



BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

SOLIDARITY AND SPIRITUALITY IN WORK

Editorial

**COUNSELING IN ACTION: THE MAIN ACTS
OF THE COUNSELOR**

Fabio Giardini, O.P.

TO RIDE ON THE WINGS OF THE SPIRIT

Antonio Lambino, S.J.

IN PRAISE OF ST. ALBERT THE GREAT

Norberto Castillo, O.P.

FROM THE PRACTICE FOR THE PRACTICE

Herman Graf, S.V.D.

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THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN ORGAN

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EDITORIAL

Solidarity and Spirituality in Work

When a would-be assassin fired at Pope John Paul II last May he had on his desk the document he was preparing for the commemoration of the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, the great encyclical on the social question issued by Pope Leo XIII on May 15, 1871. Four months had to pass before the Pope was ready with *Laborem Exercens*, which updates the Church's teaching on work.

His working-class background, his deep concern for human and personal values, his Christocentric spirituality, and his vast experience as a pastor have given the Pope many precious insights that make his encyclical on work a truly monumental document.

It would be unfair to the Pope to try to summarize his thoughts within the narrow confines of this editorial comment. But in the spirit of the Christmas season and in the light of happenings in recent weeks, it seems relevant for us to highlight his thoughts on the solidarity of workers as well as with them, and on the spirituality of work.

"There is a need for ever new *movements of solidarity* of the workers and *with the workers*," says the Pope. "This solidarity must be present whenever it is called by the social degrading of the subject of work, by exploitation of the workers, and by the growing areas of poverty and even hunger." The Holy Father pursues this thought to its logical consequences and so he states: "even if it is because of their work needs that people unite to secure their right, their union remains a constructive factor of *social order* and *solidarity*, and it is impossible to ignore it."

Throughout the document the Pope repeatedly speaks of human work as part of God's plan for man. But he dedicates a special chapter (V) to discuss the elements for a spirituality of work.

The key to the spirituality of work, according to Pope John Paul II, is the knowledge that by means of work man shares in the work of creation. This truth, said the Pope, "was given particular prominence by Jesus Christ." The Gospel of Jesus Christ was also "the gospel of work" because he who proclaimed it was himself a man of work. In particular his Paschal Mystery holds the answers to problems raised by man's need to work. "The christian finds in human work a small part of the Cross of Christ and accepts it in the same spirit of redemption in which Christ accepted his Cross for us. In work, thanks to the light that penetrates us from the Resurrection of Christ, we always find a glimmer of new life, of the new good, as if it were an announcement of 'the new heavens and the new earth' in which man and the world participate precisely through the toil that goes with work. Through toil — and never without it. On the one hand this confirms the indispensability of the Cross in the spirituality of human work; on the other hand the Cross which this toil constitutes reveals a new good springing from work itself, from work understood in depth and in all its aspects and never apart from work."

The Holy Father concludes his encyclical by exhorting man to "know the place that his work has not only in earthly progress but also in the development of the Kingdom of God, to which we are all called through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the word of the Gospel."

It will take time before the full impact of "Laborem Exercens" will be felt in the world. But we can do our part in hastening the time when work will become a true force for human solidarity and spirituality.

IN THIS ISSUE

Man's pursuit of spirituality is beset with many problems. For this reason the role of the Counselor is vital. Fr. Fabio Giardini, O.P., a professor of the Angelicum in Rome who

recently lectured on spirituality as a guest of the University of Santo Tomas, shares with us some pointers on counseling.

Spirituality must be considered not only in its individual aspect. We must also look at its communitarian dimensions. For this, Fr. Lambino's article, "To Ride on the Wings of the Spirit" could be very helpful.

Inculturation, is not just a concern of the Church in the Philippines. We share it with many new local churches, especially with the Churches in Asia. Cardinal Jaime L. Sin discusses this in his paper, "The City on the Hill".

A man of science like Fr. Norberto Castillo may seem out of place when spirituality is being discussed. But his piece on St. Albert the Great reminds us that spirituality can be married with science.

Liturgy is the means by which the Church promotes spirituality among the People of God. The better the Liturgy is celebrated, the more it will help in promoting spirituality. For this reason, the questions and answers that Fr. H. J. Graf publishes in our magazine could be a contribution to our people's spirituality.

FEATURES

COUNSELING IN ACTION:

the main acts of the Counselor

by

Fr. Fabio Giardini, O.P.

Counseling is the encounter between a person who seeks for help to grow into maturity, "the counselee", and a person who tries to give that help, "the counselor". The counseling encounter is brought about and developed by the getting together of the help-seeking and help-giving persons, which is called "counseling interviews". The word and idea of encounter needs some further clarifications.

"Encounter" is a person to person relationship in a strict sense; that is, a relationship in which two human individuals are involved with their whole persons and are both taking part in the personal existence of the other. Such an encounter is characterized by mutual closeness, openness, understanding, confidence, etc., and meets the universal human need of being known, accepted, respected, and loved as a unique person; although the personal love involved in such encounter does not need to be the love of engaged and married people. A so deeply interpersonal communication, as the one required to make an encounter, is quite rare among human beings and it can hardly attain its perfection. However, when the contact of two persons happens within an atmosphere of loving and caring involvement one can speak of that relationship as of an encounter. The counseling encounter is essentially qualified by its specific goal which is to help the counselee to grow into personal maturity.

Being a relationship of the whole person of the counselor with the whole person of the counselee, the counseling encounter requires the counselor's personal listening and responding to the counselee, as two complementary acts. Let us first explain in detail what is involved in the counselor's listening to the counselee.

a. *Listening*

To actually create in himself the appropriate attitude of listening, the counselor has to break through his habitual self-preoccupation and self-centeredness. The counselor, so to speak, must forget about himself in order to concentrate only on the counselee's person and problem. Such a personal "self-surrender" of the counselor to the counselee during the interview is necessary to enable him to be totally open and personally receptive not only to the words, gestures and expressions of the counselee, but to the whole person of the counselee; while the latter attempts to reveal his inner self to the counselor with confidence and frankness. Effective counseling cannot cost to the counselor less than such personal self-surrender.

A. Van Kaam makes this point very clearly. "To become a counselor means to go beyond my daily natural attitude of concentration on myself, that is on my study of psychology, psychiatry, philosophy or theology. It means to go beyond my compulsive, anxious involvement in persons, books, the ups and downs of events that are *relevant to my own well-being*, my own career, my own growth. This unconscious *preoccupation* with the impression that I may make on my environment makes it difficult for me to understand, authentically, the real meaning of the appeal made to me, which may be hidden in a word, movement, story or question of my counselee. During the counseling hour, he needs more than my ears, eyes and far more than what I have learned in books of professional preparation for my work. What he needs in the first place, and what is difficult to obtain, is *to break through my unconscious self-preoccupation*. One necessary condition and the initial base for counseling, then, is to leave his self-centered world of daily involvement."¹

It is the essential counselee-centeredness of counseling which demands that the counselor gives up his "self-centered world of daily involvement", in which he is habitually immersed, in order to get involved in the counselee's personal world, with all his need of and yearning for growth. Of course, nobody can get so much into the needs, yearnings and problems of another person, unless he does get out of his own personal concerns, pre-occupations and interests in the first place. So the self-surrender practiced by the counselor in order to become really present to the counselee amounts to a certain getting out of

¹ A. Van Kaam, *The Art of Existential Counseling*, Dimension Books, Wilkes-Barre, (PA), 1966, pp. 22-23.

and forgetting about oneself, during the counseling interview. Sure enough, though, such self-surrender is not at all to be confused with the obliteration of the counselor's own humanity, or "being-himself-with-the-counselee", which the counselor need to have to suffuse the counseling encounter with sincerity and honesty. What the counselor must give up of his person in order to listen whole-heartedly and openmindedly to the counselee is certainly not the receptive part of his own candid and honest human self; because in that case the counselee could not find in the counselor the listening partner whom he is actually looking for. What the counselor must give up is the "stuffing" of his own self, effected by his attitude of concentration on his own interests, preoccupations, satisfactions, etc. That inner stuffing of the person, which is so natural to all human beings, must be taken off from the counselor's self, because as long as it remains there it hampers the counselor's receptivity to the counselee and jams any personal communication of the counselee to the counselor.

Consequently, while he assumes a listening attitude the counselor tries to put aside and forget his interests, concerns, and cares for his own life, well-being, friends, etc. in order to concentrate, as much as possible, on the counselee and his problem. In doing so the counselor wants really to become a "man-for-the-counselee".

So, the first aim of that self-surrender of the counselor is the enhancement of his untrammelled ability to listen to the counselee, as much as the counselee needs and is entitled to be listened to. Now, as to listen pleasantly to a symphony one hushes voices and muffles noises, and drops worries, concerns and alien thoughts, so to listen effectively to a person one must not only stop talking to oneself, but also suspend one's own inner consideration, judgments, emotions.

In other words, to listen with the whole person one has not only to keep an outer silence of words, but also the more difficult and demanding inner silence of personal feelings, prejudices, thoughts, wishes, fears, aversions, attractions, etc., which habitually prevent one from grasping and understanding what he is told. One should not follow the inner flow of one's thoughts and emotions while the other person speaks, nor keep clinging to one's viewpoint and prejudices, nor pass inner judgments about the communication of the other, before he has finished to make his point, nor force one's frame of mind and principles on what the other person is trying to say. In fact,

it is all too easy to respond at once, perhaps aggressively too, in one's clouded mind to any attempt that another person makes to get his own message across, and so destroy within oneself all attitude of receptivity; although, of course, one pretends to listen, because one has stopped talking.

The counselor should avoid those inner pitfalls, even more than the one who wants to understand the meaning of another's words, because by listening he aims at understanding the person, the whole person of the counselee. And for such high purpose, besides all his outer and inner silence, which, after all, is something rather negative, the listening counselor must also practice an unconditional positive attention to the person of the counselee.

To listen in this way is much more than to hear the sound and to grasp the literal meaning of the words uttered by someone. It is to pay full attention to the person who speaks, approaching him neither as an object of curiosity, nor as an interesting case to study, nor as the embodiment of the prejudices that one has about him, but as an intelligent and free subject of human worth and dignity. Such human subject is not even looked at in his relations to other human beings, he is not pigeon-holed into some general category or class of people; he is instead unconditionally recognized and respected in himself as a unique person. According to this strict and demanding sense of listening to the person, the counselee is really listened to only when he is unconditionally accepted by the counselor as a person who, so to speak, fills the whole world of the counselor, i.e. as if nobody else existed in the world during the counseling interview.

Naturally, where that listening is brought about, the counselor pays attention not only to the words uttered by the counselee, but also to his facial expressions, inflections of the voice, gestures, postures, etc., which all together convey the whole personal message of the counselee to him. What the counselor tries to get from the counselee's message is certainly not limited to the conventional meaning that the words of the latter have. The attention of the counselor positively extends to the entire intellectual, affective, existential experience of the counselee.

Thus, in the one hand, by letting his personal secret ooze out through his words, facial expressions, inflection of the voice, gestures, etc. exhibited to the counselor, the counselee invites him into the mystery of his own personal existence. On the other hand, the counselor shows his acceptance of such invita-

tion by silently and attentively concentrating on the whole personal communication of the counselee. And the attentive listening of the counselor involves great respect and care for the counselee, who feels treated as a person of real worth and dignity.

It hardly needs saying that the perfect attention of the counselor to the entire personal message of the counselee is rarely achieved; and when it happens, it is always at the cost of a great strain of the counselor.

Is such strain worthwhile? Yes, it is; because only that counseling is fruitful to the counselee, in which an attentive and respectful listening is practiced by the counselor. All other types of counseling, sooner or later, end up as self-defeating endeavors. Because the counselee, who realizes that he is not really listened to by the counselor, but considered by him as another case, which comes to enrich his file, either will discontinue his counseling interviews to avoid being exploited, or — what is worse — will, more or less consciously, play the game of the "interesting case" for the counselor, at the cost of a great deal of insincerity, fiction, and deception. At the end the counselor himself risks to be more misled than instructed by what the counselee has made up of his alleged personal experience to please the counselor. So the counselor should never accept to counsel somebody just because that person seems to offer him the opportunity of training his own skill and of expanding his knowledge of people. Although, in helping people to grow as persons the counselor also acquires, as a side-effect valuable to him, more training and experience as a counselor.

In short and by way of conclusion, during the counseling interviews the counselor must listen a great deal with an open mind and heart, with great attention and understanding, without biases and prejudices, with an untiring and unconditional acceptance of the counselee as a person.

What specific benefits for the personal growth of the counselee can be expected from such demanding listening to him of the counselor?

By being so attentively, sincerely, and seriously listened to, the counselee gradually learns to understand himself. While he is striving to display and explain to the encouraging counselor what his own problematic personal experience is all about, the counselee becomes more and more acquainted with himself. To put his mental confusion and emotional distress into words, which

make sense to and can be understood by the counselor, leads the counselee to clarify his inner personal situation to himself. The wish to report as clearly and as completely as possible about himself to the counselor compels the counselee to approach the heart of the matter of his personal difficulty and to clarify it.

On the other hand, experiencing the unbiased and affectionate acceptance of the counselor, the counselee can more easily acquire self-love, as if he were sharing in the same attitude that the counselor shows to him. Exposing his personal plight to the benevolent understanding counselor, the counselee learns to be more understanding and tolerant about himself.

So, at the end of the counseling interview, the counselee feels more acquainted and reconciled with himself, more able to assess his personal confusion, and a little nearer to find a solution to it.

Where the counseling interview develops in this positive way, the counselor does not need to add much to the report that the counselee has tried to make him. Once in a while he may insert a brief comment, contribute a bit of information, or add some stimulating and encouraging questions to the description that the counselee strive to give of himself. But most of the time the counselor leads the interview by his ear more than by his tongue. In this sense counseling is a maieutic art, similar to the technique of dialogue used by Socrates to bring out the latent ideas of his interlocutors into clear consciousness and expressions. Counseling is maieutic insofar as it intends to bring forth and to foster the self-knowledge and self-acceptance that the counselee can draw from the hidden resources of his spiritual being.

That is why during a successful counseling interview the counselor hardly needs to add anything to what the counselee says, save a supportive, often silent, confirmation of the insights and judgments that the same counselee expresses about himself. It seems, therefore, that during the counseling interview the counselor is not expected to do more and better than to be an understanding and sympathetic attentive listener, a sort of personally involved sound-box or mirror on which the counselee can hear the softened echo and the embellished reflection of his own anxiety-ridden spirit and confused mind, as to become better acquainted and more reconciled with himself.

But if counseling is really like that, one may question the whole use and importance of the counselor to work through one's own personal problems. After all, one must handle one's own

personal problem by oneself, and nobody else can solve them for one! That is also the reason why it does not really help people to give them ready-made solutions of their problems. The only one lasting and effective help that can be given to people is to teach them to help themselves. Now, an experienced counselor is deeply convinced of all that; and, though, he also knows that his personal, sympathetic, attentive listening to the counselee is not only useful but necessary to him. And for many reasons

In the first place, because the counselee would hardly be able to express and understand himself and his problem without the challenging listening presence of the counselor. Secondly, because the counselor's interview reassures and encourages him to face his problem with sincerity and honesty. Thirdly, because his exposure to the judgment of the counselor stimulates the counselee to seek and find a wise solution to his own personal problem.

Accordingly, the counselor may or may not bring a verbal contribution to what the counselee expresses during the counseling interview. However, what the counselor always adds to the counselee is a new way of looking at and accepting his personal problem, and new hope and strength for eventually solving it. Such "existential and personal" contribution of the counselor demonstrates that the non-directiveness of counseling does not exclude at all a deep influence exerted by the counselor on the counselee, as far as the attitudes, insights, and judgments of the latter about his own personal situation are concerned. After all, the counselee himself expects and looks forward to receiving such a corroborating and enlightening influence from the counselor, when he goes to him asking for help; in a way which resembles the expectation of an orchestra member with regard to the stimulating, sustaining, and challenging presence of the conductor, in order to play well his own instrument.

b — *Empathy*

The listening of the counselor to the counselee is a receptive behavior which must be completed by a more responsive attitude. Having put aside and almost forgotten the world of his own involvement, occupations and worries in order to become perfectly listening to the counselee, the counselor is made ready to enter into the personal plight of the counselee with empathy. During the counseling interview the counselor's listening to and empathizing with the counselee overlap one another all the time.

Because such listening involves much empathy, and empathy is brought about and shown especially by the act of listening. But even though listening and empathy are innerly intertwined in the response of the counselor to the counselee, we study them separately to clarify better each one of them.

What does empathy really mean? In imaginative terms, to show empathy means to "put oneself into the shoes" of another person. All European languages have slightly different expressions equivalent to this English idiom. To put oneself "into the clothes" (Italian), into "the skin" (French), "in the place" (Spanish) of another, etc. So, empathy is the human capacity of identifying with another person as to experience what and how the other person feels; i.e. "where the shoes pinch". The imaginative language used to describe empathy points out that the empathetic person has to be a sort of impersonator of peoples' feelings, situation, problems. What fits well with the idea of counseling as art, something like dramatic art.²

But we can better spell out what empathy is by resorting to a more precise language. Let's first show what empathy is not, comparing it with contradictory, contrary or simply different human attitudes expressed by words that have the same verbal root as empathy. The uncaring indifference, the indolence of mind and heart that we call *apathy* is the contradictory of empathy. Apathy is a cold insensitive attitude of non-love, whereas empathy is a special kind of love. The irritable dislike, the defensive aversion called *antipathy* is contrary to empathy. Moreover, the subtle hatred involved in antipathy is opposite to love, which is essential to empathy. Empathy is also to be differentiated from *sympathy*. Sympathy means compassion for someone's sufferings, and is or can be somewhat lacking in affective involvement in the other person's plight. Even when there is affective involvement in sympathy, that seems to be too much suggested and conditioned by the subjective experiences that the sympathetic person had of suffering, and not enough attentive to the trouble of the person for whom one feels sympathetic. *Empathy* is a loving attitude, which is more objective, broader, and deeper than sympathy. More objective because empathy is concerned with the uniqueness of the other person's problem. Broader because empathy involves also the sharing

² "Drama is the artistic expression of empathy": A. Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*, Fawcett Publ. Inc., Greenwich (Conn.), 1965, p. 59.

the other person's joys, whereas sympathy concerns chiefly sorrows. Deeper, because "whereas sympathy denotes feeling with and may lead into sentimentality, empathy means a much deeper state of identification of personality, in which one person *so feels himself into the other* temporarily, as to lose his own identity. It is in this profound and somewhat mysterious process of empathy that understanding, influence, and other significant relations between persons take place".³

In other words, through empathy the counselor "feels his way into the client's (counselee's) perception. To have empathetic understanding is *to crawl inside another person's world*, to understand in some depth how the other person feels and how he sees things, to sense what the other person is experiencing."⁴

In short, in counseling empathy is the special ability of the counselor to enter into the experience of the counselee as to identify himself with the personal situation of the latter; and in such an intense and objective way that the counselee's thoughts, feelings, conflicts, and struggles are experienced also by the counselor, even in the manner in which the counselee experiences them, i.e., as much as possible, according to the moods, attitudes, and frame of mind of the counselee himself.

On the opinion of C. G. Jung, this kind of empathy is absolutely necessary to the counselor (he speaks of the psychologist, but for the counselor it is the same) to get the authentic knowledge of the counselee's personal situation, which renders the counselor able to help him. "The psychologist has come to see that nothing is achieved by telling, persuading, admonishing, giving good advice. He must also get acquainted with the details and have an authentic knowledge of the psychic inventory of his patient. He has therefore *to relate to the individuality of the sufferer and feels his way into all the nooks and crannies of his mind*, to a degree that far exceeds the capacity of a teacher or even of a *directeur de conscience*."⁵

Someone may wonder whether such a deeply personal sharing in the experience of another, as the one involved in empathy, can experience it, and certainly not in the same way. A psycho-

³ R. May, *The Art of Counseling*, Abingdon Press, Nashville-New York, 1967, p. 75. The English word "empathy" is the translation of the German word "*Empföhlung*".

⁴ H. J. Hoss, *Pastoral Counseling with People in Distress*, Concordia Publ., St. Louis, 1970, p. 50.

⁵ C. G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, American Library, New York, 1964, p. 89.

logist who, by the way, is a disciple of C. G. Jung, writes: "Our is really possible. What a person is going through in the depths of his psyche seems to be so unique that hardly another person experience of *ourselves* is utterly different from our experience or knowledge of another. We *cannot* know how life is, seems, feels to another, in spite of the fact that at times it seems to us that we do feel things from the point of view of someone close. We say, for instance, that we see eye to eye with another, only to find out later that this has been an illusion, for the other has had all sorts of ideas and associations connected with the subject under discussion or happening we have been experiencing together — ideas and associations that we have not shared at all... We *cannot* know how life is to another person; we are, everyone of us, isolated in ourselves, "islands", forever alone..."⁶

Despite such a negative and pessimistic answer to the question of how much can human beings share in one another's experiences, the same psychologist cannot deny that "we have a certain sense of knowing, of *being able to feel into someone*, through the fact that we are in a sense alike".⁷ Which practically means to be able to achieve "a form of emotional sharing and identification with others, which involve a certain retreat from personal differentiation to vital unity, in order to coalesce with them in a single stream of feeling".⁸ So, there is in us a certain ability to enact in ourselves what another is actually feeling, and that ability is called empathy. All human beings have at least a bit of that ability, just by the fact of being like other human beings. As it often happens when we touch the mystery of the human person, we run here across a paradox. Each and everyone of us is, to some extent, an "island", i.e., an individual, one in himself and separated from everyone else; on the other hand and to some other extent, though, nobody is an "island", because he is a person, i.e., a being communicative with all other human beings. So as an *individual* the human being is isolated in himself and self-sufficient, but as a *person* he is correlated to and in absolute need of others. Of course, the empathetic sharing among human beings cannot happen along the line of their isolated "individuality", but it can really happen along the line of their communicative "personality".

⁶ M. E. Harding, *The "I" and the "Not-I", A Study in the Development of Consciousness*, Princeton University Press, 1973, pp. 70-71.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101. The author speaks of persons of the same sex, but the same statement can be extended to all human beings.

⁸ Cf. B. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1972, pp. 57-59, where the analyses of M. Scheler on various communications of feelings are reported and summarized.

Indeed, in the personal dimension of his being "man's acknowledged secret is his desire to be affirmed in his essence and in his existence by his fellow-men by a kindly look, a look in which all curiosity, distrust, or the routine has been overcome by mutual sympathy (= empathy); by so doing, each would let the other know that he endorses his presence. It is this endorsement that constitutes the indispensable minimum of man's humanity. Man wishes to be confirmed in his being by man, and wishes to have a presence in the being of the other; man as man needs it. As animal he does not need to be confirmed, for it is what it is unquestionably. It is different for man: man sent forth from the natural domain of the species into the hazard of the solitary category, surrounded by the air of a chaos which came into being with him, secretly and bashfully he watches for a Yes, which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another".⁹

Accordingly, communication, sharing, empathy among human beings are not only, to an extent, possible, but absolutely necessary. Because unless the human person has the opportunity of mirroring himself on other human persons he will never build up that sense of self-worth, which he desperately needs to become mature and independent. The empathy of the counselor is precisely meant to respond to and meet that basic human need of the counselee, especially in so far as the latter strives to attain personal independence and maturity.

Naturally, not all counselors have the same gift of empathy. For instance, it seems that women are usually more gifted with empathy than men.¹⁰ At any rate, as all other human abilities, also empathy depends both on a natural predisposition or gift and on the training or exercise of it. Therefore, granted that a minimum of empathy can be found in all human beings, even the less gifted counselor can increase his empathetic response to people by training himself to become more sensitive to the counselee's experiences of confusion, distress, inner conflicts, etc., while he comes across them during the counsel-

⁹ M. Buber, *The Way of Response*, Selections from his writings edited by N. N. Glatzer, Schocken Books, New York, 1972, pp. 207-208; cfr. also pp. 105, 112.

¹⁰ "Intuitive intelligence is more intimately tied up with love than analytical intelligence. Hence, women's strength in the intuitive grasp of the living concrete, especially of the personal element. She has the special gift of *making herself at home in the inner world of other*." E. Stein, *Problems of Women's Education* in "Writings of E. Stein", ed. by H. Graef, Newman Press, Westminster, 1956; quoted by K. Stein, *Flight from Woman*, Ferrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1965, p. 26.

ing interviews. Undoubtedly, as the capacity of listening can be improved by creating in oneself a genuine receptive attitude, so the ability to empathize can be developed by responding to the personal plights of people with a loving and understanding heart, and by cultivating in oneself the conviction that nothing helps so much people in trouble as those who empathize with them.

Empathy characterizes so much the counselor that he could be altogether defined as the person who offers unconditional, supportive, and formative empathy to the counselee. The counselor must be a person with whom the counselee can let himself be totally open and even become vulnerable, without any fear of being misjudged or used by him; a person who makes the counselee feel understood, accepted, trusted, loved; to whom the counselee can turn in need at any time, and be sure that he will always give him an empathetic response.

Obviously, to be really effective in counseling empathy must be shown in the counselor's way of dealing with the counselee.¹¹ After all, perhaps the counseling relationship would never have started, if a counselee had not felt attracted to a counselor, because the former noticed in the latter a particular ability to respond empathetically to people. So, from the very first counseling interview the counselor ought to receive the counselee with gentle empathetic manners. It is very important that the counselor relates to the counselee in an "informal" way, so that the counselee may relax at the counselor's presence. Given the psychological interplay that the counseling interview creates between counselor and counselee, only that counselor will really allow the counselee to relax, who is himself relaxed at the counselee's presence. In other words: the counselor should not keep uptight and stiff, and should not intimidate the counselee showing of himself an image of a so high moral perfection that it would be hardly approachable by the counselee. The affability of the empathetic counselor, however, does not exclude that the counselor's personality challenges

¹¹ C. R. Rogers maintains that the counselor's positive and unconditional empathetic understanding of the counselee, communicated at least partially to the latter, is most important and decisive among "the necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change" (that is the title of an article published by the same author on "Journal of Counseling Psychology", Vol. 21, pp. 95-103. Cf. B. Giardani, *La Relazione d' Aiuto secondo l' indirizzo di Carl R. Rogers*, La Scuola Ed., Brescia, 1978, pp. 120-121.

and even goads the counselee both to frankly face his own real personal problem and to work seriously through its best solution.

In any case, the manifest empathy of the counselor is absolutely needed to facilitate or simply to make possible the counselee's confident opening to him, which is a sort of "unmasking" or "stripping" oneself morally naked before the counselor. Anybody who has a normal sense of his own personal privacy and dignity would hardly reveal his inner self or uncover his personal problem to someone of whose understanding, acceptance, gentle compassion — in a word, empathy — he does not feel sure and trustful.

The fear of being misunderstood, misjudged and perhaps abused by a non-empathetic person would prevent anyone from being frank and open with him. It is a common experience that we similarly need the humaneness and respect of the physician, when we have to strip our body naked before him.

The counselor's empathy towards the counselee is so much needed that whenever the counselor does not succeed in empathizing with the counselee, the counseling encounter becomes unsuccessful. In such a case, the counselor is unable to reach out and get inside the counselee's person and problem, and the counselee cannot receive help from the counselor. However not all lack of success is to be considered as total failure. The counselor and the counselee who have attempted a counseling encounter at a certain point may find it difficult or useless to continue. Perhaps they have discovered that their mentalities are so different from one another as to be practically irreconcilable. Such personal differences can render both empathy and counseling impossible. Sure enough, to be effective the counselor needs not only empathetic sensitivity towards people at large, but a sort of personal kinship with that type of people to which the counselee belongs. This is why some counselors are gifted and effective for certain categories of people more than for others. Many are the gifts and abilities of counselors, and not everybody can act as an effective counselor for everyone who needs and asks for counseling; as not everybody can become an intimate friend of everyone else.

If the above described empathy qualifies the entire activity of the counselor as counselor, how does it actually shape his attitude and behavior towards the counselee? We can try to answer this question by drawing a spiritual portrait of the empathetic counselor. An empathetic counselor is not repres-

sive, intolerant, or authoritarian. He will not try to impose any ready-made solutions on his counselee, but rather help him to contend with his own problem and to work out his own solutions. In fact such an attitude would manifest more antipathy than empathy, i.e., more distrust than esteem for the counselee's ability to make personal decisions, which on the contrary counseling especially aims at fostering. On the other hand, an empathetic counselor is far from being permissive, lax, and weak towards the counselee, as if he did not really care how the counselee will eventually solve his own problem. Such as permissive uncaring attitude flows from indifference or apathy much more than from empathy. An empathetic counselor does not indulge in sentimentality with his counselee either. That would mean that he only shows sympathy to make the counselee feel good after the interview, but without leading him to any serious resolution of working through his personal problem.

In short, the counselee has nothing to gain from the anti-pathetic authoritarianism, apathetic permissiveness, and sympathetic sentimentality of the counselor. What he is seeking for is the comforting and challenging help that the counselor can give him through empathetic understanding and acceptance. Therefore the counselor ought to strive to become more and more empathetic towards the counselee; that is, just the opposite of being repressive, permissive, and sentimental.

c. Identification

Real empathy is far from easy. Most people are likely to be unaware of the inner reactions and feelings of others and treat them with cruelty and callousness out of inconsideration.

To achieve empathetic awareness of the other person, of his inner situation as a sentient being, one must observe oneself in relation to him and not the other way round, observe him in relation to oneself. One must commit oneself to look at the other person from the other person's/ view point. And to succeed in doing that, one must break away from the circumscribed world of one's own interests and selfish self-absorption, one must overtsep the world of the mere "I" to discover and the other world of the "not-I", as to become able "to see and feel" the other's personal situation as clearly as one sees and feels one's own.¹²

¹² M. E. Harding, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

Therefore, where the counselor succeeds in empathizing in this way, he also achieves a special personal self-identification with the counselee.

Such identification is the most sought for and valuable effect of the counselor's encounter with the counselee. Because it sums up all the counselor's positive attitudes towards the counselee; namely the counselor's openness of mind and heart which sustains his listening attitude, and the counselor's dedication to the counselee's personal growth, which occurs through empathy. Bringing listening and empathy to completion, the counselor strives existentially to be not only *with*, but wholly *for* the counselee and even, as it were, to enter *into* the counselee's situation. The counselor tries to identify with the counselee, as much as he can, in order to give him his whole personal support.

"Being-with" brings forth interpersonal *closeness*. "Being-for" deepens closeness and turns it into *togetherness* (laying aside the romantic connotation that this word may have). But "entering into" in order "to-be-within" the other person carries out that in-depth interpersonal *oneness*, which we call *identification*.

Through such identification the counselor and counselee merge into a sort of "common psychic entity" or "new corporate person", within which counselor and counselee intimately share thoughts and feelings.

Even assuming that such a psychic fusion of two persons into one can, to some extent, be brought about by the counselor's intense empathetic listening to the counselee, one could still wonder whether, in the model of counseling which we are outlining here, that is really needed. Is the counselee in need and expectation of such a thing as oneness and identification of the counselor with him when he seeks for counseling?

A. Van Kaam thinks so.

"The client (= counselee) — he writes — who comes to me for counseling is not a person who has a problem or a request, but a person who is an appeal. This appeal to my presence expressed in an awkward and deceptive way as a concrete problem, goes far beyond this — to the myteries core of his personality. This unique personal core itself is an *appeal to me as a full unique human being to participate in his deepest being*, to be willing to sustain the unique and embattled core

of his confused and painful existence, to be willing to strengthen by my presence, this free core of his being, to increase his free personality".¹³

In other words, who asks for counseling wants to overcome a depressing feeling of helplessness and isolation in face of his personal problem; and he is convinced that he cannot grow out of it, if the counselor does not join him in struggling with him through a solution. Now the joining of the counselor with the counselee, to give the latter that strength and wisdom which he desperately needs to grow into a mature person, creates the "common psychic entity" we spoke about. The purpose of that is fairly clear: it brings together counselor and counselee to set up a new powerful operational psychic center, from which the personal growth of the counselee can be expected.

Through the identification process of the counselor with the counselee "the emotions and the will of each become part of this new psychic entity. Consequently, the problem of the counselee is placed on the "new person", and the counselor bears his half of it. The psychological stability of the counselor, his clarity, his courage, and strength of will, can carry through the counselee, thus lending him great assistance in his personality struggle."¹⁴

By forming a "common psychic entity" or a "new person" together with the counselee, the counselor is able to give him a twofold psychic support.

Somehow *from within* the person of the counselee, where he has entered through empathy, the counselor helps the counselee to *carry the psychic burden* that weighs him down. So that the counselee no longer feels alone in coping with his painful difficulty. He feels literally consoled, since *con-solare* in Latin means to make company with someone who feels lonely or desolate. However, the consoling effect is neither the only one nor the most typical of the counseling encounter. A good friend, to whom the counselee could open his heart, would suffice to console him by listening to his complaints with understanding and affection. Sometimes just the attention of a "likeable fellow" would suffice to give some relief. The counselor is certainly a good friend and a likeable fellow to the counselee, but there is more than that involved in his role.

¹³ A. Van Kaam, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ R. May, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

The most important and specific contribution of the counselor is to help the counselee to understand, to face up to, to solve his problem. The counselor brings to the counselee not whatever human presence, but a qualified assistance; that is, his maturity, wisdom, strength to meet the psychic needs of the counselee. Through the counselor's qualified help the counselee can attain the clarity of vision, the balance of judgment, the know-how and the will-power which he needs to tackle his personal problem and eventually to solve it.

So the common psychic entity created by the empathetic identification of the counselor with the counselee is a new center of personal operation, more potent for the counselee's growth than the persons of the counselee alone. Within that common center the sharing between the counselor and the counselee in clarity of vision, in acceptance and courage towards the confused and distressing personal situation of the counselee occurs quite naturally, but not without strain on the counselor's psyche.

Hence the more a counseling session is fruitful and relieving for the counselee the more demanding and stressful it is for the counselor, both emotionally and intellectually. The good counselor is really burdened by the personal problem of the counselee and takes his/share of it upon himself. Besides, the counselor actually offers his knowledge, wisdom, courage to the counselee. He certainly has training to play his role, but usually he cannot carry on the effort required by it for too long. This is why the optimal length of time for a counseling session is about an hour.¹⁵ However, a certain flexibility can be prudently used. At the beginning of the counseling encounter more than a hour may be needed by the counselee to open up his inner self to the counselor. And also after the attainment of the optimal time-length, either the counselee or the counselor may at times wish to prolong the counseling session. But if this seems to be requested by some growing emotional over-attachment between the counselee and the counselor the counseling session should rather be kept within a hour period.

¹⁵ "The counselor should not prolong the interview more than one hour. Experience shows — and many research projects have confirmed — that concentrated attentions weakens after three quarters of an hour, and the effort to sustain it begins to take its toll. Moreover, if there has been a true dialogue for that length of time, the client is quite satisfied and does not mind at all taking up a few days later, where he left off". R. Hostie, *Pastoral Counseling*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1966, p. 71.

NINE NEW PRIESTS

Homily delivered by

*Archbishop Bruno Torpigliani, D.D.
Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines
Manila Cathedral
August 22, 1981*

You and I were filled with holy excitement as we witnessed the ordination of nine young men to the sacred priesthood. We are overwhelmed by the thoughts, the prayers, and the actions of this liturgical act that they remain in us as realities to remember, to examine, to explore, to reflect on and to understand. Our very beings as men, as Christians, and as priests are stamped, as it were, almost like the indelible character of a sacrament by these realities; realities whose real value is perhaps not fully understood by the world. Yet, they are realities that constitute the priest's personality and sacredness which can never be erased from the soul of the one receiving it through ordination and which should always be reflected in his mind and in his life. In fact, this sacredness come from a new distinctive presence, the presence of the Holy Spirit, and constitutes the priestly identity that all of us are expected to recognize and to understand.

Newly ordained priests of God's Church: You have been called by God, by Christ, by the Church. It is a divine choice that fell on your person. The words of Jesus: "I chose you...; come, follow me..." have become realized in your human existence. For all of you and for all of us, priests and bishops, the same call: "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men..." sound attractive, liberating, and imperative.

Oh, my God! I remember having heard this voice sometime. But when and how did this invitation of yours come again and again in my mind and in my heart. When? How? My God, did you speak to me directly or did you, as you often do, make use of ordinary events that fitted together to convince me that you were speaking to me through them? Was it the christian atmosphere in my family which the life of my father and of my mother showed? Was it their great reverence for your priests? Was it a little hint: "you want to become

a priest?" Was it through the reading of a good book? Or was it through a person I met? Yes, my God my memory fails me when I try to recall exactly when and how You spoke to me. But it really does not matter. Your voice was so clear and your invitation so urgent that I could not say "No". "Come!..." and I came. "Come..." and not only am I here in your presence, I have become identified with You, with Your Incarnate Son who wants to make use of me and of my ministry for the continuation of His presence in the world and for the salvation of His and my brothers. Thank You, my God, for my priestly vocation. It is the most beautiful and most precious gift you could give me. And today, as I see the flowering and the growth of this vocation in the priesthood that You have shared with me, what is there my God, that I could say more spontaneously than a sincere "Salamat, salamat po!" Thank You because I had the grace, the wisdom and the courage to listen and to accept your momentous invitation.

This indeed is the focal point, not only of the present ceremony, but also of the mystery of the Church. It is a question of no less than the transmission of spiritual powers, the powers that the Holy Spirit Himself infuses into the chosen disciple who is raised to the rank of a minister of God, for Christ, in the Church.

"Holy Orders", says St. Thomas Aquinas, "involves principally the conferring of power." I am therefore given this power by virtue of the Holy Orders that I received. I, who am nothing before You, my God! Nothing? No, my Lord, I am a priest, just as You are, because it is You who share Your will act through me for the sanctification of souls and for the salvation of the world. I am an instrument of Your hands... a living instrument, aware and determined to let You use me any time and any way You wish, even when I do not understand the reason why You use at such a time or in such a manner.

Invested with divine powers... then, from today, I shall consecrate, offer and administer the Body and Blood of the Saviour of the world. His presence on the altar will depend on my will and on my words, just as from my judgment and my words will depend the joy of a repentant soul who will hear Our Lord's forgiveness through my lips when I say: "I absolve you, go in peace..." On my will also depend the spread of God's Word which will open the way to faith and will draw people to proclaim that Jesus is Lord and thus become His follower and disciple.

Is my priesthood nothing? Is it justified to talk about the crisis of identity regarding my priesthood? Let us listen to the Pope's words in Cebu as he addressed the seminarians and priests, quoting Vatican II: "By sacred ordination and by the mission they receive from the bishops, priests are promoted to the service of Christ, the Teacher, the Priest, the King. They share in His ministry of unceasingly building up the Church on earth into the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit..."

My brothers in the priesthood of Christ, I am convinced that in these moments, when you feel such deep joy because of your ordination, if you have to express all your feelings very briefly, I would hear from your lips those wonderful words: "I am a priest... I am a priest."

Yes, you are a priest, today and forever, in time and in eternity. Your whole life will not be enough for you to meditate on the inexhaustible wealth and greatness of the things accomplished in you by the power and goodness of God.

Your priesthood is not just a dignity or honor conferred upon your person. It is not an end in itself. It is a mission, a ministry, a service, a work of mediation between God and the people. Your priesthood is meant for the Church, for the community, for the world. It is apostolic, missionary, and social. The Lord tells you that you are the salt of the earth, the light of the world.

Your priesthood is so precious in itself that nothing and nobody must make you doubt its preciousness, even when the temptation to doubt it should come, unfortunately, from your own brother priests or, worse still, from their way of life that is far from the ideal and contrary to the holiness of the priesthood. The light always remains light even when it is surrounded by darkness. You must always walk along the trail of the light of Christ who is your model and your support.

Remember the question Jesus asked the apostles when He wanted to know what the people thought about Him? "What do they say I am?" The apostles made a quick mental survey of the various opinions people had and they answered" "Some say you are Elijah; others say you are John the Baptizer or one of the prophets." "And you, you apostles, what do you say of me? Who am I?" ... "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," was the answer of Peter.

Well, let us suppose that in ten or twenty years a similar question were to be asked from the people about you after you have worked in various assignments: in the parish, in the school, in the hospital, in social action, etc. Happy are you, if in giving their answer, your people would not limit their comments to just one aspect of your activity, saying for example, "He is a good teacher," or "He is a good choir director" or "He is a good tour organizer", and so on. Happy are you, if your people would give no other answer but this: "He is a holy priest of Christ."

While I am very pleased to congratulate you for the wonderful reality that is now yours through your priestly ordination. I also wish to express my deep gratitude to your parents who have generously given you to God and to the Church, to all your superiors, professors and others who took care of you during your long seminary formation, and also to all those who in one way or another helped you to be ordained today.

I wish to express my special congratulations to the Archdiocese of Manila and to its pastor, His Eminence, Jaime Cardinal Sin, for the great gift that God has given to them in the person of these new priests who will assist their Bishop in the building of the Kingdom of God in this Archdiocese.

Also a word to you, my dear People of God. You will be able to understand the nature of the priesthood, if you try to understand two kinds of relationship that arise from it. The first kind concerns the relationship with Christ which the ordained priest takes on by virtue of his sacerdotal ordination. You know that in the dispensation of the New Testament, there is only one and true priesthood, that of Jesus Christ who is the one mediator between God and mankind. By virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the new priest has become a sharer in Christ's priesthood so that not only does he represent Christ and exercise His ministry, but he lives the life of Christ. So, pray much for him that Christ may live in him, as St. Paul said of himself, "I live now, not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me." The second kind of relationship links the priest to the Church, and thus also to his bishop, to his people and to the world. The priest is no longer for himself; he is for the ministry of Christ's Mystical Body,

the Church. He is a servant, an instrument of the Word and of grace. The proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist, the living of a life of faith and of worship, of charity and of holiness are his duty, a duty that calls for self-sacrifice, self-denial, the carrying of the Cross, like Jesus did. It is a heavy burden.

So finally, dear People of God, try to understand your priests; try to revere and obey them; try to love them in the Lord. When the love of Christ becomes the supreme principle of our life, it makes everything easy, possible and happy. When the Eternal Priest appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory.

May I end this homily with the words of the Holy Father who, speaking to the clergy of the Philippines, said: "May Mary, Regina Cleri, Mother of priests and seminarians, help you to place your complete confidence in that same Holy Spirit, who caused her to become the Mother of Jesus, who is Lord forever!"

TO RIDE ON THE WINGS OF THE SPIRIT

(Address delivered by Fr. Antonio B. Lambino, S.J., President and Dean of the Loyola School of Theology at the First General Convocation of the academic year 1981-82.)

I. *The Signs of the Times*

Allow me to begin by sharing with you some recent conversations I had with people whom we would count as "knowledgeable" in their various fields of engagement. The first was with Fr. Teodoro Bacani, former Dean of the Faculty of Theology of San Carlos Seminary and visiting professor at LST, who had just come back from a summer visit to Europe. During his sojourn in Copenhagen Fr. Bacani observed how sparsely attended were the Sunday masses in the city. The Danish Catholics, it appears, have lost the habit of coming to Sunday liturgy. As a matter of fact, it seems that the churches would be close to empty, if not for the several hundred Filipino (!) Catholics residing in the city whose presence makes it possible to speak meaningfully of a "congregation." It looks as though the sacramental life of the Church in Copenhagen will ultimately depend on the Filipinos living there!

The second interesting conversation I had was with Bishop Gaudencio Rosales who spoke about an astonishing growth of interest and zeal among Filipino Catholics (clerical, religious and lay) in becoming missionaries to evangelize the people of other nations. In his capacity as National Director of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, Bishop Rosales is overwhelmed by the urgency and frequency of requests and initiatives pertaining to mission on the part of teachers, professionals, students, seminarians, religious priests, brothers and sisters. The Church in the Philippines has come of age and is now ready to assume more seriously its responsibility to share the Good News with the peoples of other nations. Pope John Paul II's challenge to Filipino Catholics spoken in Baguio City during his visit here could not have come at a more appropriate time: "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."

The third conversation I had was with Fr. Adolfo de Nicolas, S.J., Director of the East Asian Pastoral Institute. The EAPI had just concluded a very successful summer renewal seminar on the theme of inculturation. Fr. Nicolas was simply amazed at the drawing power this particular topic had on bishops, priests, sisters and lay leaders from various countries of Asia and other parts of the world. The EAPI staff expected some forty participants to sign up; they got ninety-six. These participants showed a very lively interest and enthusiasm "in studying the meaning, the challenge and the demands of inculturation in their various places of mission." A number of them have already signified their intention to come back next year for a follow-up seminar to deepen their understanding of inculturation and its concrete meaning for their peoples.

II. *Great Words in the History of a Christian People*

Mission, ministry, inculturation — these are the key words often repeated in speech and in writing by theologians and non-theologians alike. These words are not always clearly defined by the people who use them. There is, however, no doubt that they exercise a strong motivational influence on those who invoke them. They are the magic words, so to speak, of our times. Those who are more cautions among us will sense danger in any phenomenon involving the unlimited and unscientific use of terms. We might even suspect the presence of a fad. It is, of course, a virtue to be cautions. But not always. Not when the Spirit is urging us to move in the direction of risk and creativity.

As John Coleman observes in an article in *America*, the magic words, the "obvious words," the consensus words of a generation are significant indicators of a culture in possession. The words which we take for granted, the ideas which for us need no explanation are symbols of the deepest values we cherish and of the firmest convictions to which we commit ourselves. Because of the intimate connection such words have with the immediate, pre-reflexive realities governing our lives, we ordinarily do not bother to stop and define them but, rather, continue to use them symbolically in our language system. We should, therefore, learn to catch the profounder message behind the obvious words, the unquestioned words of a people or of a local Church. For behind these words may lie their worldview, their principles, their basic attitudes... their dreams, their hopes, their aspirations.

When a new great word comes to birth for a particular generation, this usually means that a change of consciousness has occurred for that community. The word is the culmination of a process, usually gradual but not necessarily so, whereby a shift takes place in the orientations, perspectives, emphases and priorities of the people. An ecclesial change of consciousness calls for the attention of our Christian discernment, for it appears to be the habit of the Holy Spirit to speak a bit more distinctly in just such circumstances. Might not the Spirit be saying something to us in the contemporary ascendancy of the words *mission*, *ministry*, *inculturation* and in the consciousness shift that has given rise to them?

III. *Building Up the Local Church*

"To build up the local Church" — this is the vocation, and task of Asian Christians in this period of history as discernment in the Spirit has shown time and again. The first plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences affirmed in 1974 that "to preach the Gospel in Asia today we must make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our peoples . . . The primary focus of our task of evangelization, then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local church." (*Evangelization in Modern Day Asia*, n. 9) Five years later, the first International Congress on Mission ever held in Asia confirmed the earlier discernment regarding the focus of evangelization in Asia by speaking about the renewal of the local Church in the following terms: "(The communities of Christian faith in Asia) . . . must respond creatively to the imperatives of a deeper and more extensive inculturation of the Christian life so that our Asian peoples may find the Christian existence and message truly transparent to Jesus and His Gospel, genuinely vibrant with His life. We do not, of course, now face these challenges and try to respond to them for the first time. Already we believe, the Spirit has been at work among the faithful, quickening their response. Already we discern, with wonder and gratitude, some signs of this renewal even now taking place in our local churches." (*Toward a New Age in Mission*, Message of the Delegates of the International Congress on Mission, nn. 10.11)

By the grace of God, signs of renewal abound in the life of the Church in the Philippines today. The desire of committed Christians to share the life and the destiny of the poor;

the concern for social justice; the flourishing of basic ecclesial communities; the search for a true meeting point between faith and human aspirations without accepting the facile answers of ready-made ideological positions — these can only come from the promptings of the Spirit. We can add the coming to maturity of lay vocations for mission, the growing liberation of ministries from their narrow identification with ordained priesthood, the developing outward thrust of Filipino Christianity toward mission to other peoples of the world, esp. those of Asia. One should also note the steady progress of native liturgical music, the gradual indigenization of religious life style, and the growing number of Filipino hierarchical and religious leaders and superiors.

IV. *Opportunity and Responsibility*

It should be quite evident that the Church in the Philippines lives in a time of great possibilities and abundant opportunities. We can almost feel it in the air that the moment of *kairos* has come. At the same time that our existence in civil society becomes increasingly darkened by the pervasive manipulation of the sources of truth and channels of communication and by the cavalier "solution-by-brave-words-and-denial" of the most urgent social problems, our vocation as a maturing local Church "to take our place in the forefront of the Church's missionary effort, especially here in Asia" (to quote John Paul II) impresses itself more and more on our consciousness as a people. The times are critical, but crisis means not only danger but also opportunity . . . and the vitality of our local Church can grow in the midst of crisis.

In an important article (which, I am told, has had quite an impact on people in many parts of the world), Karl Rahner proposes a three-fold division of Church history from a theological viewpoint. He sees the history of the Church as a series of significant inculturations through the ages. There was first the relatively brief but foundational period of Jewish Christianity, the establishment of the apostolic Church.. This was followed by the more protracted period of inculturation of the Christian faith in Hellenic and European society and civilization (we still feel the effects of this particular inculturation even today). Finally, Rahner suggests, there has begun the third great theological epoch of Christianity in process of becoming a truly global religion. In this third epoch the inculturation of Christianity is to be achieved anew in the many nations

of the world, particularly in Asia, in Africa and in Latin America. The task of this third great movement of inculturation, according to Rahner, is to discern "how, with what conceptuality and under what new aspects the old message of Christianity must in the future be proclaimed...to return to the final and fundamental substance of the Christian message, in order to formulate from it anew the whole ecclesial faith with the natural creativity that corresponds to the actual historical situation."

My friends and colleagues, I shall not spend more time investigating the precise meaning of Rahner's proposal. I merely wish at this point to underscore one thing that we might tend to forget: *we, you and I*, are meant to be the agents of this great theological enterprise. As we live and breathe, we are the role-players in this third significant epoch of inculturation. We are part of that Church in Asia that must discover the new face of Christianity for our times and in our culture. Most of the time we read history or watch it being made; now we are called by the Spirit to be co-creators of history as the frontiers of faith and mission of the faith in the Philippines and in other countries; I see the faces of lay theologians who will be the Church's ministers of the Word in various educational institutions, parishes and catechetical centers; I see the faces of artists, musicians and composers who will discover the symbols and write the songs that the people will recognize for justice in society and who search for authentic Christian options whereby God's beloved poor may accomplish their own liberation; I see the faces of men and women who have graduated from this school of theology and have since then assumed positions of leadership and animation in various parts of the world. And I recall the words of Scripture: "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see! For I tell you that many...have desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." (Lk. 10:23-24). May we prove worthy of this time of visitation: that the Lord of history has granted us.

THE CITY ON THE HILL

ON THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES AND ITS ROLE IN ASIA TODAY

by

His Eminence Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, D.D.
Archbishop of Manila

Introduction

This gathering, dear friends, is a deeply memorable one for me. It is a gift of your gracious kindness, for which I am grateful and joyous.

We meet this evening in this historic city of Vienna, surely one of the truly great cities of Christendom. In my boyhood I read about this great capital of the Hapsburgs, once the seat of the Holy Roman Empire — for was not Charles the Fifth the Father of King Philip the Second of Spain, after whom my country was named? I heard of your magnificent Stephansdom, of the splendid Hofburg, of the romantic Vienna woods of Johann Strauss' lilting waltzes, of the blue Danube of song and story, as a young seminarian, too, I met in our Church history classes some of the great moments in the Christian chronicle, which took place here. Above all I recall the story of the lifting of the siege of Vienna by the tide-turning battle of September 12, 1683: the western forces under King John Sobieski decisively scattering the Turks. Your cathedral is associated in my mind with this great victory; as is the Feast of the Holy Name of Mary. Little did I dream, in those student days, long ago and far away, that today I would stand here, in the heart of this noble city where one still hears the ringing and ancient words, *Austria erit in orbe ultima.*¹

Vienna has played a significant role — a glorious one — in the history of Europe and of Christendom. Perhaps it is not without fittingness that I should speak here, in all humility, on the role of the Church of the Philippines in Asia today. This is the theme that has been assigned to me; a noble theme, but a difficult one. I will not try to play the scholar tonight, nor the

prophet — these gifts do not go with the prelate's pallium! But together let us draw a panorama on this topic, with some broad and impressionistic strokes.²

I. THE PHILIPPINES: "A SPECIAL MISSIONARY VOCATION"

Words of Pope John Paul II

Let me begin this way. Earlier this year our beloved Roman Pontiff, Pope John Paul II, visited our country and spoke of the *vocation of the Christian people of the Philippines*. Our Holy Father is a man of clear and forceful speech; I, for one, am grateful that he is.

This is what he said to us.

On the first evening of his visit, at our residence in Manila, he spoke these words to our Bishops gathered to honor him:

...in the face of a harvest that is immense...you will hear other nations, especially your neighbors in Asia, calling to you: 'Come over...and help us.' (Acts 16:9). There is no doubt about it: the Philippines has a special missionary vocation to proclaim the Good News, to carry the light of Christ to the nations. It must be accomplished with personal sacrifice, and in spite of limited resources, but God will not be wanting with his grace and he will supply your needs. ...Dear Brothers, you are truly called to be a missionary Church. (To the Asian and Philippine Bishops; Villa San Miguel, 17 February 1981)

Then, some five days later, addressing our people in the mountain city of Baguio, only a few hours before his departure, he renewed the missionary imperative in even stronger terms:

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 his own pastoral visit to the Philippines.

"At this moment one cannot but think of the important calling of the people of the Philippine Islands. This land has a special vocation to be the city set on the hill,

the lamp standing on high (Mt. 5:15-16) 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)

The Holy Father then went on to develop the reasons for this missionary vocation which he affirmed so urgently:

Among all your neighbors in this part of the world, the citizens of the Philippines are unique. Our country alone has a majority of Christians. Indeed you number more than half of all Catholics of Asia. In view of this, I ask: has not the Lord of history destined you to play a prominent role in 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? ... 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. ... 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! (To the Filipino people, at Baguio City, 22 February, 1981)³

Allow me, dear friends, to use these texts of Pope John Paul II — and other Roman Pontiffs — as stating the thesis of this talk with you this evening. Let me lean on the support that their authority (as words of our common Father) adds to these reflections I share with you.

II. THE CHALLENGE OF ASIA: "AN IMMENSE HARVEST"

Some Figures on "Religious Population"

"... in the face of a harvest that is immense ... you will hear other nations, especially your neighbors in Asia calling to you ..."

With a few round figures, in shorthand as it were, let me sketch the 'religious geography' of Asia. Let 'Asia' for our purposes this evening be mainly what you in Europe call, with a certain charming arbitrariness, "the Far East."⁴ These figures (as almost always) are approximative, but they are as good as any available:

- The number of Chinese to whom evangelization, as we understand it, is not possible, 827 millions;
- the number of Hindus and other non-Christians in the Indian subcontinent, 425 millions;
- those who are numbered as Muslims, more or less, in "Asia", 664 millions;
- others belonging to other Asian religions or to animistic religious groups, 403 millions;
- totalling 2,396,000,000 + *circa* 2 billion, 400 millions.⁵

Even if we brought the number total Asian population down to two and a quarter billion, as more conservative estimates would have it, we can still say that in Asia those to whom the Gospel has not been proclaimed is in the vicinity of two billion and nearly 100 millions. In their regard the great missionary mandate, "Going therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28:20), has not yet been fulfilled.

An older terminology labelled these peoples "infields" or "heathen." Rightly we do not call them that today. Not do we presume to take God's prerogative, and say who of them are saved, and who are not.⁶ But, hearing the command of the Risen Lord, is there not pain in our hearts that two billion have not yet — in an effective way — heard the Gospel of Jesus, come into contact with His Person, been called to His discipleship?

Still using rounded figures, we are told that today there are considerably less than ninety million christians — Orthodox, Protestant, Catholic — in these same regions of the world. And of these there are a little over 60 million Catholics, *of whom more than 40 million are in the Philippines!* Some statistical tables say that we Catholics are *less* than 2 percent; the more optimistic, just a mite over 2 percent of the total Asia population.⁷

These Figures Challenge Us: "The Harvest Is Immense..."

Dear sisters and brothers, the Christian faith and the Christian Gospel are not about statistics, even about human "religious" statistics. Rather it is about a life which God shares with hearts, which open themselves to His love, with people who receive His mercy into their lives. It is about the coming of

His rule and Kingdom into history and beyond. True. And yet surely these statistics are not wholly irrelevant in the context of the prayer we say each day, *Adveniat regnum tuum!*

Sometimes, from Europe and from North America, we hear learned voices saying that "the period of Mission is over; the task of (at least) *first* evangelization is done!" Dear friends, surely such learned people must be speaking of *another* planet, not of this one, the earth on which we live! The *New Catholic Encyclopedia*⁸ gives as a responsible estimate that there were about 200 to 225 million people over the entire globe at the beginning of the Christian era. Less than a quarter billion when Jesus died on the Cross, when the disciples went forth from the Upper Room a Pentecost. And now, in Asia alone, we add *two billion persons* of those to whom the early Christians were sent! "Make disciples of all peoples...": do we still hear the same command?

"*In the face of a harvest that is immense.*" Surely Pope John Paul II's words could not be truer. The harvest in Asia is immense, and thus the multitudes call, "*Come over to us also.*" "*...you will hear other nations, especially your neighbors in Asia, calling to you.*"

The duty of proclaiming that "Jesus is Lord!" — We must thank our evangelical brethren who have been of late forcefully reminding us that the task of announcing the Gospel of Jesus is by no means completed. "Some two thirds of the world's four and a half billion people," they tell us, "have had no proper opportunity to receive Christ. ... If therefore we do not commit ourselves with urgency to the task of evangelization, we are guilty of an inexcusable lack of human compassion."⁹

In a very true sense, for Asia, *Mission has not yet begun.* This is the first challenge that Jesus and His Gospel place before us, who belong to the Church in the Philippines. — Pray for us, dear friends, pray for us who must hear this challenge in our hearts!

III. A PROVIDENTIAL HISTORY

"*Mindful of the way you have so wholeheartedly responded to the Gospel since it was first proclaimed to you...*"

"*Without a Parallel in History*"

We are challenged by our history as a Christian and a Catholic people. In his *Summa theologiae*,¹⁰ the Angelic Doctor says

somewhere that it is not easy to point to any single event of our life and say, "There, that was clearly God's action, intervening in my life, telling me to do this or that." But, he adds, perhaps one can, by going over the course of many events, trace the line of God's Providence. One can see events forming a pattern, indicating the direction of God's will in our regard. It is in such a pattern that we discern a *personal* vocation.

May we presume to line up a few such happenings in our history as the Filipino people, which we may interpret as signs of a calling, a vocation from the Lord of history?

III. 1. Our ancestors and our land were first visited by the Spanish conquerors in 1521 (16 March 1521). Even before Magellan left, in the island of Cebu, the King and Queen and some 800 of their subjects asked to be baptized. The chronicler of the journey, the reliable Antonio Pigafetta, tells us that the Spaniards

told them they should not become Christian for fear or to please us, but of their own free will. [And] all cried out with one voice that they were not becoming Christians through fear or to please us, but of their own free wills.¹¹

III. 2. In 1565, Legaspi and his companion colonizers returned, with Augustinian missionaries accompanying them. In 1571 he moved to Manila, which in time was to become the capital of this new Spanish colony.

Forty years later, almost incredibly, practically the entire archipelago — except for the Muslim areas in the south — had embraced the Christian faith. "The cross and sword went together," a later historian was to write, "but the cross won first and the sword was seen in its shadows."¹²

The American Protestant historian, Edward G. Bourne, reflecting on the Christianization of the Philippines, was to write at the turn of the present century:

In the light of impartial history raised above race prejudice and religious prepossessions, after a comparison with the early years of the Spanish conquest in America with the first generation or two of the English settlements, the conversion and civilization of the Philippines in the forty years following Legaspi's arrival must be pronounced an achievement without a parallel in history.¹³

III. 3. The nearly four hundred years which made up the history of Spanish rule in the Philippines saw many violent crises

erupt and many dark shadows fall on our people. Much tyranny and suffering were, in time, to come, and many ignominious pages of injustice were to be written in tears and blood and shame. But despite all this, the Christian faith continued spread still, and settled into our people's existence and entered into the fabric of our culture, grew and went deep into our lives, our hearts, our sorrows and our festivities.

Our great historian Fr. de la Costa was to write that when the time of our final revolution came, at the end of the nineteenth century.

Filipinos were able to distinguish between the Catholic Faith and Church . . . and the colonial government. We retained our allegiance to that Church even as we withdrew our allegiance from Spain. Indeed, in our first constituent assembly, the bill to establish Catholicism as the state religion was defeated by a single vote.¹⁴

There is much more that can be said. But in the time given us today, these three "events" will have to suffice.

"Light of Christ in the East"

It is this history, so Providential — a history of Faith received so readily with open hearts, a Faith which spread so "naturally", so rapidly, working its way so deeply into the soil of our souls, in which *a vocation in grace has been discerned*. Above all by the Roman Pontiffs, one after the other. We have luminous texts (to speak only of recent Popes) affirming this with all possible clarity: Pius XI, Pius XII, the good Pope John XXIII, Paul VI during his pastoral visit to Asia, and even the smiling Pope of thirty-three days, who said, on his last day on earth, to a group of Bishops from the Philippines:

We earnestly support the affirmation of [your] missionary vocation. We earnestly hope that it will flourish among your youth. We are sure that the Philippines has a great vocation in being the light of Christ in the Far East: to proclaim His truth, His love, His justice and salvation before its neighbors, the peoples of Asia.¹⁵

Shall we accept that the Popes, in unbroken line, and our own Bishops, speaking together, speak truly of a vocation from the Lord? And what is the meaning of this discerned task? We have been made a chosen people in Asia, all undeservedly (to be sure), because the heavenly Father wants us to be "sign and

instrument" of His goodness which calls other Asian peoples to himself. We are, somewhat like Israel, only a "little nation", a little people living on little islands, at the edge of the great civilizations of Asia. From ourselves we are nothing; we have little to glory in. It is all the Lord's gift, and we give thanks: *laetentur insulae multae!*

But to be a chosen people is always, in the plans of God, to receive a responsibility in service to him. To be, as today's phrase goes, "for others": *propter alias gentes, propter illarum salutem*. Pope Paul VI enjoined us to thank our heavenly Father for "four hundred years of grace". But such gratitude, for so much given, for so much received, can only open up to a mission shaped for us by that same loving goodness. "To proclaim His truth, His love, His justice and salvation before [our] neighbors, the peoples of Asia."

To which we answer, as answer we must, with grateful hearts: *Amen*, thanks be to God!

IV. "MY SPECIAL DESIRE": BECOME THE FOREMOST MISSIONARIES

"I wish to tell you of my special desire: that the Filipinos will become the foremost missionaries of Asia..."

What does this mission mandate mean?

Towards the end of the year 1979, we held in Manila, for the first time in Asia, an International Congress on Mission. At its conclusion, Agnelo Cardinal Rossi, the Papal Legate, was to say:

Through (this Congress) a most important step in the history of civilization has been taken here in Manila. Just as in the case of Latin American, so also Asia is emerging in the Catholic Church as an active missionary force.¹⁶

The participants of this Congress tried to spell out, especially for Asia, what this mission meant. Their final statement moved around two poles: (a) Mission in Asia as *proclamation, now, of the Gospel by the local churches* of Asia. The former "missions" are now summoned to mission; they must become, even now, churches on mission, missionary churches. (b) And secondly, Mission in Asia as *incarnation, as inculturation*: the local churches must increasingly incarnate the Christian faith

and life within the realities of their cultures: the ways of their own cultures must increasingly become for them the ways of life and expression of the Gospel and the Christian life.

Missionary proclamation and ecclesial inculturation: the great challenges of mission in Asia today. They are, too, the great challenges of mission for the Church in the Philippines in the coming decades.

Missionary Proclamation

The challenge of missionary proclamation, in obedience to the great commission, "*Euntes docete...*", has been placed before the Church in the Philippines again and again; again and again it has been received as a duty of gratitude.

We might cite one text, from the Philippine Hierarchy, during the Quadricentennial Year of the Evangelization of the Philippines:

The time has come for us to fulfill our missionary vocation as the only Christian nation in Southeast Asia. We owe our Faith to the missionary spirit of Spain. In order to pay that debt, we have to undertake the task of evangelizing our non-Christian neighbors. This is an apostolic responsibility that we cannot elude.¹⁷

It is time now to say something of how, already, we have tried to respond to this challenge.

During the period of Spanish domination, there was no real possibility of our sending out native missionaries; it will take too long to go into the reasons for this.¹⁸ If some Filipinos did in fact go out on missionary journeys, it was (in a way) not planned, *praeter consilia*. Our first native Filipino beatus, the Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz, went to Japan — there to die a martyr's death of Nagasaki, because he was fleeing from a Spanish colonial justice — a justice that was often enough not even-handed toward all. In a sense he was martyred because of an unplanned "turn of fortune."¹⁹

It seems our first native missionaries were two St. Paul de Charters sisters, who went to Thailand in 1925. (One of them still works there today.) But in 1981 we have *more than seven hundred* priests, scholastics and seminarians, sisters and even lay people in overseas mission, in all six continents. We have a Philippine Missionary Society, with six secular priests in active

overseas ministry. And we have today 35 religious congregations of men, and 68 congregations of women many of whom have sent their Filipino confreres and Filipina sisters to the missions in sixty-two countries. The SVD society has 55 Filipino priests on overseas mission; the CICM congregations has 28. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary have 54 Filipina members in foreign mission posts, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, 45. In 1970, there were some 350 Filipino missionaries working outside our boundaries; today there are over seven hundred.

From two in 1925 to more than seven hundred in 1980 — in just about half a century — surely the response to the Lord's call has not been ungenerous. And the number of volunteers is growing. Our hope, our prayer, is that by the year 2000 we may have at least 2,000 Filipinos and Filipinas doing the work, in other lands, that missionaries from Europe and America did among our people from 1565 till the present.

By the goodness of the Lord, then, our fulfillment of the first task has begun in earnest. Please God, it is "on the way" and cannot now be stopped.

If I may repeat here some thoughts I shared with the *OSSERVATORE ROMANO* in an interview last February: We must now "send forth" even more missionaries. And *out of our substance, not out of our surplus*. Not from our "Dividends", but from our capital. That is the true spirit of mission. It must be our spirit too. We must give from our poverty, from our powerlessness and littleness. Our people are poor in material resources, but I am confident that they will help in whatever way we can, even materially. But our people are rich in human resources. God has lavished them with great gifts of nature, of humanity, and above all, of faith and of hope. God has been so good to us in human potential, in the goodness of our people. And in the gift of faith. This may sound naive to you. But I have a boundless faith that our mission work, from relative poverty and powerlessness, will be really blessed by God. After all, like the *anawim* of the Bible — the poor ones, the little ones — we have to place all our trust and reliance on him. And that is — in deeds of faith — the sure formula of success. Our poor efforts,, linked with unshakable trust in the Lord, to which the Lord gives increase.²⁰

V. YOU MUST "GIVE SHINING WITNESS"

"... as a nation you are to show forth the light of Christ by the quality of your lives."

What of the second task of mission, that of "incarnating the Gospel and the Christian life in our cultures"?

Inculturation

The 1979 International Mission Congress said:

We believe that the Spirit of the Lord calls each people and each culture to its own fresh and creative response to the Gospel. Each local church has its own vocation in the one history of salvation, in the one Church of Christ. In each local church, each people's history, each people's culture, meanings and values, each people's traditions are taken up, not diminished nor destroyed, but celebrated and renewed, purified if need be, and fulfilled ... in the life of the Spirit.²¹

This duty of inculturation is, the same text says, "the actualization of the unique vocations of peoples within the catholic unity." — We cannot address ourselves at any great length to the theology and process of ourselves at any great length to the theology and process of inculturation now. We have spoken of it more fully at an earlier occasion.²² Hopefully it is increasingly understood among you. Hopefully its deeper meanings, so fundamental for the task of evangelization, will become more and more realized.²²³

But this must be said, because it bears directly on our topic: inculturation commands the "incarnation" of the Gospel and the values of the Christian life in *the totality of our cultures*. Inculturation is not limited only to areas of liturgy and catechesis. It goes beyond the outward expressions of Christian thought and behavior. In every culture there are belief and value systems; there are livelihood and power patterns and structures. Inculturation means that the values of the Gospel must penetrate and transform these systems and structures too. By a living dialogue and interchange, "*our own ways of being human*" become also *Christian ways of being human*.

In the same texts wherein the Roman Pontiffs (and our own Bishops as well) tell us that the Christian people in the Philippines have a missionary calling — in those same texts the

challenge of witness is sounded. "You must give shining witness": your neighbors in Asia must see in you, your lives, in your relationships, what it means for an Asian people to be a genuinely Christian people: what it means *to be fully Asian, and fully Christian too.*²⁴

First, this means that we must remain faithful to ourselves, our values, our roots. The Holy Father in his addresses to our people stressed the imperative of truly treasuring our cultural heritage as a precious patrimony.

Every [Filipino] must strive in all earnestness to preserve, to deepen and consolidate these [Filipino] human and cultural values — these priceless gifts — against the many forces which seriously threaten them today.²⁵

Among the values he singled out were the Filipino's "sense of the divine, [his] prayerfulness and deeply religious consciousness." The "respect for the role of women in the home, in education and in other challenges of life in society. The reverence for the aged, the disabled, the sick and infirm." "Above all," he urged, "maintain your great esteem for the family." What this means he forcefully spelled out in detail. In brief, he urged our people to uphold the structures of family life.

A nation goes the way that the family goes, and when the integrity and stability of family life is imperilled, so will the stability of the nation and the tasks it must assume before the judgment of history.²⁶

In the preservation, deepening and consolidating of our fundamental Filipino values, especially family values (values also so treasured among all Asian peoples!) — we are called "to give shining witness" to the neighboring peoples of Asia.

But, dear friends, there is even more to this task assigned to our people!

"To Construct An Exemplary Society"

The great search in Asian societies today is for what might be called "the societal and historical dimensions of human salvation". Some years back, at Bangkok, the 173 Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (of the World Council of Churches) formulated these aspirations in terms of our great human struggles today:

- the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of people by people;

- the struggle for human dignity against political oppression of human beings by their fellow men;
- the struggle for solidarity against the alienation of person from person;
- the struggle of hope against despair in personal life.²⁷

Today, if the Church in Asia will give the witness which will make the Gospel "audible and credible" to our human multitudes, it must show that the Gospel and the Christian community address themselves to these profound human issues, and accompany the people — the poor and the powerless above all! — as they enter into these struggles and commit themselves to these strivings.²⁸

We should have no illusions: religion will be severely tested in the Third World, and the test will be precisely the social question. No religion, be it Christianity, Islam or Hinduism, that is unable to [help to] create a world in which justice dwells, has a chance of seeing much of the third millenium.²⁹

We must say clearly what the Second Vatican Council says about the Church's mission: that it is not, properly speaking, in the political, economic and social orders. That the mission Christ set before his people is a religious one.

But out of this religious mission itself comes a function, a light, and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the law of God. *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 42)

No, the religious mission of the Church does not mean that she is absent from the economic, social or political spheres. Rather, her presence and action there are, through her teaching, and through the apostolic endeavours of lay Christians especially,

- to make sure that *the meanings and values of the Gospel* are announced and realized in deed;
- that the reality of human sin and selfishness, in personal and structural dimensions, are recognized, laid bare and struggled against, *with God's grace*;
- that the values of justice, of participation, of forgiveness, brotherhood and love *are kept together* in our construction of the human future, and
- that *the dignity of every man, woman and child* be always held up as primary, because they are sons and daughters of God, brothers and sisters of Christ.

This is surely the meaning of our Holy Father's continued insistence on the sacredness of human rights, on the unacceptability of class struggle and violence as societal principles, on the bankruptcy of prevailing ideologies (of the Right or of the Left) as ways of creating genuine solutions to the unjust realities of contemporary Asian societies.

Hence, the Filipino people are asked to fully realize their responsibility to create an exemplary — because Christian — society:

- a society (Pope John Paul II told us) where spiritual and cultural aspirations are fostered equally with legitimate material interests;
- a society where social organization exists only for the service of man and for the protection of his dignity;
- a society where there is active and responsible participation of all citizens in their own integral human development and in the forward movement of the history of their communities.³⁰

In this, too, we are “to give shining witness”, and the Church in the Philippines must fulfill its proper role and exercise its due participation in

the commitment to a development that is fully human and that overcomes situations and structures of inequality, injustice and poverty in the name of the sacredness of humanity. (17 February 1981)³¹

You see, then, the immensity of the missionary task that is set before us:

On the *front lines*, the missionaries, men and women of great faith, who must go beyond our boundaries, to lands where the Gospel has not been heard, where the cross has not been raised; these men and women who, in the noble mission tradition, must carry the person of Jesus with them in word and deed, in self-giving and sacrifice, in all-embracing, all-enduring love.

And *behind them*, missionary at heart, all of the Filipino Christian life in its full breath and depth, — in its entire existence and history.

VI. AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK

"This mission . . . must be accomplished with personal sacrifice, and in spite of limited resources, but God will not be wanting with his grace, and he will supply your needs."

"An Impossible Task!"

My dear friends, as you hear the high-sounding and perhaps pretentious words with which I have tried to define our task as a Church — the Church of Filipino Christians — in Asia, a Church with its special missionary vocation of proclamation and witness, you will of course say, "What a presumptuous dream! What an impossible task!" And no one more than I would agree more completely with you!

But, dear friends, is not every noble vocation indeed a presumptuous dream, indeed an impossible task? Is not every calling from the Lord of History "an adventure — by itself — foredoomed to failure?" Foredoomed, that is hopeless from the start, without the power of God? "Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders will have toiled in vain." (Ps. 127, 1)

The Christian communities in Asia are indeed but "little islands in a vast ocean" of humanity, constituting (as you will remember!) only two percent of the total human population. And yet now, at this hour, the voice of the Spirit calls them to the incredible task of bringing Christ and the Gospel to the other 98 percent of Asia. And so, we must either give up before we even begin, or we must believe, and believe with all our hearts, in the promises made to this little flock. "Fear not, little flock, for my father has given you the Kingdom!" (Luke 12, 32). A promise made once, at the shores of Galilee, to twelve ignorant men, mostly fisherfolk, with a handful of other disciples, as poor and unlettered as their leaders. And they were being asked to "turn the world upside down" (Acts 17,6), — the world of the Roman empire and the great civilizations of antiquity. With what means? With only the word of the Gospel, joined to the weakness and foolishness of the Cross.

Once your own missionaries sailed from Europe with nothing more than *these* arms, to bring the message of Jesus Christ to our shores, in the persons of the Spanish priests who had faith and courage, and unbounded hope. And now it is

we, and our missionaries, who are asked to continue the task that began from this Continent. It is *now our hour*; *now* it is our responsibility.

As we step up this "impossible task", what do we ask of you?

You Must Help Us

We ask you for the support of your prayers and sacrifices. For we believe in the key of prayer which releases the power of God in men's hearts.

We ask you too for the support of material resources. No, I am not ashamed to say this, for the sake of this gigantic effort. And do not look to help material and social development efforts only, even if these remain highly important. But there are missionary tasks, — "*the old fashioned missionary tasks*," — perhaps:

- the work of *catechesis*, so crucial for evangelization at all times, so terribly necessary even in our own country today;
- the work of building and renewing *Christian families*, in which the Church, especially in Asian cultures, must be rooted;
- the work of forming *lay leaders* on every level for our Christian communities;
- the difficult work of *priestly education* and the *formation of religious women*, without which the future of mission is not truly assured.

I repeat, I do not minimize development aid. But I believe that as communities of Christians, it remains your primary concern, *your primary missionary concern*, — to help support, to help develop ecclesial communities in the Philippines and in Asia *precisely as ecclesial communities*. We must say this clearly: we believe the authentic and integral human fulfillment lies finally in the life of Faith, Hope and Love in Christ and the Spirit.³² And we believe that ecclesial communities — *the communities of the Church in Asia* — are the bearers of his life, and this hope for all our Asian peoples.

And lastly, we ask you to commend the Mission of the Philippine Church in Asia to the Holy Mother of God. As the 1979 Mission Congress said,

in almost every [Filipino] home her image is found, in almost every corner of this nation her shrines are placed. We turn to her . . . asking her to pray that the Good News her Son brought to the world may reach ever more and more [Asian] hearts.³³

Conclusion

To the Mother of God

But let us come now to our conclusion.

The celebrated English Catholic writer, Gilbert Keith Chesterton, tells a story which I would like to recall for you, as I end this conversation with you. He narrates what he once heard in Ireland, about Donegal, to be exact:

It told [he says] how someone met in the rocky wastes a beautiful peasant woman carrying a child, who, on being asked for her name answered simply, "*I am the Mother of God, and this is Himself, and He is the boy you will all be wanting at the last*".³⁴

Tonight, as we have gathered here to reflect on the role of the Church in the Philippines in the great continent of Asia, my thought turn to Our Lady. I see the image of Mary which, more than any other, is "Our Lady of Manila" — the Lady of the Rosary who stands in quiet and lovely majesty in the Dominican Church in Quezon City. For today we honor her Solemnity, with the city's most ancient procession, that of *La Naval*.

Once she stood in the Dominican church in the Old Walled City, the object of devout pilgrimage — she who saved the royal and ever-loyal city from the threat of the invasion of Dutch pirates, in 1646.³⁵ Today, this very Sunday evening, she will be carried through Manila, and thousands — mostly young men and women, and hundreds of children — will fill the streets, holding their lighted candles, to hymn her honor and praise, singing the Hail Mary in the gathering dusk and the gently-falling darkness.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Cf. Otto Schulmeister, Johann Christoph et al., *IMAGO AUSTRIAE*, Herder Vienna 1973, pp. 51 ff.

² Perhaps I may be pardoned if I refer to three discourses on connected topics. The first two are my own; the third — a paper written by our great Filipino historian, Fr. Horacio de la Costa (+ 1977). (a) JLS, "The Future of Catholicism in Asia," given in Rome, at the Circolo di Roma, 10 March 1978; (b) JLS, "The Ways of Dialogue: Listening to the Heart; Meeting in Christ," in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, LV, June-July 1981, pp. 357-372; and (c) Horacio de la Costa, "The Missionary Apostolate in East and Southeast Asia," in *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits*, September 1972, Jesuit Missions, Inc., St. Louis, Missouri 63108. Let me refer here also the first volume of *TOWARD A NEW IN MISSION (TANAM)*, the proceedings of the International Mission Congress, Manila, 2-7 December, 1979, edited by G.B. Rosales and C.G. Arévalo, published by the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies of the Philippines (POMAS), Manila, 1981, Bishop Rosales' report, pp. 1-15 and T.C. Bacani, A.B. Lambino, et al., *TO GIVE SHINING WITNESS*, Manila, POMAS, 1981, pp. 9-31.

³ These texts are cited from Pedro S. de Achútegui, *JOHN PAUL II IN THE PHILIPPINES. ADDRESSES AND HOMILIES (JP II/AH)*, Ateneo de Manila University, 1981, pp. 33-40, 193-186.

⁴ Our late (and greatly lamented!) Filipino historian, Fr. Horacio de la Costa, used always to ask, somewhat mockingly: "Far East: far from whom?" — The expression, obviously, is from one who stands on European soil and sees the world from where he stands, "at the center of mankind"!

⁵ "The Future of Catholicism in Asia," cited in fn. 2, where I have cited *The Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook* for 1974. See also, *LET THE EARTH HEAR HIS VOICE*, International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Minneapolis, Minn. 55403, World Wide Publications, 1975, passim, e.g., pp. 288-ff., and the chart, "Hidden Peoples 1980: The World in Missionary Perspective," U.S. Center for World Mission, Pasadena, CA 91104. Cf. also P. de Achutegui, JP II/AH (footnote 3), the table on page 32.

⁶ Cf. Asandas Balchand, SJ, *The salvific value of non-Christian religions according to Asian Christian theologians*, Manila, Ateneo de Manila University, 1973, with a good bibliography. More recently, cf. Walbert Buehlmann's *ALL HAVE THE SAME GOD*, Slough, St. Paul Publications, 1979. We must also refer here to the writings of Msgr. Pietro Rossano, of the Secretariat for Non-Christians, in the *BULLETIN* of the Secretariat, Vatican City.

⁷ Cf. the references given in footnote 2.

⁸ *NEW CATHOLIC ENCYCLOPEDIA*, N.Y., McGraw-Hill, 1967, vol. XI 586, "Population" (W.J. Gibbons): "By the time of Christ... world population had increased to 200 or 225 million, so far as can be reconstructed from historical and archaeological records."

⁹ Cf. *INTERNATIONAL BULLETIN OF MISSIONARY RESEARCH*, (Ventnor, New Jersey) Vol. 5, No. 1, "The Thailand Statement 1980," Consultation on World Evangelization, p. 29.

¹⁰ This question which used to be treated in the *De gratia* treatises under the rubric of "certitude regarding grace," is taken up by St. Thomas in I-II, q. 112, a.5 and in other — even more pertinent texts — to which I have been unable to find exact references in preparing for this conference.

¹¹ Antonio Pigafetta, *MAGELLAN'S VOYAGE AROUND THE WORLD*, tr. James A. Robertson, Cleveland, Clark, 1906, I, p. 99.

¹² Francis X. Clark, *THE PHILIPPINE MISSIONS*, A Study of the Apostolate in the Islands from King Philip of Spain to Pope Pius XII, New York, America Press, 1946, p. 7. I am indebted to Fr. Clark for much of the historical material here. He has just published a new essay, 'MISSIONS AND THE PHILIPPINES — PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE', Manila/Quezon City, POMAS/Loyola School of Theology, 1981. This latter booklet brings the story of "the Philippine missions" up to date, Cf. also Pablo Fernandez, *HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES*, 1521-1898, Manila, National Bookstore, 1979, esp. pp. 274-303.

¹³ Edward G. Bourne, Historical introduction to E. Blair and J.A. Robertson, *THE PHILIPPINES*, Cleveland, Clark, 1902-1909, 55 volumes; text cited from Vol. I, pp. 19-87.

¹⁴ Horacio de la Costa, "Has Evangelization Up To Now Humanized Man?" position paper given at the XII Biannual Meeting of the Union of Superiors General, on *EVANGELIZATION AND HUMANIZATION*, Cavalletti/Rome, 26-29 November. Mimeographed, p. 24, par. 35.

¹⁵ Pope John Paul II (Albino Luciani) to Cardinal Rosales and other Philippine Bishops, on their *ad limina visit*, 29 September 1978, *THE POPE TEACHES*, vol. 23, pp. 337-339.

¹⁶ Cf. Volume I of *TOWARD A NEW AGE IN MISSION (TANAM)*, p. 128.

¹⁷ Joint Pastoral Letter of the Philippine Hierarchy on the Quadricentennial of the Evangelization of the Philippines, 2 February 1964, signed by Cardinal Julio R. Rosales, President of the Administrative Council, Catholic Bishops' Conference. *Boletin Eclesiastico* 39 (January-February 1965), pp. 5-10.

¹⁸ Cf. Francis X. Clark, "MISSION" AND THE PHILIPPINES, his lecture on missions in the Philippines, 1981, see last section, and fn. 38.

¹⁹ Cf. Fidel Villaroel, LORENZO RUIZ, *Protomartyr of the Philippines and His Companions*, Pasay City, St. Paul Publications, 1979.

²⁰ "Interview with Cardinal Sin," in L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Weekly English edition, 14 February 1981, p. 5.

²¹ Final statement and recommendations of the International Mission Congress, Manila, December 1979, in *TANAM*, Volume I, cf. page 25. Cf. also *TO GIVE SHINNING WITNESS*, Manila, POMAS, pp. 34-62 (Herbert Scholz, SVD).

²² Cf. the address given to the Circolo di Roma, referred to in fn. 2, above. For this theme of inculturation, let me refer to Pedro Arrupe, in the booklet published by the Loyola School of Theology (Manila, 1978). On *Fostering the Task of Faith and Christian Life*, W 7890...\$7890\$.... *On Fostering the Task of Inculturation of Faith and Christian Life*, 51 pp., with its bibliography, pp. 39-42; Jules Gritti, *L'EXPRESSION DE LA FOI DANS LES CULTURES HUMAINES*, Croire et Comprendre, Le Centurion, Paris, 1975; Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES*, XL, pp. 716-727 and Yves Congar, "Christianity as Faith and as Culture," translated from the paper published in *EVANGELIZZAZIONE E CULTURE*, Pontificia Università Urbaniana, Roma, 1976, — English translation published in the *EAST ASIAN PASTORAL REVIEW*, Manila (East Asian Pastoral Institute), 1981 (forthcoming issue).

²³ Cf. footnote 22, above. The EAST ASIAN PASTORAL REVIEW has recently published an entire issue on Inculturation, a report on a summer 1981 course held in Manila on this theme, INCULTURATION: Challenge to the Local Church, EAPR, Vol. XVIII/3, 1981, pp. 203-299. (Bibliography, quite extensive, on pp. 295-299).

²⁴ See the final conclusions of the 1979 International Congress on Mission, Vol. I, TANAM, pp. 25, 37-41, 161-8. See also "The Eastern Face of Christ," in Horacio de la Costa, ASIA AND THE PHILIPPINES, Manila, Solidaridad, 1967, pp. 162-169, especially the concluding section.

²⁵ John Paul II, in JP II/AH, Address to the President and the Nation, 17 February 1981, p. 27.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁷ Bangkok Assembly, Report of the Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1973, p. 89.

²⁸ Cf. TANAM, Vol. I, pp. 46-52; Workshop Four: "The Gospel, the Kingdom of God, Development and Liberation," pp. 176-179 (Antonio B. Lambino).

²⁹ Patrick d'Souza, Keynote address at the International Congress on Mission, Manila, 2 December 1979, TANAM, Vol. I, p. 49.

³⁰ Pope John Paul II, JP II/AH, pp. 28-29.

³¹ Ibid., p. 28.

³² PRAYER: THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH OF ASIA, Final Statement and Recommendations of the Second Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Calcutta, 1978, paragraphs 21-24, pp. 48-49, (Manila, FABC, 1979).

³³ TANAM, Volume I, final statement, pp. 28-29.

³⁴ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, CHRISTENDOM IN DUBLIN, London, Sheed and Ward, 1933, p. 96.

³⁵ Quijano de Manila (Nick Joaquin), "Reportage on la Naval, The Famous Five Battles of 1646 as Headlined by a Contemporary," in LIFE TODAY, October 1980, pp. 15-17. Just as Vienna remembers the victory of Jan Sobieski as, in a very true sense, the "salvation" of Christian Europe, so Manila recalls the victory of *La Naval* as the "salvation" of the Philippines as a distinct people, and not as simply part of the Dutch colony which has become today's Indonesia. The story of the origin of the Feast of *La Naval* in Manila deserves to be better known, throughout the Christian world.

IN PRAISE OF ST. ALBERT THE GREAT

By

Fr. Norberto Castillo, O.P.

We have read the likes of Charles the Great, of Catherine the Great, of Constantine the Great. They are great for various reasons.

Nominally, they belong to the same club.

St. Albert of the Order of Preachers may be considered a member of this club too. With an ocean of difference though. His greatness was essentially that of sanctity, certified church-calendar quality.

It is intelligence elevated to the honor of the altar.

FAMOUS-BUT

We are aware that the saint is famous. Famous for everything that is required of a saint. Famous too, for his universal, encyclopedic learning placed at the service of the altar which he is to occupy a niche.

Here is the catch, precisely. It is one thing to be famous. To be known is another.

Blame his forty-volume *opera* which concern *omnia* about everything known or knowable during his times. They are no easy reading. Why? Consider these: Sophisticated Latin, fully aged by years of intense teaching, happens to be a forte of St. Albert. This alone renders *strictly not for general patronage*. Add the medium to the scholastic method and you have two, but more than inclinations are prone to cynicisms when it comes to values of the past but, oh, so gullible of his present fashion.

He is famous, yes. But we still have to know him. Let's review his biodata:

NAME: Albert

BIRTHPLACE: Lauingen, Schwabia

BIRTH: c.a. 1200

PROFESSION: Priest of the Order of Preachers

STUDIES AND WORK EXPERIENCE:

Student of Liberal Arts — University of Padua

Novice — Priory of Heilige Kreuz, Cologne

Student — Theology

Lector — Saxony, 1233-1236
Regensburg, 1236-38

Master — University of Paris, 1245-48

Regent of Studies — established first Studium Generale,
1248

Arbiter — 1252

Provincial of Teutonia — 1254-57

Bishop of Regensburg and Preacher of Crusades — 1260-64

WORKS PUBLISHED: (Please use other sheets if necessary)

Commentary on the Ethics

De Caelo

De natura locorum

De causis proprietatum elementorum

De generatione et corruptione

Meteora

De mineralibus et lapidibus

De vegetabilibus

De anima

Parva Naturalia

De animalibus

Metaphysica

Ethica

Politica

Liber de causis

De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas

As we have seen, he was equally talented at administrating. The proximity of the psychological contact points between his faculties of will and intellect is so evident. It was a built-in advantage he made use of whether it was to scale the heights of Plato's Kingdom of Forms; or to mine Aristotle's hylemorphism; or to oversee the disciplinary intricacies of 36 Priories and 20 nunneries which he established in Germany from zero level; or

to envision the structure of the Order's earliest Center of Studies and its Ratio Studiorum; or to classify the living and non-living things he got curious in, etc.

Name it, and the man is versatile. He appears to be in his elements in whatever he did.

THE MEDIEVAL PARADIGM

If Albert has become a historical figure today, it is because during his lifetime he was right there at the vortex of history where the action was.

He was recruited from the ranks of a university milieu by an Order which was borne out of this same guild. This historical initiation was to be his work of a lifetime, a student forever.

Henceforth, he is to identified with learning and teaching. The Center of Studies and the University were houses of studies where he felt so at home. If a university is that from which you can acquire high and varied degrees of learning, Albert is in fact a University.

If Albert grew to be a 'university' within, blame it on his metaphysics. It was the summit of all sciences attainable by unaided reason. Like a mother whose word was last, metaphysics' word too, was last. But unlike a mother, metaphysics' word can be first. The umbrella effect was true from point alpha. It is no small wonder therefore that truth as Augustine had initiated him, was valid in the stones, or in the worms, or in the plants, or in the birds, or Aristotle, or the Sentences, which may have made his cell appear anything else but a homely quarter. Albert was a university metaphysician.

The Summa was a gothic compilation of the University-inspired knowledge unified by the science of metaphysics.

Whatever was tried or tested in the lecture halls, accepted or otherwise, ended up between the precious covers of the Summa. The agony and ecstasy of the precocious medieval intellect could be thumbed through this handwritten record.

Albert was familiar with the popular and the less-popular summas of his times. He composed his own collection towards the last twenty years of his life.

He was a *persona* of a university of a summa and of metaphysics.

WHO IS THE GREATEST?

Come west or go east, Albert was best of his times. A paradigm. A lector par excellence. And it remains to be a difficult task to capture and get hold of the essential Albert. The essential Albert was an essential universal. Like his times, he was bigger than life itself. Unframable. *Suigeneris*. In short, great. We give up.

And at best, greatness transcends description. Albert may have been one of the many — the Great — men but he was easily one of the best there ever was because he was 'many' rolled into one.

It is ultimately Albert's greatness in sanctity that made him accomplish those countless tasks, including that of training another genius Thomas Aquinas. He was no mere professor of Thomas. He was a great professor of a great student. Uniquely *equals*?

Albert would not mind who-is-more-honored-by-whom a wee bit. He was holy, remember?

But the Holy Mother the Church does. She highly honors him.

Albert — Saint, Doctor of the Church, Patron of Natural Sciences, among other things.

Great.

FROM THE PRACTICE FOR THE PRACTICE

By

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

1. *On obligatory memorials of Saints, the Ordo for the Philippines simply states concerning the Mass of the day: "of M." This means the Mass of the memorial has to be taken. What about the preface of this Mass?*

In the first edition of the reformed Roman Missal (1970) the rubrics before the prefaces of saints stated that these prefaces had to be said (or sung) "on the solemnities and feasts" of martyrs, pastors, virgins, religious and other holy men and women (prefaces nos. 66-70). In the mind of the lawgiver this was a restriction: these prefaces should have been said only on the relatively few days during the year when celebrations of saints were held as solemnities and feasts, usually on the occasion of local fiestas, i.e., when a memorial of a saint, celebrated as such by the universal Church, becomes a feast or a solemnity for a parish or a barrio chapel.

Many priests, however, took these prefaces of saints also on optional and obligatory memorials. Subsequently, Rome acknowledged this practice in the second, typical edition of the Latin Missal (1975) by adding to the former rubric: "This preface may be said (*dici potest*) on the memorials of these saints."

Consequently, on memorials, whether obligatory or optional, one may say either one of the seven weekday (common) prefaces, or one of the seasonal prefaces (Advent, Christmas season, Easter season) if the saint's memorial happens to fall during the first half of Advent (until December 16), during the Christmas season (between January 2 and the feast of the Lord's Baptism), and the Easter season (after the Easter octave), or the preface of the saint.

Many of the Masses for Various Needs and Occasions have now — according to the second typical edition of the Latin

Missal — prefaces of their own. Sunday preface VIII is now the proper preface for the Masses for the Universal Church¹ and for the local Church (nos. 1 and 1,E). The Mass for the Blessing of Man's Labor (no. 25), the Mass for Productive Land (no. 26, i.e., for the period of sowing) and the Mass in Thanksgiving after the Harvest (no. 27) have now Sunday preface V as their own. For the Mass in Thanksgiving (no. 39) Rome now recommends Weekday preface IV, while in the Mass for the Forgiveness of Sins (no. 40) Sunday preface IV should be used. If the Mass for a Happy Death (no. 46) is said, one should take Weekday (common) preface V or VI.

This list shows that the Sunday prefaces are not strictly limited to ordinary (green) Sundays. They may also be used on weekdays. Correctly so. With the Weekday prefaces the Sunday prefaces have in common that they give thanks and praise not just for an individual aspect of the saving work of our Lord, but for this work in its entirety, concentrating on the climax of this work, the Paschal Mystery.

Dealing here with the use of prefaces, it should be added that in the Mass for Pastoral and Spiritual Meetings (no. 16) and for a Council or Synod (no. 5), the preferred preface should be that of the Holy Spirit II.

2. *The reformed Sacramentary contains two prefaces for the short week between the Ascension and Pentecost; this is Ascension time. Why does the Ordo for the Philippines state that during this week also any of the five Easter prefaces may be said?*

"Ascension time," as the writer calls it, is still a part of the fifty days of the Easter season (also called Pentekoste). Consequently, any one of the five Easter prefaces is still appropriate. By the way, the first of the two prefaces for the Ascension time ends with the words: "The joy of the *resurrection* and ascension renews the whole world." Both the resurrection and the ascension are special aspects of the glorification of our Lord Jesus Christ which we celebrate throughout the Easter season. Also the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is one of these glorious aspects of the Paschal Mystery. As a matter of fact, the new preface of Pentecost Sunday states that this sending of the Holy Spirit "brought the Paschal Mystery to its completion." Concluding, it says: "The joy of the *resurrection*

¹ Except no. 1,C which has the preface of the Mass for Christian Unity.

renews the whole world." During the whole of the Easter season we celebrate the glorious aspects of the Paschal Mystery in a comprehensive way; none of them is excluded.

Until 1975 the Sacramentary limited the use of the first Easter preface to the Easter Vigil, Easter day and the octave. For the rest of the Easter season one had to use Easter prefaces II-V.

The second post-conciliar edition of the Roman Missal extends the use of Easter preface I; it may now be taken on any day of the Easter season, except on Ascension day and Pentecost. Outside the Easter octave a slight adaptation is necessary in the section beginning with the words: "We praise you with greater joy than ever in this Easter night/day (*in this Easter season*) when Christ became our paschal sacrifice."

Also the Christmas prefaces may be said during the "Epiphany season," i. e., from the Sunday on which we celebrate Epiphany to the Sunday of the Lord's Baptism. This week is still part of the greater Christmas season. Therefore, the Ordo for the Philippines observes that during this "Epiphany season" one may freely take the preface for Epiphany or one of the three Christmas prefaces. This offers the advantage of a greater variety.

3. *No improvement can be found in the rites connected with the Solemn Intercessions on Good Friday after the reform of Vatican II. Now, everything is said or sung by the priest. The people's active participation is limited to the stereotyped "Amen" at the end of each prayer. They remain standing or kneeling throughout this lengthy prayer.*

To a large extent this complaint is justified. It seems that these shortcomings occasioned a further reform of this solemn prayer. The second typical edition of the reformed Missal (1975) — which has not yet been used in the official translations so far in the market — has changed some elements of the rites of these Solemn Intercessions. Now the intentions and the prayers are to be divided between a lector (cantor, or deacon) and the priest-celebrant. The lector has his place at the lectern (ambo) and sings or says the introduction in which each intention is stated. All pray for a while in silence. Then the priest, at his seat or at the altar, with hands extended sings or says the prayer to which the people give their "Amen."

The guidelines state that the people either stand or kneel throughout the entire period of time of these solemn prayers. If a celebrant feels that he should invite the congregation to kneel down during the period of silence and personal prayer, and stand at the priest's collecting prayer, he may do so. There is no prohibition to the contrary. In this case, the traditional "Let us kneel" and "Let us rise" should be said by the lector (cantor, or deacon).

4. *With the permission of the local Ordinary one of the religious sisters of our local community exposes and reposes the Blessed Sacrament in the absence of a priest. Some priests have told us that an extraordinary minister of exposition may only open the tabernacle and remove the tabernacle veil so that the ciborium can be seen. Is this true?*

According to the fascicle of the Ritual "Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass" extraordinary ministers "may open the tabernacle and also, if suitable (*si opportunum sit*) place the ciborium on the altar or place the host in the monstrance. . . . It is not lawful, however, for them to give the blessing with the Sacrament" (no. 91). Consequently, extraordinary ministers of exposition may also expose the Blessed Sacrament on the altar. As a matter of fact, this is the preferred place of exposition. According to the mind of the Church "the exposition must clearly express the cult of the Blessed Sacrament in its relationship to the Mass" (no. 82). When the Blessed Sacrament is exposed on the altar table it shows clearly where the Lord's presence under the eucharistic species comes from, namely from the celebration of the Mass on the altar.

When the guidelines of the "Rite of Eucharistic Exposition" explain the ritual they do not make any further distinction between ordinary and extraordinary ministers of exposition. Also extraordinary ministers follow the rules given for "the the ministers": he/she opens the tabernacle, genuflects, takes the ciborium or places the host in the monstrance and brings the Blessed Sacrament to the altar. If exposition with the monstrance is extended over a longer period (several hours, a whole day) a throne in an elevated position may — but need not — be used.

What about incensation? It is prescribed for exposition in the monstrance. This prescription concerns "the minister."

There exists no prohibition which would limit the incensation of the Blessed Sacrament to ordained ministers (priests and deacons). As a matter of fact, when incense is used in a solemn Mass, the server is allowed and encouraged to incense the Blessed Sacrament during the two elevations. In many places servers incense the Blessed Sacrament while the priest or deacon gives the sacramental blessing.

At the end of the period of adoration, the extraordinary minister takes the Blessed Sacrament (ciborium, monstrance) and brings it to the tabernacle. Before closing he/she genuflects. During the time of reposition the community may sing an acclamation (the Divine Praises) or a suitable hymn.

5. *What happened to the three Eucharistic Prayers for Children and the two Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation permitted some years ago "ad experimentum" for those countries which asked for them?*

It is true, the permission granted to use these five additional Eucharistic Prayers was to expire at the end of 1980. But Rome has extended the use of these Prayers indefinitely (*ad nutum Sanctae Sedis*) on December 15, 1980. Since their use had been allowed for the Philippines, we may continue to use them until further notice.

COMMUNICATION

THE BLESSED LORENZO RUIZ SOCIETY, INC.

English and Tagalog novenas in honor of Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz and his Companions, printed in small booklet form, are now available in all Catholic bookstores and in many parishes of Manila.

Favors received through the intercession of Blessed Lorenzo and Companions are frequently reported to the "Blessed Lorenzo Ruiz Society, Inc.", an association of relatives and friends of the Filipino martyr aiming at the promotion of his veneration.

Parishes throughout the Philippines interested in having these novenas available to their parishioners may place their orders to the said Society, care of Mrs. Clem D. Ruiz, 2776 Daan Hari, United Parañaque 1, Parañaque, Metro Manila, Tel. No. 828-79-71.

Biblical Notes and Outlines for Homilies

By

Herman Mueller, S.V.D.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (December 6, 1981)

Today we hear in all three readings: The Lord is coming. Prepare his way! This day will bring about a new heaven and a new earth (second reading). We prepare the way by filling the valleys and levelling the mountains (first reading), by preaching authentically (gospel) and living a holy life (second reading).

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 40:1-5. 8-11

During the last years of the Babylonian exile (587-538) an anonymous prophet, called Deutero Isaiah, delivered his message to fellow exiles in the captivity (Is. 40-55). Part I (Is. 40:1-49:13) contains the prophecy of the deliverance from Babylonian and in Part II (Is. 49:14-55:13) the new salvation for Sion-Jerusalem is described.

The first part opens with an Introduction (Is. 40:1-11), announcing the return from exile. The chapter starts with the keyword "Comfort!" (*nachmu*) my people (Is. 40:1), and the reason for this comfort is: The exile is over and the Israelites' guilt is expiated (Is. 40:2) through the hardships of exile. Thus they can return to Jerusalem (Is. 52:11). *Nachmu* is in Hebrew plural: the prophets (in the Septuagint the priests) shall comfort, in particular, of course Deutero Isaiah himself.

He hears a voice of a herald going ahead of the king ordering to prepare the way of the king (v. 3) in the desert (according to the NT the voice is crying in the desert to prepare the way). After all, when the Israelites shall return from Babylon to Jerusalem, there has to be a way made through the desert.

And that means in particular hills have to be levelled and valleys to be filled up with soil. As in the Orient such "royal streets" were built and "procession ways for the gods, so a way shall be built for Yahweh from Babylon to Jerusalem (v. 4).

One would expect that Israel returns on this way. But Yahweh returns taking Israel along as a booty of triumph. On this new road and this return Yahweh will reveal his glory (v. 5) in a second exodus as he did during the first exodus, performing signs.

Again, the prophet hears a voice telling him to preach (v. 6). But who is he to preach? He is only like grass (vv. 6-8, omitted in today's reading). It seems that in these verses 6-8 we have the rest of the call of the prophet Deutero Isaiah, as we find it in most opening chapters of the different prophetic books.

He shall tell Sion (Jerusalem) to go on a high mountain (v. 9) and proclaim that Yahweh is there, returning with power to Jerusalem (v. 10). He is like a good shepherd carrying the sheep in his arms (v. 11).

SECOND READING: 2 PETER 3:8-14

The Second Letter of Peter is probably written by an unknown author around 100-125 A.D. who assumes the name of the apostle to give his letter more weight, a common practice at that time. Against heretics after the destruction of Jerusalem who cast doubt on the parousia he insists that the Lord will come. Uncertain is only the time of Christ's second coming.

This is especially the intention of 2 Peter 3:1-13.

- If people are saying mockingly that the parousia will not come, they have to keep in mind that God has a different idea of time. He can wait. A thousand years are for him like one day. And if we think nothing changes, God has years at his disposal to make things change (v. 8).
- Thus one cannot really speak of a delay of the parousia.
- There is another reason for the "delay": God wants to give everybody a chance to improve and thus be saved (v. 9).
- He certainly will come, like a thief at night (v. 10).
- This Day of the Lord will be a day destroying heaven and earth by fire (v. 10). Only here in the NT do we find this

picture language of the Day of the Lord as a day of wrath (cf. Is. 13:9; Joel. 2:1-2.30-31; Zeph. 1:14-18), which we must not take literally. Clear is: it will be a day of judgment of all those who did not come up to God's expectations.

- But the result will be a new heaven and a new earth (v. 13).
- Since this day will come suddenly and since we want to be there for the new heaven and earth, we have to live a holy life (v. 14).

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: MARK 1:1-8

What Deutero Isaiah refers to Yahweh (he is coming and returning Mark applies to Christ. What Deutero Isaiah says about the prophet or a voice Mark applies to John the Baptist: he is the voice (in the desert) telling people to prepare the way for Christ (Is. 40 said: [prepare it] in the desert)!

With the preaching of the Baptist the good news starts, the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God which could mean the good news which Christ preaches, but most likely means the good news about Christ. After all, the Baptist starts preaching about Jesus. John is the messenger of whom Isaiah speaks (Is. 40:3). Actually, however, the quotation in Mk. 1:2-3 is complex and not just taken from Isaiah (Isaiah is only the most important prophet quoted). The messenger referred to is found in Ex. 23:22 and Mal. 3:1. Exodus 23:22 speaks about the angel God sends ahead of the Jews in the desert that they can find the way to the promised land. In Mal. 3:1 we learn about the messenger God sends ahead to prepare the way when the Lord comes to his temple which has been defiled by the stingy sacrifices of priests. According to Mal. 3:23 this messenger is Elijah. According to Mt. 11:10 these words are quoted by Christ as referring to John the Baptizer, who prepared the way for the coming of the Savior. And in the mouth of this same John are put the words of Is. 40:3: "Make ready the way of the Lord, clear him a straight path."

It is a voice of a prophet after a long silence of centuries. The result is accordingly: All the Judean countryside and the people of Jerusalem go out to him in great numbers (Mk. 1:5).

John administers a baptism of repentance. People confess their sins, and this baptism underlines their contrition effects to a certain extent only ("it led to the forgiveness of sins")

forgiveness, as it seems, although not like a sacrament, otherwise the contrast between baptizing with water and Spirit would not make sense.

Only at the end, Mark describes the clothing and the food of the Baptist: He wears a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt (as Elijah did in 2 Kgs. 1:8) and eats locusts (Lev. 2:22-23) which could also mean beans or nuts, the *carob*, the food of the poor and wild honey from wild bees in a hollow tree or a sweet sap distilled from the bark of certain trees.

John's message is humble and powerful: After him comes somebody who is more powerful than he because he baptizes with Holy Spirit, not just with water as a penitential service. In comparison with Jesus, John is not even worthy of performing the lowest service of a slave: untie Christ's shoes, which was the lowest service of a slave which he did when a priest wanted to enter the sanctuary of the Temple. Such a slave remained unclean all his life.

HOMILY

THE LORD IS COMING — PREPARE HIS WAY!

1. a. The good news of Advent is: *The Lord is coming*. And with him comes a *new heaven and a new earth*. What we read in 2 Peter 3:10.13 is picture language: "The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and on that day the heavens will vanish with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and all its deeds will be made manifest... What we await are now heavens and a new earth where according to his promise, the justice of God will reside." What that really means in detail is not important. One thing it means is: "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it so much as dawned on man what God has prepared for those who love him" (Is. 64:3 = 1 Cor. 2:9).

b. And it means for us as long as we live on earth: Life goes somewhere. Life does not finish with the extinction. If there is nothing to come after our death, we might as well tell ourselves: "Eat and drink and enjoy life because tomorrow you do not live anymore. But as it is, since there will be a new heaven and a new earth which we do not want to miss, we have to pull ourselves together.

c. Since there is a new heaven coming, life on earth cannot be indifferent either. The good use of it makes all the difference if we do not want to miss what God has prepared for us.

d. And since death is not the end of our life but only the preparation for the new life, we can never be lost and lonely either here on earth. In all loneliness we are looking forward to the new existence.

2. That coming of the Lord is real. And there is a certain urgency. The conclusion is: *Prepare the way for the Lord!*

a. That means for the *preacher* (for the Baptist as well as for us) *authenticity of preaching*.

(1) The preaching of the Baptist was effective because he lived what he was preaching.

(a) This was demonstrated by the *place* he lived. He stayed in the desert between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. Anybody who has seen the place knows how terrible it is. The only consolation is that it is not the biggest desert where the warped and twisted limestone shimmers in the haze of the heat. In the Old Testament (Num. 21:20; 23:28; Deut. 32:10; 1 Sam. 23:19,24; 26:1,3; Is. 43:19,20; Ps. 68-7 (8); 78:10; 106:14) it is often called the devastation (in Hebrew: Jeshimmon). Only great faith could select such a place as a place where to meet God. And thus it became the place where the Essence and other monks tried to listen to the Lord. John was not a city dweller with all the commodities. When the Baptist said: "*Metanoite!* Do penance, amend your life, reform your ways!" it sounded authentic. He did not demand anything he did not do himself.

(b) John's preaching sounded genuine because his *clothes* spoke the same language: He was wearing a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt, betraying great simplicity. He did not wear luxurious clothes (Mt. 11:8) as people in palaces do.

(c) He was also satisfied with simple food: grasshoppers which one finds in the desert. But almost all Greek commentators take them as beans or nuts, vegetable of herbs, the food of the poorest of the poor. This explanation is recommended by the fact that in Mt. 11:18f John is a vegetarian. He also eats wild honey which one finds in hollow trees, or it could be the sweet sap which comes from the bark of certain trees.

To such a man people had to listen. He could speak with authority. His message was ringing true. It was not the message of someone who speaks about poverty, sitting himself in a comfortable house or palace.

(2) The preaching of John was authentic because he preached what people were waiting for, what they knew in their hearts to be true. And here finally somebody came who could formulate it with irresistible logic and power. For centuries the prophets had been preaching about the one to come. For some centuries the voices of prophets had been silent. Finally John came and a prophet preached again. He knew the signs of the time and interpreted them correctly. Everybody sensed: Here was somebody who knew what he was talking about.

(3) John's preaching was effective because he was humble. He called himself unworthy to untie the shoe laces of Christ. When a priest wanted to enter the sanctuary of the Temple in Jerusalem, a slave would untie his sandals so that the priest entered the Temple barefoot. This was considered the lowest service. This temple slave belonged to the unclean people whose uncleanness could not even be removed at the last day (Strack-Billerbeck. *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament* IV, 380b). John considers himself even less than such a slave. And that he does because he baptizes only with water, administering a baptism of repentance. Christ will baptize with Holy Spirit, giving us God's own divine life.

b. To prepare the way means for the hearer to fill the valleys and level the hills. Hills have often been compared with pride and arrogance. If the Lord shall come to us, pride has to go. The Baptist calls the Pharisees and Sadducees "brood of vipers" (Mt. 3:7). They do not accept the Lord since they think they know everything better. Valleys are tantamount to deficiencies and unreliability, to weakness of any kind.

c. The second reading expresses the same idea by saying: "While waiting for the new heaven and the new earth make every effort to be found without stain or defilement, and at peace in God's sight" (2 Peter 3:14). To be holy means to be without blemish or defilement as an animal had to be selected for the sacrifice, or as any piece of meat we want to buy has to be selected, or as any bouquet of flowers we want to have on the desk.

3. The Lord will come like a thief. But he delays his coming to give us a chance. He wants, after all, that all shall

be saved and nobody shall be lost (2 Peter 3:9). But we must not overdo it and delay our answer to the prompting of the Lord. Who knows how long the chance lasts!

**FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
PRINCIPAL PATRONESS OF THE PHILIPPINES
(December 8, 1980)**

On December 8, 1854 Pope Pius IX raised the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to an article of faith. This infallible document states that at no moment of her life was Mary under the dominion of sin, and that she was, by anticipation of the redemption by Christ, the one exception to the law of original sin. We all are born in original sin, are freed from it by Christ's redemption and in actual reality cleansed from it in our baptism. Mary was redeemed by way of anticipation the very first moment of her conception by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Savior, and thus conceived without original sin in the womb of her mother Anne. Thus she was born in the state of sanctifying grace.

The reason for this privilege is: Our Blessed Lady according to God's design should be the Mother of Jesus Christ and thus help him to redeem mankind and become the queen of heaven and earth. To redeem mankind, however can be done only by somebody who was not even for one moment under the influence of the devil. This is clear with Jesus Christ, since he is God himself and it should be true with our Blessed Lady according to God's design. Thus she would not even for one moment be under the influence of the devil, which she would have been, had she been conceived and born in the state of original sin as we are. Or expressed differently, Mary's total surrender to the divine will made the incarnation possible.

FIRST READING: GENESIS 3:9-15. 20

Whatever God created was good. And when he created man, it was even very good (Gen. 1:31). There was perfect harmony between God and man. They were close friends, so close that man dared talking to God as one only talks to best friends, and man heard God even in the noonday breeze (Gen.

3:8). There was full understanding and selfless love between man and woman. And man was even in full peace with animals and nature.

There was only one condition that man should go on with this happiness: He should not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. i.e., man should not decide for himself what is right and wrong, man should not try to be his own boss, but he should obey God (Gen. 2:17). But man wanted to decide for himself what he would be allowed to do or not. Thus he took from the fruit and ate it (Gen. 3:6).

The result of this first sin of mankind was that the harmony between God and man was gone. They had become friends. Now they were hiding from God (Gen. 3:8). Instead of having become like God they had become naked and were ashamed before one another. And that love and harmony between husband and wife was destroyed as well. Now they were accusing one another and passing the blame instead of humbly admitting what they had done wrong. But there can be no forgiveness unless man admits that he has done something wrong. Man had disobeyed God, upon the instigation of the serpent. The devil had won his first battle against mankind, sowing distrust in man's mind concerning God's veracity and love, making him believe that God would be jealous about his privileges of being Lord ("God knows well that the moment you eat of the fruit you will be like gods who know what is good and what is bad" Gen. 3:5).

But that dominion of the devil should not be for good. Misery and loss of God's friendship came by disobedience; salvation and God's renewed friendship would come by obedience. Right after the first sin God pronounced the first good news, the so-called *proto-evangelium*: "Enmity will I put between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He (the seed) will crush your head at the moment when you try to crush his heel" (Gen. 3:15). The woman, Eve had obeyed the devil and thus become his friend. There would come a time when the woman would be a complete enemy of the devil. This obviously, at least in the fullest sense, can never apply to Eve. By her sin and sins she was friend of the devil. The woman in the fullest sense, mentioned in Gen. 3:15 must therefore mean our Blessed Lady. She would not be under the dominion of the devil, not even for one moment because of her privilege of being conceived without original sin, because of her complete obedience to the Lord in her life.

The seed of the woman, which in the fullest sense can be only Jesus Christ, would crush the head of the devil at the moment he would try to crush his heel. The devil had tried to make Jesus relinquish his vocation as Messiah, redeeming mankind by dying on the cross (cf. the temptation of Jesus on the Temple). After three attempts the devil had given up, only "to await another opportunity." (Lk. 4:13). And this other opportunity came when Satan entered the heart of Judas to betray the Lord (Jn. 13:27) and he went out in the deep night (Jn. 13:30). In the garden of Gethsemani and on the cross the devil would try to make Christ despair. But Jesus would, in complete obedience to the Father, drink the chalice and die with a shout of victory: "It is consummated" (Jn. 19:30), i.e., the will of the Father has been done to the last by Christ's obedience. Some minutes before Jesus had prayed: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (Mt. 27:46). Now he could surrender his whole life, saying: "Father, into your hands I command my spirit" (Lk. 23:46).

This text of Gen. 3:15 is one of the texts of Scripture which implicitly proves the immaculate conception of our Blessed Lady. The reasoning is this: Mankind's misery came about by the first man's sin of disobedience. Redemption on the other side could be effected only by full obedience to the Father, the full obedience of the Son. But His coming was prepared and He was assisted by His mother. Thus God could really put complete enmity between the devil and the woman, which would not have been true had our Blessed Lady for some time lived in the state of original sin.

SECOND READING: EPHESIANS 1:3-6. 11-12

According to old tradition the Letter to the Ephesians was written by St. Paul when he was in prison (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). This would probably be the Roman house arrest A.D. 61-63. Others, because of a more advanced theology in Ephesians compared with the other Pauline Letters and a different vocabulary would think Ephesians was written by a disciple of St. Paul, around A.D. 90. The question is still open and debated and is secondary for the question of the content.

In the doctrinal part (Eph. 1:3-3:21) the author speaks about the mystery of the recapitulation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. The author tells us that the mystery to make men members of God's family and to give them a share in His eternal

inheritance, Jews and Gentiles alike, was conceived by God from all eternity (Eph. 1:3-14). From this part our second reading is taken. The apostle (1) thanks for *God's choice* by which he has chosen us (1:3). This choice is *bountiful* (1:3). It gives us blessings which one can find only in heaven. (2) God has chosen us already before the foundation of the world (and these words are true in a special way concerning our Blessed Lady), (3) for the purpose (1:4) that we should be holy and blameless (true again in a special way about the mother of God). (4) We shall become adopted sons of God (1:5-6) for the praise of God's glory. (5) First the Jews were elected, but then also the Gentiles (1:11-12). And that's the wonderfully good news: God elected us all.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 1:26-38

Like Matthew, but independently of him, Luke prefaces his gospel with a narrative of the infancy of Jesus. Luke's infancy narrative is composed in the form of a diptych and has two phases: before the births of John and of Jesus (1:5-38; from this is taken our gospel of today) and the accounts of the birth of both (1:56-2:40). John the Baptist and Jesus are compared and contrasted, but the greatness of Jesus is emphasized even by the more developed account of his earthly origins. Within the parallel narratives the same point is made. Mary is clearly shown to be far superior to Zechariah and, more explicitly, the Son of Mary is set on a pedestal and towers above the son of Zechariah.

Here is the *dyptych* of *Annunciation* 1:5-56:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Annunciation of the Birth of John 1:5-25 | 2. Annunciation of the birth of Jesus 1:26-38 |
| Introduction of the parents | Introduction of the parents |
| Apparition of the angel | Entry of the angel |
| Zechariah troubled | Mary troubled |
| Fear not... | Fear not... |
| Annunciation of the birth | Annunciation of the birth |
| Q. How shall I know? | Q. How shall this be done? |
| A. Reprimand by the angel | A. Revelation by the angel |
| Constrained silence of Zechariah | Spontaneous reply of Mary |
| Departure of Zechariah | Departure of the angel |
| | 3. Complementary episode 1:39-56 |
| | Visitation |
| | Conclusion: Return of Mary. |

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to Mary to ask her consent to the incarnation of Christ and thus to become the

mother of God. She is a virgin, but betrothed to Joseph. The greeting of the angel is extraordinary and translations have a hard time catching the greatness of this greeting, often without fully doing justice to the original Greek text: "Rejoice (*chaire*), (you) so highly favoured (*kecharitomenē*); the Lord is with you" (1:28). *Chaire* in Greek does not just mean: "Good morning", or "hail", or "greetings!" or "peace" or any other form of ordinary greeting, but it is an exhortation to be glad, to "rejoice". And Mary shall rejoice because the Lord is with her.

Many things in the gospels and also in Lk. 1-2 we can completely understand only in the light of the Old Testament which is used as a pious meditation (midrash) to illustrate the importance of events and person mentioned in the New Testament. *Chaire* occurs in the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint) four times of which we take off Lamentations 4:21, since *chaire* is here used as an irony. Thus, there remain three quotations:

(1) Zephaniah 3:14-15; Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem... The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst... Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged." And the reason for this great joy: The Lord is in their midst, i.e., the Messiah comes and removes the guilt of Zion, brings people back from captivity, inaugurates the Messianic kingdom.

(2) Joel 2:21: "Fear not, O land! Exult and rejoice! For the Lord has done great things." The reason for this joy is the same as in Zeph. 3:14f.

(3) Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass." All three prophesies address the daughter of Zion, who is a personification of the people of Israel. Israel shall rejoice because the Messiah comes.

The angel identifies Mary with the daughter of Zion, the people of Israel. She shall greatly rejoice and shout for joy because the Lord is near, soon she will bear him, soon the Messiah will be here and thus the Messianic age of which the prophets spoke. No wonder that Mary is deeply troubled (1:29). How could she ever have thought of such an exaltation of herself, being such a simple girl, a "servant" in her lowliness" (1:48).

This greeting of the angel: "Rejoice, (you) highly favored! The Lord is with you" is the second implicit proof from Scripture for the immaculate conception of our Blessed Lady, as we see it in the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* of Pius IX of December 8, 1854, proclaiming the dogma of the immaculate conception of Mary. The reasoning would be: The angel greets Mary, but not with her name "Mary" (he does not say, "Hail, *Mary*, full of grace" as we pray in the Hail Mary) but with *kecharitomenē*, "highly favored by the Lord, because the Lord is with her, because she shall be the mother of the Lord, she shall inaugurate the Messianic age by giving birth to her son. Thus she must be obedient to God's will to the fullest (in opposition to Eve who disobeyed), she must not for one moment be subject to the devil, be his friend as Eve was by her sin. And that means from the very first moment of her life, from the moment of her conception in Anne, her mother's womb, she must be free from the stain of original sin. And this perfection is contained in her essence, in her name which expresses her essence, the name *kecharitomenē* = highly favored = full of grace. This, however, does not mean that we could have found out that *kecharitomenē* means among other things "conceived without original sin". The Church had to tell us. It is contained only implicitly.

The angel tells Mary not to fear. She will bear a son, who will be the Son of the Most High, which in the Old Testament background of 2 Sam. 7:12-16 could be nothing more than the Messiah of Jewish expectations, the son of David who will receive the throne of David. But since Mary's son will be conceived by the Holy Spirit, "Son of God" takes a fuller sense, means God's own divine Son.

Mary has still one difficulty: She is a virgin and how could she as virgin conceive a son? She probably understood that the conception of her son should take place soon, now. We do not have to assume that she made vow of virginity. After all she was already betrothed and the idea of virginity was alien at that time. The monks of Qumran had it but more out of contempt of marriage. Only when the angel tells her about the intervention of the Holy Spirit and that with God nothing is impossible, as to a lesser degree her kinswoman Elizabeth shows, who in her old age still conceived a son, Mary gives her full consent, her *fiat*: "Let it be done according to your word" (1:38). And probably from that moment on she resolved to remain a virgin. Celibacy means virginity for Christ's sake. Christ was conceived now, and Mary wanted to remain completely His own all her life.

HOMILY

REJOICE HIGHLY FAVORED!

1. Christianity is a religion of *joy*. Christ is the reason for our joy. Christianity is what it is because of Christ. As soon as Christ is near that joy starts. When the angel Gabriel, the angel of the announcement of birth of John the Baptist and of the birth of Christ, comes to Zechariah, he tells him: "Do not be frightened, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth shall bear a son whom you shall name John. Joy and gladness will be yours" (Lk. 1:13-14). John will announce the coming of the Lord. Thus John's birth signals joy, for Christianity is around the corner.

2. That same angel Gabriel is sent by God to our Blessed Lady with *the* message of history: Mary shall become the mother of Lord, and God wants to have her consent to the event of mankind: the incarnation. Thus the angel says to Mary: "*Rejoice*, O highly favored (daughter). The Lord is with you" (Lk. 1:28)! That message of joy and being daughter of Zion or daughter of Jerusalem Zephaniah told the people of Israel (Zeph. 3:14-15): "Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem... The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst... Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged." After a period of judgment over the pagans and Jerusalem, the prophet announces the joy of the endtime, the time when the Messiah will come. This time now with the arrival of Gabriel has come. Mary is the daughter of Zion, the people of Israel. And she shall conceive the Lord.

In a similar way Joel 2:21 announces the message: "Fear not, O land, exult and rejoice! For the Lord has done great things." And Zechariah 9:9 tells us: "Rejoice heartily, O daughter Zion, shout for joy, O daughter Jerusalem! See, your king shall come to you; a just savior is he, meek, and riding on an ass." Matthew 21:5 sees this prophecy fulfilled in Christ's riding on an ass on Palm Sunday. But initially it is fulfilled now at the annunciation and thus the incarnation. Mary becomes the daughter of Zion for she is going to conceive the Lord. The Lord is with her; and ever since the time the Lord is with us, the Lord is with all the Christians, we people are Christians.

3. As mother of the Lord Mary is very close to her divine Son. She will help him redeem mankind and free us from sin and misery, free us from the snares of the devil. She had to consent fully to God's divine plan with a perfect obedience, in opposition to Eve who wanted to be like God, deciding for herself what she is allowed and what she is not allowed to do. Mary said her "yes", her "*fiat*" to the message of the angel, and the incarnation took place. Again and again would she say her "yes" to God's plan, which often enough was not clear to her, as we can see especially in the gospel of Luke. When she was looking for her son in the Temple of Jerusalem and when she finally found him after a search of three days and Jesus gave her the "strange" answer: "Why did you search for me? Did you know I had to be in my Father's house" (Lk. 2:49)? Luke adds: "But they did not grasp what he said to them" (Lk. 1:50). And she gave her last and fullest "yes" to God's plan of salvation when she stood under the cross of Jesus.

4. Being the obedient Mary in opposition to the disobedient Eve there was complete enmity between her and the devil (Gen. 3:15). Thus God granted her all the graces a human person can receive. She is full of grace (Lk. 1:28). She is even conceived without original sin. And so that exhortation to joy, "rejoice, highly favored" is already true from the first moment of Mary's life, the moment of her being conceived in the womb of her mother Anne.

We rejoice that God has created at least one member of mankind all holy, all pure, all attractive and all good: our Blessed Lady. The Liturgy often applies the words of Isaiah 61:10 to Mary: "I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation, and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels." Mary is really all beautiful. She is conceived without original sin. And that is the reason for our special joy today on her feast of the Immaculate Conception.

5. Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady in the womb of her mother Anne means only that Mary was conceived without original sin; whereas all are conceived in the state of original sin. But it does not mean that sexual relations of wife and husband, done according to God's law are something bad, or something sinful, or at least something barely tolerated in order to avoid the greater evil: being burned by passions. Rather, God created man (kind) as man and woman (Gen. 1:27). Both together are only the whole man, man alone or woman

alone is onesided. And sexual relations according to God's law mean to get to know one another more and thus love one another more. "The man had relations with his wife Eve" (Gen. 4:1) means in Hebrew literally: "The man knew his wife Eve." To have sexual relations for wife and husband means to know (and love) one another more and better.

6. Mary and we shall rejoice because of God's election. We are not elected as highly as she was but elected we are, as the Apostle tells us in the Letter to the Ephesians. From all eternity God planned to make all nations one in Christ to be holy and blameless (Eph. 1:4) and thus give praise to the Lord. We are elected to be adopted children of God. God is our Father, Christ our brother. There is no difference between nation and nation, between Gentiles and Jews, we are all one in Christ. Plenty of reason to rejoice.

7. Mary shall rejoice because the Lord is with her. And sure enough, wherever she goes with her divine son under her heart, she causes joy. After the annunciation she sets out, proceeding in haste into the hill country to a town of Judah, where she enters Zechariah's house and greets Elizabeth. When Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting, the baby leaps in her womb (Lk. 1:41). Elizabeth filled with the Holy Spirit cries out in a loud voice: "Blest are you among women and blest is the fruit of your womb. But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me? The moment your greeting sounded in my ears, the baby leapt in my womb for joy (Lk. 1:44). Blest is she who trusted that the Lord's words to her would be fulfilled (Lk. 1:39-45). It's Mary that causes the joy. But she causes it through her divine son. The unborn Jesus makes the unborn Baptist rejoice. And Elizabeth who believed that God could give her a son blesses Mary whose faith is still greater because she believed in the miracle of the incarnation. Christianity is a religion of joy from the very beginning. And this is also one of the finest pictures of Advent: how Mary hurries over the hills of Judah to help her cousin Elizabeth, causing her and her son great joy through Jesus.

That same joy continues when the Baptist is born: "When Elizabeth's time for delivery arrived, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives upon hearing that the Lord had extended his mercy to her, rejoiced with her" (Lk. 1:57-58). — And still greater joy, as to be expected, reigns when the Lord himself is born. The angel tells the shepherds at Bethlehem: "You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good

news to you, tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people. This day in David's city a savior has been born to you, the Messiah and Lord" (Lk. 2:10).

8. "Rejoice, the Lord is with you" is also valid for us. We are Christ-bearers ever since baptism. The Lord is not only coming at Christmas time. He is already with us. Basically, therefore, we have all reason to be glad, if only we remember that we carry Christ, if only we bring him to others, if only we allow Christ to greet Christ, when we meet people.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (December 13, 1981)

This is *Gaudete* Sunday. Rejoice because the Lord is near we are told. Not only because Christmas is around the corner and thus Christ's first coming in the Incarnation, but also because the imminent parousia causes joy (second reading) and the prophet rejoices greatly announcing him who proclaims the good news to the poor (first reading). Yes he is even in our midst, the Baptist tells us. We must not overlook him (gospel).

A second theme unfolds the role of the Baptist as the messenger of the one in our midst, the one greater than John.

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 61:1-2a. 10-11

This is probably the most known pericope of Trito Isaiah (Is. 56-66). the unknown author who wrote around 538-510 to the Israelites returned from exile, who were disappointed that the expected salvation did not come as fast as hoped for. The prophet stresses the importance of true piety and insists that salvation will come in spite of all obstacles. Part I (Is. 56:1-59:20) describes the obstacles and difficulties of salvation. Part II (Is. 60:1-62:12) pictures the future glory of Zion-Jerusalem. Glorified Zion is the religious center of the world (60:1-22). Zion's mourners are consoled (61:1-11).

The prophet proclaims his call: he is filled with the Spirit (which is described as anointing) to proclaim the good news, here to the discouraged returned Israelites. He will free the captives (if real captives or those who are in social distress is not certain). He will proclaim a Jubilee Year (every fourty-ninth year) where all were set free and property was returned

(Lev. 25:10; Jer. 34:8.15.17; Ez. 46:17). This will be a sign of God's grace and a punishment for the enemies. Christ applies these verses to himself in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk. 4:14-20).

The result will be: the community will prosper like a forest of oaks (v.3), Jerusalem will be rebuilt (v.4). Foreigners will do the work of pasturing sheep, farmers and vinedressers for Israel (v.5) so that the Jews are free for the service of Yahweh (v.6). The time of contempt for Israel is over (v.7) because of her richness. Israel will never become prey for the Gentiles. Rather there will be justice in the new state so that the neighboring nations will praise Yahweh (vv.8-9). All these verses are not in today's reading.

The prophet shouts for joy in the name of the people, comparable to the shout of joy of a bridegroom. God has dressed him with festive garments. He has taken off clothes of mourning. (v.10). The time of mourning and depression is over, the days of happiness and joy have arrived. God lets justice sprout like garden herbage and fame before all nations (v.11).

SECOND READING: 1 THESSALONIANS 5:16-24

After Paul has written about the second coming of Christ (1 Thes. 4:13-5:11) which will be witnessed also by those who died already, the time of which coming, however is uncertain and thus we must be prepared; the apostle gives various exhortations to the community (5:12-22) and adds his prayer for the grace of perseverance (5:23-24).

In vv. 16-18, he singles out *joy* as a typical Christian virtue. We should always be glad. Secondly, we should always *pray*. Thirdly, we should always *thank*. We always have reasons to thank, even if we don't see them.

In vv. 19-22 we are told to appreciate true charisms. We should not stifle the spirit. We should test everything and keep what is good. The most important charism for him is prophecy, as we also learn in 1 Cor. 14:1.

In vv. 23-24 Paul prays for his Thessalonians for the grace of perseverance. After all, everything is well that ends well. We can rely on Christ: he called us and he is trustworthy.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: JOHN 1:6-8. 19-28

There are two parts placed together into one logical unit about the Baptist: vv. 6-8 and vv. 19-28. The first three verses are the prosaic insertion into the pre-Johannine Prologue of John. The prologue speaks about the Logos: his divinity and participation in creation (vv. 1.3), his being the life and light of men (v. 4.9) his being repelled by men (vv. 10.11) and his incarnation and distribution of graces (v. 14.16). In this clearly arranged hymn on the Logos the evangelist inserted several verses, most of them about the Baptist whom he wants to keep in limits in opposition to the Baptist's disciples, so especially vv.6-8: The Baptist is sent by God, yes, but he is not the light as Christ is; he shall only testify to the light. Christ alone is light.

After the Prologue (Jn. 1:1-18) follows the testimony of John to the envoys sent by the Pharisees and Sadducees. He answers that he is not the Messiah, nor Elijah who according to popular belief would go ahead of the Day of the Lord. In Mal. 3:1 a messenger is pictured as preparing the way of the Lord which in Mal. 3:23 is identified with Elijah. According to the Synoptics John exercised the function of Elijah (Mt. 17:12). According to John, however, the Baptist did not think of himself as taking the job of Elijah, and that there was a tradition distinguishing the Baptist and Elijah we see in Mk. 6:14-15; 8:28. The Baptist also denies to be the prophet of which Deut. 18:15-18 speaks, a prophet who would solve problems on the pattern of Moses; thus a very special prophet.

Positively the Baptist admits to be the voice of Is. 40:3 that cries: "Prepare the way of the Lord!" Jn. 1:23 lets the voice cry in the wilderness (as the Septuagint of Is. 40:3 has it), whereas the Hebrew text of Is. 40:3 speaks of preparing a way in the desert.

Furthermore the Baptist describes his baptism as preliminary and exalts the one to come who baptizes with the Holy Spirit as it says in 1:33. The distinction between baptism with water and baptism with the Spirit is Christian. The Hebrew thought that cleaning with water and with a holy spirit came together (Ez. 36:25-26; Zech. 13:1-3).

This incident happened at Bethany (not near Jerusalem, but) in Transjordan, a place otherwise not known.

HOMILY

HE MUST INCREASE — I MUST DECREASE

1. The second and the third Sunday of Advent speak much about John the Baptist who prepares the way for the Lord. His greatness, and his limits, consists in being the messenger. One can sum it all up in the most beautiful words of John himself: "He (Christ) must increase and I (John) must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

2. Asked if he be the Messiah, John flatly denies it. He clearly knows and acknowledges his limits. He is not and never will be the Messiah, the Lord. And he is not going to fool anybody, he is not going to act as if he were the Savior. How many other people tried to act as if they were savior of a nation.

3. John does not even claim to be like Elijah or the great prophet who would solve all difficult cases like Moses did. He is satisfied in being just a messenger.

4. He is a *prophet*. The Baptist never claims to be a prophet, but the expression is used for him in the New Testament and so we can assume that he would have used it, had he been asked, or perhaps even used it. Jesus, in fact, has been quoted as calling John a prophet: "Why then did you go out — to see a prophet? A prophet indeed, and something more... All the prophets as well as the law spoke prophetically until John" (Mt. 11:9-13). And the chief priests and elders consider John a prophet: "All regard John as a prophet" (Mt. 21:26).

a. Prophet is in Hebrew *nabi'*. And that implies in the first place a special *call* by God to be a prophet. Jeremiah describes this in Jer. 1:5-10: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you." John could say that about himself too: He was called long before he was born to be a prophet to bring back many of the sons of Israel (Lk. 1:17).

b. To be a prophet means in the second place to speak in the place of God, as the Greek term *pro-phētēs* indicates. A prophet is mainly not somebody who foretells the future, but somebody who has a message from God. And so we find it

right in the story of the call of Jeremiah: "I place my words in your mouth" (Jer. 1:9). This is the reason why he is called. It is true, he would not be good enough to deliver God's word so the Lord extends his hand and touches the mouth of Jeremiah, saying: "See, I place my words in your mouth" (Jer. 1:9-10). When Isaiah objects that his lips are not clean to speak God's message, one of the seraphim touches his lips with an ember and says: "Your wickedness is removed, your sin purged" (Is. 6:7) and Isaiah can proclaim God's message.

c. John is Christ's prophet. He is called in a special way. But at the same time he is only Christ's messenger. His message is not his own word but Christ's word. Any preacher is as great as he preaches Christ's word, not his own.

5. That becomes even clearer when we take the other term for John. He is Christ's *kērux*, Christ's *herald*. So we read in today's gospel: John the Baptizer appeared in the desert, proclaiming (*kērussōn* a baptism of repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins" (Mk. 1:4). A *kērux*, a herald is a person who is a mouthpiece without power to add or subtract from the message entrusted to him. The message is all-important not the messenger. He is only important in so far as he delivers the message faithfully. How faithfully do we deliver God's word? Do we use our interpretations? Do we add something or do we subtract? Do we place ourselves in the center of our preaching? Do we speak about our experience or do we "just" explain God's word?

6. Another comparison for the same truth John underlines by calling himself "*the voice*", crying in the desert (In. 1:23 = Is. 40:3). A voice belongs to somebody. And yet one cannot say to whom this voice here in the desert belongs. But all that does not matter. Important again is only the message: Make straight the way of the Lord" (In. 1:23 = Is. 40:3)! The voice may be gone, but the message remains. And that is all that matters. We may have often preached in our life, may have shouted ourselves hoarse. People may have forgotten us and may not remember us. What matters is that they remember and follow the message: Make straight the way of the Lord! And lastly our message will be heard and followed if our voice is the voice of the Lord, not our own voice.

7. John is the friend of the bridegroom who leads the bride to the groom. He is not the groom. He is glad when people find the way to Christ, and he sees his mission fulfilled in this. Thus he cannot become jealous when more and more people go

to Jesus and less and less people to him. The scene is described in Jn. 3:22-30. When the disciples of the Baptist see that John looses ground and Jesus gains more and more, they come and tell the Baptist: "Rabbi, the man who was with you across the Jordan, the one about whom you have been testifying, is baptizing now, and everyone is flocking to him" (Jn. 3:26). Jesus can only reply that all success is given to Jesus from on high and that he himself not the Messiah but rather the best man of the groom, leading the bride to the groom. This is now happening when people flock to Jesus, the groom. And thus the Baptist can only be happy and not jealous as his disciples apparently are. The Baptist cups it up saying: "He must increase, while I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

Jealousy in the ministry is always a sign that we seek ourselves and not the Lord. We have to get after this jealousy as soon as it tries to come up, before it is too late.

8. John is a martyr, a witness. "He came as witness to witness to the light (*eis martyrian, hina martyresē*) (Jn. 1:7) ... but only to witness (*hina martyresē*) to the light (Jn. 1:8)." And again we read in Jn. 1:15: "John witnessed (*martyrei*) (testified) to him (Christ): 'The one who comes after me ranks ahead of me'." Similarly does he witness that the Holy Spirit came upon Christ (Jn. 1:32).

a. The term *martyr*— is a favorite expression in the gospel and the letters of John, occurring 64 times out of 173 in the whole NT. It means to testify to something one has seen or experienced as eyewitness. John the evangelist wants to make clear to his readers that he writes nothing but what "we heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked upon and our hands have touched we speak of the word of life... What we have seen and heard we proclaim in turn to you so that you may share life with us" (1 Jn. 1:13). The Baptist thus is testifying to what he has seen. He saw the Spirit rest on Jesus (Jn. 1:32). He has seen the light and witnesses to the light. But he himself is not the light. The term "witness" therefore explains the greatness of the Baptist's role but at the same his limits.

We shall also preach what we have witnessed ourselves and do not just know from books. People sense if we live by what we preach ourselves.

b. Martyr in the course of Christian times has taken the meaning of testifying under trying circumstances, yes, of shedding one's blood. The Baptist has become such a martyr

for Christ. The term martyr is not yet used in his last testimony for the truth and thus for Christ, but the story has all the earmarks of a martyr. Without hesitation John tells Herod Antipas that he must not live with his brother Philip's wife Herodias, although he knows quite well the implication of such fearless words. He is thrown into jail. At a birthday party of the king, the daughter of Herodias is dancing and charms the king so much that he swears to give her everything, even half of his kingdom. Perplexed, she asks her mother what to ask for. And Herodias wants the head of the Baptist. Here in a literal sense the Baptist decreases that Christ should increase.

9. The Baptist is finally a slave (*doulos*). He even says that he is less, for he is not worthy to perform the service of a slave of untying the sandals of a priest before he enters the sanctuary of the Temple (Jn. 1:27). A slave belongs completely to his master and has no own will but to do the will of his master, who is the greater one in every regard.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

(December 20, 1981)

Today we are meditating on the Incarnation of the Word (all readings). The word became flesh when Mary said her "yes" (gospel) to the angel Gabriel. This is the great mystery of which the gospel speaks (second reading). In Christ the house of David will last forever (first reading and gospel).

FIRST READING: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-5.8b-12.14a-16

This is one of the most pro-monarchic texts of the Old Testament, the text that enkindled the hope that the house of David had conquered Jerusalem, the city of the Jebusites and made it the capital of the kingdom so that every Jew could identify himself with it. Had he made Bethlehem, the main city of the tribe of his tribe. Benjamin, the capital of the kingdom other tribes could have objected. And since he knew that God must build the house, otherwise "they labor in vain who build it" (Ps. 127:1), he brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem. Blessings in his kingdom come from the presence of the Lord. But David felt bad that the ark was still in a tent, whereas he himself lived in house of cedar. Thus he intended to build a temple for the Lord. The prophet Nathan agreed to the idea. But at night he was advised by God to revoke his advice, which was Nathan's not God's advice.

David has still to go on fighting many wars and thus did not have the necessary leisure for building a temple. His son Solomon should do this after him.

But God can never be outdone in generosity. He in turn offered David the promise that his kingdom would go on. There would be always somebody sitting on his throne. "Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever" (7:16) reminds of Lk. 1:32-33: The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over the house of Jacob forever and his reign will be without end." The promise given to David was true only in the person of Jesus Christ. He alone will rule forever.

SECOND READING: ROMANS 16:25-27

This is the final doxology of the Letter to the Romans, which is found in three different places: here, after 14:23 and 15:33. It's unusual in its solemnity but fitting as end of the important letter to the Romans. To God alone be glory. That must be end of our life and is one main idea of the letter also. God alone can give us strength and power according to the gospel of Jesus Christ which Paul preaches. From all eternity God has decreed the salvation of all men. But this decree remained hidden (cf. 1 Cor. 2:7; Eph. 3:5; Col. 1:26). But now the mystery has been revealed. In the sacred Scriptures the preacher can reveal God's saving plan. All men shall be saved and also the pagans shall come under God's rule by accepting the Gospel in Faith.

In the context of today's liturgy one can easily apply this mystery to the Incarnation of Christ. After all, with the Incarnation God's God's plan to save all mankind started to be realized.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 1:26-38

This gospel was read on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

HOMILY

MARY THE GUIDE TO THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

1. Christmas is around the corner. We are going to celebrate the greatest event in history, the birth of the God-man, Jesus Christ. But this event started with the Incarnation. God

cannot become man without the consent of Mary. Only the Holy Spirit could bring about this greatest mystery and miracle of history of mankind: God made flesh, God made man. The stress lies on the creative act of the Holy Spirit rather than on the virginal conception as such. Yet the virgin birth is not only a theological statement of the divinity of Christ but a historical fact. The history of Jesus does not flow out of the stream of ongoing history, rather it expresses the transcendental origin of this history of Jesus. But the Holy Spirit could and would not work without the consent of Mary. With Christ something completely new starts, the new Adam, the new creation. But Mary's consent was necessary.

2. The annunciation story in Luke 1 has similarities with other annunciation stories as the announcement of the birth of Isaac (Gen. 17:15-27), Samson (Jgs. 13:1-25), Samuel (1 Sam. 1:1-28), John (Lk. 1:4-25), the stories of the call of Gideon (Jgs. 6:12-36), Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-8). But the annunciation story of Mary surpasses them all by far. There is first the *call* or *commission* (Lk. 1:26-28): The archangel Gabriel is sent from God to Mary and says: "Rejoice, O highly favored One. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women."

Her call is to be the daughter of Zion or Jerusalem of which Zephaniah told the people of Israel (Zeph. 3:14-15; Zech. 9:9; Joel. 2:21): "O highly favored (daughter). The Lord is with you "Shout for joy, O daughter Zion. Sing joyfully, O Israel! The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst." Mary shall conceive the Lord, and thus, the endtime will come, the time of the Messiah.

3. Mary's reaction is an *objection*, in the sense that she is greatly troubled by the angel's word and wonders what the greeting implies (Lk. 1:1:29). How could she guess that she should be the daughter Zion, that in her the history of Israel should find its climax.

4. The angel gives an *answer with further explanation* (1:30-33): "Do not fear, Mary. You have found favor with God. You shall conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus. Great will be his dignity and he will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over the house of Jacob forever and his reign will be without end." Mary shall be the daughter of Jerusalem because God has chosen her. And thus she shall conceive a Son who will not only be great before the Lord as

John the Baptist (Lk. 1:15) but simply great because he will be called the Son of the Most High, of God, himself. And thus God will give him the throne of David.

5. A *second objection* of Mary follows (1:34): "How can this be since I do not know man?" It is not that Mary does not believe or doubt as Zechariah did: "How am I to know this (i.e., that I will become father)? I am an old man. My wife is too advanced in age (to conceive a son)" (Lk. 1:18)? Mary believes that God can do this. But she is puzzled *how* she should become mother (her understanding must be it shall be now) since she is only betrothed. After all, faith shall also be reasonable not blind. So we may ask questions to enlighten our mind.

6. The angel gives her the *promise of divine assistance* (Lk. 1:35): "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God." Mary can conceive (now), Mary can bear a Son of the Most High because the power of the Holy Spirit will effect this miracle. Thus virginity is not barren, but most fruitful.

7. Without being asked for it the angel gives Mary a sign by which she can recognize that God's promise will come true (1:36-37): "Know that Elizabeth your kinswoman has conceived a son in her old age; she who was thought to be sterile is now in her sixth month." God has performed a miracle in the case of a woman beyond the age of childbearing. Thus he can perform the greater miracle also. After all, "nothing is impossible for God" (1:37) as already Abraham had to admit when his wife was told that she would conceive a son (Isaac) in her old age (Gen. 18:14).

8. *Mary's answer* is a wholehearted "yes" to the call (Lk. 1:38): "I am the servant of the Lord. Let it be done to me as you say." With her consent she makes the mystery of the Incarnation possible, effected by the Holy Spirit. God can become man if we say "yes".

9. With Mary's "yes" Christ was conceived, the Incarnation took place. And thus, we may assume *Mary resolved to remain a virgin*. Celibacy means virginity for Christ's sake. Christ was conceived now, and Mary wanted to remain completely Christ's own all her life.

10. As we can see, the mystery of the Incarnation was not right away clear to Mary, her consent needed some time. She was perplexed, she did not understand, but she was open

and listened. And in similar way the word was made flesh in a larger sense at other times: When Christ is born in Bethlehem, the angels sing to the shepherds: "Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests" (Lk. 2:14). The effect of Christ's birth will be that God is given all honor and glory and people will be saved. The shepherds hurry to tell Mary and Joseph this message. The result: "All who heard of it were astonished at the report given them by the shepherds" (2:18). How could they understand the meaning of the message! The same was true with Mary. But Luke adds: "Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart" (Lk. 2:19).

11. Still clearer is her being puzzled and not understanding but her openness to God's word at the same time expressed during the finding of Jesus in the temple. Jesus remains in the temple when his parents go home with the other people of Nazareth, without telling his parents anything. Different groups (grownups, younger people) went separately and only at night when the relatives would look for a stay over night, would Mary and Joseph notice that Jesus was not there. They return in haste to Jerusalem and when they find Jesus in the temple Mary expresses her anxiety: "Son, why have you done this to us? You see that your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow" (Lk. 2:48). But Jesus does not apologize. He gives an answer which is strange for the parents: "Why did you search for me? Did you not know I had to be in my Father's house" (2:49)? Luke adds: "But they did not grasp what he said to them" (2:50). But the evangelist also adds: "His mother meanwhile kept all these things in memory" (2:51). What was not clear to Mary she pondered in her heart, and slowly things would become clear to her. She would do things, making God's word and will become flesh in her life by her receptiveness and openness, even if she would not understand as it was the first time, when the angel came to her in Nazareth.

12. Thus Luke can sum up Mary's approach to the mystery of the incarnation by saying: "Blest are they who hear the word of God and keep it" (Lk. 11:28).

13. God wants to become man also in our life. Mary's openness, her listening, even when she did not understand must be ours. God lights up our way only in small stretches. Only if we say "yes" to the given insight at a time can God become man, can his will assume new human form.

CHRISTMAS SOLMENITY OF THE LORD'S BIRTH

(December 25, 1981)

As mentioned last year, every priest may say three Masses on Christmas. The three Masses at midnight, at dawn and during the day are the same in the three different cycles of A, B, and C. Last year only the Mass at midnight was explained, thus this year we meditate only on the Mass at dawn.

The daughter Zion is told: "Your salvation (savior) comes" (first reading) which is true in the person of Jesus. Christ's kindness and love (at Christmas) saves us since it brings in its tail baptism (second reading). Through Christ's birth God is glorified in heaven and on earth peace is given to those whom God loves. Thus we go with the shepherds to find Christ and and proclaim him to others (gospel) and treasure what we learned in our hearts (gospel).

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 62:11-12

Trito Isaiah (Is. 56-66) takes up themes of Deutero Isaiah (Is. 40-55). And thus in today's reading we find verses in Second Isaiah in a similar way. But in Deutero Isaiah the Jews in exile shortly before the return are addressed, whereas in Trio Isaiah the unknown speaks to the returned Jews. And in Is. 62:10 he encourages the Jews still living in the diaspora to return to Zion.

With a shout of joy the daughter Zion is told: "Your salvation comes (Hebrew texts" which the Septuagint and thus the NAB with a true adaptation renders with "your savior comes" (the concrete for the abstract). In the context of Christmas this is applied to Christ. And he brings (as a victorious general of an army) along the trophy.

The people in Zion will get a new name:

- "holy people" in the sense of priestly activity (cf. Is. 61:6: You shall be named priests of the Lord, ministers of our God.").
- "redeemed of the Lord" (cf. Ps. 107:2: "Thus let the redeemed of the Lord say, those whom he has redeemed from the hand of the foe."). Israel has returned from exile.
- "frequented" or "sought out". Israel is chosen and God is with her.

— “a city not (never again) forsaken”. Jerusalem will never be destroyed nor its people let into exile.

In the context of Christmas all these predicates win a deeper meaning.

SECOND READING: TITUS 3:4-7

Today's second reading is taken from the second part of the Letter to Titus (2:1-3:11) where the apostle speaks about the church discipline: the duties of different classes: old and young men and women, and finally slaves (2:1-10). The foundation for these duties rests on the grace of God which they have received (2:11-15). Then the apostle goes on talking about duties we have toward people in authority and our fellow men (3:1-2). The foundation for these duties is the rebirth which we have received (3:3-8).

The kindness and love of God our Savior appeared at Christmas (3:4) and saved us because of his mercy, not because of any merit of our own (a topic Paul does not grow tired telling us in the Letters to the Romans and Galatians).

This salvation became ours at our baptism, giving us a new birth, effected by the Holy Spirit. Ever since baptism we live God's own life. Having become just through God's grace we now live in hope of eternal life.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 2:15-20

The gospel of the Mass at dawn continues where the gospel midnight left off: The angels had sung: “Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests.” And one angel had told the shepherds: “I come to proclaim good news to you: ‘This day in David city a savior has been born to you, the Messiah and the Lord. Let this be a sign to you: in a manger you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes’.”

The shepherds follow in haste the advice of the angel and verify the sign, which is not a real sign (because it's just too ordinary and true for every child. But it goes to show that God became really human. And the shepherds see beyond the appearances in faith that with the birth of this child the message of the angels has been fulfilled and salvation has come for all men.

Thus they proclaim to everybody what had been told to them (who that is said). They proclaim the good news right away to others as it is in the nature of the gospel. How much success they have is not said. At least all are astonished.

Mary however treasures all these things in her heart and reflects on them as it is said about her several times in the gospel of Luke (3:51; 11:28; 8:15 for all).

The shepherds return to their flocks. Life goes on. Yet, there is a difference: They praise God for all they have heard.

HOMILY

LET US GO TO BETHLEHEM AND SEE THE THING THAT HAS HAPPENED!

1. The angels were singing the good news of Christmas in the fields of Bethlehem: "Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests." The original is an Aramaic (Hebrew) sentence without verb. Supplying the Verb it is less likely to supply an Optative or Subjunctive (glory may be [shall be] to God in heaven and peace may be [shall be] on earth) but rather an Indicative: "Through Christ's birth God is glorified in heaven (because his power and mercy are manifest) and on earth the men whom God loves receive the divine blessing of peace, the peace which the Savior has brought: forgiveness of sins, salvation."

2. God is glorified in heaven. He lives in splendor (this is the meaning of the Greek Noun *doxa*), light and power, visible divine radiance, in short, glory. That he has been doing from all eternity and is going to do until all eternity. But now at Christmas, this glory which is at the same time kindness and love for us has appeared (in Greek: *epephanē*; in Latin: *apparuit* which is the theme of several Christmas songs: e.g., *Resonet in laudibus* with the refrain "*apparuit*"). The apostle singles out the Christmas message saying: "The kindness and love of God our Savior appeared" (Tit. 3:4). The invisible God became visible in Christ incarnate. Over this the angels rejoice and God is glorified by it.

3. a. In comparison with God we live in darkness, in the shadow of death (Lk. 1:79 as Zechariah had been singing before

the birth of his son John, the forerunner of Jesus. The kindness of God, the Dayspring would visit us in his mercy to shine on us sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. He would guide us into the way of peace (Lk. 1:79). The angels put it this way: "Peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests" (Lk. 2:14). Since we are living in darkness of sin we were deprived of God's glory (Rom. 3:23). We all have sinned. Christ's birth brings all those on whom his favor rests peace, salvation. So we hear it from Trito Isaiah: "Say to the daughter of Zion: Your savior (salvation) comes (Is. 62:11). Paul formulates it with: "When the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he *saved us*" (Tit. 3:4). Christ saved us because of his favor, his love, his mercy, "not because of any righteous deeds we had done, but because of his mercy" (Tit. 3:4). The Greek term *eudokia*, favor in Lk. 2:14 is sometimes translated with "peace to those men of good will" as also the Latin translation has it: *bonae voluntatis*", as if the peace of God depends on our disposition. This is certainly correct theology, but it is probably not the correct translation here. God's peace and salvation is God's gift which he gives to all whom he chooses. That's according to his design *all* people because God wants *all* people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; 1 Thes. 5:4).

b. This salvation, this peace was given to us in concrete reality in our baptism as the apostle goes on telling us in Tit. 3:5: "He saved us through the baptism of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." What happened in Bethlehem objectively: Christ's physical birth, happened to us subjectively in baptism: Christ has been born in us. Angelus Silesius expressed it in a play on words: "Christ could have been born in Bethlehem a thousand times, it would not help you, were he not born in your heart!" Through Christ also the Holy Spirit is living in our hearts. Since Christ is our Savior we are justified by his grace and become heirs of the Father, waiting for eternal life (Tit. 3:7).

c. Thus we are *at peace with God*. We have no reason any more to run away from him. We do not have to be ashamed of him. We are like him. We are sons of God, brothers and sisters of Christ. Adam tried to hide from God in the garden when he had left his visible glory by sinning (Gen. 3:10).

d. We are *at peace with one another*. We are brothers and sisters again to one another. Cain had killed his brother Abel and had denied to be his brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9).

Baptism made us again sons of God, brothers and sisters of Christ and thus God's heirs of eternal life of eternal salvation (Gal. 4:7).

e. We are *at peace with ourselves*. We know again what is our goal in life. We know what we are looking for: Christ.

4. Christ's birth glorifies God in heaven and brings peace to men. What are *our reactions*?

a. The shepherds are obviously the first on whom God's favor rests, and they react immediately to the message of the angels: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this event (the Greek word "*rhēma*" is the translation of the Hebrew "*dabar*", which can mean "word" and "thing" and here is correctly translated with "thing"). Thus they go in *haste* and find Mary, Joseph and the baby lying in the manger (Lk. 2:16). Our faith shall be reasonable. And therefore God gives signs which help to verify his message which shall elicit our faith. Mary received a sign for her virgin-birth: Her relative Elizabeth who was already beyond the age of conceiving a son was in her sixth month of carrying a son under her heart. And so Mary "set out, proceeding in *haste* into the hill country to a town of Judah" (Lk. 1:39). First of all, she wanted to help a coming mother in her time of need, but also she wanted to verify the sign.

The sign given to the shepherds is not a real sign; it is just too ordinary, unless one thinks that often enough a child born of a mother for whom there was no room in the inn could not afford either to wrap the child in swaddling clothes (Lk. 2:12). The shepherds see through the poverty and understand that through the birth of this child God is glorified and peace is given to men.

God revealed his glory first to shepherds, not to rich people. He always looks down with kindness and love on the lowly (Lk. 1:48) and exalts them. But it is also an old belief that shepherds are close to nature and thus close to God and that God often reveals his mysteries to them. So we find it in Vergil (Eclogue X, 26) and Origin (Cat. 20). Others even think that these were the shepherds who were delivering regularly the sheeps for the Temple sacrifices which had to be without blemish. According to an old tradition these shepherds came from Bethlehem.

Good news wants to be carried to others, that's the consequence of the gospel. Good news wants to be shared and increase the joy of the one who shares.

They announced the good news to all. It is not said, who these people were, nor is it said what impact their news had. Only one thing is mentioned: They are astonished (*ethaumasano* Lk. 2:18). The Greek term *thaumazō* = to be astonished is often used in the New Testament, especially in Luke at the end of a happening or miracle story to express the reaction of people. It expresses man's attitude to the divine from the standpoint of religious psychology. It may take the various forms of an awesome sense of astonishment at the divine, of a critical surprise which resists or which fails to understand, or of honest and acceptable admiration. But most of the time this astonishment is only a preliminary stage of faith, the impulse which may awaken faith but which may also give rise to doubt.

b. One of those to whom the shepherds announce the good news is Mary. (Joseph is not singled out. Luke gives the preference to Mary in the infancy narrative, Matthew to Joseph.) Thus she was not just astonished, even if that meant an honest and acceptable admiration. She does more. She treasures intensely (the Preposition *syn* of the Verb *syntērein* expresses this intensity) all these things in her heart and reflects on them (*symballein* means literally "to throw them together"). She compares the news from different angles and reflects on them from all sides. This expression reflect, deliberate occurs only in Lucan writings, twice in Lk. and four times in Acts.

Thus Mary has become the model of any real Christian. A good Christian is somebody who "hears the word of God in a spirit of openness, *retains* it, and bears fruits through perseverance" (Lk. 8:15). Or differently expressed, "Blest are they who hear the word of God and *keep* it" (Lk. 11:28).

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH (December 28, 1981)

Today the Church proposes the holy Family Joseph, Mary and Jesus as model of all family and societal life. The first and second reading are for the years A, B, and C the same; only the gospel is different in each year. The first reading is a commentary of the fourth commandment: "Honor your father and mother, especially when they are old." "Bear one another, forgive and love one another: husband and wife, parents and children" (second reading). As Christ grew to maturity in a family (gospel) so every child does.

FIRST READING: SIRACH 3:2-6. 12-14 (in Greek, thus NAB)

The first reading is a commentary on Ex. 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother, that you may have a long life." A long life was for a Jew, who did not know much yet about life hereafter, the highest good. He who honors his parents also atones for sins which is true in the sense that it makes up for many other sins. Children shall be good to parents, especially when they are old, when their minds fail, or if they should become senile. — More details in the commentary of last year.

SECOND READING: COLOSSIANS 3:12-21

Again, (as in the reading of Sirach) much of the material of today's second reading is pre-Christian, pre-Pauline wisdom of all people and is therefore easily understandable, especially the second half of the reading, taken from an old "Haustafel" (3:18-4:1) = household code which lists various members of the family and society and their respective duties. Also the first half (3:12-17), speaking about the practice of virtues for community life has age-old wisdom. But as it stands, it is probably part of the "parenensis" or primitive Christian catechism, perhaps on the occasion of baptism. When the one to be baptized took off his old clothes and after baptism put on his new ones, he was admonished (1) what to put off (vices, here not mentioned) and (2) what to put on: New is that all (also the pagans, now baptized) are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved (3:12), not only the chosen people, the Jews. They shall put on *heartfelt mercy*. Christianity brought mercy into this world, something new for the ancient world, mercy for the aged, the sick, the weak in mind and body, the woman and the child. *Kindness* is the second virtue to be put on, which is goodness for goodness sake, without measuring it, like wine grown mellow with age, goodness in spite of all negative experience of being abused. *Humility* is a typical Christian virtue which one hardly finds in the vocabulary of a Greek philosopher. As a creature of God we have to attribute all our success to God, and that means humility; and secondly, we are all children of God and thus there is no room for arrogance toward others. A *meek* person is gentle because he is self-controlled since he is God-controlled. And finally we must be *patient*. In spite of in teachability of a partner we are not driven to despair; no foolishness, no bitterness drives us to ill-treatment, wrath or cynicism.

Col. 3:13 singles out one of the most important virtues of any family and community life which really Christian: "*Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievance you have against one another!*" And this we can do only because the *Lord has forgiven us*. How much allowance do we make for the faults of others? How soon and fast do we loose our patience and blow our top? The Lord has forgiven us (he died for us when we were still his enemies — Rom. 5:10). A forgiven man must always forgive.

Col. 3:14 brings the climax: "Over all these virtues put on *love*, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect." The picture is taken from the Orient where people were wearing long robes which had to be kept in place by a belt so that one would not stumble over the clothes and fall. Love keeps all other clothes, all other virtues in place so that he who loves, practices all the virtues (Rom. 13:8-9).

The result will be christ's *peace* (3:15), which is like the umpire deciding all differences of opinion. We all belong to the same Body of Christ. And thus we will listen to his *word* (3:16). We will sing songs of praise (3:16). All we do and say we do and say in the name of the Lord Jesus (3:17).

The picture of the Christian family (3:18-12) is again taken from a hierarchical subordinationist society (as in Sirach) where the father is in charge. As already mentioned, this household code probably derived from Stoic teaching via Hellenistic Judaism and passed into Greek-speaking Christianity. Thus we read: "Wives, be subjects!" which does not much appeal to women's lib. But Christianity adds: "This your duty in the Lord" (3:18). But even more, the Apostle makes clear that the husband cannot lord it over his wife. Rather, "husbands, love your wives" (3:19)!

And again, typical for that society in which the letter originated, children shall obey their parents (3-20) but again the Christian part is added: "as the acceptable way in the Lord." And even more typically Christian is the remark: "Fathers, do not nag your children lest they lose heart" (3:21).

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 2:22-40

Three things happened after the birth of a boy: (1) He was circumcised and given a name after one week (not mentioned in today's gospel, but on January 1), (2) after forty days the

mother had to be purified (in case of a girl after eighty days) according to Lev. 12:5-8 in the Temple at the Nicanor Gate in the East side of the court of women. Till that time the mother could not participate in religious ceremonies because she was levitically unclean, not that childbearing was something sinful. As an offering for the purification ceremony she had to bring along a lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon for a sin offering. In case a mother could not afford it, she was allowed to substitute both (the lamb and the young pigeon) for the pigeons. This was called "the offering of the poor". Our Blessed offered this "offering of the poor" which would indicate that Mary and Joseph were not well to do. Some scholars would caution not to stress the point too much since at that time apparently even well to do people could option for this simple sacrifice. (3) Since according to Ex. 13:2 every firstborn (animal and man) belonged to the Lord, since Yahweh had saved all the firstborn of Israel, while he slew all the Egyptian firstborn (Ex. 11), he had to be "bought free" (Num. 18:16) in recognition of the gracious power of God in giving human life, with five shekels, not before thirty-one days after the birth, but not much later either. This ceremony might also have been introduced to overcome the strange custom of sacrificing children to the gods. This redemption could take place before any priest anywhere in Palestine, by the father, who would not have to go to Jerusalem for this ceremony. If Jesus is brought to the Temple in Jerusalem, Luke wants to stress this as something special. It is not so much a redemption of Christ but more a presentation to the Father in the Temple, in a similar way as Samuel was brought to the sanctuary after his mother Hannah had conceived him in consequence of her promise to dedicate him to the Lord (1 Sam. 1).

It could look as if Jesus was brought to the Temple to be purified ("when the day came to purify them... Mary and Joseph brought Jesus up to the Temple so that he could be presented" Lk. 2:22), but only Mary needed the purification.

Two other episodes take place during the presentation of Jesus and the purification of Mary: (1) The just and pious Simeon who has been waiting for the consolation of Israel has been told by the Holy Spirit that the Anointed of the Lord (Christ is the Anointed) will come to the Temple and thus Simeon comes to the Temple the moment Christ is brought in. Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and blesses God with the famous *Nunc dimittis* (the first two words of the Latin praise): Now that Simeon has seen Christ, the hope of all Israelites, the

seer is ready to die gladly. He holds in his arms the light to the Gentiles (Is. 42:6; 49:6) and the glory of Israel (Is. 46:13). Mary and Joseph can only marvel at these words. Simeon blesses them and has a special prophecy for Mary: Christ will be the downfall or rise for many according to their refusal or acceptance of him. And Mary herself will suffer much.

(2) The prophetess Anna from the tribe of Asher (= blessed), the daughter of Phanuel (= I have seen God face to face, Gen. 32:30) is now really blessed as she sees the Lord face to face. She had been married seven years and then been a widow for eighty-four years (others take the eighty-four for her present age) and thus she would be about hundred and five years as the other great Israelite woman Judith (Judith 16:23). Widows were highly regarded in Israel (Ex. 22:22; Deut. 24:17; Is. 1:23; Lk. 18:3; 1 Cor. 7:8; 1 Tim. 5:3-16). Anna did not prophesy something in explicit words but praised the Lord.

After the parents have fulfilled all the prescriptions of the Law they return to Nazareth. Christ grows up in a family, physically and spiritually.

HOMILY

AND JESUS GREW UP IN A FAMILY

1. Jesus was born into and grew up in a family. And ever since, the holy family is the model of every family life. Every child is a gift of God, *the* gift. For a Jew the firstborn was in a special way a gift of God, the one they were looking forward to in many ways. Jesus was no exception, although he was firstborn and only son. In Egypt God through an angel had killed all firstborn sons of the Egyptians, including the firstborn of Pharaoh and thus the successor to his throne because Pharaoh stubbornly had refused to let the Jews go out of Egypt. This way God forced him on his knees, killing all firstborn. Out of thankfulness the Jews would dedicate their firstborn to God. That would have meant they should serve God in his Temple. But since that would have been a little impractical, the tribe of Levi would take over that function for all families and thus all firstborn sons could be returned to their families after they had been redeemed for five shekels (Num. 18:16).

Children are God's finest gift. Are they accepted as such gift of God? Children will not be able to vocalize the first months if they are welcomed or not, but intuitively they do feel it and later on they will remember how they were welcomed or not. And often enough it influences the whole course of their life. Jesus was welcomed with open arms by his parents.

2. Jesus was not really redeemed in the Temple as the other firstborn Israelites were before a priest, but he was more presented to the Lord, to the Father, in a similar way as Hannah brought young Samuel to the sanctuary (1 Sam. 1:24): "This is the child I asked for, and the Lord granted me what I asked him. Now I give him to the Lord as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the Lord," the mother said to Heli at the sanctuary. Mary may have said something similar and Jesus himself has been quoted as praying already in the womb of his mother (which he could have easily repeated here at the presentation in the Temple): "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you have prepared for me. Holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, 'As is written of me in the book, I have come to do your will, O God.' (Hebr. 10:5-7 = Ps. 40:7f).

Children shall not have a mother's or a father's vocation, but they shall freely respond to God's call. But it makes a big difference if parents let God take the first place in the life of their children and do not force children to select their vocation and profession according to their (selfish) wishes. And it makes a big difference if children think of God already early in their lives.

3. The parents of Jesus observed God's laws (here the one demanding the purification of the mother and the redemption of the firstborn) almost as a matter of fact. They did not lose any words about it and did not think they would do something special. The young Jesus learned from them to seek God's will expressed in God's laws: He would pray the daily prayers, he would go to the synagogue and several times a year to the Temple in Jerusalem, he would observe the different feasts, would observe the other commandments. Of course, the Pharisees in the course of the years had added many features to the Law which obliterated God's will and Jesus considered it his task (among other things) re-establish clearly God's will, especially in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7). But he learned from his parents to do God's will freely. And so it was also possible for him to do the Father's will when it was hardest, especially in the garden of Gethsemani and on the cross.

Parents teach their children many things. But the most important factor is their own example. If they do not do what is right, how can they expect their children to follow God's law. If they do not go to Mass, how can they expect their children to go! If the father has a querida, how can he expect the daughter or the son to enter a clean married life and be committed to the marriage partner wholeheartedly! Children have sharp eyes and observe very early.

4. One of 'the most human sentences about Christ is the word: "Jesus, for his part, progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men" (Lk. 2:52). This is a stereotyped formula, because a similar statement is made about Samuel in 1 Sam. 2:26 and of John the Baptist in Lk. 1:80. But, although according to Luke Jesus is God's Son from the first moment of his conception, the evangelist did not think it strange that Jesus should grow in knowledge and wisdom and even should ask questions as it is described about the twelve year old Jesus in the Temple (Lk. 2:46). Jesus is God and really man. He grew.

In the context of the Feast of the Holy Family that sentence gets a special accent: Christ grew *in a family*. Every child grows and becomes what it is supposed to be according to God's plan in a family. The family is then needed background for the growth of every child. It happens that parents do their best, live a good life and yet, to the great sorrow of the parents, the children do not turn out right. After all, each child has a free will. And it can be as it was in the parable of the two sons (Lk. 15:11-32) that a child contrary to (or wrongly even "because" of) the good example of father and mother wants to be independent and make his or her own mistakes. But if one takes a certain number of children who are problems, addicts, delinquents, murderers; most of them come from broken off families, or have no father, no real home; they have never experienced a caring father and a loving mother. In other words, they never grew up in a family.

That growing up in a family, after all, is not just something mere physical, but something more comprehensive. The family is a home, where one feels at ease and at home. Where one is accepted and can give oneself as one is. Then one can grow as a whole person.

5. A family tries to ascertain together God's will for the different members of the family. When Joseph and Mary came to the Temple they were told something about the future of the child and the mother. About their son they learned from Simeon: that he would be a light to the Gentiles and the glory of the people Israel (Lk. 2:32). The parents could only marvel about this word. Of the forty-two occurrences of *thaumazein* (to wonder, marvel) we find the expression seventeen times in the writings of Luke (Lk. and Acts). For the parents of Jesus it was more than being amazed. They were rather pondering this word and meditating on it. And the same we can assume as reaction for the second word of Simeon concerning Jesus: "This child is destined to be the downfall and the rise of many in Israel, a sign that will be opposed" (Lk. 2:34) and concerning the word to Mary: "you yourself shall be pierced with a sword so that the thoughts of many hearts may be laid bare" (Lk. 2:35). Slowly Jesus would be ready to accept his vocation to be the stone of offense, to be rejected by his own people after he had been hailed initially. Slowly he would separate from his family to follow the Father's will exclusively as he did it by an act of anticipating when he stayed in the Temple. His mother would be seldom seen in the limelight of Jesus' public ministry, but would be close to him under the cross, when in full blast a sword would pierce her heart. Through her pondering on God's word she slowly prepared herself for that hour.

Every family is such a place to ascertain God's will for the different members of the family. And no family tie must hinder a member from following God's call for him or her.

6. Since our topic today is family life we may also look at two other members of two other families which we do not well know: Simeon and Anna. Of Simeon only the name is given, no further family background. Anna hails from the region north of Mt. Carmel, from the tribe of asher (=blessed), and her father was Phanuel (=I have seen God face to face). These details are given because of the meaning of the names: When Anna sees Jesus she can say in full reality: "I am blessed because I have seen God face to face and yet I live." What both have in common in our context of family is: Both have

grown old graciously. Old age has not made them bitter but rather kind and unselfish. This is also a task of a family: How to grow old and come closer to God at the same time. Luke probably did not want to give an answer to this question, but in reality he does, after all. Most Jews remained in the clan they had been living in all their life as Filipinos do. We do not know what caused Simeon and Anna to spend their last years in the Temple. In any case, they followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit as Luke singles out (Lk. 2:27). Their secret of growing old graciously was to participate regularly in the worship and to pray personally.

Many old people do this, and how many families are blessed because of it God only knows.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD (January 1, 1982)

The Octave Day of Christmas got a new title and thus a new accent, the divine motherhood of Our Lady. The main thrust however is still the birth of Christ in which the saving act of God is inaugurated. In civil life it is the beginning of a new year. Pope Paul VI made the day a day of prayer for peace.

All three readings are the same for cycle A, B, and C. In *the son born of a woman* (second reading), *Mary, who named Him Jesus* (gospel), who is Yahweh, we are blessed (first reading) and made sons (second reading).

FIRST READING: NUMBERS 6:22-27

This very old blessing was said by priests (v. 23), within a sanctuary, in an act of worship (so Ps. 118:26) or when the participants were dismissed (2 Sam. 6:18; Lev. 9:22). *God* lastly blesses us (v. 27). In the Hebrew we have three lines:

May Yahweh bless and keep you!

May Yahweh make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you!

May Yahweh lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace!

— God keeps us in the face of every misfortune and disaster.

- He lets his face shine on us by his benevolence and favors he grants us. He even grants us pleasures, he is gracious to us.
- He turns his face to us and thus causes a state of wholeness and absolute well-being for us. Only friends see eye to eye, face to face.

The content of the blessing here is earthly well-being. But nothing forbids us to take it in the fullest sense.

SECOND READING: GALATIANS 4:4-7

This passage is a pre-Pauline credal formula which Paul has expanded by the words: "born under the law to redeem those under the law" which was a particular preoccupation of the Apostle. This leaves us with the formula:

God sent forth his Son

— born of a woman —

so that we might receive our status as adopted sons. The son was sent that we might become sons. Here we have in a nutshell the importance of Christ's birth at Christmas. Christ became human through a human birth that we might be elevated to divine sonship in him. Jn. 1:1-14 gives the same reason for the birth of Christ: "Any who did accept him he empowered to become children of God" (Jn. 1:12).

Paradoxically Christ wanted to make us sons by himself being placed under the law, being born of a mother, to free us from the law, sin and death. As long as we were under the law we were slaves. Now we are free through the Spirit of the Son. And the Spirit of the Son empowers us to pray the prayer the Son was always praying: "Abba" (Father).

God's Son is born of a woman. Mary is therefore, the mother of God, the *theotokos* as later the theologians would call her, especially the Council of Ephesus (431 A.D. — we celebrated the 1450th anniversary last year). Here mention of the reality appears for the first time, although it is not the first time, although it is not the distinct theological formulation yet.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: LUKE 2:16-21

This is the same gospel as the one of the Christmas Mass at dawn with the difference that it starts at verse 16 instead of verse 15, and that it goes on to include verse 21, the circumcision and naming of Christ. This is the climactic verse of today's reading. By wanting to be circumcised, Christ placed himself under the law (Gal. 4:4) and he received the name "Jesus" = God (Yahweh) saves, who blesses us (Num. 6:24-27).

For Jews a name expresses the essence of a person. Jesus is our savior; that is his essence. "There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved (but the name of Jesus)" (Acts 4:12).

The homily could meditate on (1) The Son of God, born of Mary, makes us sons (as we did last year); (2) the meaning of blessing, suggested by the first reading; (3) freedom from the law, proposed by the second reading. (a) Since Adam's fall, sin and death rule (Rom. 5:12-21). Thus the unredeemed is not free. (b) Man can never be autonomous; it belongs to his essence to be subject to someone. (c) Really free we become only by Christ's death. He conquered sin. (d) This objective freedom everyone has to appropriate subjectively by faith and baptism. (e) Christian liberty consists in coming to God through Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). His whole essence is tending to God. (f) Christian liberty is not dependent on social liberty or social subjection (cf. 1 Cor. 7:20-22). (g) Christian liberty is no license for the desires of the flesh, but *noblesse oblige* (Gal. 5). The Holy Spirit, put in our hearts, enables us to keep Christ's law; (4) the concept of "name" as suggested by the first reading and the gospel.

HOMILY

THE NAME JESUS WAS GIVEN THE CHILD

1. "What is in a name?" Sometimes people glibly ask. It is true, for some people names are chosen arbitrarily and mean very little. Somebody may call a black cat "snowball". But in reality, everything is in a name. That was especially true for the Israelites.

2. The Hebrew words for divine being, for God, are *El*, *Elohim*, and *Eloah*. All three words mean the same and the most often used name is *El*. The etymological meaning is intricate and uncertain. William Gesenius — Francis Brown in *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 41) give the following possible translations: (1) strong, thus God is the strong one, (2) revered one, the object of fear and reverence, (Gen. 31:42; 8:13), (3) leader, lord, (4) stretch out, reach after; thus God is the one whom men strive to reach. What these terms have in common is the note of distance between God and us. God is the strong one, the revered and even feared God, the lord, whom man tries to reach after all. The question is only: Will he reach him?

3. This El was worshipped at different Canaanite sanctuaries: Shechem, Bethel, Beersheba under different titles; and this was done even by the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The titles were: El Shaddai = God Almighty (Gen. 28:3; 48:3), El 'elyon = God Most High (Gen. 14:22), El 'olam = God the Eternal (Gen. 21:33). What the patriarchs were worshipping was not El, the pagan god, but Yahweh as he would reveal himself later, although they were not fully aware of his essence yet. All these titles again stress the God so different from us, high above us and awe inspiring.

4. Then Jacob and his clan marched to Egypt and settled there. Slowly they were oppressed by Pharaoh. "The Israelites groaned and cried out because of their slavery" (Ex. 2:23). It would seem that the Jews did not know much about God, as if they groaned just so in general, without addressing their cry clearly to God. It just went up to the sky. And yet, God was there, although the Jews were not fully aware of him. "As their cry for release went up to God, he heard their groaning and was mindful of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He saw the Israelites and knew" Ex. 2:24-25 continues.

Thus God finally intervened through Moses to free the Jews from the slavery of Egypt. This he did by revealing himself to Moses on Mt. Horeb (Ex. 3:4-22). "I have come down to rescue them (the Jews) from the hands of the Egyptians" Ex. 3:8). "I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people out of Egypt" (Ex. 3:9). But Moses wanted to be sure if God was calling him, especially when he would go to his stubborn fellow Jews and they would ask for God's name. God replied: "I am who am" ... I AM sent me to you" (3:14). Ever since the

revelation of God to Moses on Mt. Horeb, Yahweh has become the name for God. If everything is in a name, what does the name Yahweh mean? As to be expected, it is discussed.

(a) We always want to know the name of somebody. Without name a person is anonymous, unreal, far away, not in our reach. With a name, he is close to us, our friend. And the danger even exists that we want to lay hold on somebody by using his name. Thus Manoah, the father of Samson asked the Angel of Yahweh to reveal his name, and the angel evaded the question (Jgs. 13:17). Jacob wrestled with the angel and tried to hold on to the divine visitor by finding out his name, but again the request was refused (Gen. 32:30). Moses also asked for the name of God when he sent to his countrymen to lead them out. And here the name was given, which shows the extraordinary event. But God made clear that man cannot lay hold on him, one cannot manipulate God. And thus some explain Yahweh (Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh) in Ex. 3:14 as "I am who I am" i.e. who is essentially unnameable, inexplicable (Gesenius. *Lexicon*, p. 218).

(b) Since *hayah* in Hebrew is not a static, but a dynamic verb, it hardly means just a static "to be". And thus the traditional explanation that God is the *ens a se*, "The I who am, i.e., whose essence is to exist by himself" is correct theology and profound insight, but probably not the literary meaning here.

(c) Therefore many think Yahweh is the causative verb form *hawah* and thus God is "the one who brings into being whatever comes into being". The name designates God as creator.

(d) But probably a still better explanation, especially if we take the whole context of the Jews who are oppressed and cry for freedom, is that Yahweh means: "I am present and ready to act (thus *hayah* is not a static, but a dynamic Verb), "I am he who is there", "I am present to save" whoever wants to be saved (James Plastaras. *The God of Exodus* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966), p. 97-98).

Thus what God wants to be most to us in the one present, ready to help, ready to save.

5. Jesus is the Divine "I am present", especially in the gospel of John. It occurs fifty-six times, often with a predicate e.g., "I am the light of the world" (Jn. 9:5), but several times in an absolute sense: "I AM", e.g., Jn. 8:58: "Before Abraham

was I am;" Jn. 13:19: "I tell you this now, before it makes place, so that when it takes place you may believe that I AM." What Yahweh promised in the Old Testament Christ fulfills in the New Testament: He is the God present in our midst, ready to act, ready to save whoever wants to be saved. Yahweh remained invisible, although he was present under some signs, like the ark, the tent, the pillar of light, smoke. But in Christ God has become visible. And that is the great significance of Christmas.

6. Still clearer does the name *Jesus* express that Christ is the savior, ready to save whoever wants to be saved. The Greek *Iêsous* represents Hebrew and Aramaic *Yêshu'a*, which means "Yahweh is salvation", alluded to in Mt. 1:21 and Lk. 2:21: "You shall give him the name Jesus because he shall redeem his people from their sins."

Everything is in a name. In God's name and in Jesus' name is expressed that he cares for us, that he is close to us, that he is present to save, that he is our Savior.

7. Ever since we were baptised we also have a name. It should be a Christian name, not a pagan name, that reminds us that we are a Christian, that we belong to Christ, God knows us by name, he has redeemed us and thus called us by our name: "But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and formed you, O Israel: 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine'" (Is. 43:1). "I give you treasures... that you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, who calls you by name. For the sake of Jacob... I have called you by your name, giving you a title" (Is. 45:3-4). And even more unforgettable is the description of Is. 49:1.15-16: "The Lord called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my name... Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you. See upon the palms of my hands I have written your name."

8. God knows us by name. Jesus knows us through and through. Do we know him? Not just from books, not just in theory, but from daily life, living his divine life, being a Christian, being a Christ-bearer, a Christopher?

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (January 3, 1981)

The Feast of Epiphany (epiphany = appearance) celebrates and reenacts the self-manifestation of Christ to the first non-Jews, the magi and thus to our ancestors in the faith (gospel).

It is the feast of the universal Church. The prophecy of Isaiah 60 (first reading) is starting to be fulfilled: "They all (nations) gather together, they come to you." Yes, in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are now co-heirs with the Jews, members of the same body (second reading).

Since all three readings are the same in the years A, B, and C and the first reading and the gospel were explained in detail last year, here shall follow only a summary.

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 60:1-6

Trito Isaiah (Is. 56-66) encourages the returned exiles that the promised salvation would come in spite of all obstacles and the slow rebuilding of the Temple, if people would only be truly pious.

Today's first reading consists clearly of two parts: (1) Is. 60:1-3: Through the return of the exiles to Jerusalem light has come and the glory of the Lord has been revealed. This is even more true with the Incarnation of Christ which replaces the return from Babylon and inaugurates God's act of salvation. (2) Is. 60:4-6: This return of the Jews is followed by an eschatological pilgrimage of Gentiles to Jerusalem that will follow the re-building of the city. This promise is going to be initially fulfilled with the coming of the magi.

SECOND READING: EPHESIANS 3:2-3a.5-6

The Letter to the Ephesians is one of the four Captivity Epistles (Philippians, Colossians, Philomon, and Ephesians), so called because according to tradition Paul informs us that he wrote to them in prison (Phil. 1:7.12-17; Col. 4:3.10.18; Phlm. 1:9f.13.23; Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20). The captivity would also explain the different theology from the other Pauline Letters, especially in Ephesians and Colossians: the unity of all Christians among themselves and with Christ who is the head and we are the body. After all, when we are separated from our friends we discover that we can be close to them, although we are separated by bodily distance. However, because of that different theology and a partly different vocabulary, an increasing number of theologians think that Ephesians was not written by St. Paul personally but by one of his disciples. This question has no bearing on the content.

The doctrinal part of Ephesians (Eph. 1:3-3-21) speaks about the mystery of the recapitulation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ. And this is in line with the mystery of Epiphany. From all eternity God has decreed to pull down the wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:15) by the death of Christ. In Him all nations shall have access to the Father (2:18). This mystery shall now be proclaimed in the gospel (3:3). It has been revealed to the Apostle and it is his privilege to proclaim this gospel: "In Christ Jesus the Gentiles are now co-heirs with the Jews, members of the same body and sharers of the promise through the preaching of the gospel" (3:6).

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: MATTHEW 2:1-12

This gospel represents midrashic history: by reflecting on especially Old Testament texts the evangelist tries to picture Christ as the true Moses and the true Israel (Jacob): as Moses was almost killed by Pharaoh but escaped by divine protection so Jesus the true Moses escaped the hands of King Herod. There is an historical nucleus in the pericope; the small details, however, are more used to make a theological point than to give us information about the exact when and where of history.

Under Herod the Great (thus before 4 B.C. when Herod died) *magi* (wise men, sages, experts of astronomy) followed a supernatural phenomenon (the star seems not to be a conjunction of Jupiter, Saturn and Mars in 7 B.C. since it does not behave like a star) and came to Jerusalem. The place where they came from is not said. "We have seen the star in the east" (Mt. 2:2.9): is better translated with "in its rising". But it is true, left is still: "They came from the east" in Mt. 2:1. The name "magi" then suggests Persia, where the name originated, or Babylonia because of the knowledge of the stars. It could be Arabia because of the gifts which are often found there.

The number of the three magi has been concluded from the three gifts. Popular piety only has made them kings applying to them Ps. 72:10 and Is. 60:3. The names Gaspar, Melchor and Balthasar go only back to the sixth century.

The inquiry of the sages about a newborn king causes great disturbance for Herod because of fear for his throne and for the people because they fear a new outbreak of wrath of Herod. His suspicion became greater the older he grew and thus he killed any suspicious person.

Herod summons the chief priests and scribes and gets the information of Micah 5:1 combined with 2 Sam. 5:2: "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the prices of Judah, since from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel" (Mt. 2:6).

Undisturbed by hostility and indifference the sages go on to Bethlehem, find the child, and Mary, do him homage, offering him gold, frankincense and myrrh. In a dream they are warned not to fulfill Herod's wish to bring him the message where Jesus was born. Rather, they return home by a different way.

HOMILY

OUR ANSWER TO THE NEWBORN KING

1. Jesus was born when the time was fulfilled, when God had prepared everything for his coming, when people were longing for the Messiah (cf. Gal. 4:4). And yet, nobody is forced to receive him. People react differently.

There was first Herod the Great, the King of Palestine. World history has been generous to him, giving him the name "the Great", which not many figures in history received. Should that not have included also his acceptance of Christ! Being only a half-Jew, an Idumean, and having to work for the Romans, Herod tried to carry on both shoulders: To the Romans he tried to project the picture of a loyal vassal, looking for peace and order and trying to bring in the requested taxes. And by and large he succeeded. To the Jews he attempted to be a religious ruler, participating in Jewish worship, although it was more lip service than real conviction, and he built the new Temple which surpassed the second Temple, the Temple built after the return from exile.

But Herod had one big fault which hindered real greatness and which hindered him also to welcome Christ: Herod was extremely suspicious. Thus he killed whomever he suspected to be a rival to his throne, and the number of those he assassinated became bigger and bigger the older he became. He was Augustus coined the word: "I would rather like to be a pig (*hys* in Greek) than a son (*hypois* in Greek) of Herod." As a Jew he would not eat pig meat and thus pigs were safe. But

he would kill many of his closest relatives: In the year 35 B.C. he murdered his brother-in-law Aristobulus, in 34 his uncle and brother-in-law Josephus, in 30 Hyrcanus II, the grandfather of his wife Mariamne, in 29 his wife Mariamne, in 28 his mother-in-law Alexandra, in 7 his sons Alexander and Aristobulus, and in 4, only few days before his death his oldest son Antipater. Yes, before his death he even arrested many high Jewish dignitaries, when he was sure that he would die soon. They were supposed to be killed the very moment he would die. He knew, nobody would shed a tear for him. So the Jews should at least cry for some of their relative on the occasion of his death.

Such an attitude is impossible for real friendship and is even more impossible as disposition to welcome the Lord. Thus we can understand Herod's first reaction upon hearing of Christ's birth: "Here is a new pretender to my throne. That can and must not be. Thus he must be killed."

Perhaps we are not as suspicious as Herod was. But we might have our own plans about our life as he had. We want to determine everything. And thus there is no room for God's ideas and his inspirations. We have closed ourselves off and nobody even dares telling us anything, as nobody dared telling Herod the truth.

2. The second group of people who came in contact with the news about Christ's birth were the chief priests and the Scribes. Their reaction was complete indifference. They just did not care. They were so wrapped up in their daily affairs of Temple service and legal discussions that they were not open for something new. Sure, they looked up where Jesus could be born and even handed on that information, following the lead of Micah 5:1 and 2 Sam. 5:1: "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the princes of Judah, since from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel." But that information was just information for them which left them cold and uninvolved. It was not a message which told them what to do themselves. They did not even lead the magi, but stayed home, being such an impersonal sign post.

Yes, their information had even the opposite effect on them: They feared for their own safety since they knew how suspicious Herod was.

Indifference is not much better than open hostility; in some cases it can be even worse. In all our work we should leave some room for new ideas and not just follow daily routine.

3. The third group of people who learned about Christ's birth were the magi.

a. They were learned people. Yet their knowledge had not gone to their head, but they rather tried to follow their better insight.

b. They received an information about Christ's birth, which right away turned into a message for them since the information made them involved in the finding of Jesus. And this, although Herôd was hostile and the Scribes cold and indifferent. They knew only one thing: Here is the newly born king and we want to see him and do him homage. And so they went and found Christ.

c. They offered Christ *gold*.

(1) They gave Jesus all their *love*, as pure as gold, as solid and lasting as gold, and as purified from selfish motives. They wanted to love Jesus with all their heart and with all their mind.

(2) Gold symbolizes their *fidelity* and *perseverance*. Nothing would be able to separate them from Christ (Rom. 8:35).

(3) Their love was *sincere*. We can deceive men, but not God. We can put up a facade and a front. The magi did not do that.

(4) In Christ the sages saw their supreme King who receives the most precious of all the metals, the kingly metal: gold.

(5) Lastly the gold symbolized the magi's *work*.

d. The wise men offered Christ *incense*.

(1) Incense has always been used as symbol of adoration. The magi adored Jesus as God. Even today we use incense in the liturgy as sign of worship. In particular we incense the gospel in which Jesus is present, the altar, representing Christ, and the gifts of bread and wine on the altar which will become the body and blood of Christ.

(2) The sages offer the Lord their *prayer*. "Let my prayer come like incense before you, the lifting up of my hands, like the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2) we often pray, especially when he use incense. The prayer shall come from the depths of our hearts, especially our private prayers. But our service in the assembly of the faithful is like incense also. And both forms of prayers are necessary and belong together. We will manage a good private prayer only when we also pray in common and every common prayer must be followed up my private prayer.

(3) Our whole life is like a sacrifice of incense as St. Paul expresses it: "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship" (Rom. 12:1).

e. Lastly the magi offered Jesus *myrrh*.

(1) Expressing their faith in the humanity of Jesus, especially in his crucifixion. For his funeral myrrh was used.

(2) At the same time they expressed their willingness to suffer themselves. Jesus would later say: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny his very self, take up his cross each day, and follow in my steps" (Lk. 9:23).

Christ will be found in our work, prayer and suffering.

FEAST OF THE LORD'S BAPTISM

(January 10, 1982)

For the eastern Church Christ's like was (theologically speaking) a series of epiphanies (revelations) of which the baptism of the Lord was the first and most important one. Since in the West the story of the magi was so popular the baptism of Christ could only take the place of the following Sunday, which is now the first Sunday of the year.

The first and second reading of the cycles A, B, and C are the same. Only the gospel is different each year, but different only in the sense that the same report of Christ's baptism is taken from the parallel report of the three Synoptic gospels, this year from Mark. Jesus comes to the Jordan to be baptized by the Baptist (gospel) in order to to take upon himself the sins of mankind and to be revealed as the Son of God and thus start his public career as Servant of Yahweh.

This was foretold by Isaiah 42 (first reading) and outlined by Peter (Acts 10:35-43) in his speech in the house of Cornelius (second reading). Since details were explained last year, here follows only a summary.

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 42:1-4.6-7

Today's first reading is the first of the four Servant of Yahweh Songs in the Book of Deutero-Isaiah (Is. 40-55) which according to content form a unity by themselves, different from the surrounding context: Is. 42:1-4; 49:1-7; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12. To the first two songs some scholars add some verses of transition (done by the author of the Servant of Yahweh songs or by the final redactor) between the Servant of Yahweh Songs and the rest of the book.

This *ebed Yahweh* (= Servant of Yahweh) is a mysterious figure and is taken in the collective sense as the people of Israel, the ideal Israel, or in an individual sense as Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel or any other outstanding prophet, possibly even Deutero-Isaiah. But in the light of Christian fulfillment it can be only Christ himself.

This Servant of Yahweh is 1. called, chosen in a particular way (42:1; 49:1.5), 2 he is full of the Holy Spirit (Is. 42:1), 3. He will preach and thus be light to Gentiles, bring freedom to prisoners (Is. 42:42:1.6.7; 49:2.5.6; 50:4), 4. He will suffer much and vicariously, atoning for our sins (Is. 50:5-7; 53:2-8.10-12), 5. He will have many descendants by his suffering (Is. 53:10). Details about today's second reading in the homily.

SECOND READING: ACTS 10:34-38

When Peter was called to the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius, the first pagan to be taken into the Church, he was encouraged by a vision from heaven to administer the baptism. Before he did so he delivered a sermon which presents one of several samples of early Christian *kerygma* which is also the basic scheme for the Synoptic gospels: how Jesus was baptized, preached in Galilee full of the Holy Spirit, performed miracles and signs, cast out devils, went to Jerusalem, was crucified and rose from the dead.

Here again Jesus is anointed with the Holy Spirit in baptism, as prefigured by the text in Is. 42:1 and so equipped

for his ministry. God preaches the good news of peace in Jesus Christ, God who anoints him and performs the miracles in him. One can also put it the other way around: Jesus was witnessing to the presence of God acting in his words and works. Starting with Jesus' baptism God's saving presence was manifested.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: MK. 1:7-11

In the first half the gospel Mark speaks about the Messianic preaching of the Baptist (1:7-8): John in true humility has to admit that he is strong, (Greek: *ischyros*) since God made him that. But even more in his true greatness (and humility) he has to admit that Christ is stronger than he (Greek: *ischyroteros*), more capable, more able because the Baptist is only able to administer the water baptism of repentance to sinners with a view to the coming kingdom of God. Christ, however, will baptize with the Holy Spirit. The first baptism is a sign of the repentance, underlines and increases it and may also to a certain extent bring about forgiveness of sins but more inasmuch as it increases the repentance ("I baptize for the sake of reform" Mt. 3:11). But Christ's baptism brings the new life in the Spirit. Thus the Baptist can only say that he is not worthy to administer the lowest service of a slave to Christ: to untie Christ's sandal straps. This picture is taken from the moment when the priest in the temple started his holy service: Then a temple slave untied his sandals so that the priest could enter the sanctuary barefooted. According to Jewish tradition, this temple slave belonged to the class of people whose uncleanness could not even be removed at the last day. This humility (and true greatness at the same time) of the Baptist climaxes in his word: "He (Christ) must increase, I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

In the second half of the gospel Christ's baptism is described.

1. Although Jesus is without sin he places himself in line with all the sinners to take away symbolically (later on in reality) the sins of mankind. In Matthew the Baptist senses this unheard of step of Christ and does not want to baptize Jesus. But the Lord insists in being baptized by the Baptist with the remark: "Give in for now. We must do this if we would fulfill all of God's demands" (Mt. 3:15). Christ must fulfill every purpose in salvation history (Is. 42:6 we read

concerning the Servant: "I, the Lord, have called you for the victory of Justice (righteousness), I have grasped you by the hand.)

2. At the same time Christ's baptism marks the inauguration of the public ministry of Jesus with clear divine approval: A voice from heaven (the Father) is heard: "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests" (Mk. 1:11). And the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus in visible form, empowering the Lord for his ministry.

HOMILY

CHRIST'S BAPTISM: HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION

I. 1. The name of baptism is derived from the verb *baptein*, *baptizein*, which signifies "to immerse, to wash, to dip". Baptism is, then, an immersion or a washing. This symbolism of water as a sign of purification and of life is very old in the history of religions. Most of them, however, have little bearing on the baptism in Judaism.

[The baptism of John can perhaps be compared to the baptism of the proselytes. The Jews would introduce a man into the people of Israel by a baptism. And so also the baptism of the Baptist placed all those who underwent it into the true posterity of Abraham (Mt. 3:8), the remnant of Israel who would be rescued from the wrath of God (Mt. 3:7.10) and await the Messiah. It was administered to each person only once in view of repentance and pardon (Mk. 1:4). It underlined and gave visible expression to the repentance. A confession of sins followed (as it seems after the baptism), or the baptism implied the confession of sins and signaled an effort at a definitive conversion. John insisted on moral purity with the publicans and soldiers (Lk. 3:10-14). With modern theological terms we would say, this baptism was a sacramental, not a sacrament, giving to an extent forgiveness of sins, but more by the repentance than by the rite itself.

Thus the baptism was only provisional, a baptism of water which was preparatory to the Messianic baptism in the Holy Spirit (Mk. 1:8) which would give the new, divine life, the life in the Spirit. And since this baptism was a cleansing at

the same time, a fire, cleansing those who accepted it, burning those who would not accept it, Mt. 3:11 and Lk. 3:16 call it a baptism in Spirit and fire.

2. Thus it was an act of *humiliation* when Christ submitted himself to the baptism of John, placing himself among sinners, although he was without sin and could not sin. He is the Lamb of God who thus takes upon himself the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29,36). If we assume with Joachim Jeremias (article *arnion* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. I, p. 339) that John spoke Aramaic and used the Aramaic word *talja'*, then this phrase could mean: Here is the lamb, here is the servant of the Lord (*talja'* can mean both: lamb and servant). Christ as the Servant of Yahweh of whom Isaiah speaks, especially Deutero Isaiah in his Servant of Yahweh songs, especially 53:7,11,12, takes upon himself the sins of mankind, atones for them, suffering quietly like a lamb.

3. The meaning of the symbolic act of submitting to the baptism of John as taking upon himself the sins of mankind by placing himself among sinners becomes therefore clear by the voice that comes from heaven: "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests" (Mk. 1:11). This reminds of Is. 42:1: "Here is my servant, my chosen one, whom I uphold." The Hebrew name *ebed* = servant, is in the Greek Septuagint often translated with *pais* which can mean servant and son (in Greek: *doulos* and *hyjos*). The Servant of Yahweh, which lastly is Jesus Christ, by being willing to be a slave, a slave, a servant till his vicarious suffering for the sins of mankind becomes the beloved Son of the Father, the son of God in power as St. Paul puts it in Rom. 1:4 by his resurrection. Son as such he has been from all eternity. If Mark (and Matthew and Luke, following him) opts for the translation *hyjos*, son, and not *doulos*, he stresses the first view of the Servant as we will see in the second part of the homily, the greatness of the Son. But it seems he did not want to exclude that vicarious suffering of the Servant which is more outlined in the fourth Servant of Yahweh Song, in Is. 52:13-53:12, whereas in the first Servant of Yahweh Songs, in Is. 42:1-7, to which the voice from heaven clearly refers, nothing is said about his suffering.

Mark makes this first part of Christ's humiliation short, as if Christ hardly touched the water. He comes out of the water *immediately* (the famous *euthys* which occurs forty-

two times in Mark out of fifty-four occurrences in the whole New Testament). There is no confession of sins. Mark is more interested in the second part.

I. 1. Immediately the proclamation and revelation of Christ as Son of God begins. A voice from heaven, the Father, is heard: "You are my beloved Son, on you my favor rests" (Mk. 1:11). [This reminds us of and fulfills Is. 42:1: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one, with whom I am pleased." Whoever that mysterious Servant in the mind of Deuterio Isaiah was, Christ is the beloved Son of the Father in the fullest sense, in whom the Father is well pleased. He and the Father are one. The Father expresses himself fully in the Son. And here for the first time this revelation is made public. In the gospel of Mark and Luke it looks as if this is revealed only to Jesus alone. He alone hears the voice: "You are my beloved Son". But in Matthew this revelation must have been available also for others, at least the Baptist: "This is my beloved Son."

2. And the Holy Spirit descends on Christ like a dove" (Mk. 1:10). This fulfills Is. 42:1: "Upon (him) I have put my spirit." Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 1:35) and thus Our Blessed Lady gave birth to Christ the God-man; she is the mother of God, the *theotokos*. Thus from the first moment of his earthly life Christ was full of the Holy Spirit, more than any other man of God, called by God, more than any prophet, who were in a special way men of the Spirit.

At his baptism in the Jordan the descending Spirit invests the Lord for his Messianic career. Thus the prophecy of Is. 11:2 is fulfilled: "The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding, a spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the Lord, and his delight shall be the fear of the Lord." Now Christ can start his career as Messiah, which in general is a career of preaching the good news.

That the Lord acts as Messiah under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is often expressed in the gospel. Just to mention one or the other incidence: The Holy Spirit throws Christ in the desert that he should be tested by the devil and by his victory conquer him (Mk. 1:12 uses the strong expression *ekballei*: he throws him out into the desert.) — Luke mentions explicitly that Jesus starts his teaching in the power of the Holy Spirit: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Lk. 4:14). Then Jesus goes to the synagogue in Nazareth and reads from Is.

61:1ff) : "The spirit of the Lord is upon me... He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor". And Christ concludes: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk. 4:21). It is true, Christ preaches, full of the Holy Spirit.

3. Christ's endowment with the Holy Spirit is therefore in the first place an investment for preaching the good news. The Messiah (in Is. 42) is not only and not so much described concerning what he is in himself but what he is for others. Isaiah describes this preaching and the result and effect of preaching with many similes. We will see Christ's public activity unfolded in the course of the ecclesiastical year. Thus we can make it short here in this homily, where we concentrate on the first epiphany of Christ, his first manifestation as Son of God:

a. The Servant will be a teacher (Is. 42:4a). Thus, far there was nobody telling people clearly what to do. That time of silence and uncertainty will be over.

b. In particular the Servant will be a redeemer of prisoners and he will make the blind see (42:7). In the fullest sense this refers to spiritual freedom from the slavery of sin and means light of the word of God.

c. This teaching, this light is for Jews and Gentiles alike (42:6).

FEAST OF THE SANTO NIÑO

FEAST PROPER TO THE PHILIPPINES

(January 17, 1982)

It is said that when Ferdinand Magellan discovered Cebu in April 1521, he gave a statuette of the Santo Niño to the native queen Juana as her baptismal gift at the mass baptism of natives, led by King Humabon. This became slowly the oldest religious image of the Philippines and formed the center of a chapel, then a church which in 1965 became the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño in Cebu. On the third Sunday in January each year the fiesta of the Señor Santo Niño is celebrated which in the course of the years was extended to a Feast Proper for the Philippines. With the image, the beginning of Christianity in the country is connected.

The liturgy of today tells us: A Son is given to us (first reading), a child and yet the king of peace and almighty God. God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings from heaven in Jesus (second reading). He who does not accept the kingdom of heaven like a child will not enter it (gospel). The main message, therefore, is: Great is a person not by lording it over people (cf. Mt. 20:25), not in glorifying in one's own power, but in being little (as the Lord) and caring for the little ones.

The first and second reading are the same in cycle A, B, and C. Only the gospel is different in each year. But even this year's gospel is a parallele report or a doublet of last year's gospel (Mt. 18:1-5.10), and thus the underlying idea is the same, too. Since the first reading was explained in detail last year, here follows only a short summary.

FIRST READING: ISAIAH 9:1-6

This is the same reading as in the first Mass at Christmas which we saw Christmas 1980. When western, eastern and northern provinces of Israel were transformed into Assyrian provinces during the two campaigns of Tiglath-pileser III in 734 and 732, Isaiah elicited faith in the hope of his people by an oracle of salvation (Is. 8:23-9:6): (1) There will come a change for the better in the future (8:23). (2) People will walk in light again (9:1-2). (3) A kingdom of peace shall be inaugurated (9:3-4). (4) The savior king will be enthroned (9:5). He will be (a) *Wonder-Counselor*, (b) *God-Hero (Mighty God)*, (c) *Father-Forever*, (d) *Prince-of-Peace*. (5) The new king will rule as a second David.

Today's liturgy stresses the aspect: A Son is given to us Christ, although being God-Almighty and king of peace, became a little child.

SECOND READING: EPHESIANS 1:3-6.15-18

The Apostle opens his doctrinal part (Eph. 1:3-3:21) where he speaks about the mystery of the recapitulation of Jews and Gentiles in Christ by telling us that this mystery to make all men members of God's family was conceived by God from all eternity (Eph. 1:3-14). That means in particular: (1) We are chosen; we all, not only the Jews. And this choice is bountiful, since God blesses us with every blessing anybody can look for.

The purpose of the choice is to make us holy and blameless, to set us apart, to make us different (Eph. 1:3-4). (2) In concrete, God's plan consists in making us adopted sons (1:5-6). (3) The Apostle thanks God for the faith of his readers and asks him to give them wisdom and insight in God's plan. After all, we must think our way to God; unexamined religion has no worth.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: MK. 10:13-16

Jesus spoke against ambition when the apostles were discussing among themselves who would be the greatest (Mk. 9:33-37). In Mt. 18:1-5, it could look as if the reason for the discussion was the fact that Jesus singled out Peter by paying the temple tax for him (Mt. 17:24-27). In both cases, Jesus took a child, placed it in the middle of the Apostles and told them: "Whoever accepts such a child in my name accepts me (so in Mt., Mk. and Lk.).

Mt. 18:3, however, adds a sentence which we would expect in this context as directed against ambition: "Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom." This sentence, Mk. 10:15 and Lk. 18:17 bring in another context: Children are brought to Jesus and he is asked to bless them. The Apostles consider this request a bother for the master and want to send the people away. The Lord, however, insists in seeing and blessing the children for the kingdom of heaven belongs to people like these children. And then Jesus adds: "Whoever does not accept the reign of God like a little child shall not take part in it" (Mk. 10:15; Lk. 18:17). Only Mt. 18:4 adds: "Whoever makes himself lowly, becoming like this child, is of greater importance in that heavenly reign." Thus it is clear: to heaven one can go only without (wrong) ambition. And furthermore, great is the one who humbles himself in his own imagination as a child is (it does not have to and does not make itself lowly).

HOMILY

BEING GREAT BY BECOMING LITTLE AND CARING FOR THE LITTLE ONES

I. Ever since his resurrection Christ goes on living. He is seated at the right hand of the Father for all eternity as Lord,

and that means as a fully grown up man. Thus, whenever we pray to him and through him to the Father, we pray to him as the grown-up person.

2. But human as we are, and limited in our understanding, as we are, we also like to meditate on the different stages of Christ's life: his childhood, his hidden life in Nazareth, his public life, his passion, and his resurrection. This is one meaning of the liturgical year. When we celebrate the different stages of Christ's life on the different feasts of the liturgical year, we believe that this particular mystery (stage) of Christ's life is "in some way made present" and "we are enabled to lay hold on it and become filled with (its) saving grace" (Const. on the Liturgy, art. 102).

3. Different people and different religious congregations go even further and venerate Christ all their life under one particular aspect: St. Therese of the Infant of Jesus took the veneration of the Infant Jesus as the starting point for her "Little Way", and the Passionists preach "Christ crucified" (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23). But for both, this was and is only a matter of accent. Stressing one particular angle of Christ's life we see all phases as one unity and directed to Christ as he now and in all eternity.

4. If, therefore, Filipinos have been quoted as venerating much the "Santo Niño" and "Santo Entierro" (Christ Interred), the tragic victim on the cross or in the tomb, it does not (or at least it should not) mean that the historical grown-up Christ is unknown to them.

5. In the time of the discovery of the Philippines, which was a time of some strong political empires and kings and discoverers, Christ was venerated under a statue of a child (the Santo Niño of Cebu is one representation among many others in the sixteenth century) to make clear: Real greatness consists not in lording it over somebody, but in being little as Jesus was and in caring for the little ones.

6. Great is a man who becomes a child as Christ did. This is most clearly expressed in Phil. 2:6-11:

Though he was in the form of God,
he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at.

Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men... accepting even death on the cross.

Because of this God highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name above every other name... so that all proclaim: Jesus Christ is Lord.

Although Jesus is Son of God from all eternity, fully God as the Father, he divested himself, as it were, of his divinity (if that were possible) and became man. He just looked so human that one could detect his divinity only with eyes of faith. The Incarnation was an act of humility. And Christ continued this act of humility all the way till his crucifixion on the cross. But just because of this great act of humility, the Father exalted Christ and installed him as Lord (as he himself is), seating Christ at the right hand of the Father.

7. We are great if we become like children also.

a. In time of Christ, children were growing up in an authoritarian society, where grown-ups had everything to say and children had to shut up. They just had to follow orders. Thus the expression "to become like children" means: to consider oneself as unimportant as children were held in public at that time.

The same idea that only grown-ups are important, but not children is expressed in the genealogy of the patriarchs in Gen. 5:1-32. The Priestly Author (P) gives these patriarchs a great age of a little less than thousand years (thousand year would have been too perfect). They are venerable because of their old age and thus their experience. Children have nothing of this kind.

b. A child is not so much humble as dependent. And since it knows it depends for everything on his parents and educators it acts accordingly, and this is humility after all. It does not throw itself into the foreground of attention. Only misguided parental ambition can try to make a child an exhibitionist. Inasmuch as a child is concerned, it would prefer stand-back. It is embarrassed by publicity. A childlike grownup will shun the limelight and will not think in terms of pride and prestige.

c. This awareness of being dependent makes a child *open* and *trusting*. By and large it confides in people. For a child there are no bad people. A child easily makes friends with

everybody, even with strangers. Children do not have the prejudices of grownups as we see it in the case of racial segregation and any other form of national tension and any form of distrust. When children are young, they believe that their parents are right. Only when they grow up do they slowly discover that this is not always true. And it is one of the greatest worries of parents if they see that children slowly get more and more doubts and even consider their parents old-fashioned and hopeless to talk with.

A children grownup has that openness and trust in God. He accepts his dependency upon God. God has given us our life which is the most important good we could get. He will give us also the less important things in life: the food to sustain our life and the clothes to put on: Christ tells us: "Do not worry about your livelihood, what you are to eat or drink or use for clothing. Is not life more than food? Is not the body more valuable than clothes" (Mt. 6:25).

d. We are all a little stubborn. But by and large children obey easily. They are not yet looking for independent jobs.

A childlike grownup will work at this obedience toward God.

e. We all can bear grudges and do not easily forget an injustice or an offense done to us. But usually children can easily forget and thus forgive unfair treatment.

Can we forget and forgive as easily?

8. We are great if we *care for children*, for the little ones.

a. This can mean the children in the physical sense. We see in them Christ. And thus we teach them, satisfy their physical needs, wash their clothes, bind their little cuts, spend our time with them, play with them. In that sense mothers, nurses and teachers are greatest.

b. We are for children when we look after those with childlike attitude, the little ones, those who are not aggressive and self-assertive, the quiet and humble people, those who do not use their elbows.

c. In Mt. 18, Jesus tells his apostles that greatness consists in looking after the little ones. That means in Mt. 18:5-9 to look after those who have gone astray. This sentence is the middle sentence of a chiasmic structure, a structure where the first sentence corresponds to the last, the second to the last, etc.

The structure reads:

- a. See that you never despise one of these *little ones*.
- b. I assure you, their angels in heaven constantly behold my *heavenly Father's* face.
- c. What is your thought on this: A man owns a hundred sheep and one of them *wanders away*.
- d. will he not leave the *ninety-nine* out on the hills and
- e. *go in search of the stray?*
- d'. If he succeeds in finding it, believe me he is happier about this one than about the *ninety-nine*
- c. that did not *wander away*.
- b. Just so, it is no part of your *heavenly Father's* plan that
- a'. a single one of these *little ones* shall ever come to grief.

As Jesus looked after the lost sheep and brought them home so we shall look after those who err because they are small and make mistakes, often more out of weakness than out of malice.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (January 24, 1982)

There are thirty-four Sundays outside of the Christmas and Easter Cycle, called Sundays in Ordinary Time or Sundays throughout the Year. The first two are taken over by the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord, and the Feast of the Sto. Niño. The first group of these Sundays ends with the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Lent and Eastertide then interrupt the series, which begins again after the Feast of the Blessed Trinity and continues until the thirty-fourth Sunday = the Solemnity of Christ the King, which is the Sunday before the First Sunday of Advent.

Epistle and Gospel texts are arranged for semi-continuous reading so that we can appreciate the contents of the books as clearly as possible. The Old Testament passages harmonize with the Gospel theme-wise. There is no attempt at continuity,

nor is always one book at a time taken. The Epistle usually is intended to be independent of the first reading and the Gospel. Similarities occur, but are coincidental.

The theme of today is: Be converted and believe! Turn in your thinking and believe in the gospel (gospel)! Turn from your evil ways (first reading)! The apostle tell us to live as free men: the married as if he were not married, the owner as if he owned nothing, the rejoicing and the sad men as if they were not affected at all.

FIRST READING: JONAH 3:1-5.10

The Book of Jonah was written by an unknown author ca. 450 B.C., some time after the return from exile as a kind of satire to ridicule the narrowmindedness of certain Jews who acted as if salvation were only for the Jews and pagans should go to hell. There (so the story goes) was a "prophet" Jonah who was a "prophet" was called by God to speak about God's universality of love and providence and thus preaching about conversion to the people in Niniveh, the great capital of Israel's enemies so that they could be saved, after all.

Jonah, however in his narrowmindedness does not want to give the Ninivites the chance of conversion by his preaching. Thus, he buys a ship ticket to Spain instead of going to the East. But God has the longer breath. He sends a storm which makes all the people on the ship conclude that it must have originated because of the sin of a passenger on the ship. When everybody is praying for the calming of the storm, Jonah is sleeping. When he is caught, he admits that he is fleeing from God and that the storm has come because of his sin. Thus upon his own advice he is thrown into the sea and swallowed by a big fish (ad the story) and the storm ceases. For the first time Jonah prays, prays that God may save him (he who did not want that the Ninivites should be saved; what a nice "prophet"!). God answers Jonah's and the fish spews Jonah upon the shore.

Here our reading sets in: The Lord tells Jonah to finally go to Niniveh to preach penance. Jonah does and the (for him surprising) result is that the Ninivites do penance and thus are saved.

This, however makes Jonah only angry with God, for Jonah still wants all pagans to be lost. With a small incident God shows Jonah how unjustified his anger is: In the scorching heat Jonah takes shelter under a gourd plant. But during night the plant dies because of a worm, and Jonah is without shade. So he laments over the lost plant. God concludes: "Should I not be more concerned with people, the living Ninivites, than you are with a small insignificant plant" (Jonah 4:11)!

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:29-31

In chapter seven of the First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks about marriage and virginity. Marriage is good and allowed, it is indissoluble. But inasmuch as the apostle is concerned he wishes that all would remain celibate as he does. For the rest, we all shall live in such a way that we are not attached to anything, neither to the married nor to the single life, neither to fullness or want, neither to joy or sorrow. We are living in the eschatological time: The Lord may come any time for his parousia. Thus we must live in such a way that we are ready for him any time. This is in a particular way the intention of the celibate, but not only his.

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: MARK 1:14-20

After the preaching of the Baptist (Mk. 1:1-8), the baptism of Jesus (Mk. 1:9-11); and his temptations (Mk. 1:12-13) the Lord starts his preaching career in Galilee (Mk. 1:14-15). From Jn. 3:24, we know that Jesus preached for some time at the Jordan during the time of the Baptist's activity. Mark acts as if Jesus would start preaching only in Galilee, contrary to Jewish expectations according to which the Messiah would start preaching Judaea (*Tanchuma* to Num. 2:2). Thus Matthew (Mt. 4:15-17), who follows Mark, feels the need to justify this preaching of Jesus in Galilee by referring to the prophecy of Is. 8:23-9:1, which is fulfilled, as we saw last year on this Sunday. The Baptist's preaching prepared the people for the preaching of Christ; and as he has been handed over, Jesus later on will be handed over.

Jesus proclaims the good news: "The time is fulfilled. The reign of God is at hand. Reform your lives and believe in the good news!" When kings were arriving the good news consisted in the information that a king would come or be enthroned.

The good news of the New Testament consists in the fact that the eschatological time has come, the time of God's rule. And the endtime has come and thus God's rule because Christ is here. He is the good news and in his person the rule of God starts. No wonder, we have to change our lives, by placing Christ in the center of our life.

Jesus then goes on and finds two pairs of brothers at work: Peter and Andrew throwing a casting net into the sea from the shore (which shows that they are poorer than John and James who have a dragnet, operated from a cutter, and they also have hired servants), John and James who are mending their nets. Since the first is done during the day, the latter during the night, the two incidents could hardly have taken place at the same time. Mark composes them to make a theological unity of Christ's call: When he calls, the apostles follow immediately. If we take the report of John in addition, it would seem that Jesus called the four apostles first at the Jordan and gave them some time and called them again in Galilee to follow him definitely. Mark, however, cares for the theology of the call: When Christ calls, we have to follow.

There are as such two themes in today's gospel: Conversion and call to discipleship. But in the context of the liturgy, together with the repentance of the Ninivites, the theme of conversion is predominant: The disciples have heard the call "*metanoete*" and place Christ in the center of their life by following him.

HOMILY

METANOETE — PLACE CHRIST IN THE CENTER OF YOUR LIFE!

1. With today's gospel the actual preaching of Jesus begins. Mark presents a summary and thus underlines the main ideas of what gospel is. Christ comes when the *time is fulfilled*.

a. This is the *kairos* (Mk. 1:15) which God has planned from all eternity. It leads to a climax, the time of Christ. It is not the cosmic time which repeats itself in many annual rings and becomes at times dull and monotonous because it repeats itself. Rather, "when the designated time had come (lit.: "when the time was fulfilled") God sent forth his Son

born of a woman, born under the law, to deliver from the law those who were subjected to it, so that we might receive our status as adopted sons" (Gal. 4:4) Paul tells us.

b. God has prepared the preaching of Christ by the preaching of the Baptist. Humanly speaking, John has failed. He has been arrested. But this "being arrested" means literally "after John had been handed over (*paradothēnai*), Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming God's good news" (Mk. 1:14). Isaiah had already foretold that the Servant of Yahweh, who in the last analysis is Christ himself, would be handed over (*paredothē*) to death and through his suffering justify many (that means all) (Is. 53:11). Thus even this feature was prepared by the suffering and death of the messenger of the Servant of Yahweh, the Baptist.

c. And another small feature is a fulfillment, i.e., fact that Jesus starts preaching in *Galilee*, not in Judea as people expected the Messiah to do: "When the messenger of good tidings comes, it shall be announced first in Judaea" (*Tanchuma* to Num. 2:2). Matthew (Mt. 4:13-16) sees the prophecy of Is. 8:23-9:1) fulfilled: "He (Christ) left Nazareth and went down to Capernaum... to fulfill what had been said through Isaiah the prophet: 'Land of Zebulon... heathen of Galilee: A people living in darkness has seen a great light'."

2. "*The reign of God is at hand*" (Mk. 1:15), is the main content of the good news. The Jews had been looking forward to the time when God would fully rule over the Jews and the pagans as well. The ideal governmental form for an Israelite was a theocracy. What they had now was far from it. All Palestine was subjected to the Romans, or to Roman proteges. God was not ruling.

Whenever a new (human) king was installed, it was usually announced to people. And this was called gospel = good news. But here now was *the* gospel, *the* good news: The reign (rule) of God is at hand.

The reign of God is at hand because Christ is here. He is the main content of the gospel. One can equate him with "reign of God" and with "gospel".

3. The conclusion is: "Reform (*metanoete*) your life and believe in the good news" (Mk. 1:15)! *Metanoein* is not just an exterior act of penance. It rather means: change your thinking! Make an about face! Thus far people have gone into

this direction, from now on they have to make a turn of 180 degrees, going exactly in the opposite direction. So far people were interested in their own affairs, in a more or less selfish way. From now on, as soon as they start rethinking, God has to become the center of their thinking, and here in concrete: Christ shall take the center place in our heart.

a. The Ninivites were in many ways considered as the great enemies of the Israelites. After all, how many Jews had to go into the exile of Assyria. And yet, in this didactic story of the Book of Jonah, God is even willing to forgive this city if people are willing to repent, if they are willing to place God in the center of their thinking. Such a change is so enormous, almost constricting for Jonah that he cannot believe in it. And yet, the Ninivites reform their lives as soon as Jonah tells them to do so, much to the surprise and even regret of Jonah.

b. After all, he is supposed to be a prophet, a messenger between God and people, who shall tell the truth, even if it hurts. But, since God is a God of mercy, he shall even more tell about God's mercy and love for all. And this Jonah does not want to do. He has not undergone a conversion himself yet and does not fully do it, not even at the end. Claiming to be a prophet, he is in reality quite selfish and tries to make plans for God: Salvation shall be only for the Jews, not for the Gentiles. He flees from God, which is the opposite of *metanoëin*, of placing God in the center of his life. He does not pray. How could he honestly face God in prayer. It would be a mockery. When all pray for the safety of the ship, Jonah sleeps. Probably he only acts as if. There is a small amount of generosity when he offers himself to be thrown into the ocean to save the life of the other crew members. And he finally manages to pray in the belly of the fish. But it is more a prayer all people still manage who otherwise have never prayed, i.e., when they are in dire need. God shall save him who did not want that God would save the Ninivites! And when he finally goes and preaches repentance and the Ninivites are saved. Jonah is still not on the side of God, but is still the selfish man he always was. He demonstrates, what penance must not be.

4. The first four apostles: Peter and Andrew, James and John have heard the call "*metanoëite*" also. Christ is here and Christ must become the center of their life.

a. That means — if we also take the gospel of John — that they have to leave their former master, John the Baptist. The gospel does not tell us how hard it was for them. But there were at least some who did not want to make that change as we

see in Jn. 3:22-30: When they see that Jesus has more success than John, these disciples of John become jealous. One can only hope that the unselfishness of the Baptist made an impact on them, after all, so that they also found the way to Christ: "He must increase, while I must decrease" (Jn. 3:30).

b. To place Christ in the center of their life means for the apostles also to leave their former profession, their livelihood. For Peter and Andrew it is a casting net in addition, for James and John even more: a cutter and dragnet. But for all four it is the way of life they know. What the call of Christ implies they have to see for themselves.

c. *Metaneoio* implies for the apostles also to leave their father (the mother is not mentioned; but understood) and their hired servants. In short, they leave everything.

5. The apostles are able to place Christ in the center of their life because they experience him as the one who *calls*, the great personality with authority, the one with whom they fall in love, the one whom they cannot resist. He does not teach them a system of theology, he does not explain complicated theories, but he calls them to follow him, to be with him, to be like him. Only that makes their conversion complete and genuine. And nothing that falls short of this will do.

6. Only if somebody has fallen in love with Christ can he also make others fall in love with the Lord, can he become a fisher of men.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

(January 31, 1981)

Jesus is the Prophet foretold by Moses (first reading), the "Holy One of God" (gospel) and therefore teaches with authority (gospel), that even demons obey him (gospel). In the independent theme of the second reading Paul tells us that celibacy is superior to the married life because the celibate is single-minded and totally dedicated to Christ.

FIRST READING: DEUTERONOMY 18:15-20

Whatever the exact reality was, which we will never know: When God made his covenant with the Israelites on Mt. Sinai and gave them the ten commandments, he spoke to the Israelites face to face (Deut. 5:4) from the midst of the fire. Thus the

Israelites begged to be spared the necessity of hearing the divine voice directly. Moses was to listen to it and then give Israel an account of it. Yahweh granted this request and thus the prophetic office of mediator came into being (cf. Deut. 5:24ff; Ex. 20:19ff).

God would give the Jews a prophet like Moses. From then on Moses was the first in a long row of prophets. A prophet speaks in the name of the Lord. His words are God's words. A prophet must speak what God tells him, nothing more, nothing less. Whoever hears a prophet, hears God. On the other hand, no prophet must dare say anything God has not told him to say. Otherwise God will punish him.

Although this prophet in Deut. 18:15 fits any prophet, soon the prediction was interpreted as a prediction that God would send one final prophet, the eschatological prophet before the end (Jn. 1:21). Some understood Jesus to be this eschatological prophet (Jn. 6:14; 7:40). Jesus understood himself though not in a very explicit manner, to be the last messenger before its consummation in proclaiming the dawning of God's kingdom. The early Christian community clearly saw Christ as this final prophet (Acts 3:22; where our text of Deut. 18:1.19 is quoted), as we see from the speech of Peter after the healing of the lame man.

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:32-35

If we want to meditate on the greatness and beauty of marriage, and this we have to do in order to put celibacy in the right perspective, we have to turn to Gen. 1:27; 2:18-25 and to Eph. 5:22-33. Then we see that marriage is not only for those who do not want to burn or are not able to be continent as perhaps 1 Cor. 7:2.9 could suggest. This we have to say for those to whom 1 Cor. 7 apparently does not picture marriage positively enough. One can clearly see, however, Paul's heart is with celibacy, and he would want that all would remain celibate as he is.

(1) An unmarried person is free from all worries. He or she is exclusively available for the Lord, single-minded. A celibate person only wants to please Christ, wants to be exclusively his.

(2) A married person, however is occupied with many things and thus worried. His or her heart is divided since

the marriage partner has to get much attention and also the children, and thus it can happen that the Lord has to take second place.

Celibacy is a higher state (v. 7.25.38). But of course, it requires a charisma which not every Christian has (v. 7).

READING OF THE GOOD NEWS: MARK 1:21-28

Jesus has called his first apostles (Mk. 1:16-20). Now he starts his first preaching. Thus he goes to the synagogue in Capernaum. According to Mt. 4:13 he had moved to Capernaum for good. And if Lk. 4:16-30 is not only a theological overture, telling us that Jesus came to his own but his own received him not (cf. Jn. 1:11) but comes close to the historical reality when Jesus moved to Capernaum after he had been rejected in Nazareth.

This had some advantages. He could stay in the house of Peter, and Capernaum was an important city with good caravan connections, a border city of Herod Antipas against Philip, a custom place (Mk. 2:14) and a military post (Mt. 8:5).

Every Jewish community with at least ten families by law had to have a synagogue (whereas there was only one Temple, in Jerusalem). Thus the impact of synagogues was greater than of the Temple. In the Temple, worship and sacrifices were offered, in the synagogue. (1) prayers were said, (2) the word of God read, and (3) the exposition of it given. The ruler of the synagogue was responsible for the arrangement of the services. The minister (*chazzan*) had to take the scrolls of Scripture in and out of the containers, clean the synagogue, and he would blow the silver trumpet for people to know the beginning of the Sabbath.

Since there was no permanent preacher or teacher in the synagogue, the ruler of the synagogue would and could approach anybody whom he judged competent to give the explanation to the particular text of Scripture, read in the synagogue. Thus Jesus could explain his message, as it is reported several times in the gospel.

Mark here gives only a summary which we find in Mt. 7:29 at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: In opposition to the Scribes, Jesus taught with authority. The content of his preaching goes ahead (Mk. 1:14-15: The kingdom of God is at

hand. Reform your lives and believe in the gospel!) That he preaches with authority we can see from the reaction of the hearers.

That Jesus speaks with authority is demonstrated also by the casting out of a demon. Even demons have to obey Christ and he does his exorcism with a simple word, not a long and complicated formula as others would try to do.

HOMILY

AND JESUS SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY

1. When Jesus started preaching in the synagogue of Capernaum for the first time, people had heard many speakers before. Some were good speakers, others were poor and many ranged in between. But when they heard Jesus, they right away sensed the difference: Here was somebody who did not speak as their Rabbis taught. Jesus spoke with authority.

2. There are different kinds of authority with which somebody can speak. There is first the authority of a wise person e.g., of a mother who labored all her life and then coined her life experience in some short sayings. A Jewish mother may have told her children: "Better a little with virtue, than a large income with injustice" (Proverbs 16:8). And after some time they found out how right she was. On another occasion she would tell her children: "Pride goes before disaster, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18), when they had to admit that it does not pay to be proud and arrogant. And when they had to work hard and yet did not have as many commodities as the one or other neighbor, father would tell them: "Better a dry crust with peace than a house full of feasting with strife" (Prov. 17:1). And how many young men and young ladies looking for a friend in their life could rely on the experience of their parents or someone else who had gone through a long stretch of their life already:

Let your acquaintances be many,
but one in a thousand your confidant.

When you gain a friend, first test him,
and be not too ready to trust him.

For one sort of friend is a friend when it suits him,
but he will not be with you in time of distress.

Another is a friend who becomes an enemy,
and tells of the quarrel to your shame.

Another is a friend, a boon companion
who will not be with you when sorrow comes.

When things go well, he is your other self,
and lords it over your servants.

But if you are brought low, he turns against you
and avoids meeting you.

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter;
he who finds one finds a shelter.

A faithful friend is beyond price,
no sum can balance his worth.

A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy,
such as he who fears God finds" (Sir. 6:6-17)

Such authority is ready to follow because it is carried by experience. But the authority, on the other hand, is only as great as the great experience goes.

3. Greater than the authority of an experienced man is the authority of a *prophet*. He does not just convey his life experience. Whatever he says is God's word. And thus we find no expression more often in any book of the prophets than "the word of the Lord is this". And then follows the word of God.

a. All prophets are aware that their main task is to deliver the message of God. This is made clear to several of them already in their vocation vision by which they are called.

(1) Isaiah sense that he is a "man of unclean lips, living among a people of unclean lips" (Is. 6:5). Thus one of the seraphim touches symbolically his lips with an ember, taken from the altar, and empowers Isaiah to speak the word of God. (Is. 6:7).

(2) *Jeremiah* objects that he is too young and cannot speak God's words. Thereupon God extends his hand and touches the mouth of Jeremiah, (Jer. 1:9), saying: "I place my words in your mouth" (Jer. 1:9).

(3) *Ezekiel* has to eat (symbolically) a scroll, written on both sides (a scroll normally is written only on one side), so much is there to communicate with God's word.

b. And thus a prophet speaks with God's authority. His word is God's word. Whoever hears the prophet hears God. Whoever does not listen to a prophet, refuses to listen to God. The personal experience or education of a prophet is of no importance. God takes them from all states of life. Thus we find at the beginning of any oracle usually the phrase: "Hear the word of the Lord", or "the word of the Lord is this." So in Is. 1:19ff we read: "Hear the word of the Lord princes of Sodom! Listen to the instruction of our God, people of Gomorrah! What care I for the number of your sacrifices? says the Lord. 'I have had enough of whole-burnt rams and fat of fatlings... When you come in to visit me, who asks these things of you? Bring no more worthless offerings... Wash yourselves clean. Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good!'"

c. Jeremiah tells his fellow Israelites not to worship idols. But this admonition is not just his but God's word; as we read in Jer. 10:1ff: "'Hear the word the Lord speaks to you, O house of Israel! Thus says the Lord: 'Learn not the customs of the nations... For the cult idols of the nations are nothing wood cut from the forest.'"

4. If Jesus is a prophet, and as a matter of fact *the* prophet, the last and greatest prophet, as the gospel has explained Deut. 18:15, then he can also speak with the authority of a prophet. His word is God's word. But his word is actually more and he does not only speak with God's authority as a prophet does, he speaks with own authority because he is God.

a. Thus his authority is first contrasted with the authority of his Scribes. Their authority is as valid as they can quote other authors for a statement of Scripture or an explanation of a given passage. This explanation of Scripture by different Scribes and Rabbis was first done orally and collected and later put down in writing, the present Talmul. For most Jews it had the same authority as Scripture itself.

b. But when Jesus preached he did not explain Scripture texts by quoting other authors, backing up a given explanation or adding a new one. And this difference people sensed right away. He spoke with authority, i.e., with his own authority. This is in the last analysis what Mark by way of summary says and what Matthew unfolds in the Sermon on the Mount

which he sums up saying: "Jesus finished this discourse and left the crowds spellbound at his teaching. The reason was that he taught with authority and not like their scribes" (Mt. 7:28-29).

c. Thus Jesus can say that it is not enough to abstain from murder as it was told to their forefathers. Rather, real anger is tantamount to murder (Mt. 5:22).

d. In his own authority Christ tells us that abstention from adultery is not enough. Rather lustful looks (with the intention to sin is already adultery (Mt. 5:28).

e. Christ is not satisfied with swearing rightly. ~~To~~ forbids any swearing because it shows that we do not trust one another (Mt. 5:33-37).

f. Scribes had permitted retaliation. Jesus in own authority takes back this wrong concession. We must not retaliate and we must love our enemies. Only this is Christian (Mt. 5:39,44).

Nobody but Christ, the Son of God, the God-man could have such authority, because he and the Father are one (Jn. 10:30).

5. Since Christ spoke in own authority as God, he also could perform miracles in own authority. Today's gospel mentions the first miracle of the Lord in the second gospel. In the synagogue Jesus casts out a demon. The demon senses his opponent and wants to make him powerless by stating his name "Holy One of God" (Mk. 1:24). But the demon does not succeed with Lord, who with one simple word commands the impure spirit to leave the possessed man. And so it happens. Only Christ the God-man could speak with such authority.

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili Fratri RICHARDO VIDAL, Archiepiscopo Lipensi, electo Coadiutori cum iure sucessionis Archiepiscopi Caebuani, salutem et apostolicam Benedictionem. Qui experti scimus quantae difficultatis, laboris, negotii sit regere dioecesim, maxime si populo affluat, aequissimo semper animo auxilia ferimus iis Venerabilibus Fratribus, qui legitima quovis de causa id petant: iunctis enim viribus non modo laetae messis fructus multiplicantur, sed et animus erigitur sacrorum Antistitum, qui solet interdum curis nimis gravari. Qua re, cum Venerabilis Frater Noster, Julius S.R.E. Cardinalis Rosales, Archiepiscopus Caebuanus, non possit qua velit actuositate gregi consulere, atque idcirco Coadiutorem petierit cum iure sucessionis, Nos consilio petito a Venerabili Fratre Nostro S.R.E. Cardinali Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecto, bene fieri censuimus si te tali muneri destinaremus, utpote quem cognoverimus sive pietate, sive ingenio, sive usu rerum bene instructum. Quae cum ita sint, placet te, Venerabilis Frater, vinculo Sedis, Lipensis solum nominari per hasque Litteras renuntiari Coadiutorem cum iure sucessionis sacri Praesulis CAEBUANI, cui fidelis aderis, quem et adiuvabis qua diligentiore poteris ratione. Nempe iura tibi facimus oneraque imponimus quae per Litteras – Ecclesiae sanctae – describuntur, die sexto mensis Augusti datas, anno MDCCCCLXVI. Quod autem attinet ad fidei professionem atque ius iurandum fidelitatis erga Nos Successoresque Nostros, te ab iis iterandis eximimus contrariis nihil obstantibus. Neque abstinere possumus quin clerum populumque Caebuanum paterne hortemur, ut tibi olim Archiepiscopo suo diligentissime pareant, tamquam filii dilecti. Quibus omnibus hae Litterae Nostrae perlegantur in cathedrali templo diem festum agentibus. Ceterum, Venerabilis Frater, quamvis currentem stimulare videamur, haec tamen beati Augustini verba tibi meditando et in rem deducenda proponimus, brevia quidem, sed pulcherrima: – Ego nihil aliud sum, nisi servus vester per Jesum – Ps. 146, 16. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die tertio decimo mensis Aprilis, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo primo, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

✠ AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI
A Publicis Eccl. Negotiis

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI

Venerabili fratri Mariano Gaviola Garcés, hactenus Episcopo titulo Girbitano et Vicario Castrensi in Insulis Philippinis, electo Archiepiscopo Lipensi, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Cupientes ne diutius in ulla particulari Ecclesia Praesul desideretur qui ei praesit eamque moderetur, decernimus metropolitanae Ecclesiae Lipensi, cuius postremus sacrorum Antistes ad aliud destinatus est munus, nunc providendum esse. Nac de causa, raum habentes prudens consilium Venerabilis fratris Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti, de plenitudine potestatis Nostrae Apostolicae hasque per Litteraste, Venerabilis frater, ab omni quidem vinculo Ecclesiae titulo Girbitanae et a munere Vicarii Castrensis in Insulis Philippinis plane absolutum, ad memoratam Ecclesiam Lipensem transferimus eidemque Archiepiscopum praeficimus atque Pastorem, omnibus tibi factis iuribus impositisque officiis huic novo muneri tuo consentaneis. Te ab iteranda fidei professione atque a fidelitatis iureiurando iterum praestando eximentes, non tamen eximimus ab officio cavendi ut, cum in tuae archidioecesis possessionem veneris, in metropolitano illius templo hae Litterae Nostrae aliquo die festo de praecepto recitentur clero ac populo; a quibus ilico Nos petimus iustam in te reverentiam filiorumque obsequium atque pietatem. Te autem, Venerabilis frater, vehementer hortamur ne umquam cesses Dei misericordiam Christique Evangelium docere istos Lipenses dilectos filios, pro viribus et in omni sanctitate eo assidue spectans, ut omnes ü-perfidem, baptismum et adimpletionem mandatorum salutem consequantur — L.G., 24. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die tertio decimo mensis Aprilis, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo primo, Pontificatus Nostri tertio.

AUGUSTINUS CARD. CASAROLI
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GODEFRIDUS MARCIANI,
Proton. Apost.

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