

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

TRUTH, THE POWER OF PEACE

Pope John Paul II

POPE JOHN PAUL II TO VISIT THE PHILIPPINES

Vatican Secretarial of State

PASTORAL LETTER ON THE WAVE OF KILLINGS

Archbishop Antonio LI. Mabutas

EXHORTATION AGAINST VIOLENCE

Philippine Hierarchy

LORENZO RUIZ, FIRST FILIPINO MARTYR

Fidel Villaroel, O.P.

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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EDITORIAL

The International Mission Congress -- Hopefully A Fresh Impetus

Christ, about to withdraw his visible presence from this world, commanded his disciples to "proclaim the Good News" (Mark 16:15). In the past fourteen years this command has been repeated in Christ's name with varying inflections. The Second Vatican Council, in its decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes*; 1965), repeated the command to remind us that it is the way of fulfilling God's plan, and to stress the fact that "by her very nature" (no. 2) "the whole Church is missionary" (no. 35). The Council also formulated broad guidelines for the indigenization or inculturation of the Christian Message (no. 22). Nine years later, the Third Synod of Bishops convoked in Rome after the Council saw in the proclamation of the Good News also the proclamation of Human Rights and Reconciliation (see the Message from the Bishops' Synod, BEF 1974, p. 836-839); it interpreted the Church's mission as a mission "to bring about the integral salvation or the full liberation of men" (see the Declaration of the Synodal Fathers, n. 12: BEF 1974, p. 844).

Pope Paul VI, writing the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* in 1975, at the close of the Holy Year, explored how the power of the Good News, brought to men by methods suited to their present-day situations, could transform humanity and human cultures. Among the important points on which the Pope bared his mind were evangelical liberation (n. 33 ff: BEF 1976, p. 550 ff.), popular piety (n. 48; BEF 1976, p. 557); and basic communities (n. 58: BEF 1976 p. 564).

It is now time to review all these developments and try to discern how they call for the renewal, reform, or revolutionization of preaching the Gospel in Asia today. We should therefore be happy that our country will be the scene, come December 2 to 6, of the International Mission Congress which has chosen as its theme "The Good News of God's Kingdom to the Peoples of Asia".

The three themes of GOSPEL, KINGDOM, and ASIA will be examined from different angles in eight workshops, relating all of them to MISSION. In this way it is hoped that the participants, coming mainly from Asia but also including a number of representatives from other parts of the world, will share with each other and deepen the best recent theological thinking on evangelization and come up with a consensus position. This will be submitted to the Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) which will convene at Manila on December 6. A Joint Final Message of the Mission Congress and the FABC will be awaited.

Understandably the sponsors of the Congress — the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Pontifical Mission Societies and the Archdiocese of Manila — hope that it will provide a FRESH IMPETUS to the Church's effort to bring Christ to the lives of all men.

We are the Church. All of us have the mission to evangelize. We should welcome any new impetus that will help us fulfill our responsibility.

IN THIS ISSUE

We began the year 1979 as any new year should begin — with great expectations. Now we close it with some measure of disappointment but not without hope.

Pope John Paul II will not come to the Philippine this year, but almost certainly next year. Many explanations have been given for this delay, but the main reason is the unfinished cause for the beautification of the first filipino martyr, **Lorenzo Ruiz**. Hopefully this will be finished in January or February, and then the Pope will come here to the "Far East" for the first beatification outside Rome.

The Archdiocese of Manila has postponed the closing rites of its Quadricentennial celebration so that it could be done during the visit of the Pope. But two other events in the calendar drawn up in connection with the celebration will push through: the **International Mission Congress** on December 2 to 6 and the **Eucharistic Days** on December 7 and 8. Originally, a National Eucharistic Congress was planned but it proved more realistic to aim for just one or two days.

There certainly have been years more violent than 1979 in our history, but this year occasioned the Archbishop of Davao's **Pastoral Letter on the Wave of Killings** and the Philippine Hierarchy's **Exhortation Against Violence**. We hope the next year will be more peaceful. It will be if people heed the **Pope's Message for the World Day of Peace** on January 1: "Truth, the Power of Peace".

"TRUTH, THE POWER OF PEACE"

By

Pope John Paul II

(Theme for World Day of Peace 1980)

At the source of this choice is the realization that the outlook of too many people today is opposed to peace because this outlook is against truth. All too often falsehood is met in field after field of personal and collective life, giving rise to suspicion on the part of others. Suspicion takes the place of trust between one individual and another and between one people and the rest. Groups, blocs, and nations turn in on themselves and form closed societies. Suspicion, born of falsehood, begets fear and reluctance to enter into dialogue, and it makes it difficult to have any collaboration. There is a widely felt need for authenticity today, particularly among the young, and, if they do not find truth in people's outlook and relationships, this need may well turn into cynicism or intolerant protest.

To bring truth into relations — social or international relations, political or economic relations — is to work for peace. Without truth, peace will always be fragile.

The truth in question is not just a subjective attitude of sincerity on the part of people of good will, the human subjects of peace; it also concerns, on the objective level, the structure of things and therefore the nature of peace itself. Truth distinguishes authentic from counterfeit peace. "Peace on earth... can be secured and guaranteed only through absolute respect for the order established by God" (John XXIII: *Pacem in Terris*, 1). The only lasting peace is one in keeping with the nature of human beings and of things and with the common good.

In the final analysis, peace is based on the truth about man. If it is to be true and lasting, it must be truly human. By building peace on the truth about man, we help the human being to emerge from his present forms of alienation, inviting him to become once again the subject and not the object of what he himself creates and to give priority to ethics over technology, to people over things, to spirit over matter (Cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 15-16).

Truth is the power of peace, because it brings about a return to the objective demands of the moral order, the requirements of justice and social love, and to the primacy of "being" over "having" (cf. *ibid.*)

POPE JOHN PAUL II TO VISIT THE PHILIPPINES

SECRETARIAT OF STATE

No. 20374

From the Vatican, July 18, 1979

Your Eminence,

The Holy Father is deeply grateful for your letter of June 18 last and for the sentiments that you expressed therein.

His Holiness knows that the invitation you extended to him to visit the Philippines is in itself a manifestation of faith and love on your part and on that of your people.

I also have the honor to inform you that the Holy Father is disposed to go to the Philippines and he herefore accepts your invitation. The date of the visit can be made public only later, when everything is prepared for the announcement of a Beatification to be held in the Far East.

In the meantime His Holiness is close to you in prayer, commending your ministry to the intercession of our Blessed Mother.

With deep affection in our Lord Jesus Christ he sends his special Apostolic Blessing.

Be assured of my own prayerful good wishes,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

(Sgd.) A. CARD. CASAROLI
Secretary of State

This is a letter of Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Vatican Secretary of State to Jaime L. Cardinal, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP).

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Rome, January 20, 1972

PROT. N. 137/65

TO THE ORDINARIES OF THE WORLD

ON THE STUDY OF PHILOSOPHY

Your Excellency,

In the present period of various kinds of change in the life of seminaries, this Sacred Congregation would like to call to Your Excellency's attention a matter which, in our opinion, is of great importance.

As is well known among the various problems connected with the conciliar renewal of seminaries, a particular place is held by the philosophical formation of future priests. The Second Vatican Council, with the intention of creating a solid base for the study of theology, and of setting down the necessary promises for a fruitful encounter between the Church and world, faith and science, and the spiritual patrimony of Christianity with modern culture, thought it opportune to insist, among other things, on a profound reform in the teaching of philosophy, offering for this purpose certain fundamental directives (See the Decree "Optatum totius", n. 15; the Pastoral Constitution "Gaudium et spes" n. 62 passim; and the Decree "Ad Gentes". n. 16).

A vast and demanding program is supposed which, in present circumstances, while assuming a certain urgency on the one hand, is encountering not a few difficulties on the other. As a matter of fact, the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, which has been following matters in this area with special interest, has been able to note on various occasions not only praiseworthy efforts and progress, but also, unfortunately, signs of disquiet which are sometimes causing discouragement and lack of confidence.

Today, at a distance of six years from the Council, it is necessary to take stock of the situation and draw concrete and precise conclusions for the future. In fact, the difficulties which the efforts for philosophical renewal today encounter are undeniable and as such demand a careful examination together with an attentive study of the proper remedies to overcome them.

I

CURRENT DIFFICULTIES IN PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

The present reform of philosophical studies in seminaries should be seen in the framework of the spiritual climate of the times, which confronts philosophy with both a favorable and a hostile attitude. While on the one hand our times, with their many social changes and ideological movements, are richly suitable for a serious re-thinking of philosophy, on the other a tendency can be seen toward undervaluing philosophy even to the point of declaring, in some extreme cases, that it is useless or to be avoided. There can be no doubt that modern culture, shutting itself off always more and more to the problem of transcendence, is becoming adverse to authentic philosophical thought, particularly to metaphysical speculation which alone is able to reach absolute values.

In this regard, first of all, one must mention the modern spirit of technology which tends to reduce "homo sapiens" to "homo faber". Technology, while bringing to mankind numerous and undeniable advantages, is not always favorable toward giving man a sense of spiritual values. As is commonly seen today, the mind of man seems predominantly turned toward the material world, toward the concrete, toward the domination of nature by means of scientific and technical progress, reducing knowledge to the level of the methods of the positive sciences. The unilateral accent placed on action looking to the future and optimism nourished by an almost unlimited confidence in progress, while aimed at immediate and fundamental changes in the economic, social, and political fields, have a tendency to overlook the permanent character of certain moral and spiritual values and, above all, to consider as superfluous, or even harmful, authentic philosophical speculation, which rather should be thought of as the indispensable foundation for such changes. In such a climate, serious research in the highest truths is often unappreciated, and the criteria of truth are no longer the sound and indisputable principles of metaphysics, but rather the "present time" and "success". Therefore, it is easy to understand how the spirit of our times shows itself to be ever more anti-metaphysical and consequently open to every kind of relativism.

It is no wonder that in this context many no longer can find a place for a philosophy which is distinct from the positive sciences. Today, as a matter of fact, while there can be noted by almost

everyone a clear diminishing of interest in the classical philosophical disciplines, the importance of the natural sciences and anthropology is being rapidly increased. With these an attempt is made to give an exhaustive explanation of reality to the point of completely eliminating philosophy as something archaic and destined to be by-passed. In this way instead of the looked-for encounter which could contribute to the true benefit and progress of both science and philosophy, there is present rather an antagonism with negative consequences for both.

While many scientists are opposed to a philosophy distinct from the positive sciences, even to the point of disputing its existence, there are certain theologians who consider philosophy useless and harmful for priestly formation. These theologians maintain that the purity of the gospel message was compromised in the course of history by the introduction of Greek speculation into the sacred sciences. They think that scholastic philosophy has weighed down speculative theology with a quantity of false problems and they are of the opinion that the theological disciplines must be undertaken exclusively with historical method.

Other difficulties are born from the very field of philosophy itself. In fact, even where philosophy is not opposed, philosophical pluralism makes ever greater advances, due no doubt not only to encountering various cultures of the world and the diversity and complexity of philosophical currents, but also to the almost inexhaustible sources of human experience. This process is growing, notwithstanding the admirable efforts which various modern philosophers are making to give more coherence to their systems and more balance to their positions. The immensity and depth of the questions arising from various new philosophies and from scientific progress in such as to render extremely difficult not only a synthesis, but also an assimilation of these new notions, so necessary for teaching philosophy in a way that is living and efficacious.

It is natural that this situation should have serious repercussions on the study of philosophy in seminaries, and should be reflected both in the professors and in the students. It is commonly noticed how grave and many are the exigencies that impose themselves today on a professor of philosophy: the need to assimilate a great quantity of new ideas deriving from a variety of philosophical mentalities and from the progress of science; problems that are often totally new; the need for a new adaptation of language, teaching method, etc. And, all this has to be addressed often in a relatively restricted period of time, with little means, and with a student body not always adequately interested or prepared.

Not a few difficulties come from the students. Although they frequently show interest in certain problems touching men and society, they are not given any encouragement by the modern cultural climate to study philosophy, being in general much more attuned to images than to reflection. And, above all, their previous training is often of a mainly technical nature and directed to practical matters. There are other circumstances of a more special nature which render the study of philosophy less attractive to students today: the perplexity which many display in front of the multiplicity of contradictory philosophical currents; the over-involved (in their opinion) search for truth, which cannot possibly be unbiased; the aversion to fixed system, especially if recommended by authority; the deficiencies of a poorly updated teaching, presenting outmoded problems, distant from real life; a certain archaic philosophical way of speaking, little intelligible to modern man; an excessive abstraction which impedes the students, clear view of the connection between philosophy and theology and, most of all, between philosophy and pastoral activity for which they desire most seriously to prepare themselves.

From these things there can be seen in various seminaries a certain sense of discomfort, of uneasiness, and of dissatisfaction regarding philosophy and doubts about the value and practical utility of philosophical studies. From these things also we can see the phenomenon of the partial or complete abandonment of the authentic teaching of philosophy in favor of the sciences, which seem to be more real and directed to the concrete needs of life.

As can be seen, the main difficulties which place the study of philosophy in seminaries into question today seem capable of being reduced to the three following points:

1. Philosophy does not any longer have a proper object. It has been in fact absorbed and substituted for by the positive sciences, natural and humane, which are concerned with true and real problems and which are studied with the help of those methods which are recognized today as uniquely valid. This is the attitude inspired by the currents of positivism, neo-positivism, and structuralism.

2. Philosophy has lost its importance for religion and for theology: theological studies must detach themselves from philosophical speculation as from a useless word-game and must build up in full autonomy on a positive base, furnished by historical criteria and by special methods of exegesis. Theology of the future will, therefore, be the special competence of historians and philologists.

3. Contemporary philosophy has become today an esoteric science, inaccessible to the greater part of the candidates for the priesthood: the modern schools of philosophy (phenomenology, existentialism, structuralism, neo-positivism, etc.) carry on their labors at such a level of technicality of vocabulary, analysis, and demonstration as to have become a highly specialized field for select students. Therefore neither the suitability nor the possibility of inserting such a difficult and complex study into the ordinary formation of candidates for the priesthood is seen.

It is understandable that these obstacles would seem to many insuperable and as such should cause in certain areas a very real sense of discouragement.

II

THE NECESSITY OF PHILOSOPHY FOR FUTURE PRIEST

1. Although understanding all that has been mentioned above, we are nevertheless convinced that all the tendencies to abandon philosophy or to diminish its importance can be overcome and, therefore, ought not be a cause for discouragement. Even though the obstacles which today militate against the teaching of philosophy are many and difficult, it is hard to see how philosophy can be undervalued or simply suppressed in a process of formation toward a true and authentic humanism, and especially in view of the mission of the priesthood. Indeed, a desire to give in to such tendencies would mean ignorance of all that is most genuine and deep in modern thought. There can be no doubt that the most fundamental problems of philosophy are found today more than ever at the center of the anxieties of contemporary men, even to the extent of having invaded the entire field of modern culture: literature (novels, essays, poetry, etc.), the theatre, the cinema, radio and television, and even song. Here are constantly evoked the eternal themes of human thought: the meaning of life and death; the meaning of good and evil; the basis of true values; the dignity and rights of the human person; the confrontation between culture and a spiritual heritage; the scandal of suffering, injustice, oppression, and violence; the nature and the law of love; the order and disorder in nature; the problems of education authority, and freedom; the meaning of history and progress; the mystery of the transcendent; and, finally, at the depth of all these problems, God, His existence, His personal characteristics, and His providence.

2. It is evident that none of these problems can find an adequate solution on the level of the positive sciences, natural or humane, because the specific methods of these sciences do not provide any possibility of confronting them in a satisfactory way. Such questions as these pertain to the specific sphere of philosophy, which, transcending all merely exterior and partial aspects of phenomena, addresses itself to the whole of reality, seeking to comprehend and to explain it in the light of ultimate causes.

Thus philosophy, while needing the support of the empirical sciences, is nevertheless in itself a science that is distinct from the others, autonomous, and of the highest importance for man, who is interested not only in recording, describing, and ordering various phenomena, but above all in understanding their true value and ultimate meaning. It is clear that any other type of knowledge of reality does not bring things to this supreme level of knowledge which is the characteristic prerogative of the human spirit. As long as there is not an answer to these fundamental questions, all culture remains inferior to the speculative capacity of our intellects. If it can be said that philosophy, therefore, has an irreplaceable cultural value, it constitutes the soul of authentic culture, inasmuch as it puts the questions about the meaning of things and about the existence of man in a way that is truly adequate to the deepest human aspirations.

3. Also in many instances, an exclusive recourse to the light of revelation is not even possible. Such an attitude would be fundamentally insufficient for the following reasons:

a) A complete adherence by man to divine revelation cannot be conceived as an act of blind faith, a fideism lacking rational motivation. The act of faith presupposes of its nature "the reasons for believing", the "motives of credibility", which are in great measure philosophical: the knowledge of God; the concept of creation; providence; discernment of the true revealed religion; knowledge of man himself as a free and responsible person. It could be said that every word of the New Testament formally presupposes these fundamental philosophical ideas. Therefore, a priest needs philosophy to secure for his own personal faith the rational basis of scientific worth which will match his intellectual attainments.

b) The problem of "*fides quaerens intellectum*" has not lost any of its reality. Revealed truth always requires reflection on the part of the believer. It invites a work of analysis, of deeper study, and of synthesis, which work is called speculative theology.

Evidently here must be no repetition of the error of past centuries when theological speculation was often carried on in an exaggerated and unilateral way without sufficient regard for biblical and patristic studies. In this regard, it is necessary to restore the primacy of study to the sources of revelation as well as to the transmission of the gospel message through the centuries, a primacy that is beyond discussion and that can never be diminished in importance. It's proper to condemn any unjustified intrusion of philosophy to an area that is essentially that of revealed knowledge. But today, with a correct equilibrium established and enormous progress accomplished in the biblical sciences and in all the sectors of positive theology, it is both possible and necessary to complete and perfect this historical labor with a labor of rational reflection on the data of revelation. Thus there can be set forth richer and more certain data which in time the speculative theologian must confront with a critical understanding of the concepts and mental categories in which revelation is expressed. In this delicate work, the speculative theologian must not use the treasures resulting from the discoveries of the natural and especially the human sciences (psychology, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, pedagogy, etc.), but he must also have recourse in a special way to the help of a sound philosophy so that it can make its contribution to the reflection on the presuppositions and on the conclusions of the knowledge furnished by the positive disciplines. From the fact that the methods themselves of positive science (exegesis, history, etc.) start their work from various given preliminaries, which implicitly are results of a philosophical choice, a sound philosophy can notably contribute, among other things, to a critical evaluation and a clarification of such a choice (today this is especially necessary, for instance, regarding the exegetical method of Rudolf Bultmann), without, however, assuming an absolute critical function in the face of divine revelation.

This reciprocal influence of the two sciences, deeply rooted already in their very natures, has become accentuated in recent times by new situations created in the field of theology; theology, seeking to open up new dimensions (historical, anthropological, existential, personalistic) and to develop new aspects (psychological, socio-political, correct practice, etc.) as well as to deepen its methods (the hermeneutic problem), is facing a new type of problem which sometimes touches the very presuppositions of theological knowledge (as, for instance, the possibility of dogmatic definitions of permanent value) and which, therefore, requires a new clarification and deepening of certain concepts, as, for instance; the truth, the capacity and limits of human understandings, progress, evolution human nature and the human person; the natural law, the impossibility of moral actions, etc.

c) Philosophy is also irreplaceable for the encounter and dialogue between believers and unbelievers. In this regard, philosophy has a very evident pastoral value. It is, therefore, inadmissible that a Catholic priest, called to exercise his ministry in the midst of a pluralistic society where fundamental philosophical problems are being debated through all the means of social communication and on every cultural level, should be unable to engage in an intelligent exchange of views with non-Christians on the fundamental questions which are close to his own personal faith and which are the problems most agitating the world.

d) Finally, it must be pointed out that all pastoral direction, pedagogical choices, juridic norms, social reforms, and many political decisions carry within themselves philosophical presuppositions and consequences which need to be clearly and critically evaluated. There can be no doubt that authentic philosophy can notably contribute to humanizing the world and its culture, supplying a proper hierarchy of values so necessary for any fruitful action.

III

SOME INDICATIONS FOR THE TEACHING OF PHILOSOPHY

We have tried to make clear why a solid formation in philosophy is today more necessary than ever for future priest. At the same time we have tried to answer some objections brought against philosophy by positive scientists and by some theological circles. It now remains to answer those difficulties which come from the actual situation of philosophy itself, that is, philosophical pluralism, the highly technical level of the vocabulary, etc.

These difficulties are real but they must not be exaggerated. In every case it is a good thing to wish to obtain the highest possible level; but on the other hand, we must be realistic and avoid the fault of "perfectionism". In the difficulties of the present time, each seminary must come to realize what is possible, taking into account the concrete situation and the local resources, without attempting a completely perfect ideal.

1. The first efforts must be directed to the concrete organization of studies in accordance with the following objectives:

a) Provide for a solid professional preparation for the teachers. Given the increased demands of philosophy, it is absolutely necessary

that the professors be given a serious and specific preparation, acquired in centers of study which give assurances of being proper from the doctrinal point of view and as institutions of authentic philosophical research.

b) Promote by every means the permanent updating of the professors by course of study and meeting for the exchange of ideas and for the exchange of teaching experiences. To assist in the accomplishment of their work a contribution could be made by suitable economic remuneration and a correct distribution of the teaching load, giving to each one a chance for serious and systematic personal study.

c) To face up to the difficulties of the students, improve the methods of teaching as set forth in the Decree "Optatum totius", n. 17 and in the "Ratio Fundamentalís", chap. XV, but always preserving intact the time assigned to the study of philosophy, that is, the two years set out in n. 61c of the "Ratio Fundamentalís".

For a more secure orientation for the students it would be well to promote, within the autonomy of the single disciplines, a dialogue between the teachers of philosophy and those of theology to create a certain coherence between the two, according to the requirement for an efficacious interdisciplinary collaboration of the "Ratio Fundamentalís", n. 61b, chap. XI note 148a.

d) Improve the library of the seminary, making sure that it has enough good publications useful for the research of both the professors and the students.

e) Promote a close collaboration between the seminary and other theological institutes, working toward an exchange of teachers.

Evidently the local authorities must judge the suitability of the adoption of these and other appropriate remedies according to concrete necessity. In every case, however, in all the desirable efforts of renewal, one must never forget the fundamental importance of Higher Schools of Philosophy (Philosophical Faculties) and for the other Centers Specializing in philosophical studies. To these pertain the delicate and grave duty either of preparing future teachers or of sustaining this formative activity by periodic courses of renewal. To them also belongs the duty to diffuse scientific data and most important to publish suitable text books answering the needs of our times. It must be therefore, one of the main concerns of the competent authorities to see to the organization and the functioning of such institutions.

2. In the same measures with which there is establish a sound organization of studies; there must also be provided a solution to

the more important and delicate problems of the content of the teaching and of the program of studies. These problems must be faced bearing in mind the purpose of these studies in the framework of priestly formation.

Although the Second Vatican drew out with clarity certain fundamental lines for the proper renewal of philosophical teaching, today six years after the Council, we have to unfortunately admit that not all seminaries are following these lines wished by the Church. Various causes, often complex and difficult to define, have brought about a situation in which the teaching of philosophy, instead of going ahead, has lost much of its vigor, presenting uncertainty with regard to its content and with regard to its purpose. In view of this situation, it is necessary to set down the following:

Philosophical formation in seminaries may not be limited to teaching the students to "philosophize". Certainly it is important that the young seminarians learn to "philosophize", that is, to search with sincere and continuous love for the truth, developing and improving their critical sense, recognising the limits of human knowledge and deepening the rational presuppositions of their proper faith. But this is not enough. It is necessary that the teaching of philosophy present the valid principles and materials which the students can attentively consider, seek to weigh, and gradually assimilate.

Nor may the teaching of philosophy be reduced to an inquiry which limits itself to gathering and describing with the help of human sciences the data of experience. It is necessary that it go on to a truly philosophical reflection in the light of secure metaphysical principles in a way as to come to affirmations that are of an objective and absolute value.

To this end, the history of philosophy is certainly useful, since it presents the main solutions that the great thinkers of humanity sought to give through the centuries to the problems of the world and of life. Also useful is the study of contemporary philosophy and the study of works selected from literature to better comprehend the problems of today. But, the teaching of philosophy may not be reduced to the presentation of what others have said. It is rather necessary to help the young student to directly face reality, to seek to confront and examine the various solutions to its problems and to form proper convictions and to arrive at a coherent vision of reality.

It is clear, furthermore, that this coherent vision of reality to which philosophical studies must bring seminarians, cannot be in contrast with Christian revelation. Certainly there is no difficulty in

admitting a healthy philosophical pluralism, due to the diversity of regions, cultures, and mentalities through which different ways to the same truth can be pursued. This truth, of course can be presented and explained in various ways. However, it is not possible to admit a philosophical pluralism which compromises the fundamental nucleus of affirmations connected with revelation, since a contradiction is not possible between the naturally knowable truths of philosophy and the supernatural truths of faith. With this in view, one can then affirm in general that the very nature of the Judeo-Christian revelation is absolutely incompatible with all relativism epistemological, moral or metaphysical, with all materialism, pantheism, immanentism, subjectivisms, and atheism.

Furthermore the above-mentioned fundamental nucleus of truths contains in a special way:

a) that human knowledge is capable of gathering from contingent reality objective and necessary truths, and thus of arriving at a critical realism, a point of departure for ontology:

b) that it is possible to construct a realistic ontology which brings to light transcendental values and ends with the affirmation of personal Absolute and Creator of the Universe;

c) that there is likewise possible an anthropology which safeguards the authentic spirituality of man, leading to a theocentric ethic, transcending earthly life, and at the same time open to the social dimension of man.

This fundamental nucleus of truths which excludes every historical relativism and every idealistic or materialistic immanentism, corresponds to that solid and coherent knowledge of man, of the world, and of God of which the Second Vatican Council spoke (Decree "Optatam totius", n. 15). The Council wished that the teaching of philosophy in seminaries should not leave out the riches of past thought which have been handed down ("*innixi patrimonio philosophico perenniter valido*", *ibid.*) but should also be open to accepting the riches which modern "thought" continually brings forth ("*ratione habita quoque philosophicarum investigationum progredientis aetatis*", *ibid.*).

In this sense the repeated recommendations of the Church about the philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas remain fully justified and still valid. In this philosophy the first principles of natural truth are clearly and organically enunciated and harmonized with revelation. Within it also is enclosed that creative dynamism which, as the biographers attest, marked the teaching of Saint Thomas and which

must also characterize the teaching of those who desire to follow his footsteps in a continual and renewed synthesizing of the valid conclusions received from tradition with new conquests of human thought.

All of this must be done taking into particular account the type of problem and characteristics proper to the various cultures and regions, making it possible for the students to have an adequate grasp of the major philosophical ideas of their own time and own environment so that their studying of philosophy will be a real preparation for the life and ministry which awaits them, and so that they will be in position to dialogue with the men of their own time (Decree "Optatam totius", *ibid.*) not only the believers, but also with those who have no faith.

Your Excellency, in calling to your attention the problems in the philosophical formation of future priests, we wish to offer you something to consider and above all some help toward a suitable renewal in this area which the present circumstances show to be so important. Fully conscious of the limits of this letter-restricted only to essentials-given its purpose-we hope nevertheless that it, together with the clear texts of the Second Vatican Council and of the "Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis", can furnish at least some useful indications and guide-lines to teachers in their work.

Assuring you and all who are dedicating themselves to the formation of your seminarians of our greetings and cordial good wishes, we remain with every sentiment of high esteem,

Fraternally yours in Jesus Christ,

GABRIEL-MARIE CARDINAL GARRONE

Prefect

✠ JOSEPH SCHROFFER

Titular Archbishop of Volturnum

Secretary

ON THE TIME FOR THE DIACONATE

APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE

Philippines

N. 1122

6 March 1979

Your Eminence:

It is my pleasure to communicate to the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines the reply of His Eminence Gabriel-Marie Cardinal Garrone, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, to some questions raised by Monsignor Leoncio L. Lat, Apostolic Visitor of Major Seminaries and Father Albert Meersch-chaert, CICM of San Carlos Seminary, on the time and place for the conferral of the transitory diaconate upon candidates for the priesthood.

In his letter, N. 164/79/2, dated February 17, 1979, Cardinal Garrone stated the following:

"It has been the view and practice of this Sacred Congregation, in dealing with other countries, to point out the "Motu Proprio" *Ad pascendum* n. VII a. New dispositions under this "Motu Propio" not having yet been made, the provisions of Canon 976, par. 2, still obtain, which is to say the transitory diaconate is not to be conferred on seminar-ians "nisi incepto quarto anno" (cursus theologiae), dispen-sations from this Canon being reserved to this Sacred Con-gregation. This is also the practice of the Vicariate of Rome. All of this, of course, is without prejudice to the provisions of the "Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdo-talis," nn. 42c and 43."

I wish to avail myself of this opportunity to renew to Your Eminence my sincere sentiments of highest esteem and prayerful best wishes.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

(Sgd.) † BRUNO TORPIGLIANI
Apostolic Nuncio

His Eminence

JAIME CARDINAL L. SIN

President, Catholic Bishops Conference
of the Philippines

INFLATION JUSTIFIES REDUCTION OF FOUNDATION MASSES

**Apostolic Nunciature
Philippines**

N 1510

17 April 1979

Eminence,

I refer to the two letters of Your Eminence dated respectively February 12 and March 23, 1979, concerning the request for the reduction of the "Foundation Masses" which were allotted to the Ecclesiastical jurisdictions of the Philippines in connection with the donation to the CBCP Pension Plan.

As Your Eminence is aware, the matter was submitted to the Holy See and the Nunciature now received a reply from the Substitute of the Secretariat of State, His Excellency Archbishop Caprio.

Mons. Caprio states that, from the details furnished, it seems that the matter in fact falls within the scope of the faculties given to Bishops in N. 11, of the *Motu Proprio* "Pastorale Munus": "Reducendi ob deminutionem reddituum, quandiu causa perduret, ad rationem eleemosynae in dioecesi legitime vigentis, Missas legatorum, quae sint per se stantia, dummodo nemo sit qui obligatione teneatur et utiliter cogi possit ad eleemocynae augmentum faciendum." In fact, notes Mons. Caprio, under the concept of "deminutio redditum" there is included also the decreased value of the income due to the devaluation of money. Therefore, concludes Mons. Caprio, the local ecclesiastical authorities can reduce the number of Masses in such a way that for each Mass celebrated the diocesan stipend in force can be allocated.

In communicating the foregoing, I avail of the opportunity to renew to Your Eminence the assurance of my prayerful best wishes and highest esteem.

Devotedly,

(Sgd.) MSGR. THOMAS WOODS
Charge d'Affaires a.i.

His Eminence
Jaime Cardinal L. Sin
Archbishop of Manila
President, Catholic Bishops Conference
of the Philippines

DAVAO PASTORAL LETTER ON THE WAVE OF KILLINGS

To the dear People of God in the Archdiocese of Davao:

The wave of killings, raids and tortures that had been happening recently here in Davao City and Davao del Sur has prompted me to write this Pastoral Letter.

In this wave of violence, some soldiers were killed, some rebels were killed, some men, caught in the crossfire of hatred and suspicion, got killed or were mercilessly tortured; but those who suffer most are the innocent civilians, especially those in the barrios, left unprotected, and harassed by both soldiers and rebels, their houses ransacked or robbed of their belongings or of their farm produce, mothers left widowed or even spectators of their husband's torture, families being forced to evacuate their homes, people cringing in fear asking ourselves: "Who will be the next victim? Will it be I?"

Our hearts suffer with them and go to them in sympathy. Would that they be not driven into a gnawing bitterness and despair and even into violence.

In a world where violence all too frequently maims and destroys the personal and social lives of men, the Church has always upheld the violence of love and the peace of Christ over hate and destructive violence. Despair, hate, vengeance and external violence is not the language of Christianity. I repeat the teaching of Pope John Paul II in this regard: "Whatever are the miseries and sufferings of man, it will never be through violence, power plays or political systems, but through the truth about man that mankind will find its way to a better future" (CELAM, Jan. 28, 1979). And the truth about man can only be discovered in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ who was "a Saviour who spilled no drop of blood but his own."

In this regard let us all recognize our own constant need for conversion and ask God's forgiveness for whatever share, conscious or unconscious, we may have had in reinforcing the situations and structures of injustice in our locality.

I appeal, with all the moral force at my command, to the leaders of the state and to the military to be genuinely and effectively concerned with the deprivation and suffering of so many in our midst, to dedicate their efforts to implementing truly profound social renewal, and to desist from violation, or toleration of

violation, of human rights which provoke counter-violence in turn. Undoubtedly, they can stop or at least diminish violence by removing those who cause violence from positions where they commit violence or by a better disciplining of their soldiers. We ask them not to drive, either through their indifference or tacit condonation of oppression and injustice, or through the use of repressive violence and even torture, innocent civilians pressured or threatened by warring groups, or persons of goodwill and sincerity, who seek, through just means, needed changes of society, into the ranks of extremists working for certain ideological forces. Nor the burden of guilt will not be lifted from their shoulders if by either inaction or by repressive violence they become responsible for making inevitable the outbreak of violent and bloody uprisings in our country.

As strongly do I appeal to the leaders of ideological groups and their armed men to be just as genuinely and effectively concerned with the peace and well being of our people, especially the poor voiceless people in the barrios. It is a criminal irresponsibility to incite the already suffering poor to that revolutionary violence which promotes hatred, leads to useless bloodshed and the tragic loss of many lives. Those who foment internecine hatred whose first victims will only be the poor masses will be answerable for what violence brings upon people. Ironically, in doing so, they risk as well the lives, if not sacrifice them, of the very people they love and seek to liberate.

While we seek to stop this wave of violence, I ask all to pray that in this crisis we remain calm and prudent, having the good of our people in mind and the love of Christ in our hearts. Towards this I ask all the priests of the Archdiocese of Davao to add the prayer FOR PEACE to the Prayers of the Faithful of the Mass.

May the suffering Christ grace you with His strength, and may He bless us all. August 16, 1979.

✠ ANTONIO LL. MABUTAS
Archbishop of Davao

LETTER OF ARCHBISHOP MABUTAS TO MINISTER BARBERO

DEPUTY MINISTER BARBERO, GENERAL ESPINO,
GENERAL OLIVAS, COMMODORE MARTELIANO, FRIENDS:

At the outset, I would like to express here publicly my gratitude and high commendation as well as that of our own people of our locality to His Excellency, President Marcos for his concern and high statemanship in heeding and acting on our appeal for his personal intervention to solve the mounting problems of peace and security in our locality; thus he created a Commission to look more closely into our problems and give necessary solutions.

I am equally grateful to the Honorable members of this Commission for responding immediately to the call of the President; that is why they are here with us today. My expectations and the expectations of our people especially of the poor voiceless people in the barrios, here in this locality and in the whole country for that matter, are focused now on this dialogue this morning and possibly the following days.

Our expectations are that this Commission give effective and immediate recommendations and solutions to restore peace and security, now disturbed in the recent wave of killings and raids, in our locality and elsewhere so that our people, especially those who have evacuated or those cowering in fear of reprisals or persecutions, could go back to their homes thus to enable them to live and build up their communities in tranquility and peace of mind.

Our expectations are that this Commission give ear and give justice to those who have been oppressed and persecuted, killed or maimed on mere suspicion or distrust or hatred or revenge, and to their widows and orphans and families, and thus restore their confidence in the government and the rights that are theirs.

I hope we will not be misunderstood in our motivations in presenting the fears and anxieties of our people to the President. As the shepherd of the flock in this Archdiocese, my pastoral care extends to all, but especially to the poor, the voiceless, the persecuted and the downtrodden. My concern is for all and everyone of the sheep — the men in uniform and in the hills, but especially to those who are caught in between, innocent civilians sandwiched between two forces and become suspect whichever they turn to.

My care is that the fullness of man, the image of God in each and everyone be recognized and respected and that he could freely grow to the perfection God has designed for each one of us. My hope is that all — each and everyone of us, be served with justice and be at peace with each other. Thus is also the concern and commitment of all bishops, priests, religious, and all christians for that matter. May I add another expectations of my panel that this dialogue should lead to a closer look and study of the root causes of this present situation, so that from it may come:

1. Intra-organizational reform, changes in policy-vis-a-vis military-community relations, and stronger disciplinary measures which shall be adopted, instituted and implemented in order to restore the confidence of our people in the ascendancy of the civil authority over the military in the rule of law and respect for human rights and the restoration of desirable peace and order conditions;
2. Adoption of a mechanism which will prevent recurrence of the same problem and creation of body or committee which will monitor complaints from public against military empowered to take immediate administrative sanctions without need of a Manila committee to come and act when similar problems arise.

Last August 16 I wrote a pastoral letter wherein I voiced these fears and anxieties and appealed to the government, to the military, to all ideological groups and to all our people for more restraint and for Christian charity to put a check on the mounting wave of violence happening in our community. Unfortunately, it was so slanted in the press, so that those who have not read the entire pastoral letter would have the impression that it is more criticism of military abuse than a strong appeal to all those who may be committing abuses to desist from further violence for the sake of the same people whom they love and whom they are pledged to protect. Violence could not be overcome by violence. It could only be overcome by violence of love, not by violence of arms. I would like to add to this the words of the Holy Father: "Let us make peace by preaching friendship and practicing love of our neighbor, justice and christian forgiveness; let us open the doors to it where it has been driven out, with frank negotiations, aiming at sincere positive conclusions; let us not refuse some sacrifice which, without offending the dignity of the one who acts generously, makes peace more rapid cordial, and lasting".

It is in this same spirit that last August 17 we sent, I and the clergy a letter to President Marcos calling his attention to the situation we are now in, of which the Catalunan Grande raids is one of

the glaring incidents. The President responded immediately. That is why we are here now in this fact finding session presided by Minister Barbero and his Commission.

I have taken up the cudgels for those who could not represent themselves or who felt weak and fearful in representing themselves. I wish to get the assurance of the Commission again, here and publicly, that this Commission will guarantee the safety of our witnesses during the days of the hearings and following days, some of them of the minority tribes, all of them living poor and unprotected. Though we would have liked a more public venue for this hearing as a built-in security for our witnesses, the military Committee insisted in this venue, and we accede but under protest as we accept the procedure the Commission decided also under protest; for it seems these will not be public hearings.

I have with me now the Bishop's Advisory Panel and the Bishop's Legal Panel. I am very thankful to them for volunteering their services despite the risks and sacrifices this entails; they are all motivated by love and service; the IBP President himself, Atty. Nograles even wants this to be made clear that their only motivation here is their commitment of service and assistance in behalf of the poor. I would like also to acknowledge the offers of help and sympathy coming from a great segment of our community and even from some parts of the country.

It is my hope that together we shall join forces to bring about the speedy restoration of tranquility in Davao City. If at all, this fact finding session now would be looked upon as providing an avenue for remedial measures in the President's difficult task of nation building.

EXHORTATION AGAINST VIOLENCE

A Joint Pastoral Letter of the Philippine Hierarchy

The problem of violence has been a problem from the very dawn of humanity. Out of envy, Abel was slain by his brother, Cain. The human heart carries within itself the seed of violence as a product of the first sin; it is an aberration in human relationships. Modern times have opened our eyes to the many subtle ways of violence, besides the old violence of naked power, and have given us new insights as to the roots of violence.

WORLD SITUATION

A cursory into the present world situation very clearly shows that violence has indeed in different regions and countries. One has only to mention the name of Lebanon, Iran, Vietnam, Cambodia, Argentina, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, and other countries in the Middle East and Africa to see how the world has been — and continues to be — beleaguered by the stark and cruel reality of violence. This escalation of violence and its terrible consequences, as shown by contemporary history, truly make us shudder with fear and sorrow.

Pastors from all over the world, gathered in the 1971 Synod of Bishops in Rome, addressing themselves to the problems of justice in the world, had this to say:

Even though it is not for us to elaborate a very profound analysis of the situation of the world, we have nevertheless been able to perceive the serious injustices which are building around the world of men, a network of domination,

oppression and abuses which stifles freedom and which keeps the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a more fraternal world. (Justice in the World, Introd., Synod of Bishops, Rome, 1971).

Speaking of their own continent, the Bishops of Latin America, representing 42 percent of the Catholic Church in the world today, spoke of the same "network of domination, oppression and abuses," in their own countries in these terms:

From the heart of the diverse nations which make up Latin America, there arises to the heavens, a cry that is very tumultuous and deeply affecting. It is a cry of a people which suffers and demands justice, freedom, respect for the fundamental rights of men and peoples. (Document of Puebla, No. 87).

PHILIPPINE SITUATION

Like other countries of the world, the Philippines has also been beset with various forms of violence. Recent developments today can make anyone feel uneasy. The daily newspapers are filled with accounts of military encounters, of ambushes and killings, not to mention the more ordinary crimes, the scandals of corruption and other forms of violence. Revolutionary groups are increasing in number and escalating the spirit (and in some cases the praxis) of violence, especially among the urban and rural workers, intellectuals and students, and among a growing number of dedicated and concerned Christians, including some clerics and religious.

A grave concern for these realities and trends in the world and within Philippine society compels us to address our people on the subject of violence and the "temptation to violence". Our primary desire is to awaken the entire Christian community to the seriousness of these concerns. We plead for responsible judgment and decisions, responsible action, in all the ways we are called upon to meet "the problem of violence" in our society today.

In the face of the increasing presence and temptation to further violence in our country, we voice a word of concern and, so far as we are able, a word of counsel.

DEEPER CAUSES

The existence of poverty and misery, of deprivation and injustices in our midst, — and increasingly weighing down the poor, the powerless, the marginalized sectors of our population — is obvious enough to all who have eyes to see. When in Mexico, Pope John Paul II spoke of our time “when the growing wealth of a few parallels the growing poverty of the masses,” he could have been speaking of our situation as well. Massive indifference and inequalities among the countless poor; the use of force — both overt and subtle — to preserve the privileges of wealth and status; the corruption practised by many of those in public service; the denial and frequent violation of basic human rights, both personal and collective, in the name of the defense and security of certain interest groups or of the nation and state itself; the difficulty if not inability to get justice through the ordinary courts of justice — these and other injustices are the roots and causes of violence in our society today.

VIOLENCE NOT THE ANSWER

In the face of these situations and of the apparent hopelessness in effecting deeper and swifter reforms than those which may have been already achieved, it is not surprising that “the temptation to violence” should trouble many. Here we speak not only of the radical and impatient revolutionaries who have already taken up arms and are even now engaged in intensifying guerrilla warfare, but also of many committed Christians, especially younger ones, who in growing numbers, believe that the very exigencies of their faith and their sense of justice commit them to solidarity with, and action for the victims of social, economic and political injustices.

The personal moral decision which leads to the justification of the use of violence in our present situation is, we believe — at the least in the case of some — a matter which reaches into the innermost sanctuary of conscience. It is not our intent here to make peremptory and categorical statements regarding a dimension of the human person which is “the most secret core and sanctuary of men, where he is alone with God, whose voice echoes in his depths”

(The Church in the Modern World, n. 16). Nevertheless, as Pastors of the People of God in our country, we believe it is our duty to speak clearly and directly about the teaching of the Church regarding the problem of violence.

First, we must grant that an absolute interdict on the use of violence is not part of the moral tradition of the Church. Pope Paul VI was only echoing this tradition when he said that in the case of "manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental human rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country," (Pop. Prog. No. 31) the use of force is not absolutely ruled out. Christian moral theology has always required very strict conditions which must be fulfilled before an option for violence may be ethically permitted or justified. These conditions have been given traditional statement in all treatises of Christian ethics.

It is however extremely important to remember that the justification of violence **under extraordinary and restricted conditions** belongs to the area of morally permissible decisions and actions. What is ethically allowed is not necessarily evangelically recommended by the Gospel. There can sometimes be, we know, a real difference between what is morally permissible and what is the Gospel ideal. For example, though a man is morally justified in using violence to defend himself against an unjust aggressor, he is also free to refrain from inflicting violence and harm on the aggressor — even in self-defense — in the spirit of the Gospel. **The option of non-violence must be respected as one Christian option, as a Christian pattern of action.**

OUR RESPONSE

In the light of what has been mentioned above, our response is:

1. The escalation of violence and its terrible consequences lead us to reject violence as an effective human or Christian solution to the problems of communities and nations.

2. In our country today, there is a growing evidence that the call to violence is being sounded by the leaders of clearly identifiable ideological groups and by others who are collaborating with them. We must condemn as criminally irresponsible the inciting of the suffering poor to that revolutionary violence which promotes hatred, leads to useless bloodshed and the tragic loss of many lives and seldom, if at all, achieves any good. Those whose first victims will be the poor masses, must be answerable for what violence brings upon our people.

3. In a world where violence all too frequently maims and destroys the personal and sacred lives of men, we must uphold the **violence of love** and the peace of Christ over hate and destructive violence. The greeting of the risen Lord "Peace be with you" (Jn. 20:19-20) is ever that of the Church. Like the light of the befriending Spirit, loving peace dissipates the darkness of violence (Jn. 1:15). The Church takes on the example of Christ who healed the wound inflicted by the disciple (Lk. 22:49-51) and who lovingly forgave His enemies, even unto death (Lk. 23:24). Our sword must not be the sword of hate (Lk. 22:36-38), but the healing sword of courageous, unflinching and universal love.

4. We repeat the teaching of Pope Paul VI, and especially of Pope John Paul II (who in the very near future will be among us in the Philippines), regarding the use of violence as a solution to the social problems which trouble us: "whatever are the miseries and sufferings of men, **it will never be through violence**, power play or political systems, but through the truth about men that mankind will find its way to a better future." (Opening Speech, CELAM, Puebla, Mexico, 28 Jan. 1979).

5. We Bishops, recognize our own constant need for conversion and ask God's forgiveness for whatever share, conscious or unconscious, we may have had, in the situations and structures of injustices in our country.

6. We also appeal to the leaders of the state to be genuinely and effectively concerned with the deprivation and suffering of the poor in our midst, to dedicate their efforts to implementing truly profound social renewal, and to prevent violations (or toleration of violations) of human rights which provoke counter-violence in turn.
7. Finally, all of us who believe in the Gospel message, are surely summoned by our faith both to deeper reflection and prayer, as well as creative and effective action for all the things we believe in — justice, reconciliation, solidarity, brotherhood.

CONCLUSION

Peace with justice, the opposite of violence, does not just happen. It has to be desired and willed, it has to be worked for and built into the structures of society at all levels. No system, however perfect in theory and in intention, will itself guarantee justice and peace. Access to power by any group of persons can end up in abuse and tyranny. Only continual conversion, constantly renewed moral commitment to justice and reconciliation and constantly examined political commitment to just social structures, can generate justice and brotherhood. A society of justice and peace can be created and can survive only if we are willing to make the needed sacrifices, and exercise continual vigilance. It is to the attainment of these objectives — and not to the flowering of violence — that our present crisis challenges us.

For the Catholic Bishops'
Conference of the Philippines

(Sgd.) + JAIME CARDINAL L. SIN
Archbishop of Manila
President

October 7, 1979
Feast of the Most Holy Rosary
Manila

OFFICIAL INFORMATION

*Sacred Congregation
for the Sacraments and Divine Worship*

May 29, 1979

ST. STANISLAUS NOW AN OBLIGATORY MEMORIAL

St. Stanislaus of Poland, Bishop and Martyr, will henceforth be commemorated in the Liturgy of the Hours and at Mass with an obligatory memorial.

This change was decided by Pope Paul II and made known in his encyclical letter, "Rutilans agmen" given on May 8, 1979, on the occasion of the ninth centennial of St. Stanislaus' martyrdom.

The Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, in a letter dated 29 May 1979 (Prot. CD 660/79) made the following observations:

1. The "Ordo" for Mass and the divine Office for liturgical year 1979-1980 onwards should carry the new rank of the celebration in honor of St. Stanislaus. The same should be done in new liturgical books to be published by Episcopal Conferences.

2. The change does not affect the day of celebration, namely, April 11, nor the texts to be used in the Missal and the Office.

3. Where particular legislations call for the commemoration of St. Stanislaus on a different day or with a celebration of a higher rank, these will prevail.

*Sacred Congregation
for the Causes of Saints
Rome, 14 May 1979*

CAUSE OF LORENZO RUIZ BEING HURRIED UP

The Holy Father has shown special interest for the cause of the servant of God, LORENZO RUIZ, and he wanted to beatify him in December, 1979, on the occasion of the International Mission Congress and in line with the fourth centennial celebration of the foundation of the Archdiocese of Manila.

This was stated by Cardinal Bafile, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of Saints, in a letter addressed to Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila. He said the Pope expressed his wish last January 19, when Cardinal Bafile brought to his attention the petition of Cardinal Sin and the Philippine Episcopal Conference, for the beatification of Lorenzo Ruiz.

However, Cardinal Bafile said, after his Congregation studied the matter carefully, it became clear that a December deadline cannot be met. Possibly, if a few months were added, everything would be ready for the beatification. Cardinal Bafile's department is concentrating its effort for the speedy conclusion of the necessary studies.

*Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization
of Peoples; Pontifical Mission Societies
Archdiocese of Manila*

INTERNATIONAL MISSION CONGRESS IN MANILA — DECEMBER 2 TO 6

Manila will be the scene of an International Mission Congress sponsored by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, the Pontifical Mission Societies and the Archdiocese of Manila on December 2 to 6. The theme of the Congress will be: **THE GOOD NEWS OF GOD'S KINGDOM... TO THE PEOPLES OF ASIA.**

The main participants of the Congress will be the National Directors of the Pontifical Mission Societies all over the world. To their number will be added other Bishops from Asia and other parts of the Catholic world, along with resource persons — heads of mission-sending religious communities and congregations, lay missionaries, both men and women, theologians and experts. Between 250 to 300 participants are thus expected in the Congress sessions.

The purpose of the Congress is to discuss contemporary orientations in the Church's Theology of Mission and, it is to be hoped, to reclarify and deepen the theological foundations of the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies; to renew the motivation for the Church's primary task—Evangelization—among those who are involved in this work which defines the very being of the Church (Paul VI in **Evangelii Nuntiandi**); to lay down renewed guidelines for policies and planning for the immediate future for the Church's missionary effort and for collaboration with, and support for, that endeavour. It is the hope of those who are sponsoring the Congress that a fresh and powerful impetus may emerge from this Congress for dedication to the task of Mission, especially in Asia today.

Participants in the Congress will meet in both General Sessions and Workshops. Three themes will be taken up in all the workshops: **Gospel, Kingdom, and Asia**. The overall objectives of the workshops are: to make sure that the participants learn the best of recent theological thinking regarding the subject matter of the workshops; to come up with a consensus position, theologically based, to serve as a basis for motivation, policy, planning for strategies for commitment and action with regard to **Mission**.

At the inaugural session marked by a concelebrated Mass on the morning of December 2, there will be opening remarks by Bishop Gaudencio Rosales, an Address of welcome by Jaime Cardinal Sin, and a Message of the Papal Legate, Agnelo Cardinal Rossi. The first general session will convene in the afternoon with a keynote address by Archbishop S.D. Lourdasamy, who will speak on "The Church and the Proclamation of the Gospel Today: from Vatican II **Ad Gentes** to Pope Paul VI, **Evangeli Nuntiandi**."

Joseph Cardinal Cordeiro of Karachi, Pakistan will speak on "The Christian Gospel and Asian Cultures and Religions Today: Tasks of Evangelization: Challenge and Response" at the session open to the general public on the evening of December 3, after the concelebrated Mass.

"**Pauperes Evangelizantur**" will be the theme of Stephen Cardinal Kim of Seoul, Korea, at the public conference after the concelebrated Mass on the evening of December 4.

A delegate from London, George Basil Cardinal Hume, will speak on "A Spirituality for Mission Today" at the public conference on December 5, after the evening concelebrated Mass.

The Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences is expected to convene in Manila on December 6 to receive, and possibly adopt, the Message and Recommendations of the International Mission Congress. The Joint Final Message will be presented to the public in the evening, after the final concelebrated Mass at the Araneta Coliseum.

NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC DAY

The Philippine Hierarchy's original plan made over a year ago, to hold a National Eucharistic Congress, has been modified into a plan for a National Eucharistic Day. It will be a day of thanksgiving for the holding of the International Mission Congress in the Philippines, and for the 400th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Manila, the Mother of all Philippine dioceses. The principal activities shall be held in Manila on the afternoon of December 7 and the whole day of December 8.

At the diocesan or provincial levels the preparation, organization and supervision of activities shall be the responsibility of the Local Ordinary or the metropolitan Ordinary, while the activities in Manila shall be the charge of the Central Committee through the Executive Committee.

The Central Committee is composed of Bishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., as Chairman and Bishop Cirilo Almario, Jr., as Co-Chairman. Members are the Metropolitan Archbishops. The Secretary is Msgr. Teodoro Buhain, and the Co-Secretary is Fr. Pedro S. de Achutegui, S.J. The Treasurer is Bishop Pedro N. Bantigue, and the Co-Treasurer is Msgr. Victor Serrano.

Bishops Legaspi and Almario are also respectively Chairman and Co-Chairman of the Executive Committee. The members are Bishop Protacio Gungon and Bishop Manuel Sobreviñas, Msgr. Justino Ortiz, Msgr. Augusto Pedrosa, Msgr. Gabriel Reyes, Fr. Jesus Arcellana, Fr. Lorenzo Guerrero, S.J., Fr. Joseph Roy, S.S.S., Mrs. Susan del Rosario, and Atty. Luis Villaserna, Msgr. Teodoro Buhain and Fr. Pedro S. de Achutegui serve as Secretary and Co-Secretary, respectively.

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The proposed activities and the corresponding committees and person(s) in charge are:

OVERALL LITURGICAL COMMITTEE Bishop Manuel Sobreviñas

ORDINATION DAY COMMITTEE Bishop Protacio Gungon

December 7, 1979, 4:00 p.m., MANILA CATHEDRAL

NIGHT EUCHARISTIC VIGIL Fr. Lorenzo Guerrero,

Fr. Jesus Arcellana

December 7, 1979, 10:00 p.m., ARANETA COLISEUM

CHILDREN'S COMMUNION DAY Msgr. Gabriel Reyes

December 8, 1979, 8:00 a.m., ARANETA COLISEUM

CLOSING CEREMONIES Msgr. Augusto Pedrosa

December 8, 1979, 4:00 p.m., MANILA CATHEDRAL

*Episcopal Commission
for the Biblical Apostolate*

NATIONAL BIBLE WEEK NOVEMBER 26 TO DECEMBER 2

Instead of celebrating National Bible Week on the first week of Advent (December 2 to 3), the Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate has set the celebration for the previous week, November 26 to December 2. This arrangement is good only for this year, in view of the International Mission Congress on December 2 to 6, and the National Eucharistic Day on December 8.

Joining the spirit of the International Mission Congress, the Quadricentennial Celebration of the Archdiocese of Manila, and the National Eucharistic Day, the theme chosen by the Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate is: **"PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS"**.

Our Bible Week this year will coincide with the Philippine Bible Society's Bible Week, which has also been moved so as to include November 26. This date marks the establishment of the Philippine Bible Society eighty years ago.

*Permanent Committee
for International Eucharistic Congresses
Rome*

42nd INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS AT LOURDES IN 1981

Pope John Paul II approved the holding of the 42nd International Eucharistic Congress at Lourdes in July 1981. The theme of the Congress was also approved by the Pope: **JESUS CHRIST, BREAD BROKEN FOR A NEW WORLD.**

As early as June 1977 it was proposed to Pope Paul VI that the next international eucharistic congress be held at Lourdes to mark the centenary of these celebrations. The first such Congress took place at Lille, in France, in the month of June, 1881, under the inspiration of Miss Emilie Tamisier.

The Pope expressed his earnest desire that the Lourdes Congress should be seen throughout the Church as an opportunity of education in the faith, and a privileged occasion for a deepening of the catechesis of the Eucharist.

Episcopal Conferences of all nations have been exhorted to undertake pastoral and spiritual preparations for the Congress. They have been asked to elect from among their members a Delegate for the Congress who will animate the National Committee and drum up national interest in the Congress.

(In the Philippines, Bishop Cirilo R. Almario, Jr., Bishop of Malolos and Secretary General of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, has been appointed official delegate to the International Eucharistic Congress).

FEATURES

LORENZO RUIZ, THE FIRST FILIPINO MARTYR

By

Fr. Fidel Villaroel, O.P.

A happy news that has made sensational headlines in the mass media of communications in the past months is the ongoing Beatification Cause of the first Filipino candidate for the altars, Lorenzo Ruiz. It has also been widely publicized that, should the Beatification Cause be successful, the Holy Father would perform the Beatification rite somewhere in the Far East, the first case of a beatification being held outside the residential place of the Pope.

Although the main features of the Beatification Cause and of the person of the Filipino candidate have been underlined by the various press releases, it will not be superfluous to elaborate on both topics here, mainly for the benefit of the Philippine clergy, for the religious and for the subscribers and readers of the **Boletín Eclesiástico**.

To clarify wrong impressions created by some journalists, let me emphasize at the outset that the present Beatification Cause includes a total of seventeen martyrs put to death for the Christian faith at Nagasaki, Japan, in the years 1633, 1634 and 1637. These martyrs were nine Dominican priests, two Brothers of the same Order, two women of the Third Order of Saint Dominic and four laymen. Among these laymen is our Lorenzo Ruiz, married and head of a family. By nationalities, there were ten Japanese, four Spaniards, one Filipino, one Frenchman and one Italian. The variety of their nationalities and professions contributes to make this Cause eminently and attractively ecumenical.

It has also been incorrectly reported that while his companions of death were beatified long ago, Lorenzo was left alone. That is not the case. All of them wait for the honors of the altars and they will be inseparable in their eventual glorification on earth.

While Nagasaki and Japan can claim to be the place of their glorious martyrdom, the Beatification Cause has particular relevance for the Philippines. All the nine priests lived in this country for longer or shorter periods of time. Three of them, Japanese, were received in the Dominican Order in Manila and were ordained priests here. Other three Dominicans worked zealously in various forms of apostolate in Manila and in the provinces of Pangasinan, Cagayan and Bataan. Four were professors of Philosophy and Theology at the young Colegio de Santo Tomás (today Pontifical University), and one of them pursued his ecclesiastical studies in the same College. Finally, one of them, Fr. Antonio González, exercised the functions of Acting Rector of that institution at the time of his departure for Japan. For these priests, the Philippines was their second motherland and their training field for their difficult mission in Japan.

But more particularly the Philippines can be proud of having an illustrious son among those Christian heroes.

Lorenzo Ruiz is his name and he hailed from Binondo, then a **pueblo** in the outskirts of Intramuros, where he was born between the years 1600 and 1610. His father was Chinese and his mother a Tagalog Filipina. Therefore, he was a mestizo like so many a Filipino who have given honor to the country, for example, José Rizal. There is nothing extraordinary about his life in Binondo. He was the common, plain, simple type of man that bears resemblance to millions of ordinary Filipinos of all times.

In his childhood he worked in the convento and church of the Dominican Fathers in Binondo as a houseboy and altar boy. Later he joined the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary and led the pious and practical Christian life demanded by the duties of the members of such religious association. He received a good education and became an "escribano" or calligrapher, earning a living by rendering documents in good penmanship. Then he married and had two sons and one daughter. Such meager biographical highlights do not give a full picture of the man, but they help us to figure him as an active parishioner involved in church services and activities, nourishing his soul with the frequent reception of the sacraments and with Marian devotions.

In the year 1636, when he was in his late twenties or early thirties, Lorenzo had the misfortune of being involved or accused of being involved in a criminal case of unspecified nature. The

case was certainly a serious matter because he was sought by the authorities for questioning or for trial. We do not know — perhaps we will never know — whether he was innocent or guilty, but Lorenzo was afraid for his life and decided to leave the country. And so he embarked with a group of Dominican priests and a Japanese layman who were leaving Manila.

At the time of embarking, Lorenzo was still unaware of the priests' destination, because the circumstances of the departure were kept totally secret. He thought that the priests were going to Macao, where he could make a living as an "escribano". But the missionaries were actually going to a land Lorenzo never imagined, to Japan. Much less did he imagine what lay ahead for him there.

Christianity was proscribed in Japan after an Edict of the ruler Tokugawa Yeyasu issued in 1614 expelling all missionaries and and catechists and forbidding the profession of the Christian faith. The once flourishing Christianity of Japan was subjected to one of the most cruel and devastating persecutions known in the history of the Church. From that year until 1636 many hundreds, even thousands of Christians were put to death for upholding their Christian beliefs; two hundred and five of them were beatified by Pope Pius IX in the last century. By the year 1630 the hunt for Christians became so systematically ruthless that it almost wiped out every vestige of Christianity. No one was spared, men, women, children. A great variety of methods of intimidation and torture were used to make the victims apostatize or to finish their lives: crucifixions, burnings, water torture, mutilations and the mortal hanging on the pit.

At this juncture, Lorenzo was to travel to Japan, still without the slightest intention — as he said — of being a martyr.

The authorities of the Philippines had forbidden the religious to go to Japan because to the Governors of the Islands it seemed totally useless to attempt preaching the Gospel in a country where the missionaries would be arrested upon arrival and put to death. The missionaries, for their part, thought it was a compelling duty to help the persecuted Japanese Christians who were left almost without a priest. And so on June 10, 1636, in great secrecy, evading the vigilance of Governor Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, six persons managed to escape from Manila in a little champan: four Dominican priests, with Lorenzo Ruiz and another layman, a Japanese leper by the name of Lázaro.

One month later they landed in Okinawa, loosely a part of Japan, with the idea of slipping unnoticed in continental Japan. But upon landing in Okinawa on July 10, they were identified as Christians, arrested and sent to jail. One year later, they were sent to Nagasaki where the ordinary tribunal for Christians was established.

Lorenzo arrived there on September 21, 1637 together with Fr. Antonio González, the Superior of the Mission and the leper Lazaro, eight days after the arrival of the other three priests, Fr. Guillermo Courtet, French, Fr. Miguel de Aozaraza, Spanish, and Fr. Vicente Shiwozuka de la Cruz, Japanese.

During those eight days, the three priests who arrived ahead were taken to the tribunal, questioned and tormented with the water torture, which we will describe below, and with the torture of the needles which consisted in thrusting long needles between the flesh and the nails of every finger and then the torturers would play with the needles as if playing a guitar. Momentarily one of those gave in to the pains of the tortures and apostatized, but shortly later he repented and was reconciled with God, suffering the remaining martyrdom with fortitude. They were kept in prison until the arrival of the other three companions.

Lorenzo with Fr. Antonio and Lazaro were brought to trial on the day they arrived in Nagasaki, September 21. After some questions regarding their beliefs and the circumstances of their coming to Japan, Fr. Antonio was submitted to the water torture and was asked to apostatize by trampling on an image of the Virgin Mary, but he suffered the torments valiantly and refused to desecrate the image. Lazaro the leper, terrorized by the impending tortures, apostatized at first, but later, he acknowledged his sin in prison and was reconciled with God and with the Church.

After witnessing the torments applied to his two companions, Lorenzo was also induced to apostatize. He had a moment of doubt, because he called an interpreter of the court and asked him whether his life would be spared by renouncing his faith. But even before knowing the answer of the judges, he called the interpreter again and told him that he had just spoken like an ignorant, because — these are exactly his words — **"I am a Christian, and this I profess until the hour of my death; and for God I shall give my life; and although I did not come to Japan to be a martyr, however, as a Christian and for God I shall give my life"**. The judges ordered the ministers to torture him.

Placing a funnel in Lorenzo's mouth, the torturers made him drink huge quantities of water until his belly could not hold any more. Then he was made to lie on the floor and a long board was placed on his stomach. Two ministers stepped on both ends of the board pressing to make the water sprout most violently by mouth, nose, ears and the other natural exists. This operation was repeated many times until it was clear that Lorenzo refused to recant. Then he was sent to jail.

Two days later, September 23, he stood before the tribunal determined to uphold his stand until the end. The judges asked him a straight, final question: "If we grant you life, will you apostatize?" Undaunted, brave and unequivocal, Lorenzo replied immediately: **"That I will never do, because I am a Christian, and I shall die for God, and for Him I shall give many thousands of lives if I had them. And so do with me as you please"**.

It was a clear case of a Christian resolved to die for his faith, and so the judges sentenced him to be executed. The Superior of the Mission, Fr. Antonio, devoured by high fever caused by the water torture, died in prison in the morning of September 24, and his body was burnt and the ashes thrown into the sea.

On September 27, Lorenzo was withdrawn from prison to be executed together with his companions, Fr. Guillermo, Fr. Miguel, Fr. Vicente and the leper Lazaro. They were paraded along the streets of the city, on horseback, hands tied and mouth muzzled, with the motive of the death sentence announced by placards. In this manner they were taken to Nishizaka Hill, outside of Nagasaki, where they were placed in the final torture of the "gallows and the pit".

From a gallows in the shape of a football goal Lorenzo was hanged by the feet his body falling into a pit until the waist. Only the legs and one half of his body were visible. The mouth of the pit was closed with two boards adjusted to the waist of the body and pressed down with stones placed on the boards. This torment was devised to last for several days until the victim either apostatized or died by bleeding or suffocation.

The agony lasted for two days. On September 29, the judges wishing to go on a hunting trip ordered the ministers to extract the victims from the pit and have them beheaded. Lorenzo and his companion Lazaro were found already dead. The three priests were beheaded.

Their bodies were set on fire and the ashes carried to the Bay of Nagasaki and thrown into the sea to prevent their veneration by the Christians. The date of the glorious martyrdom was September 29, 1637.

This is the story of Lorenzo based on solid testimonies of eye-witnesses and other contemporary narratives. His Beatification Cause started right after the martyrdom, but due to various and complex historical circumstances, which would take many pages to explain here, it suffered a long delay until the present century. From the year 1953 it began to progress steadily and is now in the final stages of completion. However, we cannot yet anticipate the judgement of the Holy See, where a thorough study of the martyrdom is now going on and a verdict is expected in the very near future.

But independently from any verdict, Lorenzo Ruiz, the Filipino from Binondo, the Christian who led a simple life imbued by a strong Christian faith, can be an example and model of bravery and fortitude for any man and for any Filipino who tries to be faithful to his Christian vocation in the midst of the hardships and contradictions of life.

STATUS OF THE CAUSE OF BEAUTIFICATION OF LORENZO AND COMPANION MARTYRS

- The first phase was completed last June with the publication of the "Positio Super Introductione Causae et Martyrio", compilation of documents and testimonies on the martyrdom. Father FIDEL VILLAROEL of the U.S.T. worked untiringly in this project.
- The second phase (in October) is the examination of data. Fourteen experts of the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints make this examination. Father AMORE, OFM, Relator General, is assigned to write a report which will be presented to.
- The Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints and four other prelates. If accepted, the process:
- Is officially introduced to the Holy See and accepted by the Pope.
- Next follows the intervention of the Promoter Fidei or "Devil's Advocate" in the person of Father STAMO, OFM Conv.
- Response to the intervention of the Promotor Fidei by the Postulator General of the Dominican Order, Father INNOCENTIUS VENCHI.
- Meeting of the Theological Consultors, nine in number who will study the documents "theologice" and analyze the intentions of the martyrs and those who perpetrated the martyrdom. They vote separately and their reports are submitted to
- The Congregation of Cardinals, numbering 12 to 15. A selected Cardinal presents the "Relatio" to this Congregation. If approved,
- The findings are referred to the Holy Father.
- He approves the conclusions and declares the martyrdom to be authentic. This is the "Declaratio Martyrii" or beatification.

HOMILETICS

BIBLICAL NOTES AND OUTLINES FOR HOMILIES FOR NOVEMBER

By

Bernard J. LeFrois, S.V.D.

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (November 4th, 1979)

First Reading: Deuteronomy 6: 2-6: A double exhortation to "listen" indicates the importance of the message. First of all, there is promise of long life and temporal prosperity in return for fidelity to the Law. At the outset, such a provision was perhaps the encouragement needed to keep Israel loyal. For a long time, then, temporal blessings were considered tangible evidence of God's favor. But later on, this standpoint was questioned (Job 21; Ps. 37). Secondly, the keynote of the entire book and the fundamental principle of the whole Law are brought out forcefully: **Yahweh has greatly loved Israel and now he expects a return of love in full** which will mean undivided loyalty to Yahweh with the whole man (heart, soul, might), for Yahweh alone is Israel's God. This is covenantal love. It is not to be merely a matter of lip service, but deeply in earnest from the heart. In the course of time, this "greatest of all the commandments" (Mk. 12: 28) became Israel's foremost prayer. In every household it was daily recited by the father of the family with his entire household. It is called the great "shemá" from the opening Hebrew word "shemá" which means "listen". Such a prayer, sincerely said, could keep the family in the friendship of the Lord, loyal in covenant-love.

Second Reading: Hebrews 7: 23-28. A contrast between the many priests of the Old Covenant who succeeded one another together with their multiple sacrifices, and the one priesthood of Jesus which lasts forever. He is the perpetual "go-between" for man to reach his Saving God. His sacrifice once offered is forever present before

the Father, pleading, interceding for all his brothers. Thus he is the perpetual Savior for all who come to the Father through him. St. Paul voices the same thought in Rom. 8:34.

There follows in glowing terms a description of Jesus our perfect high priest. He is all-holy as God is all-holy. Sinless is his character and without blemish as the Lamb of sacrifice (cf. Ex. 12:5). He is far different from the Temple-priests on earth. Exalted on high, his sacrifice is lasting in its efficacy. According to the oath of God himself (v. 21), it is God's own Son who is our high priest forever. By these words, the author endeavors to instill great confidence in his readers, for the salvific work of Christ is not merely something of the past, but dynamically present, with Jesus continually pleading for us before the Father.

Gospel Reading: Mark 12: 28b-34. The Rabbis enumerated 617 precepts, 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions. On being questioned which was the greatest of all, Jesus without the slightest hesitation pronounced as the foremost of all the "verticle" commandment of love of God (Dt. 6:4, today's first reading), but added at once the horizontal one of love of neighbor taken from Lev. 19: 18. Love of neighbor is inseparable from love of God, for he is the image of God. Although "neighbor" in Leviticus 19:18 referred mainly to those belonging to the race of Israel, Jesus clearly gives it a universal meaning in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10: 36).

The reign of God is not merely the end-event, but it is already present in the person of Jesus and his disciples. Jesus commended the scribe's conviction and encouraged him to continue his search. At the end of the road he would find what he sought in Jesus himself, by whom both commandments were perfectly observed.

OUTLINE FOR HOMILY

LOVE REALLY CARES

(see also Bol. Ecl. August 1976. p. 445)

Introduction: Two infantry men in Korea were stringing a communications' line when they came upon what seemed to be a deserted village. But then they found one lone inhabitant: a baby almost dead from cold and hunger. They took the shivering infant and hunted around till they found some blankets. Then they set off to find food. Finally they came upon a group of Korean women who

agreed to feed and care for the baby. Through an interpreter, the women expressed great surprise that men who were so occupied in fighting a war could take time to stop and care for a wee helpless child. But Christian love does such things.

1. Love does not count the cost. A young man will slave overtime at a job for months in order to gain enough money to buy his fiancée a ring. Parents sacrifice meals and even sleep to be at the bedside of a deathly sick child. Missionaries travel long distances to bring the consolation of the sacraments to the dying. In a disaster-area, doctors and nurses work around the clock to give first aid and proper care to the injured. Love of God finds expression in showing loving care for one's fellowmen. This very day there are thousands of men and women who are reaching out to administer the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. These are the works that have lasting value. All the glamor and popularity of the footlights will fade away, but love's actions remain forever, for they are done in God.

2. Jesus summarized all the commandments in the double commandment of love of God and neighbor. If one loves God with his entire being, he will surely endeavor to please him in every word and deed, and he will take every precaution not to offend him deliberately. If one loves his neighbor as himself, he will not harm his neighbor, nor steal from him, nor offend in any way against his neighbor's rights and possessions. For his neighbor, like himself, is created in the image of the God of Love. It is easy to see, then, why these two commandments sum up all the others. In this sense the words of St. Augustine are to be understood: "Love, and do what you please". The commandments are negative prohibitions, but to love is to reach out positively in all directions, making no distinctions or preferences, for all men are created in the image of God.

4. The world is full of lonely people sitting on park benches or bar stools, in cinemas, floor shows or worse places. No one has befriended them, no one ever bothered asking them a single question or striking up a conversation. You can find lonely people even at picnics or a party. They don't seem to "fit in" with the rest. Real Christianity at a practical level can reach out to all these people, for all they are asking for is a friendly word, or a warm handshake, a bit of love and understanding. They are not asking for financial help. They are asking for a true manifestation of Christian love. Many a person has been saved from despair or evil paths or even suicide, because someone took interest in him or her at the right time. Are you willing to reach out?

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
(November 11th, 1979)

First Reading: First Kings 17:10-16. This anecdote from the life of Elijah heightens his authority as a prophet. "Elijah" has the meaning "Yahweh is my God", and he lived up to that name. During the three years of famine, he turns to a poor widow for food and drink. She is probably a pagan, since she lives in Sidon of Phoenicia. The widow is already in extreme need, and is about to prepare a last scanty meal for herself and her son. Elijah's request makes great demands on her faith in him as a prophet of Yahweh, God of Israel. She is asked to use up the last of her flour to satisfy first of all his hunger. But believing his prophetic word brings ample reward. Both the prophet as well as the widow and her son live through the famine. What stands out in this scene is the power of faith, its great rewards, and the force of the prophetic word.

Second Reading: Hebrew 9: 21-23. A contrast between the high priest of the old covenant on the Day of Atonement and Christ the high priest. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest offered special sacrifices for his sins as well as those of priests and people all, and, entering the Most Holy Place, he sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the "mercy seat" over the Ark of the Covenant which represented God's Presence, in legal expiation for sins. At the end of the ceremony he came forth, re-appearing to the waiting crowd, and conferred on them the blessing.

At the climax of the Paschal Mystery, Christ entered not man-made copies of heavenly realities (Ex. 25:40; Hebr. 8:5, but heaven itself, into the very Presence of the Father, not with the blood of animals but with his own Blood, offered in sacrifice. This he did once and for all in his Paschal Mystery, which is now eternally present before the Father (see Hebr. 7:25). This sacrifice of himself is able to remove all sin from all men of all times. Death for man is only once, so Christ's sacrificial death is but once. Judgment awaits man after death (which also includes his reward). The final phase of Christ's Paschal Mystery is its consummation in sharing his blessings with those who are his own.

Gospel Reading: Mark 12: 38-44 (or: 41-44). Jesus castigates those scribes who hanker after hypocritical show, sanctimonious piety as well as honors and recognition in public. In contrast he is full of praise for a simple, god-fearing but very poor widow. Her offering was extremely small, amounting to one sixtieth of a day laborer's wage at that time. The offerings were placed in chests labelled

for various uses and arranged in the court of the women (so-called because women could come that far in the Temple; men also entered there). Like the widow of Sidon (first reading), she offered all she had to live on. That made it so praiseworthy in Christ's eyes that it surpassed all the offerings of those who enjoyed abundance of goods. It was the total offering of herself.

OUTLINE FOR HOMILY

REAL VALUES

Introduction: The showy externals of the wealthy and the shallow piety of some of the scribes never appealed to Christ. On the contrary, we find him giving his attention to a deformed leper, a shabby old blind man, a bent-over woman, a man paralyzed and confined to his bed. The Lord had an eye for real values, and he could see the heart of man. Today's gospel shows this contrast.

1. So great was the Lord's simplicity and openness, that any form of show or hypocrisy fell under his severe censure. He watched the wealthy in their fine robes ostentatiously putting large sums into the treasury, but he singled out for praise a poor widow, dressed in somber garb, showing every mark of poverty. Did anyone else notice that forlorn looking woman, emaciated no doubt, and in appearance not too respectable? Did even the disciples find her worthy of their notice? Very likely they were taken in by the finery of the wealthy, their colorful robes and glittery jewelry, their generous donations. But where were the real and lasting values? What was the disposition of the heart in all those who offered their contributions in public before the gaze of all?

2. So tiny was the coin which the widow threw into the treasury that it hardly was heard as it fell into the container. In fact, it was the tinliest of coins in circulation. A day-laborer received 60 times the amount at that time. But the Lord took notice. Why? Because it was all the poor widow had. In giving it, she gave her whole being to God. That is what made that widow's mite so mighty in his sight. She is like the widow in the first reading who gave the prophet her last meal before she prepared to die of starvation. How remarkable are these two poor helpless widows. They had so little, yet that very little they gave gladly and whole-heartedly, not counting the cost at all, not thinking what the future would bring. Only a great act of faith stood behind those generous

gestures, and God took care of them, not merely for this life, but above all for the life of the blessed which would reward them forever.

3. It is to the poor and the forgotten that the real disciples of Christ turn their attention. Mother Teresa of Calcutta once visited an old man whose room was in a terrible condition. No one ever came near him, no one cared for him. As Mother Teresa tidied up his room, she came across a beautiful lamp covered with the dirt of years. "Why don't you light your lamp", she asked. "What's the use" he responded, "no one ever comes to see me. I'm in the dark, and nobody cares." So she asked him, "Would you light it if my sisters came to visit you?" "Yes," he replied, "if I hear a human voice, I will do it". Much later on, Mother Teresa received a message from him and it ran thus: "Tell her, the light she has lighted in my life is still burning". Who knows how close to God this poor bed-ridden man will be for all eternity, once he was given new courage from a true disciple of Christ who had an eye for lasting values!

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME **(November 18th, 1979)**

First Reading: Daniel 12:1-3. A vision of the final and greatest persecution before the consummation. "At that time" refers to this and not to the preceeding persecutions. Its unsurpassed intensity calls forth the angelic assistance of Michael, the protector of God's People (Cf. Rev. 12: 7). Some will escape unharmed. These are God's specially chosen ones (symbolized by being enrolled in the book of life: cf. Ex. 32:32; Rev. 20:15)

There follows a clear statement of the bodily resurrection of the just, a doctrine that had been only gradually revealed. It comes to the fore in the books written toward the close of the O.T. era, for example, here in Daniel (written c. 165 B.C.) and 2 Macc 12: 9.14 (written around 125 B.C.). "Sleep" is metaphor for physical death (cf. Jn. 11:11). St. Paul echoes the teaching of these verses in 1 Cor. 15:52. St. John states more clearly that resurrection will be both for the just and for the wicked (Jn. 5:29), but the latter for eternal frustration. There is a double parallel in the last verse. The wise are those who live here below according to God's will and lead many by both word and example to do the same. They are compared to the magnificence of the star-filled heavens.

Second Reading: Hebrews 10: 11-14.18. In the many sacrificial rites of the Old Covenant, the priests offered new sacrifices daily. Yet none of these sacrifices nor all of them together could remit sin. Christ's sacrifice of himself is unique. 1) it is once and for all. 2) It truly remits all possible sin. 3) Though offered once, it endures from the very moment of its completion, for at that moment, eternity reigns for Christ. 4) Thus it is permanently effective. All other offerings for sin are rendered meaningless (v. 18).

Note: The objection of some non-Catholics that these verses militate against the sacrifice of the Mass is unfounded. The mass is the **celebration of Christ's Paschal Mystery**. What happened once and for all on Calvary enters by the Mass into our place and time, and acquires presence and redemptive power within our own being (Rahner). Though offered once, Christ's sacrifice endures forever.

Gospel Reading: Mark 13: 24-32. Another reference to the period of great tribulation. Apocalyptic style of writing intends the expressions not to be taken literally but figuratively. In the language of imagery, they express here the divine intervention in power and majesty, bringing about the consummation of all things, with Christ coming in glory. His messengers will gather all the elect together. (Another interpretation which holds that the entire passage pertains to Christ's coming and reigning in the Church after his resurrection, with all the nations flowing into the Church, hardly fulfills the demands of the text). The little parable of the fig tree in its present setting brings home the lesson of expectation and hope. Signal of Christ's Coming is the great distress, and it should instill hope and expectation in the hearts of the faithful, just as the green leaves of the fig tree herald the coming of summer with its fruits.

"This generation" placed in this setting need not refer to a lifespan of forty years (though this would fit the second interpretation, given above). It can also have the meaning of the Jewish people as such (cf. Mt. 12:39). They will live on to witness "these things" (Cf. Rom. 11:25). In v. 31, Jesus emphasizes the solidity and permanence of his teaching, regardless of the time of the consummation. In v. 32, Mark need not be referring to the Son in the manner that John constantly theologizes concerning Father and Son (cf. Jn. 5:18ff), but as Son of Man in his human capacity. Both 'Son' and "angels" have just been mentioned in vv. 26-27. In his human capacity, the emptying of himself (Phil. 2:7) can also involve voluntary limitation of his knowledge of details concerning specific events.

OUTLINE FOR HOMILY**RE-ENTRY IN GLORY**

Introduction: The plane, loaded with 267 passengers, took off on its scheduled flight. No one was aware of any imminent happening. Yet it had hardly risen to any suitable height, when one of the engines loosened fell to the ground below. The plane spun, the pilot lost control and there was a terrific crash, killing all aboard. Sudden and total was their tragic end.

1. Today's gospel speaks of the Coming of the Lord. It will be when no one is expecting it, and those who are not prepared will have a tragic end of life, for they will not be prepared to meet their Judge. His Coming will be preceded by all kinds of trials, and great distress will be experienced by all the nations. This is symbolized by the heavenly bodies which are depicted as no longer giving their light, so that man is in total darkness, anxiety and fear. These expressions of the heavenly bodies are not meant to be taken literally, for it is apocalyptic language, and it is figurative, to describe the fearful happenings on earth before the Coming of the Lord. But there is a bright side to the picture. These are the birthpangs of the real event which is about to break upon the world: the glorious Re-entry of Christ to planet earth, which will be witnessed by all the nations of the world.

2. At last the Son of God who became our Savior and Brother comes into his own. The humble carpenter of Nazareth is acknowledged as the Architect of the universe. The despised Crucified One will be seen as reigning in power and majesty. He who lived in utter obscurity and lowliness will be hailed as the One to whom all mankind owes its redemption and eternal salvation. The faithful followers of the crucified will be at his side, gloriously reigning with him, clothed in light and splendor. Those who have rejected him or never bothered to know and love him while on earth will be covered with shame, and be filled with fear and trembling for the utter lack of cooperation they manifested all throughout life with the promptings of divine grace and the voice of the Spirit. The great event for which the whole world waited for centuries is finally at hand. Time is no more. Judgment is about to begin.

3. As to the time of his Coming, it is foolish to speculate, as many do. Did Christ not say that it was not communicated to the angels nor to him to disclose it to mankind? Only the self-styled prophets seem always to know the very year and the day, and throw people into fear and consternation. They always foretell "the end of the

world" but it is rather the consummation of all things that the Lord has in mind. This will be a very joyful event for those who have faithfully tried to follow the Master, and have suffered with him by bearing their cross patiently. But in his wisdom, God has not revealed the time, so that all generations may be prepared. This, then, is the lesson: Live today as if Christ were coming this very night. Live the Christ-life as he expects of you. Live every day that way you will be prepared when he comes.

**SOLEMNITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST,
KING OF THE UNIVERSE
(November 25th, 1979)**

First Reading: Daniel 7: 13-14. Everlasting dominion and indestructible kingship are being given by the Eternal One (The Ancient of Days) to "One like a Son of Man" "Like to" tells us that we are dealing with a symbol. Though in v. 18 the symbol refers to the "holy ones of the Most High" who receive the kingship, Jesus evidently refers the symbol to himself when he said to Caiaphas: "You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven (Mk. 14: 62). In Semitic expression of thought, one and the same symbol often refers to two objects: a representative individual and a collective group for which he stands. The King is considered as embodying in himself the entire people (cf. Dan. 2:37.41; 8:20-22).

The whole passage eminently fits Christ the universal king who receives from the Father "all power in heaven and on earth" (Mt. 28:20), and shares his rule with all who are his (cf. Rev. 2: 26). In him is embodied the full ruling power which is given to the saints, and through him it is exercised. As he said to his chosen band: "I for my part assign to you the dominion my Father has assigned to me" (Lk. 22:29). To Mary at the annunciation it was proclaimed that "his rule will be without end" (Lk. 1:33).

Second Reading: Revelation 1:5-8. A passage replete with theology, triple in its make-up:

1. **Three epithets** touch upon Christ's death, resurrection and exaltation: a) The faithful witness, because he perfectly revealed the Father's love, especially by his passion and death (Jn. 19:37). b) First-born from the dead, because his resurrection is the beginning and the source for the resurrection of all mankind (1 Cor. 15: 20-21). c) Universal ruler, having power over all creation. See Eph. 1: 21.

2. Three salvific actions of Christ: a) He loves: (present tense). His love is always present. We can count on it now and always. b) He delivered us from Satan and sin by his sacrificial death (Rev. 5:9). c) He shares his royal priesthood in the service of the Father. Christians united with the sacrifice of Christ continue to consecrate the whole world to God. Though suffering at present, they shall reign with him forever.

3. Three glimpses of the glorious triumph of Christ: The words break in upon us suddenly to remind us of the suddenness which Christ foretold would characterize his coming (Mt. 24: 37f). It is vividly introduced by "See" a) He will be truly manifested as God's divine Son. The cloud is the symbol of divinity (Dan. 7: 13). He will come into his own at last. b) Everyone, friend and enemy, will then acknowledge him for who he really is. The Crucified One is the universal King of glory. c) All will mourn, realizing at last what they have done to him. But time is no more. There is no further opportunity for repentance.

Gospel Reading: John 18: 33b-37. The representative of the Roman Empire confronts the King of kings who stands in criminal chains. Jesus does not answer Pilate's direct question, lest he give the impression that he is king in the sense Pilate has in mind, namely, a national, wordly one. His messianic kingship is of a different order. It is in the world but not of the world (see Jn. 17: 14-16). "World here is mankind, subject to sin and the powers of darkness. Jesus offers a simple argument to prove his point: a king of that sort has an army to defend him. Jesus stands there seemingly helpless and forsaken before Pilate.

Lest he be misunderstood, Jesus is content to let the title "king" rest on Pilate's lips, without denying it. (The Jerusalem Bible adds: "Yes, I am a king" which is not in the original Greek). Christ reigns over the hearts of men in the sense that he has become our Brother to reveal to us the all-loving Father, so that his reign be fully established over those who accept the Son. This is Christ's life task: to bear witness to the truth, that is, to God's wonderful revelation of his love, culminating in Christ himself, "Who, in bearing witness, made his noble profession before Pontius Pilate" (1 Tim. 6: 13). Christ reigns over us insofar as we accept his revelation of Good News and carry it out in our lives.

OUTLINE FOR HOMILY**HE REIGNS KING FOREVER**

The end of the ecclesiastical year climaxes with the solemnity of Christ, King of the Universe. The Apostle of the nations depicted it well: "For Christ all things were created. He is the first-born of the dead, so that primacy may be his in everything. It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him, and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person, both on earth and in the heavens, making peace through his Blood on the cross" (Col. 1: 16-18-20).

Today we celebrate the triumph of Christ. He stood before Pilate unknown, despised, condemned. Where were his followers then? Where were his armies, his generals to defend him? But his kingdom is not of this world. Today, millions of voices acclaim him as their King, their only Savior, their divine Brother who inaugurated the reign of God in the hearts of men and has spread the Kingdom of love far and wide. Among those millions are men and women of all ranks of life, of every profession and calling, drawn by the magnet of his love into the kingdom of justice and truth. This is the kingdom he came to establish, and no earthly potentate need fear to lose his crown, for the King of kings came to call kings and peasants alike to the heavenly realm where Satan and sin have no part, and where love reigns supreme.

Today the Spouse of Christ on earth is celebrating the divine liturgy on thousands of altars, united with the millions of those who have gone before and are now standing before the throne of the Lamb, celebrating the heavenly liturgy. They are praising and glorifying the Father with him for his immense love toward mankind in giving his only Son to them as Savior and Brother. And they are praising Christ the Lord as King of the universe, for having undergone the various phases of his Paschal Mystery with great patience and enduring love. With one voice they cry out, as we read in the Book of Revelation: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, wisdom and strength, honor and glory and praise. And from the entire universe comes the mighty: Amen" (Rev. 5:12).

Today, all over the world, Christians look up with renewed courage to Christ, enthroned at the right side of the Father in glory, and realize more fully that their following of Christ is trial and pain will have a most successful issue, one fraught with the richest blessings. They see in anticipation the reward of a Christian life lived in the shadow of the cross and in the company of the Eucharist. Their life of faith engenders new hope, and hope will never be disappointed, for the love of God is poured out into their hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to them (Rom. 5:5). In the midst of the world, the Christians have their eyes on the glorious future which they will share with Christ, provided they continue to live their Christian commitment faithfully by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who leads them to their goal as he led Christ himself while on earth.

Today, though evil powers are making great inroads into the very homes of those who call themselves Christian, and Satan seems to be gaining ground in every phase of life, Christian hope buoys up the heart with the realization that Christ has overcome the world and will most certainly celebrate the great triumph of his glory in the Father's appointed time. Let us rejoice today and praise the Lord, King of the universe, who will slay the Adversary of mankind with the mere power of his breath (2 Thess. 2: 8). To him be glory and power and thanksgiving for ever and ever.

HOMILY OUTLINES FOR THE AGUINALDO MASSES

By

Fr. Bernard LeFrois, S.V.D.

Dec. 16, 1979: PREPARE TO WELCOME THE LORD (Luke 3:10-18)

1. John the Baptist prepared the People of God for the Coming One, by having them straighten out their lives. He did not ask of them great penances or anything extraordinary, but just those things that everyone could do: 1) Everyone was to share his extra clothing and food with those who were in dire need of those necessities. 2) Business men, represented by the tax-collectors, were asked to be honest in their dealings, not demanding more than required. 3) The military was advised against a false show of domineering, a false accusation of others, and against complaining about their salaries. Thus the crooked ways would be made straight, and the heart prepared to receive the Holy One of Israel.

2. The Holy Spirit speaks to us today in these words of John. His exhortations offer us a simple but definite preparation for renewal in the genuine spirit of the Christ-life: 1) Sharing our surplus clothes and food with so many needy persons who have little to clothe and nourish themselves with. That alone will make many a mother and father happy, to be able to keep the family warm and content especially during the colder December days. 2) Honesty in all dealings or transactions of business, seeking only fair gain, Extra gain can be given to the poor and the destitute, the orphans and the homeless. 3) Respect for all persons on the part of the military or those in civil positions, so that all be treated fairly, with charity and understanding rather than the rigor of the word of the law. The crooked ways should be made straight again, and the eyes of all be directed to the goodness, the honesty and the loving-kindness of Christ.

3. John also raised their hopes by promising them that the Coming One would immerse (baptize) them in the Holy Spirit and fire. That meant a purification and a transformation. This is also the hope of all of us today to be immersed anew in the Spirit of Christ, to be purified of our past sinful lives and to be transformed anew

into new creatures, burning with zeal for God's kingdom and with love for one another. Advent is the time for renewal and today's Good News fires us with determination and endeavor to live anew our Christian commitment, as our Christian baptism demands.

Dec. 17, 1979: JESUS THE HOPE OF SINFUL MANKIND

(Matthew 1: 1-17)

1. We have heard the long list of names that make up the ancestry of Jesus. Some of those mentioned call to mind the sinfulness of man: there is Judah who sinned with Tamar by fornication; there is David who committed adultery with Bathsheba, and murdered her husband Uriah. Also the Gentile world is part of the ancestry, for Ruth was a Moabitess, the grandmother of David. But Jesus came to call all mankind to repentance, and he is the hope of each and everyone, the guiding Light of all nations, the new Life for all Peoples. His name is Jesus, which means Savior, for he came to save his people from their sins. No one need despair of forgiveness from sins no matter how grievous, for if both Judah and David are in the very ancestry of the Lord, he will welcome all sinners to metanoia and repentance in order to be his living members, holy and renewed in him.

2. Notice how at the very end of the ancestry, the wording changes. Jacob begot or is the father of Joseph, but it does not say that Joseph begot Jesus; rather, it states that Joseph is the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born. For the birth of Jesus is virginal, and Joseph had no part in his conception. Jesus is born of the immaculate virgin without the assistance of any man, but by the sheer overshadowing of the power of the Holy Spirit. He is conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, as we recite so often in the Apostles' Creed, the immaculate Virgin being human nature at its best, untainted by original sin, the perfect human nature as God intended it at the beginning. God has communicated his own holiness to Mary at her very conception, so that Jesus would be born of the purest of human mortals.

3. Mary is like a golden chalice, prepared to receive the sacred Presence of Christ, the Lamb of sacrifice. The gold of this chalice was gathered from the muddy streams of Israel, that is, the sinful ancestry of Jesus, but the chalice itself is pure gold without alloy, made ready to receive God's Son who becomes Son of Mary and Brother of us all. Our hearts too must be cleansed this Advent period and become like a re-gilded chalice shining bright, ready to receive the Eucharistic Lord and with him to live the Christ-life

anew for the glory of the Father. Let us willingly undergo a thorough purification and "regilding" so that Christ will come with delight and joy to live in the hearts he came to save.

Dec. 18, 1979: THE NEW BIRTH OF MARY AND THE SPIRIT
(Mt. 1: 18-24)

1. It is no wonder that Joseph was perplexed. It was evident that Mary was with child and yet he was absolutely sure that he had had no part in it. Moreover, had they not agreed to refrain from the lawful marital use of their rights, so as to serve the Lord unhindered and with their whole being? Nor could his heart accuse Mary of infidelity, for her very being breathed modesty, honesty and purity, and she showed no least sign of deceit or guilt. What in the world could have happened? He was truly in a dilemma, and in his anguish Joseph prayed and prayed the longer. Then it was revealed to him that this was the new birth promised by Isaiah of old, a virgin-birth, a birth made possible solely by the mighty power of the Spirit. It was the Spirit alone who made Mary fruitful without the usual part played by man. Have no fear, Joseph, to take Mary home as your wife. This is the unique virgin-birth of the Savior!

2. This is the beginning of the new People of God. Just as Christ was born of the Virgin-Mother by the power of the Holy Spirit, so each member of his Body will be born anew of the Virgin-Mother Church in baptism by the power of the Holy Spirit. But in baptism, as Pope Paul VI of recent memory so clearly states "the Church prolongs the virginal motherhood of Mary" (Apost. Exhort. 19). Truly then each member of Christ is born of the Virgin-Mother by the power of the Holy Spirit. The baptismal font itself represents the maternal womb from which the reborn child of God issues forth to begin life as a member of Christ. He is henceforth obligated to live a Christian life, one like Christ led. His baptismal commitment has been made for him by his godparents that day. Do we appreciate the mystery of baptism! We are born of our parents in original sin but in baptism we are born anew as members of the Body of Christ, born of the Virgin and the Spirit as he was, and dedicated to the cause of Christ.

3. Advent is the time to reflect on our rebirth in Christ, and to let the Advent mysteries remind us of it, so that we willingly renew ourselves in our Christian commitment. Advent is the time to turn to Mary with greater fervor and beg her to teach us as once she taught her Son Jesus. He is the Way and the Truth and the Life, and who can teach us better than Mary how to come to him and how to live his life? We manifest our determination by fidelity to

our Sunday duties and by genuine love of our neighbor, as Jesus taught us by his own example. This is shown by the grandfather of St. Therese of the Child Jesus, who was a captain in the French army, a courageous soldier and an exemplary Catholic. His fellow-soldiers joked to the chaplain that the captain remained on his knees rather long after the consecration of the Mass, since it was not customary to do so. "Tell them" he replied, "it is because I believe". Here was a man who was not afraid to manifest his staunch Catholic faith.

Dec. 19, 1979. RELYING ON THE POWER OF GOD (Lk. 1: 5-25)

1. Even holy people can have their doubts and make mistakes. Zechariah was a holy man. We have just heard that he was blamelessly following all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord. Long and perseveringly he had prayed together with his wife, Elizabeth for offspring, but the Lord seemed not to hear their prayers. Now both were advanced in age and Elizabeth was sterile. They would die without their cherished desire being fulfilled. Then suddenly comes the heavenly revelation that God had granted their request. Elizabeth would have a son and he would be mighty before the Lord and before his People. And Zechariah doubted. He thinks of his old age and his wife's condition, and he does not believe the heavenly messenger's word. He thinks it is simply not possible. He forgot that with God all things are possible.

2. Even Christians who daily endeavor to serve the Lord and carry out his will can sometimes be assailed by doubts. If God seems to be asking of them something unexpected and beyond their strength, they begin to doubt if they can carry it out. They grope in darkness. Is God really asking this of me? How can I do this in my present situation, or health, or means? Again, it is not a question if we can do by ourselves what is clearly God's beckoning hand. He is with us to carry out what he wants done. It is by his power alone that it will be accomplished. Zechariah was punished because he did not believe, he did not put his trust in the all powerful God who can do all things easily. Let us not follow him in this matter, but rely solely on the Holy Spirit who is given to us as Helper and Advocate, to do the will of the Father in all things. Then and then only will God's wonderful work be accomplished by us, for it is he who inspires us to do good and it is he who will accomplish it through us.

3. God did not withdraw the promised child even though Zechariah doubted. And what a wonderful child was given to him: John, the great Forerunner of the Messiah-King of Israel; John, the

Herald who would prepare the way for his manifestation; John, the Voice in the wilderness, the humble servant of the Coming One. Those long years of prayer and devoted worship on the part of Zechariah were not thwarted by his momentary doubt due to human weakness. The Lord understands the heart of man and is most merciful. He understands when we are beset with darkness and doubt, and begin to grope, not finding at once the way. But he is also mindful of the faith and love exercised in countless other instances, so he will keep his promise to be with us to the end, to carry out his divine work in us. That work during this Advent period is our total renewal in Christ for which we have been praying so long and fervently. Remember Zechariah and Elizabeth. They waited long, but not in vain.

Dec. 20, 1979: REJOICE, O HIGHLY FAVORED ONE! (Luke 1: 26-38)

1. Now the moment struck for which all heaven had waited. The heavenly messenger was sent to obtain the virgin Mary's consent to God's great plan for man, the plan that would embrace all nations and make them one in God's Son who would become a man himself in the bosom of Mary the virgin. It is the moment of supreme joy and therefore Mary is told to rejoice, for she is chosen by God for great things. In her the Son of God would enter into the divine marriage with the human race. She would give him his body, so that he could love us with a human heart as our Brother, and teach us with human lips the word of God. She would nourish the little Lamb until he was ready to lay down his life in sacrifice and become our food in the Eucharistic meal. All this flows from the great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

2. But there is nothing carnal in his conception of the virgin. Only the Spirit is to be active in bringing about the fruitfulness of Mary. He will overshadow her, envelop her, possess her as his own Immaculate Spouse. How marvellous are the works of God! Here is a simple teen-age maiden, totally unknown to the world, a peasant living among peasants, and humble in her own eyes. Yet it is to her that the good God stoops to accomplish his marvels. He asks her consent! And Mary's fiat resounds with eager response: Be it done to me as you say. Note that Mary did not say: Yes! I will do it, I will be his mother. The humble maiden said simply: I am the Lord's maid-servant. Be it done to me as you say. Thus Mary relies entirely on the good God to accomplish his designs. She lets herself in his hands as an instrument, willing and pliable. And God works his marvels. Mary becomes the Mother of the whole Christ.

3. We do well to follow the example of our Mother. She is the attentive virgin, who listens carefully to the word of God, and then submits to his will. If we carry out our own designs, the results may be good; but if we let ourselves be moved by the Spirit of God, he can accomplish so much more in and through us. The secret of the saints is not that they have accomplished great deeds on their own, that, following the example of the Virgin-Mother, they let themselves be used as instruments by the Holy Spirit. Then the moving Power is not a weak human mortal but the mighty Spirit of God. In this Advent season, the recitation of the Angelus reminds us of this ideal example of Mary, and if we learn to be open to the Spirit as Mary was, our lives will be ever so much more meaningful and fruitful in God.

Dec. 21, 1979. SACRAMENTAL ENCOUNTER (Luke 1:39-45)

1. Hardly had the virgin Mary become the Mother of God's Son when she began her role of mediating his gifts and graces to others. She greets her cousin Elizabeth with the customary embrace and words: Shalom: Peace!, but also with deep inner desire to share with her the blessings she herself had received. And then the marvels begin! Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, she becomes charismatic in her outcry, her child deep within her leaps for joy at the Presence of that other Child, the Treasure on the bosom of Mary. Thus the encounter of Mary with Elizabeth is sacramental, for Mary's word and embrace were made use of by the Spirit to convey inward grace and blessing. Indeed, the entire sacramental system, to be instituted later on by the Savior, is pre-figured in this encounter of Mary with Elizabeth.

2. Once we are open to the Spirit and have received a new release of his power, our lives can and ought to be sacramental. Our human acts, our gestures, our words of encouragement, the smiles of approval we give, the signs of recognition to a friend or acquaintance, will all be made use of by the Spirit dwelling within us to convey to others the blessings he has in store for them. Does not St. Paul say that to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good (1 Cor. 12: 7)? In this Advent season, our many encounters with others can be vehicles of grace and blessing, if we are united with the Spirit and desire to convey the gifts of Christ by our words and actions. This can be a fruitful preparation for the Birthday of the Lord. A mere word can warm a tired heart, a smile can lighten someone's loneliness, a favor rendered can bring joy to one who seemed forgotten. Our gifts and Christmas greetings will have the best effect if they are fraught with this

intention to be vehicles of the Spirit's blessings, to bring the joy of Christ to our relatives and friends. Who knows what one such kind act can do?

3. A non-Catholic wounded soldier was brought to a Catholic hospital and attended to by the Catholic Sister in charge of the floor. At first he was most reluctant to take any medicine from her, for he had been brought up with great prejudice against Catholics, and he thought she might want to poison him, being a non-Catholic! But the sweet patience and gentleness of the little Sister gradually began to have an effect on him. He realized that his fears were totally unfounded and his upbringing in this respect was sheer false prejudice. He not only won over to be a docile patient, but even to become a fervent Catholic. This is how the Spirit of God works in his chosen instruments. Their ordinary duties bring about supernatural wonders in the realm of grace.

Dec. 22, 1979. MARY'S HYMN OF EXULTANT PRAISE (Lk. 1: 45-56)

1. When Elizabeth, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, cried out with a loud voice: Blest are you among women and blest is the fruit of your womb, Mary responded with her sublime canticle of praise. Far from any thought of vanity or self-complacency entering her mind, Mary's whole being breaks forth in referring everything to God. He alone is great and deserving of all praise. He alone is the true source of joy. He alone is Savior. Well aware of the great marvels he has accomplished in her, Mary prefers to see herself as his lowly servant whose whole ambition was couched in those words: Let it be done to me as you say. Yet she cannot refrain from prophesying that from now on all mankind down the centuries will name her the Blessed One.

2. Three attributes of God are the object of Mary's praise: his might, his holiness, his mercy. God is almighty and he alone has accomplished in her great things. Indeed, the lowly maiden of Nazareth has become the Mother of the Most High, the favored Mother of the Messiah-King of Israel, virgin-Daughter Jerusalem herself in perfect form. Because he is holy, he has seen fit to make her the Holy Temple of God, for the One whom she carries within her is the Holy One of Israel. Therefore he has made her sinless from the outset, and there is no stain in her. She is the perfect flower of the human race. Because he is merciful he will continue to shower on all mankind the benefits of his mercy, because of the Child in her bosom who is the Savior of the world. The Lord will bring down the proud, as he brought down Satan from the heights. He will lift up those who are lowly and humble

as he lifted up his servant in her lowliness. The self-satisfied he will turn away but those who hunger for his love he will fill with his gifts. He will keep his promise to show mercy to all who seek him with an upright heart, as he kept his promise to Abraham, the father of all believers.

3. Mary's magnificat is a model for everyone. Today when many charismatic groups have as their key-theme the praise of God, Mary stands as archetype and pattern. We often ask the Lord for favors, but how often do we render him thanks and praise? He is so worthy of all praise. Praise is the most excellent form of prayer because it is utterly selfless. To bless the Lord is the natural outflow of the reborn child of God, just as children take delight in their parents. St. Ignatius gave his followers the motto: all for the greater honor and glory of God! This is what the angels sang on the first Christmas night: Glory to God in the highest! Yes, let us with the words of Mary give him glory and praise for he is so worthy of it. Daily the divine office sings Mary's sublime hymn of praise in the evening prayer. It is also most fitting on our lips or in our hearts after we have received him in the Eucharist, for then, carry him like Mary, we sing his praises.

Dec. 23, 1979: LOVE IN ACTION (Luke 1:39-45).

1. When the Divine Word entered the holy womb of Mary, she became the Holy Temple of God, the Tabernacle of the Most High. Yet she did not remain in the little house of Nazareth, all wrapped up in her own blessed state, forgetting the world around her. On the contrary, she set out on a three day journey over mountain and valley to the town of Ain-Karim in the province of Judea. Transportation was slow in those days and Mary would have made it either by caravan or donkey. Yet nothing deterred her from giving her aged cousin the help needed in those last months of her pregnancy. Here is the perfect pattern of love in action. The most highly favored of all God's creatures leaves all things and utterly forget of herself, comes in haste to the aid of one in need.

2. In our Advent preparation for the rebirth of the Christ Child in our hearts, Mary stands out as our model in works of charity. To come to those in need is the labor of love that will make our Christmas worthwhile, because it will make other people happy, and it will assist them to bear their burdens in this time of gladness.

Like Mary, let us forget our many concerns these days before Christmas, our over-wrought preparations in gifts and decorations, our multiple shopping trips to satisfy all relatives and friends. Though it is necessary to follow the usual customs, as follows of Mary let us also think of the many who will not have a Christmas at all without us. To them we want to give our time, our talents and our treasure. When all the Christmas trimmings are put away, and the gifts sorted out and put away, the time and means we spent on helping the poor and those in need will be a lasting memorial in the book of Life which the angels record.

3. And what was the great gift that Mary brought Elizabeth? It was the Presence of the Christ Child. That Presence made her own child leap for joy, and filled her with the Holy Spirit. To bring Christ back into Christmas is the noble aspiration of the true Christian. For what is Christmas without Christ? To carry Christ to others means to be a true Christopher, or Christ-bearer, as the name signifies. Surely it will not be difficult to carry Christ to our fellowmen. An advertisement for the original Boys' Town showed a young lad carrying a still younger but rather chubby youngster on his back. The question on the poster was: "Isn't he heavy" and the response of the lad was: "He's not heavy; he's my brother". That is the right answer. To carry Christ is not a burden. It is joy to bring him, our divine Kuya, our loving Brother, to the hearts of those in need.

Dec. 24, 1979: BLESSED BE GOD! (Lk. 1: 67-79)

1. Zechariah had humbly submitted to the punishment of being mute and unable to speak for nine months because of his lack of belief and trust in the angel's word. But when asked to write the name of Elizabeth's child, he at once wrote on the wax pad: John is his name. At that moment his tongue was loosened and filled with the Holy Spirit he broke forth into the canticle which we call the Benedictus, because of the opening words: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel. The liturgy repeats the sublime canticle every morning in the liturgical morning prayers. All over the world it is recited or sung by thousands of voices. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel.

2. The theme of the Benedictus is salvation. Zechariah is full of joy and gratitude because God has come to his People and given

them a Savior from the House of David, Jesus, Son of Mary. For three full months Zechariah had the privilege of his Presence while Mary remained with them. Daily he experience the mysterious Power emanating from God's Temple. Truly he is a Mighty Savior, symbolized by the ox's horn which stood for strength. Now can all men rejoice for their deepest longing for salvation can be fulfilled. All men long for happiness and to be delivered from all enemies, especially those of the spirit, and from sickness, calamity and death. Jesus as Savior is Champion for all this. The hour of salvation is at hand. Light shines in the darkness. It is Christ himself who lights up the way to man's peace, happiness and eternal blessedness. Blessed be God!

3. The Savior is standing before the door of our hearts today and knocking. Will you send him away as he was sent away that first Christmas in Bethlehem when there was no room for him in the inn, or will you open wide your hearts and let the Savior in? No one else can give you peace. No one else can give you happiness. No one else can give you everlasting fulfillment. Bless the Lord and welcome Mary's Son, your Brother, your Savior, your God.

HOMILETICS

By

Regino O. Cortes, O.P.

BIBLICAL NOTES FOR DECEMBER 1979 — JANUARY 1980

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(December 2, 1979)

First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Second Reading: First Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Gospel Reading: Luke 21:25-28.34-36

First Reading: Context Post-exilic promise of the permanence of David's dynasty believed to have been added by a posterior redactor. This text clearly depends on Jeremiah 23:5-6 which speaks of a king of Davidic line. It does not figure in the Septuagint or the Greek version of the Bible. While Jer. 23:5 alludes to an individual king of David's line, here it speaks of the Davidic dynasty and the name of David's descendant in the parallel text is here applied to the city: Yahweh-our-integrity.

The liturgical use of this text during this time of Advent carries our thoughts to Jesus, the son of David, the fulfillment of the messianic promises to David and to Israel.

Second Reading: This is considered part of the oldest literature of the New Testament, written by Paul when he was at Corinth probably during the winter of 50-51 A.D. Paul prays for the Thessalonians and petitions the Lord: 1) to facilitate his coming to them again; to increase the charity of the Thessalonians; 3) confirm them in holiness.

"With all his saints" (v. 13) either could mean "the angels" in reference to Zechariah 14:5; Matthew 25:31; Mark 6:38, or it could refer to all Christians who would be with the Lord at the **parousia** or his second coming which Paul would speak in 4:17.

Gospel Reading: The gospel passage has two parts: The Coming of the Son of Man (vv. 25-28) and Exhortation to be Vigilant (vv. 34-36).

The narrative of Luke which could have been based on Mark 13:24-27 used the apocalyptic genre influenced by Isaiah 13:10 and Psalm 65 (Vulg. and Sept. 64):8. The signs in the heavens which will be terrifying to the nations will on the contrary be happy signs for Christmas "for their liberation is near at hand."

Differing from Mark 13:33-37, Luke seemed to eliminate the thought of an imminent parousia. He exhorts the Christians, through the discourse of our Lord, "to pray at all times" lest they would fall into the trap (an image from Isaiah 24:17) and not survive.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY, PRINCIPAL PATRONESS OF THE PHILIPPINES

(December 8, 1979)

First Reading: Genesis 3:9-15.20

Second Reading: Ephesians 1:3-6.11-12

Gospel Reading: Luke 1:26-38

First Reading: Because of sin man become separated from God, from each other, from the rest of creation. Man blamed his sin on the woman, the woman on the serpent. All received their sentence of punishment.

3:15 has been traditionally called the **Proto-Evangelium**, the first Good News of salvation. God did not leave man in the state of sin. He promised a Redeemer.

The salvific significance of this text was not to be fully realized until New Testament times. Once the messianic import of this passage was understood, the application to Mary of the woman in the text easily followed. The offspring (singular) who would crush the serpent's head (in the Vulgate this was translated as feminine, "she") is undoubtedly the Messiah, the son of God, who "when the appointed time came was born of a woman" (Galatians 4:5).

Second Reading: Context. The liturgical reading forms part of the blessing which in turn is part of the three prayers in the first part of Paul's letter to the Ephesians: Blessing, 1:3-14; Thanksgiving and Intercession, 1:15-2:22; Intercession and Doxology, 3:1-21. Verse 3 forms the general heading linking the hymn to the greeting of vv. 1-2. Vv. 4-6 contemplates the plan of God from all eternity. The liturgical text jumps to 11-12 which in the biblical context considers the "mystery of salvation" from the perspective of the Jewish people. This will account for the change in pronouns from "we" (12) to "you" (13). St. Paul clearly makes himself one among the Jews using the first person plural.

Gospel Reading: It is quite surprising that St. Luke would have used the Greek formula **chaire** translated in latin as **Ave** instead of "Peace," in hebrew "Shalom". It may be that the angel did not greet Mary with "shalom" but another hebrew word with messianic connotation. In fact **chaire** is the term used by the Greek bible to translate **simhi**, from the root **smh** meaning "he rejoiced". This is the word used by the prophet Zephaniah addressing the daughter

of Jerusalem. "Sing aloud, O daughter of Sion; Rejoice (*simhi*) . . . O daughter of Jerusalem!" (Zephaniah 3:14-17; cf. Joel 2:21-27; Zechariah 9:9 f.). If this interpretation is correct then the original greeting of the Angel during the Annunciation would be "Rejoice, O Favoured One".

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(December 9, 1979)

First Reading: Baruch 5:1-9

Second Reading: Philippians 1:4-6.8.8-11

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:1-6

First Reading: Prophecy on the New Jerusalem; Return of the Exiles to the Holy City: 1) Jerusalem is invited to shed off its garments of mourning on account of her victory. She was given a significant name: "Peace through integrity and honor through devotedness" (vv. 4-6); 2) Jerusalem would see her sons who had been dispersed return to her fold (v. 5); 3) The exiles would return like royal princess (v. 6); 4) high mountains would be made plain (v. 7); 5) Forests and trees would provide shade (v. 8); 6) God would be the escort of his people, just like in the exodus he accompanied his people in the desert like a column of fire (v. 9).

In liturgical usage, Jerusalem, the holy city, is often depicted as the type of the Church, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or of the faithful, the people of God.

Second Reading: The passage which is taken as the second reading in today's liturgy has for one of its dominant ideas the Day of Christ which has been the object of Christian expectation, and, therefore, to be prepared for.

Paul expresses to his beloved Philippians three things: 1) his confidence that God who started the good work would bring it to a fruitful end (v. 6). 2) Supernatural love (v. 8). It is not mere human love, although this is presupposed; it is supernatural, as the love he has for them is the same love that Christ has for them. 3) prayer of thanksgiving for their collaboration and help in spreading the good news, and prayer for growth in their love and perseverance in their preparation for the Day of Christ.

Gospel Reading: The presentation of the Precursor as prophet. In today's gospel, the Precursor of our Lord is presented like the prophet of old, called by God's word to "proclaim a baptism of

repentance." The presentation of John the Baptist as prophet abounds with Old Testament parallels even from the story of his birth. His parents were old, well advanced in years, and his mother sterile. This is reminiscent of Isaac (Genesis 18:10-15); Samson (Judges 13:2-25), and Samuel, (1 Samuel 1,1-18). His calling even before he was born has parallels in Jeremiah (1:5) and the Servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 49:1-2). At his birth his father exclaimed: "And you little child, you shall be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him" (Luke 1:76).

The prophetic mission of John. The place of John's ministry is given as "the whole Jordan district". As the desert recalls the Exodus under Moses, the Jordan marks the entrance or the Eisodos under Joshua.

The Voice in the wilderness. This text of Isaiah, which in its historical context referred to the return of the captives is now applied in its prophetic context to John. This was already mentioned in the **Benedictus**: "for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him". It is only in St. Luke where we find the longer citation since he would have wished to include the phrase: "And all mankind shall see the salvation of God", words in favor of the gentiles.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (December 16, 1979)

First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:10-18

First Reading: This passage from the prophet Zephaniah is a composite of two short psalms (vv. 14-15 and 16-17). These two psalms form the conclusions to the oracles of the prophet which, in contrast to the joyful sentiment of these concluding psalms, were of a menacing nature, not only to the pagan nations but even to the chosen people who on the "Day of Yahweh" would be purged leaving the faithful remnant.

The first psalm enjoins the daughter of Sion to rejoice since Yahweh has inaugurated his reign in the Holy City and has driven her enemies away.

The second psalm stresses the end of all fear since Yahweh is in her midst.

The Messianic import is clear. Sion should rejoice because God is in her midst.

Second Reading: St. Paul expresses three important things in this passage: 1) Appeal for joy. The insistence of his appeal would show the glaring reality of this messianic feature. The joy of advent is different from the triumphal joy of easter or the effusive joy of pentecost. It is the heedful joy of waiting for something sure to come. 2) Exhortation for mutual tolerance motivated by the nearness of Yahweh's coming. 3) Attainment of peace of heart. He gives two obstacles which impede the attainment of this peace: worry and not being able to guard one's heart and thoughts. For the first, he exhorts us to pray; for the second, he enjoins us to cultivate the peace of God to unite all our affections and thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Reading: This pericope has two parts: the counsels given by John the Baptist to different groups (vv. 10-14), and his messianic preaching (vv. 15-18).

After St. Luke has indicated the general theme of John's preaching, proclaiming a baptism of repentance, specific counsels are now given motivated by the questions asked by the people and by two particular groups, the revenue officers and soldiers. We know from the same gospel source that he also had special disciples to whom he taught prayer (Luke 11:1) and fasting (Luke 5:33).

The two verses of the second part (16-17) has its parallel in Matthew 3:11-12 which is the gospel passage of the third week of Advent, Cycle A. Some minor differences may be noted between the two passages. While Matthew says that John is now worthy to carry Christ's sandals, Luke asserts that the Precursor is unfit to undo the straps. Verse 15 is peculiar to Luke emphasizing the subordinate role of the Precursor. He was not the Christ as the people thought him to be.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (December 23, 1979)

First Reading: Micah 5:2-5a
Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10
Gospel Reading: Luke 1:39-45

First Reading: Micah's prophecy will be understood better in the context of Sennacherib's invasion of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. reflected in v. 1: "They have laid siege against us." But amidst these troubles

the prophet gives the note of hope that a leader would come from Ephrathah (Bethlehem) who would save his people from their enemies.

"She who is to give birth" has clearly a mariological connotation which with all probability refers to the "maiden" of Isaiah's prophecy pronounced a little about thirty years before (Isaiah: 14).

The Messiah-King would put an end to all schism, political as well as religious, of the Jews (the old division between Judah and Israel) and the religious separation of Jews and Gentiles, bringing peace to all.

Second Reading: The Sacred Author of the epistle to the Hebrews underscores the antithesis between the sacrifices of the Old Testament citing for this purpose Psalm 40 (39):7-9 and the personal offering of obedience exemplified by Christ dying on the cross in obedience to his Father's will. Verse 10 affirms clearly that the sources of man's holiness is the unique ("once and for all") sacrifice (offering of his body) of Jesus Christ.

There is an artful suggestion here not to stress so much the external aspect of Christmas in the same way as the external rites of the Old Testament which were valueless, but rather reflect on the significance of Christ's entry into the world in obedience to his Father culminating on the Cross and his Resurrection to glory.

Gospel Reading: After knowing the condition of her relative, Elizabeth, told by the Angel, Mary left for the "hill country of Judah", most probably near Jerusalem, which tradition has placed in Ain Karim, about 6 kilometers from Jerusalem.

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting she felt that the infant she was conceiving moved in her womb and being inspired by the Holy Spirit like a prophetess she discerned that it was for joy in the presence of the Messiah and his Mother. This joy, like in the Annunciation, is a dominant theme in the Infancy Narrative. It is the joy characterizing the advent of the Messiah.

Luke affirms here the effusion of the Holy Spirit not on the soul of John the Baptist, so it is not necessary to assume that he received the gift of reason then and there, but rather on Elizabeth. The Holy Spirit is not portrayed in his passage as the Spirit-Creator like in the Annunciation but the Prophetic Spirit.

"Blessed are you among women" is a semitic or hebrew expression meaning "the most blessed".

CHRISTMAS, SOLEMNITY OF THE LORD'S BIRTH

MIDNIGHT MASS

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-4.6-7

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:1-14

First Reading: The historical context of this oracle was believed by some scholars to have been the ceremony of enthronement of a davidic king. Everytime a new king, descended from David, is enthroned, the hope for an ideal king who would fully and perfectly realize the ideal kingdom is reaffirmed. This king whose name and, therefore, whose person would be "Wonder Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace, could not have been realized by mere earthly descendants of David. The messianic connotation is very clear.

In verse 2 (verse 1 in the hebrew text) the reference is not only to the semi-gentile territories of Zebulun and Naphtali, but to all the "people that walked in darkness. The transition from darkness to light results in great rejoicing compared to rejoicing during harvest time or time of victory.

The historical context of this passage, the symbolic titles given to the child which depicts his personality, the solemnity of the oracle, preclude any other descendant of David who were mere mortals, but clearly leads to the identification of the Child as the Messiah.

Second Reading: In the preceeding passages, St. Paul (2:1-10), was giving specific moral instructions according to the Christian ideal to various groups of people; older men, older women, younger men, slaves. He now gives the motivation for living this Christian life since "God's grace has been revealed and made salvation possible." But there is still the plenitude of salvation, the future blessing that will only come at the Appearing of Christ. In this verse (13) St. Paul unmistakably affirms the divinity of Christ. Christ is identified as God and Savior. God here does not refer to the Father but, in its grammatical construction, to Christ, since in the greek expression they are governed by only one definite article. Furthermore in the Parousia only Christ is thought of to appear and not God the Father. The context itself only speaks of Christ.

Gospel Reading: The perspective of Luke's chapter 2 narrating the Birth of the Messiah is more universal in scope than the first chapter which is viewed within the hebrew world. The census by the Roman

Emperor Augustus offered the providential motivation for both to go to their place of origin of Joseph. Although the usual Roman way of making the census did not oblige the wife to register, there were cases mentioned in an Egyptian papyrus when married women also had to register. Luke used the term "betrothed" and not "wife" although they were legally married when he took Mary to his home (Matthew 1:24) pointing out the fact, that Joseph was not the father of the child.

It is not necessary to suppose that they took the journey just at the time when Mary was about to give birth, arriving in Bethlehem on the very night of her maternal labor, then knocking from door to door looking for lodging. The gospel narrative could mean they were already in Bethlehem for some time before the time of her delivery came to pass, but because of the influx of so many people on account of the census they were able to get the much needed privacy only in a stable.

The news was first given to shepherds representing the poor and the humble. The angel's words were "news of great joy", a gospel. The savior (*soter*, used only once by St. Luke) is "Christ the Lord." "Lord" or "Kyrios" is a title given only to God and thus, hints at St. Luke's belief in the divinity of Christ.

"Eudokias" (genitive) rendered by the Vulgate *bonae voluntatis* ("of good will") should rather be translated "of those who enjoy God's favor". Peace is possessed not only by men "of good will" which is still a human characteristic, but men "who enjoy God's favor" or "men loved by God".

DAWN MASS

First Reading: Isaiah 62:11-12

Second Reading: Titus 3:4-7

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:15-20

First Reading: This passage taken from Isaiah is the conclusion of the second poem on the glorious restoration of Jerusalem after the exile (ch. 62). Taken in its messianic context, it is a proclamation of the good news of salvation. The savior (greek) or salvation (hebrew) has come. The prophet calls his people with symbolic names just as in 61:6 and 62:4.

Second Reading: The context of this passage from the letter to Titus, bishop of Crete, was Paul's exhortation on the duties of Christians (3:1-8). Precisely the basis for these duties and Christian

conduct is the salvation brought by Christ, "when the kindness and love of God our saviour for mankind was revealed". Before this even the baptized Christians were "ignorant, disobedient and misled and enslaved by different passions and luxuries."

Gospel Reading: Having heard the angels and scarcely had the visions disappeared than the shepherds went in haste, which was still dawn, towards Bethlehem. There they found the child and the holy couple confirming the angelic message. Enthusiastically they narrated the vision which had guided them to the new born child, the Messiah. With regards to Mary, St. Luke explicitly mentions that she kept all these words (or "all these things" or "events") in her heart.

CHRISTMAS DAY MASS

(December 25)

First Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10

Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-6

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

First Reading: These verses from Isaiah celebrates the return of the exiles brought about by the saving action of God. As the bearer of the good news runs on the mountains he shouts "peace," "salvation," "your God is King" (v. 7). The watchmen hears his shout and echoes the joy at the restoration of Jerusalem which is described as Yahweh's return to Zion. We note in this description of the return of the chosen community to their homeland the insistence upon the message of "peace," "salvation," "redemption": themes which show on the part of the author a deeper awareness of the "history of salvation."

Second Reading: Compared with the other epistles of St. Paul, the Epistle to the Hebrews lacks the normal epistolary greeting. It immediately begins with an introduction announcing the following themes: 1) contrast between two revelations, the Old and the New (vv. 1-2a); 2) it praises the excellence of the Mediator of the New (vv. 2b-4). For the old revelation which was done in a fragmentary manner (*polymeros*) and in various ways (*polytropos*), God made use of the prophets, his simple servants; for the new he sent his very own Son in person (cf. Mark 12:2-6) and, therefore, superior to the angels.

Gospel Reading: This Prologue of St. John's gospel is a most sublime hymn to the *Logos*, the Word of God. Starting with a

description of the pre-existence of the Word with God (the Father), and that the Word is God; it passes on to the Word's creation of all things (v. 3), then it tells of His coming into the world giving life and light to all mankind (vv. 4,5), and to his own people. To all those who receive him he granted them grace to become sons of God (vv. 9-12). Finally, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. After he has shown his glory as Son and his gifts of truth and grace forming us into a new creation (vv. 14, 16 ff.), he brings us back to the bosom of the Father. The **Logos** theme seemed to have been developed by St. John from the Wisdom theme in the Old Testament. Wisdom existed with God coming forth from God, sent to dwell among His people and bringing graces to all who seek her.

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH (December 30, 1979)

First Reading: Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 3:3-7.14-17a (Greek 3:2-6.12-14).

Second Reading: Colossians 3:12-21

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:41-52.

First Reading: The main point in this passage of Sirach taken as the Old Testament reading in today's feast is the Duties of Children towards their Parents. It is considered a sign of one's fidelity to the Lord. This could be considered a commentary of the commandment of Exodus 20:12. The author even goes as far as to say that "whoever respects his father is atoning for his sins." (v. 5). Similarly, "like frost in sunshine, your sins will melt away" (v. 15). The violator of this commandment is considered a blasphemer.

Second Reading: The unclothing and the clothing is reminiscent of the baptismal ceremony when the baptized is immersed and had to shed off the old clothing and put on the new which St. Paul used here to symbolize the clothing of "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, etc." or the new man. Aside from this clothing the Christian should put on love to keep all these Christian virtues together. The Christian community is called "God's chosen race, his saints, one he loves". These terms were formerly used to describe Israel of old but now applied to the new Chosen People.

Once the Christian becomes a new man in Christ he must now apply or live this life, firstly in his own household. Everything must

now be done "in the Lord" (3:18). The word "Kyrios" (Lord) is repeated seven times in these eight verses alone.

Gospel Reading: In contrast to apocryphal writings narrating the boyhood of Jesus this account of St. Luke is very natural and unassuming without that penchant for the miraculous.

The Mosaic Law prescribes male Jews to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year: Pasch, Pentecost, and Feast of Tabernacles. There are different opinions among the Doctors of the Law whether women and children were also obliged. At any rate we find the holy Family on a pilgrimage when Jesus was 12 years old, a year before a Jewish boy is officially initiated into manhood and becomes "son of the Law" (**bar mitsvah**). This could indicate the significance of Jesus' choosing this particular age of remaining in the temple sitting with the Doctors of the Law.

The parents find Jesus in his Father's (God's) house and doing his Father's affairs. The words of Jesus which were the only ones recorded in the infancy narrative could be paraphrased: "Where would you expect a child to be but in his father's house?" There was no reproof at all but a calling to mind of his mission. He declares that God is his Father and thus the will of his Father must be foremost. Yet his time of manifestation was not yet to be at this hour. He still had to submit in obedience to his earthly parents constituting the world's most Holy Family.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

(January 1, 1980)

First Reading: Numbers 6:22-27

Second Reading: Galatians 4:4-7

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:16-21

First Reading: The passage does not go well with the preceding context and may be related with Leviticus 9:22 where we find mention of Aaron's blessing. A parallel passage is found at the end of Psalm 67 (LXX and Vol. 66). The blessing is in the form of a hymn of three verses with two members in each verse: "bless" — "keep"; "his face shine on you" — "be gracious to you"; "uncover his face to you" — "bring you peace". It is a blessing for divine protection and invocation of God's favors.

Second Reading: This text gives us a most important doctrine on our condition as sons of God and becoming heirs of the kingdom brought about by the coming of Christ who was born of a woman

(a clear allusion to the Blessed Mother, the only time that St. Paul did so) at "the appointed time", that is to say at the time in Salvation history when God determined His Son to be born.

"The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts." Other translators understand the greek word *hoti* in a consecutive sense: "because you are sons God has sent the Spirit of his Son" ... meaning to say that the sending of the Spirit was consecutive to the fact of having become sons of God. *Hoti* may also be taken in a declarative sense which is the meaning of the first translation taken from the JB.

Having become His sons we could address Him intimately *Abba*, an aramic word meaning "the Father" or in its intimate meaning "my daddy". Thus, as sons we are also heirs of the kingdom.

Gospel Reading: As soon as the shepherds heard the news or the "rema", literally: "word" or "event" corresponding to the hebrew "dabar" they lost no time (cf. 1:39) in going to Bethlehem. They found exactly the events just as the angel told them: the holy couple, Mary and Joseph, and the newly born child lying in a manger. They naturally told others about what happened but we cannot be certain that the wonderment of the hearers was due to the fact that they believed the shepherds, or whether they were astonished more at the shepherds than at the events of the birth of a child celebrated by angelic joy and songs. If the source of Luke's information was the Blessed Mother herself, who treasured and pondered these things in her heart, then we have here an authentic historical account.

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

(January 6, 1980)

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a.5-6

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

First Reading: This biblical passage is part of the hymn extolling the glorious restoration of Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:1-62:12). Compared with 47:1-15 the sharp contrast is easily noticeable. While in chapter 54 the restoration is seen still to be far off, now it is in the process of becoming accomplished. Jerusalem's light is shining, the glory of the Lord is rising, while among other nations it is still night and darkness. Other nations will participate in the glory of Jerusalem when they come towards her. They will offer gifts signifying their

acceptance of salvation through her. People living near the sea will bring the wealth of the sea, those in the desert will bring theirs in camels. This means the universality of salvation. Midian, Ephah, and Sheba are mentioned in Genesis 10:7; 25:4, the countries of perfumes and spices on the coasts of the Gulf of Elam, present Iran and Iraq.

Second Reading: Contextually these lines form part of a parenthetical digression (vv. 2-13) of a prayer which Paul already started in v. 1 to be continued in v. 14. This digression could have been caused by his mentioning the pagans. This is a classic example of *anacolouthon* frequent in St. Paul, (cf. Romans 5:12-14; Galatians 2:3-9).

St. Paul describes to the pagans the plan of his vocation and mission, just as in 1:3-14 he described the plan of redemption or the economy (*oikonomia*) of redemption.

The revelation that he received for the knowledge of the mystery seems to refer to his conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:15 ff.). This mystery has now been revealed to the pagans but first to the "apostles" and "prophets". The Spirit is the instrument of revelation to the apostles and the prophets, while the latter were in turn the channels of revelation to all those who form the body of Christ.

Gospel Reading: Matthew places the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem in Judaea "during the reign of King Herod". Dionysius Exiguus, however, a Scythian monk who wrote about 525 A.D. mistakenly computed the birth of Christ in 754 A.U.C. (*Ab Urbe Condita*, "From the Foundation of Rome"). He was then mistaken since Herod the Great, according to Josephus, died in 750 A.U.C., definitely 4 years before the proposed date of Dionysius.

The "wise men" (greek: *magoi*, hence the english word *magi*) were those who devote themselves to occult practices or astrology, some of them considered as learned men while others as charlatans or magicians, that is why sometimes they were not favourably portrayed in the Bible like Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24) and Elymas the magician (Acts 13:6-11). St. Matthew, however, did not take them in this bad light but as learned men while later tradition regarded them as kings. They represent the pagan world acknowledging the Messiah to be the universal savior thus fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2-3; Tobias 13:11.

Since the "magi" came from the East, in the region of Mesopotamia, the gifts they brought were products of the east as

enumerated in Ezechiel 27:22. They paid homage to the child Jesus with *proskynesis* a reverence proper only to God implying acknowledgment of Christ's divinity.

FEAST OF THE LORD'S BAPTISM

(January 13, 1980)

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-38

Gospel Reading: Luke 3:15-16. 21-22

First Reading: This biblical passage is taken from the First Song of the Servant of Yahweh which are altogether four. The other three are: 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:1-53:12, Jewish tradition has interpreted this as referring to the Messiah, while in Christian tradition the reference to Jesus is clear in Matthew 12:17-21.

The servant of the Lord is a "chosen one", filled with divine favors that is why God delights in him, endowed with God's spirit, an endowment promised to the messiah (Isaiah 11,1). These words are applied to Jesus at the moment of His baptism (Mark 1:11).

Second Reading: This is part of the address given by Peter to the household of Cornelius after the baptism of the first pagans to Christianity without passing through the Jewish religion. This event had the utmost importance during the time of the Apostles since evidently God's will has been manifested through the Holy Spirit "that God does not have favorites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him". It is suggested that we have here a pattern of preaching not to Jewish hearers but to Christians converted from paganism. The citations from Scripture are minimal while the description of Jesus' earthly life are lengthily dwelt upon, more complete than any passage in the Acts.

Gospel Reading: Luke mentions Jesus' baptism but in passing. His central theme was more on the theophany which followed after baptism. In v. 15 he mentions the "feeling of expectancy" among the people, an observation which is not found in the other two synoptics, psychologically setting the stage for the appearance or "epiphany" of the Christ.

The messianic age will be characterized by the action of the Spirit. Even in the Old Testament the Spirit of God had been active: in creation (Genesis 1:2); in the battles of the chosen Community (Judges 3:10; 1 Samuel 11:6); in the giving of particular

offices (Genesis 41:38; Numbers 11:17,25); in the Servant of Yahweh (Isaiah 42:1); in the messianic king (Isaiah 11:1);

"In fire" could either be taken as purifying action of the Spirit, or God's coming to judge "in fire which is the removal of evil from the midst of the elect. An eschatological dimension is then added in baptism.

The Old Testament citation in v. 22 could either come from Psalm 2 or Isaiah 42:1. St. Luke, However, seemed to have reserved the citation of Psalm 2 for Jesus' glorification (cf. Acts 13:33). The reference to Isaiah 42:1 makes us understand that the baptism of Jesus was the solemn investiture in his prophetic role of "bringing justice to the nations". The deliberate change from "servant" to "my son" could indicate in Luke an implicit confession of Christ's divinity.

FEAST OF THE SANTO NIÑO

(January 20, 1980)

First Reading: Exodus 3:13-15

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Gospel Reading: Luke 2:16-21

First Reading: The passage narrates the revelation of God's name to Moses when asked who it was that is sending him. The name as revealed to Moses was "Yahweh", possibly understood as an imperfect third person singular masculine Qal of the verb "to be" meaning "He is" (Jerusalem Bible) or the causative form "He causes to be" (Albright). It is quite certain now that the Hebrews read it Yahweh or Yahveh (german influence). But since they could not pronounce this name, everytime they see the tetragrammaton YHWH they give it the vowels of Adonay meaning Lord and pronounce it as such. Here came the hybrid "Yahovah" or "Yehovah", which read the consonants of "Yahveh" with the vowels "Adonay". The pronunciation **Jehovah** became common only in the 12th century.

Second Reading: The second reading taken from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians constitutes, in fact, the salutation of that letter. He gives his credentials as Apostles just like the Twelve since he was appointed so by God. There was a Sosthenes mentioned in Acts 18:17, the Synagogue president at Corinth, but we do not know of his conversion. The name though is not uncommon. The "Church of God" is the **ekklesia** of the Lord "sanctified in Christ Jesus".

"who pray to our Lord Jesus Christ" or "who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ": the phrase "to call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ": the phrase "to call upon the name of the Lord" is used in the Old Testament to signify the adoration of God (Psalm 99:6; Joel 2:32). There is here an unmistakable confession of Christ's divinity.

Gospel Reading: (See Gospel commentary of January 1). Verse 21: In obedience to the Mosaic Law Jesus was circumcised. The text has a parallel with the circumcision of John. (1:59). It was on this occasion that he was given the significant name of his mission, Jesus which means 'Savior'.

THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR (January 27, 1980)

First Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-4a. 5-6. 8-10

Second Reading: Corinthians 12:12-30 (or 12:12-14.27)

Gospel Reading: 1:1-4; 4:14-21

First Reading: The following verses narrate the reading of the Law (Torah) by Ezra, scribe and priest, in the assembly of the people. This may be compared with the assembly of Sinai, Exodus 19 ff. and the gathering of the people for the renewal of the covenant during the time of king Josiah (2 Kings 23). First the people are called to the assembly by God's word; then the Law is proclaimed to them; the people acclaims the word of God. Our service or liturgy of the word has its forerunner here.

Second Reading: The analogy which St. Paul uses here comparing the members of the Church constituting the mystical Body of Christ to a human body may have antecedents in the Graeco-Roman world like in Plato (Laws), Cicero (De Officiis), Titus Livius (Apologue of Menenius Agripa), Seneca ((Epistles) Philo (De spec. leg), Flavius Josephus (De bello judaico); but he goes further in his analogy considering the community of the faithful not only a moral body or organized society but informed by a vital principle, the Holy Spirit. We may distinguish three stages of development of his thought: 1) he presents the analogy and indicates the principle of unity in that body (vv. 12-13); 2) St. Paul describes the properties of the human organism, with a great variety of members, some more noble than the others, but each one necessary for the

whole; (vv. 14-26); 3) In the mystical body of Christ, which is the Church, there are also variety of members and functions. Each member having a role to play for the good of the whole. (27-30).

Gospel Reading: The first part of the Gospel reading is the introduction of St. Luke's Gospel, while the second part is the inauguration of His ministry in Galilee. The style of Luke's prologue is classical, carefully in accordance with the classical canon. Even his manner of dedicating his work to a renowned personality (Theophilus) follows the practice of profane authors (cf. also 2 Maccabees and Sirach). The scope of his work, as Luke declares, is to "draw up (*ana-taxasthai*: repetition of facts by memory) accounts of the events that have taken place among us", from "eyewitnesses and ministers of the word".

While St. Mark mentions the vocation of the first Apostles as the first event in Jesus' ministry in Galilee, (Mark 1:16-20); St. Luke starts his with the preaching of Jesus in his native city, Nazareth, motivated probably by the citation of Isaiah in verse 18, the text of which refers to the inauguraion of his mission.

II. HOMILIES

(December, 1979 - January, 1980)

CHRIST PUTS AN END TO OUR ANXIETIES

(December 2, 1979 — First Sunday of Advent)

Our Human Situation: Try playing an interesting game. Analyze the newspaper of the day and place in one column all what you think are good news and on the other the bad news. Most often will realize that the column with the bad news comes out longer than the column with the good news.

The Gospel Message: The Gospel is the "Good News" par excellence. It is the bright rays of the sun bursting forth through dark, ominous clouds. It is the fresh, soothing air in the midst of pollution and unhealthy surroundings. Christ is both the author and object of the Gospel. We preach the Good News in his name and he himself is the Good News, the awaited Savior, not only from a particular evil, like natural calamities or any physical evil, like sickness and accidents, but from all evil.

Our Response: During this period of Advent, a time of fervent waiting for the coming of the Messiah, our attitude should be one of intense hope and vibrant joy. The liturgical expectation of Christ's coming should put an end to our anxieties, for after all our salvation has already been realized.

MARY, IMMACULATE

(December 8, 1979 — Immaculate Conception)

Situation: When Pope Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception on December 8, 1854, many non-catholic considered it as another "papist" unwarranted glorification of Mary who, for them, constitutes a hindrance in approaching Christ. Four years later, on February 11, 1858, a heavenly lady appeared to a simple peasant girl named Bernadette Soubirous, in Lourdes, France and made herself known as the "Immaculate Conception," a startling confirmation from the Blessed Virgin herself of the dogmatic proclamation made four years before.

The Dogma: The development of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception had its share of difficulties. St. Augustine offered the strongest one with his teaching on the universality of original sin and the universality of redemption. Thus even the Blessed Virgin should also profit from the merits of Christ's redemption.

This difficulty was solved once and for all by a simple distinction of the anticipated merits of our Lord which were applied to the Blessed Mother at the moment of her conception preventing her from contracting original sin, while to the rest of mankind the merits of Christ are applied in a healing manner.

The words of the dogmatic definition states: "that the Blessed Virgin Mary, at the first instant of her Conception, by a singular privilege and grace of the omnipotent God, in consideration of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind, was preserved free from all stain of original sin,..."

Our Response: The Church did not invent this dogma. It is part of divine revelation. Neither did this fact diminish Christ's redemptive action, but rather made it more remarkable by preventing his own mother through his anticipated merits to be soiled by any stain of sin.

PROPHETIC COURAGE

(December 9, 1979 — Second Sunday of Advent)

St. John Chrysostom became the object of hatred and revenge by the Empress Eudoxia and banished him from Constantinople. This was reminiscent of the hatred of another woman who put another John to death, the fearless precursor of the Messiah.

Like the prophets of old John Chrysostom declared:

"What can I fear? Will it be death? But you know that Christ is my life. Will it be exile? But the earth and all its fullness is the Lord's. Will it be loss of wealth? But we brought nothing into the world and can carry nothing out. Thus all the terrors of the world are contemptible in my eyes, and I smile at all its good things. Poverty I do not fear. Riches I do not sigh for. Death I do not shrink from, and life I do not desire save only for the process of souls. And so if they banish me, I shall be like Elijah. If they throw me in the mire, like Jeremiah. If they plunge me in the

sea, like the Prophet Jonah. If into the pit, like Daniel. If they stone me, it is Stephen I shall resemble. John the precursor, if they cut off my head. Paul, if they beat me with stripes. Isaias, if they saw me asunder."

No earthly evil could extinguish the prophetic message.

GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TO OTHERS

(December 16, 1979 — Third Sunday of Advent)

There was a famous war pilot, Alex Seversky, who lost his leg in one of the air battles and was visiting another pilot who had recently lost a leg. He was trying his best to cheer the newly wounded.

"To lose a leg is not really so great a handicap as you might imagine," the veteran pilot said. "I learned how to drive a car, to dance, and even to fly, with a wooden leg of course." "And one thing more," Seversky added, "if you are hit on your wooden leg, it wouldn't hurt a bit." Then he gave his cane to the wounded pilot. "Come on, hit my leg."

The patient struck Seversky's leg with all his might and great amusement.

"See," Seversky laughed, "I'm still alright. Cheer up, pal!"

He at once left the room and had scarcely closed the door when he fell down. The wounded pilot had smashed Seversky's healthy leg and not the wooden one.

Some people go to the extent of giving courage to others at the risk of personal inconvenience and even grave harm to themselves, but by the same token show their greatness of character.

THE TRULY LIBERATED WOMAN

(December 23, 1979 — Fourth Sunday of Advent)

In these days of movement for women's liberation let us reflect on the attitude of the most blessed among women, and, therefore the most liberated in the true sense of the word.

What women liberationists seem to think of Women's Lib is the equality of the sexes which is not at all the authentic human liberation. To be able to do what the male species could do is not truly liberation but to be caught up in a new kind of enslavement.

The Blessed Virgin would never have dared to play the role proper to the Apostles planned for them by God in the history of salvation. Neither could the Apostles have performed her role in salvation history.

To be obsessed in doing everything that is done by the opposite sex is defeating the purpose of the women's liberation movement. True liberation comes only in fulfilling one's mission and one's own vocation. The greatest model for this fulfillment is the Blessed Mother.

LET CHRIST "CHRISTMAS" IN US **(Christmas, Midnight Mass)**

Situation: Every year we celebrate Christmas. How many Christmas carols have we heard and sung? How many gifts have we wrapped and received? How many children, god-children or otherwise, have we made happy? How many "Misas de Aguinaldo" have we attended? Nevertheless, how deeply have Christ "christmas-ed" in us? Is he still the Christ born in far-away Bethlehem but not in our own intimate being? Is he the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes but not made warm in the inner recesses of our hearts?

The Good News: Historically Christ was born a little less than two thousand years ago. Peace came to men who enjoy God's favor. To be favored by God is a grace. By definition a Christian is the one who enjoys God's favor since he was chosen to be a member of God's people. To a Christian then belongs true peace.

Our Response: Unfortunately a Christian may turn back against this favor by renouncing God. Yet he remains capable of turning back to God; to have again Christ "christmas" in him, and thus re-capture that true Christian peace.

REVELATION OF CHRIST'S BIRTH TO THE **SHEPHERDS: AUDIO-VISUAL** **(Christmas, Dawn Mass)**

Our Situation: We come to the knowledge of God and divine realities either through direct revelation by him or through his trusted messengers like the angels or the prophets, or we may know him through the proper use of our God-given power of reasoning. We must consider ourselves very fortunate indeed that in spite of our

condition of being separated from God for many centuries after the fall of our first parents God did not cut the line of communication between him and us.

The Good News: After many centuries of waiting the headline finally appeared in the heavens, read by simple shepherds, pondered in the heart by the Blessed Mother of God, proclaimed on the rooftops by the Evangelists, the Apostles, and the ministers of Christ throughout the ages. "The Son of God is born to us." "The Savior of mankind has come". Another group, the 'magi' or wise men of the east, would know through their own study of the heavens, seeing a sign in the form of a star.

Our Response: Would that we be sincere in searching for God's true revelation. He may not manifest himself personally to us now but certainly he has his messengers, his ministers, and most of all the Mystical Body of his Son, the Church, who would lead us to Him. And if we are sincere in the use of our reason and scientific research we will also find Him in the wonders of his creation.

DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURE IN ONE PERSON OF THE WORD MADE FLESH

(December 25, Christmas Day)

Human Situation: There is a story of a blacksmith who was a Christian. He had a firm faith in the divinity of Christ. One day an atheist entered his shop and watched him weld over the fire two pieces of iron. The atheist remarked: "Looking at those two rods of red-hot iron I could explain that Christ is not God. You weld those two pieces over the flames and they become one. That is the same with Christ. He has only a human nature."

Answers the blacksmith: "supposing I take a piece of gold and a rod of iron and join them together over the fire to make one piece. Would I have all gold or all iron? No! The gold and the iron will remain different but make one piece. Christ with the nature of God and the nature of man is one person.

The Good News: The greatest news the world has ever received is the news that the Word was made flesh. The eternal God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity took our human nature without losing the divine nature and was born in a definite time in

history. Jesus was a historical person and we firmly believe that he is the Word made flesh taking our cue from St. John who was himself an eyewitness of Christ's earthly activities.

Our Response: We can readily imagine the Person of the God-made-man, we can easily represent his figure, we can imagine hearing his voice as his disciples really did. We can draw his figure and even make a movie of him. But most of all we can love him much easier since he became a man like us.

TEST YOUR OWN HOME

(December 30, 1979 — Feast of the Holy Family)

Situation: To determine the rating of homes, a certain "Home Testing Institute" distributed questionnaires with the following questions: How many people are living there? What is the average income, monthly or yearly? What are the professions or jobs of the members? How many are their home-appliances? How old is the TV set? Judging from this type of questions the end result would not necessarily to rate a "home" but to rate "house". To rate the home one must ask the following questions: Do members pray together as a family? Do they practice kindness towards one another? Does every member fulfill the allotted task and help those who have not finished theirs? Do they receive the sacraments regularly? And questions of this sort.

The Good News: It is remarkable to note that of all the founders of religion Christ differs prominently from among the others on two counts: he was the only one who unequivocally declared himself to be God; and he was the only one who lived in a holy family: "He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority (Luke 2:51). The Hindus could not claim as much in the so-called incarnations or avatars (in the plural since they accept many) of their gods; Gautama (Buddha) did not have a happy childhood although he was well to do; Mohammed became a total orphan at the age of ten, his father had already died even before his birth.

Our Response: It is not enough to confess the divinity of our Lord. One important gauge of being a good Christian is to see how good a family member we are, either as members of our own natural family, or of our national family, or of our spiritual family in the religious life.

JESUS' MOTHER LEADS US TO THE SON WHO IS GOD

(January 1, 1980 — Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God)

Human Situation: This story was told by a certain Father Petitjean of the Paris Foreign Missions who was given charge of a church in Nagasaki, Japan, when that country was finally opened to foreigners in the year 1859 after having been closed to other countries for about 150 years. On March 17, 1865 a group from a distant village wanted to see him hearing he was a missionary priest. To prove his orthodoxy they asked three questions:

"Do you honor the Mother of God?"

"Are you unmarried?"

"Is the Pope in Rome the head of your Church?"

When the missionary answered "yes" to all the questions the villagers knelt before him asking for his blessing telling him that throughout all those years even without any priest they have kept the faith.

The Good News: The role of Mary, the Mother of God, in salvation history cannot be underestimated. This is a fact that needs serious attention. It is of course true that God could have willed the Messiah to have come into the world in some other ways but in his infinite wisdom he chose him to be born of a woman; and that woman whom God chose to be his mother is worthy of the highest praise and honor.

Our Response: The honor we pay to the Mother of God could never deviate us from her Son. She would be the first one to get hurt if we venerate her more than her Son.

IF'S OF HISTORY

(January 6, 1980 — The Epiphany of the Lord)

Situation: Some time ago, a group of famous writers like Chesterton, Mauriac, Belloc, Ludwig, the historian, Van Loon and others were invited to contribute to a book called IF, or HISTORY REWRITTEN. Some of them wrote, what would have happened, leaving their fantasies into play:

"If the Moors had won in Spain."

"If Napoleon had escaped to the United States."

"If John Wilkes Booth had missed and not killed Lincoln."

"If Lee had not lost the American civil war."

"If the Dutch had kept New Amsterdam (now New York)."

We can add many more of these "ifs". For example, "If Spain had not Christianized the Philippines," "If Rizal had not been killed," "If the Americans or the Japanese had retained the Philippines," etc., etc. But most of all what would have happened "If Christ had not come."

Good News: But Christ did come. His star was seen in the East by the Magi. He was born for all men so that the whole pagan world represented by the wise-men came to pay him homage. His coming was not dependent on an "if" but on the eternal decree of God. That is why ancient prophecies have been told even centuries before the event.

Our Response: Recognizing the Lord of history lying on a manger, fulfilling all the prophecies in the Old Testament, we cannot but fall in adoration, like the Magi and their retinue, offering to him all the treasures of our being.

JESUS: CO-ETERNAL SON OF GOD

(January 13, 1980 — Feast of the Lords Baptism)

Situation: A story is told of Theodosius the Great, who reigned in the fourth century of the Christian era, that he favored the Arian heretics who denied the divinity of Christ. Some time later the emperor decreed that his own son, Arcadius, who was just sixteen years of age, should be regarded as equal partner of himself in his kingdom. The subjects of the empire came to pay homage to the prince. Among them was Amphilocus, a holy bishop, who had suffered so much for his defense of the divinity of Christ against the Arians. He came and paid homage to the emperor but not to his son. The emperor was angry at this slight to which the good bishop answered: "Your majesty, you are angry because I neglected to pay homage to your son whom you made equal partner with yourself. But consider what God would think of you who have tolerated that the co-equal and co-eternal Son of God be degraded from His divinity in your empire."

The Good News: God did not only adopt a man to become his son, nor give divine and wonderful attributes to someone to become a Messiah while remaining only a mere man. It was his only Son he sent, with the same divine nature, co-substantial, co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father.

Our Response: We cannot and should not water down the personality of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is alright to emphasize in certain circumstances his humanity, his sympathy, his mercy; but we should not also forget his transcendence, his divinity, his majesty. Our attitude towards Him should be exactly this: that he is God-Man.

DEVOTION TO SANTO NIÑO

(January 20, 1980 — Feast of the Santo Niño)

Our Situation: It is very encouraging to note that the devotion to the "Santo Niño" in our country has been steadily gaining ground. On the other hand we occasionally hear of some oddities and irregularities here and there concerning this devotion. Some have claimed to be possessed by the "Santo Niño" or even to have talked to the child Jesus. The celebration of the "Ati-atihan" was formerly called the "Santo Niñohan" in honor of the child Jesus but now mixed with neo-pagan practices. While the native "atis" or "aetas", pagans or christianized, celebrate this feast with their Malay friends who occupied the low-lands, and thus becoming attracted to the child Jesus, the modern descendants of these Malays, who are now inhabitants of Panay, are going back to paganistic rituals.

The Good News: Before the coming of Christ pagan rituals were flourishing: fertility cults, human sacrifices, worship of nature. Christ changed all that. With his coming as man he raised man's dignity to such heights that made human sacrifices intolerable and abominable. We see the child Jesus holding the world on his frail hand to show that nature is his creation and should not be worshipped.

Our Response: The celebration of the "Santo Niño" in the Philippines is a most precious event and should be propagated. But we should not let in abnormal practices and paganistic rituals that would disfigure this devotion.

UNRECOGNIZED BY HIS OWN

(January 27, 1980 — Third Sunday of the Year)

Situation: In tennis the prestigious award is called the Davis Cup in honor of Dwight Davis who established the award in 1900. In 1932 Mr. Davis attended one of the tennis matches of the Davis

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