



# **BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS**

**THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN**

## **BIBLE MINISTRY**

**Editorial**

## **THE POPE SPEAKS IN THE PHILIPPINES**

**February 21 to 22**

## **POPE JOHN PAUL II'S BIRTHDAY**

**Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, D.D.**

## **POSITION PAPER FOR THE 1981 INTERNATIONAL VOCATION CONGRESS**

**Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines**

## **THE VICAR FORANE TODAY**

**Florencio Testera, O.P.**

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# **Bible Ministry**

Is there a Catholic Bible Ministry? This question is asked in a brochure being circulated by the Catholic Bible Ministry School (CBMS). The answer: "A Bible Ministry is in the making in the Catholic Church. It is in a period of gestation. The Catholic Bible Ministry School intends to facilitate its birth and growth in the Philippines."

Elaborating on the answer, the pamphlet explains: "The Catholic Bible Ministry was, in principle, called for by the Second Vatican Council in its Constitution *Dei Verbum*. This document signaled the start of the Catholic Biblical Apostolate. Such an apostolate can not be carried out well without Bible Ministers."

It is also noted in the leaflet that "the Second Vatican Council and, even more, post-Vatican II Popes and Synods have called for the development of *Lay Ministries*. In some parts of the Catholic world, as for example in Africa, Lay Ministers are being formed to be Facilitators in Neighborhood Gospel Groups." The suggestion is that, in the Philippines, we go one step further and form Lay Bible Ministers who will not only facilitate Bible meetings but play a wider role. They are needed here, the CBMS claims, especially because many Catholics in the Charismatic Renewal want guidance in Bible Prayer, Bible Sharing, and Bible Study.

The Catholic Bible Ministry School is a joint project of the National Catholic Bible Center and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Secretariat of Quezon City. It opens its doors to selected Catholic Leaders willing to participate in its program for at least ten months by attending sessions lasting for three hours, three times a week, and undertaking a practicum in seminar-giving on Saturdays and Sundays.

Biblical Spirituality is given prime importance in the CBMS course. However, twelve weeks are also set aside for Biblical Apologetics and another twelve weeks for Biblical Theology.

Participants in the program must be Catholics who have already been renewed by the power and wisdom of the Word of God; must come from a Parish or Church organization that has an actual or planned Biblical Apostolate program; must be active Church leaders with at least one year experience.

Many Parish Priests and Bishops will rejoice in the establishment of the Catholic Bible Ministry School. The need for it has been keenly felt for some time now, both in the urban and rural areas. Aside from the interest in the Bible brought about by post-Vatican II movements in the Catholic Church like the Charismatic Renewal, Filipino Catholics in urban areas feel the need for Bible Ministers who will counteract Protestant campaigns in television, radio, or in rallies presenting world renowned Protestant preachers who project the image of Bible experts. The youth, in particular, are the target of evangelistic campaigns luring them to Protestant ways. In the rural areas one of the most effective means for the building of Christian Communities has been found in the practice of gathering people together for Bible Sharing, Prayer and Study. Many lament the fact that the leaders in these meetings do not have special training in biblical spirituality and biblical lore.

It may be said that the Catholic Bible Ministry as well as the Catholic Biblical Apostolate are as old as the Church itself, which has always used the Bible in its preaching and catechesis. But when we talk about a ministry or apostolate that pays special attention to helping people experience the power and the wisdom of the written Word of God through personal reading and reflection, it is true that we are dealing with a post-Vatican II development.

The Catholic Bible Ministry School has done well to emphasize Biblical Spirituality in its program while not neglecting Biblical Apologetics and Biblical Theology. It would be a disservice to the Church if we were to have lay Bible Ministers who would only try to give, in simpler form, the old lessons on the Bible that are the common fare in seminaries. What we need are Lay Bible Ministers who are truly *witnesses* of a Christian life imbued with the power and wisdom of the Word of God.

Let us all hail the Catholic Bible Ministry School and through our prayers, encouragement and financial support, help it form lay leaders who will be recognized as Bible Ministers.

## IN THIS ISSUE

The concluding installment of the *Pope's speeches* in the Philippines invites our readers to take to heart the repeated call of the Holy Father for Filipinos to "assume an ever greater role in the work of evangelization". When we review his messages now, after the attempt on his life last May, his words seem to have a special resonance that should awaken in us a greater appreciation of his great concern and love for us.

Cardinal Sin's message on the *Pope's Birthday* urges us to look at the Pope as one who is truly human: one who is able to appreciate any and every positive value, no matter how small... one who appreciates the beauty and goodness of the world around us.... one who has insight into the significance lurking in big and small events... one who perceives the essential human dignity present not only in the rich and beautiful people, but also in the poor, the weak and the oppressed, the flawed and the sinful.

The CBCP *Position Paper on Vocations* reflects on the fact that the birth and growth of vocations depend very much on the life of the Christian community in general and the life of the particular member and institution within the community.

Studying the organizational structure of the Church, Fr. Testera points out that the Vicariate, headed by the *Vicar Forane*, developed as a result of necessity rather than as a project of love. Attempts at re-structuring it should be done wisely lest it be reborn by sheer mistake.

## THE POPE SPEAKS IN THE PHILIPPINES

### TO THE PEOPLES OF ASIA

Radio Veritas, Metro Manila

21 February, 1981

To you the peoples of Asia,

To you the hundreds of millions of men, women and children living on the immense mainland of this continent and in its archipelagos,

To you especially who are suffering or who are in need,

To all of you I address my heartfelt greetings. May Almighty God bless you all with lasting peace and harmony.

1. It is with great joy that I have come to Asia for my first visit as Bishop of Rome and Successor of the Apostle Peter. I have come to visit the Catholic communities and to bring a message of fraternal love to all the people of the Philippines and Japan, two countries among the many that make up Asia. My journey is meant to be a journey of brotherhood, in fulfillment of a mission that is entirely religious. But I have also come with the desire of being able in the future to travel to other Asian countries, in order to convey personally to them too my sentiments of deep respect and esteem. In the meantime, I am happy to send from Manila *a message of hope* to all the peoples of Asia. I do so through Radio Veritas, which for a number of years already has been regularly transmitting the words of the Pope and a wide range of religious information in many languages.

2. My mission is religious and spiritual in nature. In addressing all the peoples of Asia, I do not do so as a statesman, but as the *servant and apostle of Jesus Christ*, entrusted with "the mysteries of God" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:1). I have come to Asia to be a *witness to the Spirit* who is active in the history of peoples and of nations, to the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son, about whom it was written: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life" (Jn. 3:16). In the Holy Spirit, every individual and all people have become, through the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, children of God, partakers in the divine nature and heirs to

eternal life. All are redeemed and called to share in glory in Jesus Christ, without any distinction of language, race, nation or culture. The Good News which Christ proclaimed and which the Church continues to proclaim, in accordance with the Lord's will, must be preached "to all creation" (Mk. 16:15) and "to the ends of earth" (Acts 1:8).

From the very beginning, the followers of Christ, the Apostles and their successors, came to the countries of this immense Asian continent: first to India, the land of Saint Thomas the Apostle; later, in the course of the centuries, other lands and archipelagos were visited by Saint Francis Xavier, the Jesuit Matteo Ricci, and many more.

Today I have come to Asia, following the example of Pope Paul VI, *retracing the footsteps of great missionary apostles*. Today I have come with the same truth about the ineffable love of the Father — a love through which every man attains, Christ, the full measure of his dignity and his final destiny.

3. Coming to the peoples of Asia — just as all those before me who, in different periods of history proclaimed here Jesus Christ — I encounter today, in the same way the local heritage and the ancient cultures that contain praise-worthy elements of spiritual growth, indicating the paths of life and conduct that are often so near to those found in the Gospel of Christ. Different religions have tried to respond to man's search for the ultimate explanation of creation and the meaning of man's journey through life. Hinduism uses philosophy to answer man, and Hindus practice asceticism and meditation in their ascent towards God. Buddhism teaches that by devout confidence man ascends to freedom and enlightenment. Other religions follow similar routes. Moslems adore the one God and associate themselves with Abraham, revering Christ and honoring Mary, professing esteem for moral living, prayer and fasting. The Catholic Church accepts the truths and goodness found in these religions, and she sees reflections there of the truth of Christ, whom she proclaims as "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6). She wishes to do everything possible to cooperate with other believers in preserving all that is good in their religions and cultures, stressing the things that are held in common, and helping all people to live as brothers and sisters (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 1-3).

4. The Church of Jesus Christ in this age experiences a profound need to enter into contact and dialogue with all these religions. She pays homage to the many moral values contained in these religions, as well as to the potential for spiritual



living which so deeply marks the traditions and the cultures of whole societies. What seems to bring together and unite, in a particular way. Christians and the believers of other religions is an acknowledgment of *the need for prayer* as an expression of man's spirituality directed towards the Absolute. Even when, for some he is the Great Unknown, he nevertheless remains always in reality the same living God. We trust that wherever the human spirit opens itself in prayer to this Unknown God, an echo will be heard of the same Spirit who, knowing the limits and weakness of the human person, himself prays in us and on our behalf, "expressing our plea in a way that could never be put into words" (Romans 8:26). The intercession of the Spirit of God who prays in us and for us is the fruit of the mystery of the Redemption of Christ, in which the all-embracing love of the Father has been shown to the world.

5. All Christians must therefore be committed to dialogue with the believers of all religions, so that mutual understanding and collaboration may grow; so that moral values may be strengthened; so that God may be praised in all creation. Ways must be developed to make this dialogue become a reality everywhere, but especially in Asia, the continent that is the cradle of ancient cultures and religions. Likewise the Catholics and the Christians of other Churches must join together in the search for full unity, in order that Christ may become ever more manifest in the love of his followers. The divisions that still exist between those who profess the name of Jesus Christ must be felt as an incentive to fervent prayer and to conversion of heart, so that a more perfect witness to the Gospel may be given. Christians will, moreover, join hands with all men and women of good will who share a belief in the inestimable dignity of each human person. They will work together in order to bring about a more just and peaceful society in which the poor will be the first to be served. Asia is the continent where the spiritual is held in high esteem and where the religious sense is deep and innate: the preservation of this precious heritage must be the common task of all.

6. In recalling the great spiritual and religious traditions of Asia, and in urging fraternal collaboration among all its inhabitants, I would also address the problems that still face the many nations of Asia and the continent as a whole. Economic difficulties and the persisting need for more rapid and wholesome development have rightly preoccupied your leaders and your peoples. Poverty still weighs heavily on large groups

and classes in many countries. Not only are there wide contrasts in the social and economic situation of different nations, but also within individual countries great numbers of people still lack the basic minimum that is necessary for human beings to live in dignity and to take part in the advancement of their own community. Hunger is still a tragic reality for many parents and children, as is the lack of decent housing, health care and educational facilities. Great efforts have been made, various models have been applied, new ideologies have been adopted, but the results have not always been satisfactory. In some areas economic progress has not been accompanied by an improvement in the quality of life; sometimes, in fact, it has unfortunately obscured important and essential values.

7. Many factors have contributed to this state of affairs, factors that operate inside the different communities as well as elements that are imposed from the outside. Today more than ever before, one is aware of the fact that it is not possible to explain the problems of developing countries satisfactorily by merely pointing to insufficient or delayed scientific and technological progress in comparison with the more advanced or industrialized countries. It must also be acknowledged that the industrialized world has often imposed the force of its own centers of decision or life style, and has thus caused a disorganization of the very structures and possibilities of the less advanced nations.

8. Justice and equity demand that each nation and the international community as a whole assume their part of responsibility for the development of Asia in true international solidarity. Such solidarity is based on the fact that all peoples have equal dignity and together constitute a community of worldwide dimensions. In order to respect this solidarity, hard decisions will have to be taken, and the necessary structures will have to be created that will bring about a new order of international relations as a condition for the true development of all nations. All nations have a claim on international solidarity, but the nations whose very dignity and existence are threatened have a special claim and a priority right to international solidarity.

9. Above all, the true nature of the development process must be understood. Development is not a state of things achieved once and for all. Development is a long process, difficult and uncertain at times, whereby each nation assumes the management of its own affairs and obtains the means necessary

to ensure that all individuals and communities have full chances of existence and growth. True development depends on the personal commitment of the men and women that compose the community. Structures are certainly important, but they can either support or destroy people. Structures must therefore always be put at the service of man, for they exist only for man, and are in constant need of adaptation in order to serve effectively the cause of human advancement.

10. From the humblest rural laborer to the person in a high position of responsibility, all men and women must be conscious of the common good and strive to promote common progress in social and economic development. In this context, I would like to insist on the importance of creating worthy employment for all, and likewise on the importance of fostering a true understanding of the meaning of work. In the agricultural sector, as well as in industry and service-related employment, a man's work enables him to share in the development process, and also enable him to discharge the duties that, out of love, he assumes for the members of his family. Human labor, while promoting social and economic development, must also promote the total well-being and true advancement of the human person.

11. In order to succeed, the development of nations must take place in *an atmosphere of peace*. I cannot address myself to you, peoples of Asia, without touching upon this most important issue, for peace is the necessary condition for every nation and people if they are to live and develop. My heart is heavy when I think of the many parts of your continent where the sound of war has not yet died down, where the people involved might have changed, but not the reality of war, where weapons alone are thought to provide security, or where brother fights against brother in order to redress real or alleged injustices. Asia has not been spared the lot of many other parts in the world where peace—true peace in freedom, mutual trust and fraternal collaboration—still remains but a dream. Too many men, women and children on Asian soil suffer and die; too many families are disrupted or forced to flee their homes and villages; too much hate still creates sorrow and destruction. I shall not cease to raise my voice to plead for peace. As I have constantly done in public appeals and in private conversations with the leaders of the world, so now again I beseech each and every one to respect the values and rights of peoples and nations.

12. I cannot finish without sending a heartfelt greeting to my brothers and sisters in the Christian faith, *to all those with whom I confess the name of Jesus Christ*, and in particular, to those whom I love as the members of the Church that I have been called to guide and serve. To all the Catholic Bishops, priests, religious and lay men and women I say: the Lord be with you! *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum!* The Church has been present in Asia from her very beginning, and you are the successors of the early Christians who spread the Gospel message of love and service throughout Asia. In many parts of this continent you are small in number, but in every country the Church has taken root. In the members of his Church — in you — Christ is Asian.

13. *Christ and his Church cannot be alien to any people, nation or culture.* Christ's message belongs to everyone and is addressed to everyone. The Church has no worldly designs, no political or economic ambitions. She wants to be, in Asia as in every other part of the world, the sign of the merciful love of God, our common Father. The Church's mission is to proclaim Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, as the eternal Son of God and Savior of the world; to bear witness to his sacrificial love; to render service in his name. Like Christ, her Teacher, the Church desires the well-being of all humanity. Wherever she is, the Church must sink her roots deeply into the spiritual and cultural soil of the country, assimilate all genuine values, enriching them also with the insights that she received from Jesus Christ, who is "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn. 14:6) for all humanity. The Church's members will be at one and the same time good Christians and good citizens, making their contribution to the building up of the society of which they are full members. They will want to be, in every society, the best sons and daughters of their homeland, working unselfishly in collaboration with the others for the true good of the country.

The Church does not claim any privileges; she wants only to be free and unimpaired in pursuing her own mission. The principle of freedom of conscience and of religion is enshrined in the laws and customs of most of the nations. May it effectively guarantee to all the sons and daughters of the Catholic Church the free and public profession of their faith and their religious convictions. This also entails for the Church the possibility of freely establishing educational and charitable programmes and institutions; moreover, these activities will benefit the interests of society as a whole. Christians see it indeed as

their task to contribute to the safeguarding of sound morality in personal, family and social life. They see it as their duty to serve God in their brothers and sisters.

**14.** As true sons and daughters of their nation, true children of Asia, Christians give an eloquent testimony to the fact that the Gospel of Christ and the teaching of the Church flourish in the hearts and consciences of the people of every nation under the sun.

Many are the men and women who have testified to this *truth by laying down their lives for the sake of Christ* in different places of the Asian continent. They did this in the same way as others before them did, during the first centuries of Christianity in Rome, or in the course of two millennia in different places around the world.

My present pilgrimage in Asia is intimately bound to the Christian witness of faith given by the Japanese martyrs. The Church honors them with the conviction that the sacrifice of their lives will help to obtain salvation and peace, faith and love for all the people of this continent.

**15.** My final word is a *prayer for Asia*. Upon the Heads of State and the Governments of Asia, I invoke wisdom and strength, that they may lead their nations towards full human well-being and progress. Upon the leaders of the religions in Asia, I invoke assistance from on high, that they may always encourage believers in their quest for the Absolute. I pray that the parents and children of Asia will grow in love for each other and in service to their fellow citizens. And I commend to the Almighty and Merciful God the dignity and destiny of every man, woman and child on the continent — the dignity and destiny of all Asia!

## TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE MEDIA

Radio Veritas, Metro Manila

21 February, 1981

Dear friends,

1. I am very happy to greet you here at RADIO VERITAS — such an important Catholic radio station of the Philippines. I greet all of you with great cordiality and respect, for — as correspondents, photographers, radio and television specialists — you are the spark of life and the animating spirit of the various modern instruments of communication.

I would ask you always *to be keenly aware of your responsibility*. The images you film, the sounds you record, the programs you broadcast, cross every barrier of time and space. They reach — and in some forms almost instantaneously — the farthest and most diverse populations of the globe. What people see and hear in your transmissions and commentaries heavily influences the way they think and act.

People today in all walks of life, particularly the youth, are in constant search of human values and principles that will help build a better world. People at all levels of leadership need values and principles to build a more humane economic and social order. It is necessary that these values and principles reach these people. It is here that these SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA can serve humanity in a special way. This is indeed a formidable responsibility and challenge — it can also be a very wonderful contribution to humanity.

2. During these days of my visit, the Filipino people are recalling the joyful acceptance by their ancestors of the first proclamation of the Christian message. They are reflecting on the examples of generosity and heroism which that proclamation aroused in them. They are reflecting on the Christian values which they intend to maintain as a foundation for the technical, economic and social progress to which they justly aspire. In all of this they are assisted by the contribution of the media, by your generous service.

You have *the role of transmitting the events of these days* to the world. For a few hours you can offer to a world tormented by increasing strife some cheerful pictures of human solidarity, together with messages of encouragement and incentives for hope.

3. May a conviction of the importance of your mission sustain you amidst the difficulties that your work involves: climatic changes, intensive travel, multiple pressures, and the rigorous deadlines you must meet. May the joy that accompanies the communication of what is good, true and beautiful increase your energy and reward your labors.

I ask Almighty God to give each of you success and satisfaction in your lofty mission — *the success and satisfaction that come from a fidelity to truth and a commitment to fraternal love*. Upon your families, especially those farthest away, I invoke an abundance of peace and happiness. May they always be proud of you and benefit from your work. God bless you and your loved ones!

## TO THE LEADERS OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

Apostolic Nunciature, Manila

21 February, 1981

Dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ,

During the pastoral visit which I am paying to the Catholic Church in the Philippines, it is a great joy for me to meet with you, the representatives of the Christian Churches and communities and the representatives of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

1. Every nation has its own special characteristics of heart and mind. In the Philippines one thinks immediately of your *warm community feeling*, that feeling that you belong together, that sense of companionship which you call the "pakikisama" spirit. Already I have experiment it in the short time I have been with you.

2. In view of this spirit, divisions among Christian look even more strange and unnatural. This is surely an important basis for your ecumenical sensitivity, but of course our concern for the unity of Christians has a more profound reason. All that is noble and good in human community has been realized and perfected in *that deeper worldwide fellowship* of which Saint Paul says: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-27). This is the communion which the overflowing love of God has brought into being through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. This Church, God's only flock, a sign and already a foretaste of his Kingdom, like a standard lifted on high for the nations to see, ministers the Gospel of peace to all mankind (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 2).

3. The Church's unity is the gift of God and not the work of men. But the unhappy divisions among Christians impair this Body of Christ, so that now between various communities ecclesial communion is incomplete, and to that extent an effective witness to Christ is hindered or obscured. It is a great grace, and a power for renewal, that in our days God has



awakened in the hearts of Christians a deep longing for "the one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and sent forth to the whole world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1).

4. As Christians, we already belong together, Justified by faith at our Baptism and thus incorporated into Christ (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3), and living by his Spirit, we are linked in a real although still imperfect communion. It is our responsibility as far as possible to express and make visible this communion which links us in Christ, "maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. :3). "We can and must immediately reach and display to the world our unity in proclaiming the mystery of Christ" (*Redemptor Hominis*, 11). Equally we must spare no effort to re-establish that wholeness of communion in Christ our Lord and Head, who came "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (Jn. 11:52).

5. Before the great nations of Asia, the Christians of the Philippines have a special calling to witness to the common hope they have in Christ! Here especially it is necessary to ensure that "cooperation among Christians expresses that bond which already unites them and sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 12). You have an opportunity to combine or coordinate your efforts to promote the human condition, by alleviating need, by helping to create in society those conditions which make life more worthy of the dignity of every man and woman.

6. These efforts can give a common witness to the one Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel which is our common treasure, and the missionary task which is yours as Christians must lead you also to look for ways to proclaim together, as far as possible, the basic truths about Jesus Christ which it contains, finding what already unites you even before your full communion is achieved (cf. *Redemptor Hominis*, 12). Here you at once come face to face with the things which still divide you and which limit the witness that can be given together. That is the tragedy of our divisions.

Far from rendering fruitful and effective our witnessing to Christ, the scandal of our divisions has diminished our credibility. This is true not only among non-Christians but even among Christians of simple faith. In all honesty we must bear responsibility for this. That is why it is so urgent that at every level Christians should be prepared to work actively and

*to pray for the restoration of full communion.* The effort of theological dialogue is an integral part of this, but its very soul is personal conversion, holiness of life and prayer for Christian unity (cf. *Unitatis Redintegration*, 8).

7. The ecumenical situation in the Philippines is special in that the majority of Christians are members of the Catholic Church. Catholics therefore have a particular responsibility. It is up to them to have a sound knowledge of *the Catholic principles of ecumenism*, a deep loyalty to them, and a willingness to carry them out with courage and prudence. To fail to do so, either from impatience or from inertia, is to hinder the Catholic Church from bringing to the ecumenical movement the gifts of grace and faith entrusted to her. And it is important to use these gifts in communion with the rest of the faithful and with the Bishops.

8. I want to end with a word of encouragement to all Christians in the Philippines. Your task is a real one, for the divisions are in many cases of recent origin; there has been a proliferation of many different groups; for some, the divisions still find expression in open ill will and in proselytism. But remember, *the unity Christ wills for his Church is his gift.* Your patient, well-informed efforts to overcome separation and to restore communion, the common witness which even now you are able to give, are a loving obedience to the will of our Lord. Let them be unceasingly supported and made fruitful by your prayers. In every parish and community, in every Church, in every chapel and mission station and in your families, let there be supplication to God for the the unity he wills for his people and through them for the whole human family.

"My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen" (1 Cor-16:24).

## TO THE WORKING COMMITTEES

**Apostolic Nunciature, Manila**

**21 February, 1981**

Dear friends,

1. I am happy to meet with the members of the working committees who have assisted in preparing and coordinating my pastoral visit to the Philippines. To each and every one of you I owe a debt of gratitude.

Since the beginning of my pontificate, I have been eager to come to your country on a pastoral visit, to coincide with the Beatification of Lorenzon Ruiz. And now, **thanks be to God**, my wish has come true. But my visit would not have been successful had it not been for the diligent efforts and generous collaboration of all of you, had it not been for your preparation and planning. In a real way therefore you have had a share in my own mission from God, for you have assisted the Pastor of the universal Church in his role of confirming his brethren in the faith.

2. I very much appreciate all the assistance given by His Excellency President Marcos and by the whole Philippine Government. Without this assistance my visit would not have been possible. Due recognition must also be given to the Governor of Metro Manila, Her Excellency the First Lady, and to all the local authorities who have collaborated with generosity and enthusiasm.

I also wish to express my sincere thanks to all the members of **the Government committees** for their generous assistance and cooperation. May God grant to you and your loved ones the blessings of joy and peace.

3. And to all the members of **the Church committees** I extend a heartfelt word of gratitude. You represent a cross-section of the entire Church in this beloved land — Bishops, priests, religious and laity; and I know that much of your contribution has been hidden and known to God alone. But for all your efforts, sacrifices and prayers I am deeply grateful.

I pray that my pilgrimage of faith will be an encouragement and a grace for each of you in your individual Christian lives, and that you will find renewed strength, in the words of Saint Paul, "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Phil. 4:1). May the heavenly Father make you and your families strong in faith, joyful in hope and one in love, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

# HOMILY FOR MASS WITH INDIGENOUS TRIBES

Burnham Park, Baguio City

22 February, 1981

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ.

1. It is a joy for me to celebrate with you the Holy Eucharist, to come to you among your beautiful mountains to be nourished by the word of God and the Bread of life, and to unite with you in giving glory and praise, honor and thanksgiving to the Most Holy Trinity.

The Liturgy of the Word today speaks of the special dignity which has been given to all who "belong to Christ" (1 Cor. 3:23). We are invited to meditate on the profound mystery which is ours through Baptism, the mystery of how, *by water and the Holy Spirit, we have become the dwelling-place of God*. "You are God's temple", writes Saint Paul, "God's Spirit dwells in you" (1 Cor. 3:16). This is indeed a mystery of faith. For while we remain members of a particular people and nation, the heirs of a unique culture and ancestry, at the same time, because of God's abundant mercy, we have become "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. 2:19-21).

2. In a special way I have looked forward to this opportunity of meeting the people of the Mountain Provinces, of meeting you who are members of the Isneg, Kalinga, Bontoc, Ifugao, Kankanay and Ibaloy tribes. You, the indigenous peoples of this beautiful northern region of Luzon, as well as the other Tribal Filipinos, represent a rich diversity of cultures which have been handed down to you by your parents and grandparents, and which extend back through countless generations. May you always have a deep appreciation of these cultural treasures which divine providence has destined you to inherit. Moreover, may these treasures which are your heritage always be respected by others; may your land and your worthy family traditions and social structures be protected, preserved and enriched.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, you have discovered how the Gospel does not threaten the survival of your cultures or destroy your authentic traditions. For all that is truly human, all that contributes to the welfare and betterment of the human person, is strengthened by the Gospel and enhanced by faith in Christ. It could not be otherwise, since Christ is the model and origin of the new humanity, the "first born of all creation" (Col. 1:15). As you face the present problems associated with social and economic growth in your country, I assure you that *the Church is one with you in your longing to preserve your unique cultures and in your desire to participate in decisions which affect your lives and the lives of your children.* For the Church never dissociates herself from the temporal problems of her members. She remains close to the poor and suffering; she longs for justice and peace; and she concerns herself with the concrete needs of the faithful. Yet in all this, the Church never forgets the primacy of her spiritual mission, remembering that her ultimate goal is to lead all men and women to eternal salvation in Christ.

3. Permit me at this time to speak to you about the *missionary activity of the Church* and to reflect on its fruitful results here in your own land. As I look out over this vast crowd, I cannot help being reminded of the dedicated missionaries, both men and women who left their own native lands to proclaim the Gospel in your midst. They accepted many personal sacrifices and shouldered many burdens in order to carry out this work, in order to bring you the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And their efforts were not in vain! When the message of Christ was proclaimed to you, "you accepted it", as Saint Paul writes, "not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers" (1 Thess. 2:13). For this marvelous work of grace I rejoice with you! And in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and of his Church, I thank the missionaries for their faith and for their sustained efforts and persevering labor.

It is heartening to see the vitality of the Church in the Philippines: to see, for example, the active part played by the laity, the contribution made by catechists, social action workers and so many others, the indispensable role of Christian families — each in its own way furthering the Kingdom of God. In addition there has been the establishment of numerous Catholic schools and universities, institutions for health care and other needs, and the foundation of seminaries such as the ones here in Baguio City — all these bear witness to the fruitfulness of God's word and to the depth of your own faith in the Lord. I

am pleased especially at the way in which many Filipinos have responded to the call of Christ to serve the Church as priests and religious, not only at home but in other countries as well. Clearly, the missionary activity of the Church has borne abundant fruit in your land.

4. My brothers and sisters, mindful of the way you have responded so wholeheartedly to the Gospel since it was first proclaimed to you, and urged on by the missionary mandate given to us by Christ, I wish to tell you of *my special desire: that the Filipinos will become the foremost missionaries of the Church in Asia*. In this regard I would like to make my own the words which Pope Paul VI addressed to you on the occasion of this own pastoral visit to the Philippines:

"At this moment one cannot but think of the important calling of the peoples of the Philippine Islands. This land has a special vocation to be the city set on the hill, the lamp standing on high (cf. Mt. 5:14-16) giving shining witness amid the ancient and noble cultures of Asia. Both as individuals and as a nation you are to show forth the light of Christ by the quality of your lives" (29 November 1970).

Among all your neighbors in this part of the world, the citizens of the Philippines are unique. Your country alone has a majority of Christians. Indeed you number more than half of all the Catholics of Asia. In view of this, I ask: has not the Lord of history destined you to play a prominent role in the missionary effort of the Church in this region? Has he not prepared you "to give shining witness amid the ancient and noble cultures of Asia"? Are not the last words that Jesus spoke to his disciples especially relevant for you at this point in time: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation" (Mk. 16:15)? This is my heartfelt desire and fervent prayer: that you, my brothers and sisters of the Philippines, may now take your place in the forefront of the Church's missionary effort, especially here in Asia. For this reason I express my deep satisfaction at the creation only a few years ago of the Mission Society of the Philippines; and I also applaud the work of evangelization carried out by Radio Veritas. May God abundantly bless these initiatives. And may each of you who have become a dwelling-place of God through Baptism contribute in your own way to the proclamation of the Gospel. By word and deed may you proclaim that Jesus Christ is "the way and the truth and the life" (Jn. 14-6), that Jesus Christ is Lord!

## DEPARTURE FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Manila International Airport

22 February, 1981

My dear friends,  
and my dear brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ,

1. The time has come for me to say good-bye. As I prepare to leave the Philippines and continue my apostolic journey, I take with me many beautiful and *joyful memories*. It has been a great privilege to spend six days in your country. I have marveled at the great diversity of cultural values and worthy customs which enrich your land. And I shall long remember the people of such varied backgrounds and traditions whom I have had the pleasure of meeting.

2. In a particular way I carry with me the witness of *the vitality of the Catholic faith* here in the Philippines. This vitality is symbolized in the holiness of the first Filipino martyr, whose *Beatification was the reason for my pastoral visit*. By a happy coincidence I now take leave of you on the least of the Chair of Saint Peter, a feast which recalls the role of the Bishop of Rome in preserving and promoting the unity of the Church and in strengthening his brethren in the faith. It is precisely for the fulfillment of this mission, which is now mine as the successor of the Apostle Peter, that I came to your land. I have also wanted to ask you, my brothers and sisters, in view of your deep faith and your love for our Lord Jesus Christ, to assume an ever greater role in the work of evangelization, sharing with others the faith you have received as God's gift. I assure you all of my prayers, and in the words of Saint Paul, "Am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes" (Phil. 1:6).

3. Before departing *I wish to express my gratitude* to His Excellency President Marcos for his cordial welcome to this land and for all that was done to facilitate my visit.. I also thank all the Government authorities and everyone else who assisted in the maintenance of public order or in the coordination of the program of my pastoral visit.

I am especially grateful to Cardinal Rosales and Cardinal Sin, and to all my dear Brothers in the Episcopate, for receiving me so warmly and for renewing in my presence their dedication to the unity of Christ's Church and to his Gospel of truth.

*I thank all the people who gathered around me with such love and affection, both my brothers and sisters in the Christian faith and all the other citizens of the Philippines. At every moment of my visit, your hospitality has been a true expression of your generosity and goodness.*

4. *My farewell wish* to all of you, the beloved people of the Philippines, is this: May you always enjoy peace in your hearts and in your homes; may justice and freedom reign throughout your land, and may your families be faithful forever, united in joy and love.

May God bless the Philippines!

May God bless you all!

Mabuhay!



## **FEATURES**

### **POPE JOHN PAUL II's BIRTHDAY**

18 May, 1981 (Delivered by His Eminence, Jaime L. Cardinal Sin,  
Archbishop of Manila, at Pope Pius XII Catholic Center)

This was to have been a day of joy, a day of celebration. But sadness has overcast it and tinged it with grey. The man who was born Karol Wojtyla 61 years ago, the man whom all the world looks up to with admiration and love as Pope John Paul II, lies in bed in a hospital struck by a terrorist's bullets. The news flashed around the world like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky. According to an AP dispatch, even "in Moscow, Tass news agency reported the attack with unusual speed." (Cf. *Evening Express*, May 14, pp. 2, col. 5) World reaction came pouring into the Vatican, as was to be expected. All the messages containing a note of personal involvement, they expressed not simply a cerebral regret and sorrow, but gut feelings and reactions. In a sense, the terrorist paid John Paul II a true, if left-handed compliment. To couch his political statement in the strongest deeds possible, he aimed his gun at the world's most beloved figure. Socialist French President-elect Francois Mitterrand aptly expressed it in the following words: "This is an act striking the whole of mankind in the person of John Paul II." (Cf. *Evening Post*, May 14, pg. 2, col. 6)

A little over two years ago, on 16th Oct. 1978, a 59-year old cardinal was elected to succeed the smiling Pope John Paul I. When announced, his name did not ring a bell in the thousands that jammed St. Peter's square. Karol Wojtyla, then, was a cypher to the world at large. But not any more. Of all world figures, he is the one who has been seen, heard, and touched in the flesh by the most millions around the world: in Europe, North America, South American, Africa and Asia. In quite another, but perhaps even truer, sense, he can make his own Caesar's words: Veni, vidi, vici; I came, I saw, I conquered — not empires, not territories, but something vastly superior: human hearts; the imagination, affection and love of the peoples of the earth.

What is the secret of this phenomenon of contemporary times? Charisma? But what lies at the heart of this charisma? I think it is the fact that John Paul II is intensely but also simply and unaffectedly a human being. It is that intense and unaffected humanity of his that engages deep down the fundamental humanity in each and every one of us.

But what is it to be human? Very often we use this term to whitewash our weaknesses, our failures our faults, our sins, and in general, our negative traits and qualities. If a man gets angry and revenges himself, if a shopper lifts something when nobody is watching, if a wife cheats her husband — why, we're only human: *sapagka't tayo ay tao lamang*. But, on the other hand, there are also those of a Stoic or Kantian turn of mind who frown at all and any of the pleasures of life, no matter how innocent, as unbecoming of man. Both the former and the latter are mistaken.

To be human is to be able to appreciate any and every positive value, no matter how small. God created the light, the sun, the earth and the waters, night and day, moon and stars, trees and birds and animals. And He took delight in them because He saw that they were good. Can man do less? Can he spurn any of the good things God has made? And so to be human is to be able to appreciate the beauty and goodness of the sun and the wind, of the earth and the waters, of the night and moon and stars, of the mountains and the snow. It is to be able to value the body and its health. Its strength and its fitness. It is to be able to savour the thrill of nature and the outdoors, the joy of being alive and moving, the warmth of the sun and the coolness of the night, the experience of trekking through woods and forests and listening to the myriads of sounds of living things. That is Karol Wojtyla: lover of nature and the outdoors. When they looked for him to give him the news of his appointment as auxiliary bishop of Cracow, they found him canoeing with a group of youngsters through the thick forests of Poland down streams and rivers to the Vistula. Nine years later he was named Cardinal; his young friends wished to give him a present but didn't know what. The new cardinal suggested a new sleeping bag because the one he had was already worn out and failed to keep him warm when he slept in a tent or in the barracks. Somebody hinted that was unseemly of a Cardinal-bishop to go skiing down the slopes of Terminillo during the free afternoons when the Synod of Bishops met in Rome. Cardinal Wojtyla smile and commented to a group of students of Milan: "Half of the cardinals of Poland love skiing, something

that cannot be said of those of Italy." Of course, he keeps silent about the fact that Poland has only two cardinals. This active outdoors life kept him physically fit — a fitness that was to serve him well in all his travels abroad as Pope, and is serving him in good stead now at the Gemelli Polyclinica.

But to be human is more than the appreciation and good use of the outward beauty and goodness of nature. It is also insight into the meaning hidden in the extraordinary and the commonplace, the significance lurking in big and small events, the purpose and destiny of human life. This, too, is Karol Wojtyla: author of scholarly treatises and books, playwright and poet. His poetry is not the ordinary run-of-the-mill descriptive or romantic poetry. His are intellectual poems that provide food for the thoughtful and contemplative mind.

But, above all, to be human is to feel an intimate kinship with each and every human being; it is to penetrate beneath the skin and colour, beneath the dirt and the diseases and the physical and moral ugliness, in order to perceive the essential human dignity present not only in the rich and beautiful people, but also in the poor, the weak and oppressed, the flawed and the sinful. It is to be in love with this dignity, to be obsessed with it, to defend and champion it everywhere and at all times. And that, predominantly, is Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II.

You don't need me to tell you. You have seen it with your own eyes, you have felt it yourselves. You have seen the sincerity of his smile, the warmth of his heart, the gentle fire kindling his eyes, his undisguised fondness for the young, the sick and the old. He wanted to be with everybody: the men and women of the cloth, the common faithful of his flock, the professionals, the students, the workers, the farmers, the lepers, the prisoners, our separated brothers, our brother Muslims in the south, the minorities in the north. He had them all in his heart, and he wanted to be physically with them all in the flesh. And so he chose the most hectic and killing of the schedules presented to him — a pastoral schedule that had him hopping from one end to the other of our country. He came like a benediction from heaven and crisscrossed this land like the sun travelling across its skies, like the breezes sweeping through its fields, like the sea kissing its shores. We fell in love with him; and I think, he too, fell in love with us. He lingered there on the plane's ramp, loath to say goodbye, loath to go away. But, like Christ, he had other sheep, other children in other places.

Where did John Paul II learn to be so unaffectedly, so humanly human? From the Son of man, that perfect model of humanity. Jesus Christ our Lord. And that is the crowning secret of his charisma. The eyes, they say, are the windows of the soul. And the eyes of John Paul II glowed with an intense spirituality, through them looks out into the world a soul in constant communion with the God who created man to His own image and likeness; the God who so loved men that He sent His only -begotten Son, not to condemn, but to redeem them; the God who came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for us; the God whose Spirit is diffused into our hearts to enable us to cry out, Abba, Father!

Vatican II had said that only Christ reveals man to himself, that only by the light of the Incarnation is the enigma of man pierced and made clear. John Paul's first encyclical *Redemptor hominis* shows how deeply he meditated on this truth, how steeped he was in its contemplation. His second encyclical *Dives in misericordia* contains a profound and moving meditation on the parable of the prodigal son and the Father of all mercies. What is conversion on the part of the prodigal? John Paul shows that conversion begins with the son's consciousness of his lost human dignity, the last dignity of last sonship. What is salvation on the father's part? The father commands the servants to prepare the bath, to bring out the finest oils and the best garments, to put a ring on the prodigal's finger, to kill the fatted calf, to celebrate and make merry, because this son was lost and was found, he was dead and is returned to life. In short, salvation is the restoration of the lost dignity of sonship.

John Paul II's humanity sinks its roots deep in the mystery of the merciful Father in heaven, the Incarnate Son on the cross, the Spirit of love indwelling within. His humanity is only the outward and lovable expression of a thoroughly supernatural life. Jesus Christ, walking on this earth twenty centuries ago, showed men the human face of God, the human hearts of God, the human warmth and tenderness of God, the humanity of God. I like to think that in John Paul II, his present Vicar. Our Lord Jesus Christ again walks this earth showing to the jaded men of this blase 20th century the human face, the human heart, the human warmth and tenderness of God who along knows what it is to be human because it was He who created man.

John Paul II was struck by bullets. Why? I don't know. But one thing I know. This act starkly and unmistakably reveals

the essential difference between genuine humanity and its false counterfeit. The gunman professed to protest Russian and American imperialism, the injustice and killings in Afghanistan and El Salvador; he professed a love for mankind, for the masses of the oppressed and downtrodden. But that love did not prevent him from trampling on the rights of one individual man, from doing violence and injustice and gunning down one human being. And that is unmistakable evidence that he is blind to the dignity of the human being as such, which is the only ground for a genuine love of men. Love of men is not genuine but counterfeit, if it does not include so much as one human being.

And that is why Pope John Paul II is so absolutely opposed to any form of violence. At the foot of the cross, on his knees before the tabernacle, he has learned, absorbed and assimilated Christ's new commandment that we love one another, not simply as we love ourselves, but as He loved us. (John 13:34) God, says St. Paul, displays the greatness of the love He bears us in that, even while we were sinners, Christ died for us, (Rom. 5:8). And so, on the cross Jesus did not call down fire from heaven upon the deciders, as the sons of thunder once proposed to do for a much smaller offence. (Cf. Luke 9:54). Instead, his first words were words of forgiving love: Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.

On this birthday of Karol Wojtyla, Pope John Paul II, let us join him in his bed of pain in a prayer of forgiving love, in a prayer to the Father of mercies to send down his Spirit of Love so as to banish from this troubled world all hatred and all violence. Father forgive them, forgive the peddlers of hate, the peddlers of fear, the peddlers of violence, the peddlers of terrorism. Forgive them for they are blind — blinded by their twisted emotions, by their ideological prejudices — and they do not know what they are doing. Forgive them, heavenly Father, and to your son and servant John Paul II, grant him speedy and complete recovery. Grant that from this test he will emerge a human being even more whole, even more steadfast in his resolve to build up your Kingdom of understanding and love and peace among all men and among all peoples of this world. Amen.

# **POSITION PAPER OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE 1981 INTERNATIONAL VOCATION CONGRESS**

## 1. *Vocations and the Christian Community*

Vocation to the consecrated life is always understood as a gift to the community. A reflection on God's pedagogy of calling man, from the Old Testament times to the New Testament era, will always point out the reality that God calls individual man to this particular service for and in behalf of the community to which he belongs. He is called to proclaim God's design for his people and at the same time to articulate the experience of this community before God. Taken out from the family of man, he is constituted for men. Though not of this world he is in the world. He moves with the community and experiences what the community experiences as he functions the dual task of being God's spokesman to the community and the community's before God.

As gift of God to the community, it is he who distributes whenever and to whomever he wills. However, this does not exclude human mediation. First and foremost in this human mediation is the role of the Christian community in the work of vocation promotion. Vatican II has declared that "*the duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community*" (*Optatam Totius*, no. 2). With this declaration of Vatican II we would like further to assert that the proper place of promoting vocation is indeed the *sitz em leben* of the Christian community.

From the human point of view, we would like to state that the birth and the growth of vocations depend very much on the life of the Christian community in general and the life of the particular member and institution within the community.

## 2. *The Life of the Christian Community in General: Faith, Worship and Service*

By faith here is meant that particular aspect of the life of the community wherein it takes conscious steps to understand its faith. It consists of those activities which aim at "*developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God's work*

so that the whole of a person's humanity is impregnated by that word" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 20). We would like to equate therefore the life of faith of the Christian community with the status of catechesis in it. The vitality of the catechetical activity in a particular community will determine the status of the faith of that community because "*catechesis is necessary both for the maturation of the faith of Christians and for their witnesses in the world*" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 25). But its effectivity depends on its permanence and continuity, for "*it would be quite useless if it stopped short just at the threshold of maturity, since catechesis admittedly under another form, proves no less necessary for adults*" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 43).

Now, to respond to the call to consecrated life demands a certain maturity of faith. Hence, to promote vocations in the Christian community, the task of catechesis must be taken with utmost seriousness by the community. No effort must be spared to make this catechesis alive and well attuned to the mentality of the modern age. From the human point of view, the growth of vocations cannot be expected where catechesis is neglected. Pope John Paul II is so positive in stating that many "*vocations to the priesthood and religious life have their origin during well-imparted catechesis in infancy and adolescence*" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 39).

Equally in this task of catechesis education towards justice, which forms part of it, must be given due importance, for "*action in behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, that is, of the mission of the Church for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation*" (*Synod of Bishops*, 1971). Educating the children in this way would make them adults with a mature sense of responsibility, capable of following their vocation including a religious one, and choosing their state of life. (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 52). Virtues need to be taught and inculcated upon the young mind and hearts of children that they may develop a certain sense of generosity necessary to make a commitment to the call of Christ,

This life of faith of the community is inextricably related with its life of worship, its liturgy. Pope John Paul II stated:

*"Catechesis is intrinsically linked with the whole liturgical and sacramental activity for it is in the sacraments especially in the eucharist that Jews works in fullness for the transformation of human beings"* (*Catechesi Tradendae*, no. 23).

The General Catechetical Directory states that catechesis should "*promote an active, conscious, genuine participation in the liturgy of the Church*" (General Catechetical Directory, no. 25).

Good catechesis prepares the community for a good liturgy. And with good catechesis, liturgy becomes an "*outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church*" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, no. 2). To outsiders, the liturgy thereby reveals the church as a sign raised above the nations (cf. *Is.*, 11:12). Under this sign the scattered sons of God are being gathered into one (cf. *Jn.* 11:52), until there is one fold and one shepherd (cf. *Jn.* 10:16; *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 2).

With this understanding of liturgy, we can understand its tremendous impact in the work of promoting vocations.. Good, meaningful and vibrant liturgy attracts people and leads them to contemplation; while on the other hand, liturgical celebrations which are barren and devoid of life in them repel. We regret very much the fact that people were turned off from the Church because of haphazard celebration of liturgy. A thorough catechesis should therefore initiate the community to liturgy, and it must find its fruits in communities celebrating good liturgies.

Good liturgy is a boon to vocation promotion. We cannot overlook the fact that good number of people, young and old alike, turn out when the liturgical celebrations are beautiful. We could affirm that it is during liturgical celebrations when most of the call of the Lord is made. We have only to listen to the personal accounts of peoples in the consecrated life, how they have been mystified by a particular part of liturgical celebrations, an experience which has determined the course of their life and their choice of vocation. If vocation is to be promoted therefore in Christian communities, its liturgical celebrations must be taken seriously. It cannot be taken for granted. Efforts have to be made to make them more meaningful, expressive of the life and faith of the community. Sacraments must be celebrated in a manner manifesting its dignity. For indeed the Lord can make the call during the administration of baptism, confirmation, matrimony, anointing of the sick, reconciliation and most especially in the celebration of the Eucharist and in the conferring of Sacred Orders. Due weight must be given to that part of liturgical celebration called the Liturgy of the Word. The active preaching of the Word benefits greatly the



faithful gathered when it is "simple, clear, direct, well adapted, profoundly dependent on the gospel teaching and faithful to the magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardour coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief, and productive of peace and unity" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 43).

Attention must be given also to the activities of the community which are not properly called liturgy, but augments the spirit of the community towards its celebration of liturgy. These so-called paraliturgical celebrations offer also a wide possibility to become effective vehicles of vocation promotion in the Christian community.

The explicit love of the community for God expressed in liturgy is devoid of real significance without the explicit love for the neighbor. In *Isaiah* we read:

Is this the manner of fasting I wish,  
of keeping a day of penance:

That a man bow his head like a reed  
and lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Do you call this a fast,  
a day acceptable to the Lord?

This rather is the fasting that I wish:  
releasing those bound unjustly,  
untying the thongs of the yoke;  
setting free the oppressed,  
breaking every yoke.

Sharing your bread with the hungry,  
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless,  
clothing the naked when you see them,  
and not turning your back on your own (*Is. 58:5-7*).

In *Matthew* it is stated: "If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift to the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother and then come and offer your gift" (*Mt. 5:23-24*). *James* is rather strong in maintaining the necessary connection between faith and good works. Faith that does nothing is thoroughly lifeless (*cf. James 2:14-17*).

The vitality of the Christian community is even made more manifest in doing service to each other and to those outside the community. This means the active involvement of the community with issues confronting not only the community, but also with those that affect their fellowmen. It is when a parti-

ular community, in the midst of the present world, was able to approximate the ideal of the early church where no one has less and no one has more than what is necessary (cf. Acts 2) that it becomes a tangible and credible witness of the gospel it proclaim. It is in this ministry of service that the Christian community becomes a silent witness to their faith.

The dynamism of the ministry of service in the Christian community provides a very conducive atmosphere for the growth of vocations. For when Christians "*show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good; when they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, they stir irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What and who is it that inspires them?*" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 21). It is in this point of questioning that the Lord of the Harvest may plant the seed of vocations. Without denying the fact that "*the service of the priest who wishes to remain faithful to himself is a service that is exquisitely and essentially spiritual*" (Paul VI, *Address to Seminary Students and Professors*, Oct. 10, 1973), we cannot but affirm the tremendous impact a priest can make especially on the mind of the young, if in the exercise of his "*exquisitely and essentially spiritual*" service, he was able to move the Christian community to actively participate in the crying issues of our times because of their faith.

To sum up what was stated above, we would like to state that the ministries of catechesis, worship and service made operative in small Christian communities are potent vehicles of vocation promotion. For indeed, through the ministries of catechesis, worship and service, the Christians are brought to the maturity of faith — so indispensable in a healthy growth of vocations to the consecrated life. When the small Christian communities become sources of evangelization (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 58), they become sources, too, of religious vocations. The community, made aware of the need to gather in the table of the Lord to nurture their faith, will respond to the unceasing challenge of and call for a minister of the Lord's table and of ministries supportive of this function.

### 3. *The Life of Particular Members/Institutions Within the Community and the Promotion of Vocations*

The mediation of the whole Christian community in the work of vocation promotion is improved when the individual

parts that compose it improve their roles. In this section, we will try to outline the roles/relevance of what we consider the more significant members of the community in the promotion of vocations.

Vatican II states:

"Outstanding contributions are made to this work by *families* which are alive with the spirit of faith, love and reverence and which serve as a kind of introductory seminary; and by the *parishes* in whose pulsing vitality young people themselves have a part. *Teachers* and all others... should strive so to develop those entrusted to them that these young people will be able to recognize a divine calling and willingly answer it. To the greatest possible extent every *priest* should manifest the zeal of an apostle in fostering vocations... It is the *bishop's* duty to make his people active in promoting vocations and to see to it that all vocational resources and activities are closely coordinated..." (*Optatam Totius*, no. 2).

From this quotation we could identify the significant members/institutions in the ecclesial community whose involvement in vocation promotion is essential. Here, we have the bishop, the priest, the family, the parish and the school.

### 3.1. *God Calls Through the Bishop*

The Bishop promotes vocation as he carries out his mission as teacher, priest and ruler. Being the head of the local community and possessing the fullness of the priesthood of Christ, he could make his people active in promoting vocation by effectively exercising the task of the preacher, sanctifier and pastor par excellence. By preaching the word of God, by presiding at the Eucharistic Celebration of his community, and by spearheading social action — all these being qualified by this thorough knowledge of his flock as a community and as individuals — he would be able to make the presence of Christ felt in his community. The person of Christ becomes attractive, drawing most especially the young people to him, and opening the possibility of a call. But this fruitful exercise of his participation in the threefold ministry of Christ demands creativity — a creativity that is rooted in his being well grounded on the life of his people. He cannot bear being alienated from his people. Only with his immersion with his people, — when their hopes, aspirations, joys and anguish become his own —

could he be so creative and inspire his flock to be creative, too. He is not afraid of whatever his community confronts him with. He can demand from his community with a compassionate love for them. He evokes the freely obliging response to the needs of his community, for he is the first to feel and touch the reality. He evangelizes with the community with what they have to learn together. He is indeed a preacher liberated from fear and apprehension, but so much inspired by the Spirit for he has established from within himself and the community a contemplative sensitivity filled up with hope supported by his creativity.

The bishop stands out and yet in his community. He is a leader from within and also a leader from without. Knowing and being sensitive to his flock, he can do this to himself, and to his community. This is openness and this openness is the new dynamism of his creativity. He now spells out everything into the open, one with the Spirit and open to the inspiration of the Spirit and longing and vision of the community. With this he is capable of making all vocational resources coordinated. He should avail of the services of his consulting bodies: priests' senate, pastoral council, etc. and his close collaborators in this regard, the episcopal vicars, vocation directors, etc. (*Christus Dominus*, no. 35).

The Philippine Bishops are convinced that this is one of their essential responsibilities which demands courage, imagination and perseverance. They are the ones who are principally responsible for the pastoral work of vocations (cf. *A Pastoral Approach to the Vocations Apostolate*, no. 12; cf. also *Christus Dominus*, 15).

### 3.2. *God Calls Through Priests and Consecrated Persons*

To the priests, Vatican II has this to say:

"Let him attract the hearts of young people to the priesthood by his own humble and energetic life, joyfully pursued and by love for his fellow priests and brotherly collaboration with them" (*Optatam Totius*, no. 2).

This message calls for a particular lifestyle of priests — the life-witness that he may become a channel of God's call to young men and women.

Young people are said to be idealistic. But they have enough sense of realism once it comes to the truth of life. And this

is very true especially when they deal with priests or religious. They have that pre-conceived idea that priests and religious are honest and true to their life and commitment. And once they are confronted with these people, they expect them to be some sort of models to look up to. Many of our young people do open up themselves more trustworthily and with complete self-abandonment to priests and religious than to their own parents and friends. They see something more in the priests and religious. They are for them men and women of God.

The danger lies for any priest or religious to lose his/her appeal in these young people when they are trying to be one with them and in the process lose their real identity. Our young people are in search of their own identity. These youth are seeking for priests and religious who have a definite identity and a specific ideal. Our young people look up to them as their guides, no matter how distant they are to us or vice-versa. They are looking at the authenticity of the lives of priests and religious. By being authentic, a priest or religious could be the source of great inspiration for the youth.

Linking this up with the work of vocation promotion, we could say that there are as many vocation directors as there are priests who know who they are and believe in the value of what they are doing. Personal witness of priests and of religious is of paramount importance. The lifestyle of priests and religious should convey the true image of the Gospel and should be meaningful to the people of God. *"It is not in books but through living persons that men learn what the life of a priest is or that of a consecrated person. People should discover in them Christ the servant of men, completely dedicated to His Father and to the mission of salvation"* (A Pastoral Approach to the Vocation Apostolate, no. 14). The Holy Father, John Paul II, in his address to the religious in Manila, said: *"Through your religious consecration, you are a visible testimony to the world of the deep mystery of Christ, for you represent him "in contemplation on the mountain, or proclaiming the kingdom of God to the multitudes, or healing the sick and maimed and converting sinners to a good life, or blessing children and doing good to all people, always in obedience to the will of the Father who sent him"* (Lumen Gentium, 46). *Through your particular vocation, lived out in an Order or Congregation approved by the Church, you are a special sign of sanctification and apostolic work that gives you a specific role in the Church, a role with its own distinctive character"* (John Paul II, Address to Women Religious, p. 9-10). Again, the same Holy Father brought out the same message of personal witnessing in his homily to men

religious and priests and seminarians: "*The world today needs to see your love for Christ. It needs the public witness of religious life . . . If the non-believers of this world are to come to believe in Christ, they need your faithful witness — a witness which springs from your complete trust in the bountiful mercy of the Father and your persevering hope in the power of the Cross and Resurrection*" (John Paul II, *Homily at the Mass For Man Religious*, p. 19).

In view of the above, consecrated persons have a right to periods of deepening in their faith in Christ in their commitment to their mission. The beauty of their vocations will be more apparent when it is shown very naturally in the joy, radiance and in the conviction with which they speak of it and live it. There must be a certain freshness in their everyday life, a freshness that is expansive and fosters growth (cf. *A Pastoral Approach to the Vocation Apostolate*, no. 14).

To bring about all of this, the Directors of Vocations in the Philippines (DVP) places a great emphasis on the formation program which is geared towards the full and integrated development of vocation personnel. Using the experiential approach, the program begins with the growth of self in community where the discovery of self and other leads to a faith experience. The significance of contemporary realities will hopefully stand out and make real impact after social exposure among the rural and urban poor. Opportunities to reflect and guided analysis will be provided, so that the vocation personnel will be firmly grounded in the mission of the Church today and will be able to present to prospects the kind of priestly or religious stance that is asked. There definitely is a need to deepen the Christian and priestly religious commitment of vocation directors. Finally, vocation personnel should be taught skills in reaching out to the modern youth like courses in psychology, guidance and counseling, spirituality, techniques of human interactions, communication through mass media, etc. (cf. *A Pastoral Approach to the Vocation Apostolate*, no. 14).

Summarily, the best recruiters of vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life are certainly those who have themselves lived that life best and found it to be all or even more than they had anticipated.

### 3.3. God Calls Through the Family

*Gaudium et Spes* states that in the family, "*children should be so educated so that as adults they can, with a mature sense of responsibility, follow their vocation, including a religious one and choose their state of life*" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 52).

At the heart, therefore, of Christian communities, the family assumes a fundamental responsibility in the promotion of vocations. Every pastoral action must find its strength there and help the family to be aware of its proper vocation and of its essential role in awakening and encouraging consecrated vocations.

The family today is so defined by its environmental characteristics. The family is identified by the standard of living that the whole society projects. Thus, its identity is so fluid, moving along the whole social, economic, psychological, moral, political, cultural and religious systems. Through the advent of technology and other sciences, different kinds of family life emerged. A family engrossed and caught in such systems oftentimes forgets the divine name and identity that it has to live and witness to.

The Church, on the other hand, has always reminded and continuously shows her pastoral concern especially for the family today. Again and again through her documents and decrees, she called the attention of bishops, priests and religious, and more the married couples, to hail this vocation to its fullness. The bishops and other religious men and women have the duty to reach out to the families. *"By your contact with families and through the example of holiness that you give in all your apostolates, you are able to be instruments of God's grace in regard to religious vocations"* (John Paul II, *Address to Women Religious*, p. 13). Necessarily so, because the families, too, constitute the basic sub-system in the local church in the process of interaction. Once again the Holy Father, John Paul II, has delineated the role of the Christian family in the service of promoting vocations in his pastoral visit to the Philippines: *"I would like to extend an earnest invitation to you to intensify your apostolic collaboration at the service of Christian families... The links between families and the religious life are both profound and vital; the Christian family is the normal source of vocations to the religious life. Religious life will help families to become ever more Christian and to witness ever more clearly to the love of Christ, by assisting them in the Christian education of their children, in caring for the sick and meeting the problems of life"* (John Paul II, *Address to Women Religious*, pp. 12-13).

It is very interesting to note that the family is the first school of children. It presupposes them that the parents are the first teachers of their children. The parents are the translators of the values and meanings of life to their children. They teach

them through their daily life, social, relational life, behaviors and projections which their children witness and try to imitate in their tender and early age of learning. The basic elements of learning and acting of the children are well-founded in the family. Hence, *"the family should be assisted to become a milieu that fosters intimacy with God in prayer, vital attachment to the mission of the Church, and the gift of self to the poorest of our brothers"* (*A Pastoral Approach to the Vocation Apostolate*, no. 8). This evangelical climate makes the family not only a source of vocations, but also a milieu of moral support useful in the more difficult times of spiritual pilgrimage.

### *Family Life Apostolate and Ecclesia*

One of the apostolates and approaches to make the family responsible cooperators of vocation promotion is to make the family itself a center of apostleship and discipleship.

When we look at the formation of our families, we find that it has followed only some traditional and cultural education which are immediately learned as husband and wife live their married life. They have a pattern of behavior and systems of values, but seldom the life of the church becomes a part of this basic unit of society. Through the family life apostolate, the husband and wife enter again into a new formation and training. They renew not only their commitment to their sacramental life, but likewise remind themselves of their duties and obligations. The family is made open to another vocation — the priesthood and religious or consecrated life. As John Paul II, in his pastoral visit to the Philippines, said in Cebu: *"In a Christian community, everyone has a responsibility for families. Programs that focus on the family and on the dignity of marriage are of great importance: programs to prepare those who are getting married, and programs for those who are already married. In regard to their children parents have an irreplaceable role to play, not only as the first educators in the faith and as models of virtue, but also as examples of faithful conjugal love. In the community of love and trust that each family ought to be, parents and children can be evangelized and at the same time instruments of evangelization"* (*John Paul II, Homily During the Mass for the Family*, p. 110, no. 8)

The importance of Christian family attitudes as a source and support of vocations is more keenly felt in the Philippines. Our strong family ties and the social pressures that spring



from them are strong factors for confirming or shaking the vocation of our youth. On the other hand, authentic Christian attitudes are easily formed among our Filipino families.

### 3.4. *God Calls Through the Parish*

What is stated about the Christian community in general applies in a particular manner to the parishes, supposedly a community of communities or a small Christian community. This implies that the parish becomes a locus of God's call only if it is a community of faith: a community understanding its faith, a community celebrating its faith in worship, a community living and sharing its faith in service.

The mediation of the parish is improved if efforts are exerted to create opportunities for the young to participate in the task of sharing their faith to the children and even to their peers (the task of catechizing), to be involved in the liturgical celebrations and in answering to the needs of the local community. The idealism and creativity of the youth must be given a fair chance in the life of the parish as a community. This, however, is possible only if those responsible in drawing up the parish pastoral program would entertain the youth in this endeavor and have the youth always in mind, for they are the church's future.

For the parish to become the center of God's call, its leaders and members must be creative and sensitive to the proddings of the Spirit. This would mean that the parish must be a praying community. The vivacity of its dialogue with God will bring its members and head to a lively dialogue with each other and with those outside the parish community. In this way, horizons are broadened and the members, especially the young, become more open to the challenge which both the small and bigger community presents.

### *Vocations and Basic Christian Communities*

In cases where the parish is too big, to form small Christian communities and to make those small Christian communities the centers of evangelization would make a big parish the fertile ground for priestly and religious vocations. Pope Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, declared that "*the ecclesial communities de base will correspond to their most fundamental vocation: as hearers of the Gospel which is proclaimed to them and privileged beneficiaries of evangelization, they will soon become proclaimers of the Gospel themselves*" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, p. 46).

There is a root-problem existing in the Church today. To our mind, the main difficulty not only in vocations work but also in other related Church apostolates is the lack of a basic direction and perspective for the renewal of Christian life. This lack of a directional framework has spawned fragmented, peripheral and non-historical concerns and activities in the Church. This root-problem goes beyond mere techniques and approaches. It is a matter of confronting ourselves with the crucial question: what is our vision of the Local Church today, in our existential situations as Filipinos, in the eighties?

Vocation promotion is a highly-specialized apostolate in the Church, functionally-based along with family life, youth ministry, guidance and counseling, and the like other apostolates. To effectively fulfill its thrusts and objectives, promoters will search for ways and means, strategies and techniques in their presentation of vocations work. Vocation promotion will always remain a matter of techniques, unless something more substantial and permanent than just the use of gimmickry and techniques is implemented. This can be achieved, indeed not in a fortnight but patiently after years and years of arduous work, through the building of Basic Christian Communities in parishes.

Moreover, unless we situated vocation promotion along a fundamental direction of Christian renewal, this kind of work will remain independent, fragmented, and unrelated to other systems like seminary and religious formation, parish work, and family life. As a matter of fact, all these need to be subsumed under a common direction which the Church should provide. We do need a basic framework from which all aspects of Christian life will have to be re-evaluated, re-thought and re-formulated. The direction that is gradually or has slowly emerged is Basic Christian Community. It is through Basic Christian Communities that a Christian atmosphere in the parish is created, thus making vocations grow and be nourished by the "*missionary consciousness, fervour, commitment and zeal*" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, p. 46).

Three major documents of the Church in 1977 have set the direction for Christian renewal in our times. In January 1977, on the local scene, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) declared that "*the implantation of a Local Church that is self-reliant is a sign of that maturing process . . . The establishment of Basic Christian Communities, whose members are united in one Faith and Hope, and bound*

*together by Love and Service, springs from the mandate of Evangelization"* (CBCP, *Joint Pastoral Letter*; Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas, Vol. LI, Jan.-Feb., 1977, p. 33).

On a larger scale, in March 1977, the Asian Bishops in the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) stated that *"the basic fact is that today in our Asian context we are in the process of re-discovering that the individual Christian can best survive, grow and develop as a Christian person in the midst of a self-nourishing, self-governing, self-ministering and self-propagating Christian community"* (FABC, *Conclusions of the Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church*; Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas, Vol. LII, Jan. 1978, p. 21).

Then in October 1977, the Synod of Bishops, meeting on the theme of Catechesis, declared that the customary place or setting of catechesis is the Christian community. Catechesis is not simply a task for certain individuals; it is always carried out as a dimension of the Christian community itself. The forms of community, however, are evolving in our time. Today many other communities are slowly emerging, among which are small ecclesial communities. These new communities offer an opportunity for the Church to renew herself, for they can be the leaven in the mass, a leaven in a world in formation.

Therefore, Basic Christian Community, if it is to be understood in a better light today, is the main direction that should guide our renewal efforts in the Church. Vocations come in as an offshoot of evangelization. Thus it is through Basic Christian Community where the worshipping community becomes an evangelizing community, a community of witness and service in love. Once the community has been transformed, it becomes *"adequately resourceful and equipped with all that is necessary for its mission, chiefly ministries"* (*International Congress on Mission, 2-7 December 1979, "Towards a New Age in Mission"*, p. 55, no. 6). The delegates to the 1979 International Mission Congress, in a workshop on Basic Christian Communities and local ministries, stated: *"Ministries are the types and forms of services which church members 'undertake with a certain stability and exercise on a sufficiently broad basis, thus sharing formally in the Church's responsibility to signify the presence to men of Christ's saving action"* (HK Colloquium, 32). *The Church's universal ministeriality as a communion of service can only be exercised in a diversity of ministries, services and functions. Endowed with different charisms by the Spirit to meet the multiplicity of needs, different members render dif-*

jerent services in various manners and intensities. But they all contribute to the life and mission of the Church" (International Congress on Mission, 2-7 December 1979, "Towards a New Age in Mission", p. 55, no. 6).

### 3.5. God Calls Through the School

This applies pre-eminently to Catholic schools.. But this can be true only if the Catholic schools remain true to their distinctive purpose, i.e. *"to create for the school community an atmosphere enlivened by the gospel spirit of freedom and charity, and to help the adolescent in such a way that the development of his own personality will be matched by the growth of that new creation which he became by baptism, and to relate all human culture eventually to the news of salvation, so that the light of faith will illumine knowledge which students gradually gain of the world, of life, and of mankind"* (Gaudium et Spes, no. 8).

To bring about these goals of the Catholic school, close collaboration should exist among the members of the Christian community. The good of the Catholic school must be the concern of everyone, but most especially of the leaders. However, it cannot be denied that the teachers to the greatest possible extent determine whether the Catholic school can bring its goals. Therefore, *"bound by charity to one another and to their students, and penetrated by an apostolic spirit, let them give witness to Christ, the unique teacher, by their lives as well as by their teachings"* (Gaudium et Spes, no. 8).

The Church is also solicitous to those large number of Catholics who do not study in the Catholic schools. *"This she does through the living witness of those who teach and direct such students through the apostolic activity of their schoolmates, but most of all through the services of the priests and laymen who transmit to them the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances, and who afford them spiritual assistance through program which are appropriate under the prevailing conditions of time and setting"* (Gaudium et Spes, no. 7). So *"when a school does not produce vocations, the indictment is not on the neighborhood, or the area, or the homelife; it rests smack on the shoulders of the religious in the school"* (Bro. Sylvester, Sambayanihan, p. 50). To this we might as well add that this is an indictment, too, to the so-called committed Christians in the school.

There would be no need to conduct convocations on church vocations if the witness to priestly and evangelical life is present; if the consecrated persons authentically live what they claim to be. Unfortunately, however, due perhaps to the secularistic mentality of the times, or pressures from consumerism, the *visible lived gospel witness* is fogged by exaggerated concern for technical advancement, which unconsciously is perceived by the students as a priority in the choices made by those who should otherwise live as witnesses of faith in the Providence of God.

Our curriculum needs to be imbued with the gospel message of consecration and service; and should the *lived example* fail (human as we are), we need to recapture our stand by some explanation of our own vulnerability. Our own humility to admit our shortcomings will in turn move our young confreres to re-consider the dynamic aspect of the call — that it is not finished once and for all; rather, that it is a call once made by the Father which needs to be responded to at every moment.

A question we wish to pose for reflection is multi-faceted: If in the past, the Church was given by Divine Providence the trust of running schools, one of the fruits of which was the rich recruitment of Church vocations — will the present dearth of vocations be due to the less number of schools enjoying the services of priests, brothers and sisters?

Has God stopped sending those individual boys and girls to whom He has given the call to our Catholic schools, colleges and universities, because in His wisdom He does not see these centers of learning healthy for the growth and maturation of future followers of the evangelical life?

Have we been side-tracked by the insidious spirit with the need to focus on the socio-economic advancement of our studentry, to neglect if not to forget the very *raison-d'être* of our Catholic schools — the formation of authentic Christian men and women, from whose ranks Church vocations will emerge?

#### 4. *Particular Areas of Concern in the Promotion of Vocations*

##### 4.1. *Youth: Pastoral Work for the Youth*

The late Pope Paul VI said this about the youth:

*"We believe in the immense source of latent energy in the youth of our time, so open to the great ideas of justice, so thirsty for authenticity, so ready to give*

*themselves to their brothers. If we see them so sensitive to the humanity which suffers injustice, hunger and violence, how can we be resigned to think that they cannot be as sensitive to a humanity which is calling with such urgency for the presence of God, the distribution of His graces through the priestly ministry?*

*Let us keep in mind, therefore, that there are still many young people capable of embracing with great enthusiasm and fidelity a life consecrated to Christ and to men, even to the point of heroism."*

The present Holy Father describes the vitality of the youth so well in his Philippine visit:

*"The Church is not frightened at the intensity of your feelings. It is a sign of vitality. It indicates pent-up energy, which of itself is neither good or bad. It is like rain water that accumulates on the mountains after days and days of raining. When whatever holds it bursts, it unleashes forces capable of wiping whole towns off the map, overwhelming their inhabitants in a sea of tears and blood. But, if properly channeled, dry fields are irrigated, producing the necessary food and the much needed energy. In your case it is not only food or material things that are involved; ... It is without any doubt an exciting but crucial challenge for you, my dear young" (John Paul II, Address to the Students of the Philippines, p. 52).*

The realization of the late Pope Paul VI's vision depends very much on the extent the youth has been integrated into the mission of the entire Christian community. The integration of the youth into the entire mission of the Christian community demands the creation of a pastoral program designed for the youth and by the youth. This program, however, should not be created independent of the whole pastoral program of the Christian community. This program must meet the youth where they are and show them how their aspiration find their true place within the Christian life (cf. *A Pastoral Approach to the Vocation Apostolate*, no. 10). The program must be able to present courageously to the youth the whole evangelical message, that they may be able to understand deeper the role that each of them can play in the mission of the Church in all realms of contemporary life. Through this pastoral work, they

will have the opportunity to see a living Church and to share its life especially its liturgical life. They should be invited to involve themselves in the apostolic work of their parish or of their community of faith.

The urgency of doing pastoral work with the youth does not only flow from the possibility that through such actions vocations may arise from them, but also from the fact that in Asia, and in the Philippines in particular, there are more young people than the old ones.

*"The apostle in Asia must speak the language, and think the thoughts, and feel in his heart the emotions of those who are under seventeen. He must be patient when they are impulsive, and understanding when they are unreasonable. Above all, he must appreciate their real contribution: freshness of outlook, vitality, creativity, courage, compassion, integrity, generosity, the open heart, their willingness to learn" (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, 1974).*

#### 4.2. *Social Communication: God Can Call Through the Means of Social Communication*

The media are an important means of creating a positive image of the Church, of priestly life, of religious life and the missionary life. They are a means of making vocations known as a consecration to God and produce a more positive climate, so as to overcome the negative spirit incessantly brought about by other social communication and the surge of materialism and secularism.

Vocation promoters have developed precise pastoral programs about the use of social communication. Some promoters do vocation work through instructions at Masses and other paraliturgical celebrations, seminars, lectures at colleges and universities. Others conduct summer vocation camps, organize search-ins, retreats, live-ins, prayer session week-ends and orientation programs in seminaries and formation houses. These are followed up by interviews and home visitations to likely candidates. Some vocation materials are distributed containing information on diocesan clergy, religious life, missionary activities, formation houses and seminaries, and the life and work of priests and of consecrated persons. All possible means of promoting vocations — such as newsletters, projects, radio spots, sound slides, television spots, radio programs, mini-dramas —

are being utilized to challenge the consciousness of the youth towards the need of the order/congregation/diocese and of the Universal Church.

For better coordination and more effectivity, the National Vocation Center, situated in Pius XIII Catholic Center, U.N. Avenue, Paco, Metro- Manila, serves as the main medium of communication to dioceses, congregations and orders throughout the country. This National Center coordinates all vocation projects, formation, studies, activities, seminars and conventions, from which the Diocesan Centers seek guidelines and consultations.

There are diverse ways of promoting vocation. Some of these overlap each other. The "media" of communication we are taking here are to be understood not in the strict technical sense of the word, but in the broadest sense — as simply a means of communicating and interacting among people. These "media" develop according to specific situations, specific places, specific people and specific needs. Some of these are the following:

- vocation talks and interviews in families and other organizations;
- visits to schools, colleges and universities;
- friendship with school authorities, teachers and students;
- home visits to likely candidates;
- magazine advertisements;
- vocation literature and information;
- publicity in diocesan papers;
- response from "Vocation Sundays";
- faculty preaching on vocations;
- vocation catechesis in schools (integrated in the religion curriculum);
- other paid publicity programs;
- vocation exhibits;
- posters;
- "Open-House" days at the seminary for prospects;
- vocation retreats;
- vocation movies;
- vocation correspondence courses for prospects;
- seminary bulletin or newspaper;



- vocation talk by bishop at confirmation;
- ordination held in home parish;
- essay contest;
- keeping in contact through telephone, telegram, correspondence;
- continual follow-ups;
- regular meetings with other vocation promoters for exchange of views and experiences;
- witnessing the life and work of priests, religious and missionaries.

The best means for promoting vocation is the personality of the vocation director/promoter in his personal contact approach. A good personality can facilitate social communication. And it is necessary that those in authority should appoint a vocation director/directress whose personality can deal with the youth and the adults alike. Thus, the problem is not so much with the improvement of the media of communication, but more with the improvement of personal relationship. Fr. Godfrey Poage, C.P. said: *"Our problem as recruiters is not the improvement of things, but the improvement of personal relations. We want to obtain better response from youths, greater cooperation from parents, and a deeper understanding of the religious life in the laity"* (Godfrey Poage, C.P.: *Recruiting Religious Vocations*, Review For Religious, May 1962, Vol. 21, no. 3, p. 186).

#### 4.3. *Difficult and Problematic Situations: God Also Calls Through Situations That Are Very Difficult*

In some difficult situations where there is a rapid social change, where the image of the priesthood is in crisis, where social injustice is happening, where religious indifference is pervading, it is with a firm hope in the faithfulness of God that he will not let his church be wanting in vocations. In any of these difficult and problematic situations, a thorough concerted vocation campaign throughout the diocese has found positive results.

In situations today characterized by injustice, the Church must take on and champion the interests and concerns of the poor. The Holy Father, speaking to the people of Negros in his visit to the Philippines, said: *"Yes, the preference for the poor is a Christian preference! It is a preference that expresses*

*the concern of Christ who came to proclaim a message of salvation to the poor, for the poor are indeed loved by God, and God it is who guarantees their rights. The Church proclaims her preference for the poor within the totality of her mission evangelization that is directed to all people so that all may come to know Christ and find in the love of God and of neighbor their highest fulfillment. The Church wants to be of service to all people, in whatever special condition they may be; she wants to be close to all human beings, since all are poor and in need of salvation and all ought to be "poor in spirit". But she shows a special solidarity with those that are suffering and in need, with those that weep and are humiliated, with those that have been left at the margin of society and of life; she does this so that they may be helped to become aware of their dignity as human beings and as children of God" (John Paul II, Address to the People of the Sugar Plantations, p. 128). And in his visit to Tondo where the poor and the industrial workers were present, the same John Paul II declared that the Church of Asia must be "the Church of the poor because she must do what Jesus did and proclaim the Gospel to the poor (cf. Lk. 4:18) ... Being the Church of the poor means that she will speak the language of the Beatitudes to all people, to all groups or professions, to all ideologies, to all political and economic systems. She does so, not to serve political interest, not to acquire power, nor to offer pretexts for violence, but to save man in his humanity and in his supernatural destiny. Defending the human dignity of the poor and their hope for a human future is not a luxury for the Church, nor is it a strategy of opportunism, nor a means for currying favor with the masses. It is her duty because it is God who wishes all human beings to live in accordance with the dignity that he bestowed on them" (John Paul II, Address to the People of Tondo: the Poor and the Industrial Workers, p. 63, no. 6).*

The Church should approach her mission to share the life of the poor in Asia. The Church in Asia must not merely work for the poor in the manner of a beneficent institution, but more so with the poor, sharing their life and their aspirations, knowing their despair and their hope, walking with them in their search for authentic humanity in Christ Jesus (cf. *International Congress on Mission (IMC), Workshop IV: Consensus Paper: The Gospel, the Kingdom of God, Liberation and Development*, p. 47).

Time and again — especially in the present decade — has the discernment of the Church of Asia led to the imperative that she must increasingly become the Church of the Poor:

*"It is our resolve, first of all, to be more truly 'the Church of the poor.' If we are to place ourselves at the side of the multitudes in our continent, we must in our way of life share something of their poverty. The Church cannot set up islands of affluence in a sea of want and misery; our own personal lives must give witness to evangelical simplicity, and no man, no matter how lowly or poor, should find it hard to come to us and find in us their brother (Asian Bishops' Meeting, 1970, Message of the Conference, n. 19).*

*But what does it mean to be the Church of the Poor? Is not the Church for all men and women, for rich and poor, for saints and and sinners? We found an answer in the way many churches of Asia are moving in the direction of greater and greater involvement with the life of their people; their simply being with the poor: their attempts at working out programs of human development — integral, respectful of the people's dignity, attuned to their cultures, their standing with them in their hard struggle for justice and for self-empowerment; their insistence that the rich become themselves real members of the Church of the Poor by fulfilling their obligations in justice and charity toward the poor. The Church of the Poor must do all this" (Bishops' Institute for Social Action, V. 1979, sec. II, par. 5, 6).*

## 5. Conclusion

We would like to conclude this paper with the expression of our firm hope that vocations to the consecrated life would not be wanting. Our hope is based, first of all, on our faith in Him who has promised to be faithful; secondly, on the many people in the consecrated life who still believe in the meaning of their call and are trying to bear witness through authenticity of life; and thirdly, the presence of many young men and women in our midst.

Today, more than ever, we need much faith, hard work and prayer — that we may become more what we claim and ought to be, and accomplish what we have to accomplish.

\* \* \*

N.B.: This Position Paper is a work initiated by the Episcopal Commission on Vocations of the CBCP (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines) which is headed by Archbishop

Ricardo Vidal, D.D., chairman, and Archbishop Oscar Cruz, D.D., National Vocation Director. Collaborators in this work are vocation directors and vocation directresses who are members of the Directors of Vocations in the Philippines (DVP). A questionnaire has been sent to various vocation directors and directresses to involve them in this work through sharing of opinions and experiences. We are hopeful that the Position Paper — which the Philippine Delegation is presenting for consideration to the International Vocation Congress in Rome — is representative of their ideas and experiences.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: *The Church Wishes that Possible Aspirants Be Properly Assisted*

The young man/woman is in the process of maturing in his/her personal identity. He is capable of recognizing his needs; but he is always challenged by many doubts, fears, issues, and other human aspects of life. Hence, proper guidance becomes necessary.

Guidance helps in the integration of the motivational factors into the personality development of the individual. This process should lead him to a deeper awareness of his vocation and decision. It also facilitates the growth of vocation and even manifests the contradictions in the vocation.

Since there are a cultural dimension, psychological, family influence, environmental influence and economic consideration in the process of guiding the individual, guidance is necessary not so much to solve the problems but to help the individual in searching out the causes. We can trace these through the following processes:

#### a) *Vocation and Motivation:*

There are three basic motives common to applicants. These can be noticed in the way he verbalizes his motivation. "I want to be a priest," is a search for a status and has a religious connotation. And to motivate him by asking: "Do you want to become a priest or a Franciscan?" is a wrong procedure. For this leads to the *status symbol of professionalism*. The second motive is "*function-oriented*", like "I want to preach,

*administer and develop community.*" In this, we can observe two motivating factors: the craving for personal fulfillment or success in what he does and the desire to make full of his potentialities. The third motive is the "*commitment-orientation*" to Christ, which is the acceptance to live in Christ and to follow him..

The wrong motivation can be seen in the applicant's inconsistency or the lack of personal internalization. We can notice this in his mental mechanism, sublimation, rationalization and escape. In the process of acceptance, vocation men have to make extra effort in searching for the proper motivation and the possibility of whether the applicant can be motivated.

#### b) *Vocation and Detection:*

Oftentimes, we can detect the vocation of an applicant from his way of judging things, people or situations (mentality), his way of relating his affectivity and effectivity (disposition), his will of determination (attitude), what he freely chooses, acts upon and lives out (values) and how he behaves in situations (behavior).

#### c) *Vocation and Recruitment:*

The ability to recruit is not instinctive in everyone. For some, it is a charism. For others, it is a skill which cannot be imposed, but must be learned and developed through studies and experiences.

In the process of recruitment, the following questions may help:

- 1) How does the individual strive to overcome his fear, resentment and frustration?
- 2) What is his view of Christ?
- 3) What does he value in life?
- 4) Is he aware of the need?
- 5) How great is his effectivity and affectivity in relation to others?
- 6) Is his motive God's kingdom?
- 7) How is his family background, mental endowment, personality, physical and mental fitness?
- 8) When he has made his option, is his personal activity invested in witnessing by life and work?

In the process of recruitment, we should tap the resources of the applicant (the redeeming qualities) and make him aware of his work by giving him personalized attention; at the same time it would be wise to point out his liabilities which might hinder the growth of his vocation. In cases of late vocations, the age factor has to be considered, because as one grows older, he seems to lose his spontaneity and tends to use more defense mechanisms. The age factor affects the personality of the applicant, and chances are the process of formation might be rendered difficult.

One must be free from the "mass recruitment" mentality because "there have got to be candidates so the order/congregation or the diocese will survive." Over and above anything, our recruitment program has to be selective and qualitative, rather than quantitative — where there is little hope of perseverance among a mass of candidates. For this reason, some criteria have to be agreed upon depending on the needs, purposes and charism of the order/congregation/diocese and accepted by those who are involved in the promotion and admittance of vocations.

d) *Vocation and Selection/Screening:*

Selection or screening is based on the proper motivation and flexibility of the applicant's personality to be motivated. The criteria of acceptance have to be considered as the main points of reference. After gathering all the possible information about the applicant, the vocation director meets the admission board for final decision. Those who are not accepted are advised to study (or continue) outside and finish their course. Those who passed the final screening are followed up by the vocation promoter in every possible way.

e) *Vocation and Testings:*

Testings are intended for guidance and screening purposes. All new applicants who have no experience in formation programs are tested in terms of aptitudes. And those who have undergone some period of formation are given some tests in terms of commitment. All these testings are not to be taken as the ultimate criterion in accepting or dismissing a candidate. In other words, the results are never final; only indicative.

Since vocation is psychologically a subjective matter, there is a need for professionalizing vocations work. It is thus necessary to use a scientific and objective approach. The test results

are confidential. They must never be revealed to the examinee. However, those in authority may use the results for further interviews and evaluation.

f) *Vocation and Evaluation:*

Through evaluation, the individual becomes aware of his resources and liabilities. Thus, through this awareness, he grows up towards maturity. The following questions may help in the process of evaluation:

1. Where does the vocations stem from and lead to?
2. How is his developing intimacy, the need for guidance and personal involvement at a particular moment?
3. Are the elements of vocation still present?
4. Is he disturbing others?
5. How is his maturity in judging other people and himself?
6. Why is he not disturbed by the evaluation of the community?

g) *Vocation and Commitment:*

The commitment of the individual stems from three patterns of commitment. First, the "*spare-time basis*" commitment is typical of lay people who participate in various apostolates of the Church on a limited time basis. This is "volunteerism". Secondly, "*job-commitment*" is commitment on a contractual basis. It is a functionary commitment like a hired employee is committed to his boss and his job because of a contract. The third kind of commitment is the "*life-commitment*", which is typically unconditional and religious.

These three commitments sometimes appear, if not clearly understood, as contradicting mentalities. Thus, the candidate's attitude or disposition should be sought beyond his mere verbalization of motives.

h) *Vocation and Formation:*

The purpose of formation is to transform the individual into Christ so as to become Christ's effective instrument for preaching the gospel and serving God and fellowmen. After a long period of formation, if the individual still questions himself or is questioned by those in authority whether he is morally fit to be ordained or not, here and then — unfortunately — has formation failed.

Formation of vocation is a continuous process. It is sustained by apostolic exposure, prayer and community life. The uncommitted person cannot be transformed since from the very start he is already psychologically uncommitted. No matter how good the formation program is, if the person remains uncommitted. No matter how good the formation program is, if the person remains uncommitted, he is never transformed into Christ. But if the individual is psychologically committed, his personality is transformed.

i) *Vocation and Personality:*

Human factors undergo spiritual influence (God). This spiritual influence is shown in one's degree of enthusiasm. Zeal is a showcase of this enthusiasm and is expressed in apostolic service to others and once this drive is directed toward the conditions of others (call), one's personal depth becomes communitarian. Together with the community, it must then be observed how he develops his potentials and strives to overcome his problems.

Maturity has to be sought in the applicant. Maturity is perceived here as a sense of personal identity. If the applicant is free from developmental stresses, he can look forward to his future. He is able to freely chose his values, act on them and live them. He becomes capable of recognizing his needs and the needs of others. But if there is a deep insecurity, his personality growth is disturbed and his spiritual or psychological development will find difficulties. One can detect this disturbance in his lack of spontaneity in behavior and in his inconsistency in his way of thinking and feeling. With this personality, his personal success becomes the condition of his service. He will out do himself and reach beyond his potentials especially in matters of personal relationship. If he fails, he tends to be evolutionary melancholic. This means that he develops an attitude of negativism stressing his liabilities over his resources.

j) • *Vocation and Family Background (Affective Affirmation):*

Formation houses and seminaries cannot supply the natural and distinctive development of family love. If this family love is absent in the early development of the individual, it will be difficult to orientate him to a higher degree of apostolic love



which the formation program tries to give to the individual in the process of priestly and religious training. The absence of family love causes a lot of insecurity, anxiety, inconsistency and other psychological and emotional disturbances in the applicant's way of thinking( feeling, willing, choosing values and behaving.

Thus, some facts have to be discovered directly or indirectly prior to the acceptance of the applicant. Does he come from a broken family or not? What kind of broken family? Does the applicant experience love? If so, from whom?

#### k) *Vocation and Scholarship:*

Aside from the emotional attachment of the parents to their children, the other reason why parents do not allow their children to enter the priestly or religious life is the economic order. Some parents take the education of their children as an investment for their own future. They would invest in them if they take up medicine, nursing, law, engineering, etc.; but if the child joins the religious or priestly life, then the parents object. There are other parents who are even worse than the parental objectors. This kind of parents allow their children to enter but for some selfish and wrong motives: taking advantage of the scholarship, good education plus moral formation, raising up their family status, reformation of the errant child, or other wrong motives. At this point, proper screening on the motivation of the applicant is indispensable.

#### 1) *Vocation and Follow-Up (Perseverance):*

The loss of vocations can be attributed to a lack of spiritual, intellectual and emotional guidance. The problem is aggravated by the fact that there is a lack of competent or trained formators, spiritual directors and educators who can give effective direction and formation.

The Philippines has been known to have plenty of vocations. But many wonder why very few get ordained and fewer still persevere in their religious or priestly vocations. This vocational problem seems to be always related to the lack of personnel in seminaries and formation houses, to poor screening of the applicants, to the lack of competency and training among formators, and the lack of witnessing among those in the pastoral apostolate.

There is no doubt that all vocation promoters, formators and pastoral workers need on-going formation for conditioning,

motivating and guiding themselves into a deeper renewed motive. For the order/congregation/diocese, this renewal is of paramount importance and indispensable. For the continuous renewal of religious and priestly lives on the local and national levels would adequately re-motivate them to be more generative in their work of evangelization.

#### APPENDIX B: *Organization of Vocations Work*

To bring out the vision of vocation program demands the organization of vocation work. Without a sensible organization, from the human point of view, vocations work will not be effective. Much effort will be made futile and there will be people who will be overworked, thus reducing their effectiveness. Hence, due attention must be given to the organization of vocations work in each local church.

In the Philippines, the delegates to the National Convention of Diocesan and Religious Vocation Directors and Directresses in 1974 formed a national association — the *Directors of Vocations in the Philippines (DVP)* — through which they have banded together to pool resources and work out projects to express this coordination and cooperation in the pastoral work for vocations.

The DVP come out with a *formation program* for vocation promotion, which program is two-pronged — for vocation directors and for vocation prospects. By way of a summarized description, this formation program is worked out as follows:

##### a. *Program for Vocation Directors/Directresses:*

- 1) *Training in Group Dynamics and Community Building* — the self, the group and God. Objective: to experience the growth of the self, horizontally and vertically. Activities: experiential approach, group dynamics exercises and faith experience. Duration: week-end live-in (Friday evening to Sunday).
- 2) *Inserting oneself in the mission of the Church today* — contemporary realities, the new problematic, personal stance as a priest or religious. Objective: to be immersed in the people of God, and to learn from within what to be in building a world of justice and love. Activities: social exposure among the rural and urban poor, reflection, guided analysis, concrete involvement, prayer. Duration: half a month to a full month, in the summer.

- 3) *Deepening of the Christian and Priestly/Religious Commitment* — the salvific and ethical thrusts, discernment and election, priestly ministry and the vowed life. Activities: individual guided retreat, courses in spiritual direction, training in the giving of retreats, courses in guidance and counseling, etc. Duration: to two weeks.
  - 4) *Reaching out to the modern youth* — communication skills through mass media, techniques of human interactions, psychology, sociology, guidance, spirituality. Activities: theory and practicum, interviewing, screening, testing candidates, experience of the different exercises prepared for the build-up of prospects. Duration: one week.
- b. *Program for Vocation Prospects:*
- 1) *Search-in* — a soul-searching session covering the present, past and future of the participant, leading towards self-discovery and a redirection of life.
  - 2) *Tour-in* — apostolic exposure and involvement.
  - 3) *Pray-in* — prayer session, an intimate experience of God in silence, in Scripture, in shared prayers, in the eucharistic celebration.
  - 4) *Break-in* — follow-up program, a deepening integration for those with a more definite inclination towards the priestly, religious, secular institute lifestyle.
  - 5) *Live-in* — retreat of election.

Nowadays, we have to reach out to people not just by word of mouth, but more effectively and on a permanent basis by the written word. Hence, *publications* should be made to serve the interests of vocation promotion. The vocation apostolate can make good use of such publications as:

- a. *Vocation Book* — material that contains basic information on diocesan clergy and religious groups working in the Philippines.
- b. *Newsletters* — publication that contains information on the work, projects and activities of vocation promoters, on recent development in the field of vocations, etc..
- c. *Calendars* — the reason behind this is to depict a very impressive reminder about consecrated life — priests, brothers and sisters — the whole year round. The design

should be appealing to the present young generation. It will provide challenging captions and will carry a directory of the different religious groups working in the Philippines with their addresses.

- d. *Posters* — to express in the simplest and most challenging format the idea of consecration to God. Target audience is the youth. This is the type of advertisement that is very contemporary today. It is attractive to both young and old.
- e. *Hand-outs* — to prepare printed materials in easy, convenient, readable forms, as a follow-up to the radio programs, TV spots, etc. This will contain the name, brief description of work, addresses of religious groups — in separate lists — one for men and another for women.
- f. *Prayer Leaflets* — three kinds will be produced: general prayer for vocation, separate prayers for the priesthood, brotherhood and sisterhood, and parents' prayer for vocation of their children.

The Vatican II document on the media of social communication has this to say: "*The Church recognizes that these media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to mankind, since they contribute to men's entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the Kingdom of God*" (*Inter Mirifica*, no. 2). As far as *mass media* are concerned, the program for vocation promotion is as follows:

- a. *Radio Spots* — The production and airing of one-minute spots on 17 radio stations, throughout the Philippines, three times a day. The spots will be produced in English and in other major local dialects. Objective: to stimulate prayer and thought about the priesthood, the religious life, and secular institutes, among prospective candidates and among their families; to initiate contact with prospective candidates responding to these vocation spots; and ultimately, to meet the great demand for priests, religious and members of secular institutes.
- b. *Sound Slides* — The presentation of sound slides for use in schools, in parishes, and in the barrios, throughout the country. A set contains one cassette, one script, and 80 slides. The audience for this production is everyone — especially the prospective candidates. Rationale: color slides and accompanying sound are in attractive and effective medium. The viewers are given time to absorb the message.

- c. *Television Spots* — Television is most effective especially in the cities. So the best of the sound slides will be adapted for television spots.
- d. *Radio/TV Programs* — These programs will consist of interviews, commentaries, entertainment plays on moral values and vocations.

The *National Vocations Center* has been established by the CBCP's Episcopal Commission on Vocations. The Center is located at Rm. 203, Pius XII Catholic Center, U.N. Avenue, Paco, Metro-Manila, Philippines. Realizing the tremendous importance of this reach-out Center in the work of vocation promotions in the country, the DVP has offered its services to the Center. The following are some basic information on the National Vocations Center:

1. *Purpose:*

- 1.1. The National Vocations Center is not primarily a project director that imposes and dictates from above projects and tasks to be accomplished. It's role is that of a *catalyst* that stimulates and encourages local church people to be involved in the common cause of the vocation apostolate.
- 1.2. The National Vocations Center serves as a *clearing house of information* on matters pertaining to vocations and related topics, such as vocation literature, vocation materials, aids — on priestly and religious vocations and other resources available.
- 1.3. The National Vocations Center serves as a *coordinating body* that coordinates together our lines and areas of operations in the vocation apostolate. Areas of operations such as studies, efforts, activities for directors of vocations and for vocation prospects.
- 1.4. The National Vocations Center serves as a *service agency* that enables local church people to find the necessary resources of expertise in several terms and questions of the vocation apostolate.
- 1.5. The National Vocations Center serves as the *implementing staff and arm* of the Episcopal Commission on Vocations.

2. *Functions:*

- 2.1. To serve as a communication center of information to the diocesan centers;
- 2.2. To formulate general guidelines to foster the successful achievement of the apostolate of vocation recruitment;
- 2.3. To communicate to the general public the need for, as well as the role and function of priests and of religious today;
- 2.4. To provide activities which will supplement the vocation promotions of various groups;
- 2.5. To develop an indigenous theology of vocations;
- 2.6. To provide statistical reports on vocations.

3. *Personnel:*

- 3.1. The Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Vocations;
- 3.2. The National Vocations Director;
- 3.3. The National Coordinator;
- 3.4. The DVP Officers;
- 3.5. Clerical and volunteer staff.

Zeroing down into the grassroots level, the creation of diocesan and parochial vocation centers is necessary for better and more effective coordination in the work of vocation promotions. The establishment of a *Diocesan Vocations Center* or an equivalent of it has been seen necessary in the pastoral program for the vocation apostolate. "*Single centers are desirable in the individual diocese, which may be the expression of the cooperation and unity existing between both the clergies, diocesan and religious, in favor of all vocations*" (*Ratio Fundamentalis*, no. 10). And Vatican II has declared. "*The Council also directs that in accord with pontifical documents on the subject, all pastoral activity on behalf of vocations should be systematically handled and unified by vocational organization already established or due to be established in the territories of each diocese, region or nation*" (*Optatam Totius*, no. 2).

On the parish level, a *Parish Vocations Center* can be the work-horse for the implementation of vocation efforts within the confines of the parish. The following offer ideas of a parish structure for the vocation apostolate:

1. *Vocation Secretariat* — Each parish shall form a committee that will take charge of vocation promotions in the parish. Members can come from existing parish organizations and can serve as animators in their respective groups.
2. *Serra Club, St. John Marie Vianney Association and Other Vocation Organizations* — Parishes are encouraged to establish one or other organization whose specific task and purpose is the apostolate of vocations.
3. *Existing Parish Organizations* — Since the duty of fostering and promoting Church vocations fall on the whole Christian community, it is urged that all existing parish organizations should make vocation promotions truly part of their apostolic activities.

#### APPENDIX C: *Some Concrete Suggestions for Vocation Promotions*

It takes much initiative, imagination and creativeness to think out ways and means of promoting vocations. One's individual creativity can come out with a huge variety of "gimmicks" which can serve the interest of vocation promotion. Given below are some concrete suggestions for vocation promotions which has been proven and tested by bishops, vocation directors and promoters in the Philippines. These are:

1. *Pastoral Letter* — The Bishop could write a pastoral letter on vocations to his flock in the diocese. This is distributed to every parish and school in his diocese. The parishes and schools could organize a study group consisting of priests, religious, parents and young people to study and reflect on the content of the letter and share their insights with one another.
2. *Vocation Teams* — Vocation teams — consisting of a diocesan priest, a religious priest, a brother, a sister and a layman — could be formed at the parish level (depending, of course, on the availability of human resources). The team goes around together to give talks on Church vocations in the parish, in schools, etc.
3. *World Day of Prayer for Vocations* — This day of prayer has been established by the late Pope Paul VI. It is a day of prayer and reflection for vocations. The celebration of it can consist of the following:

- \* Special Mass for priestly and religious vocations in all churches;
- \* Special sermons on vocations (laymen could give the sermons also);
- \* Special devotions — Bible service, Holy Hour, Benediction, Rosary — for the increase of vocations.

4. *Vocation Week (or Months)* — A week-long (or month-long) celebration in the local church of various activities which will stimulate the people of God towards vocation awareness. Suggested activities are:

- \* Talks on Church vocations in schools;
- \* Seminar on vocations for teachers, parents, youth groups, etc.;
- \* Daily radio program on vocation and information on the life and work of priests, religious and secular institutes during the week;
- \* Publish articles on vocations in the local papers;
- \* Special liturgical and paraliturgical services for vocations.

5. *Seminars* —

- a. Hold regular youth seminars on Christian life and on vocation to the priesthood and religious life;
- b. Hold seminars for priests, religious, laymen (parents) and youth together to discuss the subject of vocation. Possible topics:
  - \* Meaning and discernment of vocations;
  - \* Priesthood and religious life;
  - \* Present situation of vocations in the Philippines.

6. *Forum* — To establish a regional or diocesan ISF (Inter-Seminary Forum) or the like. This forum should be open to diocesan major seminarians, religious brothers and sisters in formation. The purpose of this forum is to strengthen their spiritual and apostolic life-commitment. One of their apostolic activities could be the promotion of Church vocations among their peers outside. This group could be a powerhouse for vocation promotions.

7. *Seminary Vocation Campaign Team* — These are seminarians organized in groups to campaign for vocations in parishes. Possible activities:



- \* Hold choral and dramatic presentations in public;
- \* Engage in sports with local or town youths;
- \* Give talks on their own vocation and on seminary life and experiences;
- \* Back in the seminary, they share experiences of their campaign.

It has been observed that this program not only promotes and attracts vocations, but also strengthens the vocation of the seminarians.

#### APPENDIX D: *An Important Point of Clarification*

It must be understood, however, that the suggestions given in Appendices C and B do not really make up the very soul and purpose of vocation promotion. Certainly, to promote vocations to the priesthood and the religious life does not consist in the mere use of gimmickry. There are other elements which are of substantial and essential value to the task of vocation promotion.

Primacy is to be given to prayer: the prayer of the community for the gift of vocation. This primacy of prayer is based on the understanding that this charism of vocation is a gift of God. This is also a response to the Lord's invitation to pray to the Lord of the harvest for workers of the vineyard. *"Without habitual prayer, insistent and confident, there is no real pastoral work for vocations"* (*A Pastoral Approach to the Vocations Apostolate*, no. 2).

No amount of promotion and gimmickry could replace the witness of life of those in the consecrated life. Their authenticity and commitment to their apostolate is enough guarantee that vocations would not be wanting in the Christian community. When a priest or a religious shows forth the radiance of the paschal joy in his life, such an element simply becomes a spiritual "conductor" that will "contaminate" people towards a more fervent or fuller commitment to God.

Much has been said about the organization of vocations work. However, vocation apostolate is not the sole apostolate of the church/Christian community. There are equally pressing areas of apostolates which demand attention to effect the maturation of faith of the Christian community. Vocation program, therefore, may not be planned independently or separately or without reference or coordination with programs of other areas of apostolates. Equally, this coordination must be present among those working directly in the promotion of vocations.

## THE VICAR FORANE OF TODAY

By

Fr. Florencio Testera, O.P.

A child is born, so they say, either out of love, or by necessity, or by sheer mistake. This saying may ring a bell to a family planner, but is quite doubtful whether it would be relevant to a lawyer who grapples with the origin and structure of a juridical entity such as the Vicariate Forane.

Whatever that may be, it is certain that the Vicariate was not born into the church juridical structure out of love. Its conception took place as early as in the fifth century, and yet its birth occurred only after a long, painful period of gestation which spanned for some nine hundred years. Thus we may say that the structure of the Vicariate took its final shape after a long period of trial and error, and that it came to be out of necessity.

First of all, it was the establishment of the rural parishes with their corresponding filial churches which prompted all priests and deacons to gather round the pastor of the mother or main church, who thus became the moderator or leader of the group, to be called the *arch-priest* or *proto-priest*. Later during the ninth century, the extinction of the controversial rural bishops — *chor-episcopi* — in charge of tendering to the pastoral ministry of the faithful residing in far away places, created a vacuum in the pastoral ministration of certain regions of the diocese which was logically to be filled by the arch-priester. Thus by exercising the functions of the rural bishops in the remote rural areas of the diocese, the archpriest became the '*rural dean*'.

Again, by dint of necessity, the archpriest had to be associated with the archdeacon, the man in charge of the temporal affairs of the diocese. And by sharing the tremendous powers of the archdeacon, the rural dean assumed great importance in the government of the diocese. The Council of Trent, however, seeking to restore the bishop's authority, already overshadowed by the influence of the archdeacon and archpriest, clipped their powers and made them mere subordinates to the

bishop. From then on, the power sharing arrangement with the archdeacon had to be curtailed, and the rural dean settled to do his chores within the deanery with just the powers delegated to him by the bishop. It was then that the figure of the Vicar Forane (abbrev. VF) took that final shape which has endured till Vatican II.

At present a great deal of activity — mostly at the local or diocesan level — is going on in the church towards the restructuring of the Vicariate as an institution. Possibly we may soon be able to witness the rebirth of the Vicariate. Whatever the result of such activity might be, the past history of the pains and hard labor which made possible the birth and the incorporation of the Vicariate into the structural set-up of the church, should by no means be cast into oblivion, if only to prevent that the Vicariate about to emerge be re-born by sheer mistake instead of by virtue of true love.

### I. *The Vicar Forane and His Vicariate*

The sweeping expansion of the territorial parish system brought about by the social and cultural upheavals of the nineteenth century, called for a change or at least an adjustment in the parish structure. The framers of the 1918 CIC faced this problem with realism, but short of solving it through a substantial change of the structural format of the parish, they opted for a decentralization of sorts in the diocesan government. Thus it became mandatory for the residential bishop to divide the territory of his diocese into regions or districts, (CIC, c. 217), whose head, the VF, should then and there assist the bishop in the government of the diocese though in a limited capacity. Since each region ought to comprise several parishes, the Vicariate thus established became supra-parochial, in nature. Furthermore, as the office of the VF was just an extension of the bishop's office, the priest at the helm of the Vicariate logically became the "altar ego" of his bishop. To a certain extent the VF in his territory was the counterpart of the Vicar General whose role was to assist the bishop in the government of the entire diocese.

Is today's VF different from that of yesterdays? Hardly so. For the Vicariate system has not undergone substantial structural changes, but it has been adapted to new forms to make it more responsive to the times and a more effective instrument in the care of souls. The same can be said of the VF. His role is now mainly of a pastoral nature as against

the administrative and supervisory functions that formerly had the priority of the office. Thus in the words of Vatican II, the VF is "a priest who is exercising a pastoral function in a district of the diocese" (*Christus Dominus*, CD. 30). This in no way excludes the actual involvement of today's VF in certain administrative activities. A definite proof of this is the fact that the proposed Code (SN-CIC, c. 387), reproduces almost verbatim each one of the existing canons wherein administrative and supervisory duties are assigned to the VF (CIC, cc. 447, 448).

Of course, through new wording, some of the unpleasant connotations of the past are mitigated, if not entirely avoided. Now the VF "watches" no longer over the activities of his people and clergy. However, he continues to exercise the right of vigilance through "mutual sharing", "by knowing his people", "by providing for, and promoting the welfare of his clergy".

This shows, too, that the primary emphasis of the Vicar's work must be personal. He must try in every way possible to create a personal rapport with all the priests, religious and laity of his region. Through meetings, visits, even phone calls, he must try to develop a first-hand knowledge of the personnel, resources, needs, changes and over-all direction of the church within his vicariate.

From the matter just outlined it follows that:

- As an "alter ego" of the bishop, the VF must of course, work in concert with the bishop and should exercise whatever authority is delegated to him by his superior (CD, 29).
- The VF has to be a vital channel of communication between the bishop and his priests, parishes and people of the vicariate. This implies a two-way flow of information: the bishop relies on the VF to announce, clarify and help implement on the vicariate level all major diocesan decisions, policies and recommendations; while the priests, religious and laity have immediate access to the person of the bishop and to the government of the diocese through the VF, so that their ideas may play an important part in the formation of diocesan policies and priorities.

In fine, the responsibility of the VF should not be merely custodial but also creative. That is to say that his role is not only to guarantee the safe transmission of authentic law and

tradition, but also to call forth from all the people the unique experience of the spirit in their lives and in their times (*Role of the Regional Vicar*. Dioc. of Paterson, USA, 1975).

## II. *Appointment and Tenure of the VF.*

The VF, being the "alter ego" of his bishop, should logically be appointed to office by the bishop himself. The choice of the candidate is, therefore, the free and uncontested right of the bishop. Likewise, the removal from office should be *ad nutum episcopi*. Thus both the appointment and dismissal are left entirely to the bishop (CIC., c. 446; SN-CIC, c. 386; *Ecclesiae Sanctae* -ES-, 19, 2). The new set-up, however, allows for some sort of consultation, whereby the clergy of the diocese may present to the bishop a few candidates for the office of VF. The final decision, though, rests with the bishop who remains free to select as VF either a priest presented by the clergy or another not included among the nominees (NS-CIC, c. 385, 2). Likewise, the VF may be appointed for a period of time determined by special law; however, he may still be removed from office at the wish of the bishop (SN-CIC, c. 386; ES, 19, 2).

It must be noted, however, that the fact that the removal is left *ad nutum episcopi* does not warrant that the VF be left at the mercy of his bishop. The legal implication is that the dismissal of the VF depends on the good pleasure of the bishop who may take the office away from him with or without cause; that he is not bound to seek the consent or advice of his consultants, nor he needs to initiate any judicial or administrative process for dismissal. But it is to say the obvious that the bishop can not proceed arbitrarily on this matter and that natural equity must be observed at all times. The very nature of the office and the human rights of the office-holder will clearly set the limits to the action of the bishop. And the Vicar who considers himself seriously aggrieved by the arbitrariness of his bishop may certainly seek redress from higher authorities.

## III. *The Pastoral Role of the Vicar Forane.*

The care of souls was an overriding concern for Vat. II. A genuinely pastoral thrust is perceptible in each of the conciliar documents. Institutions and offices became irrelevant unless engaged in pastoral undertakings. The diocesan curia, according to the Council, should be reorganized in such a way that "it may be a useful medium for the bishop, not only for diocesan

administration but also for pastoral reasons" (CD, 27). The figure of the episcopal, regional bishop appears for the first time "to assist the bishop in the pastoral care of the diocese" (CD, 27; ES, 14). The establishment of diocesan pastoral councils is highly commended "to examine and consider all matters relating to pastoral work and to formulate practical conclusions concerning them" (CD, 27; ES, 16). Even the erection and suppression of parishes as well as the removal of pastors have to be dictated exclusively by pastoral demands (CD, 32). Nor was the VF spared from this pastoral concern of the Council. The Vicar's main objective according to Vat. II, is "to promote and direct common pastoral activity in his district through the necessary powers conferred on him by the bishop" (ES, 19, 1). In short, the Vicar's role must be pre-eminently and genuinely pastoral. He must strive to make the bishop pastorally present in every parish unit by his direction, doctrine, counsel, admonition, encouragement and inspiration.

The Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, speaking of certain special problems of large dioceses, suggests the appointment of Vicars who would personally represent the bishop in his manifold pastoral duties. Accordingly, it seems proper to apply to the Vicar and his ministry whatever is said about the ministry of bishops. The pastoral functions of the Bishops and, therefore, of his representative, the VF, are the following:

— *to know the flock*: "Acquaintance with each of the faithful and his situation, even if very difficult to attain, is a desirable goal which the VF should do his best to achieve. He strives to know at least those who are more personally involved in diocesan and parochial works of charity, piety and apostolate. He makes it his concern that his priests, especially the pastors and those who have care of souls, know as many of the faithful as possible" (*Directory*, n. 100).

— *to make the pastoral visitation of parishes*: "The pastoral visitation is one of the ways, indeed it is the Vicar's chief way, of coming into personal contact with the clergy and the other faithful of the people of God that he may know, direct and encourage them to the practice of their faith and the christian way of life, and during the visitation he can experience for himself and evaluate the real effectiveness of the structures and tools at the service of the pastoral ministry" (*Direct.*, n. 166).

— *to promote vocation*: "At all times, but specially in our time when there is a more serious and urgent need, the Vicar's first duty is to be concerned that there be a continuous and sufficient number of the various ministers for the sacred hierarchy as well as of those entering the religious life in the Church..." (*Direct.*, n. 197).

— *to preach and preside in the name of the bishop*: "The Vicar endeavours with untiring efforts to make the whole vicariate into a community of those who pray, a community that perseveres with one accord in prayer and that adores the Father in spirit and in truth." (*Direct.*, n. 77).

— *to convene the clergy and to coordinate the apostolate*: "The Vicar considers it his duty not only to stir up, to encourage and increase the energies within his vicariate but also to weld them together so as to avoid harmful scattering and useless duplications as well as destructive dissensions, while at the same time always preserving the lawful rights and liberty of the faithful... But it is hardly possible for the Vicar to accomplish such a task unless he promotes and organizes a common and united program of the entire people of God" (*Direct.*, n. 97, 113).

#### IV. *Qualifications of the Vicar Forane.*

Since the selection of the Vicar is the exclusive prerogative of the bishop, it is understandable that no special qualifications for the office be laid down by law except that the candidate be a priest worthy of the office or position he is to hold. He should be chosen preferably from among the rectors of churches in active duty within the diocese (CIC, c. 446, 1). This provision makes it possible for the bishop to select for the office a retired pastor or just an econumus, even if either be not a resident of the vicariate. The Plenary Council of the Philippines provides: "the office of the VF is not attached to any given parish or place. The bishop is free to assign the job to any priest, especially if he is a worthy pastor, even if he is still young and resides in a small town or village, and this for as long as the bishop wishes" (*Acta*, n. 140).

That the bishop should choose for the office of VF a person adequately qualified to hold the office and to assume its responsibilities, is beyond question. The bishop should have first-hand information on the personnel, needs and resources of each

vicariate within the diocese, and so he is in the best position to determine the qualifications he should look for in a candidate for that office.

The *Apost. Litt.* "Eccl. Sanctae" requires that priests appointed to that office be "outstanding for learning and for apostolic zeal" (ES, n. 19, 1). One could perhaps find an ideal model for the office in the decrees of the III Plenary Council of Baltimore wherein the appointee for the office of VF is required to have "experience in the ministry, learning, piety, prudence, discretion, kindness and loyalty (*Acta.*, n. 30). Perhaps the list of qualifications could be further expanded by adding that the VF should have at least a working knowledge of canon law.

#### V. *The Power and Jurisdiction of the Vicar Forane.*

The law makes it mandatory on the residential bishop to appoint Vicars Forane to head the various regions of the diocese (CIC, c. 446), and gives them supervisory and administrative powers (CIC, c. 477). The inference of this legislation is that the jurisdiction of the VF is "ordinary", that is, it grows out of the office to which it is attached by law, not by a given person, and can be exercised as soon as one is in full possession of the office. Moreover, since the power or jurisdiction is exercised not in the name of the office-holder but in that of the bishop or superior whom the VF represents within the region, it follows that the jurisdiction is "vicarious", too, and not "proper" (CIC, c. 197).

In addition to this "ordinary" — though "vicarious" — power of the VF in virtue of common law and by prescription of diocesan or provincial synods (CIC, c. 447, 1), he enjoys a "delegated" jurisdiction which accrues to his person by special commission of his superior, the bishop (CIC, c. 447, 1; ES, 19, 1).

Since in principle "ordinary" jurisdiction is subject to delegation, the VF can delegate his powers totally or partially to another, unless otherwise stipulated in law (CIC, c. 199). Considering further that the power of the VF is "vicarious", i.e., exercised in the name of his superior, it follows that all administrative decisions made by the VF are as good as if made by the bishop himself, as they can be presumed to have been made upon instructions and with the approval of the bishop. On the basis of such a legal presumption, and unless the contrary is proven, it is logical to conclude that at least in theory:



— no administrative recourse can be made to the bishop against an official decision of the VF,, and instead it should be elevated or referred to a higher authority above the bishop;

— the bishop is responsible *in solidum* for the wrong doings or mistakes of his Vicars and, therefore, he may be liable to a law suit and be obliged to repair damages resulting from the poor performance of his personal representative, the VF;

— the bishop can not punish his “alter ego” for the wrong doings performed by him in an official capacity; however, he can remove him from office.

All this goes to show that the VF must work in perfect harmony with the bishop at all times and share with him the utmost concern for the common welfare of the diocese (CD, 29). If the VF can not act that way, he should resign from office.

#### VI. *The Office and Functions of the Vicar Forane.*

To exercise properly and adequately the functions of his office, the VF enjoys faculties granted him *ex officio* or by delegation by his superior. It is obvious that these faculties ought to be extensive enough as to give the VF the necessary power to administer his vicariate effectively.

The powers of the VF are mostly, though not exclusively, of a supervisory and administrative nature. He includes in his charge all the priests of his vicariate, and must see to it that all the instructions of the Ordinary are carried out within the territory.

a) According to common law the Vicar Forane’s supervisory power consists in ascertaining effectively or seeing to it that:

— the clergy within his territory lives up to the requirements of the law (CIC, c. 124), and that they satisfy their obligations, particularly those relative to residence (CIC, c. 143), preaching (CIC, cc. 1327, 1328), catechetical instruction of children and adults (CIC, c. 1329), and attendance to sick calls (SN-CIC, c. 387, § 1, 2).

— the clergy under his supervision executes the bishop’s instructions given during the pastoral visitation (CIC, c. 343).

— the necessary precautions concerning the matter of the Eucharistic sacrifice are observed (CIC, cc. 814, 816).

— the rules concerning the adornment and neatness of churches and sacred furnishings (CIC, c. 1178), especially the custody of the Blessed Sacrament (CIC, c. 1265) and the celebration of Mass are observed (SN-CIC, c. 387, § 1, 3).

— the sacred function are performed in accordance with liturgical laws (CIC, c. 733; SN-CIC, c. 387, § 1, 3).

— church temporalities are carefully administered (CIC, cc. 1520-1528), and all obligations arising therefrom, especially Mass obligations (SN-CIC, c. 387, § 1, 3), are properly discharged.

At this point some may be thinking that all functions of the VF are ultimately reduced to being a "policeman" over the clergy and people of his region. This is not so. The VF can exercise the required vigilance over his priests and people by just being close enough to them. Through frequent communion, the VF should be able to create personal rapport with his subjects and thus become acquainted with the actual condition of the vicariate without resorting to the use of police powers. This is precisely why the law requires the VF to visit the parishes of the territory at times specified by the bishop (CIC, c. 447, 2; SN-CIC, c. 387, § 4). The Plenary Council of the Philippines would go a step forward by requiring the VF to pay a monthly visit to, or somehow communicate with, his priests residing in distant, solitary places. (*Acta*, n. 142, 1).

b) Administrative faculties granted to the VF *ex officio* are:

— to allow for a just cause a leave of absence from his parish provided there be a substitute (Conc. Plen. Fili., n. 141, 1; 142, 4).

— to stop the alienation of sacred things and other church property in favor of non-catholics (CIC, 1289, 1).

— to grant church administrators permission to enter or answer a law-suit in the name of the church, though only in urgent cases (CIC, c. 1526).

— to watch over the administration and custody of beneficial and other church property (CIC, c. 1478; SN-CIC, c. 387, § 1, 3), especially during sickness or death of a priest (CIC, 447, 3; SN-CIC, c. 387, § 3).

c) Faculties granted *ex officio* to the VF for pastoral reasons are:

— to allow bination and trination Masses in accordance with law and whenever necessary for the good of the faithful (*Conc. Plen. Phil.*, 141, 3).

— to permit the pastor to say the Mass *pro-populo* on another than the day specified by law (CPF, 141, 2).

— to grant absolution from sins reserved to the bishop with the faculty to subdelegate this power *per modum actus* to the priest-confessor who ask for it (CIC, c. 899, 2).

— to assist sick and or dying priests within the vicariate in their temporal and spiritual needs (CIC, c. 447, 3; SN-CIC, c. 387, § 2, 3).

— to correct any abuse by priests or laymen within the vicariate; to mediate in disagreements between priests or between a pastor and the laity; to investigate complaints and denuntiations made against a priest, and whenever necessary, to report the case to the bishop (CPF, 142, 2; 143).

— to permit the substitution of the publication of marriage banns from oral proclamations to written notices to be posted in the parish bulletin board for a period of eight days covering two days of obligation (CPF, 141, 4).

d) In addition to the faculties granted him *ex officio*, the VF enjoys certain powers delegated to him by the bishop. These delegated faculties vary from diocese to diocese. Those most commonly granted are the following:

— to preside over the investiture ceremonies of new pastors;

— to administer the sacrament of Confirmation in places away from the Vicar's residence (*Decennial Faculties*, n. 1).

— to conduct the examination of candidates to the novitiate and to the profession in orders or congregations of religious women within the territory (CIC, c. 552).

## VII. *Duties of the Vicar Forane.*

The law is very specific as to the duties of the VF. These are the following:

— to make regular visitations of the parish within the vicariate in order to obtain first hand information on their state of affairs (CIC, c. 447, 2; SN-CIC, c. 387, § 4).

— to convoke and to preside over the so called "clerical conferences" organized for the discussion and solution of moral and liturgical problems, and related matters (CIC, cc. 131; 1448, 1; SN-CIC, c. 387, § 2, 2).

— to reside within the vicariate or in another nearby place as determined by the bishop (CIC, c. 338, 2).

— to submit, at least once a year, a report on the condition of the vicariate. This report should be a sort of balance-sheet wherein a fair and real picture of the vicariate is presented. It should make reference to the achievements of the year elapsed as well as to the abuses that crept in, and the scandals that arose, indicating the means used to up-root them, and suggesting the remedies he deems fit for the eradication of existing evils. The Vicar could and even should touch on other topics he considers relevant (CIC, c. 449; SN-CIC, c. 388).

#### VIII. *Rights and Privileges of the Vicar Forane*

The rights and privileges of the VF are:

— to have a vicarial seal different from that of other vicariates for use in all official documents (CIC, c. 450; SN-CIC, c. 389),

— to have the right of precedence over all the pastors and priests of the vicariate (CIC, c. 450, 2). Outside of his territory VF, has no right of precedence, though the bishop could grant him that privilege within the diocese in virtue of c. 106, 6 of CIC.

— to be convoked for, and to attend, the diocesan synod (CIC, c. 348).

— to be heard regarding the erection, division or suppression of parishes within the vicariate (ES, 19, 2).

#### IX. *In the Service of the Bishop and of the Vicariate.*

As pointed out above, the VF shares the pastoral role of the bishop as his representative in the vicariate. He is committed, therefore, to serve his superior and his vicariate. The ways in which a Vicar can serve his bishop and his vicariate are many and varied according to local pastoral circumstances. The most common functions usually performed by the Vicar within his territory are the following:

a) In relation to the bishop:

- he installs new pastors within the vicariate.
- he collects the annual pastoral report of each parish and forwards it to bishop.
- when a matter of conflict come to the attention of the vicar, he investigates and resolves the matter by his own authority whenever possible, and when necessary, he brings the matter to the attention of the bishop.
- he presides over, or assists at, the funeral of priests.
- he is available, whenever possible, for important parish celebrations.
- he represents the bishop in local liturgical, ecumenical or civil functions.
- he subdelegates to other priests certain faculties given him by the bishop.
- he communicates the pastoral judgments of the bishop to his vicariate.

b) In his vicariate:

- The VF assists persons or groups within the vicariate to fulfill better their responsibility of preaching the gospel and of serving the needs of one another.
- he explores and communicates trends and programs on the vicariate at both the diocesan and the national levels, such trends and programs that might affect the further growth of its parishes and institutions within the vicariate.
- he speaks for vicariate positions, needs and interests with civil or diocesan agencies or authorities.
- he promotes self-evaluation of the parishes and institutions as a means of planning for continual growth and improvement.
- he promotes priestly fraternity and spirituality and seeks to develop a real sense of mutual concern and cooperation among all the clergy of his vicariate.
- he takes steps to bring the people within his territory into a community of shared visions, goals and projects.
- he serves as a channel of communication for the various parishes and as a forum for their needs and resources.

— he fosters the development of an effective parish council in each parish (Cfr. *Role of the Urban Vicar*, Chicago, USA, 1976).

#### X. *The Vicariate in Action.*

The vicariate system is so far the most effective system of communication between the bishop and his people. The success of the system, however, has been rather uneven. Some vicariates have accomplished a great deal more than others. This is done to a great extent to the organization and leadership of the vicariate.

The performance of a given vicariate depends, first of all and to a great extent, on its origin or formation. The vicariate should preferably be formed by parishes which have something in common, say, the territory, social class, ethnic make-up, language, traditions... This common bond or denominator may provide the necessary inducement for the parishes to begin to work in unison, and to share their resources, planning, expertise and personnel.

However, a vicariate, no matter what its origin or formation might have been, will never grow and develop unless it is placed under the leadership of a competent vicar. He is the person who is to act as the real catalyst within the vicariate through the exercise of creative leadership and the implementation of collegiality. He should be able to function not so much on mandated authority but rather on that ascendancy earned from his people. Thus his effectiveness as an agent of unity is largely dependent upon his qualities of leadership and personal charisma to gain the respect, the acceptance and the cooperation of the people whom he serves.

Since in many instances the VF may lack the time or the expertise to initiate or carry out desired objectives, some places have experimented with full time or, so to say, career Vicars. The experiment seems to have worked well in most of the cases, though frequently it had to be abandoned due to the shortage of priests. The idea of a coordinator to help the vicar was thus born.

In running his vicariate the VF counts with the vicariate Council and at times with the vicariate Commissions or committees. The Council should be representative enough and accommodate the clergy, the religious and the laity exercising

the apostolate in the region. Through regular council meetings the Vicar shares with the members the latest developments from his meetings with the bishop and the other Vicars Forane, and invites feedbacks or seeks an input on a number of issues to take back to the bishop.

The vicariate Commissions are parallel to the commissions operating at the parish level as working bodies of the parish council such as the commissions on Workshop, Education, Administration . . . The Commission ought to hold regular meetings to facilitate a sharing of ideas and even to offer a common programming. The interchange of impressions among the vicariate Commissions has helped to generate ideas and insights and to spark activities in parishes which have tended to move rather slowly.

The functioning of the vicariate system does vary from place to place. However, the extent of its success can only be gauged in terms of the service it has rendered to the bishop, the clergy and the people. In the final analysis it can be said that a vicariate system has functioned satisfactorily and has served the diocese well when:

- it has made possible for the bishop to be closer to the people and for them to him;
- the people have had an opportunity for contributing a direct input into the policy-making of the diocese;
- it has fostered closer interdependence among the parishes and among the priests, the religious and the laity within those parishes;

For it is only then that the bishop, and the people can be said to have collaborated in searching for ways to live out the mission entrusted to them by the Lord.

# HOMILETICS

## BIBLICAL NOTES AND OUTLINES FOR HOMILIES AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1981

By

Fr. Herman Mueller, S.V.D.

**Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
(August 2, 1981)**

The liturgy today pictures God who feeds men. Deutero-Isaiah invites the exiles: "Come, all you that thirst" (first reading)! Jesus with the help of his apostles feeds five thousand people (gospel). The independent theme of the second reading: Paul exclaims: "Nobody and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ!"

### **First Reading: Isaiah 55:1-3**

Deutero-Isaiah (Is. 40-55) describes in the last part of the book the spiritual blessings of the new covenant (55:1-13). In the first verses (55:1-5) he invites all that thirst to come and be filled. Apparently, many exiles had settled down in Babylonian and did not want to return to Palestine any more. To them the author can only say: "Why spend your money for what is not bread; your wages for what fails to satisfy" (55:2)?

And then like a water-seller and others who shouted their wares in the market he goes on: "All you who are thirsty, come to the water. You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; come without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk." They will get real food: the essential (grain and water) and the luxurious one (wine and milk).

At the same time, it looks also like Wisdom who invites to be guests at her table. She begins with the characteristic



public invitation to the hungry and thirsty to come (Prov. 9:5; Sir. 24:19) and partake of food and drink at her table, where both can be had without money. And as in Prov. 9:11, this invitation culminates in a promise of life: Come to me feedfully, listen, that you may have life" (55:3).

Typical for Wisdom also is the oscillating between the image of bread of life as instruction (word) and bread of life as eaten from a table. In the gospel Christ (eternal Wisdom) feeds the multitude with his words and then with the miraculous bread.

### **Second Reading: Romans 8:35-37-39**

Paul concludes chapter 8 of the Letter to the Romans, which told us that life of a Christian is a life in the Holy Spirit, with a hymn of triumph (8:35-39) on the indomitable love for Christ. No created thing can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ.

In two paragraphs the apostle tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ:

- (a) First comes a series of seven forms of suffering:
  - (1) trial, (2) distress, (3) persecution, (4) hunger, (5) nakedness, (6) danger, (7) sword.
- (b) Then follows a series of ten cosmic powers which could try to separate us from Christ:
  - (1) death, (2) life, (3) angels, (4) principalities, (5) present, (6) future, (7) powers, (8) height, (9) death, (10) any creature.

Christ has loved us, especially by dying for us. The cross was the obedience of the Son (cf. Phil. 2:8) and the redemptive act of the Father (2 Cor. 5:19). This death was victory over the demonic powers, who can do no real harm to the believers, if (of course) we hold on to Christ.

### **Reading of the Good News: Matthew 14:13-21**

The multiplication of the loaves is reported twice: The feeding of the five thousand we find in Mt. 14:13-21; Mk. 6:30-44; Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-15. The feeding of the four thousand

is narrated in Mt. 15:32-39 and Mk. 8:1-10. Scholars agree that it actually happened only once. The similarities between the two reports are greater than the dissimilarities. The strongest argument, favoring two multiplications, the word of Christ in Mk. 8:18-20; Mt. 16:9 ("Do you not remember when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets of fragments you gathered up?" They answered, 'Twelve!' 'When I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many full hampers of fragments did you collect?' They answered, 'Seven'.") is not a very word of Christ, but a word of the redactor. Early Christian tradition was pleased with the historical core and reported the small details in a different way according to the theological message it wanted to convey. Thus the first multiplication source pictured Christ as the Good Shepherd who feeds his sheep by word and food. The second source of tradition pictures him as the giver of the wonderful bread only. That brought about the small different details. When this two-fold version of the same historical event took shape in the written gospel, one took them for two different events not realizing that the same different details were due to the different theological interpretation of the same historical event. Consequently, the different details were not tried to be harmonized and the word of Jesus in Mk. 8:19-20 (and parallel in Mt.) was shaped. Thus we find in the first report (Mk. 6:30) Christ as Good Shepherd who feeds the people by his word (6:34c) and the miraculous bread. People follow him because they are like sheep without shepherd (Mk. 6:34b). Jesus is the Good Shepherd and makes the people recline on the green grass (Mk. 6:39 = Mt. 14:19). This is a clear insinuation of Ps. 23 (22): If: "The Lord is my shepherd... In verdant pastures he gives me repose." They reclined in groups of about hundred or fifty persons each (Mk. 6:40). That reminds of Ex. 18:13-27 (mainly v. 25). Upon the advice of his father-in-law Jethro, Moses "chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens." That means: As Moses once grouped the people and gave them leaders and judges so our Lord, as the new Moses and shepherd groups his people into groups and gives them their leaders who in turn give the people the bread of life.

The second report (Mt. 15:32,39; Mk. 8:1-10 pictures Christ as the giver of the miraculous bread. Thus missing is the reference to the flock without shepherd and the allusion to Ps. 23 and the green pasture. There is no division into groups.

The multiplication of the loaves is one of the few pericopes the Synoptics have in common with John. That proves how important the pericope was considered. The early Church soon considered the feeding of the thousand as figure for Holy Eucharist. Meditating on the details we find that the report is theological reflection on the importance of Holy Eucharist. Here especially we will eat our fill. Holy Eucharist is the real bread

## HOMILY

### THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES FIGURE OF HOLY EUCHARIST

1. John has only few pericopes in common with the Synoptics (if we set aside the passion and resurrection narratives). The multiplication of the loaves is one of them. Its place before the Eucharist discourse (Jn. 6:22-71) makes it refer to Holy Eucharist. It looks as if Jesus wanted to tell people in Capernaum: "Why are you so scandalized if I say: 'Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you have no life in you'? If I could perform the miracle of feeding the thousands I can also perform the miracle of changing bread and wine into my flesh and blood."

2. Soon the early Church saw in this miracle of feeding the thousands a figure of Holy Eucharist. And one can understand the report fully only if one thinks of Holy Eucharist. And many features of Holy Eucharist become clear only by meditating on the multiplication of the loaves. As the Lord was giving the people a wonderful bread that afternoon so and even more he is giving us an excellent food in Mass.

3. The Holy Eucharist was made possible only by Christ's death. He had to die that he could be in our midst as Eucharistic food for all the time. This is what John wants to tell us when he tells us: "The Jewish feast of Passover was near" (Jn. 6:4). He does not just want to give us a date. Rather, Jesus died at Easter time.

4. Another reference to this suffering of Christ, and thus to Holy Eucharist, which one can take only from the multiplication of the loaves, not from the Last Supper, is the fish as symbol of Holy Eucharist. The Fathers of the Church coined

the word: "Piscus assus est Christus passus" = "The fried fish is the suffering Christ". One of the most common symbols of Holy Eucharist is a fish and on top of that fish a basket with bread. We often find it in the catacombs and on many tabernacles. Only during the multiplication of the loaves did Jesus also bless and distribute fish, not at the Last Supper. As a matter of fact, the Greek name for fish, ἰχθύς (*ichthyus*) has become one of main diagrams for our Lord, where every of this Greek letters stands for one word:

I	=	Ἰησοῦς	( <u>Iēsous</u> )	=	Jesus
X	=	Χριστός	( <u>Christos</u> )	=	Christ
O	=	Θεοῦ	( <u>Theou</u> )	=	God's
Υ	=	Υἱός	( <u>Hyios</u> )	=	Son
Σ	=	Σωτήρ	( <u>Sōtēr</u> )	=	Savior

Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. We experience Jesus Christ as Son of God and Savior mainly in Holy Eucharist.

5. Is it chance that in the introductory form of the consecration in the Mass, in Canon I, we have exactly the same five points which we have during the multiplication of the loaves, not during the Last Supper: 1. he took the bread, 2. looked up to heaven, 3. gave thanks (spoke the blessing), 4. broke the bread and 5. gave it to his disciples. Nr. 2 (he looked up to heaven) is missing in the introductory form of the Last Supper. The conclusion seems to be: The report of the multiplication of bread features as figure of Holy Eucharist.

6. Mass is not a private affair. There are no private Masses. And to receive Holy Communion alone shall be the exception. Holy Eucharist is a ceremony which involves the whole community, the different parish communities. Already at the feeding of the thousands, Mark (Mk. 6:40) sees the parishes in miniature when people are ordered to recline in groups of hundreds and fifties.

There will be no Holy Eucharist without a priest. "You give them to eat" Jesus says in all three Synoptic gospels (Mt. 14:16; Mk. 6:37; Lk. 9:13). The apostles are puzzled. How

can they feed five thousand (and women and children are not included in this figure) with five loaves. But Jesus insists on his order. The apostles, the priests, can feed the multitude with Holy Eucharist and everybody receives the whole Christ.

7. Yes, the Lord is present in any smallest piece of this wonderful bread, not here at the feeding of the five thousand, but in its fulfillment in our churches. Probably this is what the Lord wants to tell with the order to collect the leftovers. The fragments filled twelve baskets. This certainly signifies clearer than anything else that really everybody got his fill. After all, there were only five loaves at the beginning. It also underlines the cooperation of the twelve apostles. It demonstrates equally that we never should waste any food. But this reverence becomes fully understandable only with Holy Eucharist: In the smallest particle, Christ is present as the sequence on the Feast of Corpus Christi by St. Thomas Aquinas, puts it:

"When the sacrament is broken,  
Doubt not, but believe 'tis spoken,  
That each sever'd outward token  
doth the very whole contain."

8. One of the technical terms for Holy Eucharist is "Mass". Missa comes from the Latin *mittere*, *missi*, *missum* = to send away. Mass according to this explanation is the ceremony where people are sent away. At the Last Supper Jesus did not send his apostles away. Rather, they stayed together for quite some time, even if we do not believe that Jesus delivered the whole Farewell Address (Jn. 14-17) as it stands in the gospel of John but assume that it's present form is due to the redaction of John. Only after the multiplication of the loaves it is said "Immediately afterward, while dismissing the crowds, Jesus insisted that his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side. When he had sent them away, he went up to the mountain by himself to pray" (Mt. 14:22-23). Before the multiplication of the loaves the apostles had intended to dismiss the people because the disciples could not feed them: "As evening drew on, his disciples came to him with the suggestion: 'This is a deserted place and it is already late. Dismiss the crowds so that they may go to the villages and buy some food for themselves'" (Mt. 14:15). But the Lord did not want to send them away. Only after they had gotten their fill could they go home. Only after we have received the strength in Holy Eucharist, in Mass and Communion, can we go back to life and put the Mass into action, for the Mass not just be a sacred drama.

9. Another familiar term for Mass is "Eucharist" thanksgiving. Here at the feeding of the five thousand, as well as, at the Last Supper Jesus took the bread and gave thanks. Every family father would bless the bread before the paschal meal with thanks. For Jesus it was more, and so it is for us. The sacrifice which Jesus made of his life in consecrating it to the Father in order that he might sanctify his own, is our eucharist (Jn. 17:19). And this eucharist is anticipated in figure at the feeding of the five thousand. At the Last Supper and on the cross, Jesus reveals the drive of all his life and that of his death: thanksgiving from his heart. The passion and death of Jesus were necessary that he may fully glorify the Father (Jn. 17:1). The best way of thanking God is Holy Eucharist, performed in figure by the multiplication of the loaves.

**Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
(August 9, 1981)**

The liturgy of today tells us to face the obstacles of our life by going toward the Lord. Peter leaves the ship and walks toward Christ (gospel). Elijah experiences the Lord in a tiny, whispering wind (first reading). The independent theme of the second reading shows us how St. Paul regrets that his people has rejected Christ.

**First Reading: 1 Kings 19-9.11-13**

The prophet Elijah was the champion of irreconcilable antagonism between Yahweh and Baal. Yahweh is a jealous God who cannot tolerate other gods besides him (Deut. 4:24; 5:9). Any form of Baal cult is therefore idolatry. Elijah orders the priests of Baal to a showdown on Mt. Carmel. Each party shall offer a sacrifice to his god, and the god who answers the prayers of his party is the true god. The priests of Baal start with their sacrifice to Baal. But inspite of their loud shouting no fire comes from heaven to consume the sacrifice. But hardly has Elijah prepared his young bull of sacrifice and called on the name of Yahweh, then fire consumes the whole sacrifice and even the water around the altar (1 Kgs. 18). With great zeal Elijah has all Baal priests killed.

Apparently he has won the battle. But there is still the queen Jezebel, wife of Ahab, an enthusiastic worshiper of Baal herself. She swears: "May the gods do thus and so to me if

by this time tomorrow I have not done with your life what was done to each of them" (7 Kgs. 19:2). Thus Elijah flies for his life. What a letdown for a man of God who has done everything he could. Resigned and enervated to the point of contemplating suicide, he flees to Beer-sheba on the southern border of Judah. Here the Lord feeds him with a wonderful bread so that he can go on to Mt. Horeb. (What the Yahwistic and Priestly Source call Mt. Sinai, the Elohist and Deuteronomistic Source call Mt. Horeb.) He wanted to pour out his troubles to Yahweh at the place where Yahweh had already shown himself so plainly, and where Moses, too, had worked. There the covenant had been established which Elijah saw broken. And he considered himself the only true worshipper left.

But the theophany at Mt. Horeb tells him something different. God appreciates Elijah's zeal. But he overdoes it a little. Thus the Lord is not in the mighty wind, the earthquake, nor the fire, but rather in the gentle whisper of the breeze. God will accomplish his goals of the covenant, after all. Yahweh is not finished with Israel. And Elijah is not the only true worshipper left. A remnant of Israel will remain, e.g. the seven thousand (around figure) who have not bowed to Baal (1 Kgs. 19:18). Israel will suffer much at the hands of Hazael of Syria and of Jehu whom Elijah shall appoint as avengers to their task. But this will not be the end of Israel. The remnant would be blessed by Yahweh. To be a remnant is a chastisement (it is only a remnant); but at the same time it is also a blessing: life comes from this remnant.

### **Second Reading: Romans 9:1-5**

The main intention of the Letter to the Romans is: "We are all justified by faith in Christ". There remains, however, a great problem for the apostle, which he answers in Rom. 9-11, the so-called Pauline Theodicy: How can one reconcile with this universal will of salvation of God the fact that Jews as a whole do not accept Christ, but as one can see it clearer by now, that they have rejected him? The answer of Paul is: (1) The infidelity of the Jews is not contrary to the way God rules history. No one can blame God (Rom. 9). (2) The infidelity of the Jews comes from a sinful refusal of the Jews (Rom. 10). (3) The infidelity of the Jews is only partial and transitory (Rom. 11).

Today's second reading brings the introduction of the first of above three parts: Israel is infidel inspite of its privileges (Rom. 9:1-5). The fact that the Israelites cut themselves off from the Messianic blessings is a continual source of sorrow for Paul. If it were possible he would rather wish to be deprived of these blessings himself than his fellow Jews. That strong is his love for them. They are deprived inspite of eight prerogatives: (1) *adoption*, i.e. the election among all others to be the people of God (Ex. 4:22; 19:5; Deut. 13:1), (2) *glory*, i.e. They saw God's *shekinah*, or sensible manifestation of the presence of God in the Tabernacle and in the Temple (Ex. 40:34; 1 Kgs. 8:10; Ez. 10:11), (3) *the covenants*, which God made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses, (4) *the law*, which regulates, (5) *the service* i.e. the worship of the true God, (6) *the promises* to receive the Messiah one day, (7) *the Fathers*, i.e. the patriarchs, and finally (8) *the Messiah*, Jesus Christ, who came from the Jesus according to the flesh, i.e. according to human nature.

Paul ends with a doxology. From the context one would expect that this doxology (as climax of the pericope) refers to Christ: "They are descended from the patriarchs, and from their flesh and blood came Christ who is above all, God for ever blessed! Amen." Thus we find it in the Jerusalem Bible, in the margin of the RSV. But since St. Paul seldom calls Christ God (cf. Tit. 2:13; Hebr. 13:21, which are not even strictly Pauline) but the Father, others, like the NAB, RSV, NEB translate: "Theirs were the patriarchs, and from them came the Messiah (I speak of his human origins). Blessed forever be God who is over all! Amen." The Greek text leaves the possibility open for either translation.

### Reading of the Good News: Matthew 14:22-33

This pericope we also find in Mk. 6:45-52 and Jn. 6:16-21. Together with the pericope of the multiplication of the loaves it is one of the few passages John has in common with the Synoptics. When the Jews had a hard time to accept Christ as life-giving bread and asked him: "How did you come here" (Jn. 6:25), he could answer: "I come from above." And together with the first miracle, the multiplication of the loaves, Christ could say: "If I could perform such miracles, I can also change bread and wine into my flesh and blood. Don't be scandalized!"



Matthew follows closely his source, Mark, but adds vv. 28-30 the walking of Peter on the water, and thus singles out Peter more than Mark does,, which is typical for the first gospel. Also the blame of the disbelief of the disciples in Mk. 6:52 is omitted. In Mt. 14:33 they rather confess Christ as Son of God.

Immediately after the feeding of the five thousand Jesus dismisses the crowd and insists that his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side. As Jn. 6:15 shows, people want to make him king and the apostles would join people in this attempt. But Jesus wants to avoid all this. On the other hand, the apostles might have feared that a storm might come up and thus did not want to embark right away. But the Lord wants to impress on them that he is Lord over the powers of nature. Storms on the Sea of Galilee come suddenly, but not as a surprise, because storms coming from the Mediterranean are registered in advance by a sort of natural weather-forecast: the roaring of the surfs along the Syrian coast, particularly at Ras-en-Nakura = the great chest, which is a large cave in the rockbound coasts which amplifies the noise created by the violent tossing force of the waters against the cliffs. The deep, dull roar is carried to the Lake of Genesareth by vibrations of the earth. Then fishermen hear it and say: "The great chest is roaring". They know that within twenty-four hours a storm will come and do not venture out upon the Lake when such danger threatens. Storms coming from Mount Hermon are usually accompanied by severe atmospheric tension, announced by flashes of lightning in the North. The fishermen can also predict those storms. The two occasions on which the disciples were overtaken by a storm (here and in Mk. 4:35-41 = Mt. 8:23.27 = Lk. 8:22-25) were seemingly not unexpected. Jesus ordered the disciples to venture forth when, as experienced fishermen, they would have otherwise remained on shore.

Jesus meanwhile prays to prepare people for the Eucharistic talk in Capernaum (Jn. 6:22-71) and to prepare the meeting with his apostles on the lake. A storm falls on the lake, the apostles have a hard time battling the wind and the waves. In the fourth night watch (3:00 A.M. till 6:00 A.M.) Jesus walks toward them on the water. They take him for a ghost. But when he assures them that it is he, Peter asks the Lord to come toward him on the water. He succeeds only to sink when his faith falters. But the Lord takes Peter by his hand. Both go into the boat and the wind ceases.

## HOMILY

### ENCOUNTERING THE LORD

1. a. We have to grow in our life by facing obstacles. This is what we learn in the first reading and in the gospel of today. There is the prophet Elijah, a real fighter for the Lord, a man who hates foul compromises, a man of principles. When the Jews came from the desert into the promised land, they faced one of the greatest social changes. They had been nomads or semi-nomads so far and now they had to become farmers.

There are many wonderful things in nature. But one of the finest is certainly the mystery of life in plants, animals and in human persons. Palestine has long winters where much of the vegetation dies. But as soon as springtime comes, the grass springs up, green leaves appear on the trees, the flowers bud. In short, there is life again, almost over night. And springtime is also the love time for many animals, and for men as well. The Canticle of Canticles puts it this: "The winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of pruning the vines has come, and the song of the dove is heard in our land... Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one, and come" (Song of Songs 2:11-12).

The Canaanites had observed that going and coming of life every year and had asked themselves where this life might come from. Their answer was: It comes from the sexual relations between the farmer god Baal and his wife Baalath (or Anath). Each winter Baal lost the battle with death (Mot) and was carried to the underworld. Anath searched for her husband. When she finally found him, she killed Mot, and Baal and Baalath were again united. Due to these sexual relations between Baal and Anath, rain came (there was no rain in winter) and life came back again in nature, animals and men. Man was not a mere spectator of this sacred marriage. By ritually enacting the drama of Baal, it was believed that man could bring the divine pair together in fertilizing union.

In the act of temple prostitution, the man identified himself with Baal, the woman with Anath. So far, Yahweh had been the god of wanderers and thus the ruler of history. Would he, in this transition of Israel from the status of semi-Nomads to the sedentary existence of farmers, prove to be the God

of fertility too, or would the Hebrews turn to Baal, the "owner" and "lord" (this is the meaning of Baal) of the land? Participating in the Baal cult and temple prostitution Hebrews would fall away from the true faith in Yahweh

This is the background of the fierce fight of Elijah. Queen Jezebel and her husband Ahab of the Northern Kingdom, the Kingdom of Israel, were devotees of Baal, the queen more than the king. She supported and defended the Baal priest. Elijah had to fight alone. Did one not have to admire him for his courage in the showdown on Mt. Carmel? In many ways certainly yes.

b. And yet, even great men of God are one-sided. The author of the Books of Kings certainly wants to say that Elijah exaggerated in his battle. And furthermore, how was his reaction when he was persecuted? Was he not almost sulking against God as Jonah was?

There is a tendency in all of us to make things seem larger or more difficult than they really are. Did Elijah not picture his own situation and that of the faithful Israelites too black? "This is enough, O Lord; Take my life, for I am no better than my fathers" (1 Kgs. 19:4) he prayed, when he came to Beer-sheba. Was his fight with the Baal priests and queen Jezebel all that enervating that he should think of dying. Was he not pitying himself too much!

And that same mood continued when in the power of the miraculous bread he went on to Mt. Horeb and he judged the situation of the faithful Israelites hopeless: "I have been most zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to the sword. I *alone* am left, and they seek to take life" (1 Kgs. 19:10). Was it really that bad? The Lord could only refer to a great faithful remnant: "I will leave seven thousand men in Israel, all those who have not knelt to Baal or kissed him" (19:18).

One should be a man of principles. But the way one does it makes a lot of a difference. The form should be mild and gentle. This is what Yahweh in his theophany wanted to tell Elijah. "A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. There was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. There was fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. There was a tiny whispering sound. And God was in this tiny

whispering breeze" (19:11-13). Elijah covers his face as sign of reverence before the Lord and as sign that he, the prophet judged too harshly. "Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss" (Ps. 85:11) the responsorial psalm says and Elijah may have prayed himself.

2. a. Peter was another type, different from Elijah. Probably he would not have called himself a man of principles as Elijah. But he certainly also wanted to give himself completely to the Lord. He was always fast at hand in acting and doing his share. After the feeding of the five thousand Christ insisted that his disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side. He knew how much the Jews were looking for a Messiah, but more for a political hero than for a savior. Thus he did not want such a hope to come up. John 6:15 says that they wanted to come and make him king. After he had dismissed the crowd he went up to a mountain to pray for the success of his important speech on the institution of Holy Eucharist next morning in the synagogue of Capernaum (Jn. 6) and of his encounter with his disciples on the sea. Shortly after 3:00 A.M. he left his solitude and started walking toward his disciples. Meanwhile the boat was battling with a heavy storm. When the apostles saw Jesus, they took him for a ghost. God and demons can often not easily be distinguished. It needs the charism of distinguishing spirits.

b. But Peter felt the need to do something more than the apostles did. He wanted to impress on Jesus his loyalty. And thus he said: "If it is really you, tell me to come to you across the water." "Come"! was the laconic answer. And Peter left the ship to walk toward the Lord. He did not ask what the other apostles would do, if they follow him. At times we have to leave the security of a daily routine, of well known habits, of old familiar customs and do something different, which nobody has done before us, and where we are not sure, how it will develop. We cannot ask, if others will laugh at us, or what they will say, if we feel that the Lord wants us.

c. Everything went fine till Peter forgot to look at the Lord and trust in him. All of a sudden he became self conscious. Then he felt the storm in his face and saw the big waves. First the Lord was still on these waves. But then Peter did not see him any more either. And the apostle began to sink to the degree his faith was shrinking. As soon as we stare at the difficulties of our life we lose courage. We do not see the Lord any more who is so close to us. We have to look a little higher, up to the Lord, not to the big waves. Otherwise fear cripples us as it crippled Peter.

d. Peter had acted more on impulse, as he did so often, than by taking into consideration the whole cost, all the difficulties and his limited strength. He was too sure of himself and did not put the Lord in the center. He would do it again, when he self-sure would say: "Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine will never be shaken" (Mt. 26:33). And yet the Lord would have to tell him soberly: "I give you my word, before the cock crows tonight you will deny me three times" (Mt. 26:34).

e. But at least that much faith Peter had left to shout, "Lord, save me" (Mt. 14:30)! Peter never finally failed. He always was ruled by his heart. He always at the moment of failure clutched at Christ. A Saint is not the one who never fails and falls but the one who gets up and goes on again every time he falls. And when Peter betrayed Jesus three times, a look of the Lord was enough to make Peter weep with repentance (Mt. 26:75). To admit one's fault is not the smallest sign of greatness.

f. Jesus took Peter by his hand. Both went into the boat and the wind died down. When Christ is in the boat of our life, in the ship of the Church, things are well, if we only see his presence and believe in him.

### **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (August 16, 1981)**

God builds a house for all peoples, we learn in today's liturgy. Third Isaiah said it clearly for the first time, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (first reading). Israel is chosen, but also the pagans shall receive mercy (second reading). Although Jesus is sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he heals the daughter of a Canaanite woman (gospel). As one can see, this is one of the few Sundays where a unitive theme runs through all the three readings.

### **First Reading: Isaiah 56:1.6-7**

Trito-Isaiah (Is. 56-66) wrote around 538-510 B.C. to the Jews returned from exile, telling them, after the first enthusiasm was soon spent and the expected salvation did not come as fast as some had hoped for, not to despair. Salvation would come. But true piety would be important.

There were many aliens, not Israelites, residing in Palestine. Before the exile, foreigners had been allowed to perform certain functions in the precincts of the temple. Ezekiel had objected to uncircumcised foreigners: "You have admitted foreigners, uncircumcised both in heart and flesh, to my sanctuary to profane it when you offered me food, fat, and blood; thus you have broken my covenant of caring for the service of my temple, you have appointed such as these to serve me in my sanctuary in your stead" (Ez. 44:7-8). Also in Deut. 23:2-8 Canaanites are excluded from the community of the Lord. These barriers are now removed, for salvation is universal. The Lord will bring to his holy mountain the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord (Is. 56:6-7). "For my house shall be called a house of prayer" (56:) for all peoples (56:7).

The condition is that they observe what is right and do what is just (56:1), that they observe the Sabbath, and hold to the covenant (56:6).

### **Second Reading: Romans 11:13-15.29-32**

Last Sunday we saw the main ideas of Paul's Theodicy (Rom. 9-11). In the third part (Rom. 11) the apostle tells us that the infidelity of the Jews is only partial and transitory. That means in detail: (1) As in old times God has preserved a remnant for himself (11:1-6). (2) The temporary rejection of Christ by Israel as a whole serves meanwhile for the conversion of the Gentiles and to arouse the Jews to emulation and holy rivalry. Israel remains the chosen people (11:11-24). (3) When the full number of Gentiles have entered the Church, all Israel as a nation will be saved (11:25-29). (4) This mystery of wisdom is incomprehensible (11:30-36).

Today's second reading shows how the refusal of the Jews to accept the gospel served in spreading the gospel to the pagans. Paul usually went first to the Jews and only then when they did not accept him did he go to the pagans. But he hopes that the Jews will become envious if they see pagans enter the Church and they themselves will want to enter. This only would be the full flowering of the Church, when Jews and pagans enter. St. Paul certainly hoped for it soon and would be surprised to see the Jews still un-Christian in 1981.

In any case, God's election of the Jews is irrevocable and there will come the time of their accepting the gospel.

### Reading of the Good News: Matthew 15:21-28

Matthew took over the story of the Canaanite woman from Mark 7:24-30. Mark wrote for Gentile Christians and told them that salvation is first for the Jews ("let the children first be fed"; Mk. 7:27) and then for the Gentiles. Matthew wrote for Jewish Christians and showed them that only faith breaks down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles.

Most of the small changes in Matthew help to underline that difference: (1) The woman is called a Canaanite instead of a Syro-Phoenician. (2) The dialogue between Christ and the woman is enlarged. Christ by his apparent resistance stimulates her faith. (3) And thus Jesus praises her faith (v. 28). (4) Matthew removes the word of Mk. 7:27: "Let the children (=Israel) first be fed." (5) Matthew does not as clearly as Mark say that the healing was done from a distance since he omits Mark's reference that the woman went home and found the daughter healed. (6) In other small details Matthew expresses distance which Mark tries to soften: (a) Jesus withdraws into the district of Tyre and Sidon (Mt. 15:21). But it is not clearly said that he entered pagan territory. Matthew wants to spare Jewish feelings as much as possible. How could a Jew enter pagan territory! Mark 7:24 clearly says: "Jesus entered a house", a pagan house. Thus distance between Jesus and the pagan woman is bridged over. (b) In the conversation between Jesus and the woman Matthew expresses more distance again by not saying that the partner addresses his partner (Jesus the woman and woman Jesus): Mt. 15:26 we read: "He said (person to whom he says it is not indicated): It is not fair to take the children's bread." Mk. 7:27 formulates: "He said to her..." Similar is the answer in Mt. 15:27: "She said..." Again no person indicated, whereas Mk. 7:28 formulates: She answered him..." (c) In Mt. 15:27 the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their *master's* table. In Mk. 7:28 the dogs eat the *children's* crumbs.

Since the following homily might be too long, one can opt for I or II.

## HOMILY

### SALVATION FOR ALL WHO TRUST

I. 1. We all would like to know where we stand with the Lord. Does he like me? Will I make it in life? Such and similar questions come to our mind, especially if we see somebody who

is an apparent favorite of God, who succeeds in all things so well and so easily.

2. The clear answer is: "God has not destined us for wrath but for acquiring salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thes. 5:). "He (God) wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

3. God's plan was and is: First the Jews should reach salvation, then the other nations through the chosen people. Thus God already tells Abraham in Gen. 12: "I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you."

4. Israel was not elected because it was better than other nations, but because God loved it freely, with unmerited love; God loved it first. The prophet Ezekiel brings home that lesson. Israel was a nation of the many Canaanites, related to the Amorites and Hittites, no better, no worse, humanly speaking. "Thus says the Lord God to Jerusalem: By origin and birth you are of the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. As for your birth, the day you were born your navel cord was not cut; you were neither washed with water nor anointed, nor were you rubbed with salt, not swathed in swaddling clothes. No one looked on you with pity or compassion to do any of these things to you. Rather, you were thrown out on the ground as something loathsome, the day you were born. Then I passed by and saw you weltering in your blood. I said to you: Live in your blood and grow like a plant in the field. You grew and developed, you came to the age of puberty . . . Again I passed by you and saw that you were now old enough for love . . . I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you; you became mine, says the Lord God" (Ez. 16:3-8).

God elected Israel freely, made his covenant with her so that all the other nations should be taken in later.

5. Such elections God performs in the history of salvation again and again, in any Christian community, when he calls somebody for a particular vocation. It is no reward for special merits nor is it for personal enjoyment, but for the benefit of others, for the whole community. Nobody can tell God how he has to do it and whom he has to choose. The prophet Jeremiah was told this lesson: "This word came to Jeremiah from the Lord: Rise up, be off to the potter's house; there I will give you my message. I went down to the potter's house and there



he was, working at the wheel. Whenever the object of clay which he was making turned out badly in his hand, he tried again, making of the clay another object of whatever sort he pleased. Then the word of the Lord came to me: Can I not do to you, house of Israel, as this potter has done? says the Lord. Indeed, like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, house of Israel" (Jer. 18:1-6). The immediate lesson is certainly that God does not deal arbitrarily with his people. Rather, he is almighty to destroy or restore, accordingly as they disobey him or fulfill his plans. But St. Paul in Rom. 9:20-22 uses the same picture to illustrate that God is free in his elections and can make vessels which are used for honorable purposes (for keeping wine for instance) and others for urgent business at night. Can the vessel complain if it is used for an honorable or a less honorable purpose? With the picture of the body (1 Cor. 12:12-31) Paul could have said: "Can the stomach or the digestive tract complain that it is not head? The main thing is that each one functions well for the benefit of the body.

6. Jesus knew himself to be sent by the Father to the Jews. "My mission is only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:24). And thus he restricted his activity to them with very few exceptions, e.g. he preached to pagans in the gospel of today. And he also forbade his apostles during his lifetime to preach to non-Jews: "Do not visit pagan territory and do not enter a Samaritan town. Go instead after the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 10:6). The fact Mark and Luke omit both saying does not prove that Jesus did not say them. Both Synoptics, writing for Christians coming from paganism, found these words too hard. Matthew could hold them against the Jews pointing out: "Although Jesus tried hard to do his best for you, and for you in particular and exclusively, you did not accept him!"

7. Yet, Christ clearly promised the Gentiles a share in his salvation. The Ninivites and the queen of Sheba would have part in his resurrection (Mt. 12:41f. par), yes even the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon (Mt. 11:22 par), as well as those of Sodom and Gomorrha (Mt. 10:15 par). At the last judgment all nations would stand before the judgment seat (Mt. 25:31). As the Son of Man he would die for many and shed his blood as the Servant of Yehweh (Mt. 20:28; Mk. 10:45; Is. 53:5:6; Mt. 26:28).

8. Thus there is an apparent contradiction: Jesus on the one hand limited his activity to Israel and imposed the same limitation upon his disciples (during his lifetime) and on the

other hand promised the Gentiles a share in the Kingdom of God and even warned his Jewish hearers that their own place might be taken by Gentiles: "Many will come from the east and the west and will find a place at the banquet in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the natural heirs of the kingdom will be driven out into the dark" (Mt. 8:11). This pilgrimage of the Gentiles to the banquet, this coming of the many nations to the holy mountain was long foretold by Is. 2:1-5 (=Micah 4:1-2); Is. 56:1-8.

9. Christ could be preached to all nations only after his death. This is the meaning of the incident when pagans came to see Jesus. "They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee (a city on the border between Jews and pagans) and put this request to him: 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' Philip went to Andrew; Philip and Andrew in turn came to inform Jesus. Jesus answered them: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I solemnly assure you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit'" (Jn. 12:21-24).

10. The apostles after Christ's ascension in the beginning followed Christ's example, preaching only or at least mainly to the Jews. Peter as well as probably the other apostles wanted to preach to the Jews (Gal. 2:7), Paul to the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7). But even he always first preached to the Jews and only when they refused to listen to him, did he turn to the pagans. The first persecution of the Church hit only the Hellenistic Christians, not the (Hebrew) apostles, who could still stay on in Palestine. Before Peter accepted the first pagan, the centurion Cornelius into the Church (Acts 10:1-48), he needed a push by the Holy Spirit (10:9-16) and afterwards he had to defend his action before the members of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-18). And the Church as a whole got that push to become really worldwide by the persecutions.

11. Paul is convinced that the Jews are the chosen people (Rom. 11:2) and remain the chosen people. God's call is not conditional, nor is his election temporary. God does not reject his people, although they rejected Christ (Rom. 11:2). The blindness of the Jews is temporary and serves to make the pagans more open. They meanwhile will enter the Church. But there will come a time when Israel as a whole will accept the Lord. This is the mystery the apostle tells the Romans (Rom. 11:25). Only then, when the Israelites enter the Church will come the high time of the Church. And this mystery is so wonderful that Paul must exclaim: "How deep are the riches

and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable his judgments, how unsearchable his ways! For 'who has known the mind of the Lord? Who has given him anything so as to deserve return?' For from him and through him and for him all things are. To him be glory forever, Amen" (Rom. 11:33-36).

12. The Jews and for that matter many other nations have not entered the Church yet. The Jews we Christians certainly have treated unfairly many times. Our credibility has been lost. Thus it is our fault as well as theirs, and perhaps even more than theirs, that they are not Christian yet.

II. 1. Salvation is for all who trust in Christ, no matter what the appearance is, no matter if we at times think it is not true. The story in today's gospel is one of the finest examples of what trust in the Lord can do. According to the Father's inscrutable design Jesus restricted his activity to the Jews, to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt. 15:25). Thus Jesus' trip to Tyre and Sidon was only an exception. Probably he went there only to rest, to take time out. Here he was safe from the hostility of the Scribes and Pharisees, here he could relax from the dangerous popularity of people who saw in him more a political hero than the redeemer, here he could think things over before the turmoil of the end, before his death.

2. Christ's retreat was suddenly interrupted by a petitioner. A Canaanite woman heard about this man from Galilee. Rumors of his activity and also of his performing miracles must have reached her. Thus her conclusion is ready: If anybody can help to heal her daughter who is possessed by a demon, it can be only this Jesus of Nazareth.

3. She enters the house in which Jesus stays and says: "Lord, Son of David, have pity on me! My daughter is terribly troubled by a demon" (Mt. 15:22). Anybody would expect an answer. That's what ordinary politeness and good manners require. The more stunning it is that Jesus "gave her no word of response" (Mt. 15:23). Clearer Christ could not have underlined the distance. Yet at the same time he wanted to stimulate trust and faith in the woman.

4. Her love for her daughter, who is in dire need, makes the mother persevere. She makes the misery of her daughter her own. And thus she does not mind the silence. Had the request been for her, perhaps she would have given up. But here is the need for her daughter.

5. The woman's shouting gets on the nerves of the apostles. Thus they ask the Lord: "Get rid of her. She keeps shouting after us" (15:23). How blunt they can be. They have no concern for and interest in the woman on their part either. Their word is almost more offensive than the silence of the Lord. Here is somebody in need and all the disciples want is to be left alone, to have their peace.

6. Jesus answers by referring to his mission he received from his Father, to go after the lost sheep of the house of Israel (cf. Mt. 9:12f; 11:19) only. Thus his mission is restricted, even if one understands by "lost sheep" all the Jews, since all need God's mercy. The woman, however is a non-Jew, and thus cannot expect help from a man sent only to the Jews.

7. The woman's faith increases in spite of all hindrances. She comes forward and does homage with the plea, "Help me, Lord" (15:25)!

8. And yet she gets one more word of distance and refusal: "It is not right to take the food of sons and daughters and throw it to the dogs" (15:26). In comparison to the children, the Israelites, the pagans are only dogs. Dogs at that time were even more than today the unclean scavengers of the street, lean, savage, diseased. What an insult to be compared to such a dog. Would most of us not have turned our back on Jesus.

9. Not so this woman. She even has a sense of humor and does not take everything dead serious. She can even smile. "Sure, I am a dog in comparison to the beloved children of the house," she gives back. "But you know that there are dogs and dogs. There are also small dogs (called *kynaria* in Greek), living in houses, being pets of the members of the family, especially of the children. Everybody loves them. They lie under the table and live from leavings that fall from the master's table (Mark 7:28 puts it still more familiar: "They eat the children's leavings"). Let me be just such a little dog. I am satisfied with the crumbs. I do not want to take precious food away from the children."

10. Such an endearing modesty and trust Jesus cannot resist. He silently has admired her all the time for her humility and perseverance. "Woman, you have great faith. Your wish will come to pass" (15:28). And he could have added as he did in the case of another pagan, the centurion, whose son Jesus also healed from a distance: "I have never found this much faith in Israel" (Mt. 8:10).

11. Christ offers his salvation to all, if they only trust in him.

**Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time  
(August 23, 1981)**

Today we meditate on Peter the rock, on which the Church is built and to whom the keys of heaven are given (gospel). In a similar way Eliakim was given the keys to the palace of King Hezekiah and he was made vizier (first reading). In the independent theme of the second reading Paul admires the deep riches of the wisdom of God from whom, through whom and for whom all things are.

**First Reading: Isaiah 22:15-19-23**

Isaiah contains in his second part (Is. 13-27) prophecies against the gentile nations. At the end of the first subdivision (Is. 13-23) we find three appendices, thus loosely connected with the context: (1) Oracle on the stubborn Jerusalem (Is. 22:1-14), (2) Oracle on Shebna, prefect of the palace (Is. 22:15-25) and (3) Oracle on Tyre (Is. 23:1-18).

Shebna, the master of the palace of King Hezekiah (715-687/6 B.C.) had opposed the policy of the prophet Isaiah of trusting in Yahweh only. Shebna was rather in favor of a political union with Ashur. His influential position went to his head so that he built a tomb for himself. God deposed him from his position and Eliakim took his place as prime minister or vizier of the Davidic king Hezekiah.

The vizier is the second in line (right after the king). Every morning the vizier would send someone to open the gates of the king's house, to admit those who have to enter, and to send out those who have to go out. Like the Egyptian vizier, the master of the palace was the highest official in the Jewish state: His name comes first in the list of 2 Kgs. 18:18. He alone appears with the king in 1 Kgs. 18:3.

This Davidic vizier Mt. 16:18 refers to implicitly when Peter is promised the keys to the kingdom of heaven. The Omni Antiphon on December 20 applies it to Christ: "O key of David and sceptre of the house of Israel. You open and nobody closes. You close and nobody opens. Come, lead out of prison the ones sitting in the darkness and the shadow of death!"

**Second Reading: Romans 11:33-36**

With one of the finest doxologies Paul finishes the Pauline Theodicy (Rom. 9-11) answering the question how one can reconcile God's universal will of salvation with the stubbornness of the Jews and their rejecting Jesus Christ. We saw, the answer: (1) No one can blame God. (2) it's the Jews' own fault. (3) The infidelity is only temporary; one good day they will convert themselves. This is certainly enough reason to exclaim: "How deep are the riches and the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How inscrutable his judgments, how unsearchable his ways (Rom. 11:33). The above section is the immediate context of these words. That the Jews one good day will enter the Church is certainly one of the finest signs of God's richness and inscrutable judgments. These inscrutable designs, however, are true also in a wider context, in the life of the Church as a whole and in our own life.

Paul in Rom. 11:34 goes on quoting freely Is. 10:13 ("Who has directed the spirit of the Lord, or has instructed him as his counselor?") and Wisdom 9:13 ("For what man knows God's counsel, or who can conceive what the Lord intends?").

A doxology to God (the Father) as the creator ("from him"), sustainer ("through him"), and goal of the universe ("for him all things are") concludes chapter 11. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

**Reading of the Good News: Matthew 16:13-20**

There are three texts in the New Testament which speak about the primacy of Peter: Jn. 21:15-17 ("Feed my sheep!"), Lk. 22: 3-32 (I have prayed for you that your faith may never fail. You in turn must strengthen your brothers.") and Mt. 16:17-19 (You are "Rock", and on this rock I will build my church... I will entrust to you the key of the kingdom of heaven.") This threefold tradition of probably one and the same event proves that Jesus promised and conferred the primacy to and on Peter, but each of the three evangelists formulates the event according to his own theology and it will be impossible to say which one comes closest to the historical event.

The most extensive and most elaborated and for that matter also the most discussed report is the one of Matthew, for the pericope is also reported in Mk. 8:27-30 and Lk. 9:18-21. But the big difference between the report in Matthew and

Mark is: In Mark Peter confesses Jesus' as the Messiah, that means, the political hero who frees the Jews from the yoke of the Romans. Since Jesus cannot tolerate such a wrong concept he charges Peter not to speak about him to anybody and dedicates the whole second half of the gospel of Mark from Mk. 8:21 on to speak about the suffering Son of Man (not Messiah). The Concept "Son of Man" from Daniel is the concept Christ prefers when speaking about himself because it is free from these political over and undertones of the concept "Messiah". Son of Man refers to Christ's passion and then (and only then) exaltation as coming on the clouds and judging heaven and earth. There is no word in Mark about Peter's primacy.

In Matthew, however Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. This must mean a deep insight into Christ's mystery going into the direction of being the metaphysical Son of God (although we do not have to assume that it is clearly this theological insight), for Christ answers: "Blest are you, Simon, son of John! No mere man has revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father." That Christ would be the Messiah Peter could find out by his own reasoning, but not that Jesus be the metaphysical Son of God. For this he needed the revelation of the Father.

Jesus in turn, then promised Peter to make him the rock on which to build the church and to give him the keys of heaven.

It is discussed among theologians if the report of Matthew or Mark is more historical. A man as late as Peter F. Ellis, C.S.S.R. (*Matthew: His Mind and His Message*. Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1974 p. 128) gives the preference concerning historicity to Matthew, not to Mark. Mark omitted the word about the primacy because the motif of the obtuseness of the Apostles runs all through Mark's gospel and that was the reason why he omitted the word of Peter's deep confession and Christ's word of the primacy. Mark keeps the apostles a little dumber than they are. But it is more likely that Mark is more historical in this report than Matthew and most scholars give Mark the edge ever since the article of Anton Voegtle, "Messiasbekenntnis und Petrusverheissung. Zur Komposition Mt. 16, 13-23 par" in *Biblishe Zeitschrift* NF 1 (1957) 252-272; 2 (1958) 85-103 (Peter's confession of Christ as Messiah and Christ's promise to Peter). The reasoning is: The apostles could hardly have such deep insight in Christ before Easter. Thus the incident must belong to the time after Easter. The reality is historical, but the report, as it stands, is composed by Matthew, as he often composes without falsifying the historicity.

The pericope is clearly from a Palestinian, such as Matthew is: (1) The structure of the pericope of three strophes with three sentences each, which is typical Hebrew:

- v. 17 Blest are you, Simon, son of John!  
Not flesh and blood have revealed this to you,  
but my heavenly Father.
- v. 18 I for my part declare to you,  
you are 'Rock', and on this rock I will build my Church,  
and the jaws of death shall not prevail against it.
- v. 19 I will entrust to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven.  
Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in  
heaven ;  
whatever you declared loosed on earth shall be loosed  
in heaven.

(2) There are many typical Aramaic expressions:

- the blessing "Blest are you Peter",
- Bar Jonah (= Simon is the son of Jonah),
- flesh and blood (instead of "mere man"),
- to bind and to loose,
- the gates of death (literally "Hades")

(3) The play on words: "You are Kepha and upon this Kepha I will build my church is perfect only in Aramaic, not in Greek where the second being the proper masculine name. In Aramaic Kepha is the thing and the name of the person.

(4) That not just any Palestinian, but probably Matthew wrote the pericope is lastly made likely by the fact that Matthew as so often in his gospel sees also in this passage a fulfillment of the Old Testament: The word from the key is taken from Is. 22:22 and the word of the rock from Dan. 7:13-14 and 2:35.45

## HOMILY

### PETER THE ROCK — PETER THE GREATEST

I. 1. Jesus had died and risen. He gathered his disciples around him, had instructed them, and now his cause would have to go on without his bodily presence. There was to be somebody to take his place as leader. One of the main purposes of the gospel of Matthew is to show how Jesus had received all authority from the Father (Mt. 1-9) and how he handed on this authority to his disciples (Mt. 10-28). Peter



was supposed to have a special place, he was trained to be the leader, the head of the Church.

2. Matthew has five greater parts, each one consisting of narratives and then a corresponding sermon. In Mt. 14-17 we have the narratives which show that Jesus is acknowledged by his disciples and how the authority of Peter is established. The corresponding Sermon on the Church (Mt. 18) illustrate this authority.

Mt. 14-17 consists of three parts and at the end of each part stands a pericope which singles out Peter as the greatest, not because of personal merits but because Jesus wants him as leader of the church: (1) Mt. 14:22-3 shows Peter walking on the water. He is the only apostle who does so. (2) Mt. 16:13-20 is our pericope in question: Jesus promises to make Peter the foundation of the Church. (3) Mt. 17:24-27 tells us how Jesus paid the temple tax for himself and for Peter only.

Besides, Peter is often mentioned in this section of Mt. 14-18, dealing with the Church: Thus in 14:28,29; 15:15; 16:16,18,22; 17:1,4,24,25. He often acts as spokesman of the apostles.

.3 Before promising Peter to make him head of the Church, Jesus asks him about his faith. After all, how could somebody continue Christ's work if he would not believe in him. Peter sees Christ as the Son of the living God. This is an insight which Peter could only receive by revelation of the Father, without his own merit. And so Jesus praises the Father and congratulates Peter for that insight which reminds us of Mt. 11:25 "Father, Lord of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; for what you have hidden from the learned and the clever you have revealed to the merest children." This insight Peter probably only had after Easter.

4. Jesus in return in two different pictures promises to make Peter the head of the Church. He shall be the solid rock on which the church is built. Everybody in Palestine understood what importance a good foundation had for a building. If a house was built on rock, it would last; it could withstand all storms and floods (cf. Mt. 7:24-27: "Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice is like the wise man who built his house on rock. When the rainy season set in, the torrents came and the winds blew and buffeted his house it did not collapse.") This rock is lastly God himself (cf. Gen. 49:24; Deut. 32:18; 1 Sam. 2:2\* 2 Sam. 22:3,47; 23:3; Ps. 18:3,32,47; 19:15; 28:1; 31:3,4; Is. 62:2,8) and Jesus Christ.

After all, "No one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid, namely Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Peter can be this rock only inasmuch as he takes Christ's place. But a visible rock there has to be since Christ went back to heaven.

5. With another picture Christ illustrates Peter's job: He is the holder of the key with which he opens or closes and lets people in or shuts them out (i.e. in or out of the church). Furthermore, whatever he declares bound on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever he declares loosed on earth shall be loosed in heaven. This implies highest teaching authority. He declares something forbidden or allowed. He lets somebody into the community or bans him from the community.

6. Protestants in the beginning tried to say that Christ is the rock on which Jesus builds his Church, not Peter. One would have to see the bent finger or Jesus between the first and second half of the sentence: "You are Peter, the rock, and upon this rock (here Christ bent the finger and pointed to himself), i.e. me, I will build the Church."

7. Later (especially at the end of the last century) some Protestants tried to deny the authenticity of the text and declared it a later addition of the second century.

8. Nowadays all acknowledge the authenticity of the pericope. One will find it in the Protestant edition of the Greek New Testament of Nestle. But most will say only Peter shall be the rock, not the successors of Peter, the Popes. But we have to say, when Matthew incorporated this pericope into his gospel Peter was long dead. What interest would Matthew have in underlining the position and function of a person who is dead, if this position would not be transferred upon his successors! And if we take the picture of the rock, we must say: A foundation is needed as long as the building lasts, not only at the beginning. The Church, however will last till the end of time. Thus there must be a visible foundation, a rock, and that means successors of Peter as the rock on the persons of his successors, the Popes.

II. Why are many non-Catholic Christians so reluctant to admit the primacy of the Pope? Are we too triumphalistic? Have Popes been too sure of themselves? Have they acted too absolutistically? Mt. 18 pictures for us Peter as the greatest and thus the Pope as the greatest and for that matter any leader in any position as the greatest. But who is the greatest? Who can be a leader? Who can be in charge of people?

1. The greatest is the one who realizes he is least, we learn in Mt. 18:1-4. "Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven," Jesus said, placing a child in the midst of the disciples. And that lesson was meant especially for Peter and for anybody the Lord wants to put in charge of persons.

2. Great is the man who gives no scandal (Mt. 18:5-10). Nobody should cause somebody to stumble and fall by his bad example, but especially a man in authority should not do so.

3. A leader should always look for the lost sheep (Mt. 18:11-14). As Christ said about himself that he had more joy over somebody who sinned but let himself be found and returned than over ninety-nine who did not need any forgiveness, so especially the Pope, any person in high position should make it his main preoccupation to bring back people who went astray. Such authority one will appreciate.

4. Greatest is the one who corrects his brother (Mt. 18:15-18). He does not insist in being right, nor does he argue with him. He does not talk behind his back and tell everybody else but the person in question. Rather, he will tell the brother concerned first alone. In case he does not listen, he will summon another. Perhaps the erring brother will listen to two or three. And only then, when the brother does stubbornly refuse to listen will the caring person tell it to the authorities, so that they can act officially.

5. A superior, who wants to be great, will pray for erring people (Mt. 18:19-20) rather than loudly excommunicate them and shout at them. And yet, if the case demands it, he will have to excommunicate.

6. Greatest is the man, especially the superior who can forgive, not just seven times, but seventy times seven, that means, everything somebody wants and needs forgiveness (Mt. 18:21-22). And this is illustrated by the parable of the merciless official (Mt. 18:21-35).

7. If a Pope, as here in Mt. 18 especially Peter was advised, acts thus and sees his authority, his primacy in this way, things will look differently.

### **Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (August 30, 1981)**

A disciple of the Lord has to renounce himself and follow Christ (gospel). The prophet Jeremiah experienced already, how he was insulted and mocked because of his prophetic word

(first reading). As usual, the second reading has a theme of its own: Paul tells us: We shall consecrate our body, i.e. our whole being to God and thus make our daily life a spiritual worship.

### First Reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9

The prophet Jeremiah was called to his prophetic mission ca. 627/26 B.C. Though naturally of a timid and introspective disposition, Yahweh had great plans for this remarkable Jeremiah. "I place my words in your mouth! This day I set you over nations and over kingdoms, to root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). Every natural impulse of this sensitive nature rebelled against the task so that he could only say: "I know not how to speak; I am too young" (1:6). But God gave him his grace, his powerful word, and the bashful lad of Anathoth became a "fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass, against the whole land" (1:18). And he worked as a prophet for more than forty years in the most difficult time of the Jewish history till the destruction of Jerusalem in 587/6 B.C. to continue after the fall of Jerusalem in Egypt.

The prophet led a most lonely life (15:17), remained unmarried (16:2), was avoided by friends, priests and relatives because of his profession and his mission. He had no success with his sermons. The destruction of Judah and Jerusalem came nearer and nearer, yes Jeremiah had to foretell the end, and he could not stop it with all his prayers. He was no popular prophet (if prophets ever were popular) because nobody likes to be blamed for his sins. And precisely this was the task of prophets, especially of Jeremiah.

Thus again and again the prophet was persecuted (Jer. 11:18-12:6), arrested, put in jail (Jer. 36-45), thrown into an empty cistern (38:6), had to fear for his life, and this only because he was faithful to his call to preach the word of God. No wonder that he felt overwhelmed by his burden several times; thus 15:10-21 and 20:7-18. As much as the prophet tried to keep quiet and not to prophesy against his fellow Jews, he could not resist the powerful word of God and must preach the truth. His only consolation was: after the destruction of Jerusalem there would one day come the new covenant.

**Second Reading: Romans 12:1-2**

After the long dogmatical part (Rom. 1:16-11:36) follows the moral part (12:1-16:27) in the Letter to the Romans. St. Paul always brings first the good news before he continues with the Christian ethics, connected with what God has done in Christ by a "therefore" (in Greek: *oun* in 12:1). Only after unfolding the redemptive act of God in Christ and setting it in the context of salvation history, can the apostle discuss moral problems.

Since he does not know the Roman community yet, and no particular problems have been reported to him as for instance in the Corinthian community, Paul's advice is more general. He discusses Christian ethics as it would be valid in any average Christian community.

He starts out by telling his readers that Christian life is man's continual confirmation and pronouncement of what he believes, not just once but again and again, not with just one thought, but with all his thoughts, not only with his mind, but with his whole person, not only in some aspects of his existence, but in all of them. Once bodies of animals were offered. The Christian shall consecrate his body, i.e. his whole being to God. That will be "reasonable" service, i.e. a real spiritual worship, suited to the nature of God and man.

We offer our bodies as spiritual worship by our offering of our everyday life to God. Holiness, sacrifices and liturgical offerings are not restricted to the church, but the whole world is a temple of the living God, and every common deed is an act of worship. As Christ put it in the conversation with the Samaritan: "An hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain (Gerizim) nor in Jerusalem" (Jn 4:23), but everywhere.

Since we are of Christ's and the Holy Spirit's mind (Greek: *nous*) since our baptism we must also live accordingly and must not take our values from this world. Then we are able to do what is good, pleasing and perfect.

**Reading of the Good News: Matthew 16:21-27**

Jesus had singled out Peter, placed him at his side (as we saw last Sunday in Mt 16:13-20), promised him full authority over his Church, making him the rock on which the building rests. But hardly has Jesus done so than Peter becomes the

stumbling block and Peter himself is endangered since he does not understand the need of suffering. He has to become Christ's disciple once more.

After all, (1) a disciple of Christ must deny himself, take up Christ's cross and follow him (Mt. 16:24). (2) He must be willing to give away his life (by bloody or unbloody martyrdom) for Christ's sake, then it will be restored to him again at the resurrection. If he wants to keep it selfishly, he will loose it (Mt 16:25). (3) He who looses (eternal) life has nothing, even if he should gain the whole world because he cannot gain back his (eternal) life (Mt 16:26). (4) When Christ comes at the last judgment he will repay everyone according to his conduct (Mt 16:27).

This pericope is also to be found in Mk 8:31-9:1 and Lk 9:22-27. Matthew follows Mark rather closely with some small changes:

- Peter's rebuke (Mt 16:22) is given, whereas Mark is satisfied to record the fact (Mk 8:32).
- Mt 16:23 adds the word *skandalon* (Peter is a scandal for Christ).
- Mark's "crowd" (8:34) is removed. Christ addresses his disciples instead.
- Mt 16:27 speaks about the repayment of the faithful.

## HOMILY

### A DISCIPLE MUST CARRY CHRIST'S CROSS

1. It is human to measure one's worth of life by the success one has. Why should Christ, humanly speaking have had a different outlook on life! It is interesting to see and follow the beginning of his public career, how people were hanging on his lips, when they realized that he was preaching "with authority and not like their scribes" (Mt 7:29). And if one would not know the content of the gospels one would wonder, if he would succeed in winning over the authority as well and change the *Qahal Yahweh* = the congregation of Yahweh, the people of Yahweh, just a little bit to make it the *ekklesia*, the Church, with the greatest difference that it would be the Church of God by being the Church of Christ.

2. We know from the life of Christ that he did not succeed in winning over the Jewish authorities nor the people as a whole. Was it just bad luck that the Pharisees and Sadducees turned

out to be so stubborn and so Jesus was condemned to death? Or was it more, i.e. the Father's design that Jesus should have to suffer and redeem mankind by his suffering. It was the latter. How often do we find in Scripture the Greek word *dei* = must (Mt 16:21; Mk 8:31; Lk 9:22; 17:25; 24:7.26.44): Christ had to suffer and to die because so it was designed by the Father and foretold in Scripture.

3. To look for success and avoid suffering was one of the temptations of Jesus, the second in Matthew (Mt 4:5-7) and the third in Luke (Lk 4:9-12). "Why should you suffer," the devil told him. "Look for success, impress people by a show miracle, like jumping down from the pinnacle of the Temple so that angels can rescue you in the middle of your jump and you land safely in the middle of the Temple square, admired by all people standing there and say, 'Just incredible'." But Jesus only referred to Deut 6:16: "You shall not put the Lord your God to the test." He knew the Father had designed the cross for him.

4. Peter must have felt great when Jesus promised to make him the rock on which to build the church, so that his thoughts were on success too. Thus when the Lord told him about Christ's suffering and death, the apostle could only coin it madness. And thus he tried to put it out of Jesus' mind. But the master had to use one of the sharpest rebukes: "Get out of my sight, you satan. You are trying to make me trip and fall. You are not judging by God's standards but by man's" (Mt 16:23). What Peter here suggested was the same as what the devil insinuated and thus the apostle was a satan, a temptor.

5. a. Christ became our savior by suffering and dying (and of course rising) for us. Christianity is a religion of the cross. Thus Jesus can tell us: "If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self" (Mt 16:24). Peter denied the Lord (in Greek: *arneomai*), telling the maidservant that he did not know this Jesus of Nazareth (Lk 22:57), although he knew him quite well. Out of shame and cowardice he dissociated himself from the Lord, he the "strong" man before a "weak" woman.

b. Christ requires from us that we act as if we do not know ourselves. Usually we treat ourselves as if we were the most important person. It should be the other way around: We should forget about ourselves and confess the Lord in all our

acts, even if this means persecution and death. Only then will the Lord confess us before his heavenly Father. "Whoever disown (*arnesetai*) me before men I will disown (*arnesomai*) before my Father in heaven" (Mt 10:33). "Whoever acknowledges me before men I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven" (Mt 10:32).

c. We can take the term "deny" in a restricted sense, i.e. to do or live without something, do give up something for a certain time, like smoking in Lent. But Christ requires more than denial in a restricted sense. We must deny ourselves every moment, once and for all. It must be a dominant principle in our life to dethrone ourselves and enthroned God, to obliterate self and make God the ruling passion of our life.

6. A disciple of Christ must "*take up his cross*, and begin to follow in Christ's footsteps" (Mt 16:24). The Jews understood what crucifixion meant. When Jesus was a young boy, Judas the Galilean had led a rebellion against Rome and raided the royal armory at Sepphoris, four miles from Nazareth. The Romans acted swiftly. The burned Sepphoris to the ground, sold the inhabitants into slavery and crucified two thousand rebels on crosses in line along the roadside as dreadful warning to others tempted to rebel. To take up Christ's cross would mean to be ready to face even crucifixion for loyalty to God. For some few it would mean actual crucifixion. For most it would involve daily faithfulness. And thus Luke (Lk 9:23) adds: "He must take up his cross daily."

7. a. A disciple must be willing to lose his life for Christ's sake (Mt 16:25). In other words, we must spend our life and not hoard it. We must not ask: "How much can I get? What is the safe thing to do? What is the minimum permissible in the way of work? "Rather we must ask ourselves: "How much can I give? What is the right thing to do? What is the maximum possible to do?"

b. A man who plays for safety loses his life. We must not just exist, we must really live! Our life must be worthwhile living. Mere material well being is not enough. And to hold on to it by denying Christ is not worth it. A man who risks his life, who risks all, for Christ's sake, finds life. In every decision of our life we make ourselves a certain kind of person, build a definite self and character. And that we do only if we gain Christ, not the whole world without him or even in opposition to him.



c. After all, no one can take everything of the material things along, but only himself. And if we degrade ourselves we can have only regrets.

d. Material things cannot help us in the hour of our death; they can not delay our death, nor can they heal a broken heart or cheer a lonely person. Christ is our real life.

e. Only a fool sells his real life and buys material things. He will never be able to buy the real life back. Material things bring no true security.

f. A man owes himself and everything to Christ. A man can give nothing to Christ in place of his life. He can give money, lip service, free will offering, but withhold his own life. We must give ourselves to Christ. There is no substitute for us. Nothing else will do.

8. To follow Christ as disciple, as prophet, means, as the example of Jeremiah shows to rely on his powerful word. It may be very unpleasant what one has to say; it may bring persecutions, imprisonment and death. It may even make us doubt if we have the right spirit or are disillusioned by a demon. It may bring us great loneliness and bring us to despair. But the word of Christ will carry us through, if we only hold on to it. "Have no fear, because I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord" (Jer 1:8).

### **Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time (September 6, 1981)**

The liturgy of today speaks about fraternal correction. "Win your brother over!" we are told in the gospel. "Warn the wicked man!" Ezekiel insists (first reading). And by chance, as in few cases, the second reading fits in: "Love fulfills all commandments, also the one of fraternal correction."

#### **First Reading: Ezekiel 33:7-9**

Ezekiel received his call (and in this he is unique) outside of Palestine, at Tel-Abib in Babylonia (3:15) and was prophesying among the *Golah*, the community of Jews settled in the land of their conquerors ca. 593-570 B.C. He had been brought captured when Jerusalem was besieged and captured in 597

B.C. The Jews still hoped for an early return, for deliverance, in alliance with Egypt. But Ezekiel, as well as his contemporary Jeremiah, had to tell the Jews that Jerusalem would be definitely conquered (586 B.C.). Superstitious belief in the protective power of the Temple would not be enough, but moral chance would be required. But the Jews made no attempt in improving their behavior. After the final fall of Jerusalem Ezekiel, who so far had to threaten and to warn the Jews to wake them up, now had to encourage them lest they would despair, picturing the restoration of Israel, the new covenant, the new temple, and the new worship. Thus in Part I (Ez 3:22-24:27) we find prophecies against Judah and Jerusalem before the final destruction of Jerusalem in 586). Part II (25:1-32:32) warns Gentiles not to become proud and arrogant if God uses them as scourge against the Jews. They are only a scourge, not more. Part III (33:1-48:35) speaks about the restoration of Isarel.

This third and last part is introduced by a wonderful description of the duty of a prophet: The prophet is a watchman (33:1-9).

Ez 33:1-6 brings a parable: In the defense system of Palestine (as in other countries) there were watchman posted on the hills, at regular distances, to warn people with a trumpet blast, if enemies would approach so that everybody could be on guard.

Ez 33:7-9 applies this parable to the prophet. He has been appointed watchman over the house of Israel. He must warn the people. He must tell them if they do something wrong so that they can amend their ways. If people do not listen and die (a spiritual death) it is their own fault. The prophet has done his duty and is guiltless. But if the prophet does not warn people and they die (a spiritual death) it's the prophet's fault. He is held responsible.

### **Second Reading: Romans 13:8-10**

As we saw last Sunday, Rom 12:1-16:27 contains the moral part of the Letter to the Romans. First Paul speaks about the Christian life as a spiritual service rendered to God in particular duties (12:1-13:14). That means in details: 1. Sanctification of personal life (12:1-3). 2. Right use of the gifts of grace (12:4-8). 3. Brotherly love and love of enemies (12:9-21).

Obedience to the authorities appointed by God (13:1-7). 4. Love is the fulfillment of the Law (13:8-10). 5. The Parousia as motive for moral conduct (13:11-14).

Today's second reading brings the second half of the decalogue in an unusual, i.e. Hellenistic-Jewish order:

- 6th commandment: "You shall not commit adultery".
- 5th commandment: "You shall not murder!"
- 7th commandment: "You shall not steal!"
- 9th and 10th commandment: "You shall not covet!"  
(9th: your neighbor's house, 10th: your neighbor's wife).

All these commandments are summed up in the one: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18; Rom 13:9). Love is the unifying principle behind the separate injunctions. There is only one commandment which is universal, covers every situation, to which we are always obligated: the commandment of love. The separate commandments are only illustrations of what love may mean in particular situations.

And thus the second reading fits in with the first reading and the gospel: Fraternal correction pays the debt of love we owe the others. This debt is permanent, for we must always love.

### **Reading of the Good News: Matthew 18:15-20**

Mt 18:1-35 contains the Sermon on the Church

- 1) Mt 18:1-14 Value of the "little ones" in the community
  - a) True greatness 18:1-5
  - b) Care for the "little ones" 18:6-14
    - (1) Warning against scandals 18:6-9
    - (2) Care for the "little ones" 18:10-14
- 2) Mt 18:15-35 Relation toward the brother
  - a) The correction of the brother 18:15-20
    - (1) The rule of the Church discipline 18:15-17
    - (2) The power of binding and loosing 18:18
    - (3) The presence of Jesus in his Church 18:19-20
  - b) On forgiveness 18:21-35
    - (1) Principle of forgiveness 18:21-22
    - (2) Parable of the unforgiving debtor 18:23-35

Today's second reading has only for Mt 18:15 a parallel in Lk 17:3b. The rest is proper to Matthew. In its original form it probably contained a saying of the risen Lord (cf. Jn 20:19-23) empowering the Twelve (Eleven) to admit or to exclude men and women from the kingdom according to whether they accepted or rejected the kerygma. Slowly it became a Church discipline rule, in Jewish-Christian circles, modelled after Old Testament texts and Qumran practices, with Mt 18:15 as word of Jesus. Here in Matthew, however the tone is on winning the brother, whereas in Qumran it shows a more juridical procedure.

Mt 18:21-22 speaks about personal sins. Mt 18:15 talks about sins in general, i.e. sins which affect the community (of course, every sin affects the community in a way, but some more, others less). Only some manuscripts insert (if a brother sins) "against you" . . . The procedure shall be:

- (1) Correction in private, in order not to shame unnecessarily, but to win the brother v. 15.
- (2) If he does not listen, tell him in the presence of two or three witnesses v. 16.
- (3) If he does not listen to them, refer it to the church v. 17a.
- (4) If he does not listen to the church, he shall be excommunicated v. 17b. Correction in private first is also recommended by Lev. 19:17.

Correction before witnesses is required by Deut 19:15 and the *Manual of Discipline* V, 24-VI, 1 of Qumran: "When anyone has a charge against his neighbor, he is to prosecute it truthfully, humbly and humanly. He is not to speak to him angrily or querulously or arrogantly or in any wicked mood. He is not to bear hatred (towards him in the inner recesses) of his heart. When he has a charge against him, he is to proffer it then and there and not to render himself liable to penalty by nursing a grudge. Furthermore, no man is to bring a charge publicly against his neighbor except he prove it by witnesses." (Theodor Gaster. *The Dead Sea Scriptures*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956, p. 54).

## HOMILY

## WIN YOUR BROTHER OVER!

1. Matthew more than any other gospel has been called "the gospel of the Church". Jesus illustrates in many parables (Mt 13) the essence of the Church. She is not the community of the saints, but a community of those who want to become saints. As God has forbearance with all of us, so we shall let the weed grow with the wheat.

2. This, however, does not mean, we shall close our eyes to every sin and every fault, especially if it does harm for the community. We are a community of brothers and sisters for whom we are responsible.

3. Ezekiel illustrates that responsibility in Ez 33:1-9. Countries protected themselves by placing watchmen in regular intervals on the hills. As soon as an enemy would approach, the watchmen would blow the trumpet and thus alert the inhabitants. The watchmen were responsible for the safety of the inhabitants. Every prophet was such a watchman appointed by God. He was the conscience of Israel. He was the mediator between Yahweh and his people, informing them about God's wishes, telling them what to do and what to omit. It was not easy to tell the truth, especially if the truth hurt. Jeremiah, more than any other prophet, experienced how people hated him because of his being the watchman of Israel. They maltreated him, threw him in a cistern, and later on in jail, and finally he died as a martyr. But all the prophets knew God's word: "I have appointed you watchmen for the house of Israel. When you hear me say anything, you shall warn them for me. If I tell the wicked man that he shall surely die, and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked man from his way, he (the wicked man) shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death" (Ez 33:7-8). And thus they spoke out, even the gentle Jeremiah, although it was against his nature, and he had liked to keep silent. God's word was burning in him like a fire which he could not resist (Jer 20:7-18).

4. We cannot say with Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper" (Gen 4:9)? We are our brother's keeper. First the superiors for their subjects, the fathers and mothers for their children, the officials of the government for their subjects, a bishop for his diocese, a pastor for his parishioners, a teacher for his stu-

dents, an educator for his pupils. But to a certain degree we are also responsible for those who are just our brothers and sisters and not our subjects.

Whenever somebody somewhere commits suicide we ask ourselves: Could not somebody have helped that lonely man to come out of his loneliness and make him forget about this nasty thoughts of committing suicide? Why was nobody there to help him! If somebody is going to be dismissed from a university or if somebody is not being admitted to vows or ordination, the most common reaction is: "Why did not somebody tell me before that I was in a serious situation and should have improved my behavior! If only somebody would have told me!"

5. The early Christian Church was fully aware of her responsibility of being her brother's keeper, as we see in the gospel of today. And what has been outlined in Mt 18 has been unfolded in many rules of different religious congregations. The first thing to note is: These are regulations among brothers and sisters. We are all brothers and sisters as soon as we are baptized. Nobody is a stranger, nobody is a foreigner. And whatever we do in the line of correction we do not do to show our superiority, to run other people's life for them, to be right, to make others feel bad and backward, to punish them, but in order to win them over. And that is the biggest difference between the texts in the Old Testament and Qumran and here in the New Testament. There it was more a rejection and reprobation in order to establish the pure community, the light, in opposition to the darkness. Here in the New Testament the underlying tone is love, to win the brother back.

6. The first step is: "If your brother should commit some wrong, go and point out his fault, but keep it between the two of you" (Mt 18:15)! Matthew softens the Lucan *epitimeson* (rebuke; Lk 17:3) to *elegxon* (show him, i.e. his sin (Mt 18:15)). This presupposes that the correction is justified and solidly grounded so that it may be accepted by the one concerned. And the purpose is: to win the brother over.

This advice sounds so obvious, almost like common place. And yet we know from experience that it is very often violated, not only in the beginning of our life, but also later. How often do we talk behind somebody's back and tell everybody else the fault but not the person concerned! Sometimes we did not find the person concerned. More often we are too coward

to face him personally. It's easier to tell other people. But how do we feel if somebody talked behind our back. In most cases we are hardly willing to accept the correction any more, or at least it has been made unusually hard. We feel betrayed, shamed.

7. The brother to whom I told his fault may see it differently from me. Perhaps I did even exaggerate. And so he may be inclined to deny it altogether. But if we are more objective than he is (and fact is that in other people's matters we are usually more objective than in our own) then we are advised to take two or three witnesses along and tell the brother (18:16). After all, he must admit: One person alone can see something wrong. But if there are three or four who judge the situation the same way, chances are that there is actually something wrong which has to be checked.

We have greater chances if we select witnesses who are good friends of the brother concerned, who do not shame him but rather make him feel almost honored when he admits his shortcomings.

8. And only then when he "ignores them (the witnesses) shall we refer the case to the church, i.e. to the official authority (Mt 18:17). That their main concern shall not be excommunication right away but rather to go after the strayed sheep and win it back is clearly explained in Mt 18:10-14. In typical Matthean chiasmic structure 18:12 stands in the middle of the pericope: go in search of the stray. Great is the shepherd who wins back his sheep.

In the few cases of apparent strictness in the New Testament (e.g. 1 Tim 5:20; 2 Tim 4:2; Tit 1:9,13; 2:5 and especially in the first clear "excommunication" in 1 Cor 5:1-5) it still is obvious that the Church does not want to excommunicate as punishment but as a last chance for somebody to think it over and come back. The incestuous man in Corinth was excluded temporarily from the community (Paul calls it: "I hand him over to the devil") "for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved". That means: He should stop living according to mere human standards (according to the flesh) but live according to the spirit.

9. The decision of the Church is binding (Mt 18:18). It may be that in certain cases she took that decision a bit too easy. But by and large she was rather slow in excluding from

the Church, especially when she kept the word of going after the lost sheep in mind. For the benefit of the faithful "little ones" who must not be scandalized, the Church has to take a clear stand.

10. And there is one final word: "If two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst" (Mt 18:19-20). We do not know if this is the original setting of the saying. It is true in every case: The Lord will grant any prayer said in unity with the Church and if it is said in the name of Jesus. But we may also apply it to the context in which it now stands and say: God likes nothing more than a prayer for a brother who goes astray and he will grant the petition for his coming back, if we are only united in praying so. Should it not be also one main intention of our prayers!

11. Fraternal correction pays the debt of love we owe our brother. This debt is permanent because we must always love. And if our main concern is to win our brother over we have fulfilled all the commandments. And everything that we do is guided by love.

### **Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (September 13, 1981)**

Today we meditate on forgiveness. "Forgive seventy times seven!" The Lord tells us in the gospel. "Forgive your neighbor's injustice!" we learn in the first reading. The second reading shows fortuitous, but real correspondence with the theme (especially if we take in addition v. 10): "We live and die for the Lord. Why should we judge!"

### **First Reading: Sirach 27:30-28:7**

(Jesus) Sirach or Ecclesiasticus is one of the seven books of the Old Testament which is recognized as inspired and canonical by the Catholics, called deuterocanonical, but not recognized as canonical by the Protestants and Jews and by the former called apocryphal. It contains wisdom and experience of all people, upon which Sirach puts his own stamp. Thus the different sayings are already a little more arranged according to topics,



although not quite; whereas in the similar book of Proverbs, proverb is still more loosely strung to proverb. The greatest difference between these two Wisdom Books and the Egyptian and Mesopotamian Wisdom Books is the religious note: Only the fear of the Lord (Sir 3:7) can teach all this. The author, inhabitant of Jerusalem, member of the scribal class, had travelled a lot; thus his experience. The book was written between 200 and 180 B.C. The original Hebrew text was lost, but two thirds have been rediscovered. The Greek translation is complete.

Part I (1:1-29) speaks about the concept and the use of wisdom. Part II (2:1-43:35) contains sayings on wisdom in its ethical bearings on human life, its higher aspects and its relationship to God. Part III (44:1-50:31) unfolds the praise of the Fathers of Old from Adam to the High Priest Simon, the son of Onias.

In Sir 27:30-28:7 we find an admonition concerning anger, vengeance and forgiveness, which especially in 28:2, comes close to the ethics of the New Testament and serves as foundation for Mt 6:12. 14-15; 5:23-24; 18-21-35; Mk 11:25-26; Lk 6:37; James 2:13.

- Only sinners like wrath and anger.
- The vengeful will be punished by God.
- Thus we must forgive our neighbor; then our sins will be forgiven, when we pray.
- If God shall pardon us, we must pardon people.
- We should remember our death and stop sinning.
- We should observe the commandments, especially the one not to hate our neighbor, and to overlook his faults.

### **Second Reading: Romans 14:7-9**

Today is the last of the sixteen semi-continuous readings from the Letter to the Romans (Sundays 9-24 of cycle A). The second reading of the last two Sundays was taken from the Moral Part (Rom 12:1-16:27). The first subdivision speaks about the Christian life as spiritual service rendered to God in particular duties (Rom 12:1-13:14). The second subdivision (Rom 14:1-15:13) talks about the relation and obligation of charity of the "strong" and of the "weak". 1. Neither should despise the other (14:1-12). 2. We should avoid scandal (14:13-23). 3. We must bear with the infirmities of the weak and both should look to Christ as an example (15:1-13).

In the Roman Church there was a Jewish, as well as a larger Gentile element. The Jewish Christians there, as elsewhere, naturally retained, to a greater or lesser extent, their love for the law and the Mosaic observances. It was likely, therefore, that some of these converts in Rome should carry their inherited practices and prejudices so far as to observe some of the Mosaic feasts and to distinguish between different foods as entirely to abstain from certain meats and drinks, especially meat from sacrifices offered to idols which was sold at a whole-sale price. St. Paul speaks about it in detail in 1 Cor 8-10. Idols do not exist. Thus meat offered to idols does not change the meat. One may buy it and save some good money. This is a matter of economy rather than religion. It is not idolatry. One must abstain from buying such meat only if one would eat it at a pagan sacrificial banquet, for demons stand behind such sacrificial banquets and try to make men fall from the true God. Equally one must forego the privilege of buying such meat if one was told (and thus put to the test) that this meat was offered to idols.

"Strong" Christians, those who know the real facts, may therefore eat such meat. "Weak" Christians, those who (wrongly) believe that one must abstain from eating such meat because it amounts (although in reality it does not) to idolatry must abstain. Both groups should respect each other, and not judge nor condemn one another; and in cases where both live together, "strong" Christians should forego their privilege and not eat such meat, lest they would scandalize the "weak" Christians. Most "strong" Christians came from paganism, most "weak" Christians from Judaism.

These ideas are explained in 14:1-6. Then follows our second reading of today. We are all one, living our divine life. It is his life which we live since Christ's death and resurrection and our own baptism. He is our Lord, we are his servants (slaves). Consequently (and this v. 10 is not in today's reading any more): How can we sit in judgment on our brother!

### **Reading of the Good News: Matthew 18:21-35**

The pericope of today's gospel sums up the Sermon on the Church (Mt 18:1-35) which answered the question of "who is the greatest?" It is the one who serves his brothers, in constant self-sacrifice and self-denial, who gives no scandal to the "little ones", who always has limitless mercy, which he shows toward

his brother who strays. And to a brother who places himself outside of the Church and this has to be officially recognized as such, a recognition ratified by the Father in heaven, he will still continue to extend God's forgiveness. He will forgive everytime, seventy times seven. Greatest is the one who always forgives.

The principle on forgiveness (Mt 18:21-22) we also find (slightly different) in Lk 17:4. The parable of the merciless official (Mt 18:21-35) is proper to Matthew.

In Mt 18:21-22 Peter asks how often somebody has to forgive and insinuates the generous figure of seven. But Christ answers: "You must forgive seventy times seven", that means every time.

The following parable does not illustrate the point of how often one must forgive, but insists on the sternest warning: "If you want forgiveness you must forgive!" Details are given in the homily.

## HOMILY

### FORGIVE YOUR BROTHER FROM YOUR HEART!

1. It is one of the intentions of the Yahwistic author (J) in the book of Genesis to show that sin and evil in this world do not come from God, but from man. God had created everything good and men, between man and woman, between brother and brother, between man and creation, between nation and nation. Sin increases with the increasing number of mankind, as we see in the genealogy from Adam to Noah in Gen 4, in opposition to the same genealogy in Gen 5 of the Priestly author. The names of Cain, Enoch, Irad, Mehujael, Mathusael and Lamech are explained as being rebellious to God. Good are only Seth and Enosh, and (to be supplied, not clearly mentioned) Noah. Culture, civilization increases, but at the same time religiosity decreases. Lamech, the last before Noah, has two irregularities: He is the first one to have two wives, although in paradise God clearly wanted monogamy (Gen 2:24). But even worse, he boasts: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; wives of Lamech, listen to my utterance: I have killed a man for wounding me, a boy for bruising me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold (cf. Gen 4:15), then Lamech seventy-sevenfold" (Gen

4:23). It's the most distasteful and frightening bragging. Lamech will take revenge as often and as much as he can. No wonder that mankind will degenerate fast.

2. The alienation caused by man's sin has been healed by Christ's saving death. One effect is that we must not take revenge, but rather forgive, not just once or three or seven times, but seventy-seven times seven. That story we find in Mt 18: 21-35.

Peter came up to Jesus and asked him: "Lord, when my brother wrongs me, how often must I forgive him? Seven times" (Mt 18:21)? He was generous, offering the number seven. After all, the Rabbis were teaching that a man must forgive a given offender no more than three times. They deducted this number from the Book of the prophet Amos. Amos 1:2.6.9.11.10; 2:1.4.6 speaks of three and four crimes for which God holds pagan nations responsible and punishes them. Singled out in each case is just one crime. The Rabbinic reasoning was: God forgave three times, but punished the fourth time. But nobody can expect a man to be more generous than God is. Thus we must not forgive more than three times.

Christ's answer is very clear: We must forgive as often as there is need. It is not even said (and we can assume that this is not required) that somebody must first ask us for forgiveness. We must grant it, even if we are not asked for it.

3. The parable of the merciless official is one of the sternest parables in the New Testament. It is not an illustration of the principle of forgiveness, but rather gives us the reason why we must forgive: (1) We have been forgiven first. (2) We have been forgiven immensely more than we ever can forgive. (3) If we do not forgive, we shall not be forgiven.

4. There was a king who had, as it was custom, several tax officials. And they certainly were in charge of a lot of money. But as usual in parables, so here, the figures are very exaggerated to make a point. One tax official owes the king 10,000 talents. The NAB just translates "a huge amount". This is probably better than to try to express the ten thousand talents with figures of our present currency. First, it would be almost impossible to do so, and second, the buying value of money changes in the course of years and thus the figures do not help us much; what one could buy for one peso fifty years ago one does not get for one peso today. We reach the point of com-

parison if we give the figures in wage value. From the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16) we know that one dinarius was a good day's wage. A Greek talent, however, was the equivalent of 6000 drachmas or denarii. (Louis Hartman, C.Ss.R. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible*. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1963; p. 2388). Consequently the servant owed his master the phantastic sum of 60,000,000 denarii or the wage of 60,000,000 days or roughly of 160,000 years.

He falls down and pleads with the king: "My Lord, be patient with me and I will pay you back in full" (18:26). What an exaggeration. He is not going to live 160,000 years that he could earn it. And this impossibility still exists even if we grant that as tax official he could get a lot of money from those persons he taxed. It could not be that much either. The whole revenue of Idumaea, Judaea and Samaria was only 600 talents.

The king cancels the whole debt with an unheard act of mercy and kindness.

5. But now the unheard of cruelty and mercilessness happens: That same servant whose unbelievable debt has been cancelled meets a fellow servant who owes him the small sum of hundred denarii, a salary or a wage of a hundred days, or roughly speaking of three months. (The NAB translates: "who owed him a mere fraction of what he himself owed.") It's a relation of 1 to 600,000: the main servant owed his master 600,000 times more than what his fellow servant owes him. And yet although the fellow servant repeats the very words the main servant had used, the head servant is not willing to cancel the debt. And yet, the fellow servant did not exaggerate when he pleaded: "Just give me time and I will pay you back in full!" He really could have paid the debt relatively easily. The main servant throws the fellow servant in jail until he pays what he owes. Such torture was not allowed in Palestine, but was done in other countries and also by Herod the Great. By doing so one hoped the incarcerated person would reveal some secret resources and his family and friends would help to raise the money, as it is done today in case of kidnapping.

6. When the king hears about this inhuman behavior of the main servant he gets angry, summons the head servant, reproaches him for his cruelty and reverses his verdict. The main servant is thrown in jail "until he paid back all that he owed."

One can easily see how long that will be: all his life since he cannot pay back that immense sum.

7. The application is impressive:

a. We are that main servant who has been forgiven first so that we must forgive those who have debts with us. "Christ died for us godless men. It is rare that anyone should lay down his life for a just man, though it is barely possible that for a good man someone may have the courage to die. It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:6-8). Christ died for us sinners and made us his friends. He forgave us first. Thus we must be willing to forgive seventy times seven.

b. What we owed and owe God is so immense that we could never pay it back. It's the sum of a salary of 60 million days, or roughly 160,000 years. After all, we offended God and could never pay that back since God is infinite and we are only finite human persons. We could never make up an infinite offense. Yet God cancelled it with a stroke of a pen when Christ died (and rose) for us.

What other people owe us is in comparison to what we owe God always small, it is limited, finite, the mere fraction of a wage of three months. And yet, in our mind we figure the other way around: We think that what we owe God is small and what other people owe us is very big. But our wrong thinking does not change the fact: What we owe God is infinite, what people owe us is finite. This is another reason why it is only reasonable to forgive.

c. But the most shocking sentence is: "My heavenly Father will treat you in exactly the same way, i.e. he will not forgive you unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart" (Mt 18:35). After all, we pray it often during the day in the Our Father: "Forgive us our sins as (in the measure) as we forgive those who sin against us!" Perhaps it would help us to formulate it the other way: "Do not forgive us, if we do not forgive those who sin against us!"

**Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**(September 20, 1981)**

The liturgy of today presents us God's generosity. "Are you envious because I am generous?" Christ asks in the gospel. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways," God tells us through the prophet Deutero-Isaiah in the first reading, i.e. God is always more generous. As usual, the second reading has a theme of its own: For Paul (and for us) to live is Christ, since we have been incorporated into him through his death and resurrection and our baptism. Thus the apostle is willing to die a martyr or go on working for his Philippians as God wants it.

**First Reading: Isaiah 55:6-9**

Second Isaiah (Is 40-55) encourages the exiles toward the end of the exile, 538 B.C., in Babylon that the deliverance from Babylon will come soon (40:1-49:13) and pictures the new salvation in 49:14-55:13.

The last chapter (Is 55:1-13) describes the spiritual blessings of the new covenant. (1) All are invited to the new covenant (Is 55:1-5). Salvation is proposed under the figure of food and drink, offered free to the hungry and thirsty: "All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat" (55:1)!

(2) Conversion, however alone is necessary, for Yahweh's word is omnipotent (55:6-11).

(3) A last time the new exodus is announced (55:12-13): "In joy you shall depart" (55:12)!

Today's first reading is taken from the second part. The prophet admonishes: "Let the scoundrel forsake his way, and the wicked man his thoughts; let him turn to the Lord for mercy; to our God, who is generous in forgiving" (55:7). "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways above your ways and my thoughts above your thought" (55:8-9).

God's thoughts are not our thoughts and his ways not our ways not because he is moody and unpredictable and we would have to submit to him without asking any questions. Rather, we are more narrow-minded than he is insisting on strict justice. God, however, is always kind and generous and merciful. Even our sins shall turn out to be something good, although of course God cannot throw them behind us, if we do not repent. But that is all what is required. The rest God does. His powerful word (not in today's second reading) accomplishes what it says (55:10-11).

### **Second Reading: Philippians 1:20-24.27**

For four Sundays the semi-continuous reading of the second reading will be taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians. On his second mission journey (A.D. 49-52; Acts 15:40-18:22) Paul and his three companions landed in Macedonia, in the harbor of Neapolis and went on to Philippi, ca. eight miles inside. The city was founded by the father of Alexander the Great, Philip in 356 B.C. In Philippi the Jews were not in sufficient number to have a synagogue. Thus they held their religious gatherings outside the city. Here Paul preached and slowly made his first converts to Christianity. Lydia, a seller of purple, was one of them. The relations between Paul and the Philippians became very close and the community was one of his favored ones. In fact, it was the only community from which he accepted material support. This good relationship was not marred by Paul's short imprisonment in Philippi. The apostle had freed a slave girl from being possessed by the devil. But this devil had been a "pythonical" i.e. a divining spirit. Thus after Paul's casting out of the devil the slave girl could no longer predict the future and so the owner of the slave girl lost some good income, grew angry and accused Paul of propagating a religion which was against Roman Law, and of disturbing public order. Without trial the apostle was put in jail, but freed again, when he referred to his Roman citizenship.

Later Paul was again in prison (referred to in Phil 1:7. 13.17). This is traditionally believed to be Paul's imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30-31, ca. A.D. 61-63). There is today a growing consensus of scholars that the imprisonment took place in Ephesus (ca. A.D. 52-55; hint to this imprisonment would be



1 Cor 15:32). When the Philippians heard of Paul's imprisonment they sent Epaphroditus to bring the apostle money. Epaphroditus fell critically ill while he was with Paul. When the Philippians learned about Epaphroditus' sickness they worried about him. Thus Paul wrote the Letter to the Philippians putting them at ease with good news of the recovery of Epaphroditus. After remembering the good old days when he was with them (Phil 1:1-11) (1) Paul reports about his situation: he can preach the gospel in spite of his imprisonment (1:12-26). (2) He asks them to be one in mind and heart, imitating the example of Christ (1:27-2:18). (3) He will send back Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-3:1). (4) Paul attacks Judaizers who disturb the community (3:2-4:1). (5) Paul exhorts again to unity, joy and peace (4:2-9), and (6) finally thanks for the gift they sent him (4:10-23).

Today's second reading is taken from the first part of the letter. Paul can be pleased. Christ will be exalted through him, whether he will be freed or whether he will die a martyr. Dying a martyr would be the climax of a missionary life. This the apostle does not say because he wants to escape from his labors into personal bliss. But perhaps the Philippians still need him more. And so he remains neutral between dying now (a martyr) and going on preaching the gospel. To live is Christ for Paul. This is not simply the mystical enjoyment of communion between Christ and him, but the execution of the apostolic mission.

### **Reading of the Good News: Matthew 20:1-16**

As most parables, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, proper to Matthew, was told in three different settings. (1) It was told by Jesus, (2) modified by oral tradition and (3) presented by the evangelist to his community.

(1) Jesus told his opponents who criticized him for paying more attention to the outcast than to the respectable people of society: "Do you begrudge me for my generosity?"

(2) Oral tradition added: "The last shall be first and the first shall be last": The Gentiles had been drawn into the Church; whereas Israel had rejected the gospel.

(3) The evangelist shows his understanding of the parable by affixing it to the discourse of Jesus with Peter in Mt 19:

23-30. Peter had told the Lord: "Here we have put everything aside to follow you. What can we expect from it?" Jesus had answered: "In the new age you will take your places on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Moreover, you who have left home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life." But here the evangelist adds: "Many who are first shall come last, and the last shall come first" (19:30). And then follows the parable to illustrate this saying, to end again with the same saying in 20:16 in reversed order. Those who forsake everything for Christ's sake can still be in danger to be the last if they are looking for reward and demand it.

## HOMILY

### "ARE YOU ENVIOUS BECAUSE I AM GENEROUS?"

1. Parables contain usually a true to life story. Yet in many cases there are exaggerations because the application already shines through. This is true in a special way with the parable on the laborers in the vineyard. The parable invites contradictions. The picture itself is impossible. What vineyard owner would have no idea of how many workers he needed to bring in the grapes in one day that he would have to go the market place to hire workers four more times! How impossible is the method of paying: Those who came last get their pay first, and those who had to work so long and are exhausted and tired have to wait the longest for their pay. But most impossible is the schedule of wages: all receive the same pay. If the employer were to continue to be so obstinate he would soon learn from experience in the following week. For no man would be so stupid as to come to work at dawn if he could get a full pay envelope so much easier by coming late. Our sympathies are involuntarily on the side of the workers who worked so long and yet got only the same pay as those who worked only for one hour. Where remains social justice!

Apparently there is no proportion between burden and wages. Why should one exert oneself? Why make a special

effort to walk the steep and narrow way to heaven (Mt 7:13-14) if one can drive the comfortable highway, if the happiness for both groups is the same?

2. Obviously, what Jesus says in other places of the gospel he does not want to deny with this parable. As so often, the Bible speaks in extremes and we are mistaken if we take the extreme statements alone without bringing them into context and taking them together. God is just and we cannot fool him by taking it easy. The way to heaven is steep and only those who apply themselves will enter the kingdom. But to understand him as such a God is relatively easy, because most of us are built that way, especially if somebody has been trained in doing his duty. Most Jews were brought up that way. But God is, at the same time, so completely different from us. His ways are not our ways and his thoughts not our thoughts (Is 55:8). He is not only just, he is also generous, unbelievably generous. This is the main lesson the parable wants to bring home.

3. Jesus was sent to the lost sheep of Israel. Not the healthy people need a doctor, but the sick, he would say. And thus he could compare these sinners, prostitutes and neglected people with workers who had found no work for almost the whole day. There were many people without work in the time of Jesus, especially after the Temple of Jerusalem had been finished. Was it the fault of the jobless people? Who would support their family? Such people would have highly appreciated if an employer would have hired them for one hour and given them (and thus their family) the salary of a whole day. After all, the family had to live. Jesus did just this by calling and saving sinners who had no right to his help. Jesus was always and is different. He is generous, giving us what we have no claim to.

4. God is generous. We are often jealous and envious. The laborers who had worked twelve, nine, and six hours complained because they did not receive more pay than those who had worked just one hour. But were they really cheated? Were they treated unjustly? By no means. They had made an agreement for one denarius, a good day's wage, and received it. The employer was fair and just. The complaint started only when the workers of the early morning compared themselves with the laborers who had started at five o'clock in the afternoon.

Jealousy always begins when we compare ourselves with others and see that they have more than we have. We should never look around and look at others. Either we despise others, or, more frequently, we become envious.

5. Jealousy and envy, however, let us never see the good and generous Lord. God will never be generous to an envious person.

6. The apostles had left everything, father, mother, brothers and sisters and all possessions and were following Jesus. He would be generous in rewarding them with a special throne in heaven and a hundredfold already here on earth. God will reward the good we do. But with the parable where the last are the first in the sense that they receive the denarius, the kingdom, Jesus wants to underline that we must not look for nor demand the reward. The reward will always come as a surprise and often enough differently from the way we expected it. If a man expects reward in his life, often he will not get it. We must not expect anything but be satisfied with everything. Then the great surprises will come. This saving certainty that God is good, good to me, enters into my heart only if I trust that he cares for me beyond all that I can ask or think. But I must leave it up to him. Then I am safe and secure in his goodness.

7. How often do we hear somebody complain to his superior: "If somebody does his duty faithfully day by day, a superior takes it for granted; he does not even pay attention to such a subject. But just watch what somebody gets, if he is a problem child. Why should I not try to be a problem child, then I have made it!" This was the complaint of the older brother toward his father, when he gave the younger son all the attention which he according to the older son did not deserve (Lk 15:30). It was the complaint of the Jews when they saw many pagans enter the Church.

But envy and jealousy do not only hinder us from seeing the generous God. They make also us blind and unfair in judging our brothers. Should we not be thankful if God allows us to serve him faithfully. And is this alone not already enough reward! or the rest, what do we know about the hardship our brother went through.

**Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time**  
**(September 27, 1981)**

Today we are told: "Repent and live!" The wayward are first in the kingdom of heaven, since they are saved by faith and repentance (gospel). "Turn from your wickedness and be saved!" God admonishes us through the prophet Ezekiel (second reading). The independent theme of the second reading is: "Have the mind of Christ!"

**First Reading: Ezekiel 18:25-28**

In the early history of Israel communal solidarity was very much stressed. There were corporate consequences of individual guilt. Thus we find texts like "The Lord is not declaring the guilty guiltless, but punishing children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation for their father's wickedness" (Ex 34:7; Deut 5:9; Num 14:18). But we have to haste adding that God's goodness is much greater: In most of these texts is added or goes ahead: "The Lord, the Lord, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in kindness and fidelity, continuing his kindness for a thousand generations, and forgiving wickedness and crime and sin" (Ex 34:7; Deut 5:10). And, although corporate responsibility is more stressed, individual responsibility is not completely omitted, not even at that time: "Understand, then, that the Lord, your God, repays with destruction the person who hates him; he does not dally with such a one, but makes him personally pay for it" (Deut 7:10).

With the destruction of Israel's national institutions during the exile a new emphasis on the individual responsibility appeared. People were inclined blaming the exile on the guilt of the fathers with the saying. "The fathers ate unripe grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. 31:29). Against such voices Ezekiel (Ez. 18) stresses individual responsibility. The children are not punished for the sins of their parents, but for their own. A person is free any time to turn from wickedness to righteousness and vice versa. And he will be judged by the new life he has turned to, not by the previous sins.

Both viewpoints, the older and the more recent one belong together. The recent one is only a difference of emphasis not of denial of the other idea of solidarity, but rather a corrective.

**Second Reading: Philippians 2:1-11**

Part of today's second reading, Phil 2:6-11, the pre-Pauline Christological hymn we saw on Palm Sunday and on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, September 14. In the second part of the Letter to the Philippians (Phil 1:27-2:18) Paul advises his favorite community to fulfill his joy by preserving unity, to be one in mind, thought, and love (2:1-5), to imitate the example of Christ, who, being God (2:5-6), stripped himself by becoming man (2:7-8), and, by his voluntary humiliation, deserved his incomparable exaltation (2:9-11).

**Reading of the Good News: Matthew 21:28-32**

As in other parables, so also in the parable of the unlike sons we can distinguish three settings:

(1) The setting at the time of Jesus (Mt 21:28-31a). Jesus was blamed for his mercy to sinners. To these critics Christ would answer: "Tax collectors and prostitutes, who receive me now, will enter into the kingdom of God at the last judgment rather than you who criticize me for consorting with them."

(2) The level of oral tradition (Mt 21:28-32): the parable is extended and applied to John the Baptist's preaching: Tax collectors and prostitutes believed the Baptist and went to Christ; the Pharisees and Sadducees did not.

(3) The evangelist, finally places everything in a new setting (Mt 21:23-27): the question of authority. The parable of the unlike sons (21:28-32) becomes thus one of three answers. The other two are the parable of the tenants (21:33-45) and the parable of the wedding banquet (22:1-14). Although Jesus has full authority to teach and to demand belief in himself the answer of the Jewish leaders was constant rejection, illustrated by the three parables. They made their rejection complete in the time of the evangelist so that the Church according to Matthew feels justified when it abandons the mission to Israel and turns to the pagans.

There is a problem of textual criticism concerning the sequence of the two brothers.

(1) Many good manuscripts read: "He went to the first son... He answered: 'I will not; but afterwards he repented

and went. And he went to the second . . . He answered, 'I go, sir, but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, 'The first.''' This is the option of the Greek New Testament of Nestle-Aland, and the translation of the Jerusalem Bible and the RSV.

(2) To this reading is a variant of few manuscripts which has everything as above with the exception that the answer of which of the two did the will of the father is: "The second." This is the translation of the New English Bible.

(3) A fewer number of good manuscripts read: "He approached the first son . . . He answered: 'I am on my way, sir;' but he never went. Then he came to the second son . . . He said, 'No, I will not;' but afterward he regretted it and went. Which of the two did what the father wanted? They said, 'The second.'"

This is the option of the Greek New Testament of Augustin Merk, and the translation of the NAB, Kuerzinger, Josef Schmid.

It will be hard to decide which reading is preferable. The first reading however seems more logical. The father went only to the second son because the first did not do his wish, and the change to the third reading seems to have come about because readers thought right away at the application where the Jews first said "yes" but did not go and then only Jesus turned to the prostitutes and sinners who first said "no", but then changed their mind and accepted the Lord. Furthermore, a criterion of text criticism is that the more difficult (to explain) reading is the better one. Actually, however it is difficult to understand why first the son is mentioned who says "yes". The father would not have gone to the second son.

## HOMILY

### THE TWO UNLIKE SONS

1. Jesus was a Rabbi and taught in many ways similar to those of the Scribes, especially since both founded their teaching on Holy Scripture. And yet they differed, which soon placed Jesus in opposition to the Scribes and Pharisees. This was so

because Christ did not just explain Scripture and apply it to historical conditions as the Scribes did. He did not just demand the observance of the Law and measure everything according to the faithfulness with which somebody would observe it. The Scribes would admit to not being perfect and sinning. But basically one makes reparation for sins by works of supererogation. Sinners according to them could of course repent and return. But for all practical purposes, they were a separate group in as much as the Pharisees were concerned, and a return was not easy.

Jesus, however, explained Scriptures on own authority, and thus he was also above the law in the sense that he would prophetically ask about its meaning and not just about its how as the Pharisees did. He would especially talk about the Father's outlook on people. And then all of a sudden their yardsticks would not be correct any more. The sinners, the outcast, the prostitutes became God's favorites. And thus we understand why Jesus so often speaks about first who become last, the guests who are invited but refuse to come and those from the highways and byways who come instead. God is so completely different from us. He is the merciful, compassionate Lord, who cannot be forced by our own standards of perfection and merits, well intended as they may be.

2. This truth the Lord explains with many parables. One is the parable of the two sons. The father goes to the one (according to different manuscripts it is either the first or the second, which for the practical application does not make any difference) and asks him to go in the vineyard and work. Very politely the son answers: "I am on my way, sir." He knows how important good manners are. He realizes that the first impression is often the best and the most lasting. He is aware that one often remembers the "yes" somebody gave and forgets that that same person later on forgot about everything. But sure enough, the polite son does not keep his promise; he does not go to the vineyard. Did he do the father's will? The most obvious answer would be, he did not, as most texts have it and also the enemies of Christ admit it. After all: It is not enough to say, sir, sir or: Lord, Lord, but one has to do the will of the Father (Mt 7:21) for the Father to recognize us. Also the Rabbis said: "Whoever learns but does not act accordingly, it would be better for him if he had not been born" (Hermann Strack — Paul Billerbeck. *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. I, 910).



How could Jesus say that the Pharisees did only talk nicely but did not act! Were they not trying harder than anybody else to do the will of God? Certainly. But it was all spoiled by their picture of God as counting the good deeds. Jesus could only picture the Father who wants mercy rather than obedience to the Law and sacrifices (Mt 9:13; 12:7).

3. There is a version, taken over by the New English Bible which lets the Pharisees remark that the son who said "yes", but did not go to the vineyard, did the will of the father. Did they want to escape the admission that they were wrong? Did they want to say that the most important thing to do is to be polite and correct in form, always to smile, no matter what the second step would be? After all, do we not like people who never lose their temper and never argue, who never cause us great trouble, who side with us rather fast so that a meeting is over soon. And yet, for Christ such a son does not do the will of the Father because pious words are not enough. Reliability counts more. Many people promise everything because they do not dare to tell the truth or get a scolding. They prefer appearing pleasant.

4. The second son said roughly: "No, I will not," when the father asked him to go to the vineyard. But afterwards he regretted it and went. This son, according to the judgment of Christ and the evaluation of the hearers of Christ according to most manuscripts, did the will of the father. Sure, his first "no" was a mistake. He should have been less impetuous, he should have taken his time in thinking it over, then he would have found out that he could do it after all. It was a mistake which hurt the father, but the son had the guts to admit and change his mind for the better.

Many publicans, simple uneducated people, prostitutes at the time of Christ were such sons, despised by the Pharisees as uncouth and avoided by them. And there are many such sons in our time. They hate to appear pious, they do not want to show their goodness. Their practice is better than their reputation. They may not go to church often. But one can rely on them in times of hardships and crises. They will help. They have a rough shell but a good heart. They often shout at people. One has to have the courage to go to them more than once if one wants to have a favor done. And those who do not know them are turned off by their harsh behavior and do not even dare to come back.

5. If one has the choice between the two sons one will side with the second who first says "no" but then does the will of the father after all. But ideal he is not either. And so behind the gospel's story of the first and the second sons there one can see the figure of a third son, who says "yes" and also acts correspondingly. This son *par excellence* is the son of God and son of man. His whole life was a single "yes" to the will of the Father. "Here I am to do your will" he prayed already in the womb of his mother (Hebr 10:7; Ps 40:7f). And in the garden of Gethsemani he said: "Not my will but your will be done" (Mt 26:42).

The ideal Christian attitude is thus the imitation of the third Son, who does not rebel or remonstrate nor contradict. He goes courageously out of himself into the greatness of God's will. His "yes" is a "yes" which he does not take back.

**JOANNES PAULUS EPESCPUS SERVUS  
SERVORUM DEI**

dilecto filio DINUALDO GUTIÉRREZ, Vicario Generali dioecesis Capicensis, nominato Coadiutori cum iure successionis Episcopi-Praelati Marbeliani, salutem et apostolicam Benedictionem. Qui in beati Petrisimilitudinem cfr. Jo. 21, 15-17 universo fidelium coetui praepositi sumus, sollemne semper, et religiosum, et sanctum habuimus, tum gregi quam gregis magistris, pro opportunitate, consulere: id enim exigit munus Nostrum pontificale, id poscit amor quo filios Nostros, Christi asseclas, complectimur. Ceterum, — amoris est officium pascere dominicum gregem —. S. Aug. in eundem Jo. locum. Qua re, cum Venerabilis Frater Reginaldus Arliss, Episcopus Praelatus Marbelianus, paulo provectior aetate iam non possit qua esset voluntas gregi consulere, petiit ad hac apostolica Sede ut sibi Coadiutor daretur cum iure successionis. Quod posse in fidelium utilitatem cedere reputantes, aequae eius expostulationi concedere existimavimus, teque illi assignare, qui non solum ingenio atque pietate, sed etiam usu rerum abundas. Audito ergo Venerabili coetu Fratrum Nostrorum S.R.E. Cardinalium Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praepositorum, te Coadiutorem eius Venerabilis Fratris cuius mentionem fecimus, Episcopi-Praelati scilicet MARBELIANI, nominamus, cui succedes cum Ecclesia illa legitime vacaverit. Interim iuribus illis frueris quae litterare apostolicae — Ecclesiae sanctae — die sexto mensis Augusti, anno MDCCCCLXVI, datae continent. Consecrationem autem episcopalem poteris ubique excipere, a quolibet catholico Praesule, iuxta normas liturgicas; non tamen antekuum sive fidei professionem feceris, sive ius iurandum fidelitatis erga Nos et successores Nostros iuraveris, teste aliquo Episcopo qui Nobiscum fidei vinculis iungatur. Formulas vero ad quasi iuraveris, recte subscriptas ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis cito mittes. Tuum etiam erit curare ut hae Litterae Nostrae clero

populoque Praelaturae Marbelianae perlegantur, diem festum celebrantibus in praelaticio templo. Quos simul hortamur ut filiorum more te excipiant, tisque mandatis pareant in suae Sedis prosperitatem, sive nunc Coadiutori, sive in posterum Praesuli ordinario. Ceterum, haec beati Augustini verba cum animo reputa: — Inspira mihi, Domine, caritatem, ut doceam suavitatem; da mihi patientiam, ut doceam disciplinam; illumina intellegentiam, ut doceam scientiam —. Cfr. Ps. 118, 4; tract. XVII. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die undevicesimo mensis Novembris, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

Nov. 19, 1980

✠ AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI  
A Publicis Eccl. Negotiis

MARCELLUS ROSSETTI, *Protonot. Apost.*

## JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili Fratri JESU VARELA, hactenus Episcopo Ozamisano, ad cathedralem Sedem Sorsogonensem translato, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Cum dioecesi Sorsogonensi, vacanti propter abdicationem Venerabilis Fratris Arnulfi Arcilla, esset destinandus sacrorum Antistes, aptus Nobis visus es tu, Venerabilis Frater, cui huiusmodi officium committeremus. Probe namque novimus animi ingenique tui ornamenta necnon rerum pastoralium usum. De consilio igitur Venerabilis Fratr<sup>is</sup> Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Praefecti Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, Apostolica Nostra usi potestate vinculo te solvimus Ecclesiae Ozamisanae regendae atque ad cathedralem Sedem SORSOGONENSEM transferimus, datis iuribus congruisque impositis obligationibus. Quod autem attinet ad catholicae fidei professionem et ad iusiurandum fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros, ab iis iterandis te eximimus, contrariis quibuslibet non obstantibus. Mandamus insuper ut hae Litterae Nostrae clero ac populo in cathedrali dioecesis tuae te templo publice legantur die aliquo festo de praesepto; quos dilectos filios hac data opportunitate paterne hottamur ut non solum te libentes accipiant, verum etiam tibi diligentissime pareant tuisque pastoralibus inceptis obsecundent, quae ad spiritualem eorum ipsorum salutem comparandam ineunda esse censueris. Prote denique. Venerabilis Frater, Christum, Pastorum Principem, enixe deprecamur ut, intercedente beatissima Virgine Maria, sua dignetur gratia te abunde ditare atque sustinere quo uberiora ista catholica communitas Sorsogonensis, et subernante, capiat incremente. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die septimo et vicesimo mensis Novembris, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

Nov. 27, 1980

✠ AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI  
*A Publicis Eccl. Negotiis*

MARCELLUS ROSSETTI, *Protonot. Apost.*

## JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

dilecto Filio VILFREDO MANLAPAZ sacerdoti archidioecesis Cacerensis electo sacri Praesulis Maasinensis Auxiliari atque Episcopo titulo Tanudaiensi salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Cum certo quidem noverimus Nos apostolici esse etiam muneris Nostri, quantum fieri sane possit, Fratribus in Episcopatu Nostris subvenire locorum Ordinariis qui gravioribus usque distringantur pastoralis officii oneribus necessitatibusque, libenter idcirco tribuere eisdem consuevimus Episcopos Auxiliares efflagitantibus ad opus dioecesani apostolatus certiore ratione expediendum. Ubi proinde Venerabilis Frater Vincentius Ataviado — Tumalad sacrorum Antistes Maasinensis talem sibi ab hac Apostolica Sede adiutorem poposcit Episcopum, qui ingravescencia secum communicaret episcopali curarum onera, visus es tu ipse Nobis, dilecte Fili, et dignus et idoneus cui eadem munia fidenter crederemus utpote qui antea ingenii excelluisses dotibus animiquesacerdotalis virtutibus. Accepto igitur consilio Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrarum S.R.E. Patrum Cardinalium negotiis Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis praefectorum, te pro apostolicae potestatis Nostrae plenitudine Auxiliarem destinamus eius quem commemoravimus Episcopi Ordinarii Maasinensis unaque creamus Episcopum ipsum vacantis Sedis titulo TANUDAIENSIS, dum cuncta concedimus tibi iura et congrua iniungimus officia quae in Apostolicis Litteris — Ecclesiae Sanctae — perscribuntur die VI mensis Augusti anno MCMLXVI emissis. Permittimus nihilo minus ut ordinationem suscipias a quovis catholico Episcopo extra urbem Romam cui duo secundum liturgicas leges adstabunt viri consecratores. Prius vero quam id contingat tu catholicae fidei professionem facias erit necesse coram quolibet rectae pariter fidei Episcopo atque ius iurandum fidelitatis iures erga Nos et Successores Nostros ad

statutas formulas quas deinde ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis diligenter cures transmittendas solito more signatas sigilloque munitas. Ceterum, dilecte Fili, paterno animo te cohortamur ut episcopalis tuae memor semper dignitatis et vocationis tatum te dedas curationi amatissimi gregis Masinensis, cui ita Nobis placet tradere adiuvantem pastorem, solique Deo omnipotenti confidas et ab Eo necessaria solacia lumina caelestia expetas ad Auxiliaris Episcopi munere convenienter perfungendum. Datum Romae apud S. Petrum die vicesimo secundo mensis Decembris anno Domini millesimo non-gentesimo octogesimo, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

Dec. 22, 1980

✠ AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI  
*A Publicis Eccl. Negotiis*

EUGENIUS SEVI, *Protonot. Apost.*

## JOANNES PAULUS EPESCPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

dilecto filio GABRIELI REYES ET VILLARUZ, electo Episcopo titularis Ecclesiae Saelesiensis et Auxiliari Archiepiscopi Manilensis, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Decet Nos, divino obstrictos mandato universae Ecclesiae prospiciendi, eorum Praesulum preces exaudire qui, multiplicibus ministerii pastoralis negotiis gravati, accommodum petant auxilium, quo aptius valeant in bonum Christifidelium suas adhibere curas. Libenter igitur Venerabili Fratri Nostro Cardinali Jacobo Sin, Archiepiscopo Manilensi, satisfacimus, qui ob multiplicatas archidioecesis necessitates auxilium postulavit. Ad illud autem munus obeundum te idoneum esse existimavimus, dilecte fili, qui congruenti cum eodem pietate, doctrina et rerum usu praecellis. Qua re, audito consilio Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrorum S.R.E. Cardinalium Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praepositorum, Nostra usi Apostolica potestate ad episcopalem dignitatem te evehimus et archidioecesis Manilensis sacrorum Antistiti adiutorem assignamus. Quod vero ad tuam episcopalem ordinationem attinet, poteris eam extra urbem Romam ubicumque volueris recipere a quolibet catholico Episcopo, servatis tamen liturgicis legibus et non ante quam coram eodem Episcopo vel alio professionem feceris rectae fidei et ius iurandum interposueris fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros: quorum actuum usurpatas formulas cito Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis mittes de more signatas et sigillo impressas. titulum simul tibi conferimus vacantis Ecclesiae SAELESIENSIS et monia tribuimus iura, quae in Apostolicis Litteris – Ecclesiae Sanctae –, datis die VI mensis Augusti anno MCMLXVI, describuntur. Tu denique, dilecte Fili, memor quibus virtutibus quaque vitae consuetudine eum fulgere oporteat, qui in successores Apostolorum ascitus, ipsos Apostolos in oculis habet imitandos, fac gratia sacramentali munitus te iis adsimules. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo mensis Januarii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo primo, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

Jan 20, 1981

✠ AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI  
*A Publicis Eccl. Negotiis*

MARCELLUS ROSSETTI, *Protonot. Apost.*



## JOANNES PAULUS EPESCOPOS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili Fratri SALVATORI L. LAZO, hactenus Episcopo titulo Seliensi Ecclesiaeque Ferdinandopolitanae ab Unione Administratori Apostolico, electo Episcopo Ferdinandopolitano ab Unione, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Cum Nostrum sit vigilantiter cavere ne diutius ulla Cathedralis Ecclesia suo orbetur Praesule atque pastore, decernimus dioecesi Ferdinandopolitanae ab Unione in praesentia vacanti providendum esse. Nos igitur, ratum habentes consilium Venerabilis Fratr<sup>s</sup> Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti, vi et potestate Nostra Apostolica per has Litteras te, Venerabilis Frater, ab omni vinculo Ecclesiae titulo Seliensis plane absolutum, Episcopum memoratae FERDINANDOPOLITANAE AB UNIONE Cathedralis Ecclesiae eligimus et renuntiamus eique praeficimus pastorem iuribus instructum officiisque devinctum collati muneris ac dignitatis propriis. A nova fidei professione te quidem eximentes, tibi tamen mandamus ut iureiurando fidelitatis erga Nos Nostrosque Successores te obstringas, teste aliquo rectae fidei Episcopo servatisque iure servandis, utque formam ad iurandum adhibitam, sueto more signatam ipsoque sigillo impressam, cures ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis celeriter transmittendam. Volumus autem hasce Litteras Nostras aliquo die festo de praecepto in cathedrali dioecesis tuae templo recitari clero ac populo; a quibus etiam petimus ut debita cum veneratione te suscipiant patremque dehinc et ducem et magistrum libenter amanterque colant. Te denique, Venerabilis Frater, hortamur ut omni studio ad pastorale munus tuum gravius factum intendas istosque tibi pastori creditos fideles ita congreges, — ut omnes... in communione caritatis vivant et operentur — Chr. Dom., 16. Nuius ipsius rei causa — in omnibus te ipsum praebe exemplum bonorum operum, in doctrina integritatem, gravitatem, in verbo sano irreprehensibilem — Tit. 2, 7-8. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo mensis Januarii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo primo, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

Jan. 20, 1981

✠ AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI  
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**Prot. N. 183/80**

## **SACRA CONGREGATIO PRO EPISCOPIS**

### **VICARIATUS CASTRENSIS IN INSULIS PHILIPPINIS**

#### **ADMINISTRATIONIS APOSTOLICAE**

#### **D E C R E T U M**

Ad consulendum regimini vacantis Vicariatus Castrensis in Insulis Philippinis, Summus Pontifex IOANNES PAULUS, Divina Providentia PP. II, praesenti Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Decreto nominat et constituit Administratorem Apostolicum ad nutum Sanctae Sedis memorati Vicariatus Castrensis, usque dum aliter provideatur, Exc.mum P. D. Marianum Gaviola, archiepiscopum Lipensem, eique jura et facultates tribuens quae, ad normam juris, competunt.

Contrariis quibusvis minime obstantibus.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis, die 14 mensis Aprilis anno 1981.