to the Father."²³

However, He confers upon His Church through His Apostles a special mandate when He said. "As the Father has sent Me, so I send you."²⁴ He who hears you, hears Me. He who rejects you, rejects Me, rejects Him who sent Me."²⁵ Thus, the Church through the Apostles and their successors will be seen as the **principle of continuity and diffusion for the Christian Revelation**, and at the same time, of **unity and authority for the believers**. The **Mission of the Church** is, indeed, the **continuation of Christ's Mission**. The **Mission of Christ** flows over into the **Mission of the Church**.

In continuing and exercising the Mission of Christ, the Church, bear this well in mind, in order to keep up for all times her identity with Christ, must preserve intact the **Orthodoxy of the Divine Heritage** — the "Depositum" which Apostle Paul says must be faithfully kept safe.²⁶ This helps us to understand the **Authenticity of the Church's Mission**, otherwise it is no longer the continuation of Christ's Mission but rather it is a purely human mission and a human affair.

Moreover, it must also be pointed out that the Church's Mission is neither springing from itself nor self-organized, but derived from Christ and conferred by Christ, in the words of Apostle Paul, "sent not by men or by any man, but by Jesus Christ and God His Father who raised Him from the dead."²⁷ One, therefore, has first to receive the **Mandate** to exercise so sublime a function, for certainly without being commissioned "Men will present themselves distorting the truth and leading astray any who follow them".²⁸

THE CLERGY AND THE LAITY

In the era of the New Alliance, the time in which we are living, the Church fulfills Her Mission through **Structures and Organisms** which Christ himself defines and prepares and to which the Holy

²² Cfr. Denz., 54.

²³ St. John XVI:28.

²⁴ *Ibid.* XX:21.

²⁵ St. Luke X:16.

²⁶ Cfr. 1 Tim. VI:20.

²⁷ Gal. I:1.

²⁸ Acts XX:30.

Spirit gives life. The **Clergy** (the Priesthood in the strict sense) and the **Laity**, by virtue of the grace and Character conferred on them by Baptism and Confirmation, the Clergy, also by Holy Orders), are the **living and Strong Structures and Organisms** destined to make up the Mystical Body of Christ. Though distinct one from another, yet the Clergy and the Laity are necessarily linked in the **Unity of the Church**. They are like the branches which must remain united to the vine-stem which is Christ, so that they may bring forth much fruit.²⁹ Though one is a Priest and the other a layman and consequently, the apostolate of the one is sacerdotal and of the other, lay, yet both collaborate in the commitment to continue Christ's Mission. For, both receive the commission to be the "salt of the earth and the light of the world."³⁰

Certainly, "in the Church, there is diversity of service but unity of purpose."³¹ "For just as in one body we have many members, yet all the members have not the same function, so we, the many are one body in Christ, but severally members one of another."³² "Each has a share in the function as well as in the life of the body,³³ and the whole body which is the Church, "derives its increase according to the functioning in due measure of each single part."³⁴

Thus, the Clergy, in responding to the call of Christ and in exercising the apostolate, perform the role as demanded of them by their sacred vocation; the Laity, too, play the part which is proper to them according to their state in life.

THE PRIESTLY APOSTOLATE

Christ entrusts to His Apostles the power of **Consecrating**³⁵ and that of **Teaching and Governing**,³⁶ that is, of communicating to mankind the infallible truth and of establishing the laws which regulate Christian life. The Apostles pass these powers to the Pope and Bishops who, in turn, pass them on to the Ordained Priests. The Clergy, then, that is, the Pope, the Bishops and the Priests, in exercising the apostolate, perform a triple Ministry,³⁷ namely, the

²⁹ Cfr. St. John XV:5.

³⁰ St. Matthew V:13-14.

³¹ Apostolate of the Laity, No. 2.

³² Rom. XII:4-5.

³³ Apostolate of the Laity, Ibid.

³⁴ Eph. IV:16.

³⁵ Cfr. St. Luke XXII:19-20.

³⁶ Cfr. St. Matthew XXVIII:19-20; XVI:18-20.

³⁷ Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church, No. 30.

Ministry of the Word, the Ministry of the Sacraments, and the Ministry of Serving and Pasturing the People of God.

The **Roman Pontiff**, by Divine Institution, as Vicar of Christ on earth and Successor of Saint Peter, "enjoys supreme, full immediate and universal authority over the care of souls... a primacy of ordinary power over all the Dioceses."³⁸ It is, therefore, the **Apostolic Role** of his Holiness, the Holy Father, as Pastor of all the faithful, to care for the "common good of the Universal Church and for the good of the individual Churches."³⁹

The **Bishops**, for their part, being appointed by the Holy Spirit Successors of the Apostles to be Pastors of soul, have as their **Apostolic Role** (together, of course, with the Supreme Pontiff and under his authority), continuation "throughout the ages of the work of Christ which is... to teach all nations, to hallow men in truth and feed them."⁴⁰ In other words, to teach, to sanctify and to govern (serve) the sheep entrusted to their care in their respective dioceses (with the cooperation, of course, of the Presbytery) is the Bishops' concern, that ultimately all men may walk "in all goodness and justice and truth."⁴¹

The **Priests**, by virtue of their Sacred Ordination and of the mission they receive from their Bishops, "are promoted to the service of Christ, the Teacher, the Priest and King. They share in His ministry of unceasingly building up the Church on earth into the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit."⁴²

Since the Bishop, due to limitation of time and space, cannot be everywhere at once, a community of co-workers is ordained — The Priests, "his Brothers and Friends,"⁴³ who teach, sanctify and govern in His name the People of God in their respective Parishes, that "men may knowingly, freely, and gratefully accept what God has achieved perfectly through Christ, and manifest it in their whole lives."⁴⁴

Thus, it is only in and through the exercise of the **Priestly Apostolate**, that is, the apostolate to teach, to sanctify and to govern, that the Clergy may attain **Christian Perfection** and achieve **Personal Sanctification**.⁴⁵

³⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Eph. V:9.

⁴² The Ministry and Life of Priests, No. 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, No. 7.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Nos. 13 and 18.

THE LAY APOSTOLATE

Sacred Scripture clearly tells us that God shows no partiality: the revelation of His choice of Israel to be the People of God does not mean that He withholds the Divine Favor from other men.⁴⁶ At first, however, the developing Jewish community of Jerusalem shows unwillingness to accept others as Bearers of the Word of Salvation. But, finally, through an exceptional Ordinance of God, they come to realize His plan in the inclusion of other people.⁴⁷ Thus, a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles is formed and acquired the new name of "**Christians**."⁴⁸ In the new alliance the Church calls these Christians "**The Laity**" or "**The Faithful**," who "by Baptism are made one body with Christ and are established among the People of God."⁴⁹

Being incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism, strengthened by the Power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, consecrated into a Royal Priesthood and a Holy People and by the Holy Eucharist nourished "to communicate that **Charity** which is the **Soul** of the entire apostolate,"⁵⁰ "the Laity are assigned to the **Apostolate** by the Lord Himself."⁵¹ Their Christian vocation, by its very nature, is, indeed, a **Vocation to the Apostolate**.⁵²

As we have already said, the duty to exercise the apostolate is common to both the Clergy and the Laity. Christ in conferring on the Clergy the duty of Teaching, Sanctifying and Ruling in His Name and Power, makes also "the Laity share in His priestly, prophetic and royal Office."⁵³ In other words, "the **Lay Apostolate** is a **participation** in the Saving Mission of the Church itself;"⁵⁴ "a **share** in the Mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world."⁵⁵ "a Cooperation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy."⁵⁶

The **Lay Apostolate**, therefore, is not only inherent in the Christian vocation, but also **indispensable** and **necessary**. For the Church (since time immemorial), since the days of our Lord in Jerusalem,

⁴⁶ Cfr. Acts X:34F.

⁴⁷ Cfr. *Ibid.*, XI:1-18.

⁴⁸ Cfr. *Ibid.*, X:26.

⁴⁹ Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, No. 31.

⁵⁰ Apostolate of the Laity, No. 2.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Cfr. *Ibid.*, Nos. 1 and 2.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, No. 2.

⁵⁴ Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, No. 33.

⁵⁵ Apostolate of the Laity, No. 2.

⁵⁶ Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, No. 33.

nearly two thousand years ago, is **never without it**. Spontaneous and fruitful, indeed, is the Laity's activity at the very beginning of the Church.⁵⁷

The Laity, by engaging in **temporal affairs** through their secular **professions** and **occupations**, and by living in the ordinary circumstances of **family and social life**, are called to exercise their apostolate in the world as a **kind of leaven**. Through their **temporal activity** led by the spirit of the Gospel, they can openly bear **witness to Christ**, work for and promote the salvation of the world.⁵⁸

The modern conditions existing in our times — like the shortage of Priests (and in some instances, a number of them, deprived of due freedom in their Ministry, and abandoning their vocation either due to celibacy or crisis of faith or strained relations with their superiors) the indifference to the Christian Faith on the part of a considerable number of baptized Catholics (and in some cases, total loss of such faith), the laxity of morality due to immoral books or magazines, movies or dramas (and sometimes, the evil influence imparted by particular radio and television programs and press releases), drug addiction and delinquency, the unfaithfulness in some Christian homes, divorce and unnecessary separation which most of the time lead to broken homes, the ever increasing rate of population with the presentation of artificial contraceptives, abortion, vasectomy and euthanasia as its solutions, the deteriorating relationship between the Church and State in some places, the corruption of a number of public officials (even in high places), unjust wages and poverty, the deteriorating peace and order situation, the cry — justified or unjustified — for human rights and women's liberation, the gross injustice which creates a pitiful travesty on the dignity and personality of Man, and those other areas which sometimes involve a degree of departure from the ethical and religious influences and a serious danger to Christian life, thus widening the gap between the modern world and the message of the Gospel — urgently need the **concern and attention of the Laity**.⁵⁹ For the most part, these areas are accessible only to them and through them. They become, in the words of Paul VI, a sort of a "Bridge to the modern world."

"Upon all the Laity, therefore, the Council Fathers remind us, rests the noble duty of working to extend the divine plan of salvation ever increasingly to all men of each epoch and in every land. Con-

⁵⁷ Cfr. Apostolate of the Laity, No. 1; Acts XI:19-21; Rom. XVI:1-16; Phil. IV:3.

⁵⁸ Cfr. Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, No. 31; The Apostolate of the Laity, No. 2.

⁵⁹ Cfr. Apostolate of the Laity, No. 1.

sequently, let every opportunity be given to them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church."⁶⁰

BUILDING GENUINE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY: OUR COMMON UNDERTAKING

By Baptism, as we have already pointed out, we, both, the Clergy and the Laity, are members of one and the same Body of Christ, whose **Upbuilding** is entrusted to us. We, whatever rank or status, are called to the fulness of **Christian life** and to the **Perfection of Charity**.⁶¹ And one of the effective ways to achieve Christian Holiness is the fulfillment, in the Spirit of Christ, of our respective roles in the **Common Undertaking of Building Up A Genuine Christian Community**. "The office of Pastors... is also properly extended to the formation of a **Genuine Christian Community**."⁶² "The Laity also have their own proper role in **Building up the Church**."⁶³ The role of the Laity **complements** the role of the Clergy in building up a Genuine Christian Community, "since Pastors and Faithful are bound to each other by a mutual need. Pastors of the Church, following the example of the Lord, should minister to one another and to the other Faithful. The Faithful in their turn should enthusiastically lend their cooperative assistance to their Pastors."⁶⁴ "Their activity is so necessary within the Church Communities that without it the apostolate of the Pastors is generally unable to achieve its full effectiveness."⁶⁵

THE PARISH — FIELD FOR OUR COMMON UNDERTAKING

Since it is the Parish that the community of christians is made present and visible, it is the **Parish** that should be the logical **Field for our Common Undertaking** which is to build it up into a Genuine Christian Community.

But how do we view our Parish? If we understand our Parish only in a **physical sense**, that is as only a **place** or **neighborhood** in which we reside, then there is a danger that even if we are in the Parish, **we may not be aware** that we are a part of it. Thus we go

⁶⁰ Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, No. 33.

⁶¹ Ibid., No. 40.

⁶² Ministry and Life of Priests, No. 6.

⁶³ Apostolate of the Laity, No. 25.

⁶⁴ Dogmatic Constitution of the Church, No. 32.

⁶⁵ Apostolate of the Laity, No. 10.

to Church wherever is most convenient to us, one Church this week another Church the next. We know the Parish Priest only by name, because he is rarely seen; we never come to the convento because the Parish Priest either has an indifferent attitude or is always out somewhere; and our only contact with Parish life, perhaps, is when we are tapped for a donation for the Parish fiesta or for a Parish project, which we willingly give since we are residents of the Parish and because we consider ourselves as good Catholics.

Another view of the Parish is functional. We see it as a division of the Church structure created for the purpose of rendering service to the parishioners. It exists, therefore, to serve the religious needs of the people. The concept, of course, is correct but inadequate, because it results in an idea of a Parish life which revolves only about the Church, going to Sunday Mass and occasionally receiving the Sacraments, perhaps, with a pietistic attitude. No wonder, then, many people identify the **Parish with the Person** of the Parish Priest, and when we get in trouble with him, then, that's the end of our Parish life.

Let us, therefore, view our Parish as a **Community of Christians**, as the **Primary Community of the Mystical Body** which is the Church, the People of God. However, we must be fully aware that the Parish is, first of all, a **Human Community**, that is, "a group of people carrying on a common interdependent life, and living in the context of social, cultural, geographical circumstances. This is the **matrix** on which the Christian Community is built. Even before it becomes Christian, a community must already be **viable as a human community**."⁶⁶ And the Parish can only become a Christian Community "when we build upon the human community the **Spirit of Christ**, and we do this by incorporating it into the **Worshipping Christ**, the **Witnessing Christ**, the **Serving Christ**,"⁶⁷

We can, therefore, deduce that when the Parish becomes a Christian Community, it becomes a **Living Cell** of the Church and shares in Her triple Characteristics, namely a **Worshipping Community**, a **Witnessing Community** and a **Serving Community**. Thus, the Parish becomes a Genuine Christian Community when we, the Clergy and the Laity, are united in the **Worship of God**, in the **Teaching of the Gospel** and in the **Service of and Love for one another**.

In the concept of Vatican II, the Parish, to become a Christian Community must have "its basis and center in the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist..." (Worship) and "if the celebration is to be

⁶⁶ Benito Sison, "Parish Ministry and Management", Philippine Priests' Forum, Vol. II, No. 2 (June, 1970) pp. 23-24.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

sincere and thorough, it must lead to various work of Charity and mutual help (Service) as well as to missionary activity and to different forms of Christian Witness."⁶⁸ (Teaching)

This then, is the way all of us should see our Parish. With this concept, we will be able to extend our vision from the confines of the Church to the farthest corners of the Parish, for there, too, the Message of Christ must be brought. We cannot remain indifferent to its problems. We can no longer be concerned only about our welfare but must also be concerned with the welfare of the other members, for as Apostle Paul says: "You are the Body of Christ. Every one of you is a member of it . . . that all the members may be concerned for one another. If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members share its joy."⁶⁹ This concern for the welfare of the rest of the members must then be **translated into apostolate** which is the obligation, as we have already discussed, of every Christian arising from the very fact of his membership in Christ's Mystical Body which is the Church.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Vatican II recommends an effective **Parish Structure** which, while preserving the character and autonomy of existing Parish organizations, can serve as an **instrument for communication, coordination and cooperation** between the Clergy and the Laity as they exercise their respective roles in building up the Parish into a Genuine Christian Community. And it is the **Pastoral Council**: "In dioceses as far as possible, there should be councils which assist the apostolic work of the Church either in the field of making the Gospel known and men holy, or in the charitable, social or other spheres. To this end, clergy and religious should appropriately cooperate with the Laity. While preserving the proper character and autonomy of each organization, these councils will be able to promote the mutual coordination of various lay associations and enterprises. Councils of this type should be established as far as possible also on the **parochial**, interparochial and interdiocesan level as well as in the national or international sphere."⁷⁰

The Parish Pastoral Council becomes **effectively working**, if its **membership is truly representative** of the Parish community: "a council where we gather some of the leaders of our Parish who not

⁶⁸ Ministry and Life of Priests, No. 6.

⁶⁹ I Cor. XII:25-27.

⁷⁰ Apostolate of the Laity, No. 26.

only will communicate to us the needs and problems of their fellow parishioners, but will also evaluate our own leadership and functions, as well as share in formulating programs of action and in leading the rest of the Parish in the action that is expected of a Christian community. Such a Parish Council would indeed be a practical application of the principle of collegiality and co-responsibility in the Church which should find extension on all levels in the Church."⁷¹

Mostly, the Parish Pastoral Council draws its membership from the various existing Parish organizations. Some Parishes, however, cannot establish a Pastoral Council, because the organizations are dead or dormant, and if active and strong, lack the knowhow to form it.

PARISH PASTORAL PLAN

For a better understanding, order, oneness and harmony, thus avoiding conflict, confusion, duplication of efforts, waste of energy and unnecessary competition in the Parish activities between the Clergy and the Laity in the exercise of their respective roles in building up the Parish into a Genuine Christian Community, the Parish Pastoral Council must draw up a **Pastoral Plan or Program**. To make it effective and relevant to the times, the Plan or Program must take into consideration the triple aspect of the Parish-Human Community: the **Worshipping**, the **Witnessing**, and the **Serving Community**. "It is hardly possible to draw up any successful pastoral program or to plan any feasible pastoral adaption without analyzing the sociological, cultural and religious phenomena that are current in our Parish communities. And ignorance of the factors underlying the problems and needs of the society in which we live will only result in the application of palliatives or in a scattering of energies."⁷²

In this way, the Parish Pastoral Plan will consist of three Programs which correspond to the triple function of the Clergy and the Laity, namely, the **Worship Program**, the **Christian Education Program** and the **Social Action Program**.

⁷¹ Benito Sison, *Op. Cit.*, p. 30.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

CONCLUSION

Together with this Pastoral Letter we are also issuing a **Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines** for your deliberation and consideration, and hopefully, for adaption according to the needs of your respective Parish Communities.

We, therefore, end this Pastoral Letter with the inspiring words of our Lord, Jesus Christ: "Listen to what I say: open your eyes and see! The fields are shining for harvest!"⁷³

May these words of inspiration make us find our joy and our strength and the guarantee of a fruitful harvest as we together, working as one, all of us, come to direct our apostolic efforts towards the transformation of our Parish into a real, living, and Christian Community, in which the Son of God made man, Saviour of mankind, is the Center and Life of all.

We wish you all a fruitful Apostolate and as a token of Christ's Love, we impart to you, our beloved Co-workers in the Apostolate, the clergy and the Laity, Our Pastoral Blessing.

(Sgd.) **SINCERO B. LUCERO, D.D.**
Bishop of Borongan

September 8, 1977 — Feastday of
Our Lady of Nativity
Borongan Town Fiesta
The Seventy-Ninth Day of Our Episcopacy
In the Diocese of Borongan
Eastern Samar

⁷³ St. John IV:35.

GUIDELINES FOR A PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

DIOCESE OF BORONGAN
Eastern Samar

By

SINCERO B. LUCERO, D.D.
Bishop of Borongan

ARTICLE I

NAME AND NATURE

Section 1. **NAME** — This body shall be known as _____.

Section 2. **NATURE** — The Parish Pastoral Council is a planning and coordinating body of lay Catholic leaders, who under the guidance of the Parish Priest, prepares the pastoral plan for the parish and coordinates the activities of all parish organizations towards the successful implementation of the pastoral plan. It shall be understood, however, that the Parish Pastoral Councils is separate and distinct from the different parish organization which shall retain its individuality, full autonomy and internal direction.

The Parish Pastoral Council also serves as the representative body of the Church in the parish which extends the Church's cooperation to the activities of the socio-civic and governmental organizations which are intended for the welfare and well-being of the people and the community.

ARTICLE II

OBJECTIVES AND FUNCTIONS

Section 1. **OBJECTIVES** — The objectives of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be three-fold:

- 1) To form and develop the parish into a truly christian community of worship, witness and service.
- 2) To promote and encourage a spirit of unity and cooperation among the various parish organizations and to foster among its members a zeal for the apostolate.
- 3) To awaken among the residents an awareness of belonging to the parish and of their duty and responsibility to activity support and participate in all its activities.

Section 2. **FUNCTIONS** — The functions of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be:

- 1) To prepare plan for the parish with the three-fold aim of:
 - a) attaining full participation of parishioners in the liturgy;
 - b) providing catechetical instruction for the youth, opportunities for further religious training of adults, leading to the Christian formation of the families, and the promotion of vocations; and
 - c) the social and economic upliftment of the residents of the parish through the various programs of the Church's social action.
- 2) To coordinate the activities of the different parish organizations to insure full implementation of the pastoral plan with maximum utilization of available talent and resources.
- 3) To cooperate with the socio-civic and governmental organizations in projects intended to improve the welfare and well — being of the people and the community.
- 4) To prepare and implement a program for the improvement of the finances of the parish with the end in view of making it self-sustaining through the offerings of the parishioners.
- 5) To take charge of the physical plant (buildings and grounds) and equipment of the parish and to provide for its maintenance, as well as to plan and work for its improvements.
- 6) To manage the preparations for the parish annual fiesta celebration, and all special liturgical celebrations.

ARTICLE III

ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. **STRUCTURE** — The Parish Pastoral Council shall be composed of a governing body to be called the **Parish Executive Board**, and the **membership proper** which shall be drawn from all existing Catholic organizations, barangay councils, sitio and neighborhood organizations, civic and school organizations in the parish.

The Parish Executive Board shall be composed of **all officers, both elected and appointed, fifteen (15) lay leaders** in the parish appointed by the President after consultation with the other officers

and with the concurrence of the Parish Priest, **Barangay Captains** of all the barrios in the parish, school principals and the **chairmen of the standing committees**.

Section 2. **MEMBERSHIP** — The members of the Parish Pastoral Council shall be appointed by the Parish Priest after consultation with the concerned organization and shall consist of the following:

- 1) four (4) representatives each from all existing Catholic organizations;
- 2) three representatives (3) each from all barangay councils, sitio and neighborhood organizations, civic organizations, school organizations, parent-teacher's associations in the parish; and
- 3) the fifteen (15) laymen appointed to serve in the Parish Executive Board.

In the case of religious organizations, the president, vice-president and treasurer shall be *ex-officio* members of the Council. In the case of barangay councils and other organizations, the barangay captain, the president and vice-president of such organizations shall, if willing become members of the Council; or if they are not willing or are unable to serve, they shall be asked to nominate their representative to the Council.

Provided, however, that if any of the said officers, is already an elected officer or member of the Parish Executive Board, the deficiency shall be filled by the organization concerned; and provided further that the Parish Priest, at this discretion, may appoint more than the **minimum** number of members from any organization specified in sub-paragraphs (1) and (2), but in no case should there be more than ten (10).

Section 3. **DUTIES OF MEMBERS** — It shall be the duty of members:

- 1) to attend and actively participate in the general meetings of the Council and in the monthly meetings of the committee to which they are assigned;
- 2) to disseminate information on policies and projects of the Pastoral Council to the other members of the organization to which they belong; and
- 3) to help in the implementation of such policies and projects through their respective organizations.

Section 2. **TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP** — It must be understood that membership in the Parish Pastoral Council is an

opportunity for service to the people and community. Should any member fail to attend Council meetings for three (3) consecutive months without justifiable cause, it will be taken to mean that he is unable to render service that is expected of him, and he will be considered automatically resigned. The Parish Priest will then appoint another to take his place, who shall be nominated by the organization to which the resigned member belongs.

ARTICLE IV

OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

Section 1. **OFFICERS** — The Pastoral Council shall have as its officers a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, auditor, public relations officer, legal counsel and property custodian.

Section 2. **THE PRESIDENT** — The President shall be the over-all head of the Council and his duties shall be:

- 1) to preside over the general meetings of the Council and the monthly meetings of the officers and the Parish Executive Board;
- 2) to implement and execute all decisions of the Council and the policies and programs formulated by the Parish Executive Board;
- 3) to coordinate the work of the various committees;
- 4) to represent the Council, together with the vice-President and Public Relations Officer, at the meetings of the Diocesan Pastoral Council, and at meetings and programs of school and socio-civic-governmental organizations in the parish when such representation are necessary and desirable; and
- 5) to perform such other duties connected with his office.

Section 3. **THE VICE-PRESIDENT** — The Vice-President shall perform all the duties and powers of the President in the absence or incapacity of the latter or vacancy of the office of the President. He shall actively assist the President in coordinating the work of the various committees, and shall exercise such other functions which may be assigned to him by the President or by the Parish Executive Board.

Section 4. **THE SECRETARY** — The Secretary shall be the custodian of all the records of the Council. His duties shall be:

- 1) to prepare, after due consultation with the President and the Parish Priest, the agenda for Council meetings;
- 2) to send notice of meetings to the officers and members of the Council, such notice to contain the prepared agenda;
- 3) to record all proceedings and attendance of the Council; and
- 4) to keep updated rosters of members of the Council and of all existing parish organizations, which shall include such information on the members as will enable the Council to effectively marshal available talent for its program of action.

Section 5. **THE TREASURER** — The Treasurer shall be the custodian of all funds of the Council. He shall discharge funds only with the joint authority of the President and the Parish Priest, such disbursement or payments to be supported by proper receipts or vouchers duly signed by the payee or creditor or his authorized representative. The Treasurer shall also collect and receive any funds or contributions due to the Council and each such collection shall be evidenced by a proper receipt in the name of the Council.

The Treasurer shall prepare a monthly financial report to the Council. He shall also prepare a semi-annual financial report to be duly publicized in order to make the parishioners aware of the income and expenditures of the Council.

The Treasurer shall be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee.

Section 6. **THE AUDITOR** — The duties of the Auditor shall be:

- 1) to audit all funds in the hands of the Treasurer, examine the accountability of the latter, and to verify all collections received and payments made by him; and
- 2) to make an annual inventory of all equipment in the hands of the Property Custodian, such inventory to be submitted to the Council.

The Auditor shall also be an ex-officio member of the Finance Committee.

Section 7. **THE PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER** — The Public Relations Officer shall be ex-officio chairman of the Committee on information which shall be created to handle the publication of a parish news bulletin. He shall publicize the policies, programs, and worthwhile activities of the Council in the said news bulletin, as well as in newspapers. He shall be the liaison officer of the Council

with the various parish organizations, and he may be called upon by the President to attend the meetings of these organizations to explain the policies and programs of the Council.

Section 8. **THE LEGAL COUNSEL** — The Legal Counsel shall act as the representative of the Council in all legal matters affecting the Council and the parish and shall prepare all legal documents which the Council may require in its operations.

Section 9. **THE PROPERTY CUSTODIAN** — The President, after consultation with the Parish Executive Board, shall appoint a Council member in good standing as Property Custodian who shall be responsible for the safekeeping of the Council's equipment. The term of office of the Property Custodian shall be coterminus with the term of the appointing officer and upon the appointment of his successor, the Property Custodian shall turn over to him all equipments of the Council which he may have in his possession.

ARTICLE V

ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE

Section 1. **ELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE** — All the officers enumerated in Section 1 or Article IV, with the exception of the the Secretary and Property Custodian who shall be appointed by the President with the concurrence of the Parish Executive Board, shall be elected on the **(day and month)** for which a meeting of the entire Council shall be called.

The election shall be by secret ballot under the strict supervision of an election committee composed of four (4) members of good standing in the Council who shall be appointed by the Parish Priest immediately before the election. Each office shall be voted upon separately in a general ballot and the candidate obtaining the highest number of votes for each office shall be declared elected.

Section 2. **WHO SHALL VOTE** — All officers and members of the Council, including the duly appointed members of the Parish Executive Board, shall be qualified to vote.

ARTICLE VI

COMMITTEES

Section 1. **STANDING COMMITTEES** — The Parish Pastoral Council shall have the following standing committees:

- 1) Worship Committee which shall plan and coordinate with the various organizations their programs
 - a) to increase parish consciousness;
 - b) to secure greater attendance and increased participation in liturgical and paraliturgical activities of the parish, with special emphasis on family participation; and
 - c) to strive and strengthen all worship organizations.
- 2) Education Committee which shall plan and coordinate with the various organizations their programs
 - a) for the catechetical instruction of children in the public school of the parish and of out-of-school youth;
 - b) for the continued religious training of adults through study clubs and the dissemination of Catholic magazines and periodicals;
 - c) for the Christian formation of family life;
 - d) for the promotion of vocations; and
 - e) for the establishment of reading centers in the parish.
- 3) Social Action (or Service) Committee which shall plan and coordinate with the various organizations their programs
 - a) for the socio-economic upliftment of the residents of the parish, like the Alay Kapwa program, Nutrition program, Credit union and Consumers' cooperatives, farmers' and fishermen's development program, evacuees' rehabilitation program, workers' and employees' program, the hospital and jail apostolate;
 - b) for community development and beautification;
 - c) for the maintenance of peace and order;
 - d) for the protection of the youth of the parish from immoral and destructive influences; and
 - e) for the protection of the oppressed from injustice.
- 4) Finance Committee which shall
 - a) plan and implement through the various organizations an expanded Sunday offering program for the support of the parish;
 - b) solicit donations and contributions for the religious activities, socio-economic and building projects of the parish, and
 - c) coordinate the fund-raising activities of the various parish organizations.

- 5) Committee on Information which shall
 - a) publish a news bulletin that is within the financial capability of the Council and which shall publicize the worthwhile activities of the various parish organizations and the policies and program of the Council; and
 - b) to prepare the printed program of the annual parish fiesta celebration.
- 6) Building Committee which shall manage all parish constructions and repairs and shall oversee the beautification of the Church and plaza.
- 7) Evaluation Committee which shall
 - a) evaluate the performance of the officers, the Parish Executive Board and the other standing committees;
 - b) check on the attendance of the meetings of the Parish Executive Board and the standing committees; and
 - c) make semi-annual reports and recommendations to the general membership of the Parish Pastoral Council.

The Council may also create other committees as the necessity arises.

Section 2. COMPOSITION — The Worship, Education and Social Action Committees shall be composed of at least one representative each from the organizations enumerated in Article II, Section 2. The Finance Committee shall be composed of the Parish Pastoral Council Treasurer, the Council's Auditor, the Treasurers of the various Catholic organizations, and such other members as the President, with the concurrence of the Parish Priest, may appoint.

The Evaluation Committee which shall have three (3) members, shall be elected by the Parish Executive Board from among its fifteen (15) appointed lay leaders during its regular meeting. The members of this committee shall be chosen for their known qualities of fairness, impartiality, and expertise on organizational management.

The various committees, other than the Review Committee, shall be constituted not later than the **(day and month)**. After the committees shall have been formed, they shall promptly elect from among their members a chairman and secretary, with the exception of the Committee on Information which shall be headed by the Public Relations Officer of the Council.

Section 3. PROGRESS REPORTS — The chairman of each committee shall see to it that his committee is a working committee. At each meeting of the Parish Executive Board, the committee

chairman shall submit a progress report on the work performed by their respective committees. The progress report shall include a summary of problems with the proposed solutions for action by the Board.

Any committee which fails to report after its organization may be reorganized by the President with the approval of the Parish Priest.

ARTICLE VII

M E E T I N G S

Section 1. **COMMITTEE MEETING** — The various committees enumerated in Article V, Section 1, shall hold regular monthly meetings as follows:

- a) the committees on Worship and Information on the first Saturday or Sunday of the month;
- b) the committees on Education and Finance on the second Saturday or Sunday of the month; and
- c) the Social Action and Building Committees on the fourth Saturday or Sunday of the month.

Section 2. **MEETINGS OF THE PARISH EXECUTIVE BOARD** — The Parish Executive Board shall hold regular meetings every third Sunday of the month at 9:00 A.M. at the Parish Rectory or Center. The Parish Priest and/or his assistant, and the chairman of the standing committees shall attend these meetings.

Special meetings may be called by the President or by at least five (5) members of the Parish Executive Board in order to treat on any urgent matter needing the attention of the Board.

Section 3. **GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS** — The entire Council membership shall meet thrice a year: on the third Sunday of July for the purpose of electing the Council officers; on the third Sunday of November for the purpose of ratifying the pastoral plan prepared by the Council for the coming year; and on the third Sunday of January for the purpose of evaluating the progress made in the implementation of the pastoral plan. At the July and January meetings, the semi-annual financial statement prepared by the Treasurer and the Auditor, and the semi-annual reports of the Review or Evaluation Committee shall be presented to the Council.

Special meetings of the entire Council membership may also be called by the President or by the Parish Priest in case there should be matters which require the approval or ratification of the Council.

Section 2. **QUORUM** — Thirty (30) members of the entire Council shall constitute a quorum for general meetings. In the meetings of the Parish Executive Board and the standing committees, a simple majority shall constitute a quorum.

Section 5. **ORDER OF BUSINESS** — The following shall be the order of business:

- 1) Opening
- 2) Roll Call
- 3) Reading of the minutes of the last meeting
- 4) President's Time
- 5) Progress reports of the chairman of the various standing
- 6) Discussion of prepared agenda
- 7) Parish Priest's Time
- 8) Other Business
- 9) Closing Prayer and Blessing

Section 6. **HOW MEETINGS ARE CONDUCTED** — The rules of parliamentary practice as laid down in Roberts' Rules of Order shall be followed in all meetings of the Council.

ARTICLE VII

THE PLANNING AND COORDINATING FUNCTIONS OF THE COUNCIL

Section 1. **THE PARISH PASTORAL PLAN** — The Parish Pastoral Plan is a blueprint of parish activities which provides the Parish Priest and the Parishioners opportunities of exercising in a coordinated manner their respective roles in building up the parish into a genuine Christian community. It will consist of four programs, namely, the Worship Program, the Christian Education Program, the Social Action Program, and the Sunday Offering Program.

Section 2. **PREPARATION OF THE PARISH PASTORAL PLAN** — The Parish Executive Board, through the Secretary, will request the various parish organizations to submit a general program of

action for the coming year, with a list of the specific projects they propose to undertake. These shall be submitted not later than the third week of September to the Secretary of the Council.

Based on these programs submitted, the Council will prepare an over-all parish plan which shall have the four programs above-mentioned. Each program may have:

- a) projects to be undertaken by the different organizations separately;
- b) projects to be undertaken jointly by several organizations when joint action is necessary for greater effectiveness and to avoid waste of time and effort through unnecessary duplication; and
- c) projects to be undertaken by all the organizations under the direction of the Council itself such as the Sunday Offering Program.

After the Parish Pastoral Plan has been prepared, it will be submitted to the entire Council membership which is representative of all parish organizations for ratification and subsequent implementation. The various organizations have the freedom to refuse any project that the Council may ask them to undertake. It should be understood, however, that serious consideration be given to such projects or proposals before they are rejected or turned down.

Section 3. IMPLEMENTATION. — Implementation of the various projects of the Parish Pastoral Plan will be left to the organizations concerned. The Council, however, through its various standing committees, will coordinate their efforts and enlist the help of other organizations, when such help is required for the successful realization of the project.

Section 4. FUND RAISING — Fund raising to be undertaken by any organization shall be submitted to the Council for approval before it may be implemented in order to avoid simultaneous fund raising projects which will be a burden to the parishioners. It shall be the Council which shall determine priorities. Whenever its help is solicited, the Council will also enlist the help of other organizations for any approved fund raising project.

Ten percent (10%) net of any funds raised, except those specifically intended for parish construction, shall be given to the Council for its operating expenses and to enable it to carry out its various projects under the Parish Pastoral Plan.

ARTICLE IX

AMENDMENT AND EFFECTIVITY

Section 1. **AMENDMENT** — Any provisions of this Constitution may be amended by a two-third (2/3) vote of all the members of the Council present in the meeting at which the amendment is prepared.

Section 2. **EFFECTIVITY** — This Constitution shall take effect upon approval of a majority of the entire Council.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 19____

Ratified this _____ day of _____, 19____

(SGD.) _____ (SGD.) _____
Chairman, Constitutional Amendments President

Members:

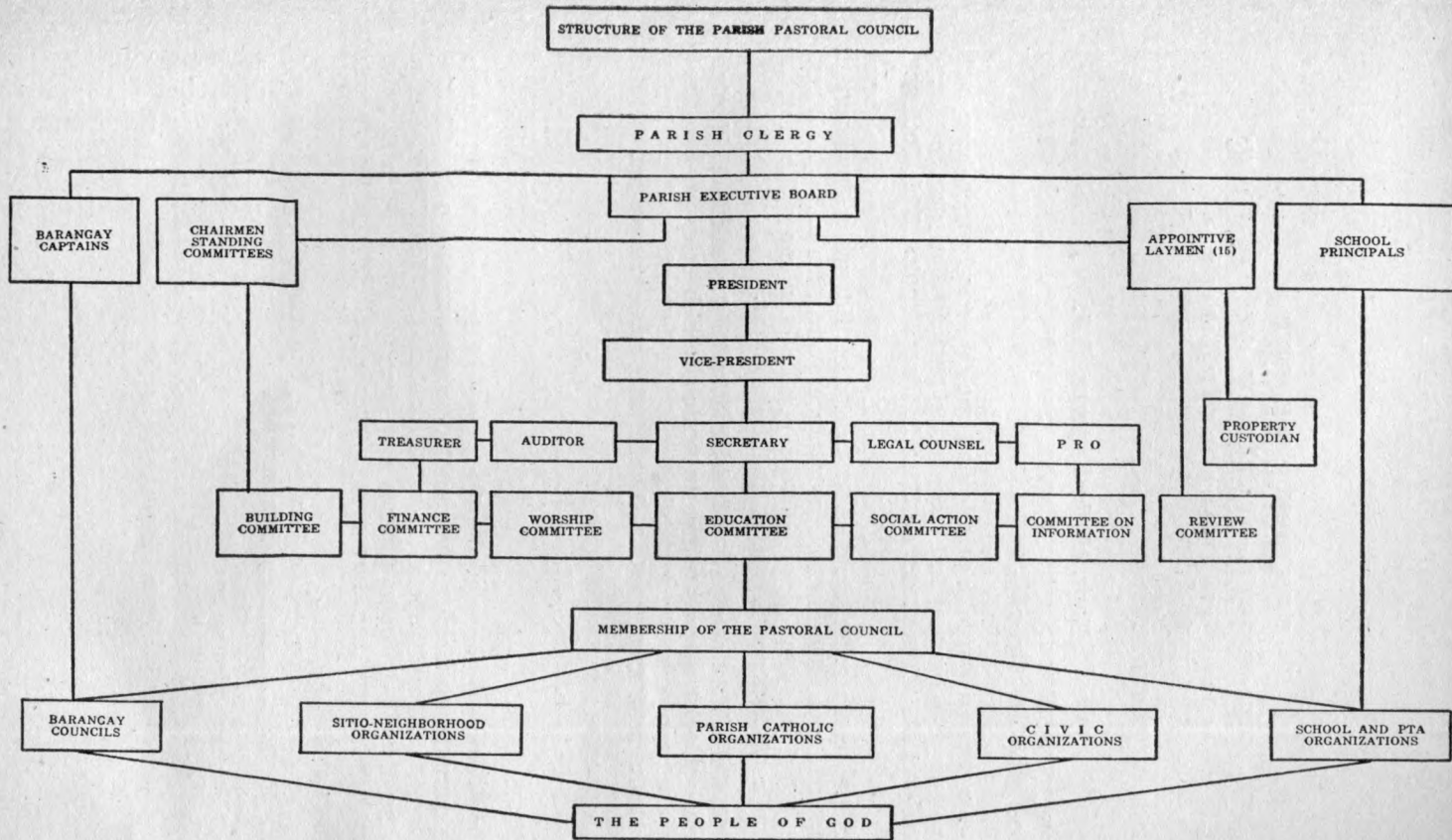
(SGD.) _____

(SGD.) _____

(SGD.) _____
Parish Priest

September 8, 1977 — Feastday of Our Lady of Nativity
Borongan Town Fiesta
The Seventy-Ninth Day of Our Episcopacy
In The Diocese of Borongan
Eastern Samar

✠ (Sgd.) SINCERO B. LUCERO, D.D.
Bishop of Borongan



PHILIPPINE REPORT TO THE WORLD ASSEMBLY OF CATHOLIC BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE (MALTA)

By

Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P.

I. On Bible Translations

Ten Roman Catholic priests and one Catholic laymen have had (some are still having) **full-time active participation** on the translation projects of the Common Bible in the Philippine Bible Society:*

The following common version New Testaments have been published already: Tagalog, Cebuano, Iloko, Hiligaynon, Pangasinan and Somarenio. Those that are in process and soon to be published are: Bikol and Pampango. These publications carry the Roman Catholic Church's **nihil obstat** and **imprimatur**.

The common version Old Testaments in the above Philippine languages exist already either in basic draft form or in the final stage being processed for publication. The Deuterocanonical books also have been translated in four of the above languages.

Excepting for one Catholic priest and one layman, whose salaries were partly subsidized by the Philippine Bible Society, all the other priests received their full salaries as translators from the Roman Catholic Church.

The other important thing to take note is the fact that before any common version is disseminated, a programme to launch the common version is held in public under the joint sponsorship of the Roman Catholic Church and the Philippine Bible Society. This joint launching has always been received joyfully by our people.

The cooperative work between Filipino Catholic scholars and their Protestant brethren has reached a high-level point and is

* For the Cebuano translation, Fr. Diosdado Camomot (at the initial stage of the project also Fr. Mardonio Honculada and Fr. Cesar Alco-seba); For the Tagalog translation, Fr. Emilio C. Palma; For the Iloko translation, Fr. Godofredo Albano and Fr. Peter Julian. For the Hiligaynon Fr. George Monteclaro (at the initial stage of the project. Fr. Jose Gaston); for the Bikol translation, Fr. Jesus Esplana. The new Testament of these translations had already been published.

strenuously being kept up there. Today we can be proud both of the quality and quantity of various Philippine-language common bible projects being produced.

An important consequence of this on-going cooperative venture is the relationship of goodwill and mutual respect that was generated among the Christians in our country. The interconfessional translations have set the stage in the Philippine where Catholics and Protestants put their minds, hearts and resources together in an atmosphere of brotherhood and charity. It is hoped that this cooperation, begun in the sphere of bible translation, may extend into other areas of Christian service and apostolate.

II. On Biblical Apostolate

We are aware of the enormous potential of the biblical apostolate in our country; we are also conscious of the vast ground we still have to cover but we have barely scratched the surface. Our dismay as well as our impatience in this regard is tempered by the recognition of that necessary logistics-principle that before starting any effective apostolate of the bible one must first take steps to make the bible available to those one must evangelize.

Ten years ago, the Church in our country has taken that first step by deciding to work with the Philippine Bible Society in translating, publishing and disseminating Bibles in the Philippine languages. But we are still far from being able to claim that we have made the bible available to every Filipino home.

Then there is the matter of priorities that the Philippine Church must consider when it wants to involve its resources and efforts. Social and economic problems; the question of vocations; the lay ministries; the seminaries; government programmes that have repercussion in Church-life; education and religious instruction; the basic christian communities; all of these are simultaneously claiming the attention and the purses of our bishops, and in the process are showing (so it appears) the question of the biblical apostolate to the background.

We feel the need of a functional service organization at the national level that should effectively help the bishops and other biblically oriented organizations to discharge their responsibility of

making the bible available and intelligible to all the Filipinos. We have not yet reached that stage, although our Bible Committee, set up by the Bishops' Conference, approximates that status.

Notwithstanding the absence of a truly functional service organization at the national level, there exist in our country genuine apostolic works that give guidance or promote Bible Study. Examples of these are the Catholic Bible Center in the Archdiocese of Manila which publishes the "Good News", a quarterly bulletin giving guidelines for the study of the Sunday Gospel Readings; produces "Bibliya at Buhay," a weekly radio program; holds weekly Bible Study and Prayer meeting ("Bibliarasal"); and organizes Bible Seminars from time to time; the religious; congregation in the Daughters of Saint Paul; the numerous Prayer-Bible study groups all over the country; the various Catechetical institutes; the Basic Christian Communities' leaders institutes or seminars. They arise here and there, flower and hold on, or die, depending on the interest and resources of their animators.

STATEMENT OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF THE WORLD CATHOLIC FEDERATION FOR THE BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE

Malta, 11 - 19th April, 1978

The second Plenary Assembly of the World Catholic Federation for the Biblical Apostolate (W.C.F.B.A.) gathered at Malta from April 11 to 19, 1978, takes this opportunity to offer its services to all those who, by a spiritual gift of the Lord, have a specific duty of spreading the Word of God as conveyed by the Holy Scripture, recognizing that it is the purpose of the Federation to help foster and harmonise the Biblical Apostolate throughout the world by promoting the study and understanding of the Bible, by encouraging inter-confessional and international cooperation in this work.

P A R T I

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Biblical Apostolate

The members of the W.C.F.B.A. have been encouraged as they have assessed the development of the Biblical Apostolate during the six years since the First Plenary Assembly in Vienna. During eight days of ceaseless work, 76 participants representing 44 countries have realized that only through a deeply rooted biblical spirituality can Christians play their specific role in the world and contribute towards the building up of a new society based on Christian vision and values. They therefore recommend that every Bishop set apart a competent person in each diocese to animate, coordinate and promote the Biblical Apostolate and that steps be taken to coordinate this work at the national level.

2. Liturgy

The participants have experienced in a variety of forms, due to their international representation, the richness of a liturgical life based on the Word, finding in the liturgy a source of light and strength. The Assembly recommends that Bishops' Conferences and

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Biblical Associations ensure that all leaders of liturgical and para-liturgical assemblies be trained in the proclamation of the Scriptures, so that all to whom they minister may be equipped to play their role as 'ministers of the Word' (Luke 1:3).

3. Seminaries

The Assembly gave special attention to the pastoral-biblical formation of seminarians, conscious that their scripture course could too easily remain on an academic level.

The Assembly therefore recommends that the formation given to seminarians should seek to provide a deep biblically-centred faith experience and that their biblical studies should be complemented by such in-service training as allows the pastoral application of what is learnt, particularly in the different forms of communicating the Gospel message.

4. The Training of Catechists

The Assembly considers it of great importance that the catechists who play such a vital role as leaders and animators of the Christian communities, should have a sound and adequate knowledge of the Bible. This will enable them to discover God's active presence in their lives and history, to interpret for their communities the designs of the Lord in the light of God's Word and to use the Bible as a source of their prayer life. This aim should be kept in mind in all biblical teaching during and after their training.

5. Bible Sharing Groups

The sharing by participants during the Assembly told of the emergence on all the continents of many spontaneous group chiefly among the laity, e.g., Bible-sharing, neo-catechumenate and charismatic groups, basic communities, Christian family movements, etc. We recognize in this a sign of the times and the work of the Spirit.

The Assembly recommends that Bishop's Conferences encourage the formation of such groups and invite existing groups to include the prayerful study of the Bible in their programmes. Bishops' Conferences and Biblical Associations should provide such groups with all necessary help and guidance about the Bible so that their Christian life may be firmly based on a sound knowledge of the Word of God.

6. Catechesis

The Federation in the light of its reflection on the Bible and Catechesis joins with the Hierarchies of the world and the recent Synod of Bishops in their concern for a sound Biblical Catechesis to form all sections of the Church in the faith. The Word of God as contained in the Bible should have its rightful place in all catechetical sessions and in all forms of faith-education to give meaning to and shed light on the life of the people.

The Assembly therefore recommends that all Biblical Associations establish close co-operation with the Catechetical Agencies in the training of priests, catechists and teachers of religion.

7. Exegesis

One of the major challenges in the biblical field of the twentieth century considered by the Assembly is to make exegesis relevant to spirituality and to the pastoral ministry of the Word. For a Christian the scientific study of the Bible and his spiritual growth should be closely related. This interaction as well as the power of communicating it should be fostered in the formation of all ministers of the Word so that in their teaching and personal lives they are able to manifest the relevance of the Bible to real life.

The Assembly therefore recommends that courses in the art of communication be included in the training of all priests and teachers so that their teaching of the Bible is seen to be relevant to the lives of those to whom they speak.

8. Ecumenism

Ecumenism has been the Lord's gift to Christians of the twentieth century as they seek through the grace of Christ to realize their unity in Him (John 17:23). The Plenary Assembly feels that the Federation can play a most vital role in promoting dialogue and cooperation with other Christian Churches and with the United Bible Societies.

The Assembly recommends that translations of the Bible, wherever possible, shall be interconfessional. Close cooperation should exist with the United Bible Societies in the production and distribution of the Scriptures, in arranging Bible Sundays, — Weeks, — Exhibitions, etc. Wherever possible biblical education, training and research should also be done on an interconfessional level.

9. Other Religions

The ever-widening membership and participation in W.C.F.B.A. of member countries of diverse religious heritages has enriched the Federation.

The peoples of Asia and Africa and other parts of the world have rich religious traditions enshrined in their sacred writings and sustained by a living tradition. In these areas the Gospel often appears to be identified with a particular culture foreign to the people's mentality and expression. This contradictory situation calls for a living encounter with these religions and with their sacred writings.

The Assembly recommends that the cultures and religious traditions of all peoples be respected both in the initial presentation of the Gospel and in allowing for the authentic development of their own form of Christian life and worship.

10. The 'Unchurched'

The Assembly is deeply concerned about the growing numbers of men, woman and young people who, while still thinking of themselves vaguely as Christians and showing Christian qualities in their lives, have given up any serious commitment to the Church. Among these are found many authentic seekers after truth, some of whom are turning for help to eastern ways of prayer and meditation and to other world religions for the experience of God they have so far failed to find in Christianity. The Assembly recognizes that these present us with a challenge so to display in our lives the fruits of the Spirit and the witness of a living community nourished by the Word of God that they may come to see in Christ the One Whom they seek, and thus contribute to the renewal of society.

11. Unbelief

The Assembly is conscious that Christians of all denominations are a minority in the world today. It recognizes that it has the responsibility to witness to the saving truth in Christ to those who do not believe and that this task is an urgent one, made more difficult because of the division among the Churches and by our failure to allow Christ to achieve his work of redemption in us.

The Assembly recommends that we Christians should all seek to present Christ with such insight and empathy that these people find in Him the meaning of their life and their orientation and hope for the future.

12. Justice and Human Rights

The Biblical Apostolate should emphasize the special challenge of the Scriptures to a world marked by division and oppression. It recommends that Bishops' Conferences continually set before their people the need to respect the human dignity of all people everywhere. The rights of individuals and minorities must be safeguarded; freedom of conscience must be guaranteed, and all should have equal treatment before the law.

13. International Cooperation

In a world characterized by the emergence of many nations together with ever growing international cooperation, the W.C.F.B.A. wishes to bring its humble contribution by gathering Christians from all parts of the world in a common effort to spread the Good News of salvation. The Assembly therefore recommends that Bishops' Conferences and Biblical Associations develop close forms of cooperation with similar bodies in adjacent countries in promoting Bible work, that regional meetings be held wherever possible, and that special meetings be arranged in each region before the next Plenary Assembly to send recommendations to those planning it.

14 The Arts, Audio-Visual Language and Mass Media

Now a days the arts, and in particular audio-visual language, have become a new means of communication and even a current language in the mass media, and this on an international level. Christians would be guilty of concealing what has been revealed to all mankind if they were to neglect these modern ways of expression in which the Word of God can take form. The Assembly therefore recommends that projects concerning the use of audio-visual language and mass media be encouraged and that information about these be circulated by the Federation.

15. Illiteracy

For those not able to read the Bible the Assembly recommends the development of other means of communicating the Living Word

of God through the media of song and dance and by audio-visual expression so that the biblical message is not restricted just to those able to read the printed word.

The Assembly also recommends that in those countries where is a high rate of illiteracy the Churches take the initiative in training literacy teachers and in providing suitable materials for "new readers".

PART II

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS TO FEDERATION MEMBERS AND TO THE COORDINATING CENTRE

While we make these recommendations to all who are involved in and responsible for the Biblical Apostolate at various levels, we members of the Federation single out the following tasks as our priorities of action for the next six years on national and international levels.

16. National Level

- Coordination of the Biblical Apostolate at the national level;
- Formation of Biblical Associations where they do not yet exist;
- Biblical training centres to be started;
- Inter-confessional cooperation in all possible areas;
- Completion of translation and commentary projects;
- Creation of basic Christian communities and the promotion of their biblical formation;
- Encouraging Bible-sharing groups;
- Celebration of Bible Sunday/Bible Week;
- Extensive use of audio-visual language and mass media in the Biblical Apostolate;
- Sending reports of various forms of the Apostolate to the WCFBA office and to members within each region and continent.

17. Continental Level

- Regular exchange of information and experiences;
- Sharing of resource persons;

- Working towards the establishment of Pastoral Biblical Institutes in Africa and in Asia;
- Organizing workshops for those engaged in the Biblical Apostolate at bi-yearly or yearly intervals;
- Cooperation with existing professional Biblical Associations;
- Continuance and expansion of the existing 'Africa Service'.

18. Regional Cooperation

- Cooperation between adjoining countries;
- Sharing of audio-visual materials.

19. Office of the Federation

- To help organize seminars/workshops on the Biblical Apostolate;
- To contact countries which have not become members;
- To see that the bulletin of WCFBA reaches all those who are involved in Biblical Apostolate: Seminaries, catechetical centres, etc.

20. Executive Committee

- To establish liaison with other bodies such as the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

Conclusion

The participants of the Plenary Assembly, after having studied and experienced Biblical Spirituality during their meeting in Malta, dare to make the preceding recommendations to the Church. Furthermore, the Federation looks to the future with a spirit of hope engendered during this Assembly, and proposes to carry out its work in keeping with the exhortation of St. Paul:

"So we preach Christ to everyone.
With all possible wisdom
we warn and teach them
in order to bring each one into God's presence
as a mature individual in union with Christ.
To get this done (we) toil struggle,
using the mighty strength
which Christ supplies and
which is at work in (us)."

CATECHESIS AND INCULTURATION

By

Jaime L. Card. Sin

(Speech delivered by His Eminence, Jaime L. Card. Sin, Archbishop of Manila, during the Lecture Series on the Synod sponsored by the UST Religion Department, held at the Education Auditorium on January 1, 1978 at 9 a.m.)

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Jesus is the Incarnate Word, took flesh from the womb of the Virgin Mary, chose Bethlehem as his birthplace and adopted Himself to the culture of the place, spoke the language of the Jews.

Suppose, I often ask myself, Christ had been born in Tondo instead of the Holy Land, and suppose the Last Supper had taken place in Balut, what would have happened? For one thing, the Mass would be different in this sense: instead of the unleavened bread and grape wine that priests now use all over the world, they would probably be using **puto** and **tuba**.

The reason is simple: Christ selected unleavened bread to become His Body, and He chose grape wine to become His Precious Blood at the moment of transubstantiation because these were what the people of the Holy Land were eating and drinking; these were the materials most readily available. To put it in another way, Christ made use of the things that were indigeneous to the Jewish culture.

My friends, please do not misunderstand me. When I spoke earlier of **puto** and **tuba**, I certainly was not advocating that we should use them in our Masses. I make a very clear distinction between what is essential and what is not essential. Unleavened bread and grape wine are essential. There is no question about that. Hence, their use must be continued wherever Masses are solemnized, be that in Manila or Rome, Timbukto or Alaska. Because of this essentiality, the Church in the Philippines made no move to change them even during the darkest days of the Japanese occupation when wheat flour was scarce and grape wine almost unavailable.

Let me cite another example, this time in the purely secular sense. Let us take the jeep. This most practical of all vehicles was brought to the Philippines by the Americans during World

War II. It was a stark and austere vehicle, but it was efficient and, for the warlike functions that it was intended to perform, it served its purposes well.

But, after the Liberation, when the departing Americans left surplus jeeps in large quantities, the Filipinos adopted it as their own. They stripped it of its olive drab coloring and repainted it in diverse colors. They gave it the flamboyance of their nature, and they reshaped its body so it would be a passenger transport. And they called it a jeepney. The jeepney is still basically the jeep — no one can deny that — but it has been indigenized. Or, to use a word more relevant to the topic assigned to me today, it has been inculturated.

Regarding the non-essentials, however, a more flexible attitude can be — and has been — adopted. The music sung at the Mass, for instance, has been inculturated. Thus, in Africa, they use tom-toms. And, in the Philippines, we use the guitar, the *banduria* and, in some missionary areas, the *kudyapi*. And because of the employment of these indigenous instruments, the Mass has become more interesting and more meaningful to the churchgoers. This, we must all agree, is a step in the right direction. Masses could be said in any dialect or language.

With that as a backdrop, allow me now to tackle the subject you have given me.

It must be clearly understood that inculturation deals with accommodating revelations to the concepts or signs of a particular culture, rather its the other way around. It deals with accommodating the concepts or signs of a particular culture to the revealed truths.

Every catechist or evangelist should always bear in mind that the Gospel or the revealed word of God is unchangeable. It can not be modified. It is the absolute norm. It is not the one that should be accommodated to anything, rather it is the understanding, the will, the affections, the conduct, the customs, society itself; in short, the whole life of man that should be accommodated to it. It is the task of the catechist to adapt the means of evangelization to ways that would make the doctrine of the faith intelligible and understandable to modern man, to the man of a specific and determined culture. Making the doctrine of the faith understandable means making human reason grasp it and digest what it means. But one thing is the truth of the doctrine itself and another thing is the revealed sense of that doctrine. The truth of the revealed doctrine is Christ Jesus, can never be understood by human reason alone. Precisely, it is a doctrine of the faith because human reason

alone cannot grasp it. It can only be understood by human reason in an obscure way and only be means of submitting the human intellect to the authority of God who reveals it. Otherwise, if the revealed doctrine could be understood clearly by the intellect, it ceases to be a doctrine of the faith — it becomes science or philosophy. St. Aug.: "Believe first in order to understand..."

On the other hand, the sense of the revealed truth can be made understandable and intelligible to human reason. In this case, the one teaching, the catechist or evangelist, should see to it that the listener grasps and sees the meaning of what is being taught him. It is not enough just to talk or move the lips, but to convey, to transmit the sense or the meaning to the listener, otherwise he would be waisting time.

As could be seen, we deal here essentially with the task of translating, of conveying the Christian doctrine in a language that is understood by the listener. And by language is mean not only words, but all the other psychological instruments and processes — concepts, images, experiences, feelings, etc. The teacher has to dig from the listeners' treasury of ideas, images, words, experiences to express the meaning of the revealed doctrine.

And like every translation work, the supreme norm or criterion is what the author really wishes to convey, and in this case, the author is God. Nobody, not even the Church, can take away from or change the least thing in this revealed doctrine. The Church, with the aid of the Holy Spirit is only the faithful keeper and interpreter of this revealed truths. That is why, to be unfaithful to or to betray the revealed sense of the Word of God is a fundamental sin in today's effort of "inculturation."

The last Synod in Rome, as all of you know, focused on catechesis as a means of evangelization. I will talk on the particular role I played during the Synod and why I stressed the need for inculturation in the catechetical process if catechesis is to become meaningful and effective.

To start with, let me say that if I was single-minded in my efforts to espouse the cause of inculturation, it was not for political or nationalistic considerations. I am aware that, in some segments of the Western world, the move toward inculturation has been misunderstood. These quarters have interpreted it as a reaction to colonialism because the advocates are all from the Third World countries, and these countries have only just recently been liberated from the colonial yoke.

I repeat neither politics nor nationalism impelled me to insist on inculturation. My insistence was based exclusively on my conviction that if the people of the Third World are to be properly catechized, if they are to be taught their faith, to grow in their faith and to live that faith, then it should be taught in terms that are not alien to them, in ways that are part and parcel of their lifestyle, and with means that are compatible with their customs and traditions.

Again, let me cite a concrete example that all of us are familiar with.

We live in an atmosphere where, as a matter of course, we make use of *padrinos* or intermediaries. If we are looking for a job, we do not apply directly. Instead, we go to a person of influence and ask his help to get us the job. If a young man is attracted to a girl and wishes to court her, he looks for a go-between — maybe another girl who is close to her — and solicits her assistance.

This reliance on intermediaries has colored the practice of our faith. We never talk to God directly when we need His divine help. Instead, we run to our favorite saint and say countless novenas. To Saint Jude when what we ask seems impossible, to Saint Pancratius when we want a job, to Saint Anthony when we have lost anything, and to him also when a girl wants to find a boy friend.

Now, suppose a catechist — let us say an American missionary — tells our people that it is better to go to God directly, to establish our own hot line to Christ, what would happen? The people would think he was downgrading the saints. They would be turned off by him and they would refuse to listen to him. As a result, all his efforts at catechesis would prove unavailing.

I beg your indulgence in giving still another example. One of our most treasured practices during the Christmas season is the **Misa de gallo**, the dawn Mass. All over the country, the people look forward to this novena of Masses. It is a big event to them and, in many towns, the people are roused from their sleep by a brass band parading through the streets of the town.

If a Western catechist, who comes from a cold country where dawn Masses are impractical, is to say that there is no sound liturgical or canonical reason for the **Misa de Gallo**, the results could be disastrous.

Again, I ask you please not to misunderstand me. I have nothing against Western catechists and will go so far as to admit that, without the help of foreign priests, the Church in the Philip-

pines would be severely handicapped. If, in my two examples, I cited Western catechists, it is because the first catechists in the Philippines were Western, and they in turn trained the Filipino catechists. Trained them, I might add, in the Western Way.

It was, of course, not the fault of those catechists. History tells us that most of the catechisms used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries — and this was the period when the Spanish missionaries were beginning to be most active — were made in Europe in the context of the Counter-Reformation. As a result, the emphasis was on the orthodoxy of doctrine and the need for its clear and unequivocal presentation to the catechumens.

These missionaries, therefore, were most eager to draw up a catechism that would present, as clearly as possible, the principal points of the Christian doctrine as it was understood at that time in Europe.

Thus, the image of the "good man", of the perfect Christian gentleman, as presented to the Filipino catechumens, was drawn from the European gentlemen of the classical period. I need not tell you, of course, that this image was completely alien and, therefore, unintelligible to our ancestors. For it was a portrait that was strange — sometimes even hostile — to the values, the traditions and the religious attitudes of the people.

The people accepted the image, but it was meaningless to them. And if it was meaningless, then they had no particularly strong incentive to emulate the Christian gentleman.

Fortunately, Vatican II dramatically changed the scenario. The Council Fathers came to the realization that while the "world was one" specially under the influence of Christianity, its multiplicity had to be admitted as an undeniable fact. Besides the Christian, Westernized culture, there were other cultures. And since the confession of faith is "social" by its very nature — social because it was born in a community — then culture must be considered as very important factors in the way is born, the way it develops, and the way it thrives.

As a result of Vatican II, the existence and validity of cultural pluralism has become an accepted fact. And this acceptance destroys the principle, admitted at least implicitly in the past, that European or Western culture was the norm of other cultures, cultures whose degree of perfection was judged by the degree of conformity or non-conformity with the Christian West.

We all know that catechesis must take man "as he is and where he is." It is obvious, therefore, that the way of approach-

ing man in catechesis should follow no set, standardized pattern. It would simply be wrong to lead all those who are so different through the same path. The wise parent — to use an analogy — has the same goal for all his children: that they grow up to be strong and useful citizens in this world and in the next. But he knows that every child is different, so he handles each one differently. The sensitive child must be treated with gentleness, for roughness or the unsparing use of the rod could ruin him.

In the light of this, reasonable and adequate responsibility must be given to the pastors of the local Church so that, while maintaining the unity of the faith, they could be free to improvise, to use those methods and approaches that lead more directly to the hearts of the people they want to catechize, people who are often totally ignorant of Western thought and who are children of specifically different cultures.

When the plurality of cultures is accepted and respected, the logical consequence is indigenization. And indigenization is merely another word for the adapting of the Christian message to the catechumen "as he is and where he is."

This process of adaptation includes emphasizing the customs and way of life to which people attach great importance. It also means dropping those Western considerations which are less relevant to the way the people live. It is wishful thinking to expect meaningful and fruitful catechesis unless it is carried out with great respect for the religious and cultural patrimony of those to be catechized.

We must admit, whether we like it or not, that the Spirit is always alive and active in the culture, life and heart of all people, even though some of these people may not be directly illumined by the light of the Christian faith. And precisely because the Spirit is in them, then they are entitled to respect even though they may at times be indulging in pagan or even animistic practices. After all, even these pagan practices can be used to bring them to a deeper spirituality.

There is still another strong argument for inculturation, and it is this: the mission of the Church does not solely consist in giving of what she has. It also means receiving what she does not yet have. For this reason, she must enrich the patrimony of the faith she already possesses in everything that is true and good in other cultures and religions. She must do this so that, in accordance with other peoples and other faiths will make her grow and to achieve, in the fullest measure, the actualization of her catholicity.

Permit me to mention yet another argument for inculturation. We all must admit, whether we like it or not, that it is impossible to set up a monolithic, universal model for catechesis. Even if it could be set up, it is doubtful whether it can ever be implemented. For catechesis deals with concrete situations and we cannot implement a model where situations differ, not just from region to region, or country to country, but even from community to community.

Besides, all cultures, whether young or old, are constantly evolving. Consequently, a progressive consciousness of the integral meaning of revelation is gradually emerging from the rhythm of experience. Now, since the fidelity of the Church to revelation is dynamic and not static, then there is a need to integrate today's more technological and democratic mentality with the primitive and somewhat patriarchal mentality of yesterday.

Inculturation, however, must begin with the catechists themselves. It is a fact that many of them are familiar with salvation history as expressed in categories belonging to Western culture. But it is a fact also that they are quite ignorant of salvation history within their own culture. Moreover, they often see their own culture as an obstacle to rather than an instrument of proper catechesis. And if they are not prudent, if they show themselves extremely critical of local forms of popular religiosity — for example, the widespread practice among people who walk on their knees from the door of the church to the altar — then they can become alienated from their own people. And there is no sight more appalling than to see a catechist who has lost his credibility with his catechumens.

While I am on this subject, let me say that if Philippine or Asian catechesis continues being subservient to Western categories — categories, moreover, that are now becoming obsolescent — then the Catholic Church will prove incapable of keeping pace with other Asian religions. And all of us who pride ourselves in being concerned Catholics would not wish to see this happen.

In the Position Paper issued by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines which was sent to the Synod, the Philippine hierarchy made its stand very clear in these words:

"What can be considered an integral part of traditional Filipino culture, in the strict sense, are the devotional practices to honor Christ, the Virgin Mary and the Saints. There is always some quasi-religious or religious ritual for nearly all occasions from birth to burial, through marriage, baptisms, construction of residence, etcetera. These should be viewed as **apertura** or openings to a

deepening of faith. Modernizing agents — principally oriented towards material prosperity, efficiency and scientific rationalism — are attempting to introduce new values into the system.

"However, there is a surprising degree of syncretism which makes it easy for the host culture to assimilate foreign cultures. In the process, neither culture survives in its original form although the devotional practices mentioned earlier have survived for a long time. In fact, it is the ritualization of many of these devotions which could account for their resiliency over time."

The catechist who is inculturated, therefore, sees these practices, not as superstitions that must be eliminated, but as doors for the deepening of faith, as instruments by which the people can make the transformation from popular religiosity to witnessing. The catechist who indiscriminately condemns all these quasi-religious observances will merely alienate the people and render him completely ineffective.

At this point, it may be apropos to direct our attention to divine pedagogy as shown to us in Holy Scripture, particularly the Old Testament.

For two thousand years, Yahweh prepared his people for the reception of the complete revelation. In doing so, he used the rites and the myths of the people around Israel. At the same time, he sent prophets to explain the new meaning of the old pagan symbols. Thus, he purified the rites of the Canaanites and used their culture to prepare his people for the coming of Christ. He also sanctified the laws and customs of the people around so that he could communicate his message.

In other words, he took the myths with which the people were familiar in order to reach their hearts. Wasn't this inculturation? And why cannot the same method be used in our catechesis today?

Of course, it must be clearly understood that inculturation must be selective. All those elements that are foreign to the substance of the message and completely alien to the mentality of the people must be carefully excluded. And they should not be allowed into the lives of those to be catechized. Any form of syncretism that would endanger the purity of the faith must be eliminated.

Returning to the Scriptures, to my mind, is one good way of making catechesis both fruitful and inculturated. For the Scriptures present the divine message in a way that transcends all philosophical systems. Thus, even those cultures which are not familiar with Western philosophy can get the message.

I must tell to you, of course, that the idea of using inculturation in catechesis is neither new nor original. As early as September, 1976, the East Asia Region of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences issued this strong statement, and I quote: "As the occasion demands, we propose a flexibility in the Liturgy of the Word and of the Eucharist. We should consider requesting the Holy See that the Eucharistic celebration should contain, besides Scriptural readings, other cultural and religious readings, and use the symbols of the present indigenous culture."

Father Pedro Arrupe, the superior general of the Society of Jesus, also has expressed very strong views about the imperative necessity of inculturation in catechesis. He said, and I quote:

"The diversity of cultures creates for catechesis a great plurality of settings. As indicated by the Second Vatican Council and as reaffirmed by Paul VI in the Apostolic Exhortation **Evangelii Nuntiandi**, the Christian message must plant its roots in human cultures, assuming and also transforming these cultures. In this sense, we can say that catechesis is an instrument of 'inculturation.' This means that catechesis develops and at the same time enlightens from within the ways of life of those to whom it is addressed. Through catechesis, the Christian faith must be inserted in all cultures. A true inculturation of faith through catechesis supposes not only a process of giving, but also of receiving."

And Proposition 16 of the Synodal Document, **Instrumentum Laboris**, declares:

"In cultures not permeated with Christian values, the 'seeds of the Word' should be sought and made explicit. In cases where there is opposition between the Gospel and the cultural expression, the Gospel does not yield. Christ can fulfill his word of salvation in every culture, offering to everyone the possibility of thinking, judging and acting according to God's will and the actual situation of a given people."

From all that I have said thus far, my friends, you probably have acquired an idea of what inculturation means. You may have noticed that I have not given you a formal definition of the term. This was deliberate on my part because I felt that you would understand the term more if I gave you the explanation before the formal definition.

I shall now give you the formal definition by telling you, again in the words of Father Arrupe, what inculturation is and what it is not. Here is Father Arrupe:

"Inculturation in catechesis is not merely an adaptation of older forms of catechetical instruction, rejuvenated by the introduction of new terminology and by the use of modern pedagogical techniques. It is not just an effort to bridge the generation gap by making a few concessions to the demands of youth.

"It is not a strategy adopted to make Christian doctrine more attractive. It is not a subtle means of destroying the preponderance of the West. It is also not a simplistic acceptance of the past to the detriment of the future.

"Inculturation in catechesis is not such an accommodation of faith to culture as would damage the substance of Revelation. It is not a kind of benevolent, almost folkistic approach which the West substitutes for the criticism of other cultures. And finally, it is not some sort of ethnocentrism, a false theory which tries to construct a Western model as the type towards which other cultures ought to evolve.

"Rather, inculturation in catechesis is the practical corollary of that theological principle which asserts that Christ is the one and only Savior and saves only what he assumes to himself. Hence, Christ must assume in his Body (which is the Church) all cultures, purifying them and removing everything which is contrary to his Spirit, thus saving them without destroying them.

"It means faith reaching man in his most profound experience of life, even to the extent of influencing his way of thinking, feeling and acting under the inspiration of the Spirit of God.

"It makes possible the widespread contribution of all cultural values in the service of the Gospel.

"Inculturation means a continued sharing between the Word of God and the rich varieties of human expression. Hence, it enables us to speak **with** (not just **to**) the men and women of our times about their problems, needs, hopes and desires."

Before concluding, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, allow me once more to go back to my original statement about the Last Supper.

In instituting the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, Christ, I repeat, used the materials available — unleavened bread and grape wine. To enable us to eat His Body and drink His Blood, He took what was on hand; He did not have to import more expensive or

more delicious ingredients from another country. But the message was received by the apostles present, and they in turn transmitted the message to all of us all over the world and through the centuries to the end of time.

Similarly, in catechesis, which is actually the spreading of the Good News, we do not have to import the materials from other countries in the Western world. We can use whatever materials are on hand. And those materials are to be found in our culture, materials which are rooted in the people and an inextricable part and parcel of their tradition and way of life.

This is my message for you today, I close with the hope and prayer that this new year will find you growing richer in Christ's choicest blessings. God love you and remember, I love you all very dearly.

THEOLOGY: MAGISTERIUM

First of a series

CRISIS OF FAITH IN THE MAGISTERIUM

By

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

Introduction

When speaking of the "Prophetic Function of the Church", one is immediately reminded of the two other elements of the triad: namely, the priestly and kingly functions of the Church. This triad, in turn, brings to mind the three messianic functions of Christ: i.e. as priest, as king and as prophet, of which ***lumen Gentium*** speaks about.

At the mention of this Vatican II document, you will almost naturally recall the theological principle upon which the attribution of the three functions to the Church is based. The Church serves to continue the very same mission of Christ, i.e. to mediate the saving Word to all men. But in sharing in the same mission with Christ, the Church necessarily shares in the same functions or offices of Christ, namely, as priest, king and prophet.

For this reason we speak of the priestly or sanctifying office, the kingly or ruling office, and of the prophetic or teaching office of the Church.

And then our trouble begins.

The expression 'the teaching office of the Church' is a 'hard' saying for many people. The very word 'office' arouses in many people unpleasant associations with authoritarian regimes, with the 'establishment', the 'organization'. As part of our entire contemporary consciousness we are at the moment experiencing a feeling of critical reserve towards what is called the 'official Church', the 'institutional' Church. The particular form of this office as 'teaching office' sharpens the uneasiness that is felt: people fear it could lead to the suppression of discussion needed for clarification and of freedom of teaching and research, that it could lead to modern forms of the Inquisition.

Manifestations of this crisis

Cursory readings of articles and news on ecclesiastical matters these past years unmistakably reveal the existence of a crisis of faith in the teaching authority of the Church.

How else should we understand the fact that, especially during these past twenty years or so, most emphatic and most discussed pronouncements of the Popes have been on the magisterium of the doctrinal authority of the Church? From the "Humani Generis" of 1950, the discourse of the Pope to the Faculty Members and Student Body of the Gregorian University in 1953, the "Si Diligis" address to the Episcopate of May 31, 1954, the October 1, 1965 address to the theologians attending the International Congress on the Theology of the Second Vatican Council, the resounding profession of faith of the Credo of the People of God, the 'Humanae Vitae, the *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of June 24, 1973, all the way up to the most recent declarations on the doctrine of faith — the emphasis has always been "by the will of Jesus Christ, the immediate and universal norm of this unfailing truth — revelation can be found solely in the authentic magisterium of the Church whose task is to safeguard faithfully and to explain infallably the deposit of faith." (I Vat. Council, sess. III, ch. 4; D-B 1798).

Some Christians who remain attached to the faith of their childhood cannot today help experiencing a feeling of discomfort. They no longer have that serenity which they thought was tied to their faith and which sometimes they claimed as something owed to them. The faith seemed to them like a set of dogmas which were as unalterable in their form as in their content. And so it is that to them this structure seems to be unsteady. No longer do they experience its solidity. Many Catholics retain the desire to believe, but they no longer know precisely whether it is this or that they should believe. They expect the Church to tell them what it is to which their adherence should remain doggedly loyal.

Not all were as gentle with the Magisterium, unfortunately. The reception accorded to *Humanae* in 1968 brought to the surface a very clear fact: there are elements in the Catholic Church capable of publicly criticizing and rejecting the authentic teaching delivered by the highest teaching organs in the Church.

The teaching office, or the magisterium no longer enjoys the implicit and unquestioning confidence of all catholic priests and faithful. Even bishops, differ among themselves regarding the binding force of papal encyclicals, Sophisticated Catholics today have other criteria of truth by which they sometimes judge even the teaching of the hierarchy.

In the realm of dogma, all that was a certainty of faith is being questioned by some: the signification of the sacraments, baptism, penance, eucharist, ministerial priesthood; the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word, of the Resurrection, of Redemption; the place of the Virgin Mary in Christian life; and the precise sense of the mystery. Even the sense of the transcendent God, who wills to reshape man's history by Israel and by the Church, is affected. In the name of a very poorly elucidated psychoanalysis the profound reality of traditional spiritual life is under attack. One does not learn to pray from the Saints any more. The beatitude of poverty is sometimes gravely disfigured, and others, like purity and suffering, are forgotten. A significant fact; some spontaneously revert to Feuerbach and August Comte again, and become the disciples of Karl Marx, or of Freud. For them, Christianity does not tell any longer of the mystery of the living God acting in history, but only of the depths of human consciousness and of the drama of man at grips with his destiny.

Last 1969, Frank Sheed wrote in the *National Catholic Reporter*:

And now in the Catholic Church, unity's last stronghold we have a crisis of faith among adults, a vast evaporation of faith among the young, discord among the clergy — with no doctrine or practice of the faith I have not heard denied by a priest.

This could well be said of 1978, only clearer and deeper.

In the same year — 1969 — Fr. Richard McCormick, S.J., told the annual convention of theologians:

I believe it is safe to say that the hierarchical magisterium is in deep trouble. For many of the educated faithful it has ceased to be truly credible. (The Teaching Role of the Magisterium and of Theologians," *Proc. Cath. Theol. Society of America*, June, 1969).

This too is as valid today as it was in 1969, only clearer and more pervasive.

Causes of this crisis

There are many causes which explain more or less this phenomenon. Some of the principal causes, to my mind, are the following:

1. One cause is inherent in the nature of the object of our faith. We are thoroughly familiar with the idea that there is a development in the understanding and assimilation of revelation, that there is indeed a development of dogma. Furthermore we are at the moment living in an age of a kind, that has very rarely

been experienced in the history of the Church. Everywhere new questions arise in the form in which they are posed but not occasioned by Vatican II. We need only think of the understanding of Holy Scripture, the declaration on original sin, many questions on the Eucharistic doctrine and of marriage morality, the much more positive assessment of the non-catholic Churches and communities, and even of the non-Christian religions.

Compared with the past, many statements of the teaching office show important changes and new perspectives during the Second Vatican Council. Now, this ought not to disturb us if only we recall that God's reality has not been disclosed to us bluntly for our immediate and conclusive comprehension. Rather can we only approach it in perspective, and from every new viewpoints, it discloses new perspectives.

But for many who are unable to perceive more deeply and to differentiate in their judgments, the teaching office of the Church seems to be contradicting itself, and thus abandoning itself. On the other hand, if the question is seen from the point of view of one who shares in the teaching office, one must be able to wait patiently so as not prematurely interrupt and bring to a halt an indispensable process of theological development. So for one person, the teaching authority seems to be intervening too quickly; while in the opinion of another, it is neglecting its duty.

2. Another major cause is the dominance of the scientific method. The scientific method has gradually gained hegemony as the only acceptable way of knowing reality. What cannot be verified through the application of the scientific method is rather commonly thought to be unworthy or anything more than private opinion and speculation. This frame of mind, of course, excludes most forms of philosophical knowledge, and more so it excludes divine revelation and theology as valid avenues of true knowledge. This in turn has led to the present dichotomy between orthodoxy and orthopraxis which regards questions of truth as inconsequential and is exclusively concerned with practicalities.

3. The third major factor making up the wider background of the problem is the cultural phenomenon of the new emphasis on human dignity, freedom and rights, the new personalism which so cherishes self-determination and self-fulfillment and tends to reject what would influence thought or opinion from outside or above.

I mention these factors not to reject them outright, since it is obvious that there is a place for the scientific method as well as for a wholesome personalism. Yet these two factors, the second and the

third, when carried beyond their proper sphere do have destructive and reprehensible features and both have some bearing on the present crisis of faith in the magisterium.

4. A fourth cause — more in the level of prudence or lack of prudence — is the unwise and hasty communication of investigations which are legitimate in themselves but which are inaccessible to most people, since they presuppose a level of theological and philosophical education which forces their critical examination to be reserved to specialists.

5. There is a certain habits of as it were passively receiving the teaching of the hierarchy and retaining its formulation as if it were a lesson well learn, without an attempt at personal assimilation and reflection.

Results of a non-credible Magisterium

Several results necessarily follow when the magisterium ceases to be credible to a large portion of the Church.

1. Theology tends to become irrelevant for all but skilled theologians. For, with many of the major teachings of the Church seemingly a matter of dispute, many Catholics will tend to view theology as a hopeless confusion, irrelevant to daily living.

2. Secondly, a decline in the statute of magisterium will inevitably tend to erode the faith of many Catholics. What we believe is usually grounded on scripture, tradition, and theological reason. But few of our theological proofs are able to carry real conviction to the majority of the clergy and laity, apart from the fact that a particular doctrine is taught infallibly, or at least authentically, by the magisterium.

How many of us can prove **apodictically** from scripture the real presence, the existence of seven sacraments, or even the inspiration of scripture? Thus the content of our faith depend for most of us on the clear teaching of the magisterium, and, in particular, in proportion as the magisterium ceases to be credible, our faith will necessarily become vague and uncertain.

3. A third and tragic result of the decreased influence of the magisterium within the Church is the polarization and divisions that have taken place in many religious communities and congregations. It is true that many of the present divisions in religion to the liturgy ascribed to other factors, such as different approaches to the liturgy and diverse interpretations of obedience. But it seems clear that some of the deeper and most emotional disputes in religion today

come from fundamental theological differences, arising from diverse approaches to the magisterium. Dialogue and openness alone can not heal these divisions within communities, any more than dialogue alone can bring a consensus among Protestants and Catholic theologians.

4. A final result, at least indirectly, of the decrease of the magisterium in the Church, is the decrease in priestly and religious vocations. To attribute the vocation crisis wholly to magisterial problems would be clearly simplistic. But it scarcely seems an exaggeration to say that theological disputes within the Church have created a deep unrest among clergy and religious, an unrest easily perceived by youth. It is the interior happiness of priests and religious that attracts vocations, and this is often lacking today. This is partially due to theological contention and confusion.

Recommendations

1. The responsibility of restoring a greater measure of respect for the magisterium is in some degree on all of us: bishops, priests, religious, laity. Every member of the Church has the opportunity of witnessing his faith in the Church and its teaching authority.

The theology upon which this assertion is founded is highly interesting as it is simple. In speaking about the teaching office of the Church — its prophetic function — we should not begin with the distinction between the 'teaching' and the 'learning' Church. The whole Church is **fundamentally** and permanently the learning Church and at the same time the teaching Church too.

Does this mean that there is no normative magisterium? No. The admission of a whole Church fundamentally a teaching Church does not exclude the acceptance that there is a normative magisterium. What is being emphasized here is that, in the midst of the Church and at the service of its faith is placed, as the highest form of this task which is common to all, the authentic teaching office; the office endowed with the authority of Christ (LG, n. 25). This normative office is assigned to the college of bishops, who exercise it for the whole Church and in the dioceses entrusted to them in association with and subordination to the Pope as the supreme teacher of the Church.

But both the general and normative teaching functions, i.e., the teaching office of the Church is not above the Word of God, but is at the service of that Word. The purpose of the prophetic func-

tion of the Church lies precisely in listening afresh to this word in every hour of the Church's history so as to proclaim it undiminished and unfalsified (DV, n. 10).

2. There is a need among those who hold the magisterial office to have the right attitude regarding their duties. They are enjoined to proclaim and to defend the Good News. Both are important, but the first should be the principal concern at a time like ours. The Council's decree on the office of the bishops, *Christus Dominus* says: "They should, in the power of the Spirit, summon men to faith or confirm them in a faith already living." (n. 12). And what is this faith? It is the faith of which the scripture speaks about so frequently: that personal, total assent to God revealing himself in Christ. But the one actual imperative of this responsibility is to be able to do it in a language that is understood by the man of today and in response to the questions that oppress him. This concern should take precedence over concern of ultimate precision and exactitude of statements of belief.

In this age of research and rapid changes, the pastors of the Church should look upon sincere attempts on the part of theologians to discover a language that is appropriate to the mystery and to its correct understanding. If it should happen that an unsatisfactory solution or even one that is false in its application should be confirmed in the case of a theologian who has been taking serious trouble over his work, then in no case ought this to be equivalent to discrimination. Let the authority of Christ be heard when such case comes, but always in atmosphere of love and of understanding.

3. For the members of the Church who do not enjoy the authentic normative magisterium, what is fundamental always and at any time is living faith within the Church. We have confidence in the assistance that is promised to the whole Church and thus to us also.

4. One must take into account the evolution of modern man, many conciliar texts, the Declaration on Religious Freedom in particular, have underlined the personal character that must increasingly typify christian life. But one must not ignore the danger of an individualism contrary to that fundamental aspect of Christianity, by which it is a **people**. This is what Christ willed to establish. Now, in order to insure its fundamental unity, any society maintains a

certain authority even on the naural level. If Christianity depended only upon individual inspiration it would not keep this character of a people and of a body. But one must go much deeper. What makes obedience important in the Church is that we are not just dealing here with the sort of obedience demanded in the organization of each and every society. There is, at the very foundation of the Church, an authority that is **absolute**. This norm is absolute because it is divine. Primarily, it is the very authority of God's word, as it is manifested in the Scripture, but also it is a divine authority that the Church holds because it flows from the assistance of the Holy Spirit. For a Catholic and the Council has repeated this, the Church's authority is not simply a human authority, but a participation in the very authority of God. This gives her the right, in the area of dogma, to rule infallibly on certain questions and, on the level of her government, to make binding decisions which are for the good of the people of God.

Conclusion

At this very time, we pastors and teachers of the Church must ask for your appreciation of the particularly heavy task of the teaching office. In an age which a tendency to criticism, the Christians should show critical judgment but with patience.

TEAM MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

NEW TRENDS IN PASTORAL CARE

By

Florencio Testera, O.P.

The concept and praxis of team-shared-pastoral-ministry in the Church is firmly rooted in tradition. History bears witness to the existence in the early christian communities of leading groups of presbyters who, gathered around their bishop, formed a cohesive unit and ministered to the community of the faithful as a body. Though the origin, nature and functions of the old **presbyterium** continue to puzzle contemporary scholars, the corporate action of the presbyters stand out as the main feature of the priestly ministry of that era.

The old **presbyterium**, characterized by a common authority, the plurality of members and a corporate nature, lost most of its pristine meaning and even the sense of unity among its members but it refused obstinately to die. Remnants of such types of corporate structures can still be found in existing institutions such as cathedral chapters, the college of cardinals, the diocesan curia and synod, etc., which for centuries have carried on a life more symbolic than active.¹

Vatican II, moreover, made a vigorous effort to restore the communitarian concept of the old **presbyterium** and its corporate form of ministry. Thus, though the Council's Decrees refrained from using explicitly the term "college of priests", the various types of priestly ministry are constantly viewed as a communitarian undertaking. Such view ensues as a necessary corollary from the corporate nature of the priesthood itself which in turn stems from the sacramental character of the priestly ordination and finds its concrete expression in some form of community life through bonds of charity, prayer and other forms of cooperation.

"Priests by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood".

¹ Barberena, Tomás G., Collegiality at Diocesan Level; The Western Presbyterate. *Concilium*, Oct. 1965, pp. 13-18.

"Each one, therefore, is united in special bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and brotherhood with the other members of this priesthood. This has been manifested from ancient times in the liturgy when the priests present at an ordination are invited to impose the hands together with the ordaining bishop on the new candidate, and with united hearts concelebrate the sacred Eucharist. Each and every priest, therefore, is united with his fellow priests in a bond of charity, prayer and total cooperation".

"In order that priests may find mutual assistance in the development of their intellectual and spiritual life, that they may be able to cooperate more effectively in their ministry and may be saved from the dangers of loneliness that may arise, it is necessary that some kind of common life or some sharing of common life be encouraged among priests. This, however, may take many forms, according to different personal or pastoral needs, such as living together where this is possible, or having a common table or at least by frequent and periodic meetings".²

The foregoing texts underscore the need to revive and invigorate among the clergy of today the communitarian spirit and praxis of the ancient **presbyterium**. A technical formula, however, had to be found to adapt the various modes of pastoral ministry and the communitarian meaning of the old **presbyterium** to the present day milieu. This is precisely what the on-going revision of Church law has lately accomplished with the explicit formulation of the juridical structure of a new form of priestly mission, the so-called **team-ministry** or **shared-pastoral-ministry**.³

THE TEAM OR EQUIPE

The on-going revision of Church law, while retaining in principle the territorial structure of the parish, envisages the possibility of a parish or several parishes being entrusted to a group of priests who will collectively or corporately discharge the office of parish priest under the leadership of a Moderator or Director. In case of limited clerical manpower the pastoral team, always headed by a priest, could even include non-ordained or lay members. This latest form of ministry has been devised to cater for the pastoral needs of some peculiar parish or group of parishes and thus should not be viewed as a substitute of the traditional parish but rather as its

² Vatican II: *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 8.

³ *Communicationes*, vol. 8, (1976), pp. 29-31; Pontificia Commissio Codici Juris Canonici Recognoscendo: *Schema Canonum Libri II. De Populo Dei*, cc. 349, 2; 374-376. Hereinafter quoted as: *De Populo Dei*.

complement and extension, since the old principle one-parish-to-every-pastor still remains the rule. The implication is that the centuries old parochial system is still the preferred working model of pastoral activity and, as a consequence, team-ministry should be of limited application such as determined by the special needs of the community it purports to serve.

The team or *équipe* system is not always the best suited program for all situations. Thus the adoption of the system in a large scale should be discouraged unless its viability and practicality in a given case have been beforehand tested and established through a pilot project and study.⁴

The need for a shifting to the team or group type of ministry may arise in small as well as in large parishes. A sparsely populated community may not need the full time services of a pastor while a large parish can not be adequately attended to by one individual priest. In both such cases alternatives should be sought and found. One could possibly be the entrusting of several parishes to one pastor or to a group of priests as the case may require. In large, complex parishes at least certain ministerial activities should be carried out through shared-parochial-ministry instead of vesting all responsibility and efforts of running the unit on one man, the parish priest. Indeed the pastoral possibilities of such huge communities are so varied and so complex that the united effort of a team becomes imperative.

From the juridical viewpoint the structure of a team-administered-parish is distinct from that entrusted to and run by a moral or juridical person such as a religious community, a canonical chapter and the like. As a matter of fact the old arrangement that made it possible for a moral or juridical person to take over the role of parish priest and act as such in the running of the parish entrusted to its pastoral care,⁵ will not be henceforth feasible.⁶ The new legislation explicitly provides that the pastor always be a physical, human person.⁷ However, a parish may still be entrusted to a religious institute or community either on perpetuity or for a fixed time on condition that one priest of that community or institute be appointed and act as parish priest and not merely as a *vicarius actualis* or simple administrator of the parish under the

⁴ Cora, F. George, Team Ministry: Theological Aspects. *The American Ecclesiastical Review*, vol. 167 (1973), pp. 684-690.

⁵ *Codex Iuris Canonici*, cc. 452; 1423, 2. Hereinafter quoted as: CIC.

⁶ *Motu Proprio: Ecclesiae Sanctae*, n. 21, 1.

⁷ *Communicationes*, vol. 8 (1976), p. 25.

authority of his own superior. The parish priest in such cases will henceforth have total independence and enjoy all the faculties and privileges of parish priests in general.⁸

THE TEAM LEADER

It is beyond question that any team needs a leader, someone who is ultimately responsible for the direction, the running and eventually the very performance of the group. On this score the revised law is quite definite and admits of no exception. The pastoral team needs a Moderator as much as the parish a pastor, (CIC., c. 406, 2). As a matter of fact the team-parish does not become vacant upon expiration of the Moderator's term of office or when somehow he becomes impeded to carry on his duties, in which case the senior team-member automatically takes over and acts as Director until the bishop should appoint as new Moderator, (*De Populo Dei*, c. 372,2).

What could certainly be a debatable question on this issue is the very nature of the Moderator's role and his position within the team. Is the Moderator of the team just like anyone of his peers? Or is he the senior associate whose main concern is to maintain unity among the members? Is the Moderator there just to hear the advise of the body and then make his own decision and enforce it with or without the consent of the other members? Is he the person ultimately responsible for the running of the group or unit?

The team can not and should not be composed of mere equals as the letter and spirit of the new law will assign the Moderator certain functions and impose upon him various duties which can not, as a rule, be delegated to any member or members of the team. For instance, the Moderator personally assumes the direction and the coordination of the team's work and efforts, (*De Populo Dei*, c. 394,2). Similarly he is the man responsible for the preparation and keeping in good, proper condition the parish books, registers and other records, (*Ibidem*, cc. 369;375,3). The Moderator alone represents officially the parish and signs in its behalf all official papers and documents mostly those related with legal or juridical matters such as lawsuits, (CIC., 1649, 1653), alienation of Church property, agreements and contracts of any sort, etc., (*Ib.*, c. 375, 3). The new law also reserves to the Moderator certain functions, but allows him when opportune to share them through delegation with any

⁸ Motu Proprio: *Ecclēsiae Sanctae*, n. 33, 1.

or all team members, such as the power to assist at marriages, to dispense from the Sunday precept, to dispense or commute the obligation of fast and abstinence, etc.⁹

Neither does the new law regard the Moderator as a senior associate or partner whose only and specific function is to preserve the unity of the team. As Card, Suenens puts it, "the problem is not primarily one of safeguarding the unity of command. It is much more profound than that. The fundamental role of the leader is to make collegiality possible. He is its guarantee. He is there primarily so that each member may be a part of the whole, and thus assume responsibility toward a common effort".¹⁰

Obviously such is the intention of the law when it clearly establishes a distinction between the senior team member that takes over as *interim* Moderator in the event of a vacancy in the leading position of the *équipe*, and the new Moderator to be appointed by the bishop in accordance with law, (*De Populo Dei*, c. 376,2).

It would be totally inaccurate, moreover, to look at the Moderator as the man who is everything in the *équipe*, the brain behind all decision making and planning, while the task of the members is limited to that of helping their leader with the implementation of his decisions and plans. The type of relationship expected to exist between the Moderator and the member-priests is not just that which can succeed in welding the team into a cohesive unit. Team ministry is a type of shared-pastoral-ministry where all the members collectively exercise the care of souls and are held responsible as a body, *in solidum*, for the duties proper to a parish priest. This is a typical case indeed of priestly collegiality at the local or parochial level. The implication being that all priests who share the responsibility of the pastoral work must get directly and personally involved in the decision-making process and be a part in the pastoral activity of the parish.

"The role of the one in charge, writes Card. Suenens, is not that of making a personal decision after taking the advice of others into account. For in that case it would still be his decision. His role is rather to make it possible, in so far as this depends upon him, for there to be a common decision, in such a way that they are solidly behind it and willing to accept all the consequences of

⁹ Pontificia Commissio Codici Iuris Canonici Recognoscendo: Schema Canonum Libri IV. *De Locis et Temporibus Sacris*, c. 43; CIC, c. 1245.

¹⁰ Suenens, Card. L. J., *Corresponsibility in the Church*, NY, 1968, p. 132.

what has been decided together. A true leader, ultimately responsible for the pastoral work of a locale, will find his place when his has succeeded in helping the others find theirs".¹¹

THE MEMBERS OF THE TEAM

The parochial team is not fashioned out of a group of parish priests who, through a common understanding, band together in order to run jointly their individual parishes. On the contrary, the team is made up of individual priests who agree to form the *équipe* and join forces to effectively exercise the pastoral ministry of a parish under the leadership of a Moderator. The presence of the Moderator in the team should not serve as a reminder of the often strained relations between pastors and their assistants or curates, when the parish priest makes the decision and the curate assists him in the implementation of the plans without being directly responsible for the running of the parish. In the *équipe* the relationship that should bind the team leader with the members is that of associates in a common undertaking. Since priestly ministry is a joint responsibility of the team all its members must be directly and personally involved in the pastoral management and work of the parish. Yet total integration of the individual member into the parish life and ministry can not be attained unless he knows the pastoral objectives and the means conducive thereto.

On the other hand, since the team members are collectively bound to exercise the ministry of the parish entrusted to the care of the group, their qualifications for the job, the duties and obligations imposed on every member thereof shall be those of a parish priest, (*De Populo Dei*, cc. 354;374,1; 362,363,375).

Only the bishop has the right to nominate the team members and to appoint the Moderator or Director. In making the appointment the bishop should take into account the pastoral needs of a particular parish or group of parishes whose pastorship is to be entrusted to the *équipe*. To do this more effectively he is obliged to consult the dean or vicar forane and he may also, when and where opportune, be advised by other priests and even lay persons of the locality, (*Ib.*, c., 356,2). Candidates to the office should prove their fitness through an examination after a course of study, unless in a particular case the suitability of the person may be established otherwise, (*Ib.*, c., 359,2). The appointments should generally be for

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.

an indefinite period of time, though with the approval of the Bishops' Conference, a diocesan bishop may appoint team members for a definite time, say five years, (*Ib.*, c. 355).

As a general rule, all the priests in the team are collectively responsible for the duties proper to every parish priest, viz.: to teach, to sanctify and to lead the flock, (*Ib.*, cc. 362,375). In practice, however, some specific duties such as the obligation of residence and the *Missa pro populo*, etc., will be apportioned among the members through team consultation under the direction of the Moderator, (*Ib.*, cc. 367,368,375).

Any member of the team may cease from office upon removal, transfer, resignation duly accepted by the bishop, or by lapse of time when the appointment was for a fixed term. In the future, any team member, like any other pastor, will be subject to forcible retirement upon reaching the age of seventy five, (*Ib.*, cc. 370,376).

The team ministry presently in its experimental stage is hoped to evolve into a truly juridical structure. But beyond the juridical readjustments therefor, important though they may be, and the benefits hoped for from this new system of pastoral action, team ministry offers immense possibilities in both the material and the spiritual realms for both the pastors and the flock. To quote one authority: "Friendship between the priests and the mutual support that they can give to one another are inestimable graces for the priests themselves and for their apostolic activities. The isolation which the ecclesiastical celibacy entails should, no doubt, be balanced by a strong interior life and genuine ascetism, but it should also be lived out within an atmosphere of affectionate and brotherly communion which grows with the passage of years because of an intimate sharing of a common ideal with others. We must resolutely live behind the era of individualism and isolation, and develop those things which lead to a sense of community".¹²

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

"I WILL LIFT UP THE CUP OF SALVATION..."

The Reformed Rite of the Blessing of Chalices

by

H. J. Graf, S.V.D.

In his exposition on Psalm 113 St. Augustine mentions that Christians use a number of utensils and vessels for the celebration of the Liturgy, made of silver, gold and other metals. Then he adds casually that these vessels are consecrated by their very use in the sacred rites; **therefore** they are called holy or sacred.¹ For centuries Rome seems to have followed the same practice.

Only under the influence of the Gallican Liturgy Rome established special rites for the consecration of patens and chalices. The *Missale Francorum*² and the *Old Gelasian Sacramentary*,³ both of the early eighth century, contain the oldest Latin blessing of a chalice and paten. From then on through the centuries we can trace special rites for the same purpose. We find them in the appendix to the *Gregorian Sacramentary*⁴ in the ninth century, and in the *Romano-Germanic Pontifical*⁵ in the tenth. By way of the pontificals of the Middle Ages⁶ this rite found its way into the *Roman Pontifical*, as we had it until Vatican II.

According to the Code of Canon Law the consecration of a chalice and paten was one of the reserved consecrations: only bishops, cardinals and priests with a special delegation were allowed to consecrate these sacred vessels.⁷ The rite was found in the second part of the *Roman Pontifical*. For the sake of convenience many Latin Missals contained this rite also in a special appendix for

¹ Enarrat. in Ps. 113, C Ch L 40, 1645.

² L. C. Mohlberg (e.a.), *Rerum Eccl. Documenta. Series Maior. Fontes II* (Rome 1957) nn. 62-65, p. 18 f.

³ L. C. Mohlberg (e.a.), *Rerum Eccl. Documenta. Series Maior. Fontes IV* (Rome 1960) nn. 696-699, p. 109.

⁴ J. Deshusses, *Spicilegium Friburgense. Vol. 16* (Fribourg 1971) nn. 1257-1259, p. 421 f.

⁵ C. Vogel—R. Elze, *Studi e Testi* 266 (Rome 1963) nn. 88-95, pp. 155-157.

⁶ M. Andrieu *Le Pontifical romain au moyen âge. Vol. III* (*Studi e Testi* 88) (Rome 1940) pp. 518-520.

⁷ C.I.C., can. 1304.

reserved consecrations and blessings. After the opening words "Adiutorium nostrum" followed first the consecration of the paten, then that of the chalice. Both consecrations had the same structure: after an introductory mention to the bystanders to pray, the minister pronounced the consecratory formula and anointed the vessel with chrism. A final prayer brought the rite to conclusion.

With the publication of a new fascicle of the Roman Pontifical this rite is now a matter of the past. Under the title "Ordo Dedicationis Ecclesiae et Altaris" the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship published a book of 162 pages under the date of May 29, 1977. But only towards the end of September of the same year the volume became available at the Vatican bookstore.

The new rite is an entirely new creation. Nothing of the former rite for the consecration of the paten and chalice in the Roman Pontifical has been retained. But in its present form the new rite did not come as a complete surprise. A preliminary stage of its development had been made accessible to experts in 1973 in a book with the rather ponderous title "Ordo Dedicationis Ecclesiae et Altaris deque aliis Locis et Rebus Sacrandis." Originally, Rome had asked scholars from all over the world for their comments on these rites. But a little later all those who were about to consecrate churches and altars, or to have an image or statue of Our Lady crowned could obtain from Rome the permission to use this book. In the Philippines it was used for the dedication of the new cathedrals of Dagupan and Cabanatuan.

The Roman study edition of 1973 contained rites for a number of other blessings, like that of a part-time church, of a cross destined for public veneration, of bells, of a cemetery, of the crowning of a statue or image of Our Lady, etc. Only one of these blessings "survived" in the new fascicle of the Roman Pontifical: the blessing of patens and chalices. All others were omitted, because they belong, properly speaking, in the *Benedictionale* or *Rituale*. Rites and ceremonies found in the Pontifical should be reserved to "pontifices", i.e., to bishops. From this point of view the blessing of a paten and chalice — no longer a "consecration" in the technical sense of the word — should also not be part of the Pontifical. Their blessing is no longer reserved to bishops. The new fascicle, therefore, abolishes Canon 1304 of the Code of Canon Law, because "every priest can bless a chalice and paten, provided these vessels are made in line with the rules laid down in the Roman Missal."⁸ It seems necessary to call the prescriptions of the General Instruction of the

⁸ Roman Missal, General Instruction, nn. 290-295.

Missal, as they had been published in 1969 — they were inserted in the same form in the Missal itself which appeared only in 1970 — to the attention of our priests. Not seldom they use chalices, patens and ciboria which they would not dare to offer to any of their visitors at lunch or supper as eating and drinking utensils.

290. **Vessels should be made of solid materials which are considered suitable in each region. The conference of bishops will be the judge in this matter. Materials which do not break and deteriorate easily are to be given preference.**

It must be said that the English official translation of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) is not always correct. The word "suitable" does not render the meaning of the Latin "nobilis" which means renowned, fine dignified, and in this context "precious."

291. **Chalices and other vessels which are intended to hold the blood of the Lord should have a cup of non-absorbent material. The base may be of other solid and worthy material.**

Chalice-like wooden vessels which can be bought for a few pesos in any store selling Filipino handicraft are certainly not fulfilling the conditions of the Roman Missal. The acids contained in the wine dissolve the varnish, and the wood easily absorbs the wine. Therefore, the bishops' conference of the Philippines decided in its meeting of July 2-5, 1969 that "chalices and patens may be made of materials other than the customary, provided they are solid, dignified and non-absorbent".⁹

292. **Vessels which are intended to hold hosts, such as a paten ciborium, pyx, monstrance, etc., may be made of other materials which are locally considered valuable and appropriate for sacred use, such as ebony and hard wood.**

Vatican II called for a poor Church, but it is not appropriate to impose this poverty onesidedly on the Lord present in the Blessed Sacrament. It would be a more genuine sign of poverty — more in line with what the Council intended — if priests began with their own style of life. For the celebration of the Mass and the worship of the Eucharist outside Mass we are supposed to continue to use "materials which are locally considered valuable and appropriate for sacred use." It is not true that gold and gilding should no longer be used. This would be in clear contradiction to the next article of the Introduction of the Roman Missal:

⁹ *Liturgical Information Bulletin* 4 (1969) 61.

THE NEW RITE**A. Celebration within Mass**

In former times the bishop consecrated chalices and patens usually in private ceremonies, witnessed only by his sacristan or chaplain. Now the Church wishes that the blessing of a chalice and paten become a communal celebration, that may be even inserted into the Mass. If this is not possible, the blessing should be held in the context of a celebration of the Word of God (Bible Service).

For this Mass (or Bible Service) special readings from Sacred Scripture have been provided. Unfortunately, they may be used only on ferial days of ordinary time, and on optional and obligatory memorials. Other days of higher liturgical rank are ruled out.

The Mass formulary is that of the day, or, if permitted, the votive Mass of the Holy Eucharist (two formularies) or that of the Precious Blood.

As first reading the ordo provides 1 Cor. 11:23-26 ("This cup is the new covenant in my blood") and 1 Cor. 10:14-22a ("Is not the cup of blessing a sharing in the blood of Christ?"). There are also two responsorial psalms: Ps 16(15) with the responsory "You are my inheritance, O Lord, and my cup", and Ps. 23(22) with the responsory "You spread the table before me, my cup is overflowing." The gospel readings are from Mt. 20:20-28 ("You shall indeed drink my cup") and from Mk 14:12-16.22-26 ("He took a cup, gave thanks and passed it on to them, and they all drank from it"). A homily should comment on the readings and the significance of the blessing of chalice and paten.

After the Universal Prayer the servers or some representatives of the local community — especially if they sponsor the chalice and paten— should bring them to the altar while the community sing the antiphon "I will lift up the cup of salvation; I will call on the name of the Lord", or some other suitable song. Leaving his presidential chair the priest comes to the altar where he says the following prayer.¹⁰

**Lord, our God,
in the joy of our heart
we place this chalice and paten on your altar**

¹⁰ This is a private, non-official translation.

for the celebration
of the sacrifice of the New Covenant.
May the body and blood of your Son
which we offer in and receive from these vessels
make them holy.

And to us, Lord, our God,
grant that, while we offer this spotless sacrifice
and are strengthened by holy communion
may be filled with your Spirit
until we share with your Saints
the supper in the kingdom of heaven.

To you glory and praise for ever.

R. Blessed be God for ever.

This is no blessing formula at all. It states that the priest and the Christian community withdraw these vessels from common, every-day use. Therefore, they are placed on the altar. From now on they are destined for the celebration of the Eucharist. Then the text re-echoes St. Augustine: the body and blood of Christ, to be offered in these vessels, is to make them holy by the very contact. The celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice sanctifies the chalice and patent; no additional blessing is needed.

Th subsequent petition for the Christian community is a kind of epiclesis. About to offer the sacrifice of the New Covenant and to receive holy communion, the Christian community asks to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is needed for the celebration of holy Mass. He makes the gifts of bread and wine holy "so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Euch. Prayer II). Only through the Spirit holy communion can become fruitful. Therefore in each of the new eucharistic prayers there is a special communion epiclesis. The spirit-filled body of Christ is to fill the communicants with the Holy Spirit so that they "become one body, one Spirit in Christ" Euch. Prayer III. The Spirit is to lead the communicant to the kingdom of God which is here described under the image of a meal, alluding to words of Sacred Scripture, like: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son" (Mt. 22:2; cf. Lk. 14:15-24). One may also think here of the word of the angel, inserted by the post-Vatican II reform of the Liturgy into the rite of receiving holy communion: "Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Apoc. 19:9).

Now the offertory procession begins. Some of the faithful may bring the gifts of bread, wine and water to the altar. As accompanying song the ritual proposes Psalm 116 (115) with the responsory

"I will take up the cup of salvation and will offer a sacrifice of praise." Any other suitable song will also do. Very appropriate would be the incensation of the gifts and the altar in this celebration. At communion time the faithful may receive the precious blood from the new chalice, a further extension of the occasions when they may receive communion under both kinds ¹¹

B. Celebration outside Mass

The blessing of a chalice and paten may also be held in a service of the Word of God. After the people are gathered, the priest, in alb or surplice and stole, proceeds to his seat, while an entrance song is chanted, e.g., Ps. 116(115) with the antiphon indicated above. As greeting the ritual proposes the following text:

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
who offered his body and blood
for us and our salvation,
the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.**

In place of this formula the priest is free to use any other suitable text, preferably from Sacred Scripture. In a short address he is then to introduce the faithful to the celebration. One or two of the readings indicated for the Mass may be read and one of the responsorial psalms be sung in between. A time of sacred silence may be observed instead. After the homily the servers or some representatives of the community bring the chalice and paten to the altar, while an appropriate chant is sung. Standing at the altar the priest invites the people to personal prayer, and after a short while of silence he adds this prayer of blessing:

**Heavenly Father,,
look with kindness on your children.
In the joy of their hearts
they placed this paten and chalice
on the altar.**

**With one heart and mind
they destine these vessels
for the celebration
of the sacrifice of the New Covenant.
Sanctify them by your blessing ✙.**

**When we celebrate the sacred mysteries
and are strengthened in Holy Communion**

¹¹ Roman Missal, General Instruction, n. 242.

**fill us with your Spirit
until we share with the Saints
the supper in the kingdom of heaven
To you be glory and praise for ever.**

R. Blessed be God for ever.

Since there is no Mass in which, through the contact with the body and blood of Christ, the chalice and the paten would be made holy, a special blessing formula is needed in addition to the gesture of the faithful in bringing the vessels, separated from daily use, to the altar, thereby assigning them to the service of the eucharist.

The petition to God to bless the chalice and the paten is followed by a petition for the Christian community that is to use them in the future for the celebration of the Mass. Among the fruits of the Mass, frequently asked for in the prayers after communion, are also strength and the bestowal of the Spirit. At the end of the Easter Vigil Mass we pray: "Fill us with your Spirit and make us one in peace and love."

A Prayer of the Faithful, which may be freely formulated, should conclude this celebration. The ritual provides the following model:

Let us pray to our Lord Jesus Christ who gives himself unceasingly to his Church as the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. Let us say to him:

R. Christ, our Bread from heaven, give us eternal life. Savior of the world, you obeyed the will of the Father, by drinking the cup of suffering for our salvation,

— let us share the mystery of your death and lead us to the kingdom of heaven (R.).

As the Priest of God Most High, you are present in a veiled form in the sacrament of the altar.

— satisfy our hunger for you and transform us into you (R.).

Lamb of God, following your command the Church celebrates the paschal mystery under the signs of bread and wine,

— make the memorial celebration of your passion and resurrection the summit and fountain of the spiritual life of all the faithful (R.).

Son of God, in a miraculous way you satisfy our hunger for you with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,

— may the mystery of the eucharist become for us the source of our love for you and your neighbors (R.).

The summit of our prayer is Christ's prayer on the cross, as the mediator of our salvation. Fulfilling the Father's will he taught us to pray:

Our Father . . .

**Almighty and eternal God,
you redeemed all men
through the death and resurrection of your Son.
Continue his healing work in us.
As we celebrate the memorial of the mystery of Christ
grant us the fruit of our redemption.
He lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.**

There follows the usual conclusion of the celebration. One final observation should be added. The celebration within Mass could be easily inserted into the first Mass celebration of a newly ordained priest in his home parish. Many of our new priests have their own chalice, often bought at great expense and sacrifice by parents, brothers and sisters, and close friends. They should bring the chalice and patent to the altar, and the new priest should bless the vessels in this celebration, witnessed and shared by the family, friends and the entire home parish.

HOMILETICS

by

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

I. BIBLICAL NOTES FOR AUGUST

FEAST OF THE TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD (August 6, 1978)

First Reading: Daniel 7: 9-10.13-14
Second Reading: Second Peter 1: 16-19
Gospel Reading: Matthew 17:1-9

First Reading: A scene of judgment is described by the Seer in apocalyptic language: God enthroned amid the heavenly court to judge men's deeds (the open book). The throne is a symbol of royalty with its functions and powers, but especially its judiciary powers. God is given the mark of eternity, while white garments signify the absolute holiness and impartiality of the judge. Fire in this setting is a symbol of divine justice as in Pss. 50:3; 97:3. It is not said who occupies the thrones. The image of the "son of man" is ambivalent, fluctuating between an individual (the messianic King) and the People of God who he represents (vv. 18.22). His is universal dominion which will last forever. This contrasts with the partial and temporal dominions of the four beasts (vv. 15-22) with which this judgment-scene opens.

Gospel Reading: See biblical notes for Second Sunday of Lent in Bol. Ecl., Feb.-Mar. 1978, p. 186; and Jan.-Feb. 1977, p. 99f; and Jan. 1976, p. 87.

Second Reading: Though turbulent times may weaken the belief in the Lord's glorious return, the apostolic witness stands firm. They already had a glimpse of Christ's glory on the mountain of the transfiguration. Truly, there he was clothed in majesty, and proclaimed by none other than the Father himself as the beloved Son of God, to be revealed in this own time. Besides, there is the prophetic message concerning the triumph of the Lord which is completely reliable, for all prophecy is made only when men are moved by the divine Spirit (v. 21). The reference can be to

O.T. prophecies, such as Dan. 7:14,27; Zech. 9:10, but also to those of the N.T. such as mentioned in 1 Thess. 3:13 and 2 Thess. 1:10. Not only will Christ's triumph be an objective event, but also subjectively fully participated in, with Christ filling each one with delight as the bright Morning Star (Rev. 22:16) which is the harbinger of the Great Day.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(August 13th, 1978)

First Reading: First Kings 19: 9a,11-13a

Second Reading: Romans 9: 1-5

Gospel Reading: Matthew 14: 22-33

First Reading: Fleeing from the wrath of the wicked queen Jezabel, Elijah the prophet came to Mt. Horeb (Sinai) to renew the covenant of Israel with Yahweh, which had been made by Moses, the servant of God, on this same mountain. All this life Elijah had been a spectacular prophet, defending the true worship of Yahweh with mighty deeds, punishing at times his enemies with fire from heaven. Now he learns that God intends to bring back Israel to himself by the inner persuasion of the Spirit through more practical means such as preaching the word of God. The gentle whisper of the breeze symbolizes the inner workings of the Spirit (see Job. 4:12).

Gospel Reading: Apart from the historical value of this scene, it is presented by the evangelist with strong symbolical overtones. Peter stands out in prominence. The boat with the apostles is the Church buffeted by storms on all sides and hardly able to make any progress. When the night is far spent (between three and six A.M.) Jesus comes to their aid in a miraculous appearance which frightens them because he is not recognized, until they hear his authoritative word: *It is I!* Peter's courage and faith evokes a positive response from Jesus who imparts to him powers that no other apostle shares (the primacy). Yet the fury of the storm weakens his faith and he too cries out to be saved. With Christ in their midst, the storm abates and the boat reaches its destined goal (the eternal shores). All in Peter's boat acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.

Second Reading: From the heights of exultation in the preceeding part, Paul descends to the very depths of poignant grief at the thought of his Jewish brothers not accepting Christ as their Messiah. In these few verses he presents the problem which he will develop in the following chapters.

How could Israel, chosen by God as his special people, with her manifold and unique privileges, reject her long-awaited Messiah, who sprung from her very bosom? Has the Lord rejected his People? Paul would willingly forego his highest ambition in life for their sake, if it were feasible. (The Greek verb is not the potential optative: "I wish to", but the imperfect: "I could wish to", which denotes what is only in thought but not an act of the will.)

"Adoption of sons" in the O.T. was collective (Hos. 11:1). Christ brought the full sharing of sonship to each member (Rom. 8:15f). The "glory" was God's manifestation of his special presence at Sinai, and in the tabernacle (Ex. 40:32) and in the Temple (1 Kgs. 8:11). The "Law" was Israel's great boast, as was the specially prescribed worship of the true God in the Temple. In the last verse Paul reaches a climax. The natural grammatical construction makes the last words a profession of faith in Christ's divinity (like Phil 2:11): Christ, who is God, he blessed forever (King James, JB, RSV Cath. ed.). Other translations opt for an unusual grammatical break, and refer the last words not to Christ but to God in general: Blessed forever be God (RSV non Cath. ed.; NAB, Good News for Modern Man).

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(August 20, 1978)

First Reading: Isaiah 56: 1-6-7

Second Reading: Romans 11: 13-15-29-32

Gospel Reading: Matthew 15: 21-28

First Reading: The third part of the book of Isaiah (called Trito-Isaiah) opens on a universal tone: salvation is not only for Israel but for all peoples, provided they prepare themselves (v. 1) and carry out the commandments of the Lord (v. 6). Emphasis is here on man's cooperation, though the saving action is God's (v. 7).

God's dwelling-place is called by the superb epithet of "a house of prayer for all peoples". Here the prophet envisages the new and universal People of God, devoted to the Lord, not merely by external ritual, but by deep communion with God in prayer and immolation. Jesus quotes this verse in Mt. 21:13, but the true Temple of the new People of God is the Person of Christ himself (Jn. 2:21) through whom all true worship is given to God.

Gospel Reading: A pagan woman (one not of the race of the chosen People) comes to Jesus for help in need, professing faith in him as Messiah and in his power to heal. But her faith is sorely tried.

There are three apparent refusals, the last of which seems final with its casting her in the role of a house-dog, in comparison with the children of the household to whom the food belongs. Rising to the occasion, she enters cleverly into the picture, and so humbly renews her request that Jesus himself breaks out in praise of her great faith, and grants her request.

The scene is presented by the Early Church with evident symbolic significance. If the Gentile world comes to Jesus with undaunted faith, accepting him as Messiah and Savior, he will also accomplish his salvific work in them. That faith may be sorely tested by the very attitude of those of the House of Israel (the Jews), but in the end it will win out entirely. Jesus, the Food of the children (Israel) will be granted to the pagans also, for their faith often surpasses those of Israel (Mt. 8:10).

Second Reading: Let not the Christian converts from paganism despise Israel. Israel still remains very dear to God. After all, Paul is of the race of Israel. Their rejection of Christ paved the way for the conversion of the Gentile world. All the more will their acceptance of Christ in its own time mean new life both for Israel as a race (the pruned olive tree) and for the entire Gentile church which was engrafted on the olive tree (v. 18). God has not rejected the offspring of the patriarchs. When they return to him in humble submission and only then, will his mercy triumph. Salvation comes to all men only through the mercy of God.

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(August 27, 1978)

First Reading: Isaiah 22: 19-23

Second Reading: Romans 11: 33-36

Gospel Reading: Matthew 16: 13-20

First Reading: Eliakim is to be installed as chief steward or major-domo over the entire house of the king, instead of Shebna who abused his rights. Although first in authority after the king, Eliakim is not to be domineering, but like a father to all. The key was a sign of one's authority. It was large, and hung over the shoulder for all to see. Admission or refusal of admission to the royal throne was in the power of the chief steward. The peg seems to symbolize security and stability, for it was used to firmly hold down the tent-dwelling. The similarity to today's gospel-message is evident.

Gospel Reading: This passage is called the promise of the primacy of jurisdiction conferred on Peter. Jesus had asked all the apostles, but Peter as spokesman and representative spoke up in answer. In Mk. 8:29 and Lk. 9:20, there is only a confession of Christ as Messiah, and these are parallel texts. Even at the end of this passage (Mt. 16:20) Jesus refers to himself only as Messiah. But the wording of Peter's confession goes beyond messiahship, for it is also a profession of faith in Christ's divine sonship, this special relation to the Father. But a profession of faith in Christ's divinity of such clarity before the resurrection would hardly seem tenable. More likely, Matthew synthesizes by telescoping two events in one: Peter's confession of Christ as Messiah at Caesarea Philippi, and the profession of faith in Christ as Son of God after the resurrection. He does this because this section of his gospel is proposing this fundamental tenet of the Early Church.

The promise to Peter is in all the manuscripts of Matthew's gospel. There is no scientific justification for denying its authenticity. In these words, Jesus in turn promises Peter the primacy of jurisdiction over all the Church (which is conferred in Jn. 21:15-17). Several words in this passage deserve special attention:

1) **"Kepha" "the rock"** in Aramaic (petra in Greek) is used twice, but if it is used as a proper name in the first instance it must have a masculine ending (petros). What the Lord said was: You are the rock and upon this rock I will build my Church. Peter's function is to be the rock foundation-stone of unity, the image of stability. God is the rock of Israel (Deu. 32: 4-15; Ps. 18:3). Abraham is the rock from which God made Israel his people (Is. 51:1). He is the rock on which God built the world (Midrash Tanchuma to Num. 23:9). Hence, Jesus builds on Peter the new edifice of the People of God.

2) **Church** (Greek: ekklesia from ek-kaleo, to call out, to assemble). The word occurs 115 times in the N.T. but in all four gospels only twice, in this passage and in Mt. 18:17. In the epistles it is the common designation for the Christian community, (qahal in the O.T.). It is not certain whether Jesus used this precise word, or that it is a clarification of the mind of Jesus by the Early Church in the terminology then prevalent. It matters little. What is certain is that Jesus intended to form his disciples into the new People of God. They understood this and transmitted this fact to the primitive community as is evident from the Acts of the Apostles: What Jesus brought into existence was aptly expressed by the word "ekklesia" or church.

3) **My:** the community of the Messiah, the new People of God built on Peter the rock. There is only one Church built by Christ on

Peter. Iglesia ni Cristo claims Jesus meant the title by which they go, but nowhere in the Scriptures do we find the title.

4) **Gates of the underworld** (Hades, Sheol): can be taken in two ways:

a) Gates as portals like jaws that swing wide open for all who are swallowed up by death: thus, jaws of death. But death had no power over Jesus, so they will have no power those who are one with Christ.

b) Gates as part for the whole (synechdoche), symbolizing the hostile powers of evil. The hostile underworld has trapped man by the death of sin, in order to enchain him in eternal death. But in the battle here portrayed, victory is on the side of the kingdom Jesus founded.

5) **Prevail**: such a translation puts the Church on the defensive. The Greek (katischyō) rather means "to hold out". This puts the Church on the offensive. She fights to win. In the end-battle the powers of the under-world have no prospect of success.

6) **I will give you the keys**: The master of the house possesses the keys (Is. 22:22; Rev. 1: 18 and 3:7f). He gives them to his authorized steward (like in today's first reading). To Peter Christ gives the authority of spiritual leadership in his kingdom. The following metaphors clarify what that power is:

7) **Bind and loose**: nowhere found in biblical usage but frequent in rabbinical vocabulary. I can refer to either doctrinal matters: to bind is to forbid something, to loose is to permit it to be held; or it refers to disciplinary matters: to bind is to condemn, exclude someone, to loose is to absolve, allow one to enter. Thus Peter is given a comprehensive mandate with regard to the means of salvation. This is strictly a divine charge. **He receives juridical authority which is exercised on earth and is valid in heaven.**

Conclusion: By using the term "assembly" side by side with that of "kingdom of heaven" Jesus shows that this community of the end-times is to have its beginnings here on earth in the form of an organized society whose leader Jesus now appoints (JB).

Second Reading: Paul concludes his discussion of the problem of the divine election and the blindness of Israel with an outburst of admiration for God's infinite wisdom and mercy, which disposed to have both Jews and Gentiles to be of mutual assistance in reaching the eternal goal of mankind's salvation. He quotes Job and Isaiah to show how independent the infinite God is in all his undertakings. He is the Creator, the source and the goal of all creation. All glory belongs to him.

BIBLICAL NOTES FOR SEPTEMBER

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(September 3rd, 1978)

First Reading: Jeremiah 20: 7-9**Second Reading:** Romans 12: 1-2**Gospel Reading:** Matthew 16: 21-27

First Reading: Jeremiah is greatly weighed down by the demands of his prophetic role. The Lord had outlined his work in glowing terms (1: 7-9), but the faithful carrying out of his office brought him untold contradiction and grief. In a bold metaphor he complains that the Lord deceived him, and in an inner crisis of soul, he is almost determined to relinquish his role. But then the inner searing of prophetic duty was even more unbearable. He hurdled the crisis.

Gospel Reading: After the disciples had openly professed through Peter, their spokesman, that Jesus was truly the Messiah of Israel (16:16), Jesus disclosed to them something totally unexpected: yes, he was their Messiah, but a **suffering Messiah** (in line with Is. 53). Because of pre-conceived notions, Peter remonstrated strongly but is at once sharply rebuked by the Lord. There is an intended contrast by the evangelist: Peter the Rock has become the stumbling block, an obstacle in the path of Jesus to reach his goal. He is ordered out of the way or perhaps to get behind and follow. He is dubbed "satan" which means adversary, because he is imitating the great Adversary who tempted Jesus to act contrary to the divine plan (Mt. 4:1-6).

Some sayings of Jesus on true discipleship are now strung together. The requisites are 1) not to prefer oneself nor one's whims and ideas to Jesus, even though following him means laying down one's life. 2) willingly embracing the "cross", that is, one's share of sufferings and trials as a member of Christ and 3) following his manner of life and teaching. You do not do things by halves for Christ. If you enjoy all that this life offers, you lose it, for it ends in death. But if you give up everything that is opposed to Christ, and even your life for his sake, you will possess real life forever, and that Life is Christ. A final saying ushers in the glorious Parousia where each one will receive his due.

Second Reading: Paul urges these readers to consecrate their whole being ("body" means the entire person as visibly manifested) to

God's service, like a continuous liturgical act of sacrificial worship. It is "reasonable" (spiritual) worship, befitting a man, in contrast with the unreasonable worship of pagan cults. Far from conforming to wordly standards, they are to conform to the divine model. Then they will be carrying out God's will perfectly and be transformed into his likeness.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME **(September 10th, 1978)**

(Readings and biblical notes as in Bol. Ecl., July 1975, pp. 486f)

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME **(September 17th, 1978)**

First Reading: Sirach 27: 33 (30) to 28:9

Second Reading: Romans 14: 7-9

Gospel Reading: Matthew 18: 21-35

First Reading: Wise advice for covenanted People. It can almost be put in a nutshell: Do unto others as you would have the Lord do unto you. The similarity with the fifth petition of the Our Father is evident. Finally, how can a man overcome anger? By remembering 1) the certainty of death 2) the commandments of the Lord 3) the covenant made with the Most High.

Gospel Reading: Forgiving our brothers in Christ is not to be measured the number of offenses. There is no limit. That is the symbolism of the already full number seven and it is strongly corroborated by seven multiplied by ten (JB) or the square of seven multiplied by ten (NAB). The parable well illustrates the point: It can be given in three steps:

a. **Called to account:** An oriental king and absolute monarch desires to settle accounts with the officials of his realm. One was brought in that had spent a fabulous amount lavishly and was in extremely great debt, living far beyond his means and borrowing from the royal revenues. Since he was simply unable to pay the debt, the king, as was custom of the time, ordered him to be sold with his entire family into slavery. Falling down the official begs for mercy and promises to pay all (which is clearly impossible), if given the opportunity. With royal magnanimity and generosity the king grants him his freedom, pardons the offense and remits the entire debt. Every reason for him to rejoice and be grateful!

b. Forgiven but not forgiving: At heart, the servant is ignoble and base. Hardly out of the king's presence, he meets a fellow-servant of the king who owes him a trifling sum, and with physical violence demands immediate payment of the debt. A plea for mercy in the same terms he had obtained mercy from the king goes utterly unheeded. He has the man jailed.

c. Condemnation: Indignant fellow-servants report the matter to the king. Greatly incensed, he recalls the official, publicly rebukes him severely, and condemns him for his mean and unmerciful treatment of his servant. This time he is delivered to the torturers for good. (Note that his condemnation is not for the previous crime but for his action toward his fellow-servant who is also the servant of the king).

d. The lesson: This is given in the last verse. Unless we forgive our fellowmen their offenses, God will not forgive ours. There is no mention of any limit of number of offenses. God's infinite mercy will always forgive us provided we always forgive our fellowmen. There is no proportion at all between the two. Our Lord put this very lesson into the fifth petition of the Our Father.

Second Reading: This short passage is set between an exhortation to judge one's fellowmen with charity and understanding, for each and every Christian belongs entirely to the Lord, and is endeavoring to serve him alone. To him belongs universal dominion, won by his death and resurrection. Thus he is Lord of both the living and the dead. If we serve others, it is for his sake.

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (September 24th, 1978)

(Readings and biblical notes as in Bol. Ecl., July 1975, pp. 489f)

II. HOMILIES FOR AUGUST

CHRIST, THE GLORY OF THE ELECT

August 6, 1978: Feast of the Lord's Transfiguration

What the apostles see on the mountain of the transfiguration is not only a glimpse of Christ's own glory, but also a glimpse of the glory of the elect, who are called to share the very glory of the Master. For that is what he promises them later on in the high

priestly prayer: "I have given them the glory you gave me, that they may be one, as we are one" (Jn. 17:22). His face became dazzling like the sun in brightness, and this is what he claims for his faithful followers in the parable of the darnel-weeds: "The virtuous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt. 13:43). They will be radiant with glory as Jesus is here on the mountain. The Beloved disciple who was there and witnessed it, will tell us in his first letter: "When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he really is" (1 Jn. 3:3). Today's opening prayer brings this out: "God our Father, in the transfigured glory of Christ your Son, you show us the splendor of your beloved sons and daughters..."

How shall we put on the light of Christ and radiate that light to others? How can sinful man, so prone to deeds of darkness, radiate the shining on the face of Christ? Only if we ourselves became children of light. That is the message of Paul to the Ephesians: "You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness, and right living and truth" (Eph. 5:9). By sincerely following Christ, we open our minds to that light, so that we can be transformed from the darkness of sin and ignorance into the light of holiness and truth, and thus radiate the goodness and warmth of light to others. In the same vein Paul tells the Corinthians: "God who said: 'Let there be a light shining out of darkness' has shone in our minds to radiate the light of the knowledge of God's glory, shining in the face of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

But again we must ask: what are the means offered us to become like Christ the light that is all goodness and holiness? No other than the voice of the heavenly Father himself in today's gospel tells us the means; it is all in one word: Listen to my Beloved Son. He is my sole delight. He is the full revelation of my mind. He is the Way and the Truth for all men. Only by listening to the words of wisdom pouring from his lips, and putting those words into practice, will you become like him, a child of light, radiating goodness and mercy and love in all directions. Listen to him as he unfolds his message in the Gospel, in the parables and in the longer instructions, such as the sermon on the mount. Listen to him in the pithy sayings he gives to his disciples, in the keen answers he responds to his adversaries, listen to him in the farewell discourses at the last supper. Read the message of the Good News he brought to earth, and ponder over it, study it, put it into practice. If the People of God of the Old Covenant took the words of God and fastened them on their foreheads, and on their wrists, placing them as reminders on their doorposts and their gates (Dt.

6:8), how much more should the People of God of the everlasting covenant place in their hearts the words of the glorious Son of God whom the Father has given us as Teacher, Model and Guide, Saviour and Redeemer?

Deep within us the Spirit we received in baptism is enlightening us as we ponder Christ's message, and pray over his words. What is that message which runs throughout all his exhortations and counsels? It is a message of love. The Son of God became our brother to show us how to live not as enemies who hate each other, nor as strangers who ignore one another, but as brothers who love one another, help one another toward the goal that lies ahead. The Savior wants that all men love one another, not merely in fine sounding words and in multiple conferences and conventions, but in down-to-earth, actual deeds which alone prove the sincerity of our words. As St. John says: "Let us love one another in deed and truth, and not merely talk about it" (1 Jn. 3:18). Jesus proved his love for us both by dying for us and by instituting a perpetual memorial of his dying love in the Eucharist. It is the Eucharist that will strengthen us to love each other, for it is the sign and the bond of love, to draw all men more and more into the oneness of his Body-Person. Then the prayer today after communion will be fulfilled, which addresses the Father in these words: "You revealed the true radiance of Christ in the glory of his transfiguration. May the food we receive from heaven change us into his image".

To be transformed into the very image of Christ in glory! What a destiny! What a future for the believing Christian. This is the work of love's transformation. Let us set to work anew to obtain that glorious goal!

THE ABIDING PRESENCE

August 13, 1978: Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Human Situation: Children and grown-ups enjoy bathing at the sea-shore, quite unmindful of any dangers that may lie hidden in the waters. There is an ever-present awareness of the life-guard stationed at his place, in whom they put implicit trust. They know he is ready to help them in any need, and it is this presence of the life-guard that lends a sense of security to even the youngest among them.

The Good News: He had commended them to get into the boat and row back to the other side of Lake Genesareth. Then he had gone up the mountain to pray by himself, leaving them alone. They had

obeyed, although they were reluctant to go without his presence among them. Yet they only thought he was leaving them alone. In reality, he was very much with them, for he was praying very much just for them, his chosen ones, since he had great plans for them. It was for their best that he withdrew his visible presence for a while. They had to learn to trust him even when he seemed to go away and leave them by themselves. They had to experience the need of him, and of his all-assuring presence.

We do not always sense the presence of the Lord in our lives, especially when he seems to leave us to our own resources. But he is always with us, for that is what he promised. When God seems far away, he is right in our midst, right in the depth of our hearts, right there in the Tabernacle, waiting for us to call upon him in our need. Then indeed we prove to him that we have faith in him, for faith is something spiritual and is not felt necessarily by the senses and the feelings.

The disciples obeyed the Lord and now it was already late in the night and darkness had enveloped them. There was not even any moonlight, for the sky was overcast and a strong wind was blowing. The sea showed signs of getting rough and it was against their better judgment to have risked this crossing under such circumstances. But Jesus had bidden them to do so and so they kept on. For a long time they rowed, all efforts being put forth to reach the goal of the other shore. But the rowing became increasingly difficult, and with strong head-winds they hardly made any progress. They were strong fishermen, used to rowing, but in these conditions they could do next to nothing, that is, by themselves alone. If ever they felt the need of Jesus, it was now. It is the same when the trials of life nigh engulf us and we seem to be make no headway at all in solving our many problems, that we need to turn with all the more trust and confidence to our Savior. Now is the time for earnest prayer that the all-powerful Lord come to our aid. Now is the time to prove our faith with which we are blessed as Christians.

When the night was far spent and their energies were almost at a breaking point, Jesus came to his disciples, but in a manner they least expected. They did not even recognize him walking on the waves, but were frightened at what they thought was a ghost. Out there alone on a rough sea, with Jesus seemingly far away on the mountain, it was only natural that they were filled with fear. But then they heard his well-known assuring word: "Courage! It is I!" Do not be afraid!" They could not believe their ears and were still filled with wonder, when Peter challenged: Lord, if it is you,

bid me to come to you on the water. Jesus said but a word: Come! And Peter shared that extraordinary power of Jesus walking on the water, which none of the other apostles shared!

But does he forget that it is not on his own power that he walks the waves? Does he keep in mind that Jesus is his goal and in him alone can be too find safety and salvation? It is faith that is needed, great faith, Peter. But the waves are high, and forgetting rather to keep his eyes on Christ, Peter is frightened by the turbulent waves. He begins to sink, only to cry out to the Lord to save him. Even Peter, prince of the apostles, must depend in all things on the one and only Savior of mankind. Even Peter must constantly exercise great faith, for the storms that beset the boat are many and great.

Jesus chided the chosen apostle gently: Why did he doubt? Why such little faith when I have shown you so often my saving power in dire need? And they entered the boat and found themselves shortly at the shore. The lesson is obvious: Jesus never deserts his own, but he tries their faith, for they must learn to do without the sensational and the extraordinary, and be strong in living faith, that he is ever present, ever at our side, ever Emmanuel: God-with-us, to lead us on over the waves and storms to the final goal of eternity.

Our response: It is good to have at hand the little ejaculation to say at given occasions: "Sacred Heart of Jesus I trust in you." Life is often full of dark days, and stormy nights. Faith is the bulwark that has kept the saints serene even in the greatest trials of life, for they professed continually their faith in his name: "I am he! Take courage."

PERSISTENCE REWARDED

August 20th, 1978: Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Human Situation: For centuries man tried to fly engine-less man-powered contraptions with but little success. There were many failures and crack-ups. Then in 1977, a 24-year-old young man managed to get his bicycle-pedalled "dragon-fly" off the ground and "flew" it for over a mile in a circle 8 around two poles, winning the \$87,000 prize for anyone who would accomplish the distance set by the authorities. He had failed often, but he never gave up. His persistence won the prize.

The Good News: Today's gospel is a story of dogged persistence, but it also reveals a deep insight into the Heart of the Savior. A mother had a little daughter whom she loved dearly, but for days the little

one had been writhing with a strange ailment, and every available medicine had been to no avail. Beside herself with grief, the mother was helpless to do anything more. Then she heard that the Wonder-worker from Nazareth was in the vicinity at the border of her country. He was being hailed as the long-awaited Son of David. He had healed many, fed thousands in the wilderness, cast out demons, and was kindness itself to all. Courage came back to the mother's heart. Though she was a pagan, she approached him with deep faith and humility, convinced that he could heal her daughter. "Son of David, have pity on me" she cried. "My daughter is sorely troubled by a demon."

There is a sudden strange silence. All look at the master, expecting a sign from him. But Jesus says not even one word. They pass on. They leave her prostrate on the ground. Her prayer was not heard. Her little child would not be cured. But the mother is determined. Again she runs after the Master. Again she shouts and continues to shout her one request: "Have pity on my little one who writhes in pain at home." Then apostles intervene. But not in her favor. Her continued clamor embarrasses them and they beg the Master to send her away. This time Jesus speaks. But what does he say? "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel". That sounds final. She was a pagan. The Son of David is Israel's Messiah. His mission was not for the pagans. The conclusion was evident.

This second blow is still harder to bear, since it sounds so final. The mother is crushed. She was unheard, unanswered. A woman with less determination would have given up then and there. Yet there is nothing too hard for a mother's heart, when it concerns one of her own. With a last supreme effort, she manages to buoy up her faith and hope to the utmost, and coming before Jesus she falls at his feet, with the one word: "Lord, help me". Surely the kind Heart of the Wonder-worker will not refuse this last persistent plea. He speaks. But what he says was totally unexpected, almost unbelievable. "It is not fair to take the bread that belongs to the children and cast it to the house-dogs." The disciples gasp. The air is tense. Everyone could grasp the insinuation. Israel was the chosen children, the pagans were the house-dogs. The bread of God's favors belonged to the children. Why throw it to the house-dogs!

But the good woman stood that final test. Cleverly she entered into the picture given by the Master, and rose to the occasion. She was humble enough to accept the insinuation, but she has a ready answer: "Oh, yes, Lord! The little dogs do feed on the crumbs and the scraps that fall from their Master's table!" At that, even the

Master could not repress his great admiration. "O woman, great is your faith!" You have won out, you have stood the test. Go home now, your little one is cured!" See how the Heart of Christ acts. All along he had intended to grant the request of this mother who was not asking something for herself but for her child. He tested her and saw the stuff she were made of, and he has given her praise that was given to few others. Her prayer did not go unheard. It was her persistence that won the day. And her example will give courage and faith to thousands who hear of her courage and her faith.

Our Response: Each year we hear this Gospel read to us. Each year we are spurred on to new courage and strength to turn to the Blessed Savior in our needs, and to persist despite initial delays or seeming refusal on the part of God. But perseverance and persistence will bring from his lips the same praise: Great is your faith. Go, you have won the day. But he can only call our faith great if it has been tested in the crucible like the pagan mother in today's gospel.

YOU ARE THE ROCK

August 27th, 1978: Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Because of the theological importance of this gospel, it seems advisable to offer the audience a word-for-word explanation of its multiple content, as is given in the biblical notes for today.

HOMILIES FOR SEPTEMBER

THE SCANDAL OF THE CROSS

September 3rd, 1978: Twenty-Second Sunday

The Human Situation: In early Christian centuries, pagan Rome ridiculed a crucified Savior by painting a caricature of him in the form of a donkey crucified to a cross. But the cross triumphed, and paganism collapsed. Today the cross of Christ stands high on hundreds of church steeples in the holy city of Rome. The pagan temples are mere monuments of antiquity. The "folly of the cross" has become the wisdom of the Christian world.

The Good News: That the Messiah, their long-awaited Deliverer and Savior would be a suffering Savior was farthest from the minds of those who had followed Jesus. They had been under the dominion of foreign powers for so many years, they had often been weighed down by corruption in government circles, as well as by exorbitant taxes and unjust treatment of the ordinary man of the street, that they longed for the great king who would restore Israel to her glory, as the prophets had foretold, and the psalmist had sung in the Temple liturgy. And now, just after all the apostles had agreed through Peter their spokesman, that Jesus was that promised Deliverer, that long-awaited king of Israel, all their hopes had apparently been dashed to the ground, by the revelation Jesus had just made, that he would suffer great torments at the hands of the leaders in Israel and be put to death. They hardly heard the last part of his prophecy that he would be raised on the third day, at any rate, it made little impression on them, for it was unheard of that anyone should return from the realm of the dead.

That their master whom they had just acknowledged as Messiah-King should be handed over to the leaders and be put to death meant in their minds that they were more powerful than he. How could he be Israel's Savior and Messiah! That is why Peter remonstrated so vigorously. He had pinned all his hopes on Jesus and so did the others. Everything until now had looked so promising: the glamor of the crowds hanging on his words, the impact his healings made on those he cured and the bystanders, the amazement they all shared when he drove out demons and calmed the storm at sea, even his fearlessness in standing up against the leaders in Israel and defending the tax-collectors and the poor ones; all this had given them the greatest confidence and hope. And now this prophecy of his impending death! So Peter remonstrated. He tried to dissuade Jesus from following that path that seemed to him to lead to utter failure and ruin. It must not happen to him. It simply could not happen to the Messiah of Israel.

It is not often that anger is attributed to Jesus in the gospels. But this time he is filled with a holy anger. Will even his devoted apostles, and above all Peter, try to dissuade him from the path that he knows clearly to be the will of the Father for the salvation of his fellowmen? It is a real temptation to listen to these close friends of his who loved him dearly, persuading him to take an easier path, and forget the harsh measures which the Father laid out for him. How subtle the temptation! Why must the Messiah king of Israel submit to such atrocities and even die for the people? Is there no alternative? But Jesus resisted at once and vehemently any such suggestion. It was like the subtle temptation of Satan

in the desert at the outset of his public career: Use your miraculous power independently of God's plan, and nourish yourself with bread! Throw yourself down, cause a sensation, and all will be your followers. Swiftly he had responded: Away with you, Satan! This was not the way the Father had planned for him. It was the way *of suffering and death as the victim for the sins of men*. Now he says those same words to Peter he had said to Satan: Out of my sight, you Satan. You are an adversary to me in reaching the goal set for me by my Father. Get behind me and follow me on the path I intend to follow as the Father gave me to follow.

Then Jesus told all his followers, and we are his followers, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me". This is the doctrine of the cross. This is the scandal of the cross for those who do not understand the message of Jesus. It is not acceptable to anyone who would follow worldly standards or selfish aims. How often those subtle temptations come to each one of us, to throw off the cross that was given to us in the form of an unexpected set-back or sickness, family troubles or financial worries, opposition from unexpected quarters or lack of support from those over us. The words of Jesus are clear: If you want to be my follower, you must take up your cross, but first deny yourself whatever stands in opposition to my ideals, whatever comes between me and you, and the yoke of my cross will not be heavy. All your advancement in business or career will be of no avail if you lose the salvation offered you, which can only be obtained by sharing my cross. Deny your unworthy ambitions, deny your desire for more power and wealth. What will it profit you if you even gain the whole world and ruin yourself in the process, ruin yourself for all eternity! Following me, says the Lord, is no child's play. Your entire eternity depends on it.

Our Response: When standing before Caiphas, Jesus thought of his coming glory and it gave him courage (Mt. 26:64). So too the thought of the glorious future promised to those who follow Jesus, once he comes again in the triumph of his Parousia, ought to be our strong stimulus to carry the cross that the good God lays upon us. Legend tells us that Simon of Cyrene was reluctant at first when forced to carry the cross after Jesus, but when he had done so for just a short while, the burden became light, and he gladly carried the cross. He became a follower of Jesus, which can be rightly concluded from St. Mark's mentioning the names of his two sons, who would be well known to his Christian readers Mk. 15:21).

THE POWER OF UNITED PRAYER

(Another homily on today's gospel is found in
Bol. Ecl., July 1975, p. 491)

September 10, 1978: Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

The Human Situation: By uniting in larger groups, man often obtains what he needs or desires. When hundreds of workers signed a petition demanding better lunch-room and toilet facilities, the company listened and renovated several basement rooms for the purpose. When numberless phone calls and letters deluged a TV channel, demanding the removal of an indecent program, the manager capitulated. Such is the power of united effort. Will it be less when God's children put forth their petitions?

The Good News: The prayer of petition is a powerful means to obtain what we need for ourselves and others in any given situation. Before choosing the twelve apostles, Jesus spent the night in prayer (Lk. 6:12). He taught his followers the excellent prayer, the "Our Father" with its manifold petitions for God's glory and our well-being. Before raising Lazarus to death he prayed to the Father (Jn. 11:44). For Peter especially he prayed that his faith would not fail (Lk. 22:32). And he told his disciples: "Ask and it shall be given to you" (Mt. 7:7). God always hears our prayers, but will only give us what is beneficial to us, for we are his loving children.

Today's gospel speaks of prayer in common. Israel was known for its common prayer. The psalms were sung in groups at home, on journeys and in the temple-liturgy. Jesus here has also community-prayer in mind, though in its smallest form of two or three. He is emphasizing fellowship. His promise is very broad: the prayer will be granted, whatever it is, but he conditions it by demanding that they must agree among themselves, as to what they are praying for. That supposes that they took counsel together and it is not the whim of one private person. No selfish ends of an individual but the need of the community is here in question.

Why is this prayer of a community in Jesus so efficacious? Why? Because Jesus is in its midst. He has formed all those who are baptized in him into one Body-Person, and it is his **powerful presence** which assures the good will of the Father. It is the Spirit of Jesus crying out in the oneness of the community: "Abba, Father!" that draws down the divine blessing. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said to his Father: "I know that you always hear me..." and yet he petitioned for this miracle to happen. That is why he **directs**

us to pray together with himself in our midst, for the Father always hears his prayer. At the same time he is before the throne of God always making intercession for us (Hebr. 7:25).

The liturgy has well understood this message of Jesus. The presiding officer prays together with all the faithful present, and in their name. All prayers are made through Jesus or in his name. The object of these prayers is always in some way the spread of the kingdom or the well-being of its members, peace on earth, eternal salvation and the glory of God. The community adds the "amen" which is a whole-hearted confirmation: so-be-it! of whatever was the object of the prayer. Thus the "amen" ought to be recited aloud, with full intention and purpose. If we let our individual prayers and intentions be absorbed by these prayers of the community, they will always reach the Heart of God, for in them he hears his own Son praying, and his Spirit crying: Abba, Father!

Our Response: Community prayer is of great value, and we ought to prefer it to our own individual private prayers, though these too are good and laudable. When we pray in the community of Jesus, we pray with an immense number of those who have put on Christ and have the Spirit in their hearts, lifting up their voices in one accord to God the Father of all. Did not Jesus say: "If you, with all your sins, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to anyone who asks!" (Mt. 7:11).

UNLESS YOU FORGIVE...

September 17th, 1978: Twenty-Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

(The parable in today's gospel can be developed very graphically with the help of the biblical notes for today, with the lesson in mind as given there).

THE CALL TO FAITH

September 24th, 1978: Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time.

(Another homily on today's gospel can be found in Bol. Ecl., July 1975, p. 494).

The Human Situation: When St. Therese of the child Jesus was but a child, she learned that a notorious criminal named Pranzini would be executed at the gallows in a few days. Therese determined

to win the grace of conversion for this man, and make him her first big "convert". She redoubled her prayers and little sacrifices imploring heaven's favor for the conversion of the criminal. Still, when Pranzini ascended the steps to the gallows, he refused to take the crucifix offered him by the attending chaplain. But at the last moment, just before he noose was placed around his neck, he seized the crucifix and kissed three times the holy wounds. When she heard the news, Therese was thrilled. It was not merely a eleventh hour conversion but a last minute one.

The Good News: It is the goodness and free will of God to call one to take part in the labors of the kingdom. The call to faith is a free gift of his love. Some are born in good Christian families and grow up in an environment that lends itself to regular Christian living. Others have had an unfortunate upbringing, coming from neo-pagan environment, broken homes, evil surroundings and bad example. Yet once they have received the call of God's love, they belong to his kingdom just as much as those born in more favorable and Christian surroundings. The favor of God rests where it will, and no one can begrudge another's place in the kingdom, no matter at what hour the call was accepted to "work in the vineyard" of the Lord, provided that call was accepted with good will. In our Lord's time, the Jews thought they had a right to be members of the kingdom, because they were descendants of Abraham, but Jesus made this statement: "There will be weeping and grinding of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the prophets safe in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves rejected. People will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God" (Lk. 13: 28f).

With this in mind, no one should boast of his Catholic parentage or presume upon it. No one may despise others because for a long time they lived a sinful life and only later in life encountered Christ and committed themselves to him. Often such late conversions are all the more fervent, because they realize the blessing which they now possess. And no one has a right to heaven just because he is a baptized Christian. Eternity depends on the grace of God and each one's cooperation with that grace of God. The thief on the cross, the dying Pranzini, the death-bed conversion are all the works of God's love. Would the Christian who has remained loyal to Christ all his or her lifetime be envious of the one whom God has enfolded in his love the last moment to save him from an eternity of frustration?

It is Christ who is the master of the vineyard, and he calls many to work in it under various capacities. He calls them from every corner of the globe, from the dense cities with its crime-laden alleys, to the lone desert dwellers or the eskimos in the ice regions of Alaska. All are called to be his brothers and there is no regard for race or color or status in life. He offers them the grand reward of an eternity of happiness with him, if they agree to cooperate with his call and labor according to their abilities in building up God's world, the kingdom of God on earth. For some it will be in the simple duties of home life, for others in professions and crafts, still others in management and employment. Each according to his capacity, working together with Christ to advance the aims of Christ and build up a world, where peace and love dominate in preparation for the Great Day of Christ's Coming. Some receive the invitation early in life, others later, still others at the last hour. It is the boundless goodness of the Heart of the Savior to grant them all the promised reward: "He who is faithful to the end will be saved" (Mk. 13:13).

Our Response: The great and precious treasure of the faith is often not appreciated. Today high school and college students are relinquishing their Catholic faith and becoming Buddhist. Prescinding from the good which Buddha did to people, he is not Christ the Savior. No one can offer eternal salvation to man but Christ the Lord. No one gives the grace of faith but Christ. To relinquish Christ in favor of any other person is to admit that he never really understood Christ nor experienced a genuine encounter with him. What is needed is a thorough renewal in our Christian commitment, a proper understanding of the person and mission of Jesus. And finally, a total dedication to our Lord and our God.