

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

**SALVIFICI DOLORIS**

**John Paul II**

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DOCUMENT:  
INSTRUCTION ON CERTAIN ASPECTS  
OF THE "THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION"**

**Antonio Mabutas, D.D.**

**PROCLAMATION OF A MARIAN YEAR  
FOR THE PHILIPPINES**

**INDULT FOR USE OF ROMAN MISSAL  
OF 1962 ACCORDING TO THE JUDGMENT  
OF DIOCESAN BISHOP**

**Congregation for Divine Worship**

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**


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**EDITORIAL**

2 IS THE STRUGGLE FOUND WITHIN?

**FEATURES**

- John Paul II 3 SALVIFICI DOLORIS
- Joseph de Torre 43 THE FAMILY AND THE COMMON GOOD:  
A SCHOOL OF LOVE AND LIFE
- UST Social Research Center 58 THE RURAL ELDERLY:  
SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL  
CHARACTERISTICS

**CANON LAW**

- Wilfredo Paguio 68 THE DIOCESAN CURIA

**CASES AND INQUIRIES**

- Jose Ma. Tinoko, O.P. 77 A QUESTION OF EXCLAURATION
- Excelso Garcia, O.P. 81 DOUBTFUL CONCELEBRATION

**DOCUMENTATION**

- Antonio Mabutas, D.D. 83 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DOCUMENT:  
INSTRUCTION ON CERTAIN ASPECTS  
OF THE "THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION"
- 87 PROCLAMATION OF A MARIAN YEAR  
FOR THE PHILIPPINES
- Congregation for Divine  
Worship 88 INDULT FOR THE USE OF ROMAN MISSAL  
OF 1962 ACCORDING TO THE JUDGMENT  
OF DIOCESAN BISHOP
- Marcellus Rossetti 90 APPOINTMENT OF MSGR. ANTONIO TOBIAS

**HISTORY**

- Pablo Fernandez, O.P. 91 DOMINICAN TOWNS IN PANGASINAN

**HOMILETICS**

- Bernard LeFrois, S.V.D. 99 HOMILECTICAL NOTES

**MEDITATIONS FOR PRIESTS  
AND RELIGIOUS**

- Guillermo Tejon, O.P. 115 "MY HERITAGE" (OUR VOCATION)
-

## EDITORIAL

### **IS THE STRUGGLE FOUND WITHIN ?**

Groups — like families, parochial or diocesan organizations, religious communities, etc. — often find themselves facing difficult challenges or confronting conflict-situations. Now, how should members of these groups and other people concerned face conflict-situations is indeed a very important consideration.

The solutions to conflict-situations are as varied as the causes. The causes may be rooted in the misuse of authority, assumption of undue power, ambition, presumption, revenge, and many others. Whoever, therefore, has the obligation to bring out solution to any difficulty must also look for other factors.

More important than the external causes are the internal causes (unconscious and subconscious). An external conflict may be just a manifestation of an internal one. A poster carries this saying: *Madness! To fight outside ourselves when the real struggle is found within.*

It is not really difficult to point out the core of a conflict-situation. The following guidelines could help: see one's whole countenance; listen to one's language; find out personal values; review family background; discern attitudinal framework and be attentive even to one's bodily posture.

Hence, it is useless to pay attention only to external factors if one forgets the internal ones. We must discern the link between the external and the internal lest we miss the appropriate solution to a conflict-situation.

Head of families and of parochial, diocesan or religious bodies, as well as all persons concerned, should never miss the unconscious and the subconscious elements in personalities if they wish to have an in-depth grasp of any conflict-situation and face them squarely with appropriate solution.

And for the persons facing struggles—either from within or from without—they will be well-served to know the Christian meaning of suffering in the light of *Salvifici Doloris*.

FR. VICENTE CAJILIG, O.P.



## FEATURES

### On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering

# salvifici doloris

## I

### INTRODUCTION

1. Declaring the power of salvific suffering, the Apostle Paul says: "In my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is the Church".<sup>1</sup>

These words seem to be found at the end of the long road that winds through the suffering which forms part of the history of man and which is illuminated by the Word of God. These words have as it were the value of a final discovery, which is accompanied by joy. For this reason Saint Paul writes: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake".<sup>2</sup> The joy comes from the discovery of the meaning of suffering, and this discovery, even if it is most personally shared in by Paul of Tarsus who wrote these words, is at the same time valid for others. The Apostle shares his own discovery and rejoices in it because of all those whom it can help — just as it helped him — to understand the *salvific meaning of suffering*.

2. The theme of suffering — precisely under the aspect of this salvific meaning — seems to fit profoundly into the context of the Holy Year of the Redemption as an extraordinary Jubilee of the Church. And this circumstance, too, clearly favours the attention it deserves during this period. Independently of this fact, it is a universal theme that accompanies man at every point on earth: in a certain sense it co-exists with him in the world, and thus demands to be constantly reconsidered. Even though Paul, in the Letter to the Romans, wrote that "the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now",<sup>3</sup> even though man knows and is close to the sufferings of the animal world, nevertheless what we express by the word "suf-

<sup>1</sup> Col. 1:24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 8:22.

#### 4 BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

fering" seems to be particularly *essential to the nature of man*. It is as deep as man himself, precisely because it manifests in its own way that depth which is proper to man, and in its own way surpasses it. Suffering seems to belong to man's transcendence: it is one of those points in which man is in a certain sense "destined" to go beyond himself, and he is called to this in a mysterious way.

3. The theme of suffering in a special way demands to be faced in the context of the Holy Year of the Redemption, and this is so, in the first place, because the *Redemption* was accomplished *through the Cross of Christ*, that is, *through his suffering*. And at the same time, during the Holy Year of the Redemption we recall the truth expressed in the Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*: in Christ "every man becomes the way for the Church".<sup>4</sup> It can be said that man in a special fashion becomes the way for the Church when suffering enters his life. This happens, as we know, at different moments in life, it takes place in different ways, it assumes different dimensions: nevertheless, in whatever form, suffering seems to be, and is, almost *inseparable from man's earthly existence*.

Assuming then that throughout his earthly life man walks in one manner or another on the long path of the suffering, it is precisely on this path that the Church at all times — and perhaps especially during the Holy Year of the Redemption — should meet man. Born of the mystery of Redemption in the Cross of Christ, the Church has *to try to meet* man in a special way on the path of his suffering. In this meeting man "becomes the way for the Church", and this way is one of the most important ones.

4. This is the origin also of the present reflection, precisely in the Year of the Redemption: a meditation on suffering. Human suffering evokes *compassion*; it also evokes *respect* and, in its own way, *it intimidates*. For in suffering is contained the greatness of a specific mystery. This special respect for every form of human suffering must be set at the beginning of what will be expressed here later, by the deepest *need of the heart*, and also by the deep *imperative of faith*. About the theme of suffering these two reasons seem to draw particularly close to each other and to become one: the need of the heart commands us to overcome fear, and the imperative of faith — formulated, for example, in the words of Saint Paul quoted at the beginning — provides the content, in the name of which and by virtue

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Nos. 14; 18; 21; 22; AAS 71 (1979) 284 f: 304; 320; 323.

of which we dare to touch what appears in every man so intangible: for man, in his suffering, remains an intangible mystery.

## II

### THE WORLD OF HUMAN SUFFERING

5. Even though in its subjective dimension, as a personal fact contained within man's concrete and unrepeatable interior, suffering seems almost inexpressible and not transferable, at the same time in its objective reality, perhaps nothing else requires as much as does suffering to be dealt with, meditated upon, and conceived as an explicit problem; and that therefore basic questions be asked about it and the answers sought. It is evident that it is not a question here merely of giving a description of suffering. There are other criteria which go beyond the sphere of description, and which we must introduce when we wish to penetrate the world of human suffering.

*Medicine*, as the science and also the art of healing, discovers in the vast field of human sufferings *the best known area*, the one identified with greater precision and relatively more counterbalanced by the methods of "reaction" (that is, the methods of therapy). Nonetheless, this is only one area. The field of human suffering is much wider, more varied, and multi-dimensional. Man suffers in different ways, ways not always considered by medicine, not even in its most advanced specializations. Suffering is something which is *still wider than* sickness, more complex and at the same time still more deeply rooted in humanity itself. A certain idea of this problem comes to us from the distinction between physical suffering and moral suffering. This distinction is based upon the double dimension of the human being and indicates the bodily and spiritual element as the immediate or direct subject of suffering. In so far as the words "suffering" and "pain" can, up to a certain degree, be used as synonyms, *physical suffering* is present when "the body is hurting" in some way, whereas *moral suffering* is "pain of the soul". In fact, it is a question of pain of a spiritual nature, and not only of the "psychological" dimension of pain which accompanies both moral and physical suffering. The vastness and the many forms of moral suffering are certainly no less in number than the forms of physical suffering. But at the same time, moral suffering seems as it were less identified and less reachable by therapy.

## 6 BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

6. Sacred Scripture is a *great book about suffering*. Let us quote from the books of the Old Testament a few examples of situations which bear the signs of suffering, and above all moral suffering: the danger of death,<sup>5</sup> the death of one's own children<sup>6</sup> and, especially, the death of the firstborn and only son;<sup>7</sup> and then too: the lack of offspring,<sup>8</sup> nostalgia for the homeland,<sup>9</sup> persecution and hostility of the environment,<sup>10</sup> mockery and scorn of the one who suffers,<sup>11</sup> loneliness and abandonment;<sup>12</sup> and again: the remorse of conscience,<sup>13</sup> the difficulty of understanding why the wicked prosper and the just suffer,<sup>14</sup> the unfaithfulness and ingratitude of friends and neighbours;<sup>15</sup> and finally: the misfortunes of one's own nation.<sup>16</sup>

In treating the human person as a *psychological and physical "whole"*, the Old Testament often links "moral" sufferings with the pain of specific parts of the body: the bones,<sup>17</sup> kidneys,<sup>18</sup> liver,<sup>19</sup> viscera,<sup>20</sup> heart.<sup>21</sup> In fact one cannot deny that

<sup>5</sup> As Hezekiah experienced (cf. Is 38:1-3).

<sup>6</sup> As Hagar feared (cf. Gen. 15:16), as Jacob imagined (cf. Gen. 37:33-35), as David experienced (cf. 2 Sam. 19:1).

<sup>7</sup> As Anna, the mother of Tobias, feared (cf. Tób. 10:1-7); cf. also Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zac. 12:10.

<sup>8</sup> Such was the trial of Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:2), of Rachel (cf. Gen. 30:1), or of Anna, the mother of Samuel (cf. 1 Sam. 1:6-10).

<sup>9</sup> Such was the lament of the exiles in Babylon (cf. Ps. 137 136).

<sup>10</sup> Suffered, for example, by the Psalmist (cf. Ps. 22 [21]:17-21) or by Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 18:18).

<sup>11</sup> This was a trial for Job (cf. Job. 19:18; 30:1, 9), for some Psalmists (cf. Ps. 22 [21]:7-9; 42 [41]:11; 44 [43]:16-17), for Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 20:7), for the Suffering Servant (cf. Is. 53:3).

<sup>12</sup> Which certain Psalmists had to suffer again (cf. Ps. 22 [21]:2-3; 31 [30]:13; 38 [37]:12; 88 [87]:9, 19), Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 15:17) or the Suffering Servant (cf. 53:3).

<sup>13</sup> Of the Psalmist (cf. Ps. 51 [50]:5) of the witnesses of the sufferings of the Servant (cf. Is. 53:3-6), of the prophet Zechariah (cf. Zec. 12:10).

<sup>14</sup> This was strongly felt by the Psalmist (cf. Ps. 73 [72]:3-14), and Qoheleth (cf. Ec. 4:1-3).

<sup>15</sup> This was a suffering for Job (cf. Job. 10:19), for certain Psalmists (cf. Ps. 41 [40]:10; 55 [54]:13-15), for Jeremiah (cf. Jer. 20:10), while Sirach meditated on this misery (cf. Sir. 37:1-6).

<sup>16</sup> Besides numerous passages of *Lamentations*, cf. the laments of the Psalmists (cf. Ps. 44 [43]:10-17; 77 [76]:11; 89 [88]:51), or of the Prophets (cf. Is. 22:4; Jer. 4:8; 13:17; 14:17-18; Ezek. 9:8; 21-11-12); also cf. the prayers of Azariah (cf. Dan 3:31-40) and of Daniel (cf. Dan 9:16-19).

<sup>17</sup> For example Is. 38:13; Jer. 23:9; Ps. 31 [30]:10-11; Ps. 42 [41]:10-11.

<sup>18</sup> For example Ps. 73 [72]:21; Job. 16:13; Lam. 3:13.

<sup>19</sup> For example Lam. 2:11.

<sup>20</sup> For example Is. 16:11; Jer. 4:19; Job. 30:27; Lam. 1:20.

<sup>21</sup> For example 1 Sam. 1:8; Jer. 4:19; 8:18; Lam. 1:20, 22; Ps. 38 [37]:9, 11.



moral sufferings have a "physical" or somatic element, and that they are often reflected in the state of the entire organism.

7. As we see from the examples quoted, we find in Sacred Scripture an extensive list of variously painful situations for man. This varied list certainly does not exhaust all that has been said and constantly repeated on the theme of suffering by *the book of the history of man* (this is rather an "unwritten book"), and even more by the book of the history of humanity, read through the history of every human individual.

It can be said that man suffers whenever *he experiences any kind of evil*. In the vocabulary of the Old Testament, suffering and evil are identified with each other. In fact, that vocabulary did not have a specific word to indicate "suffering". Thus, it defined as "evil" everything that was suffering.<sup>22</sup> Only the Greek language, and together with it the New Testament (and the Greek translations of the Old Testament), use the verb " $\pi \propto \sigma \chi \omega$ " "I am affected by . . . , I experience a feeling, I suffer"; and, thanks to this verb, suffering is no longer directly identifiable with (objective) evil, but expresses a situation in which man experiences evil, and in doing so, becomes the subject of suffering. Suffering has indeed both a *subjective* and a *passive character* (from "patior"). Even when man brings suffering on himself, when he is its cause, this suffering remains something passive in its metaphysical essence.

This does not, however, mean that suffering in the psychological sense is not marked by a *specific "activity"*. This is in fact that multiple and subjectively differentiated "activity" of pain, sadness, according to the intensity of the suffering subject and his or her specific sensitivity. In the midst of what constitutes the psychological form of suffering there is always *an experience of evil*, which causes the individual to suffer.

Thus the reality of suffering prompts the question about the essence of evil: what is evil?

<sup>22</sup> In this regard, it is useful to remember that the Hebrew root "*r*" designates in a comprehensive way what is evil, as opposed to what is good (*tob*), without distinguishing between the physical, psychological and ethical senses. The root is found in the substantive form *ra'a* indicating indifferently either evil in itself, or the evil action, or the individual who does it. In the verbal forms, besides the simple one (*qal*) variously designating "being evil", there are the reflexive-passive form (*niphal*) "to endure evil", "to be affected by evil" and the causative form (*hiphil*) "to do evil", "to inflict evil" on someone. Since the Hebrew lacks a true equivalent to the Greek  $\pi \propto \sigma \chi \omega$  "I suffer", this verb too occurs rarely in the Septuagint translation.

This questions seems, in a certain sense, inseparable from the theme of suffering. The Christian response to it is different, for example, from the one given by certain cultural and religious traditions which hold that existence is an evil from which one needs to be liberated. Christianity proclaims the essential *good of existence* and the good of that which exists, acknowledges the goodness of the Creator and proclaims the good of creatures. Man suffers on account of evil, which is a certain lack, limitation or distortion of good. We could say that man suffers *because of a good* in which he does not share, from which in a certain sense he is cut off, or of which he has deprived himself. He particularly suffers when he "ought" — in the normal order of things — to have a share in this good, and does not have it.

Thus, in the Christian view, the reality of suffering is explained through evil which always, in some way, refers to a good.

8. In itself human suffering constitutes as it were a specific "world" which exists together with man, which appears in him and passes, and sometimes does not pass, but which consolidates itself and becomes deeply rooted in him. This world of suffering, divided into many, very many subjects, exists *as it were* "in dispersion". Every individual, through personal suffering, constitutes not only a small part of that "world", but at the same time that "world" is present in him as a finite and unrepeatable entity. Parallel with this, however, is the interhuman and social dimension. The world of suffering possesses as it were its *own solidarity*. People who suffer become similar to one another through the analogy of their situation, the trial of their destiny, or through their need for understanding and care, and perhaps above all through the persistent question of the meaning of suffering. Thus, although the world of suffering exists "in dispersion", at the same time it contains within itself a singular challenge to *communion and solidarity*. We shall also try to follow this appeal in the present reflection.

Considering the world of suffering in its personal and at the same time collective meaning, one cannot fail to notice the fact that this world, at some periods of time and in some eras of human existence, *as it were becomes particularly concentrated*. This happens, for example, in cases of natural disasters, epidemics, catastrophes, upheavals and various social scourges: one thinks, for example, of a bad harvest and connected with it — or with various other causes — the scourge of famine.

One thinks, finally, of war. I speak of this in a particular way. I speak of the last two World Wars, the second of which brought with it a much greater harvest of death and a much heavier burden of human sufferings. The second half of our century, in its turn, brings with it — *as though in proportion to the mistakes and transgressions* of our contemporary civilization — such a horrible threat of nuclear war that we cannot think of this period except in terms of an *incomparable accumulation of sufferings*, even to the possible self-destruction of humanity. In this way, that world of suffering which in brief has its subject in each human being, seems in our age to be transformed — perhaps more than at any other moment — into a special “world”; the world which as never before has been transformed by progress through man’s work and, at the same time, is as never before in danger because of man’s mistakes and offences.

### III

#### THE QUEST FOR AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION ON THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

9. Within each form of suffering endured by man, and at the same time at the basis of the whole world of suffering, there inevitably arises *the question: why?* It is a question about the cause, the reason, and equally about the purpose of suffering, and, in brief, a question about its meaning. Not only does it accompany human suffering, but it seem even to determine its human content, what makes suffering precisely human suffering.

It is obvious that pain, especially physical pain, is widespread in the animal world. But only the suffering human being knows that he is suffering and wonders why; and he suffers in a humanly speaking still deeper way if he does not find a satisfactory answer. *This is a difficult question*, just as is a question closely akin to it, the question of evil. Why does evil exist? Why is there evil in the world? When we put the question in this way, we are always, at least to a certain extent, asking a question about suffering too.

Both questions are difficult, when an individual puts them to another individual, when people put them to other people, as also when man *puts them to God*. For man does not put this question to the world, even though it is from the world that suffering often comes to him, but he puts it to God as the Creator and Lord of the world. And it is well known that concerning this question there not only arise many frustrations and con-

flicts in the relations of man with God, but it also happens that people reach the point of actually *denying God*. For, whereas the existence of the world opens as it were the eyes of the human soul to the existence of God, to his wisdom, power and greatness, evil and suffering seem to obscure this image, sometimes in a radical way, especially in the daily drama of so many faults without proper punishment. So this circumstance shows — perhaps more than any other — the importance of *the question of the meaning of suffering*; it also shows how much care must be taken both in dealing with the question itself and with all possible answers to it.

10. Man can put this question to God with all the emotion of his heart and with his mind full of dismay and anxiety; and God expects the question and listens to it, as we see in the Revelation of the Old Testament. In the Book of Job the question has found its most vivid expression.

The story of this just man, who without any fault of his own is tried by innumerable suffering, is well known. He loses his possessions, his sons and daughters, and finally he himself is afflicted by a grave sickness. In this horrible situation three old acquaintances come to his house, and each one in his own way tries to convince him that since he has been struck down by such varied and terrible sufferings, *he must have done something seriously wrong*. For suffering — they say — always strikes a man as punishment for a crime; it is sent by the absolutely just God and finds its reason in the order of justice. It can be said that Job's old friends wish not only to *convince him* of the moral justice of the evil, but in a certain sense they attempt to *justify* to themselves the moral meaning of suffering. In their eyes suffering can have a meaning only as a punishment for sin, therefore only on the level of God's justice, who repays good with good and evil with evil.

The point of reference in this case is the doctrine expressed in other Old Testament writings which show us suffering as punishment inflicted by God for human sins. The God of Revelation is the *Lawgiver and Judge* to a degree that no temporal authority can be. For the God of Revelation is first of all the Creator, from whom comes, together with existence, the essential good of creation. Therefore, the conscious and free violation of this good by man is not only a transgression of the law but at the same time an offence against the Creator, who is the first Lawgiver. Such a transgression has the character of sin, according to the exact meaning of this word, namely the biblical and theological one. *Corresponding to the moral evil of sin is punishment*, which guarantees the moral order in the same



transcendent sense in which this order is laid down by the will of the Creator and Supreme Lawgiver. From this there also derives one of the fundamental truths of religious faith, equally based upon Revelation, namely that God is a just judge, who rewards good and punishes evil: "For thou art just in all that thou hast done to us, and all thy works are true and thy ways right, and all thy judgments are truth. Thou hast executed true judgments in all that thou hast brought upon us... for in truth and justice thou hast brought all this upon us because of our sins".<sup>23</sup>

The opinion expressed by Job's friends manifests a conviction also found in the moral conscience of humanity: the objective moral order demands punishment for transgression, sin and crime. From this point of view, suffering appears as a "justified evil". The conviction of those who explain suffering as a punishment for sin finds support in the order of justice, and this corresponds to the conviction expressed by one of Job's friends: "As I have seen, those who plough iniquity and sow trouble reap the same".<sup>24</sup>

11. Job however, challenges the truth of the principle that identifies suffering with punishment for sin. And he does this on the basis of his own opinion. For he is aware that he has not deserved such punishment, and in fact he speaks of the good that he has done during his life. In the end, God himself reproves Job's friends for their accusations and recognizes that Job is not guilty. His suffering is the suffering of someone who is innocent; it must be accepted as a mystery, which the individual is unable to penetrate completely by his own intelligence.

The Book of Job does not violate the foundations of the transcendent moral order, based upon justice, as they are set forth by the whole of Revelation, in both the Old and the New Covenants. At the same time, however, this Book shows with all firmness that the principles of this order cannot be applied in an exclusive and superficial way. While it is true that suffering has a meaning as punishment, when it is connected with a fault, *it is not true that all suffering is a consequence of a fault and has the nature of a punishment*. The figure of the just man Job is a special proof of this in the Old Testament.

<sup>23</sup> Dn. 3:27-28 ff.; cf. Ps. 19 [18]:10; 36 [35]:7; 48 [47]:12; 51 [50]:6; 99 [98]:4; 119 [118]:75; Mal 3:16-21; Mt. 20:16; Mk. 10:31; Lk. 17:34; Jn. 5:30; Rm. 2:2.

<sup>24</sup> Job. 4:8.

Revelation, which is the word of God himself, with complete frankness presents the problem of the suffering of an innocent man: suffering without guilt. Job has not been punished, there was no reason for inflicting a punishment on him, even if he has been subjected to a grievous trial. From the introduction of the Book it is apparent that God permitted this testing as a result of Satan's provocation. For Satan had challenged before the Lord the righteousness of Job: "Does Job fear God for nought?... Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face".<sup>25</sup> And if the Lord consents to test Job with suffering, he does it *to demonstrate the latter's righteousness*. The suffering has the nature of a test.

The Book of Job is not the last word on this subject in Revelation. In a certain way it is a foretelling of the Passion of Christ. But already in itself it is *sufficient argument* why the answer to the question about the meaning of suffering is not to be unreservedly linked to the moral order, based on justice alone. While such an answer has a fundamental and transcendent reason and validity, at the same time it is seen to be not only unsatisfactory in cases similar to the suffering of the just man Job, but it even seems to trivialize and impoverish *the concept of justice* which we encounter in Revelation.

12. The Book of Job poses in an extremely acute way the question of the "why" of suffering; it also shows that suffering strikes the innocent, but it does not yet give the solution to the problem.

Already in the Old Testament we note an orientation that begins to go beyond the concept according to which suffering has a meaning only as a punishment for sin, in so far as it emphasizes at the same time the educational value of suffering as a punishment. Thus in the sufferings inflicted by God upon the Chosen People there is included an invitation of his mercy, which corrects in order to lead to conversion: "... these punishments were designed not to destroy but to discipline our people."<sup>26</sup>

Thus the personal dimension of punishment is affirmed. According to this dimension, punishment has a meaning not only because it serves to repay the objective evil of the transgression

<sup>25</sup> Job. 1:9-11.

<sup>26</sup> 2 Mac. 6:12

with another evil, but first and foremost because it creates the possibility of rebuilding goodness in the subject who suffers.

This is an extremely important aspect of suffering. It is profoundly rooted in the entire Revelation of the Old and above all the New Covenant. Suffering must serve *for conversion*, that is, *for the rebuilding of goodness* in the subject, who can recognize the divine mercy in this call to repentance. The purpose of penance is to overcome evil, which under different forms lies dormant in man. Its purpose is also to strengthen goodness both in man himself and in his relationships with others and especially with God.

13. But in order to perceive the true answer to the "why" of suffering, we must look to the revelation of divine love, the ultimate source of the meaning of everything that exists. Love is also the richest source of the meaning of suffering, which always remains a mystery: we are conscious of the insufficiency and inadequacy of our explanations. Christ causes us to enter into the mystery and to discover the "why" of suffering, as far as we are capable of grasping the sublimity of divine love.

In order to discover the profound meaning of suffering, following the revealed word of God, we must open ourselves wide to the human subject in his manifold potentiality. We must above all accept the light of Revelation not only in so far as it expresses the transcendent order of justice, but also in so far as it illuminates this order with Love, as the definitive source of everything that exists. Love is also the fullest source of the answer to the question of the meaning of suffering. This answer has been given by God to man in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

#### IV

#### JESUS CHRIST: SUFFERING CONQUERED BY LOVE

14. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".<sup>27</sup> These words, spoken by Christ in his conversation with Nicodemus, introduce us into the very heart of *God's salvific work*. They also express the very essence of Christian soteriology, that is, of the theology of salvation. Salvation means liberation from evil, and for this reason it is closely

<sup>27</sup> Jn. 3:16.

bound up with the problem of suffering. According to the words spoken to Nicodemus, God gives his Son to "the world" to free man from evil, which bears within itself the definitive and absolute perspective on suffering. At the same time, the very word "*gives*" ("*gave*") indicates that this liberation must be achieved by the only-begotten Son through his own suffering. And in this, love is manifested, the infinite love both of that only-begotten Son and of the Father who for this reason "*gives*" his Son. This is love for man, love for the "world"; it is salvific love.

We here find ourselves — and we must clearly realize this in our shared reflection on this problem — faced with a completely new dimension of our theme. It is a different dimension from the one which determined and, in a certain sense, concluded the search for the meaning of suffering within the limits of justice. This is *the dimension of Redemption*, to which in the Old Testament, at least in the Vulgate text, the words of the just man Job already seem to refer: "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last . . . I shall see God . . .".<sup>28</sup> Whereas our consideration has so far concentrated primarily and in a certain sense exclusively on suffering in its multiple temporal dimension (as also the sufferings of the just man Job), the words quoted above from Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus refer to *suffering in its fundamental and definitive meaning*. God gives his only-begotten Son so that man "should not perish", and the meaning of these words "should not perish" is precisely specified by the words that follow: "but have eternal life".

Man "perishes" when he loses "eternal life". The opposite of salvation is not, therefore, only temporal suffering, any kind of suffering, but the definitive suffering: the loss of eternal life, being rejected by God, damnation. The only-begotten Son was given to humanity primarily to protect man against this definitive evil and against *definitive suffering*. In his salvific mission, the Son must therefore strike evil right at its transcendental roots from which it develops in human history. These transcendental roots of evil are grounded in sin and death: for they are at the basis of the loss of eternal life. The mission of the only-begotten Son consists in conquering *sin and death*. He conquers sin by his obedience unto death, and he overcomes death by his Resurrection.

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<sup>28</sup> Job, 19:25-26.



15. When one says that Christ by his mission strikes at evil at its very roots, we have in mind not only evil and definitive, eschatological suffering (so that man "should not perish, but have eternal life"), but also — at least indirectly — *evil and suffering in their temporal and historical dimension*. For evil remains bound to sin and death. And even if we must use great caution in judging man's suffering as a consequence of concrete sins (this is shown precisely by the example of the just man Job), nevertheless suffering cannot be divorced from the sin of the beginnings, from what Saint John calls "the sin of the world";<sup>29</sup> *from the sinful background* of the personal actions and social processes in human history. Though it is not licit to apply here the narrow criterion of direct dependence (as Job's three friends did), it is equally true that one cannot reject the criterion that, at the basis of human suffering, there is a complex involvement with sin.

It is the same when we deal with *death*. It is often awaited even as a liberation from the suffering of this life. At the same time, it is not possible to ignore the fact that it constitutes as it were, a definitive summing-up of the destructive work both in the bodily organism and in the psyche. But death primarily involves *the dissolution* of the entire psychophysical personality of man. The soul survives and subsists separated from the body, while the body is subjected to gradual decomposition according to the words of the Lord God, pronounced after the sin committed by man at the beginning of his earthly history: "You are dust and to dust you shall return".<sup>30</sup> Therefore, even if death is not a form of suffering in the temporal sense of the word, even if *in a certain way* it is *beyond all forms of suffering*, at the same time the evil which the human being experiences in death has a definitive and total character. By his salvific work, the only-begotten Son liberates man from sin and death. First of all he *blots out* from human history *the dominion of sin*, which took root under the influence of the evil Spirit, beginning with Original Sin, and then he gives man the possibility of living in Sanctifying Grace. In the wake of his victory over sin, he also takes away the dominion of *death*, by his Resurrection, beginning the process of the future resurrection of the body. Both are essential conditions of "eternal life", that is of man's definitive happiness in union with God; this means, for the saved, that in the eschatological perspective suffering is totally blotted out.

<sup>29</sup> Jn. 1:29.

<sup>30</sup> Gen. 3:19.

As a result of Christ's salvific work, man exists on earth *with the hope* of eternal life and holiness. And even though the victory over sin and death achieved by Christ in his Cross and Resurrection does not abolish temporal suffering from human life, nor free from suffering the whole historical dimension of human existence, it nevertheless *throws a new light* upon this dimension and upon every suffering: the light of salvation. This is the light of the Gospel, that is, of the Good News. At the heart of this light is the truth expounded in the conversation with Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son".<sup>31</sup> This truth radically changes the picture of man's history and his earthly situation: in spite of the sin that took root in this history both as an original inheritance and as the "sin of the world" and as the sum of personal sins, God the Father has loved the only-begotten Son, that is, he loves him in a lasting way; and then in time, precisely through this all-surpassing love, he "gives" this Son, that he may strike at the very roots of human evil and thus draw close in a salvific way to the whole world of suffering in which man shares.

16. In his messianic activity in the midst of Israel, Christ drew increasingly closer to *the world of human suffering*. "He went about doing good",<sup>32</sup> and his actions concerned primarily those who were suffering and seeking help. He healed the sick, consoled the afflicted, fed the hungry, freed people from deafness, from blindness, from leprosy, from the devil and from various physical disabilities, three times he restored the dead to life. He was sensitive to every human suffering, whether of the body or of the soul. And at the same time he taught, and at the heart of his teaching there are *the eight beatitudes*, which are addressed to people tried by various sufferings in their temporal life. These are "the poor in spirit" and "the afflicted" and "those who hunger and thirst for justice" and those who are "persecuted for justice's sake", when they insult them, persecute them, speak falsely every kind of evil against them for the sake of Christ...<sup>33</sup> Thus according to Matthew: Luke mentions explicitly those "who hunger now".<sup>34</sup>

At any rate, Christ drew close above all to the world of human suffering through the fact of having taken *this suffering upon his very self*. During his public activity, he experienced not only fatigue, homelessness, misunderstanding even on the

<sup>31</sup> Jn. 3:16.

<sup>32</sup> Acts 10:38.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Mt. 5:3-11.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Lk. 6:12.

part of those closest to him, but, more than anything, he became progressively more and more isolated and encircled by hostility and the preparations for putting him to death. Christ is aware of this, and often speaks to his disciples of the sufferings and death that await him: "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man *will be delivered* to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him to the Gentiles; and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise".<sup>35</sup> Christ goes toward his Passion and death with full awareness of the mission that he has to fulfill precisely in this way. Precisely *by means of this suffering* he must bring it about "that man should not perish, but have eternal life". Precisely by means of his Cross he must strike at the roots of evil, planted in the history of man and in human souls. Precisely by means of his Cross he must accomplish *the work of salvation*. This work, in the plan of eternal Love, has a redemptive character.

And therefore Christ severely reproves Peter when the latter wants to make him abandon the thoughts of suffering and of death on the Cross.<sup>36</sup> And when, during his arrest in Gethsemane, the same Peter tries to defend him with the sword, Christ says, "Put your sword back into its place... But how then *should the scriptures be fulfilled*, that it must be so?",<sup>37</sup> And he also says, "Shall I not drink the *cup which the Father has given me*?"<sup>38</sup> This response, like others that reappear in different points of the Gospel, shows how profoundly Christ was imbued by the thought that he had already expressed in the conversation with Nicodemus: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life".<sup>39</sup> Christ goes toward his own suffering, aware of its saving power; he goes forward in obedience to the Father, but primarily he is *united to the Father in this love* with which he has loved the world and man in the world. And for this reason Saint Paul will write of Christ: "He loved me and gave himself for me".<sup>40</sup>

17. The Scriptures had to be fulfilled. There were many messianic texts in the Old Testament which foreshadowed the

<sup>35</sup> Mk. 10:33-34.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Mt. 16-23.

<sup>37</sup> Mt. 26:52, 54.

<sup>38</sup> Jn. 18:11.

<sup>39</sup> Jn. 3:16.

<sup>40</sup> Gal. 2:20.

sufferings of the future Anointed One of God. Among all these, particularly touching is the one which is commonly called the *Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant*, in the Book of Isaiah. The Prophet, who has rightly been called "the Fifth Evangelist", presents in this Song an image of the sufferings of the Servant with a realism as acute as if he were seeing them with his own eyes: the eyes of the body and of the spirit. In the light of the verses of Isaiah, the Passion of Christ becomes almost more expressive and touching than in the descriptions of the Evangelist themselves. Behold, the true Man of Sorrows presents himself before us:

*He had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,  
and no beauty that we should desire him.  
He was despised and rejected by men;  
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;  
and as one from whom men hide their faces  
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.  
Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;  
yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.  
But he was wounded for our transgressions,  
he was bruised for our iniquities;  
upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,  
and with his stripes we are healed.  
All we like sheep have gone astray  
we have turned every one to his own way;  
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.<sup>41</sup>*

The Song of the Suffering Servant contains a description in which it is possible, in a certain sense, to identify the stages of Christ's Passion in their various details: the arrest, the humiliation, the blows, the spitting, the contempt for the prisoner, the unjust sentence, and then the scourging, the crowning with thorns and the mocking, the carrying of the Cross, the crucifixion and the agony.

Even more than this description of the Passion, what strikes us in the words of the Prophet is *the depth of Christ's sacrifice*. Behold, he, though innocent, takes upon himself the sufferings of all people, because he takes upon himself the sins of all. "The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all": *all human sin in its breadth and depth becomes the true cause of the Redeemer's suffering*. If the suffering "is measured" by the evil suffered, then the words of the Prophet enable us to understand *the ex-*

<sup>41</sup> Is. 53:2-6.



*tent of this evil* and suffering with which Christ burdened himself. It can be said that this is "substitutive" suffering; but above all it is "redemptive". The Man of Sorrows of that prophecy is truly that "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world".<sup>42</sup> In his suffering, sins are cancelled out precisely because he alone as the only-begotten Son could take them upon himself, accept them *with that love for the Father which overcomes* the evil of every sin; in a certain sense he annihilates this evil in the spiritual space of the relationship between God and humanity, on earth.

18. It can be said that the above considerations now bring us directly to Gethsemane and Golgotha, where the Song of the Suffering Servant contained in the Book of Isaiah, was fulfilled. But before going there, let us read the next verses of the Song, which give a prophetic anticipation of the Passion at Gethsemane and Golgotha. The Suffering Servant — and this in its turn is essential for an analysis of Christ's Passion — *takes on himself* those sufferings which were spoken of, *in a totally voluntary way*:

*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,  
yet he opened not his mouth;  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,  
and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,  
so he opened not his mouth.  
By oppression and judgment he was taken away;  
and as for his generation, who considered that  
he was cut off out of the land of the living,  
stricken for the transgression of my people?  
And they made his grave with the wicked  
and with a rich man in his death,  
although he had done no violence,  
and there was no deceit in his mouth.*<sup>43</sup>

*Christ suffers voluntarily and suffers innocently.* With his suffering he accepts that question which — posed by people many times — has been expressed, in a certain sense, in a radical way by the Book of Job. Christ, however, not only carries with himself the same question (and this is an even more radical way, for he is not only a man like Job but the only-begotten Son of God), but he also carries *the greatest possible answer to this question*. One can say that this answer emerges from the

<sup>42</sup> Jn. 1:29.

<sup>43</sup> Is. 53:7-9.

very matter of which the question is made up. Christ gives the answer to the question about suffering and the meaning of suffering not only by his teaching, that is by the Good News, but most of all by his own suffering, which is integrated with this teaching of the Good News in an organic and indissoluble way. And this is *the final*, definitive word of this *teaching*: "the word of the Cross", as Saint Paul one day will say.<sup>44</sup>

This "word of the Cross" completes with a definitive reality the image of the ancient prophecy. Many episodes, many discourses during Christ's public teaching bear witness to the way in which, from the beginning, he accepts this suffering which is the will of the Father for the salvation of the world. However, *the prayer in Gethsemane* becomes a definitive point here. The words: "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt",<sup>45</sup> and later: "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done",<sup>46</sup> have a manifold eloquence. They prove the truth of that love which the only-begotten Son gives to the Father in his obedience. At the same time, they attest to the truth of his suffering. The words of that prayer of Christ in Gethsemane prove *the truth of love through the truth of suffering*. Christ's words confirm with all simplicity this human truth of suffering, to its very depths: suffering is the undergoing of evil before which man shudders. He says: "Let it pass from me", just as Christ says in Gethsemane.

His words also attest to this unique and incomparable depth and intensity of suffering which only the man who is the only-begotten Son could experience; they attest to *that depth and intensity* which the prophetic words quoted above in their own way help us to understand. Not of course completely (for this we would have to penetrate the divine-human mystery of the subject), but at least they help us to understand that difference (and at the same time the similarity) which exists between every possible form of human suffering and the suffering of the God-man. Gethsemane is the place where precisely this suffering, in all the truth expressed by the Prophet concerning the evil experienced in it, *is revealed as it were definitively before the eyes of Christ's soul*.

After the words in Gethsemane come the words uttered on Golgotha, words which bear witness to this depth — unique in

<sup>44</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 1:18.

<sup>45</sup> Mt. 26:39.

<sup>46</sup> Mt. 26:42.

the history of the world — of the evil of the suffering experienced. When Christ says: "My God, My God, why have you abandoned me?", his words are not only an expression of that abandonment which many times found expression in the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms and in particular in that Psalm 22 [21] from which come the words quoted.<sup>47</sup> One can say that these words on abandonment are born at the level of that inseparable union of the Son with the Father, and are born because the Father "laid on him the iniquity of us all".<sup>48</sup> They also foreshadow the words of Saint Paul: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin".<sup>49</sup> Together with this horrible weight, *encompassing the "entire" evil of the turning away from God* which is contained in sin, Christ, through the divine depth of his filial union with the Father, perceives in a humanly inexpressible way *this suffering which is the separation, the rejection by the Father, the estrangement from God*. But precisely through this suffering he accomplishes the Redemption, and can say as he breathes his last: "It is finished".<sup>50</sup>

One can also say that the Scripture has been fulfilled, that these words of the Song of the Suffering Servant have been definitively accomplished: "it was the will of the Lord to bruise him".<sup>51</sup> Human suffering has reached its culmination in the Passion of Christ. And at the same time it has entered into a completely new dimension and a new order: *it has been linked to love*, to that love which creates good, drawing it out by means of suffering, just as the supreme good of the Redemption of the world was drawn from the Cross of Christ, and from that Cross constantly takes its beginning. The Cross of Christ has become a source from which flow rivers of living water.<sup>52</sup> In it we must also pose anew the question about the meaning of suffering, and read in it, to its very depths, the answer to this question.

## V

## SHARERS IN THE SUFFERING OF CHRIST

19. The same Song of the Suffering Servant in the Book of Isaiah leads us, through the following verses, precisely in the direction of this question and answer:

<sup>47</sup> Ps. 22 [21]:2.

<sup>48</sup> Is. 53:6.

<sup>49</sup> 2 Cor. 5:21.

<sup>50</sup> Jn. 19:30.

<sup>51</sup> Is. 53:10.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Jn. 7:37-38.

*When he makes himself an offering for sin,  
 he shall see his offspring,  
 he shall prolong his days;  
 the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;  
 he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul  
 and be satisfied;  
 by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,  
 make many to be accounted righteous;  
 and he shall bear their iniquities.  
 Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the great,  
 and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;  
 because he poured out his soul to death,  
 and was numbered with the transgressors.<sup>53</sup>*

One can say that with the Passion of Christ all human suffering has found itself in a new situation. And it is as though Job had foreseen this when he said: "I know that my Redeemer lives . . .",<sup>54</sup> and as though he had directed towards it his own suffering, which without the Redemption could not have revealed to him the fullness of its meaning. In the Cross of Christ not only is the Redemption accomplished through suffering, but *also human suffering itself has been redeemed*. Christ — without any fault of his own — took on himself "the total evil of sin". The experience of this evil determined the incomparable extent of Christ's suffering, which became *the price of the Redemption*. The Song of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah speaks of this. In later times, the witnesses of the New Covenant, sealed in the Blood of Christ, will speak of this. These are the words of the Apostle Peter in his First Letter: "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but *with the precious blood of Christ*, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot".<sup>55</sup> And the Apostle Paul in the Letter to the Galatians will say: "He gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age",<sup>56</sup> and in the First Letter to the Corinthians: "You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body".<sup>57</sup>

With these and similar words the witnesses of the New Covenant speak of the greatness of the Redemption, accomplished through the suffering of Christ. The Redeemer suffered in place of man and for man. Every man has *his own share in the Re-*

<sup>53</sup> Is. 53:10-12.

<sup>54</sup> Job. 19:25.

<sup>55</sup> 1 Pet. 1:18-19.

<sup>56</sup> Gal. 1:4.

<sup>57</sup> 1 Cor. 6:20.



*demption.* Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the Redemption was accomplished. He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the Redemption through suffering, Christ *has also raised human suffering to the level of the Redemption.* Thus each man, in his suffering, can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ.

20. The texts of the New Testament express this concept in many places. In the Second Letter to the Corinthians the Apostle writes: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always *carrying in the body the death of Jesus*, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh..., knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus".<sup>58</sup>

Saint Paul speaks of various sufferings and, in particular, of those in which the first Christians became sharers "for the sake of Christ". These sufferings enable the recipients of that Letter to share in the work of the Redemption, accomplished through the sufferings and death of the Redeemer. *The eloquence of the Cross and death* is, however, completed by *the eloquence of the Resurrection.* Man finds in the Resurrection a completely new light, which helps him to go forward through the thick darkness of humiliations, doubts, hopelessness and persecution. Therefore the Apostle will also write in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: "For *as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings*, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too".<sup>59</sup> Elsewhere he addresses to his recipients words of encouragement: "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ".<sup>60</sup> And in the Letter to the Romans he writes: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, *to present your bodies as a living sacrifice*, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship".<sup>61</sup>

The very participation in Christ's suffering finds, in these apostolic expressions, as it were, a twofold dimension. If one

<sup>58</sup> 2 Cor. 4:8-11, 14.

<sup>59</sup> 2 Cor. 1:5.

<sup>60</sup> 2 Th. 3:5.

<sup>61</sup> Rom. 12:1.

becomes a sharer in the sufferings of Christ, this happens because Christ *has opened his suffering to man*, because he himself in his redemptive suffering has become, in a certain sense, a sharer in all human sufferings. Man, discovering through faith the redemptive suffering of Christ, also discovers in it his own sufferings; he *rediscovers them, through faith*, enriched with a new content and new meaning.

This discovery caused Saint Paul to write particularly strong words in the Letter to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me: and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me".<sup>62</sup> Faith enables the author of these words to know that love which led Christ to the Cross. And if he loved us in this way, suffering and dying, then with this suffering and death of us he *lives in the one whom he loved in this way*, he lives in the man: in Paul. And living in him — to the degree that Paul, conscious of this through faith, responds to his love with love — Christ also becomes in a particular way *united to the man*, to Paul, *through the Cross*. This union caused Paul to write, in the same Letter to the Galatians, other words as well, no less strong: "But far be it from me to *glory* except in the *Cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world".<sup>63</sup>

21. The Cross of Christ throws salvific light, in a most penetrating way, on man's life and, in particular, on his suffering. For through faith the Cross reaches man *together with the Resurrection*: the mystery of the Passion is contained in the Paschal Mystery. The witnesses of Christ's Passion are at the same time witnesses of his Resurrection. Paul writes: "That I may know him (Christ) and the power of his Resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead".<sup>64</sup> Truly, the Apostle first experienced the "power of the Resurrection" of Christ, on the road to Damascus, and only later, in this paschal light, reached that "sharing in his sufferings" of which he speaks, for example, in the Letter to the Galatians. The path of Paul is clearly paschal: *sharing in the Cross* of Christ comes about *through the experience of the Risen One*, therefore through a special sharing in the Resurrection. Thus, even in the Apostle's expressions on the subject of suffering

<sup>62</sup> Gal. 2:19-20.

<sup>63</sup> Gal. 6:14.

<sup>64</sup> Phil. 3:10-11.

there so often appears the motif of glory, which finds its beginning in Christ's Cross.

The witnesses of the Cross and Resurrection were convinced that "through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God".<sup>65</sup> And Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, says this: "We ourselves boast of you . . . for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions which you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made *worthy of the Kingdom of God*, for which you are suffering".<sup>66</sup> Thus to share in the sufferings of Christ is, at the same time, to suffer for the Kingdom of God. In the eyes of the just God, before his judgment, those who share in the suffering of Christ become worthy of this Kingdom. Through their sufferings, in a certain sense they repay the infinite price of the Passion and death of Christ, which became the price of our Redemption: at this price the Kingdom of God has been consolidated anew in human history, becoming the definitive prospect of man's earthly existence. Christ has led us into this Kingdom through his suffering. And also through suffering, those surrounded by the mystery of Christ's Redemption *become mature* enough to enter this Kingdom.

22. To the prospect of the Kingdom of God is linked hope in that glory which has its beginning in the Cross of Christ. The Resurrection revealed this glory — eschatological glory — which in the Cross of Christ was completely obscured by the immensity of suffering. Those who share in the sufferings of Christ are also called, through their own sufferings, to share *in glory*. Paul expresses this in various places. To the Romans he writes: "We are . . . fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us".<sup>67</sup> In the Second Letter to the Corinthians we read: "For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to things that are unseen".<sup>68</sup> The Apostle Peter will express this truth in the following words of his First Letter: "But rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed".<sup>69</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Acts 14:22.

<sup>66</sup> 2 Th. 1:4-5.

<sup>67</sup> Rom. 8:17-18.

<sup>68</sup> 2 Cor. 4:17-18.

<sup>69</sup> 1 Pet. 4:13.

The motif of *suffering and glory* has a strictly evangelical characteristic, which becomes clear by reference to the Cross and the Resurrection. The Resurrection became, first of all, the manifestation of glory, which corresponds to Christ's being lifted up through the Cross. If, in fact, the Cross was to human eyes Christ's *emptying of himself*, at the same time it was in the eyes of God *his being lifted up*. On the Cross, Christ attained and fully accomplished his mission: by fulfilling the will of the Father, he at the same time fully realized himself. In weakness he manifested his *power*, and in humiliation he manifested all *his messianic greatness*. Are not all the words he uttered during his agony on Golgotha a proof of this greatness, and especially his words concerning the perpetrators of his crucifixion: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do"?<sup>70</sup> To those who share in Christ's sufferings these words present themselves with the power of a supreme example. Suffering is also an invitation to manifest the moral greatness of man, his *spiritual maturity*. Proof of this has been given, down through the generations, by the martyrs and confessors of Christ, faithful to the words: "And do not fear those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul".<sup>71</sup>

Christ's Resurrection has revealed "the glory of the future age" and at the same time, has confirmed "the boast of the Cross"; the *glory that is hidden in the very suffering of Christ* and which has been and is often mirrored in human suffering, as an expression of man's spiritual greatness. This glory must be acknowledged not only in the martyrs for the faith but in many others also who, at times, even without belief in Christ, suffer and give their lives for the truth and for a just cause. In the sufferings of all of these people the great dignity of man is strikingly confirmed.

23. Suffering, in fact, is always a *trial* — at times a very hard one — to which humanity is subjected. The gospel *paradox of weakness and strength* often speaks to us from the pages of the Letters of Saint Paul, a paradox particularly experienced by the Apostle himself and, together with him, experienced by all who share Christ's sufferings. Paul writes in the Second Letter to the Corinthians: "I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me".<sup>72</sup> In the Second Letter to Timothy we read: "And therefore I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I

<sup>70</sup> Lk. 23-34.

<sup>71</sup> Mt. 10:28.

<sup>72</sup> 2 Cor. 12:9.



have believed".<sup>73</sup> And in the Letter to the Philippians he will even say: "*I can do all things in him who strengthens me*".<sup>74</sup>

Those who share in Christ's sufferings have before their eyes the Paschal Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection, in which Christ descends, in a first phase, to the ultimate limits of human weakness and impotence: indeed, he diés nailed to the Cross. But if at the same time in this *weakness* there is accomplished his *lifting up*, confirmed by the power of the Resurrection, then this means that the weakness of all human sufferings are capable of being infused with the same power of God manifested in Christ's Cross. In such a concept, *to suffer* means to become particularly *susceptible*, particularly *open to the working of the salvific powers of God*, offered to humanity in Christ. In him God has confirmed his desire to act especially through suffering, which is man's weakness and emptying of self, and he wishes to make his power known precisely in this weakness and emptying of self. This also explains the exhortation in the First Letter of Peter: "Yet if one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God".<sup>75</sup>

In the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul deals still more fully with the theme of this "birth of power in weakness", this *spiritual tempering* of man in the midst of trials and tribulations, which is the particular vocation of those who share in Christ's sufferings. "More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us".<sup>76</sup> Suffering as it were contains a special *call to the virtue* which man must exercise on his own part. And this is the virtue of perseverance in bearing whatever disturbs and causes harm. In doing this, the individual unleashes hope, which maintains in him the conviction that suffering will not get the better of him, that it will not deprive him of his dignity as a human being, a dignity linked to awareness of the meaning of life. And indeed this meaning makes itself known together with *the working of God's love*, which is the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit. The more he shares in this love, man rediscovers himself more and more fully in suffering: he rediscovers the "soul" which he thought he had "lost"<sup>77</sup> because of suffering.

<sup>73</sup> 2 Tim. 1:12.

<sup>74</sup> Phil. 4:13.

<sup>75</sup> 1 Pet. 4:16.

<sup>76</sup> Rom. 5:3-5.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Mk. 8:35; Lk. 9:24; Jn. 12:25.

24. Nevertheless, the Apostle's experiences as a sharer in the sufferings of Christ go even further. In the Letter to the Colossians, we read the words which constitute as it were the final stage of the spiritual journey in relation to suffering: "Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh *I complete what is lacking in Christ's afflictions* for the sake of his body, that is, the Church".<sup>78</sup> And in another Letter he asks his readers: "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?"<sup>79</sup>

In the Paschal Mystery Christ began *the union with man in the community of the Church*. The mystery of the Church is expressed in this: that already in the act of Baptism, which brings about a configuration with Christ, and then through his Sacrifice — sacramentally through the Eucharist — the Church is continually being built up spiritually as the Body of Christ. In this Body, Christ wishes to be united with every individual, and in a special way he is united with those who suffer. But at the same time, in the mystery of the Church as his Body, Christ has in a sense opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering. In so far as man becomes a sharer in Christ's sufferings — in any part of the world and at any time in history — to that extent *he in his own way completes* the suffering through which Christ accomplished the Redemption of the world.

Does this mean that the Redemption achieved by Christ is not complete? No. It only means that the Redemption, accomplished through satisfactory love, *remains always open to all love expressed in human suffering*. In this dimension — the dimension of love — the Redemption which has already been completely accomplished is, in a certain sense, constantly being accomplished. Christ achieved the Redemption completely and to the very limit; but at the same time he did not bring it to a close. In this redemptive suffering, through which the Redemption of the world was accomplished, Christ opened himself from the beginning to every human suffering and constantly does so. Yes, it seems to be part of *the very essence of Christ's redemptive suffering* that this suffering requires to be unceasingly completed.

Thus, with this openness to every human suffering, Christ has accomplished the world's Redemption through his own suffering. For, at the same time, this Redemption, even though it was completely achieved by Christ's suffering, lives on and in

<sup>78</sup> Col. 1:24.

<sup>79</sup> 1 Cor. 6:15.

its own special way develops in the history of man. It lives and develops as the body of Christ, the Church, and in this dimension every human suffering, by reason of the loving union with Christ, completes the suffering of Christ. It completes that suffering *just as the Church completes the redemptive work of Christ*. The mystery of the Church — that body which completes in itself also Christ's crucified and risen body — indicates at the same time the space or context in which human sufferings complete the sufferings of Christ. Only within this radius and dimension of the Church as the Body of Christ, which continually develops in space and time, can one think and speak of "what is lacking" in the sufferings of Christ. The Apostle, in fact, makes this clear when he writes of "completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church".

It is precisely *the Church*, which ceaselessly draws on the infinite resources of the Redemption, introducing it into the life of humanity, *which is the dimension* in which the redemptive suffering of Christ can be constantly completed by the suffering of man. This also highlights the divine and human nature of the Church. Suffering seems in some way to share in the characteristics of this nature. And for this reason suffering also has a special value in the eyes of the Church. It is something good, before which the Church bows down in reverence with all the depth of her faith in the Redemption. She likewise bows down with all the depth of that faith with which she embraces within herself the inexpressible mystery of the Body of Christ.

## VI

### THE GOSPEL OF SUFFERING

25. The witnesses of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ have handed on to the Church and to mankind a specific Gospel of suffering. The Redeemer himself wrote this Gospel; above all by his own suffering accepted in love, so that man "should not perish but have eternal life".<sup>80</sup> This suffering, together with the living word of his teaching, became a rich source for all those who shared in Jesus' sufferings among the first generation of his disciples and confessors and among those who have come after them down the centuries.

It is especially consoling to note — and also accurate in accordance with the Gospel and history — that at the side of

<sup>80</sup> Jn. 3-16.

Christ, in the first and most exalted place, there is always his Mother through the exemplary testimony that she bears *by her whole life* to this particular Gospel of suffering. In her, the many and intense sufferings were amassed in such an interconnected way that they were not only a proof of her unshakable faith but also a contribution to the redemption of all. In reality, from the time of her secret conversation with the angel, she began to see in her mission as a mother her "destiny" to share, in a singular and unrepeatable way, in the very mission of her Son. And she very soon received a confirmation of this in the events that accompanied the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, and in the solemn words of the aged Simeon, when he spoke of a sharp sword that would pierce her heart. Yet a further confirmation was in the anxieties and privations of the hurried flight into Egypt, caused by the cruel decision of Herod.

And again, after the events of her Son's hidden and public life, events which she must have shared with acute sensitivity, it was on Calvary that Mary's suffering, beside the suffering of Jesus, reached an intensity which can hardly be imagined from a human point of view but which was mysterious and supernaturally fruitful for the redemption of the world. Her ascent of Calvary and her standing at the foot of the Cross together with the Beloved Disciple were a special sort of sharing in the redeeming death of her Son. And the words which she heard from his lips were a kind of solemn handing-over of this Gospel of suffering so that it could be proclaimed to the whole community of believers.

As a witness to her Son's Passion by her *presence*, and as a sharer in it by her *compassion*, Mary offered a unique contribution to the Gospel of suffering, by embodying in anticipation the expression of Saint Paul which was quoted at the beginning. She truly has a special title to be able to claim that she "completes in her flesh" — as already in her heart — "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions".

In the light of the unmatched example of Christ, reflected with singular clarity in the life of his Mother, the Gospel of suffering, through the experience and words of the Apostles, becomes *an inexhaustible source for the ever new generations* that succeed one another in the history of the Church. The Gospel of suffering signifies not only the presence of suffering in the Gospel, as one of the themes of the Good News, but also the revelation of *the salvific power and salvific significance* of suffering in Christ's messianic mission and, subsequently, in the mission and vocation of the Church.



Christ *did not conceal* from his listeners *the need for suffering*. He said very clearly: "If any man would come after me . . . let him take up his cross daily",<sup>81</sup> and before his disciples he placed demands of a moral nature that can only be fulfilled on condition that they should "deny themselves".<sup>82</sup> The way that leads to the Kingdom of heaven is "hard and narrow", and Christ contrasts it to the "wide and easy" way that "leads to destruction".<sup>83</sup> On various occasions Christ also said that his disciples and confessors would *meet with much persecution*, something which — as we know — happened not only in the first centuries of the Church's life under the Roman Empire, but also came true in various historical periods and in other parts of the world, and still does even in our own time.

Here are some of Christ's statements on this subject: "They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be a time for you to *bear testimony*. Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death; you will be hated by all *for my name's sake*. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives".<sup>84</sup>

The Gospel of suffering speaks first in various places of suffering "for Christ", "for the sake of Christ", and it does so with the words of Jesus himself or the words of his Apostles. The Master does not conceal the prospect of suffering from his disciples and followers. On the contrary, he reveals it with all frankness, indicating at the same time the supernatural assistance that will accompany them in the midst of persecutions and tribulations "for his name's sake". These persecutions and tribulations will also be, as it were, *a particular proof* of likeness to Christ and union with him. "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you . . . ; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you . . . A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me they will persecute you . . . But

<sup>81</sup> Lk. 9:23.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Lk. 9:23.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Mt. 7:13-14.

<sup>84</sup> Lk. 21:12-19.

all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me".<sup>85</sup> "I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world".<sup>86</sup>

This first chapter of the Gospel of suffering, which speaks of persecutions, namely of tribulations experienced because of Christ, contains in itself *a special call to courage and fortitude*, sustained by the eloquence of the Resurrection. Christ has overcome the world definitively by his Resurrection. Yet, because of the relationship between the Resurrection and his Passion and death, he has at the same time overcome the world by his suffering. Yes, suffering has been singularly present in that victory over the world which was manifested in the Resurrection. Christ retains in his risen body the marks of the wounds of the Cross in his hands, feet and side. Through the Resurrection, he manifests *the victorious power of suffering*, and he wishes to imbue, with the conviction of this power, the hearts of those whom he chose as Apostles and those whom he continually chooses and sends forth. The Apostle Paul will say: "All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted".<sup>87</sup>

26. While the first great chapter of the Gospel of suffering is written down, as the generations pass, by those who suffer persecutions for Christ's sake, simultaneously another great chapter of this Gospel unfolds through the course of history. This chapter is written by all those *who suffer together with Christ*, uniting their human sufferings to his salvific suffering. In these people there is fulfilled what the first witnesses of the Passion and Resurrection said and wrote about sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

Therefore, in those people there is fulfilled the Gospel of suffering, and, at the same time each of them continues in a certain sense to write it: they write it and proclaim it to the world; they announce it to the world in which they live and to the people of their time.

Down through the centuries and generations, it has been seen that *in suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ*, a special grace. To this grace many saints, such as Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and others, owe their profound conversion.

<sup>85</sup> Jn. 15:18-21.

<sup>86</sup> Jn. 16:33.

<sup>87</sup> 2 Tim. 3:12.

A result of such a conversion is not only that the individual discovers the salvific meaning of suffering, but above all that he becomes a completely new person. He discovers a new dimension, as it were, of *his entire life and vocation*. This discovery is a particular confirmation of the spiritual greatness which in man surpasses the body in a way that is completely beyond compare. When this body is gravely ill, totally incapacitated, and the person is almost incapable of living and acting, all the more do interior *maturity and spiritual greatness* become evident, constituting a touching lesson to those who are healthy and normal.

This interior maturity and spiritual greatness in suffering are certainly the *result* of a particular *conversion* and cooperation with the grace of the Crucified Redeemer. It is he himself who acts at the heart of human sufferings through his Spirit of truth, through the consoling Spirit. It is he who transforms, in a certain sense, the very substance of the spiritual life, indicating for the person who suffers a place close to himself. *It is he* — as the interior Master and Guide — *who reveals* to the suffering brother and sister this *wonderful interchange*, situated at the very heart of the mystery of the Redemption. Suffering is, in itself, an experience of evil. But Christ has made suffering the firmest basis of the definitive good, namely the good of eternal salvation. By his suffering on the Cross, Christ reached the very roots of evil, of sin and death. He conquered the author of evil, Satan, and his permanent rebellion against the Creator. To the suffering brother or sister Christ *discloses* and gradually reveals *the horizons of the Kingdom of God*: the horizons of a world converted to the Creator, of a world free from sin, a world being built on the saving power of love. And slowly but effectively, Christ leads into this world, into this Kingdom of the Father, suffering man, in a certain sense through the very heart of his suffering. For suffering cannot be *transformed* and changed by a grace from outside, but *from within*. And Christ through his own salvific suffering is very much present in every human suffering, and can act from within that suffering by the powers of his Spirit of truth, his consoling Spirit.

This is not all: the Divine Redeemer wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer through the heart of his holy Mother, the first and the most exalted of all the redeemed. As though by a continuation of that motherhood which by the power of the Holy Spirit had given him life, the dying Christ conferred upon the ever Virgin Mary a *new kind of motherhood* — spiritual and

universal — toward all human beings, so that every individual, during the pilgrimage of faith, might remain, together with her, closely united to him unto the Cross, and so that every form of suffering, given fresh life by the power of this Cross, should become no longer the weakness of man but the power of God.

However, this interior process does not always follow the same pattern. It often begins and is set in motion with great difficulty. Even the very point of departure differs: people react to suffering in different ways. But in general it can be said that almost always the individual enters suffering with a *typically human protest* and *with the question "why"*. He asks the meaning of his suffering and seeks an answer to this question on the human level. Certainly he often puts this question to God, and to Christ. Furthermore, he cannot help noticing that the one to whom he puts the question is himself suffering and wishes to *answer him* from the Cross, *from the heart of his own suffering*. Nevertheless, it often takes time, even a long time, for this answer to begin to be interiorly perceived. For Christ does not answer directly, and he does not answer in the abstract this human questioning about the meaning of suffering. Man hears Christ's saving answer as he himself gradually becomes a sharer in the sufferings of Christ.

The answer which comes through this sharing, by way of the interior encounter with the Master, is in itself *something more than the mere abstract answer* to the question about the meaning of suffering. For it is above all a call. It is a vocation. Christ does not explain in the abstract the reasons for suffering, but before all else he says: "Follow me!" Come! Take part through your suffering in this work of saving the world, a salvation achieved through my suffering! Through my Cross. Gradually, *as the individual takes up his cross*, spiritually uniting himself to the Cross of Christ, the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him. He does not discover this meaning at his own human level, but at the level of the suffering of Christ. At the same time, however, from this level of Christ the salvific meaning of suffering *descends to man's level* and becomes, in a sense, the individual's personal response. It is then that man finds in his suffering interior peace and even spiritual joy.

27. Saint Paul speaks of such joy in the Letter to the Colossians: "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake".<sup>88</sup> A source

<sup>88</sup> Col. 1:24.



of joy is found in the *overcoming of the sense of the uselessness of suffering*, a feeling that is sometimes very strongly rooted in human suffering. This feeling not only consumes the person interiorly, but seems to make him a burden to others. The person feels condemned to receive help and assistance from others, and at the same time seems useless to himself. The discovery of the salvific meaning of suffering in union with Christ *transforms* this depressing feeling. Faith in sharing in the suffering of Christ brings with it the interior certainty that the suffering person "completes what is lacking in Christ's afflictions"; the certainty that in the spiritual dimension of the work of Redemption *he is serving*, like Christ, *the salvation of his brothers and sisters*. Therefore he is carrying out an irreplaceable service. In the Body of Christ, which is ceaselessly born of the Cross of the Redeemer, it is precisely suffering permeated by the spirit of Christ's sacrifice that is *the irreplaceable mediator and author of the good things* which are indispensable for the world's salvation. It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls. Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. In that "cosmic" struggle between the spiritual powers of good and evil, spoken of in the Letter to the Ephesians,<sup>89</sup> human sufferings, united to the redemptive suffering of Christ, *constitute a special support for the powers of good*, and open the way to the victory of these salvific powers.

And so the Church sees in all Christ's suffering brothers and sisters as it were a *multiple subject of his supernatural powers*. How often is it precisely to them that the pastors of the Church appeal, and precisely from them that they seek help and support! The Gospel of suffering is being written unceasingly, and it speaks unceasingly with the words of this strange paradox: the springs of divine power gush forth precisely in the midst of human weakness. Those who share in the sufferings of Christ preserve in their own sufferings a very special *particle of the infinite treasure* of the world's Redemption, and can share this treasure with others. The more a person is threatened by sin, the heavier the structures of sin which today's world brings with it, the greater is the eloquence which human suffering possesses in itself. And the more the Church feels the need to have recourse to the value of human sufferings for the salvation of the world.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Eph. 6:12.

## VII

## THE GOOD SAMARITAN

28. To the Gospel of suffering there also belongs — and in an organic way — the parable of the Good Samaritan. Through this parable Christ wished to give an answer to the question: "Who is my neighbour?"<sup>90</sup> For of the three travellers along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, on which there lay half-dead a man who had been stripped and beaten by robbers, it was precisely the Samaritan who showed himself to be *the real "neighbour"* of the victim: "neighbour" means also the person who carried out the commandment of love of neighbour. Two other men were passing along the same road; one was a priest and the other a Levite, but each of them "saw him and passed by on the other side". The Samaritan, on the other hand, "saw him and had compassion on him. He went to him, . . . and bound up his wounds", then "brought him to an inn, and took care of him".<sup>91</sup> And when he left, he solicitously entrusted the suffering man to the care of the innkeeper, promising to meet any expenses.

The parable of the Good Samaritan belongs to the Gospel of suffering. For it indicates what the relationship of each of us must be towards our suffering neighbour. We are not allowed to "pass by on the other side" indifferently; we must "stop" beside him. *Everyone who stops beside the suffering of another person*, whatever form it may take, is a Good Samaritan. This stopping does not mean curiosity but availability. It is like the opening of a certain interior disposition of the heart, which also has an emotional expression of its own. The name "Good Samaritan" fits *every individual who is sensitive to the sufferings of others*, who "is moved" by the misfortune of another. If Christ, who knows the interior of man, emphasizes this compassion, this means that it is important for our whole attitude to others' suffering. Therefore one must cultivate this sensitivity of heart, which bears witness to *compassion* towards a suffering person. Sometimes this compassion remains the only or principal expression of our love for and solidarity with the sufferer.

Nevertheless, the Good Samaritan of Christ's parable does not stop at sympathy and compassion alone. They become for

<sup>90</sup> Lk. 10:29.

<sup>91</sup> Lk. 10:33-34.

him an incentive to actions aimed at bringing help to the injured man. In a word, then, a Good Samaritan is *one who brings help in suffering*, whatever its nature may be. Help which is, as far as possible, effective. He puts his whole heart into it, nor does he spare material means. We can say that he gives himself, his very "I", opening this "I" to the other person. Here we touch upon one of the key-points of all Christian anthropology. Man cannot "fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself".<sup>92</sup> A Good Samaritan is *the person capable of exactly such a gift of self*.

29. Following the parable of the Gospel we could say that suffering, which is present under so many different forms in our human world, is also present in order to *unleash love in the human person*, that unselfish gift of one's "I" on behalf of other people, especially those who suffer. The world of human suffering unceasingly calls for, so to speak, another world: the world of human love; and in a certain sense man owes to suffering that unselfish love which stirs in his heart and actions. The person who is a "neighbour" cannot indifferently pass by the suffering of another: this in the name of fundamental human solidarity, still more in the name of love of neighbour. He must "stop", "sympathize", just like the Samaritan of the Gospel parable. The parable in itself expresses a *deeply Christian truth*, but one that at the same time is very universally human. It is not without reason that, also in ordinary speech, any activity on behalf of the suffering and needy is called "Good Samaritan" work.

In the course of the centuries, this *activity* assumes organized *institutional forms* and constitutes a field of work in the respective *professions*. How much there is of "the Good Samaritan" in the profession of the doctor, or the nurse, or others similar! Considering its "evangelical" content, we are inclined to think here of a vocation rather than simply a profession. And the institutions which from generation to generation have performed "Good Samaritan" service have developed and specialized even further in our times. This undoubtedly proves that people today pay ever greater and closer attention to the sufferings of their neighbour, seek to understand those sufferings and deal with them with ever greater skill. They also have an ever greater capacity and specialization in this area. In view of all this, we can say that the parable of the Samaritan of the Gospel has become *one of the essential elements*

<sup>92</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 24.

of moral culture and universally human civilization. And thinking of all those who by their knowledge and ability provide many kinds of service to their suffering neighbour, we cannot but offer them words of thanks and gratitude.

These words are directed to all those who exercise their own service to their suffering neighbour in an unselfish way, *freely undertaking to provide "Good Samaritan" help*, and devoting to this cause all the time and energy at their disposal outside their professional work. This kind of voluntary "Good Samaritan" or charitable activity can be called social work; it can also be called an *apostolate*, when it is undertaken for clearly evangelical motives, especially if this is in connection with the Church or another Christian Communion. Voluntary "Good Samaritan" work is carried out in appropriate *milieux* or through *organizations* created for this purpose. Working in this way has a great importance, especially if it involves undertaking larger tasks which require cooperation and the use of technical means. No less valuable is individual activity, especially by people who are better prepared for it in regard to the various kinds of human suffering which can only be alleviated in an individual or personal way. Finally *family* help means both acts of love of neighbour done to members of the same family, and mutual help between families.

It is difficult to list here all the types and different circumstances of "Good Samaritan" work which exist in the Church and society. It must be recognized that they are very numerous, and one must express satisfaction at the fact that, thanks to them, the *fundamental moral values*, such as the value of human solidarity, the value of Christian love of neighbour, form the framework of social life and interhuman relationships and combat on this front the various forms of hatred, violence, cruelty, contempt for others, or simple "insensitivity", in other words, indifference towards one's neighbour and his sufferings.

Here we come to the enormous *importance of having the right attitudes in education*. The family, the school and other education institutions must, if only for humanitarian reasons, work perseveringly for the reawakening and refining of that sensitivity towards one's neighbour and his suffering of which the figure of the Good Samaritan in the Gospel has become a symbol. Obviously the Church must do the same. She must even more profoundly make her own — as far as possible — the motivations which Christ placed in his parable and in the whole Gospel. The eloquence of the parable of the Good Samaritan,



and of the whole Gospel, is especially this: every individual must feel as if *called personally* to bear witness to love in suffering. The institutions are very important and indispensable; nevertheless, no institution can by itself replace the human heart, human compassion, human love or human initiative, when it is a question of dealing with the sufferings of another. This refers to physical sufferings, but it is even more true when it is a question of the many kinds of moral suffering, and when it is primarily the soul that is suffering.

30. The parable of the Good Samaritan, which — as we have said — belongs to the Gospel of suffering, goes hand in hand with this Gospel through the history of the Church and Christianity, through the history of man and humanity. This parable witnesses to the fact that Christ's revelation of the salvific meaning of suffering *is in no way identified with an attitude of passivity*. Completely the reverse is true. The Gospel is the negation of passivity in the face of suffering. Christ himself is especially active in this field. In this way he accomplishes the messianic programme of his mission, according to the words of the prophet: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord".<sup>93</sup> In a superabundant way Christ carries out this *messianic programme* of his mission: he goes about "doing good",<sup>94</sup> and the good of his works became especially evident in the face of human suffering. The parable of the Good Samaritan is in profound harmony with the conduct of Christ himself.

Finally, this parable, through its essential content, will enter into those disturbing words of the Final Judgment, noted by Matthew in his Gospel: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was in prison and you came to me".<sup>95</sup> To the just, who ask when they did all this to him, the Son of Man will respond: "Truly, I say to you, *as you did it to one of the least of*

<sup>93</sup> Lk. 4:18-19; cf. Is. 61:1-2.

<sup>94</sup> Acts 10:38

<sup>95</sup> Mt. 25:34-36.

*these my brethren*, you did it to me".<sup>96</sup> The opposite sentence will be imposed on those who have behaved differently: "As you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me".<sup>97</sup>

One could certainly extend the list of the forms of suffering that have encountered human sensitivity, compassion and help, or that have failed to do so. The first and second parts of Christ's words about the Final Judgment unambiguously show how essential it is, for the eternal life of every individual, to "stop", as the Good Samaritan did, at the suffering of one's neighbour, to have "compassion" for that suffering, and to give some help. In the messianic programme of Christ, which is at the same time the programme of *the Kingdom of God*, suffering is present in the world in order to release love, in order to give birth to works of love towards neighbour, in order to transform the whole of human civilization into a "civilization of love". In this love the salvific meaning of suffering is completely accomplished and reaches its definitive dimension. Christ's words about the Final Judgment enable us to understand this in all the simplicity and clarity of the Gospel.

These words about love, about actions of love, acts linked with human suffering, enable us once more to discover, at the basis of all *human sufferings*, *the same redemptive suffering of Christ*. Christ said: "You did it to me". He himself is the one who in each individual experiences love: he himself is the one who receives help, when this is given to every suffering person without exception. He himself is present in this suffering person, since his salvific suffering has been opened once and for all to every human suffering. And all those who suffer have been called once and for all to become sharer "in Christ's sufferings",<sup>98</sup> just as all have been called to "complete" with their own suffering "what is lacking in Christ's afflictions".<sup>99</sup> At one and the same time Christ has taught man *to do good by his suffering* and *to do good to those who suffer*. In this double aspect he has completely revealed the meaning of suffering.

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<sup>96</sup> Mt. 25:40.

<sup>97</sup> Mt. 25:45.

<sup>98</sup> 1 Pt. 4:13.

<sup>99</sup> Col. 1:24.

## VIII

## CONCLUSION

31. This is the meaning of suffering, which is truly supernatural and at the same time human. It is *supernatural* because it is rooted in the divine mystery of the Redemption of the world, and it is likewise deeply human, because in it the person discovers himself, his own humanity, his own dignity, his own mission.

Suffering is certainly part of the mystery of man. Perhaps suffering is not wrapped up as much as man is by this mystery, which is an especially impenetrable one. The Second Vatican Council expressed this truth that "only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. In fact... Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, *fully reveals man to himself* and makes his supreme calling clear".<sup>100</sup> If the words refer to everything that concerns the mystery of man, then they certainly refer in a very special way to *human suffering*. Precisely at this point the "revealing of man to himself and making his supreme vocation clear" is particularly *indispensable*. It also happens — as experience proves — that this can be particularly *dramatic*. But when it is completely accomplished and becomes the light of human life, it is particularly *blessed*. "Through Christ and in Christ, the riddles of sorrow and death grow meaningful".<sup>101</sup>

I now end the present considerations on suffering in the year in which the Church is living the extraordinary Jubilee linked to the anniversary of the Redemption.

The mystery of the Redemption of the world is in an amazing way *rooted in suffering*, and this suffering in turn finds in the mystery of the Redemption its supreme and surest point of reference.

We wish to live this Year of the Redemption in special union with all those who suffer. And so there should come together in spirit beneath the Cross on Calvary all suffering peo-

<sup>100</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

ple who believe in Christ, and particularly those who suffer because of their faith in him who is the Crucified and Risen One, so that the offering of their sufferings may hasten the fulfilment of the prayer of the Saviour himself that all may be one.<sup>102</sup> Let there also gather beneath the Cross all people of good will, for on this Cross is the "Redeemer of man", the Man of Sorrows, who has taken upon himself the physical and moral sufferings of the people of all times, so that *in love* they may find the salvific meaning of their sorrow and valid answers to all of their questions.

*Together with Mary, Mother of Christ, who stood beneath the Cross,*<sup>103</sup> we pause beside all the crosses of contemporary man.

We invoke all *the Saints*, who down the centuries in a special way shared in the suffering of Christ. We ask them to support us.

And we ask all *you who suffer* to support us. We ask precisely you who are weak *to become a source of strength* for the Church and humanity. In the terrible battle between the forces of good and evil, revealed to our eyes by our modern world, may your suffering in union with the Cross of Christ be victorious!

To all of you, dearest brothers and sisters, I send my Apostolic Blessing.

Given at Rome, at Saint Peter's, on the liturgical Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes, 11 February 1984, in the sixth year of my Pontificate.

JOHN PAUL II

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Jn. 17:11, 21-22.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Jn. 19:25.



# *The Family and the Common Good:*

## A SCHOOL OF LOVE AND LIFE

By FR. JOSEPH H. DE TORRE

### **Domestic Society and Civil Society**

The "Charter of the Rights of the Family", presented by the Holy See to all persons, institutions and authorities concerned with the mission of the family in today's world, on 22 October 1983, states the following in its Preamble:

"The family constitutes, much more than a mere juridical, social and economic unit, a community of love and solidarity, which is uniquely suited to teach and transmit cultural, ethical, social, spiritual and religious values, essential for the development and well-being of its own members and of society."<sup>1</sup>

This essential link between the family and the common good of society is further stressed in the same Document:

"The family and society, which are mutually linked by vital and organic bonds, have a complementary function in the defense and advancement of the good of every person and of humanity."<sup>2</sup>

As I have explained elsewhere, "if the good of the family is fostered, promoted and protected by society, the individuals are in a position to grow up to their fulfillment in the best possible environment: the blend of (i) *privacy* (which fosters his individual autonomy and responsibility) and (ii) *affection* (which fosters his sociability), conducive to the development of the social virtues of a good citizen. The effectiveness of all other educational agencies depends on this primary and natural school for life: the family."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, I have also written that "the most basic community in civil society is the family: the

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<sup>1</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, 28 November 1983, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *The Roots of Society*, Sinag-tala, Manila, 1977, p. 51.

## 44 BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

natural school for citizenry, where everyone can learn to love the common good in the right order, *i.e.*, love of God and love of neighbor."<sup>4</sup>

### Materialist Ideologies

In order to properly assess and diagnose the present plight of the family, threatened by "numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it,"<sup>5</sup> we must be aware of the ideologies which have developed in the last few centuries, with an accelerated chain of social, economic and political crises, counterpointed by a no less evident succession of achievements of the human spirit in all domains.<sup>6</sup>

The *liberal individualism* which developed in the wake of the protestant reformation and the rise of the bourgeoisie, reaching its peak with the doctrines of Locke and Rousseau in the 18th century, was followed by the utilitarian and evolutionary post-bourgeois materialisms of Bentham, Darwin and Marx, going in the direction of *totalitarian collectivism*.<sup>7</sup> The two trends, individualism and collectivism, stemmed from the common root of a man-centered humanism bent on "liberating" man from God.

Parallel to this development, a process occurred whereby the concept of *individual* overshadowed that of *person*, the concept of selfish autonomy that of responsible self-giving, and the concept of society that of community, while the meaning and value of the family was gradually dimmed together with the sense of fatherhood and filiation, so that, as Gustave Thibon has put it, "the individual has become a grain of sand and society a desert."<sup>8</sup>

### Love and Selfishness

Since man's thirst for the Absolute cannot be repressed, due to his inexhaustible capacity to know and to love, if he rejects the transcendent God, he must absolutize his own self,

<sup>4</sup> *Christian Philosophy*, Vera-Reyes, Manila, 1980, p. 255.

<sup>5</sup> Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 22 November 1981, no. 3: *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, 21-28 December 1981.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Vatican II Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, no. 47, and *Familiaris consortio*, no. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *The Roots of Society*, ch. II. See also S. L. Jaki, *The Road of Science and the Ways to God*, ch. 18, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Hervé Pasqua in *Le Billet de Waasmunster*, October 1983, p. 3.

either by making himself his own god or by submerging himself in the collective self. And, as St. Augustine put it in its classical form, these two options, love of God and love of self, give rise to two "cities": the heavenly and the worldly. The heavenly city, whether in this life or in the next, would be a society in which the common good is actually pursued in a community of shared commonwealth; in which the individuals act as persons in a community of solidarity. The worldly city, on the other hand, is the realm of egotism, doomed to self-destruction, both in this life and in the next.

As I commented in an essay some years ago,<sup>9</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas noted that our instinctive natural disposition toward others is one of friendliness,<sup>10</sup> clearly shown when we instinctively try to help others in an emergency. The only interference with this natural tendency is the opposite tendency to sin, namely to love of self in preference to love of God.

The mystery of man is that he has a finite root in matter with a touch of infinity in a spirit open to a boundless transcendence: he has an intelligence capable of understanding the existence of infinite goodness and peering into it, coupled with the ensuing capacity to love it, as Plato described so piercingly in his *Symposium* and in his *Republic*. Man is the only being in the material universe capable of knowing and loving God, of mirroring God in his being and communing with Him.<sup>11</sup> All he has to do is to open his intelligence to the world with childlike simplicity and wonderment, and point his will and heart towards goodness and beauty. Thus he attains wisdom.<sup>12</sup> But the failure to do this, by preferring his own self, lands man into the foolishness<sup>13</sup> of denying the existence of God and falling into idolatry.<sup>14</sup>

In fact, from the beginning of his creation, man was deceived into thinking that he could be like God<sup>15</sup> by emancipating

<sup>9</sup> *Human Life — Welcome Friend or Unwelcome Intruder?*, Economics & Society, CRC, Manila, February 1976. Reprinted in *Philippine Panorama*, Manila, 16 May 1976, and in *Position Papers*, Dublin, Ireland, August-September 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Summa contra gentiles*, III, 117.

<sup>11</sup> "God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image and likeness... God created man in his image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them.'" (Gen. 1:26, 27).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Mt. 11:25 and Lk. 10:21.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Ps. 13 and 52.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Ws. 13:1-5 and Rom. 1:18-23.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Gen. 3:5.

himself from God and doing his own will instead. But since man is open to infinity by knowing and loving God, rejecting God means to him necessarily falling back into his own finitude, which he shares with the rest of creatures. His own devaluation and the consequent devaluation of everything he handles in that state of mind is the pathetic result.

### Man's Self-devaluation

The first victim of man's self-devaluation by his turning away from the infinite Absolute into the finite relativity of creatures is man himself, namely human life, not in the abstract but in the concrete individual. He begins to be seen by his fellow-men as a potential aggressor since the self-centered egoist projects his own image on to others, and so the aforementioned instinctive tendency to friendliness turns into distrust, self-defensive indifference, insecurity, fear of interference, envy, jealousy, resentment, anger, hatred, strife.

Man thus becomes the unwelcome intruder, since he requires a sharing, and other men do not want to give, because if they did, they would run out of what they have. Of course, this way of thinking is the result of measuring human happiness in purely material, finite terms of physical health, material well-being, pleasure and comfort, all of which is indeed limited and can certainly be run out of.

This is how "quality of life" is construed by a *Weltanschauung* or outlook which, consciously or under the impact of subliminal advertising, has capitulated to the materialism and pleasure-worship of the *practical* atheist, or, put in a more sophisticated way, the agnostic humanist, who prefers to leave the question of God's existence "in brackets", as phenomenologists say, or as not *streng wissenschaftlich*, as logical positivists say, and would rather concentrate on building up the secular city, just as if God did not exist.

### The Social Repercussions

In the wake of the practical atheist or agnostic humanist, typified by freemasons and doctrinaire socialists of the liberal sort (though other, more pragmatic socialists do not in fact differ much from these),<sup>16</sup> there comes the *theoretical* atheist,

<sup>16</sup> See note 7 above.



typified by marxist communists. The work of these ideologists then percolates into the institutions and laws of society, which tend to surrender to egotism in the name of "freedom". Laws and institutions are then gradually (liberal socialism) or abruptly (marxist socialism) "liberalized" in the name of progress and modernity. Laws thus become more "permissive" (liberal socialism) or totalitarian (marxist socialism), and from being the safeguard of civilization by encouraging virtue and deterring from vice,<sup>17</sup> they become the meek endorsers of selfish hedonism (liberal socialism) or the instrument of a ruthless dictatorial State (marxist socialism), thus corrupting themselves.

This is consistent with both practical and theoretical atheism: with the practical atheism of freemasonry (for whom we have to act "as if" God did not exist) and of liberal socialism (for whom religion is a purely private affair which should have no social or political manifestations: the majority of votes settles *every* issue), as well as for the theoretical atheism of marxist socialism, for whom God does *not* exist, and religion *must* be suppressed as an alienating force *via* the abolition of private property in the revolutionary process.<sup>18</sup>

This "liberalizing" process takes place with the suitable sugar-coating of appropriate slogans, clichés and euphemisms, such as the "smashing of taboos" and "old-fashioned prejudices", the "challenge" or "refusal" to the "arrogance of the establishment", the "emancipation of the slaves of authority", the "overthrow of antiquated and fossilized structures", the "liberation from every oppression", the "expropriation of the expropriators", etc., etc.

These emotionally charged terms and expressions are very effective weapons against weak and timorous holders of authority, who easily give way under cover of "humility" and "charity", unwittingly forgetting the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, which are the *intelligent* way of implementing humility and charity, as distinct from the *emotional* way, which ends up as a rule in injustice.

They forget prudence by not foreseeing the damage that their compromise will do to those entrusted to them. They forget justice by not giving to them what they owe to them: the

<sup>17</sup> See *The Roots of Society*, ch. V.

<sup>18</sup> I am not denouncing freemasons, socialists or marxists, as persons. Nor do I question their intentions or the positive values they all uphold. I only point out the practical and/or theoretical atheism which they are the first to admit, and which logically binds them to materialism.

sure guidance of truth. They forget fortitude by meekly bowing to the intimidating pressure of a vociferous mass media or official propaganda. And they forget temperance by being afraid of the discomfort of having to take unpopular measures.

### Effect on Marriage

Usually the first victim of this type of liberalism is the *indissolubility of marriage*. What makes marriage a human and divine institution is that it expresses a God-like mutual self-giving of a man and a woman oriented towards eternity: "till death do us part." In this way, a love for the opposite sex, which is only a *general* attraction in the abstract, and which Don Juan never makes *real* as long as he only *uses* women as objects for his *own* pleasure, becomes *concrete* in the subjectivity of the I-thou of husband and wife, who commit themselves irrevocably to each other. Prostituted sex is nameless, impersonal, selfish. Only the genuinely human sex of marriage is personalized, and thus indissoluble: "... and the two shall become one flesh. Therefore now they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder."<sup>19</sup>

The normal fruit of married love is the offspring, who then needs to be brought up by the parents, who thereby become also the primary educators of their children.<sup>20</sup> But even if, with no conscious interference of the spouses, no offspring comes forth, they still are *wedded* to each other by the strength of that self-giving love: they are so *for life*, and this is how marriage is distinguished from animal mating, which is the "free love" advocated by anarchists and marxists.

But the substitution of love of self for love of God drives out eternity and everything irrevocable. The "pursuit of happiness" is then fully secularized, materialized and animalized. The fact, recognized by all genuine sages or philosophers of all cultures, that *perfect* happiness is impossible for man on earth is foolishly discarded, and an epicurean haste ("we only have a short life to live") to enjoy pleasure at all costs finds a long and assorted chain of "arguments" against the indissolubility of the marriage bond, which is described as "enslaving", whereas

<sup>19</sup> Mt. 19:5-6. Cf. Gen. 2:24.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Art. 5 of the Charter of the Rights of the Family.

in fact it fulfills man's capacity for self-giving love with its power to liberate man from his egotism.

These "arguments" are then fanned out with the help of effective and refined techniques of persuasion, through economic or political power, until eventually divorce is "liberalized" by the law of the land, which thereby becomes an incentive for egotism, the deadly corrosive force of society. To the extent that love of God recedes from society and thereby from married couples, the bonds of human love are shaken loose and may break up.

Pope John Paul II traced the fidelity of conjugal love to the spouses' love of God, in his Mass for Families at Kinshasa in 1980:

"It is... by conforming to Christ who gave himself up for love of his Church that spouses have access, day after day, to the love of which the Gospel speaks to us: 'Love one another, as I loved you,' and more precisely to the perfection of indissoluble union on all planes... Each of the spouses must reserve moments of solitude with God, for 'heart-to-heart' communication in which the partner is not the first concern. This indispensable personal life of the soul with God is far from excluding the sharing of all conjugal and family life. On the contrary it stimulates the christian couple to look for God together, to discover his will together and to carry it out in practice with the light and the energies drawn from God himself."<sup>21</sup>

### The Bankruptcy of Human Life

The next bond to break<sup>22</sup> is the *subordination of sex to human love*, that "horse and carriage" of the famous popular song. It is astonishing how man's frantic craving for selfish pleasure can blind him to the evident purpose of sex or natural termination of the sexual act, which is the union of the male and female elements of human fertility. But this act can only be consonant with humanity if it is the result of a life-long, total and fully personalized mutual self-giving. It is ontologically out of place, and therefore profoundly immoral in any other context. It is a degradation of humanity, and if the very source of the river is thus polluted, one can imagine the devastating contamination of the entire stream.

<sup>21</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, 12 May 1980, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ps. 2:3.

Authentic human love between the two sexes is actualized in marriage, whose primary purpose or crowning fruit is the begetting<sup>23</sup> and upbringing<sup>24</sup> of children, and whose complementary and no less essential purpose is the mutual sharing of affection, help and companionship of the spouses, even when they are not blessed with children with no fault of their own<sup>25</sup> or when they are too old to have them.

The January 1976 official declaration of the World Health Organization that sex is not only for begetting children but also for sheer pleasure is symptomatic of this dehumanization of sex and degradation of humanity. Its logical sequel is the condoning, and eventual legalization of all sorts of sexual aberrations as long as they provide pleasure.

If sexual pleasure is not at the service of human life, but the other way round; if pleasure is not subordinated to spiritual goals, but the other way round, it is perfectly logical to control births by *contraception*, that is, to use human intelligence to devise methods to check human life, so that the amount of pleasure can be maximized and the amount of hardship minimized, for after all, we only have *this* life to live. The triumph of egotism is thereby evident, and *other* human life becomes an unwelcome intruder.

The next logical step is to neutralize or permanently block the sources of human life, or even dry them up altogether: an outrageous insult to the Author of that life. The well-known term for this affront to humanity is *sterilization*. But since this is still an ugly word, its liberal promoters have to resort to technical euphemisms, such as vasectomy or ligation of fallopian tubes, to get people to swallow the pill, or even to a brazen enticement to animality, such as "enjoy sex fully without any risk."

### The Anti-life Mentality

Then comes *abortion*, or with a medical euphemism, termination of pregnancy, which, after the final and incontrovertible findings of modern genetics, which prove that a human being exists from the first moment of conception, leaves no doubt

<sup>23</sup> Also called procreation, since it is accompanied by the creation of a spiritual and immortal soul by God: see my *Christian Philosophy*, ch. 31, d

<sup>24</sup> Also called education, with all the noble and human overtones of this term: see *Gaudium et spes* no. 50.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. note 19 above. See also Mk. 10:7; I cor. 7:11; Eph. 5:31.



as to its constituting the worst type of murder, due to its most aggravating circumstances (when it is deliberate, of course): the intentional killing of a completely *innocent* and *defenseless* human being *by his own mother*, a human being who has a special right to protection by society, since he is one of its weakest members.

But egotism is blind to these facts and continues to regard *other* human life as an unwelcome intruder. The sophisticated ancient Greeks were more logical in preferring *infanticide*, that is, killing the infants after birth, as less messy and less risky for the mother. No wonder the Catholic Church has attached the penalty of ex-communication<sup>26</sup> to all those directly involved in the commission of this hideous sin.

Next in line is *euthanasia* or "mercy-killing" (I don't know which is the medical euphemism in this case), glamorized by the expression "the right to die", which puts it on a par with *suicide*, and which forgets that rights, by their very nature, can only be claimed to something morally good.<sup>27</sup> No one has the right to do evil. In this case the value of human life reaches its lowest quotation, and "justifies" the elimination of all kinds of undesirable human beings: the elderly, the sick, the feeble-minded, the disabled, the parasites. This logical conclusion was reached by the leaders of that notorious form of socialism which engulfed Germany from 1933 to 1945, and they went a long way in implementing it not only with the hapless millions of Jews. As for that other type of socialism of marxist communism (the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a transition to communist class-less society), it has had no scruples in implementing it whenever it was thought necessary by the Party,<sup>28</sup> as can be seen, for instance, in Krushchev's *Memoirs* and in Solzhenitzyn's *Gulag Archipelago*.

In the last analysis, the victim is always the individual human being. Who can care for him or her, if love of self has eclipsed the love of God, if the foundation of all personal human rights has been removed? The materialist Hobbes put it very appropriately in the 17th century: *homo homini lupus*, man is a wolf to man. While sin is man's flight from God into egotism

<sup>26</sup> And still does in the new Code of Canon Law, promulgated in 1983: canon 1398.

<sup>27</sup> See my *Christian Philosophy*, ch. 43, b.

<sup>28</sup> See my *Marxism, Socialism and Christianity*, 2nd ed., Sinag-tala, Manila, 1983.

(idolatry), salvation is man's conversion to God and to his commandments by repentance and adoration. Only thus can man succeed in loving his fellow-men as God loves them, one by one, and in not doing them any harm with his mind or with his will.

### The Church and Human Life

Human love and human life are indeed inextricably bound to each other: they stand or fall together. If human love fails, human life suffers to that extent. That is why there is a close connection between sexual perversion (the separation of sexual pleasure from its openness to the procreation and education of human life) and man's inhumanity to man (physical and psychological violence, cruelty and sadism). It is a truism that at this point of history, the accumulation of selfishness or anti-love has reached such proportions that human life is in very real danger of self-annihilation.

In the words of the Second Vatican Council:

"Whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator . . .

"Sacred Scripture teaches the human family what the experience of the ages confirms: that while human progress is a great advantage to man, it brings with it a strong temptation. For when the order of values is jumbled, and bad is mixed with the good, individuals and groups pay heed solely to their own interests, and not to those of others. Thus it happens that the world ceases to be a place of true brotherhood. In our own day, the magnified power of humanity threatens to destroy the race itself."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 27 and 37 (Abbott Edition).

It is well to recall here the steps that the Catholic Church has been taking in defense of human life and its sanctuary of conjugal love. In 1976, I edited a book which did just that, and to which I refer the reader.<sup>30</sup> But since then, very important developments have taken place.

After appropriate collegial consultation, Pope John Paul II approved the subject to be taken up by the 1980 Synod of Bishops<sup>31</sup> as "The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World." And from the very start the twin issues of love and life were put resolutely on top. The Pope himself composed a prayer to be said in all churches and oratories for the entire duration of the Synod, beginning as follows:

"Lord God, from you every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. Father, you are *Love and Life*. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman, and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity, grant that every family on earth may become for each successive generation *a true shrine of life and love*." (Italics added.)

A little over a year after the meeting of the Synod of Bishops, on 22 November 1981, the Pope issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* "regarding the role of the christian family in the modern world,"<sup>32</sup> in whose opening section the keynote is already sounded in what is described as "the beauty and grandeur of the *vocation to love* and the *service to life*." (Italics added.)

As a school of love for the procreation and education of human life, or for the formation of good citizens, the family is seen in this document as the molecule of society, and anything threatening the values of marriage and family is a source of cancer for society.

## Marriage and Family Values

Vatican II had already specified some of the countervalue opposed to life and love and therefore lethal for the common good of society:

<sup>30</sup> *The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy*, Sinag-tala, Manila, 1976.

<sup>31</sup> The Synod of Bishops is a consultative body created by Vatican II, made up of episcopal representatives of all countries, to meet every three years in Rome, in order to study the most urgent current issues related to the Church's mission, and recommend lines of action to the Pope as supreme Shepherd of the Church.

<sup>32</sup> See note 5 above.

"The well-being of the individual person and of human and christian society is intimately linked with the healthy condition of that community produced by marriage and family. Hence christians and all men who hold this community in high esteem sincerely rejoice in the various ways by which men today find help in fostering this community of love and perfecting its life... Yet the excellence of this institution is not everywhere reflected with equal brilliance. For polygamy, the plague of divorce, so-called free love, and other disfigurements have an obscuring effect. In addition, married love is too often profaned by excessive self-love, the worship of pleasure, and illicit practices against human generation. Moreover, serious disturbances are caused in families by modern economic conditions, by influences at once social and psychological, and by the demands of civil society. Finally, in certain parts of the world problems resulting from population growth are generating concern."<sup>33</sup>

*Familiaris consortio* elaborates further:

"The situation in which the family finds itself presents positive and negative aspects: the first are a sign of the salvation of Christ operating in the world; the second, a sign of the *refusal that man gives to the love of God*...

"... Signs are not lacking of a disturbing degradation of some fundamental values: a mistaken theoretical and practical concept of the independence of the spouses in relation to each other; serious misconceptions regarding the relationship of authority between parents and children; the concrete difficulties that the family itself experiences in the transmission of values; the growing number of divorces; the scourge of abortion; the ever more frequent recourse to sterilization; the appearance of a truly contraceptive mentality.

"At the root of these negative phenomena there frequently lies a corruption of the idea and the experience of freedom, conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of *self-affirmation, often against others, for one's own selfish well-being*.

"Worthy of our attention also is the fact that, in the countries of the so-called Third World, families often lack both the means necessary for survival, such as food, work, housing and medicine, and the most elementary freedoms. In the richer countries, on the contrary, excessive prosperity and the consumer mentality, paradoxically joined to a certain anguish and

<sup>33</sup> *Gaudium et spes*, no. 47 (Abbott Edition).



uncertainty about the future, deprive married couples of the *generosity and courage* needed for raising up new human life: thus life is often perceived not as a blessing, but as a *danger from which to defend oneself*.

"The historical situation in which the family lives therefore appears as an interplay of light and darkness.

"This shows that history is not simply a fixed progression towards what is better, but rather an event of freedom, and even a struggle between freedoms that are in mutual conflict, that is, according to the well-known expression of St. Augustine, a conflict between two loves: the love of God to the point of disregarding self, and the love of self to the point of disregarding God.

"It follows that only an *education for love* rooted in faith can lead to the capacity of interpreting 'the signs of the times', which are the historical expression of *this twofold love*.

"Living in such a world, under the pressures coming above all from the mass media, the faithful do not always remain immune from the obscuring of certain *fundamental values*, nor set themselves up as the *critical conscience of family culture* and as active agents in the building of an authentic *family humanism*.

"Among the more troubling signs of this phenomenon, the Synod Fathers stressed the following, in particular: the spread of divorce and of recourse to a new union, even on the part of the faithful; the acceptance of purely civil marriage in contradiction to the vocation of the baptized 'to be married in the Lord'; the celebration of the marriage sacrament without living faith, but for other motives; the rejection of the moral norms that guide and promote the human and christian exercise of sexuality in marriage."<sup>34</sup>

### The Community of Love

It is in no. 11 of *Familiaris consortio* that the vital union of love and life is presented in all its depth, steering clear of both a manicheistic disparagement of marriage and a materialistic reduction of human sexuality to mere animality:

"God created man in his own image and likeness: calling him to existence *through love*, he called him at the same time *for love*.

<sup>34</sup> *Familiaris consortio*, nos. 6 and 7 (italics added).

"God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. Creating the human race in his own image and continually keeping it in being, God inscribed in the humanity of man and woman the vocation, and thus the capacity and responsibility, of love and communion. Love is therefore the *fundamental and innate vocation of every human being*.

"As an incarnate spirit, that is a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, man is called to love *in his unified totality*. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love.

"Christian revelation recognizes two specific ways of realizing the vocation of the human person, in its entirety, to love: marriage and virginity or celibacy. Either one is, in its own proper form, an actuation of the most profound truth of man, of his being 'created in the image of God.'

"Consequently, sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is *by no means something purely biological*, but concerns the innermost being of the human person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a *total personal self-giving*, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally.

"This totality which is required by conjugal love also corresponds to the demands of *responsible fertility*. This fertility is directed to the generation of a human being, and so by its nature *it surpasses the purely biological order* and involves a whole series of personal values. For the harmonious growth of these values a persevering and unified contribution by both parents is necessary.

"The only 'place' in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is marriage, the covenant of *conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God himself*, which only in this light manifests its true meaning. The institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly

affirmed as unique and exclusive, in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the Creator. A person's freedom, far from being restricted by this fidelity, is secured against every form of subjectivism or relativism and is made a sharer in creative Wisdom."<sup>35</sup>

### The Family and the Common Good

No. 17 of this historic document states that "the family has the mission to guard, reveal and communicate love," and therefore it is the indispensable school for the training of citizens, namely members of society fully committed to the common good. The role of teachers and other educators is to assist parents in this mission.

Nos. 28 to 35 reaffirm the values of human procreation in continuity with *Gaudium et spes* and the encyclical *Humanae vitae*, and strongly proclaim anew the Church's resolute stand for life. Nos. 36 to 41 do the same with regard to parental education, also in continuity with Vatican II's Declaration on Christian Education, *Gravissimum educationis*. And nos. 42 to 45 focus on the "vital and organic links with society" (no. 42), calling the family "the first and vital cell of society," as Vatican II also did in its Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 11.

And in no. 46, *Familiaris consortio* enumerates fourteen specific rights of the family, as consequent to its nature and purpose, and announces "the preparation of a Charter of Rights of the Family, to be presented to the quarters and authorities concerned." This is the document quoted at the beginning of this commentary.

Let me end with these recent words of the Pope to the Bishops of Papua New Guinea on 8 May 1984:

"In every society today, marriage and family are threatened by moral and social evils. And yet at no time in history has the stability and vitality of a christian home been more necessary."<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, as *Familiaris consortio* states in its conclusion (no. 86): "*The future of humanity passes by way of the family.*" (Italics in text.)

<sup>35</sup> Italics added, except for the first two expressions, which are italicized in the original.

<sup>35</sup> *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, 14 May 1984, p. 17.

# ***THE RURAL ELDERLY: Selected Demographic and Social Characteristics***

**UST RESEARCH CENTER**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The recent census of population for 1980 showed that the Philippines has an extremely young population with a median age of 17.6 compared to 30 years and over median age for US and other developed countries. The youth shall definitely constitute the majority population for the next two decades. With declining mortality rate and improved health services, however, a concomitant building up of the elderly population is taking place. As of 1980, the elderly or the 65 years and over constitute only 3.4% of the population or 1.6 million. Based on the 1981 ESCAP report on a Regional Survey of Aging for Asia and Pacific region, by the year 2000, the Philippines shall have 5.2 million of 60 years and over of which 3.3 million are 65 years and over.

The acceleration of population ageing has started and with changes in technology, urbanization and migration, more and more elderlies shall be displaced. Whereas it is assumed that the caring responsibilities for the aged reside with the family especially in the rural areas, the effects of the gradual erosion of traditional values and breakdown of family ties need to be assessed and studied. The social, economic and humanitarian implications of the growing number of elderly, although not yet that urgent, have to be faced, the sooner the better.

Since the country has a predominantly agricultural economy, majority (63% as of 1980) of the elderly population is concentrated in the rural areas, hence the first phase of the research was concentrated on the rural elderly. This study aims to describe the characteristics and living conditions of the rural elderly and from these, identify their needs.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To carry out these objectives, a total enumeration of the elderly (60 years and above) in the area was conducted, out of which 58 were randomly selected for a more intensive study.

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\* Based on the Social Research project on "The Rural Elderly" written and coordinated by Ms. Amor Pedro, Senior Research Associate, SRC, UST.



After the structured interviews, the researchers undertook six months of regular week-end observation and visitation of the area. Through person to person approach and informal dialogues and workshops, the researchers were able to gain more insights into the perceptions of the elderly of themselves and their situation.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT SITE

The community under study is typical rice producing area where the tempo and pattern of activities revolve around the main source of livelihood. Pulilan, a third class town, is one of the 24 towns of Bulacan in the Central Plain of Luzon, located 55 kilometers away from the National Capital. Out of the 19 barangays of the town (population 39,900 as of 1980), Barangay Inaon was selected because it is relatively accessible; houses are more clustered compared to other barangays and rice farming is the predominant occupation. The site is seven kilometers away from the town proper and is accessible by jeepneys and tricycles. With a land area of 3,480 hectares, it supported a population of 3,357 in 1980.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ELDERLY POPULATION

### A. SEX AND STATUS

Based on the total enumeration, the elderly constitute 5.59% of the total population with slightly more female (52.17%) than males (47.83%).

Table 1

### FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY CIVIL STATUS AND BY SEX

STATUS	MALE		FEMALE		TOTAL	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Single	0	—	4	3.7	4	1.93
Married	90	90.9	78	72.2	168	81.16
Widowed	8	8.08	26	24.08	34	16.42
Separated	1	1.01	0	—	1	0.48
T O T A L	99	99.99	108	99.98	207	99.99

Table 1 shows that by civil status, 81.16% are currently married, while 18.84% are either widowed, single or separated. A closer look, however, shows that 24% of the females are widowed and single compared to only 8.08% of the males.

It would appear that the elderly males are relatively better off than the females because more of them have spouses, aside from the children to care for them. The trend may be attributed to the customary preference of men to marry younger women and the generally longer life expectancy of women.

## B. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND OCCUPATION

Table 2

### DISTRIBUTION BY EDUCATIONAL LEVEL ATTAINED BY RESPONDENTS AND CHILDREN

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	RESPONDENTS		CHILDREN	
	f	%	f	%
None	6	10.4	2	.65
Cartilla	2	3.4	0	—
Tagalog	2	3.4	2	.65
Catechism	6	10.4	2	.65
Primary (1-4 years)	29	50.00	93	30.39
Intermediate (5-6 years)	13	22.4	153	50.00
Secondary (7-10 years)	0	—	26	8.50
College (11-15 years)	0	—	28	9.15
T o t a l	58	100.00	306	100.00

A typical elderly in the community has a very low level of education as can be seen in table 2. Not one of the respondents reached the secondary level of education and for those who attended school (72.3%), average attendance is 3.8 years. 10% have no formal schooling while 17% received informal lessons on catechism and on the national language.

Due to the low level of education and lack of skills, opportunities for non-agricultural occupations are limited as can be seen in table 3. Those who do not have occupations are mainly women who do not actively work for their living but simply assist their spouses in their farm work.

Table 3

DISTRIBUTION BY PREVIOUS AND CURRENT  
OCCUPATIONS OF RESPONDENTS AND CHILDREN

OCCUPATION	RESPONDENTS		CHILDREN	
	f	%	f	%
Farming	17	29.31	68	22.22
Farm wage earner	6	10.34	24	7.84
Handicraft (weaving, etc.)	11	18.97	23	7.52
Poultry and livestock production	1	1.72	6	1.96
Trade/Commerce (vending)	7	12.07	13	4.25
Professional	0	—	16	5.23
Skilled worker	2	3.45	21	6.86
Student	0	—	10	3.27
Laborer/Factory worker	3	5.17	16	5.23
Housekeeper	13	22.41	83	27.17
Unemployed/none	1	1.72	26	8.50
Total	61	100.00	306	100.00

*C. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT AND OCCUPATION  
OF CHILDREN*

Almost in accord with the national figure, the average number of children is 5.5. As shown in table 2, unlike their parents, the children exhibited higher level of education, as shown by at least 9.2% who reached college level and 8.5% reaching secondary level. Although 6 out of 306 did not attend any formal schooling, 80.4% reached the primary and intermediate level. Over-all respondents have an average of 6.03 years of formal education. Such improvement in educational level is reflective of the high value and priority of Filipinos for education.

Understandably, the occupations of the children are more diversified and technical. Such jobs have brought about the movement of at least 21% of the children to other areas.

D. *ELDERLY HOUSEHOLD AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS*

Table 4

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY LIVING  
ARRANGEMENT, BY STATUS

	Status			Total
	Married	Widow	Single	
Living with unmarried children	9	3	0	12
Living with married children and grandchildren	16	10	0	26
Living with grandchildren	6	1	0	7
Living with other relatives and helpers	10	0	2	12
Living alone	0	1	0	1
T o t a l	41	15	2	58

The average household size (4) was found to be less than the national average of six. Table 4 shows the composition of such households. Only less than one half (44.83%) of the elderlies are living with their married children; the rest may be considered as heads of the family or are still able to fend for themselves.

Apparently, there are more elderlies who prefer to live by themselves as long as they are able. Those living with their grandchildren, distant relatives and helpers reasoned out that since all the children have their own families, they were simply left behind. The only respondent who was living alone was in fact taken in by the son's family only when he got sick.

Those who are living with their married children however, reasoned out that it is the married children who stayed with them after getting married. Only six respondents answered that they are incapable of living on their own and are totally dependent on their children.



## E. EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC STATUS

Table 5

## DISTRIBUTION BY SOURCE OF INCOME

	f	% OF RESPONDENT	AVERAGE INCOME
Farmland	37	63.79	P2,960 per year
Wages	16	27.59	
Farm laborers, weavers, etc.			P1,170 per planting cycle P8 - 25 per week
Profit	7	12.07	Cannot be determined
Poultry-raising, vending, etc.			
None	13	22.41	—
Pension	0	0	—
TOTAL	73*	—	—

\* Multiple responses

Employment and income data in the informal sector cannot be accurately determined as in the formal sector where employer-employee relationships are explicit. In addition, non-market transactions which are very common in the rural areas, would introduce a downward bias to the estimates of income and consumption.

As to the source of income in table 5, 63.8% cited farmlands which are either leased, owned or both. From an average farm size of 1.67 hectares (10,000 square meters) and after costs have been deducted, the farmer usually gets an average of P2,960 per year.

Wage is the major source of income for 27.6%, while 12% cited profit and self-employment. Income levels of wage earner and self-employed cannot be determined accurately because work is seasonal, on piece rate basis and generally not stable. Weavers can earn P8.00 - P25.00 per week if materials are available, while an agricultural wage earner gets an average share of 18 cavans per planting cycle which, if valued at government controlled prices, is equal to P1,170.

The 22.4% who reported having no source of income at all, get their subsistence from their children and grandchildren either in cash or in kind, such as food and clothing. Only two cited relatives as their sources of subsistence.

When asked whether their incomes were sufficient for their needs, 17.24% responded it is just enough; while 82.76% responded that it is not enough.

Table 6

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE ON THE QUESTION,  
"WHAT ARE THE NEEDS NOT MET BY YOUR INCOME?"

	f	% of RESPONDENTS
Additional food	37	63.79
Medical expense	33	56.90
Clothing	13	22.41
Other household needs (soap, fuel, light, etc.)	21	36.21
Recreation	2	3.45
Others	1	1.72
Not applicable	9	15.52
Total	116*	

\* Multiple answers

Table 6 shows the needs which are not adequately met by the present sources of income. Food was cited by 63.8%, medicine by 56.9%, other household needs (soap, light, fuel, etc.) 36.2%, clothing 22.4% and leisure 3%.

Housing as a need was not at all cited because practically all of the respondents, or their immediate family, own their houses. Even if the houses are dilapidated and old, housing is not considered a serious problem since with some indigenous materials, improvements and repair can be undertaken.

#### F. STATE OF HEALTH AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

Despite the economic status, perceived state of health, however, is generally good since only 17% admitted being often

sick and bedridden, while 22.04% said they were never sick and 60% were occasionally sick. The most common ailments cited by one half of the respondents were pulmonary ailments, followed by rheumatism, stomach disorders and high blood pressure.

### *Access to Health Facilities*

65.85% of the respondents usually go to the health center or clinic in town for their medical treatment, while those with more serious illness (21.45%) usually go to hospitals in other towns. The remainder simply stay home.

When asked whom they consulted for medical care and treatment, 67% answered they were treated by doctors; yet 44% of them still went to herbal doctors, while 19% resorted to self-medication.

### *Perceived Causes of Illness*

Those who were sickly attributed their illnesses to hardwork (23%), old age (19%), lack of food and irregular eating habits (14.2%), and constant work in water (9.5%).

## G. RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

Children not living with or near their parents still maintain close relationship through once-a-week (20.7%) and once-a-month (20.7%) visitations, or get together during special occasions (31%). On the other hand, the parents visit their children less frequently: once a week (12.07%) and once a month (12.07%). Considered by respondents as special occasions for family get-together are Christmas (79.3%), fiestas (32.8%), and New Year (17.24%).

Children still consult their parents whenever they have problems according to 79.3% of the respondents. The elderly on the other hand, also consider their children as their confidante or as advisers, as indicated by 57% of the respondents.

The elderly (93%) expect their children to care for them in their old age, while 51.72% also cited their grandchildren to care for them.

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSION

*Overall Status of the Rural Elderly*

In general, the summary results followed the general trend of elderly population in the Philippines, namely:

- 1) There are more female elderly than male, especially concentrated in the old-old category or 75 years and above.
- 2) There are more widows and single/unmarried females elderly than males.
- 3) The rural elderly have very low level of education (3.8 years of formal education) and are employed mainly in the informal sector.
- 4) Elderly household is small (4) and composed mainly of immediate and close relatives.

*Employment, Income and Perceived Needs*

- 1) Farming is the main source of income. The income derived from such activity is well below subsistence level, hence, has to be supplemented from other sources such as fishing, vegetable gardening, weaving, poultry raising, etc.
- 2) Except for the incapacitated, more than one-third are still actively working, while the rest are still engaged in some light activities.
- 3) Children working in the community or elsewhere contribute significantly to their subsistence.
- 4) Total economic dependence on the children is confined mainly to the old-old category.
- 5) Food, medicine, household needs, clothing in diminishing order of importance were cited as needs which are not sufficiently met by their present sources of income.
- 6) Although they think they are healthy because they can still move about, quite a number of them suffer from poverty-related diseases such as pulmonary tuberculosis, weak lungs and anemia.



*Relationship with Children*

- 1) No elderly lives alone. Aside from the spouse, there are always children or grandchildren staying with them.
- 2) Children maintain close ties with their parents even if they are working outside the community. Economic as well as emotional support are still provided by them.
- 3) The elderly still command the respect of not only their children but other members of the community.

Based on the overall findings, the rural elderly, although plagued with poverty, hardwork and general weakening of the body, is not forlorn, bitter and hopeless. By necessity he has to stay on his own two feet as long as he is able, sustained by the love and economic support for him by his children and grandchildren. If he has no children, relatives and friends are there to take care of him, and share with him whatever they have. Relationships are close not only among families but also within the community, since somehow or another they are all related. On the whole, the elderly in the rural area seems to be well integrated in the family and community.

**"THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION"**

(Continued from page 86)

4.5. Since the theses of theologies of liberation are often indiscriminately popularized under a simplified form among groups which lack the necessary catechetical and theological preparations as well as the capacity for personal discernment, *pastoral discretion in the proposition* of doctrine is absolutely required.

4.6. Catechesis and any method or process of formation should always present *the whole message of salvation* and the operatives of true liberation within the framework of this whole message. Only thus can we lay the foundation of the "civilization of love".

September 4, 1984

† ANTONIO LI. MABUTAS, D.D.  
CBCP President

## THE DIOCESAN CURIA

The New Code defines the diocesan curia as consisting of those persons and institutions appointed by the bishop to furnish him assistance in the governance of the entire diocese, i.e., in the direction of its pastoral activity, in the exercise of its judicial power and in providing for its administration (cc. 469-470).

In this article, we shall deal only on those persons and institutions which help the bishop in the administration of the diocese.

### I. PERSONS IN THE DIOCESAN CURIA

The persons who shall work at the diocesan curia are the bishop, the curia moderator, the vicar general and episcopal vicar, the chancellor and notaries, the financial officer and the canon penitentiary.

*The Bishop* — The principal function of the bishop at the curia is the coordination of all the transactions and services to be rendered by it for the good of the diocese. Hence, the New Code states that the diocesan bishop must see to it that all the matters which concern the administration of the entire diocese are duly coordinated, and that they are arranged in a manner that the good of the portion of God's people committed to him is more suitably obtained (c. 473, 1).

It is also the responsibility of the diocesan bishop to coordinate the pastoral activity of his vicars general or episcopal vicars (c. 473, 2). Indeed, this coordination is further emphasized by the Code even when a bishop has an auxiliary or coadjutor. Canon 406, 2 says that the diocesan bishop should appoint his auxiliary or coadjutor as vicars general or at least episcopal vicars. Such an appointment makes clearer the fact that they are still dependent upon his authority for coordination.

*Curia Moderator* — The appointment of the curia moderator by the bishop is facultative, i.e., he may or may not appoint one. However, when such an appointment is judged advantageous,

this moderator ought to be a priest. Moreover, unless in the judgment of the bishop local circumstances warrant otherwise, the vicar general or, if there are several, one of the vicars general, should be appointed moderator of the curia (c. 473, 3).

His responsibility is to coordinate, under the authority of the bishop, those tasks which concern administration. He likewise sees to it that the other members of the curia duly fulfill the office committed to them (c. 473, 2).

Furthermore, the chancellor is obliged to inform the moderator of the curia about all those acts which give rise to a juridic effect duly signed by the bishop and by himself, or by any other notary (c. 474).

*Vicar General and Episcopal Vicar* — Both the vicar general and the episcopal vicar are equipped with ordinary vicarious power with identity with the principal. However, if they are auxiliary or coadjutor bishops, this ordinary vicarious power is without identity with the principal, i.e., with the diocesan bishop.

A. Difference — The difference between a vicar general and an episcopal vicar is this. The vicar general is appointed by the bishop to assist him in the governance of the entire diocese (c. 475, 1). The episcopal vicar, on the other hand, is appointed to assist him over a determined section of the diocese, over a certain type of business, or over the faithful of a determined rite or of a certain group of persons (c. 476).

B. Number — Unless the size of the diocese, the number of its inhabitants, or other pastoral reasons warrant otherwise, as a rule, there should be appointed but one vicar general (c. 475, 2). Also, as often as the correct governance of the diocese requires it, the diocesan bishop can appoint one or several episcopal vicars (c. 476).

C. Appointment, Removal, Tenure — The diocesan bishop can freely appoint and can freely remove a vicar general and an episcopal vicar, except as regards the auxiliary or coadjutor bishops who should be appointed vicar general or at least episcopal vicar. Moreover, an episcopal vicar who is not auxiliary bishop can be appointed only for a time period to be determined in the act of appointment (c. 477, 1).

D. Substitute — When a vicar general or an episcopal vicar is absent or is legitimately impeded, the diocesan bishop can appoint another who acts as substitute for such a vicar (c. 477, 2).

E. Qualifications — A vicar general and an episcopal vicar should be (c. 478, 1 & 2): (a) a priest; (b) not less than thirty years of age; (c) a doctor or licentiate in canon law or in theology, or at least truly expert in these disciplines; (d) one of sound doctrine, integrity, prudence and experienced in handling matters; (e) not canon penitentiaries; and (f) not related to the bishop within the fourth degree by blood.

F. Powers — By virtue of his office, the vicar general possesses that executive power over the entire diocese which in law belongs to the diocesan bishop, i.e., he possesses the power to do all administrative acts with the exception of those which the bishop has reserved to himself, or which in law require the special mandate of the bishop (c. 479, 1). For example, the vicar general or the episcopal vicar cannot preside over any session of a diocesan synod without special mandate from the bishop (c. 462, 2).

The episcopal vicar possesses also *ipso iure* this same power which we mentioned but only over that determined section of territory, over that type of business, or over those faithful of a determined rite or group for which he was appointed. Excepted from this general rule are those cases which the bishop or vicar general has reserved to himself or which in law require the special mandate of the bishop (c. 479, 2).

Within the limits of their competency, a vicar general and an episcopal vicar also possess the habitual faculties granted to the bishop by the Apostolic See, as well as the power to execute rescripts. This is the case unless another provision has been expressly made or unless the intervention of the diocesan bishop has been chosen due to the some personal characteristic involving the matter at hand (c. 479, 3).

G. Special Obligation — The vicar general and the episcopal vicar must refer to the diocesan bishop the principal matters which are to be handled and which have been handled, and they should never act contrary to the will and mind of the diocesan bishop (c. 480).

H. Termination of Tenure — The power of the vicars general ceases: (a) when the time of their mandate is fulfilled; (b) when they resign; (c) when they are informed of their removal except in cases of auxiliary and coadjutor bishops; and (d) when the episcopal see is vacant except again in cases of auxiliary and coadjutor bishops.



I. Suspension — Unless they possess the episcopal dignity, the power of the vicar general and of the episcopal vicar is suspended with the suspension from office of the diocesan bishop (c. 481, 2).

*The Chancellor and the Notaries* — In every curia, a chancellor is to be appointed, whose principal task is to be sure that the acts of the curia are gathered and arranged, in order that they may be guarded in the archive of the curia, arranged in chronological order and an index made (c. 482, 1). If it seems necessary, the chancellor can be given an assistant, whose title would be vice-chancellor (c. 482, 2).

Notaries, on the other hand, are those whose signatures establish the authenticity whether of any acts whatsoever, whether only of judicial acts, or only for acts of certain causes or transactions (c. 483, 1). The chancellor and the vice-chancellor are automatically notaries or secretaries of the curia (c. 482, 3).

The chancellor and the notaries ought to be of good character and above reproach (c. 483, 2). A priest ought not to be the notary in cases in which the reputation of a priest can be called into question. Ordinarily, therefore, a lay person, whether man or woman, can act as chancellor or notary.

The notary is supposed (1) to write the acts and instruments relating to decrees, dispositions, obligations and other tasks required of them; (2) to record faithfully in writing what has taken place and sign the record with notation of place, day, month and year; and (3) to furnish the acts or instruments to one legitimately requesting them, all else being equal, and to declare copies of them in conformity with the original (c. 484).

The chancellor and notaries can be removed from office at the will of the diocesan bishop, but not by the diocesan administrator, except with the consent of the college of consultors (c. 485).

Related to the job of the notaries are the archives of the diocese which shall be three, namely, the diocesan archive, the secret archive and the historical archive. Only the bishop and the chancellor shall have a key to the diocesan archive. No one may licitly open it without the permission either of the bishop or of both the moderator of the curia and the chancellor (c. 487). In case, therefore, the bishop chooses not to appoint a curia moderator, he shall be the only one capable to open the diocesan

archive. By law, moreover, it is also only the bishop who may have the key to the secret archive (c. 490, 1). Documents of historical value shall be kept in the historical archive (c. 491, 2).

*Financial Officer* — In each diocese, having listened to the college of consultors and also to the finance council, the bishop shall name a financial officer who is to be truly skilled in economic affairs and absolutely distinguished for honesty (c. 494, 1). He may be a lay person. And he shall be appointed for a five-year term, renewable (c. 494, 2). During his term, he must not be removed from his office except for grave cause, judged by the bishop after listening to the college of consultors and to the finance council once again (c. 494, 2).

It is his role to administer the goods of the diocese under the authority of the bishop, in accordance with the policy established by the finance council. From the income of the diocese he shall meet the expenses which the bishop or others deputized by him shall have legitimately authorized. And at the end of the year, he must give to the finance council a statement of receipts and expenses (c. 494, 4).

*Canon Penitentiary* — Where there is no chapter of canons, the diocesan bishop shall appoint a priest to fulfill the job of a canon penitentiary (c. 508, 2). The diocesan bishop is to confer this office only upon priests outstanding in the integrity of their doctrine and life, and who have performed the ministry in a praiseworthy manner (c. 509, 2).

The canon penitentiary receives from law the ordinary faculty — which nevertheless cannot be delegated to another — of absolving in the sacramental forum from undeclared censures *latae sententiae* not reserved to the Apostolic See as for example, procured abortion. Within the diocese, he can absolve even outsiders. And outside the diocese, he can absolve members of the diocese (c. 508, 1).

## II. INSTITUTIONS IN THE DIOCESAN CURIA

There are five institutions in the diocesan curia which are supposed to help the bishop in the administration of the diocese. They are the episcopal council, the presbyteral council, the college of consultors, the finance council and the pastoral council.

*Episcopal Council* — The establishment of this council is facultative. If the bishop should judge it beneficial in fostering

more suitable pastoral activity, the bishop can establish an episcopal council which would consist of the vicars general and the episcopal vicars (c. 473, 4).

*Presbyteral Council* — This is a body of priests who are to be like the senate of the bishop, representing the entire presbyterate. It belongs to this council to aid the bishop in the governance of the diocese according to the norm of law, in order that the pastoral welfare of the portion of the people of God committed to him may be carried forward as effectively as possible (c. 495, 1). In apostolic vicariates and prefectures, the vicar or the prefect is to constitute a council of at least three priests whose opinion is to be heard in more serious matters, even by way of letters (c. 495, 2).

The establishment or constitution of a presbyteral council by the bishop is obligatory (c. 495, 1). When there is a new bishop in the diocese, he must constitute the presbyteral council within a year after taking possession (c. 501, 2). If the presbyteral council is dissolved for grave causes as stated by law, the bishop shall constitute it anew also within a year (c. 501, 3).

This council enjoys only a consultative vote. What transpired in its meetings can only be divulged by the bishop and by no other (c. 500, 3). Moreover, the bishop must listen to it or even seek its consent in cases expressly defined by law (c. 500, 2). However, the Code does not state any case where the bishop should seek the consent of the presbyteral council. But there are several cases where the bishop must hear the council. They are the following: c. 461, 1 — in convoking a diocesan synod; c. 515, 2 — in erecting, suppressing or altering parishes; c. 531 — on offerings in a parish; C. 536, 1 — in establishing pastoral councils in parishes; c. 1222, 2 — in permitting the relegation of the use of an old unrepairable church to profane but not sordid use; c. 1263 — in imposing moderate taxes to public juridical persons.

In general, the council must be heard according to the Code "in more serious matters" (c. 495, 2). There is one case, moreover, where the bishop proposes candidates and the council elects, i.e., the parish priest consultors for the process on the removal of parish priests (c. 1742).

Now, it pertains to the diocesan bishop to convoke the presbyteral council, to preside at it, to determine the questions to be treated by it or to receive proposals from its members (c.

500, 1). It can never act without the diocesan bishop (c. 500, 3). Hence, when the diocese is vacant, the council ceases (c. 501, 2). Its functions are fulfilled by the college of consultors.

The presbyteral council is to have its own statutes. These are to be approved by the diocesan bishop, and are to respect the norms which may be issued by the Conference of Bishops (c. 496). The manner of electing members to the presbyteral council is to be determined in the statutes. This is to be done in such a way that insofar as it is possible, priests will represent the presbyterate, taking into account the fullest diversity of ministries and various regions of the diocese (c. 499). Members of the presbyteral council are to be designated for a term to be determined in the statutes. This is to be set in such a way that the full council or some part of it are renovated within a five-year period (c. 501, 1).

About half of its members are to be elected by priests themselves, in keeping with the norms of the canons as well as the council's statutes. Some priests, in keeping with the council's statutes, ought to be ex-officio members, i.e., members who belong to the council in virtue of the office they hold. The diocesan bishop is at liberty to freely name some others (c. 497).

The following have the right to both active and passive votes in constituting the presbyteral council: (a) all secular priests incardinated in the diocese; (b) secular priests not incardinated in the diocese who live in the diocese and exercise some office for the good of the diocese; (c) priests who are members of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life, who live in the diocese and who exercise some office for the good of the diocese; and (d) other priests who have a domicile or quasi-domicile in the diocese, if the statutes provide for it.

Finally, we have to state that if the presbyteral council is no longer fulfilling the function committed to it for the good of the diocese, or is gravely abusing it, the diocesan bishop can dissolve it after consulting with the metropolitan or, if it is the metropolitan who has the problem, after consulting with the suffragan bishop who is oldest by promotion (c. 501, 3).

*College of Consultors* — Some priests are to be freely selected by the diocesan bishop from among the members of the presbyteral council to constitute a college of consultors. Their number is to be not less than six nor more than twelve. They are constituted for a five-year term. When the five-year term is up, the college exercises its proper functions until a new col-



lege is constituted. The diocesan bishop presides at the college. If the see is impeded or vacant, the one who takes the place of the bishop in the interim presides. If such a person has not yet been constituted, the priest who is oldest in ordination presides.

The Conference of Bishops can determine that the functions of the college of consultors be committed to the cathedral chapter. In apostolic vicariates and prefectures, the same mission council which takes the place of the presbyteral council takes the place of the college of consultors (c. 502).

The following are some of the duties of the college of consultors: c. 404 — in the absence of the diocesan bishop, auxiliary or coadjutor bishops may just present their appointment to the college in taking possession of his office; c. 413 — in case of an impeded see, when there is no auxiliary or coadjutor bishop and no list of persons who shall govern the diocese is left by the diocesan bishop, the college can elect the governor; cc. 419, 421, 422, 430 — when the see is vacant, the college may elect the administrator; c. 1277 — on the administration of the goods of the church the consent of the college is needed in case of alienation of church goods (c. 1292), for an administrator to grant excommunication or incardination (c. 272), to remove a chancellor or notary from office (c. 485), to grant dimissorials (c. 1018); and the bishop must hear the college before he names a financial officer (c. 494).

*Finance Council* — In each diocese, a finance council is to be constituted by the bishop. He himself or his delegate is to preside over it. It is to be composed of at least three members of the Christian faithful truly skilled in economic affairs, as well as in civil law, and of outstanding integrity (c. 492, 1). Its members are to be named for a five-year term, renewable (c. 492, 2). Excluded from it, however, are those related to the bishop up to the fourth degree of consanguinity and affinity (c. 492, 3).

The duties of the finance council are twofold, namely, to prepare a yearly budget of the diocese and to approve the report of receipts and expenses submitted by the finance officer (c. 493).

The bishop needs the consent of this council in order to issue the more important acts of the administration of church goods (c. 1292, 1). He needs to hear it in the following cases: c. 1263 — in imposing moderate taxes to public juridical persons;

c. 1277 — in more important matters on church goods; c. 1281 — on acts which go beyond the ordinary procedures of administration not mentioned in statutes; c. 1305 — in investing money and other movable goods; and c. 1310 — in reducing obligations for pious causes.

*Pastoral Council* — The establishment of this council is also facultative. However, in each diocese, to the extent that pastoral circumstances recommend it, a pastoral council is to be constituted whose responsibility is to investigate under the authority of the bishop all those things which pertain to pastoral works, to ponder them and to propose practical conclusions about them (c. 511). It shall, moreover, enjoy only a consultative vote. And the bishop shall preside over it. It pertains to him exclusively to convoke the pastoral council according to the necessities of the apostolate (c. 514, 1). And it belongs to him alone to make public what has been discussed in the council, which he shall call together at least once a year (c. 514, 2).

This council shall consist of Christian faithful who are in full communion with the Catholic Church, clerics, members of institutes of the consecrated life and lay persons especially, who are to be designated in a manner to be determined by the diocesan bishop (c. 512, 1). The Christian faithful who are appointed to this council are to be selected that the entire portion of the people of God which constitutes the diocese shall be truly reflected, with due regard to the diverse regions of the diocese, its social conditions and professions, as well as the role which they have in the apostolate, either as individuals or in conjunction with others (c. 512, 2). No one, moreover, except Christians of proven faith, good morals and outstanding prudence are to be appointed to this same council (c. 512, 3).

It is to be constituted for a time period according to the prescriptions of the statutes which are issued by the bishop (c. 513, 1). And when the see is vacant, this council ceases to exist (c. 513, 2).

And, to end, we must emphasize that the Code lists two important obligations of all those who are admitted to offices within the diocesan curia. They are the following: (1) they should promise to fulfill their duty faithfully in accord with the manner determined by law or by the bishop; and (2) they should observe secrecy within the limits and according to the manner also determined by law or by the bishop (c. 471).

FR. WILFREDO C. PAGUIO

## CASES AND QUERIES

### 1. A Question of Exclaustration

*Dear Father,*

*A sister left for exclaustration. She asked for it in order to study herself better. She was allowed by the Superior and the Bishop of the place where she was residing. She belongs to a diocesan congregation. During her exclaustration, she was under the guidance of another bishop who was kind enough to help her resolve her difficulties in the religious life. This bishop asked her to help him in his diocese: at school administration and parochial work. At the same time, she stayed in the convent (parish). She was also given two good priests to guide her.*

*After three years, she decided to go back to the convent for two reasons: she was called by the bishop of the diocese where her motherhouse is located and was told that she must go back to the convent. She understood everything and the reason why she asked to be exclaustrated. Another reason is that, she is convinced that she is really called to the religious life. Her three-year experience made her love her vocation more. experience made her love her vocation more.*

#### *Questions:*

- 1. What kind of vote (passive or active) does she enjoy while outside the convent, I mean, while in exclaustration?*
- 2. What kind of vote does she enjoy once she returns to the convent, I mean, no longer exclaustrated?*
- 3. Is it allowed by Canon Law that Superiors, particularly the Superior General, insert an article in the constitution that sisters who are exclaustrated and have come back must go back to JUNIORATE for six months, i.e., without passing through the General Chapter? The inclusion is only known to the Superior General and the members of the General Council.*

4. *If the sister who is exclaustrated is a Councilor, what will be her status when she goes back to the convent? Can she resume her post as a Councilor? There is no provision in the particular constitution about this. What does the Canon Law say?*
5. *Can the Superior General and other Superiors say that this sister who underwent exclausturation, though qualified to hold important positions in the Congregation, should not be given the same trust and responsibility because she is bad in the sense that she had been exclaust-rated? If this is really happening, how can the Sisters be checked? This idea could poison the minds of the younger Sisters as to really believe that no such trust should be given again to such a one. What if this topic is being discussed in the conferences of the Novice Mistress who also happens to be the Mother General? How can such information be contained? How can the reputation of the Sister be protected with such kind of conferences given to the novices and to the juniors?*

Answers:

1. A religious who is exclaustrated while in that state *does not enjoy* both active and passive votes. (Can. 687)

2. A religious who returns to the religious institute after a period of exclausturation regains both active and passive votes. (Cf. explanation of no. 3)

3. There are two questions in this query, (a) that concerning the authority of a Superior General to insert an article in the constitution without the knowledge or consent of the General Chapter, but with the knowledge of the members of the general Council, and (b) the other regarding a provision which states that a sister who returns after the period of exclausturation must go back to the juniorate for six months.

With regard to query (a) it should be noted that the fundamental code or constitution of an institute protects more faithfully the *vocation* and identity of each institute. Hence, besides the patrimony of the institute (Can. 578), the constitution should contain basic norms concerning, among other things, the *discipline* of the members (Can. 587 §1). The constitutions

are approved by the competent ecclesiastical authority, and can be changed only with the consent of the same authority (Can. 587, §2). In a religious institute the General Chapter has supreme authority in accordance with the constitution (Can. 631, §1). Consequently, it is the only authority who can introduce changes or innovations which become binding only after approval of the competent ecclesiastical authority, in the case in question, the diocesan Bishop, since it is an institute of diocesan right (Cann. 587, §2; 594; 586 §2).

This norm is to be followed even if it is only a question of other norms collected in other codices like directories, for example, and the like (Can. 587, §4).

The Supreme Moderator of an institute, in the present case, the Superior General, exercises authority only within the limits of universal law and the institute's own laws (Can. 617).

Following the above explanation, the answer to query (b) is evident. The Superior General in the case has no authority, even with the knowledge of the General Council, to *change* or *add* new provisions in the institute's constitution.

Furthermore, a religious who undergoes exclausturation is supposed to be already *perpetually professed* (Can. 686, §1). When the same is granted exclausturation, the separation from the institute is only *temporary*. Therefore, the subject remains a religious with the same *perpetual vow*. When the religious, therefore, returns to the institute after the period of exclausturation, the temporal separation ceases and he/she becomes once more a full member of the institute with the same vows — perpetual. To send a religious, therefore, to the Juniorate for six months (or for whatever period of time) after the period of exclausturation is to demote the religious from perpetual vow to temporary vow, which is unjust and legally uncalled for. Exclausturation is *not a crime*, therefore, it should not be treated as such. A religious who returns to the institute after the period of exclausturation has not committed a crime and, thus, should not be punished with demotion or any other form of penalties.

4. When a religious is granted an indult of exclausturation, the same should resign from all offices he holds in the institute which are incompatible with the new condition of life. This includes that of being a Councilor, among others (Can. 687). When the same returns to the institute after the period of ex-



claustration, she cannot resume the former post of Councilor which has already been relinquished, but could again be appointed or elected as one. If there are no provisions in the constitutions about this, the same should be provided for and details regarding the same, or questions related to it, should be specified and clarified in the directories or other codices. The Code is silent about this because, I repeat, the case of exclaustation is only a *temporary* separation and not a *definitive* one, as in the case of *dismissal* or *secularization*. Hence, the problems are to be treated as if the religious never left the institute (Cf. Answer to No. 3).

5. This question has many interrelated topics and subtopics which shall be dealt with one at a time.

I repeat that exclaustation is not something *bad* or that a religious who *requests* for an indult of exclaustation is someone *bad*. It is true that the fact is a serious matter, but who are we to judge the conscience of a person and question the freedom of a religious to request for the indult of exclaustation if that is what the religious believes as the only remedy to "study herself better," as you indicated in your letter. To treat a religious who returns after the period of exclaustation with mistrust and not to consider her for some positions of responsibility though qualified is not only infantile *but irresponsible*, since it shows lack of understanding regarding the mystery of the religious life and its *ecclesial dimension*.

In fact, in your letter, the case in question was able to study herself better during the period of exclaustation and returned convinced "that she is really called to the religious life" because "her three-year experience made her love her vocation more".

Who are we then to condemn a religious who is honest with herself and with her vocation? Are we such self-righteous persons as to be the first to throw a stone when we ourselves may just be white sepulchres — hypocrites who hide our hypocrisy under our habits?

If there are many cases of religious who request for exclaustation and the like, it is rather the obligation of those in authority to see why this is happening. Is it because of weak formation? or lack of religious spirit in the institute? or lack of the atmosphere of sanctity that should prevail in an insti-

tute so that its members may become holy, etc.? These possibilities should rather be explored, instead of condemning individual religious who after all gave everything up with the thought that he/she encounter the means of sanctification inside the particular religious institute.

There is nothing wrong with discussing problems of exclausturation with novices or juniors. In fact, they should be treated truthfully and frankly before them. What is to be avoided is a sentimental and emotional treatment of the same, designed to frighten the novices and the juniors.

By the way, it is generally regarded in most, if not all, religious institutes that the positions of Novices Mistress and Mother General are among those which are considered *incompatible*. The reason is alluded to in Can. 651, §3. If that is the case in your congregation, the same should be immediately corrected.

FR. JOSE MA. TINOKO, O.P.

## 2. Doubtful Concelebration

*Last week, I concelebrated with ten priests at a funeral Mass. We were all given the corresponding stipend by the family of the deceased. It happened that, due to the negligence of one of the concelebrants, there was no Sanguis left in the chalice for the last priest. He, however, had communicated under the species of bread. In order not to call the attention of the congregation gathered in the church, he performed the usual purification of the chalice. After the Mass we had in the sacristy a discussion on the matter and the following two questions were raised:*

1. *Has the last priest really concelebrated?*
2. *If he did not concelebrate, is he entitled to the stipend he had received?*

A Priest

The Holy Eucharist can be considered in two different ways, namely as a *sacrament* and as a *sacrifice*. As a sacrament the Holy Eucharist is the most excellent of all sacraments. While the other sacraments give or increase the sanctifying grace in the recipients, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist gives the communicants the Author of the grace itself. The Mass is also a real sacrifice inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ truly offers Himself to God in an unbloody manner under the appearances of bread and wine, through the ministry of the priest. The Mass is the living renewal of the sacrifice of the cross reconciling man to God, since it actually renews in the separate consecration of the bread and wine the death of the Lord, the separation of His body and blood.

The new Codex reflects these two aspects of the Holy Eucharist in canon 897, which reads: "The most venerable sacrament is the Blessed Eucharist, in which Christ the Lord Himself is contained, offered and received, and by which the Church continually lives and grows. The Eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is forever perpetuated, is the summit and the source of all worship and Christian life. By means of it the unity of God's people is signified and brought about, and the building up of the Body of Christ is perfected. The other sacraments and all the apostolic works of Christ are bound up with, and directed to, the Blessed Eucharist." And canon 899 reads: "The celebration of the Eucharist is an action of Christ Himself and of the Church. In it Christ the Lord, through the ministry of the priest, offers Himself, substantially present under the appearances of bread and wine, to God the Father, and gives Himself as spiritual nourishment to the faithful who are associated with Him in His offering."

Though there is no unanimous opinion among theologians on the essence of the Holy Sacrifice of Mass, most of them hold that its essence is in the consecration of both species, bread and wine, with its ordination to the Holy Communion which is an integral part of the sacrifice itself. The reason is that only in the consecration of both species are the conditions for a true sacrifice verified. This being the general belief of the Theologians, the answers to the proposed case are:

(Continued on page 89)

## DOCUMENTATION

### Highlights of The Document:

# Instruction on certain aspects of the "Theology of Liberation"

(As presented by Archbishop Antonio Ll. Mabutas, D.D., President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines)

With the date of August 6, 1984, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a document entitled "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'".

It is incumbent on the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines to offer to our people the *highlights of this Instruction* with the hope that it will be of help for its right understanding. The reading and study of this document is recommended to all, but more especially to priests, religious, theologians and lay leaders.

There are *two fundamental affirmations* which may be rightly considered as the hinges around which the whole problematic of the "theology of liberation" turns. The Instruction *begins* with the solemn affirmation that "*the Gospel of Jesus Christ* is a message of freedom and a source of liberation." This statement is the motif which, like a theme in a symphony, runs across the whole document and constitutes the basic norm for its authentic interpretation. The *second* affirmation states the *meaning of liberation*: "Liberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin." From this source many and different kinds of slavery and situations of injustice derive. Attuned to these two principles a legitimate theology of liberation may be accepted; any disharmony, whether in theory or in praxis, with either of these two pivotal ideas will make the so-called theology of liberation at least suspect, if not outrightly off the target.

To *prevent any misunderstanding or misuse* of the document and its content, the Instruction states unequivocally that the

warnings it voices on the deviations found in some theologies of liberation "should in no way be interpreted as a *disavowal* of all those who want to respond generously and with an authentic evangelical spirit to the 'preferential option for the poor'... More than ever, the Church intends to condemn abuses, injustices and attacks against freedom, wherever they occur and whoever commits them" (pp. 4-5). The Instruction is a well balanced document.

The Instruction does not pretend to be exhaustive: it speaks only of "certain aspects" in the theology of liberation. The *eleven sections* into which the document is divided may be reduced to *four headings*: 1. Aspiration to Liberation; 2. Liberation as a Christian theme; 3. A new interpretation of Christianity; 4. Orientations.

#### 1. ASPIRATION TO LIBERATION AND ITS EXPRESSION (I-II, pp. 5-7)

The aspiration to liberation is one of the principal *signs of the times* which the Church has to examine and interpret in the light of the Gospel. The recognition of the dignity of the human person, the will for a peaceful and just fraternal life, the desire to do away with the shocking inequality between the rich and the poor at the international and national levels, the yearning for justice are ingredients of this aspiration for liberation.

#### 2. LIBERATION AS A CHRISTIAN THEME (biblically founded and proclaimed in the teaching of the Church; III-V, pp. 7-14)

The desire for liberation has found a strong and fraternal echo in the hearts of Christians, particularly those living in the Third World. 'Theology of Liberation' (a term which is accepted as "thoroughly valid" by the document) refers first of all to a "special concern for the poor and the victims of oppression, which in turn begets a commitment to justice" (p. 8).

2.1. A criticism made by the Instruction to some of these theologies is the *selective use* of certain passages in the *Old Testament*, particularly the book of Exodus, bypassing im-



portant spiritual requirements stressed in the Psalms and emphasized by the prophets — and particularly the demands of love in the New Testament.

2.2. The *New Testament* offers a still greater radicalization of these requirements as can be shown in the discourse of the *Beatitudes*. Those who suffer or are persecuted are identified with Christ. From this it becomes clear that the full ambit of sin, the source of evil, cannot be restricted to 'social sin'; nor can one localize evil principally or uniquely in bad social, political or economic 'structures'. The root of evil lies in free and responsible persons who have to be converted by the grace of Jesus Christ.

### 3. A NEW INTERPRETATION OF CHRISTIANITY (non-Christian presuppositions: VI-X, pp. 15-29)

The main section of the Instruction is dedicated to the interpretation of Christianity advocated by some theologies of liberation. It examines their *methodology* — mainly the use of Marxist analysis — and their content — which includes positions incompatible with the Christian vision of humanity.

3.1. The serious problem stems from the *uncritical borrowing* of concepts from Marxist ideology and by recourse to theses of biblical interpretation marked by *rationalism*.

In particular, the ideological core borrowed from Marxism corrupts and subverts the meaning of two important components, namely truth and violence. (1) According to this analysis there is no *truth* except in and through partisan *praxis*; orthopraxis is the criterion of truth — not orthodoxy, as the rule of faith. (2) The fundamental structure of history is characterized by class-struggle and consequently, society is founded in *violence*. "To the violence which constitutes the relationship of the domination of the rich over the poor, there corresponds the counter-violence of the revolution" (p. 21).

3.2. The *theological application of this core* which in some theologies of liberation is often explicit, follows logically from the premises. Thus *ecclesial realities*, including liturgical practices as the Eucharist itself, are to be judged, according to these theologies, in the light of class struggle. From this there stems a manifest *tendency* to identify the

Kingdom of God and its growth with the human liberation movement; to define faith as "fidelity to history"; to present participation in the class struggle as a requirement of charity itself and the use of non-violent means of dialogue as opposed to love; to confuse the poor of whom Scripture speaks with the Marxist proletariat. The *Church of the People*, too, becomes the Church of the class, the oppressed who must be conscientized; members of the hierarchy and the magisterium are to be opposed since they are representatives of the ruling class; ministers take their origin not from God but from the people.

3.3. In the new interpretation by some of the theologies of liberation the reading of the Scripture is to be political.

#### 4. DOCTRINAL AND PASTORAL ORIENTATIONS (XI, pp. 29-34)

The orientations found in the past section of the Instruction are of practical application to our local Church. The principal are the following:

4.1. The Church *hears the cry for justice* and intends to respond to it with all her might. Thus she asks the pastors "to consider the *response to this call* a matter of the highest priority," and expects the same from priests, religious, lay people and theologians.

4.2. The "systematic and deliberate recourse to blind *violence*, no matter from which sides it comes, must be condemned."

4.3. Since the source of injustice is the hearts of men, there is an imperative need for *interior conversion*, so that a social change will be brought about which will be truly at the service of man. New structures, of themselves, do not give birth to the "new man".

4.4. One of the conditions to bring about the proper correction in the theological and catechetical presentations is giving its proper value to the *social teaching of the Church*.

(Continued on page 67)

# PROCLAMATION OF A MARIAN YEAR FOR THE PHILIPPINES

Recalling that at Lourdes, France, in August 1983, the Holy Father suggested that it would be "opportune to celebrate the bimillennium of the Birth of Mary" (Homily during the Mass, August 15, 1983), we desire to make that suggestion a reality.

As a Catholic people, we have been historically and culturally characterized by our deep devotion to Mary, the Blessed Mother of God, the Patroness of our nation. We have been called the "*pueblo amante de Maria*", a people looking up lovingly to her and asking her to bring us closer to her Divine Son.

We recognize the tremendous flow of divine grace coming to the nation through the intercession of Our Mother. Such efficacious intercession we continue to need most especially at this critical juncture of our nation's history.

Realizing all this, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines unanimously approved on July 11, 1984 that a Marian Year be celebrated to mark the two thousandth anniversary of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Therefore, the Philippine Hierarchy now hereby proclaims the year beginning December 8, 1984 and ending December 8, 1985 as a MARIAN YEAR FOR THE PHILIPPINES.

It is hoped that it would occasion serious reflection on the place of Mary in the Divine Plan of Salvation, stir up greater love for her, and inspire our people with new life and courage to live the faith in these troubled times.

For a well-coordinated and fruitful celebration, a National Marian Year Committee has been organized, headed by His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila. This National Committee will be ready to assist the dioceses in their local celebrations.

Given in Manila on this 8th day of September in the year of Our Lord 1984.

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference  
of the Philippines

† ANTONIO LI. MABUTAS, D.D.  
Archbishop of Davao  
President

# Indult for use of Roman Missal of 1962 according to judgment of diocesan bishop

*The following is the text of a Circular Letter sent on 3 October by the Congregation for Divine Worship to the Presidents of Episcopal Conferences.*

Most Rev. Excellency:

Four years ago, by order of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, the bishops of the whole Church were invited to present a report:

— concerning the way in which the priests and faithful of their dioceses had received the Missal promulgated in 1970 by authority of Pope Paul VI in accordance with the decisions of the Second Vatican Council;

— concerning the difficulties arising in the implementation of the liturgical reform;

— concerning possible resistance that may have arisen.

The result of the consultation was sent to all the bishops (cf. *Notitiae*, n. 185, December 1981). On the basis of their replies it appeared that the problem of priests and faithful holding to the so-called "Tridentine" rite was almost completely solved.

Since, however, the same problem continues, the Supreme Pontiff, in a desire to meet the wishes of these groups, grants to diocesan bishops the possibility of using an indult whereby priests and faithful, who shall be expressly indicated in the letter of request to be presented to their own bishop, may be able to celebrate Mass by using the Roman Missal according to the 1962 edition, but under the following conditions:

a) That it be made publicly clear beyond all ambiguity that such priests and their respective faithful in no way share the positions of those who call in question the legitimacy and doctrinal exactitude of the Roman Missal promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1970.

b) Such celebration must be made only for the benefit of those groups that request it; in churches and oratories indicated by the bishop (not, however, in parish churches, unless the bishop permits it in extraordinary cases); and on the days and under the conditions fixed by the bishop either habitually or in individual cases.

c) These celebrations must be according to the 1962 Missal and in Latin.

d) There must be no interchanging of texts and rites of the two Missals.

e) Each bishop must inform this Congregation of the concessions granted by him, and at the end of a year from the granting of this indult, he must report on the result of its application.

This concession, indicative of the common Father's solicitude for all his children, must be used in such a way as not to prejudice the faithful observance of the liturgical reform in the life of the respective ecclesial communities.

I am pleased to avail myself of this occasion to express to Your Excellency my sentiments of deep esteem.

Yours devotedly in the Lord

✠ Augustin Mayer, Pro-Prefect

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## DOUBTFUL CONCELEBRATION

*(Continued from page 82)*

1. The last priest, though he was not able to take the Sanguis, truly concelebrated;
2. Since he really concelebrated, he was entitled to the stipend he had received.

FR. EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.



# Appointment of Monsignor Antonio Tobias

Joannes Paulus Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei venerabili **FRATRI ANTONIO TOBIAS Y REALUBIN**, hactenus Episcopo titulo Tipasensi in Numidia atque Auxiliari praesulis Zamboangensis, electo Episcopo Pagadianensi, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Scienter quidem ac vigilanter curantes, ne ulla in Ecclesia particulari nimium diu praesul desideretur, qui eam pascendo docendo gubernando provehat, hisce ipsis Litteris Nostri Sedi Pagadianensi hodie providere properamus, quam, cum superior pastor eius alio translatus sit, adhuc vacare constat. Quapropter de consilio Venerabilis Fratris Nostri S.R.E. Cardinalis Sacrae Congregationis pro Episcopis Praefecti deque summa potestate Nostra Apostolica Te, venerabilis Frater, et a vinculo Ecclesiae Tipasensis in Numidia et ab Auxiliaris officio hucusque tuo plane absolvimus atque, obligationibus adstrictum iuribusque auctum pastoris propriis, Episcopum memoratas Ecclesiae **PAGADIANENSIS** nominamus eique praeficimus. Eximeris quidem a nova fidei professione nuncupanda, erga Nos tamen Nostrosque Successores fidelitatem iureiurando spondere debes, ante quam canonicam possessionem iure statutam capias mandatumque Tibi munus publice in cleri tui ac populi notitiam perveniat. Fac autem ut formulam praestiti iurisiurandi more subsignatam sigilloque impressam Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis celeriter mittas. Nos iam nunc a clero populoque tuo petimus ut quisque pro sua parte Te patrem ac pastorem dociles sequantur. Te denique, venerabilis Frater, amanti animo hortamur ut omnes officii tui partes ad normam Iuris Canonici statutas magno animo expleas, ita ut quam maxime Ecclesiam Tibi commissam provehas. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die decimo quarto mensis Septembris, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo quatuor, Pontificatus Nostri sexto.

Joannes Paulus II  
Marcellus Rossetti, Protonot. Apost.

## HISTORY

# *Dominican Towns in Pangasinan*

By

Fr. Pablo Fernández, O.P.

### **SAN BARTOLOME DE AGNO (1687)**

The Dominican Order, in its zeal for the salvation of souls, extended at the end of the 17th century its apostolic activity to the as yet unevangelized regions of Eastern Pangasinan, regions that were traversed by the Agno River, covered with endless and thick forests and inhabited for the most part by pagan ethnic groups known in the pages of history by the name of Alaguetes and Igorots.

In that area the Dominicans founded two towns: San Bartolomé de Agno (1687) and San Luis Beltrán de Asingan (1697). These sister towns are the subjects of the present article. In regard to San Bartolomé, we prefer to leave the description of its founding and early vicissitudes to the eloquent pen of Father Vicente de Salazar, who in his own style tells us how it came into being and how tragically it ended.

"The other house (i.e., ministry) that was founded in this Provincial gathering<sup>1</sup> was that of San Bartolomé de Agno in Pangasinan. It was erected by the zealous diligence of Father Provincial<sup>2</sup> for the purpose of establishing there a mission for the "reduction" of several neighboring ethnic groups. These were the Igorots and the Alaguetes and the result was the founding of a new town integrated in part by old Christians from Pangasinan and in part the catechumens of the said ethnic minorities.

"A church and a convent sufficiently large were built because it was expected that San Bartolomé would eventually grow into a big town. All expenses for the construction were shouldered by the Province so as not to burden the natives. Thus,

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. *Acta Capitulum Provinciale* ... 1688, I, 392; Ocio, *Monumento*, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Father Bartolomé Marrón.

the cost was excessive, but the Province did not mind this very much, fully realizing that all was done for the good and profit of those souls whose conversion to our faith was being sought. We have to bear in mind, however, that due to the nearness of the forests, the lumber was so available, and this of such good quality and so selected that all the doors and windows of the church and of the convent as well, for all practical purposes, were each fashioned out of single piece boards.

"Bearing in mind the wish of Father Provincial, the church was placed under the patronage of St. Bartholomew, to whom he was specially devoted, and also because of the harvest of souls that they hoped to gather in this Mission; and thus, as much as he could, he provided the church with furnishings, the sacristy with sacred vestments and vessels and the convent with an averagely good library.

"The site where the Mission was founded proved inconvenient for the Religious ministers, not only because its climate was a bit unhealthy but also because they found themselves very lonely, since it was more than ten leagues away from our ministries in Pangasinan; and, as a result, the resident missionary, in order not to absent himself for too long from the ministry had to pass entire months without contact with his brethren. And when, on occasions, he felt the need, either to unburden himself or to make his confession, to go in search of the nearest Religious priest, he had to travel for a whole day over a very bad road. In addition to this, through the many months of the rainy season over here the road became impassable, and the Religious found himself alone and had to give up all hope of getting in contact with the other Religious.

"In order to afford him (with) some relief in the midst of such loneliness, a town was founded midway, about three or four leagues from the first, under the advocacy of St. Louis Beltrán, and this town came to be like a stop over and a resting place, so as to make such a long trip a little more bearable.

"When the Province abounded in personnel, a minister was assigned to this town, in order that he might be of help to the one who was farther away, although this assistance was seldom extended to him because the Province was almost always short of Religious. As a result, he (i.e., the Father minister of San Bartolomé) remained alone most of the time, feeling quite disconsolate and having to bear the inconvenience consequent to his loneliness, to which were added the dangers that threatened his life, due to the fact that he lived so close to the mountains

and, therefore, so surrounded by enemies. Yet, all these inconveniences were taken and borne patiently, and even willingly accepted, because of the fruit that was gathered in this Mission in the conversion of many pagans who embraced our faith and received Holy Baptism. Thus a flourishing Christian community came into being, especially from among the Alaguetes who were more docile than the Igorots, although some of the latter whom God had predestined for eternal life, also accepted the faith.

"This Mission lasted for a little over twenty years, because, being so close to the enemies, it could not be maintained for long; and so, towards the year 1709 or on the next, due to some misunderstandings between the townspeople and the Igorots dwelling in the hills, the Igorots swooped down during nighttime and, without being noticed, set the village on fire; and as the houses of the natives are all of light materials and an easy prey of fire, the fire was upon them even before they became aware of the presence of the enemy.

"Although they (i.e., the Igorots) took the townspeople by surprise in their sleep and, therefore, unprepared to put up a fight, the Christians did their best to defend their lives from the voracity of the flames and from the weapons of their enemies. In the end they saved themselves by fleeing, abandoning the town with everything that was in it, and the Religious did the same... The church and the convent went up in flames, and nothing could be saved of all that was therein, due to the confusion and the suddenness of the flight..."

"The Father and the people withdrew to the already mentioned town of San Luis, which, being farther away from the hills, was safer from such attacks, and there they stayed for about six years until, by decree of the Superior Government, they transferred to a site named Maoacatoacat that was thought to be a more suitable place for easier administration. From there, they were moved to another called Pao. Lastly, during these last years, in the most recent census of the tribes made in the province of Pangasinan, they were aggregated to the town of Manaoag... However, as people attached to their place of origin, many stayed in their former places, and many from among those who had settled in the said sites, returned to where they had been living before..."

"There they made their living — adds Father Salazar — without clothing to cover their nakedness and without tilling the soil to raise their foodstuffs, taking only advantage of the



game that abounds in that area and of the food — though savourless — that they got from some wild roots.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this, they obtained some profit from the gold placers; and not only they but also some old Christians from Pangasinan who, fleeing from the taxes and personal services, chose to settle in such out-of-the-way places. As a result, the region was teeming with people, each one living in his own hut, without any civic organization, without religious instruction, mass and sacraments, and without any sign of their Christian identity, as Father Salazar himself who saw it, affirms, not without expressing at the same time a feeling of deep sorrow for the eternal perdition of so many souls.

After the Asingan mission had been restored in 1733, as we shall soon see, the Provincial Father Jerónimo Sanz Ortiz founded another mission almost in the same place where San Bartolomé de Agno had once stood. Its purpose was to serve as a bridge between the ministries of Pangasinan and the newly founded towns of Ituy and Paniqui (Nueva Vizcaya and Southern Isabela). They named it Maliongiong and placed it under the advocacy of St. Joseph. Maliongiong did not last long either. As we shall later see, that is, in 1880, the town of San Manuel was founded in that same area and it may be considered therefore, as a historical continuation of San Bartolomé de Agno and San José de Maliongiong.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Salazar, pp. 447-449.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 449-451; Blair and Robertson, XLIII, pp. 46-47; Rosario Mendoza Cortés, *Pangasinan, 1572-1800*, University of the Philippines Press, Quezon City, 1974. “Lastly Father José Villa, the Provincial, transferred the two little towns of San Bartolomé and San Luis to a more suitable place and farther away from the Igorots, who, besides being cowardly, show a marked tendency to burn villages and houses. This they did on one occasion to San Bartolomé, where they set some houses on fire, killed a few natives and carried off others. Had it not been for the presence of a Religious who defended the church in a seemingly miraculous way, since arrows were being shot at him and on his three or four companions, they (i.e. the Igorots) would have burned and finished it all. The defenders compelled them to retreat, aided by some fugitives who, out of fear, had been in hiding and later returned to the town to join in the fight. In the year 1720 these two towns, integrated into one, were located a league from Manaoag, where there was a good place for the cultivation of rice and where some mountaineers joined them in the faith.” (Cf. AGOP, *Anales de la Provincia de Ntra. Sra. del Rosario*, MS, 58 b & c). All this happened not in 1709, as Father Salazar says, but in 1713.” Says a contemporary document: “And because the natives of the town of San Bartolomé have petitioned that the said town be transferred to the site called Macatuacag on account of the dangers of the attacks from the Igorot infidels who live near the said town in the place where it was founded, as it happened in the past year of 1713 in the inroad that the said infidels carried out against the said town, burning some houses, killing some people



**SAN LUIS BELTRAN DE ASINGAN (1697)****Its Name**

In its complete original form, the name Asingan should read *Naasinggueran*, from the rootword *asingguer*, which means "near" and, therefore, the term Asingan, syncopated and shortened in the past tense, signifies "it got closer," or "it was transferred from its first site to a nearer place."<sup>5</sup>

**Its acceptance**

Founded with the King's permission, Asingan was accepted as a Dominican ministry in the Provincial Chapter of 1698, which entrusted it to the spiritual care of the saintly and zealous missionary, Fr. Francisco de la Maza.<sup>6</sup>

**Its situation in 1869**

"Asingan," says Father Suárez, "on its western side has Binalonan for its neighbouring town, with some deflection, however, to the North. In the same direction, although with a more pronounced deflection to the South, lies the new town of Urdaneta. On the South-west, at a distance of two leagues and a half, it is bordered by Villasis; by Tayug on the East, and on the Northeast by its former barrio of Guisic, now civilly raised to the rank of township with the name of San Manuel."<sup>7</sup>

**Asingan through the 18th century**

As already stated, the town of San Bartolomé was burned by the Igorots in 1713, and its inhabitants transferred to San Luis, and eventually the people of both towns were relocated in safer places. Thus the town of Asingan temporarily disappeared from the list of Dominican ministries until in or about the year 1732 when the Provincial Father Diego Saenz, having

and carrying others off, although they could not, as they wanted, to set the church and convent on fire, due to the vigorous defense of the natives of the said town, who assisted and led by the Reverend Father Minister, Fray Francisco Pérez (?), compelled the said infidels to withdraw, leaving also behind some dead and taking along wounded many of his companions... January 9th, 1716," (signed: Fray Francisco Gómez, O.P., Vicar General of the Dominicans in the Philippines); (Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan," Volume VII, Fol. 86).

<sup>5</sup> Suárez, 213.

<sup>6</sup> Ocio, *op. cit.*, 70; *Acta Capitulorum Provincialium*, I, 44, II, 8.

<sup>7</sup> Suárez, 213v.

pity on the condition of so many souls who, left to their natural instincts, were wandering like sheep without a shepherd, asked permission from the Governor General to restore the town of Asingan, as in fact he did, locating it on a better site, where under the guidance of a priest, the runaways began to return to the ways of civilization, while new converts were made from among the nearby pagan tribes. On the other hand, immigrants from other towns of Pangasinan began to flow in attracted by its good soil, hunting grounds and gold placers.<sup>8</sup>

The restored Asingan was accepted as a "Vicaría" by the Provincial Chapter of 1733 with the name of Sinapog, and as Sinapog was known until the Chapter of 1785, when, without losing this name, it resumed once more its former denomination of Asingan. From 1802 and onwards it retained only its original name.<sup>9</sup>

Due, however, to lack of Religious personnel, Asingan was often entrusted to the spiritual care either of the minister of San Bartolomé or of that of Manaoag. From the year 1818 until 1834 it was administered by the secular clergy.<sup>10</sup>

### Asingan's claim to glory

After the British occupation of Manila and the Pangasinan Revolt from 1762 to 1764, Asingan became famous and a constant object of praise for its loyalty to the Spanish cause and for having given shelter within its confines to the eighteen Spanish Dominican priests then residing in the province. Hence, the title of "very noble and ever loyal town of Asingan" granted to it at the request of the Manila government by Charles III, and of "Lord of lives and properties" to its Gobernadorcillo, according to the style of the times. However, the physical appearance of Asingan, as Father Suárez comments, fell far below such grandiose and high-sounding titles. Father Suárez visited Asingan soon after his arrival in Pangasinan in 1845.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Salazar, 450.

<sup>9</sup> *Acta Capitulorum Provincialium*, II, 205; Ocio, *Monumento*, 71.

<sup>10</sup> González, *Labor Evangélica*, 86.

<sup>11</sup> Suárez, 213. On this occasion, the brave captain of the town, Don Francisco Javier, engaged at the head of his men the advancing forces from Binalatongan in a place named Bagtas inflicting on them a heavy defeat, and as a reward for his loyalty and courage, the Governor General, with the king's authorization, honored Asingan with the title of *Villa Real*, and raised its Captain to the rank of Master of the Camp. At that time, this noble leader made a trip to Manila, where he was warmly welcomed, and on this occasion, the Governor General presented him with a sword as a mark of recognition for his loyalty to the Spanish cause during the Pangasinan uprising (González, *op. cit.*, p. 86).

### The churches, convents, and public buildings and works of Asingan

Along the labyrinth of ecclesiastical and civil constructions and improvements undertaken through the years in Asingan we rather had as our guide Father José Ma. González in his work *Labor Evangelizadora*, etc. In the year 1804 — says he — church and convent were of boards, and both already very old. At this time, the walls of a new church were being constructed from *anay clay* and *vituca* stones. In 1834, Vicente Pellicer laid down the foundations of a new church and raised its walls about a meter high. His work was carried on by Frs. Antonio Gonzalez (1835-1847), and Juan Gutiérrez (1853-1854). The latter covered it with a nipa roofing, while furnishing it also with sacred vessels and vestments.

This same Father finished the courthouse, which had been started in 1852 by Father Modesto Pérez, and gave the town square or *plaza* its final form. On the other hand, Father Gutiérrez had transformed several streams into irrigation canals thus giving fresh impetus to agriculture.

One of the pastors who worked the hardest in Asingan was Fr. Jorge Arjol (1874-1886) who, according to Father Ocio, "successfully exerted his best efforts in bringing to an end the disputes then going on between the Pangasinanes and the Ilocanos who were at odds due to ethnic differences; promoted worship and frequent reception of the sacraments; laid the foundations of a new convent; built with durable materials the courthouse and a school house for boys; fenced the cemetery and built inside it a beautiful chapel that he himself inaugurated in 1886."

"The same Father Arjol provided all the barrios with school buildings for both sexes, made a church of brick, covering it with an iron roofing, and beautifying it with a wooden ceiling. He also opened roads, and so forth."

Father Feliciano Martín, while enlarging the convent, carried on the projects of his predecessor, Father Arjol. It was, however, reserved for Father Blas Pastor, the last Dominican pastor of Asingan, to finish it. He also put the finishing touches to the girls' school and constructed some mortar and stone culverts. Unfortunately, the convent was sacked and burned by the revolutionists toward the middle of May of 1898 with all its records and furniture, as Father Blas Pastor stated in a letter written at Macao on January 28, 1899.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*; Ocio, *Compendio de la Reseña*, 666, 999-1000; Letter of Father

### The Ilocano Immigration

Before the year 1830, the inhabitants of Asingan were pure Pangasinanes. But from that year on they began to welcome Ilocanos into their midst.

It is a well-established fact that the Ilocano immigration into Pangasinan was motivated by the Sarrat insurrection of 1816, when a number of fugitives arrived in the province, hiding themselves in its dense and extensive forests. Finding themselves comfortable and at ease therein, they began to draw in others, and these others, to such an extent that the Ilocano influx eventually became a fashion in Pangasinan. And it was enhanced a great deal by the hospitality that the local inhabitants used to extend to them. They began to clear up forests, build their homes along the main roads, and as Asingan was at that time a densely forested area, it was but logical that they showed a marked preference towards it. Thus the majority of its population became in time, Ilocano.<sup>13</sup>

The population of Asingan, excluding barrio Guisic (San Manuel) as reported by Father Suárez, reached in 1869 the number of 1,700 tributes or families, all farmers, although some of them had already begun to raise sugarcane. Besides growing rice (which was the main agricultural stock of the province) they also engaged in raising cattle, in gathering gold nuggets in their rivers, and in the planting of sibucao.<sup>14</sup>

### Statistics

The following numbers gathered from different sources will show us how Asingan steadily grew through the years from almost nil to the large population that it boasts of today.

1751 .....	385 <sup>15</sup>
1758 .....	650 <sup>16</sup>
1800 .....	911 <sup>17</sup>

Blas Pastor, O.P., dated at Macao, January 28, 1899, (Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan," Vol. VII, Doc. 34, Fol. 14).

<sup>13</sup> Suárez, 213v-214.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Informe al Rey Nuestro Señor*, 1751, MS in APSR, Section "Miscelánea," Vol. III, Fol. 44v.

<sup>16</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan," Vol. IV, Doc. 1, Fol. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Cagayan," 1800, Vol. XVII, Doc. 26.

(Continued on page 114)

# HOMILETICS

By

Bernard S. LeFrois, S.V.D.

## SOLEMNITY OF MARY

(January 1, 1985)

### Mary, Mother of the Whole Christ

A mother's role in bringing a child to maturity is a most vital one. Who gives the infant her own life blood and heart-beat for nine months at the outset of life? The mother. Who cares for it so tenderly day after day and night after night with watchful eye and loving heart during that first period of helplessness? The mother. Who is more concerned than the mother when the child leaves home to play or go to school, or later when it becomes involved in more mature matters? And who keeps praying with tears and supplications when perchance the child already grown has gone astray and leads a wayward life? It is the mother above all, that wonderful person that God gave his children on earth: a loving, tender, compassionate, mother. Would God do less for his own divine family?

At a definite time designated by the Father above, in a definite race prepared through hundreds of years, from a definite Woman, the object of God's love from the very first moment of her existence, the Son of God entered the world. Mary is that Woman. No other creature was exalted so high above all other created beings as Mary, Mother of God. And no other has been so humble and lowly in her own eyes as Mary, whom the Lord made the Mother of all the children of God. By means of her the Son of God was enabled to share our human condition so as to be able to redeem us all. He was born of her that we might be reborn as sons of God.

It is no wonder that Pope Paul VI declared Mary to be the Mother of the Church, which is the People of God of the New Covenant, the believing Community of Jesus Christ. For Mary is the embodiment of the Church. What she is, God wants his Church to be: "She is the image and first flower of the Church



as she is to be perfected in the world to come" (Dogmatic Const. on the Church, no. 68). "The followers of Christ raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues" (no. 65). Many implore Mary to intercede for them with her Divine Son as their loving Mother, and this is praiseworthy for it manifests humility and childlike confidence. But there is a deeper reason for her being our Mother. Her children are to model themselves on that loving Mother who was given them by Jesus, her staunch and unwavering faith, her enduring hope and her exquisite love for God and man, so often shown forth in the Gospels. Still more does the Motherhood of Mary have meaning if Mary's ideals are made to unfold in the everyday lives of her children, as they endeavor, following her lead, to treasure in their hearts all the words and deeds Jesus, to ponder on them often, in order to penetrate more and more the mystery that is Christ, and to draw from them that manna which will stay them up in the desert of this life. As Mary was open to the Spirit from the very outset, so her true children make it their life-endeavor to be impelled by the Spirit of Christ. Only then will Christ fully live in them as he did in his Virgin Mother.

What better way to start the New Year than to resolve to live for Christ as Mary did in the many ordinary events of the day, in joy and sorrow, in work and recreation, in prayer and at the hour of sacrifice? "Through Mary to Jesus" has always been the safest and the more perfect way of attaining Christ. For the Mother leads invariably to the Son.

### **THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD**

**(January 6, 1985)**

#### **They found the child with Mary his mother**

Men sometimes search years for the object of their quest, scientists for an important breakthrough in an energy crisis, explorers for the re-discovery of a lost city or for the sources of the Nile River. Converts to the faith will relate how they went through agonizing searching till they found the object of their aspirations in the Church which gave them Christ their Savior.

It took much courage to set out on a journey with such an objective as the Magi had in mind. And look at the hurdless

they had to overcome: distance, desert heat, dangers of travel, misgivings for lack of definite guiding lines, weariness, and above all, a gripping fear of King Herod, the blood-thirsty tyrant in Jerusalem jealous and suspicious of even his wife and sons, whom he murdered, lest they take the throne from him. Yet, the Magi went on. Nothing stopped them. They dared enter Herod's city, ask for an audience with the King, and even amazingly inquire about "the newborn king of the Jews", a query which would only increase the jealous king's murderous design!

Many a person searches today for something that will give him peace of heart, still the longings and aspirations of his soul, and give him fulfillment. His search is for God though he may not know it at the outset. Neither is he aware that God has come down to us and lets himself be found in the form of a Babe in his Mother's arms. Many search for him in various philosophies of life, in Eastern mysticism, even in erotic experiences, but they do not find the object of their search, they do not experience that satisfaction that assures them their search is at an end, and life is worth living.

The Magi to their surprise were told that they would not find the newborn Messiah-King in the grand capital of the land, but in a little town called Bethlehem, the city of David. Once again they set out, nothing daunted, wondering no doubt what disappointments awaited them in an unknown town of peasant people. Yet they hurdled every obstacle, they overcame every fear, and at last with great joy they came upon the object of their searching. It was a child in the arms of his Mother! Had they expected a royal palace with palace-guards and courtiers? Had they thought to find signs of majesty and wealth, servants and handmaids, carriages and coaches? They found none of that. But by an interior enlightenment they recognized that their search was at an end, and that they had found him whom they sought: the Child-King in the arms of his Mother.

Many look for Christ in places he does not let himself be easily found: in superb projects, in grand operations, in convention and discussion. What is hidden from their eyes is that the great God deigned to become very little, a Child like any other child, one of us, sharing our life, our shelter, our food, and even a human mother. In the arms of that Mother he was found by the Magi, and they represent the nations of the world. And Christ now lives in the midst of his Church, whom that Mother embodied and represented in her person. The sophisticated

look for him in every place except in the midst of his Church and in the arms of Mary. Neither Mary nor the Church has any place in their programming for reforms, in their grand plans for making a better world. Yet this Child is the King of all nations, the King of the universe. Without him, the nations will never find peace, never be able to come together in a united attempt to bring humanity to its fullest development. The humble of heart will find him, despite trials, delays, disappointments, opposition, for they are searching for him where he really is: in the believing community with Mary in their midst, the Church through whom he wills to give peace and salvation to all the world.

Many a person has never really found Christ, nor experienced him. But once anyone has found him, the Child in the arms of Mary, the living Christ in the midst of his believing community, Christ living in everyone of his brethren, then life takes on real meaning, then there is a new lease on life that is lasting. We want that experience to be ours.

### **FEAST OF THE LORD'S BAPTISM** (January 13, 1985)

It is remarkable what one single person can accomplish when goaded on by a definite idea, ambition or motivation. A Teresa of Avila, a Don Bosco, and many other noble men and women have accomplished wonders. Likewise, an evil ambition has given the world a Hitler, a Stahlin, and many other tyrants. The impelling factor in the case of Christ is the Spirit of divine Love.

The baptism scene is replete with mystery and meaning. There it is revealed to us that Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter's son, is the Beloved Son of the Father, the Servant of Yahweh who will be his perfect instrument in carrying out the full designs of the Father. On him the Spirit rests permanently and in sevenfold fulness as foreseen by the prophet (Is. 11:1-3; 42:1). Invested with that Spirit, he will carry out his role of Messiah and Savior in the spirit of gentleness and love, symbolized by the dove. God's Spirit is one of loving-kindness and mercy, not one of domination and tyranny, as that of so many conquerors of old.

Impelled by the Spirit, his ministry will be one of understanding and compassion for his fellowmen, bruised by sin, de-

graded by social injustice imprisoned by social conditions. It would bring him into constant contact with all classes. He grew up in a workingman's home, himself a carpenter, and could well understand those who had to work daily to make a living. He was not going to remain behind closed doors in isolation from his fellowmen, but would mix with the devout and the sinner alike. He did not disdain to place his hand on leprous scabs, and stop to cure a blind man. He went about doing good to all, preaching and teaching men the way to the Father.

Jesus did not find it repugnant to step into the waters in order to receive the baptism of John, thus classifying himself as a common sinner, though he was the spotless Lamb of God. He simply wanted to incarnate himself fully into mankind, and take upon himself all their burdens and sins, so as to cleanse them from all defilement. He thus sanctified the element of water to make it a regenerative womb of rebirth in Christian baptism. In baptism the Child is reborn of God, cleansed of all defilement, and given the Spirit into his heart to impel him toward the same goal that is that of Christ. From that moment on the heavenly Father looks down and sees his Son in the newly-born babe.

Impelled by the Spirit, Jesus will at once strike out to meet the archfiend of mankind, and be tempted by him, but Satan will be utterly defeated in all his wiles and suggestions by the dutiful Son, whose Spirit is the Love of God. Impelled by that Spirit he will work his wonders, found the kingdom, implant his Gospel-message, and offer himself as a total oblation for his fellowmen. Impelled by that Spirit he will establish the Reign of God in the hearts of men.

Today in the charismatic movement, many are being made aware of the potential they have received in the sacrament of baptism, and are undergoing a full renewal in the Spirit of Jesus. Their lives have taken on a new momentum, one of praise of God for all his wonderful works, and one of loving service to their fellowmen. This is the same Spirit that impelled Jesus toward his sublime goal, and will impel all and everyone who let themselves be open to him.

### **FEAST OF THE SANTO NIÑO** (January 20, 1985)

Love for the Santo Niño is deeply embedded in the heart of the Filipino because the little image of Santo Niño is connected with the very foundations of Christianity in the Philippines.



It was given by Magellan to King Humabon's Queen as baptismal gift, and later on became the means of reconciliation and peace between the Filipinos and the Spaniards under Legazpi and Urdaneta. To this day it is treasured in the Augustinian Church in Cebu, and has escaped unharmed in the bombings of World War II.

It is the Infant Jesus whom we honor and love in the image of the Santo Niño. — Jesus has captured the human heart by becoming a lovely infant, a winsome Babe. And there is no nation on earth that is not won over by the loveliness of a child. Christ could have entered our planetary existence as a grown adult, a King, a mighty Conqueror, but he preferred to come as any other child comes into the world through the mediation of motherhood, and with all the homely details that surrounds infancy. Ought this not make us think? Is there not a deep reason intended by God in the very fact that his Son chose to become a Babe? There certainly is.

The image of the child brings home to us our utter dependence on God to whom we owe everything: life, health, gifts, family surroundings. The image of the child is moreover one of artlessness, innocence, purity of heart. It is one of joy and of winsome love. Jesus knew what he was doing when he came to us as a child and let the inspired writings develop that image of him. Today you will find some who voice the idea that our devotion to Christ ought to center more on the adult and mainly Christ, the worker, the crucified, the risen one. No one denies the value of such motivation. But to consider the devotion to the Santo Niño as immature and as reflecting a child-mentality in a man hardly stands up against the clear directives of the Lord himself who gave to adult Apostles the image of a child as a model for their conduct:

"They returned to Capernaum and once inside the house, Jesus began to ask them. 'What were you discussing on the way home?' At this they fell silent, for on the way they had been arguing about who was the most important. So he sat down and called the Twelve around him and said, 'If anyone wishes to rank first, he must remain the last one of all and the servant of all.' Then he took a little child, stood him in their midst, and putting his arms around him, said to them 'Whoever welcomes a child such as this for my sake, welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me welcomes, not me, but him who sent me.'" (Mk. 9:33-37). Again Jesus said to them: "I assure you, unless you change and become like little children, *you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*"



If the Lord wanted us to learn spiritual childhood from the example of a child, from whom can we learn it best if not from the Child Jesus himself? All through his adult life, Jesus manifested the very virtues of a true child of God: his utter trust in the Father in every situation, his total obedience to the plan and will of the Father, his loving-kindness toward all men, his uncomplaining simplicity with whatever was at hand in food or clothing, habitation or companions. God is simplicity, and Jesus has given us an eminent example of childlike simplicity and love.

Enthroning the image of the Santo Niño in our homes and edifices is surely praiseworthy, but what the Father expects of us is to imitate the virtues of his Infant Son, and become one with him in mind and heart. Otherwise our devotion to the Santo Niño remains on a superficial level.

### **THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (January 27, 1985)**

#### **Believe in the Good News**

When the explorers opened up the New World and the Far East to European nations some centuries ago, thousands sought their fortunes in these newly discovered lands which promised them great opportunities for wealth, success and fame. Some attained these objectives but only after arduous toil and much hardship, for it involved re-adjusting to new climes and conditions, new situations and challenges. Those who did not adjust were doomed to disappointment.

Christ has unfurled his banner for us to follow him into an adventure that will challenge the best in anyone. He is not out to conquer lands and acquire wealth, but to conquer mankind for the kingdom of his Father, so that God may reign fully over all hearts in love and lasting peace. This in turn constitutes man's perfect happiness. To follow him will mean a change of the whole man in his interior aims and ideals, but what he holds out as the prize to be obtained is not only his sublime doctrine which can transform the most hardened sinner into an Augustine or a Magdalene; not only his solid principles for man's happiness in social justice and the sharing of all possessions; but above all the priceless personal possession of himself in love and friendship, a union that is all-absorbing and all-demanding, leading straight to the Heart of God in the participation of God's own Spirit.

For the Good News he asks us to believe in is primarily himself, God giving himself to each individual man in his Son, first in obedient sacrifice throughout life until death on the cross all for man, then in the sacrificial meal which re-enacts and makes present his sacrificial giving of self in the Eucharist, and finally in the end-reality of which the Eucharist is the sign and seal, when God is possessed in complete and perpetual love in the final gift of himself. Such is the stupendous import of the Good News.

The material-minded man has little interest in the reign of God over him. It never enters into his calculations, which are merely bound up with the transitory and fleeting things of life. The sensual and carnal man wants nothing to do with God's reign, for it will deprive him of the kind of pleasures for which he craves. But once the grace of the Spirit has touched the little heart of man, and he listens to Christ beckoning to him, is willing to reform his life and follow him, there ensues a remarkable change, and one is soon aware of a liberation, a quickening of spirit, a rebirth of his whole being, that like Paul the Apostle he considers all past possessions as mere rubbish, and longs to be caught up by his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The possibilities and potentialities of the heart of man under the transforming influence of Christ's Spirit are incalculable and every effort to meet the challenges involved is effort well given. God is never outdone in generosity. To have found Christ in person, is to have found the treasure in the field, for which a man sells all he has to possess. It is the personal cultivation of our holy faith centered on Christ that has produced the great men and women of our Christian heritage. What others have done, by the grace of God we also can do.

The call of Christ is manifold: it may be to any one of many vocations in the Church: married or single, priest or religious. But the eager response of the first followers as shown in today's Gospel-reading is the model for our own: spontaneous eagerness and total renunciation.

#### **FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (February 3, 1985)**

##### **The Reign of God is at hand**

In the movie "The Exorcist", those who endeavor to expel the evil spirit fail utterly at first, no matter what they try, and only seem to succeed through a tragic turn of events. How dif-

ferent with the Lord: with one word he commands the evil spirit and it instantly obeys. There are no wild gestures, no shouting, no long drawn-out prayers. Just a word, a command, and Jesus is master of the situation. What a contrast!

Why did Jesus drive out demons, cure all manner of diseases, and raise the dead to life? Was it always in the first place to prove his divine mission? If that were so, why should he refuse the Pharisees when they demanded a sign (Mt. 12:38)? Why lose himself in the crowd as soon as the miracle had been wrought (Jn. 5:13)? Why impose secrecy on those he had cured (Mk. 5:43)? No, the main purpose of his miracles was not to offer credentials for his divine mission. They were primarily intended as the means to establish the reign of God among men.

At the very outset Jesus had proclaimed that the reign of God was at hand (Mk. 1:15). By word and deed he had set about establishing it. He himself was the embodiment of its perfect realization, he who, full of the Spirit of God, was the perfect image of divine Love. But there was one great Adversary to God's plan for man: Satan, whose influence over mankind from the very beginning had been disastrous (Gen. 3:17). From those earliest times, mankind had come more and more under Satan's sway, and Satan was not going to give up his domain without a mighty struggle. So Jesus met him head-on at the beginning of the public ministry in the forty days in the desert. He met the Adversary and came out victorious (Mt. 4:1-11).

From then on his ministry was greatly taken up with driving out demons as he himself declared: "Today and tomorrow I cast out devils and perform cures, and on the third day my purpose is accomplished" (Lk. 13:32). If he is to establish the reign of God, he must first dethrone Satan from his hold on man, in order to enthrone instead in the heart of man the God of love. Well, could he state, "If it is by the Spirit of God that I expel demons, then the reign of God has overtaken you" (Mt. 12:28). He knew that he was dealing with an archenemy of great acumen and malice, who would concentrate all his forces before yielding his domain. But he also was aware that he, Christ, was the Stronger One (Lk. 11:22).

His cures of sickness and disease are seen in the same light. In general, they are the consequences of mankind's sinfulness and fall under Satan's hold on man. Jesus came to liberate man from Satan's hold; and thus deliver him from sin and sickness, abject poverty and disease, though this would not fully be accomplished till the consummation. "It was to destroy the devil's works that the Son of God revealed himself" (1 Jn. 3:8). Hence the cures of Jesus are seen as manifestation of his power over the evil spirits. The evangelists do not describe scientifically the nature of the cures, but regard them as the triumph of Christ over Satan. Death was the final thrust against God's plan for man, and Satan would inflict not only physical death but everlasting death in the loss of God. So the primary significance of Jesus raising the dead (the widow's son, the daughter of Jairus, Lazarus) is the ultimate triumph of Christ over Satan. Though the restoration of integral beauty intended by God for man would come about only in the end-kingdom, when the reign of God reached its perfection with the resurrection of man and the transformation of the universe, Jesus began it then and there with dynamic energy: he forgave sins, drove out demons, restored health, raised the dead to life, and gave the heart of man the Spirit of God. The works of darkness were on the wane. The kingdom of light and love and peace was at hand.

There is still much to be done. The forces of evil grow apace day by day. Yet, in the same Spirit of Christ, which each has received at baptism, and in whom so many are renewing themselves today, the members of Christ can carry on the work of the Master. With energetic undertakings they can offset corrupt practices, refuse to patronize immoral movies, campaign against obscene literature, and oppose neopagan standards. They can lay bare social injustice crying to heaven, the misery of the underdog, the living conditions of those in slum areas. They can join the noble band of those who scientifically fight diseases, or those who use their time and means to come to the help of the needy. One with Christ, they continue to establish Christ's reign of justice and love, of harmony and peace among their fellowmen. Christ in his members is continually waging war against all the forces of evil today. Some do not realize that they are no longer members of Christ but of Satan. But victory is on the side of Christ, who said: "The Prince of this world is at hand. He has no hold on me" (Jn. 14:30), and again: "You will suffer in the world. But take courage. I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

**FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**(February 10, 1985)**

**Work and Prayer**

Man at all times has affirmed that reflection and consultation before engaging in serious matters or making important decisions are the surest way of proceeding successfully. Business managers devote a great deal of time to planning new projects. Army generals do the same for their next strategic moves. Any one putting up a new home or an important structure will give it much consideration and preparation beforehand. Prayer is like that: reflection on one's needs, turning to God for guidance and help, learning from the prayer-experiences of others.

An itinerant preacher like Jesus did not have the commodities of travel that we have today. Though the distances between towns were comparatively short, yet putting in a full-day's work of teaching and preaching, curing the sick, walking from place to place, giving advice where advice was needed, can be very tiring. This was the daily routine of the Lord during the three years of his public life. Yet he always found time for prayer. From the gospels it is evident that he had, so to say, two needs: the need to be among people in order to establish the reign of God, and the need to commune with the Father in the silent hours of the night or in the early morning hours, because there was a vital relation between these two needs.

Some years ago it was a fad to boast that one's work was one's prayer; so all special time given to silent prayer with God was considered a waste of time, out-moded, no longer "in". You were supposed to find God totally in your work, to encounter him in your doings with your fellowmen, to build up a better world by throwing yourself completely into your work, for, it was said, God is working in us to build a better mankind. It is certainly ideal and praiseworthy to find God in our fellowmen and in our work, or to give ourselves up to him so that he act through us to build a better world. This was foremost in the mind of Jesus too. But Jesus always took time out to commune with God alone: "He went out to the mountain to pray, spending the night in communion with God" (Lk. 6:12). Again we are told that "rising early in the morning, he went off to a lonely place in the desert; there he was absorbed in prayer" (Lk. 1:35).



From this example of Jesus we learn that his prayer was intimately bound up with his active work. It was, so to say, the fuel he needed to keep his ministry running smoothly. St. Luke brings this out many times in his gospel: He prayed before choosing his twelve apostles (6:12); before teaching them the excellent summary of all prayer in the Our Father (11:1); at the last supper he prayed that Peter's faith would not fail (22:32). He prayed before great events in his ministry such as the theophanies or divine manifestations, like at his baptism (3:21) and again at the Transfiguration (9:29) and similar events (21:37). Not only was his prayer one of petition, but also one of thanksgiving and praise (10:21).

All this shows amply that Jesus always combined his intense day of work in the ministry of the word and in the establishing the reign of God with frequent prayer, often of longer duration, first of all because he was like us in all things, sin excepted, and his sacred humanity felt the need of divine help to carry out well the duties of his career. In the fearful hour of the agony in the garden his prolonged prayer won for him the heavenly strengthening he stood so much in need of (Lk. 22:43). This example of the Savior is the most forceful argument that our work will be blessed in proportion that we combine it with a spirit of prayer, and besides making our work itself a prayer, to take time out before important decisions and undertakings to turn to God relying on him in every need. "Ask and you shall receive" promised the Savior (Mt. 7:7).

Modern man may not often find the time for long protracted prayer, on account of the many circumstances encroaching upon his time. But he can without much difficulty train himself to utter short ejaculations which express his need of God, his love, his trust in God's fatherly care, or even his sorrow for failings and shortcomings. More important still is an attitude or spirit of prayer that has learned to turn to God in odd moments and leisure times to refresh the inner man. Many have also discovered that if they devote a somewhat longer period of prayer at a definite time of the day or the evening, life flows on much more smoothly, business is more successful, trials can be borne more patiently, the outlook on life in general is more meaningful. For God is a God of peace and love, and prayer unites man to his God. Jesus has given us an eminent example by combining all work and activity, no matter how important and sacred, with prayer alone with God.

**SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**(February 17, 1985)**

**You can heal me**

People are willing to undergo a great deal of trouble and expense in order to have their health restored. They submit willingly to a physician, undergo frequent treatments, take expensive medicines, in fact, anything if only they can regain physical health, even though they be at an advanced old age. How many are equally concerned with regaining the health of the inner man, which may have been brought low by the poison of sin, paralyzed by evil habits of long standing, or jeopardized by wilful carelessness in thoughts and actions? Yet, what is more important when man stands before his God at the gate of eternity, physical health or the integrity of the inner man?

Everything in today's gospel seems to bring before our eyes the penitent sinner who seeks reconciliation and healing from Christ, the great Sacrament of God's love. Not as if leprosy were necessarily connected with personal sin, but today's gospel vividly conjures up to the mind the dispositions required of the penitent sinner, aware of his great need of the Savior, the loving and willing action of that same Savior in the sacrament of penance which he instituted for the express purpose of healing man's inner spirit, and the effects as well as the requirements of the sacrament.

First of all, the leper approaches Jesus in person. This is unusual because lepers were supposed to keep at a distance so as not to contaminate anyone. But see how he approaches close to the Lord, with great confidence and utter simplicity, relying entirely on the help of the One from whom he knew help could come. This is the disposition required of the penitent who seeks to be renewed in spirit. Aware, of this utter need of the Savior, he seeks a personal encounter with him, moved by faith in his saving power, and placing his utter trust in the love of the Savior for him, that he could heal him no matter what wounds infect his spirit, no matter what the number and gravity of his offenses. Though sinful, he will not stay away, but come close to Jesus who became man precisely to be man's Savior.

The goal of the sacrament of penance is to return to Christ in love. Emphasis shifts in the new rite of penance from mere-

ly seeking remission of sin to reconciliation with God in Christ. Christ is the Way God wants to encounter all men. He instituted the sacrament of penance so that this encounter take place through the ministers of his Church: "Receive the holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them" (Jn. 20:22). Through Christ and the ministry of the Church, the sinner is reconciled to God. So the heart of this sacrament is meeting Christ personally, as the leper in the gospel. For Christ is present in his sacraments, and by means of this sacrament he reaches into the heart of man to heal it of its wounds and defects, and fill it with his love. Thus Jesus reached out to touch the leper, though the leper was himself one of the untouchables! With what promptness and willingness Jesus responds to the desire of the leper! "Of course I want to heal you. Be healed!"

Like the leper who is totally renewed in bodily integrity and can live an entirely new life not admissible for him before, so the repentant sinner, renewed in God's love, walks in the newness of the Christ-life, all his actions and motivations taking on a renewed direction. His aim is now to be more conformed to the image of Christ, his Savior, and that will mean a thorough conversion from sinful ways. Even though the conversion brought about by the reception of penance may not have had to do with serious sin, there is always need of a constant and progressive orientation toward walking with Christ the Way to the Father. Furthermore, the Savior's admonition to go to the priest and carry out the prescriptions of the Law also reminds us that the penance imposed by the priest is to be carried out an integral part of the sacrament.

The faithful should become aware of the renewed theological aspects of the new rite of penance (Feb. 1974). The entire rite is now personalistic, concentrating on the return to God's love with a complete inner renewal or metanoia, change of heart and life-style. The work of each person of the Trinity is beautifully expressed in the new formula of absolution: "God, the Father of mercies, through the death and resurrection of his Son has reconciled the world to himself, and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins: through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (Penitent answers: Amen!). It is God, Father, Son and Spirit, who takes the initiative in man's renewal of love. Let man merely avail himself of God's loving action. (Cf. Bol. Eccles. Mar. 1975. 210ff).

**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT****(February 24, 1985)****The Challenge of Christian Living**

Give anyone a worthwhile challenge and you have instigated interest, energy and ambition, if the person has any idealism at all. Witness the numerous races in the field of sports, the contests in arts and music, the essay and other literary competitions. All bring out the best in man. Even handicapped persons or those who know they suffer from leukemia and have not long to live, are known to have accomplished marvels for their fellowmen, just because they met the challenge with which they were faced.

To be a Christian is a real challenge. Christ never intended the following to him to be easy. He said: "Whoever loves his father or mother, son or daughter, more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt. 10:38). And again: "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). His very first announcement was not a message that people welcomed: "Repent" he tells us in today's gospel. Metanoia, a change of heart, a change of attitudes.

Many are hardly aware that they need a change of attitudes, and that they are catering to the standards of Satan. The lust for power, to dominate the minds and wills of others, to push their own will through at any cost, with no concern for the personal needs and happiness of others: these are not Christ's standards but Satan's, and there is need of a change of heart. The greed for acquiring wealth, not the honest effort for means to live decently with personal or family requirements, but the avid desire to acquire, possess and selfishly cling to all manner of worldly possessions: these are not Christ's standards but Satan's, and there is need of a change of heart. To put pleasure and comfort before all other considerations, regardless of the moral angle involved in these pursuits: these are the standards of Satan, not Christ's, and there is need of a change of heart.

In the battle against evil, Christ has given us a powerful example. In the wilderness, nothing that Satan proposed to him succeeded in alluring him, neither easy solutions to problems, nor the lust for power, nor the glamor of spectacular success. The will of the Father was the sole guideline for Jesus, and this he

found in the ordinary duties of everyday life, the daily drudgery of work and toil combined with prayer and love. In these he found his daily cross until the cross became a reality on Golgotha where he gave himself up as a victim for all mankind.

But Christian living implies more than a change of heart from past ways. It involves a serious following of the ways and guidelines of Christ: to think as he did about life and eternity, to live as he did with the constant aim to please the Father (Jn. 8:29) and serve his fellowman: "The Son of Man has come not to be served by others but to serve, to give his life as a ransom for the many" (Mt. 20:28). He came to give, not to take away. He came to share our life with all its inconveniences and troubles in order to sanctify all our sufferings in the crucible of love. Therefore, the second part of his announcement in today's gospel was: Believe the Good News. Believe what I tell you, what I propose to you for your happiness, and live the Gospel message; live the life that I am leading, for this alone will make you truly human, and fulfill your inmost desires for happiness. Then you are meeting the challenge of Christian living.

The reason of Lent beckons to us to make a wholehearted response. A change of heart will enable many to turn away from selfish aims and come to the need of their fellowmen, to share their goods with those more in need, to spend their time and efforts on things of real value. For the true follower of Christ has found joy in life and strength in good living.

## DOMINICAN TOWNS IN PANGASINAN

(Continued from page 98)

1843	.....	2,651 <sup>18</sup>
1875	.....	7,305 <sup>19</sup>
1897	.....	9,520 <sup>20</sup>
1980	.....	37,301 <sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> González, *op. cit.*, 86.

<sup>19</sup> *Estado General*... (UST Archives).

<sup>20</sup> *Estado General*... 1897.

<sup>21</sup> Cfr. *Special Report*, No. 3, Philippines, 1980, "Population, Land Area and Density," Republic of the Philippines, National Census and Statistics Office, Manila.



## MEDITATIONS FOR PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

by Guillermo Tejon, O.P.

### I. "MY HERITAGE" (Our Vocation)

*The people remained encamped as long as the Cloud rested on the tabernacle. If the Cloud stayed for many days above the tabernacle, the sons of Israel paid worship to Yahweh and did not break camp. But if the Cloud happened to stay for only a few days above the tabernacle, they pitched camp at Yahweh's command and broke camp at Yahweh's command. If the Cloud happened to remain only from evening to morning, they set out when it lifted the next morning. Or, if it stayed for a whole day and night, they set out only when it lifted. Sometimes it stayed there for two days, a month, or a year; however long the Cloud stayed above the tabernacle, the sons of Israel remained in camp in the same place, and when it lifted they set out. At Yahweh's command they pitched camp, and at Yahweh's command they broke camp. They paid worship to Yahweh, according to the orders which Yahweh had given through Moses.*

(Nb. 9:18-23)

*Exodus* is one of the most interesting books of Scripture. It describes the itinerary followed by the people of Israel from the slavery of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land. It is a first-class human-interest story, full of drama, suspense, heroic exploits, agonizing fear and bright hopes.

The people of Israel, with Moses at its head, received a call from the Lord: the call to serve him in freedom in a new land. Moses and his people welcomed the call and eagerly accepted the challenge that the journey to the unknown entailed. However, the journey to the Promised Land was no picnic. There were obstacles on the way: the sea of reeds, the desert, thirst and hunger, long marches under the merciless sun, hostile peoples, etc... Israel suffered temptation. Her faith wavered, and her trust in the Lord waned, and even disappeared at times.

The temptations that Israel faced in the desert were of various kinds; but they can be reduced to three categories: the temptation of history, the temptation of bread and the temptation of power.

*The temptation of history:* You wanted to change your history and you left Egypt in search of a new life. But what have you found so far, aside from hunger and thirst, and venomous serpents and interminable marches and continuous struggles against all odds? Why don't you abandon this enterprise, which is nothing but a fantastic dream, and go back to Egypt? Surely, in Egypt you were, and will continue to be, a slave; but isn't it better to be slave and have food to eat, than to die in the desert? This new history, this so-called vocation that the Lord is offering you is simply a dream that Moses your leader dreamt up in the wilderness. Turn back, and return to Egypt!

*The temptation of bread:* The people were hungry, and cried out to the Lord, and the Lord sent them manna as food. The Israelites were told to gather just enough for the day, except on the sixth day when they could gather twice as much, for the next day, the Sabbath, was a day of rest. The promise of the Lord was clear: "You will have your food everyday." However, some would not believe it. Oh, yes, they heard Moses' words promising a daily ration; but... There was always a 'but' in the desert: "Suppose the Lord forgets!"... And they tried to amass manna, collecting more than what was needed for one day. The mistrust and the complaints did not stop there. Why manna only? "Who will give us meat to eat?... Think of the fish we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic! Here we are wasting away, stripped of everything; there is nothing but manna for us to look at!" (Nb. 11:5-6). And they complained about lack of water: "Give us water to drink"... Why did you bring us out of Egypt?... Was it so that we should die of thirst, our children too, and our cattle?" (Ex. 17:2-3).

Actually, 'bread' in this temptation stands for more than just material food and drink. It also stands for the word of God. Yahweh had vowed to deliver his people safely to the Promised Land, and had worked countless wonders to prove it. In spite of all this, when come face to face with the land they were expected to conquer, the Israelites thought only of their strength, not of Yahweh's 'strong arm', and backed out, saying: "We are not able to march against this people; they are stronger than we are" (Nb. 13:31). "Let us appoint a leader and go back to Egypt." (Nb. 14:4).

And finally, *the temptation of power:* Without any doubt this Yahweh, the god of Moses, seems to be a powerful god. He has done great things for us. His 'strong arm' has brought us out of Egypt, has overcome countless and unsurmountable

obstacles on the way, has provided us with the things we need . . . But now he seems to have vanished from sight on the top of the mountain, and Moses with him! We cannot continue our march, not knowing what is going to happen next. Let us look for another god, a god of our own making, a god we can control and manipulate. All other peoples have such gods; why can't we? . . . And, collecting gold, they cast it into the effigy of a calf, and worshipped him!

Since "the wages of sin is death," the Israelites paid dearly for their disloyalty and disobedience. For their sin of history, they were punished to wander in the desert for forty years, and only a handful of those who left Egypt were allowed to see the Promised Land. Those who succumbed to the temptation of bread, storing away a plentiful supply of manna, discovered the next day "that it bred maggots and smelt foul" (Ex. 16:20). As for the worshippers of the golden calf, they fell by the sword.

Yet, in spite of all this, Yahweh did not abandon his people. The Cloud, signifying his presence, continued to lead them, his 'strong arm' went on working wonders, the Promised Land was given and the Lord consecrated Israel to himself with a special covenant on Mount Sinai: "You shall be my people, and I shall be your God!"

*Exodus* is not only the story of the people of Israel. It is also the story of Jesus. Jesus left heaven and came down to earth on a pilgrimage that is unique in the history of creation. All throughout his life, but especially in the desert, Jesus underwent temptations of history, bread and power.

*History*: "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down." (Mt. 4:6). Forget about the cross! A cross, for a great prophet like you? That's ridiculous! Do something spectacular, a terrific stunt, and everybody will follow you! . . . But Jesus, who knew that the cross was the mission assigned to him by the Father, flatly refused: "You must not put the Lord your God to the test." (Mt. 4:7).

This temptation was repeated by Peter when, scandalized that Jesus had spoken about death, took him aside and started to remonstrate with him: "Lord, this must not happen to you!" Jesus' answer was even sharper and more to the point than that given to the devil: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle in my path, because the way you think is not God's way but man's" (Mt. 16:22-23).

*Bread*: "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves." (Mt. 4:3). Why do you have to go hungry, when you are all-powerful, when you can produce food out of nothing?... But Jesus, who came not to amass a fortune, but to establish a spiritual kingdom, replied: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Mt. 4:4).

After the multiplication of the loaves and the fish, the Jews searched for Jesus, expecting more loaves and more fish. What a wonderful opportunity for Jesus to increase his popularity and the number of his disciples!... What he did, instead, was to talk about a new kind of food from heaven: bread and wine that were to be his own body and blood. He not only did not give in to the temptation, but willingly took the risk of losing many admirers, who, unable to accept what they considered "intolerable language," left him for good.

*Power*: "Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these', he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me'" (Mt. 4:8-9). The golden calf before Jesus, asking to be worshipped, and in exchange for worship, offering to make Jesus the most powerful man on earth, with everything under his command and control... But Jesus knew the Father, and that only the Father was entitled to worship, and so he turned his back on the golden calf: "You must worship the Lord, your God, and serve him alone" (Mt. 4:10).

As with the Israelites, and much more so, Yahweh kept his covenant with Jesus: through the desert of temptation and the cross, he brought him to the Promised Land of the Resurrection.

*Exodus* is also our story as priests and religious. One day we, too, received a call from the Lord: to leave Egypt (the world, family, other professions) and to follow him into the land of promise of the priesthood or the religious life. And ever since, we have been walking; and as we go on, we also meet all kinds of obstacles: seas of reeds, deserts, serpents, temptations of history and of bread and of power...

Temptations against our vocation are temptations of history: Are you sure that your vocation is genuine? Doesn't it look rather like an impossible dream? Why don't you give it up? After all, many of your friends have abandoned the priesthood, the religious life, and are happy in the world! You can serve God as well, or even better, as a simple Christian, and you can be an apostle too...



The answer to this temptation is chastity. Chastity in our vocation means total acceptance of God in our lives and total surrender to him: total consecration. In other words, the command of Dt. 6:5 brought to its highest perfection: "You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength."

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Temptations that invite us to put all our trust and confidence in scientific knowledge, modern methods and techniques, academic degrees, worldly criteria... are temptations of bread.

To such temptations we have to oppose obedience. Not simply the obedience vowed in ordination or profession to a bishop or a superior, but obedience to the Will of God who has consecrated us to himself and to his service. With Christ we should say: "My food is to do the will of the One who sent me." (Jn. 4:34).

And all the time we experience temptations of power. When we forget that only the 'strong arm' of the Lord is powerful enough to make us holy and to make our apostolate successful we start paying homage to the 'idols' of our prestige, of our success, of 'my' apostolate, of 'my' ideas... and we end up working in our own name, not in the Lord's name...

All these idols have to be smashed and thrown to the ground by poverty. Again, not merely the vow, but by the real spirit and reality of poverty, that remind us of Jesus' words: "Cut off from me you can do nothing." (Jn. 15:5).

The Promised Land is our destination. Not just the Promised Land of the New Jerusalem in heaven: our priesthood, our religious life should be for us and for others a promised land.



A promised land must of needs be a good land, a fertile land, a land abundant in all kinds of fruits, a land "flowing with milk and honey."

Here on earth our life has to be such a land: in a imperfect way, of course, but still a real land of promise.

Is our priesthood, our religious life, a promised land for us? Have we found real joy and happiness in it, and this in spite of temptations, and obstacles and sins? ... Have we really left 'Egypt' and entered the new land? Are we heading straight ahead for it, or are we sliding back on desert sand, going around in circles like the Israelites? Do we feel nostalgia for the 'onions' and 'garlic' and 'melons' of Egypt (of our old life)? Have we found our true identity as priests and as religious? Do we wish to be like 'other' people, abandoning our vocation, or trying to live it in a secularized way? Are we really happy in our vocation, or just resigned to it? Are we collecting the 'wages of sin' (restlessness, unhappiness, mediocrity, frustration...) or the wages of faithfulness (joy and peace)? Are we following the Cloud, the Pillar of Fire (the Spirit of God) or some other guide? Is our consecration a true conversion? ...

Can we truthfully and with full conviction recite Psalm 16?

*Preserve me, God, I take refuge in you.*

*I say to the Lord: "You are my God;  
my happiness lies in you alone."*

*He has put into my heart a marvellous love  
for the faithful ones who dwell in his land.*

*Those who choose other gods increase their sorrows.*

*Never will I offer their offerings of blood.*

*Never will I take their names upon my lips.*

*O Lord, it is you who are my portion and cup;  
it is you yourself who are my prize.*

*The lot marked out for me is my delight:  
welcome indeed the heritage that falls to me!*

*And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;  
even my body shall rest in safety.*

*For you will not leave my soul among the dead,  
not let your beloved know decay.*

*You will show me the path of life,  
the fullness of joy in your presence,  
at your right hand happiness for ever.*