

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

**"SIMON, DORMIS? " (WATCHFULNESS)**

Guillermo Tejon, O.P.

**PARISH CONSULTANTS**

Wilfredo Paguio

**DISMISSAL OF MEMBERS  
FROM RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES  
OF PONTIFICAL RIGHTS**

Oscar Cruz, D.D.

**THREE MARTYRS OF CHASTITY**

Pablo Fernandez, O.P.

**DIAMOND JUBILEE OF THE  
ARCHDIOCESE OF TUGUEGARAO**

Teodulfo Domingo, D.D.

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# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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## EDITORIAL

### The Presence of Someone Else

In his book *Summoned by Love*, Carlo Carretto writes:

*When you pray, you feel yourself in the presence of  
Someone Else.*

*Maybe you feel the Someone Else inside you,*

*Maybe you feel him outside you;*

*Maybe you feel enveloped in him,*

*Maybe you feel far, far away from him;*

*Maybe you feel him in Silence:*

*as Absence,*

*as Aridity,*

*as Darkness or as Light,*

*or as Joy, or as Fulness,*

*or as Reproof.*

Our hard times (because of injustices, economic crisis, danger of civil war, etc.) lead our people to pray more often than they used to do. However, they may not feel the presence of God that easily. Hence, pastors need to help them see *the presence of Someone Else* outside or inside themselves, in absence, aridity, darkness, and reproof, or as light, joy and fulness.

Pastors, spiritual directors, chaplains, and all sorts of spiritual moderators: pay attention to what your faithful are telling you. Help them realize that the presence of God is experienced in everything that comes to their lives.

VICENTE CAJILIG, O.P.

## MEDITATIONS FOR PRIESTS AND RELIGIOUS

by Guillermo Tejon, O.P.

### **4. "SIMON, DORMIS?" (Watchfulness)**

*They came to a small estate called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Stay here while I pray." Then he took Peter and James and John with him. And a sudden fear came over him, and great distress. And he said to them, "My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here, and keep awake." And going on a little further he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, this hour might pass him by, "Abba (Father)!" he said "Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from me. But let it be as you, not I, would have it." He came back and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Had you not the strength to keep awake one hour? You should be awake and praying not to be put to the test. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came back and found them sleeping, their eyes were so heavy; and they could find no answer for him.*

(Mk 14:32-40)

As usual, Peter was the most vocal of all:

Even if all lose faith, I will not...

Even if I have to die with you,

I will never disown you.

(Mk 14:30-31)

Although the evangelists do not quote the other disciples verbatim, we know that they joined Peter in promising loyalty to the very end, and with all the consequences: "And they all said the same" (Mk 14:31).

So, when Jesus leaves the Upper Room and bravely plunges into the dark night with his challenge, "Come now, let us go!" (Jn 14:31) they all follow, ready for action. They even carried

a couple of swords (Lk 22:38). I am sure that as they went, they were all insistent on their promises of loyalty and help: Don't worry, Master. Nothing is going to happen to you. We are with you!...

Everything went well until they reached Gethsemane. The moment they reached there, they made their first mistake. Jesus told them to keep awake and pray so that they would not be put to the test; but his words were lost in the darkness of the night... What test? What to fear, when everything was so quiet and peaceful, when they had a couple of swords at the ready?... If the disciples ever heard Jesus' words, at that moment they sounded almost meaningless to them.

Besides, after a few hectic days in Jerusalem, they were tired and sleepy: And they just went to sleep! That was their second mistake. Of course, they did not consider it a mistake. What was wrong with a little nap in the coolness of the night and under the bright stars? At any rate, they were there, not far from the Master. Should anything untoward happen, they would immediately rise to his defence!

This going to sleep at that precise moment, in the face of the drama that was approaching, when the 'hour' had finally come, deeply pained the loving heart of Jesus. He realized that they meant well, and that they were sincere in their protestations of loyalty; but he could see very clearly that they just did not understand what was going on, did not comprehend the significance of the 'hour'.

Here we can detect a world of difference between the attitude of Jesus and the attitude of the disciples.

Jesus had accepted death. For some time now he had been preparing for it, and at the Last Supper he had spoken of it as something imminent. Confronted with death, he is afraid, goes through agony, and takes refuge in prayer. He goes to the Father and presents his case to him, asking whether perchance there is another way. In the end, the will of the Father prevails, and when Judas and the cohort and the guards appear, Jesus faces them squarely and calmly: "Who are you looking for?"... "I am he" (Jn 18:4-5).

The disciples, on the contrary, had loudly protested that they were ready for anything, even death. In doing so, they had been carried away by the excitement of the moment, but

they were not fully convinced. They failed to see the finality of that 'hour' and the inescapable reality of that death. When they discovered it, they felt utterly helpless, forgot all about their brave words of a while before, and ran away. They all denied the Master, if not with so many words, at least with their fear and cowardice. Peter, of course, was again more vocal than anybody else: "I do not know the man!" (Jn 14:71).

There is disappointment, sorrow and compassion in Jesus' voice when he says: "Why are you asleep? Get up and pray not to be put to the test" (Lk 22:46). And perhaps a sad smile on his face when he addresses Peter: "Simon, are you asleep? Were you not able to stay awake for one hour?" (Mk 14:37). Peter and the others must have also felt sad when they realized that "they could find no answer for him" (Mk 14:40).

We, priests and religious, are being told time and again that we have to watch and pray. Do we always see the reason why? Don't we often think that what we must do is to be ready for action at all times? Are we not frequently too busy with countless other things, with the result that we do not find time to pray?

And yet, the Lord is very insistent. He wants us to pray, to keep vigil, to watch. And for a very good reason. We know from personal experience the disastrous consequences that follow when prayer is abandoned. On occasion, our "eyes are so heavy" with the burden of many occupations and problems, that we do not have the courage to wake up and pray: and the Lord comes a first, a second, a third time, rebuking us, reminding us, gently prodding us... *Simon, dormis?*

Why should a priest, a religious, pray?

1. *To accept the will of God at all times* — We work for the Lord and the vineyard is his. He is the one who tells us what to do, guiding us in our work. We have to do his will, not ours. But how shall we know and understand his will if we do not consult with him, if we do not listen to him in prayer?

2. *To understand the Word* — Of course, we study the Word in the Bible and in Theology books. But the real teacher of the living Word is the living Christ who, through his Spirit, opens our minds to understand the Scriptures and explains them to us... in prayer.

3. *To be loyal to our consecration* — Without prayer we can neither understand nor keep our vows. We cannot under-

stand them: There is much more to the meaning of the vows than the explanations we are given in formation talks; finer points and practical conclusions and faith and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As for the keeping of vows, it is simply a matter of everyday experience that it is not possible without prayer. If prayer is necessary for the understanding and keeping of the precepts, won't it be necessary when dealing with the counsels? Our vocation is basically 'spiritual', and we have to spiritualize it with prayer.

4. *To prepare for the 'hour' of temptation* — With or without prayer we shall always suffer temptation. But there is a big difference. With prayer, temptations are less frequent, and weaker, because, living in a spiritual world, we are stronger to face them. With prayer, temptations will not frighten us, will be manageable, will be under the control. Priests and religious who pray can confidently say with St. Paul:

Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked... For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Rm. 8:35, 38-39)

On the contrary, what can the priest and the religious without prayer, say? He will be scared to death of temptations, will be frightened beyond control. Temptations will easily become 'obsessions' with him. A continuous succession of falls and risings will eventually turn his life into a long and painful 'hour' of anguish, unhappiness and emptiness, preventing him from ever reaching the 'Promised Land' of God's service.

To say, "I will pray when the 'hour' comes" is no more than wishful hope. In reality, temptations are defeated before they come by strengthening our spiritual life through prayer. If we wait until they come, we may discover too late that we are too weak even to have the will to pray.

5. *To have someone to talk to* — Assuredly, we have friends, we may even live in a community, and furthermore we are part



of the larger community we call the people of God. But deep inside we feel the need to communicate in a more intimate way with a special friend, with God, the loving God, who lives in us and for whom we work: with the Spirit, with whom we form a special community. Only prayer can do this for us.

6. *To find rest after our work* — It is all right to watch TV or to join a party or to relax with friends. But there is another kind of rest offered by Jesus to his tired disciples; "You must come away to a lonely place all by yourselves and rest for a while" (Mk 6:31) . . . in Jesus' company!

7. *To be witnesses* — Prayer enlightens us, shows us what things are right in us and what things are wrong, slowly transforms us, makes us go from sin to grace, from apathy to fervour; it is continuous death to sinful inclinations and continuous resurrection or conversion to the Lord. And we know that only in spiritual death and resurrection can we be effective witnesses for Christ.

8. *To actuate the gifts of the Spirit in ourselves* — In our ministry we need the gifts of wisdom, discernment, counsel, etc. These gifts, together with the Spirit, are given to us in Baptism: but they have to be actuated and brought to the highest possible degree of effectiveness. This is done by the Spirit, not by ourselves. Of course, the Spirit does this whenever and however he pleases. However, the ordinary way is through an intimate communication with him in prayer.

9. *To teach others to pray* — People come to us with the request that one of the apostles brought to Jesus: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Lk 11:1). They expect us to guide them in the life of prayer. But how can we, unless we really know how to pray? To give them standard answers found in books is not always enough. Our teaching has to be both doctrinal and experiential. We have to teach with the authority of learning and the authority of experience.

10. *To assure the success of our apostolate* — "As a branch cannot bear fruit by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me." . . . "Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing" (Jn 15:45) . . . How can we 'remain' in him without prayer? How did Christ 'remain' in the Father except through a constant communion with him? Without prayer, the word we preach will become less and less

Jesus' word and more and more our word, less and less God's word and more and more man's word. Without prayer we will rely on our methods and techniques, falling victims to the *temptation of bread*; eventually we will turn our apostolate and successes into 'idols', making us fall into the *temptation of power*... and all this will assure, not the success, but the failure of our apostolate!

11. *To rediscover and fortify our vocation* — Our commitment is to God, and we have to rediscover and strengthen it daily in his presence. Nothing can substitute for God in this matter, and nothing can substitute for prayer in our contact with the Lord.

12. *To be!* — Summing up everything, we can say that prayer is necessary for us simply *to be!* How many vocations that *were* no longer *are* for lack of prayer? How many consecrations are not whole-hearted but superficial for want of frequent and fervent prayer? We cannot *be* unless we are *with* Jesus, and we cannot be with Jesus unless we pray. Let us ask ourselves a very simple question: How are we, how are things with us and with our apostolate when we neglect our prayer? An honest answer to this question will open our eyes to many things.

There is no doubt about it: we have to pray, for these reasons and for many others that are well known to all of us.

When we look at the daily praxis of our lives we can discover two wrong attitudes (let us call them temptations) that militate strongly and actively against prayer. We must beware of these temptations.

The first attitude is: *Prayer means Work*. Therefore, as long as we work we are at prayer. In other words: let us work, and that is enough. Surely, all our work should somehow be incorporated into our prayer. More than that: our work should be the result of our prayer. But work alone is not enough. If we just work and work and keep working, very soon we will lose sight of the One we work for and our work will become secularized, it will no longer be the work of a religious or of a priest. And let us hope that it is not said of us that we no longer are priests or religious!

Of course, we should not go to the other extreme and conclude that all we have to do is pray, leaving the work for

somebody else. That we have to give all we can to the apostolate was made clear in the reflection on availability.

The second attitude is *I have no time to pray*. This can be true or false, depending on circumstances. Frequently, it is just an excuse. We have and find time for everything else, but not for prayer! Let us be honest with ourselves and remove the excuse from our path. As the old Cursillo slogan used to say, "Make Time!" On occasion, however, it may happen that a priest or religious is so overburdened with all kinds of duties and activities that he simply cannot find time to pray, or at any rate, to pray as much and as leisurely as he needs. Such a situation can only be described as tragic, and it cannot be allowed to go on existing. Whoever finds himself in such a fix must by all means get rid of some of his activities and find time for prayer. Let him do this without any qualms of conscience: nobody can do everything in the apostolate, and no one should allow his work to endanger the very essence of his spiritual life. Should this over-crowded schedule be the result of obedience, then the priest or religious concerned should bring the matter up before his superiors and request — and, if necessary, 'demand' — to be relieved of some of his obligations. In the life of a consecrated person time for prayer is a basic 'human' right which cannot be denied to anybody.

Most of the problems we encounter in our spiritual life and in our apostolate can be traced back to a lack of serious and sustained life of prayer. On the contrary, if there is anything in the spiritual life that can really take care of things, answer questions, solve problems... it is prayer. If we are looking for a guarantee that we are on the right path, a sure road to perfection, the panacea we sometimes dream of... we will find it in prayer.

St Teresa reduces the way to perfection to prayer. And she is very definite about the need we have of it:

The good that one who practices prayer possesses has been written of by many saints and holy men... I can speak of what I have experience of. It is that in spite of any wrong he who practises prayer does, he must not abandon prayer since it is the means by which he can remedy the situation; and to remedy it without prayer would be much more difficult... Whoever has not begun the practice of prayer, I beg for the love of the Lord not to go without so great a good.

Simon, dormis?...

In the life of normal, good, praying priests and religious one may distinguish two approaches to prayer:

*To 'get by'*: to keep their vocation, to avoid falling into grievous sins, just to manage... Something like a student who aims at a mere 'passing' grade.

This approach leads to mediocrity.

*To 'go all for it'*: as their very life, as the 'all' they have; aiming at really encountering the Lord and a life of intimacy with him.

This leads to spiritual progress, to holiness.

It is up to us to make the choice!

Simon, dormis?...

## RECONCILIATIO ET PAENITENTIA

(Continued from 428)

As I said in my Encyclical on the subject of divine mercy,<sup>114</sup> it is a love more powerful than sin, stronger than death. When we realize that God's love for us does not cease in the face of our sin or recoil before our offences, but becomes even more attentive and generous; when we realize that this love went so far as to cause the Passion and Death of the Word made flesh who consented to redeem us at the price of his own blood, then we exclaim in gratitude: "Yes, the Lord is rich in mercy", and even: "The Lord is mercy".

The mystery of *pietas* is the path opened by divine mercy to a reconciled life. (To be continued)

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, 8; 15: AAS 72 (1980), 1203-1207; 1231.

## PASTORAL SECTION

# PARISH CONSULTANTS

In our last article, we dealt about religious associations in the Parish. For, indeed, Vatican II's Decree, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no. 18, says: "...remember that man is social by nature and that it has been God's pleasure to assemble those who believe in Christ and make them the people of God, a single body. The group apostolate is in happy harmony therefore with a fundamental need in the faithful, a need that is both human and Christian. At the same time it offers a sign of the communion and unity of the Church in Christ...". Hence, the Christian faithful, as participants of Christ's mission, can certainly exercise this mission in association. Thus c. 215 affirms that: "The Christian faithful are at liberty freely to found and to run associations for charitable and religious purposes as well as for promoting the vocation of Christians in the world. They are at liberty to hold meetings for the purpose of pursuing these purposes in common. Such right is also affirmed for clerics, both secular (c. 278, 1) and religious (c. 307, 3).

The principal innovation of the Code on this matter is the distinction of associations into public and private. "The associations of the Christian faithful which are erected by competent ecclesiastical authority are called public associations" (c. 301, 3). Private associations therefore are those which are not erected by competent ecclesiastical authority but by private agreement of the Christian faithful.

In our first article, we suggested the erection of administrative councils specially for big parishes. Which is a non-canonical body. In this article, moreover, we shall discuss the canonical councils to be erected in a parish, namely, the pastoral council and the financial affairs council.

## THE PASTORAL COUNCIL

The existence of pastoral councils in the different parishes of a diocese depends upon the decision of the diocesan bishop. After having discerned by himself on the wisdom of establishing pastoral councils in the parishes and after having listened

to his presbyteral council, the bishop shall decide whether the parishes in his diocese should have pastoral councils. In the Philippines, however, pastoral councils have already existed even before the publication of the new Code. Hence, it is difficult for a bishop to prohibit the erection of pastoral councils in the parishes (cf. c. 536, 1). Although, of course, the diocesan bishop has the right to do this.

*Council President* — In case the diocesan bishop decides to erect pastoral councils in the different parishes of his diocese, according to the Code, the parish priest is supposed to be its president. This may appear to be a retrogression to some—because before the Code, laypersons can already be pastoral council presidents. However, this is the law (c. 536, 2).

It must, moreover, be also stated that the assistant parish priest or parochial vicar, if there is any in the parish, shall be a member of the pastoral council. All the Christian faithful who share in the parish pastoral activity shall also be represented to it as members. The council shall be ruled by norms issued by the diocesan bishop (c. 536, 2).

*Consultative Vote* — The pastoral council does not have a deliberate vote. It only has a consultative vote (c. 536, 2). This means that the parish priest only consults it. He does not have to obey it. The decisions of the pastoral council only serves as suggestions to the parish priest. This is the universal law of the Church. No bishop, archbishop or cardinal can alter this. Neither, therefore, can a priest or the whole pastoral council or some of its members change this law. Only the Pope or his representatives can do this.

This is sometimes very hard to explain to our people. Perhaps because of the present democratic system in our country, our people can hardly accept that the decision of many can just be vetoed by one man, that is, the parish priest.

The reason can also be cultural. Because, for us, when we say "listen", we not only mean "hear", we also mean "follow" or "obey". Thus, when we say: "*Makinig ka!*", we not only mean: "You listen!" We also mean: "You obey!" The difference between this dichotomy of meanings cannot be easily comprehended by the Filipino. Hence, he often feels insulted when he suggests something and his suggestion is not accepted.

He will reason out: "*Bakit pa tatanungin kung hindi naman susundin?*" (Why still ask for suggestions when the suggestions will not be accepted anyway?)

With these as background, we can also say it is good that the parish priest is designated to be the pastoral council president. Because, as such, he cannot just behave like a detached observer to the deliberations of the pastoral council. He cannot just keep silent and later simply accept or reject the council's decisions. As the council's president, he necessarily becomes a part of the council's deliberations and resolutions. Hence, it will almost always be easier for him to accept the council's suggestions. And thus avoid conflicts between him and the council.

### FINANCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Another council mentioned by the Code of Canon Law is the financial affairs council. Unlike that of the pastoral council whose erection depends on the decision of the bishop, the establishment of the financial affairs council is made obligatory by the Code itself.

Each parish should have a financial affairs council. This shall be regulated by universal law and by norms issued by the diocesan bishop. Its members shall be chosen in accord with diocesan norms (c. 537).

*From the Diocesan Financial Affairs Council*—Aside from what we have just mentioned, the Code does not say anything more on the parish financial affairs council. However, if we compare the parish financial affairs council with its diocesan counterpart and we try to be consistent, we can say the following.

The parish priest or his delegate should be the president of this council (c. 492, 1). 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 which shall be renewable (c. 492, 2). Those related to the parish priest up to the fourth degree of consanguinity and affinity are to be excluded from it (c. 492, 3). The duties of the

parish financial affairs council are: to prepare a yearly budget of the parish, to approve the report of receipts and expenses (c. 493), and to consider the annual reports of the administration of parochial ecclesiastical goods (c. 1287, 1).

This is how we can apply what the Code says on the diocesan financial affairs council to the parish financial affairs council.

*Deliberative and Consultative Votes* — In the same manner, we can also say that the parish financial affairs council shall have deliberative vote in some instances. In others, it shall have consultative vote. For example, the parish financial affairs council shall have deliberative vote, that is, the parish priest shall need its consent in such matters as the issuance of the more important acts of administration of parish goods (c. 1277) and in cases of alienation of the same parish goods (c. 1292, 1). As regards other matters, the parish financial affairs council may just have a consultative vote, that is, the parish priest may hear the council but he does not necessarily have to follow it like on the investment of parish money and other movable parish goods (c. 1305).

We see therefore how delicate this council is. At the same time, we are made aware of its importance. Specially today when we see antique church properties in private collections, we need this council to take care of these church properties. Fund-raisings can also be controlled by this council. We know of several instances where a group of supposedly trustworthy people collect contributions in the name of the Church. But afterwards, they just disappear together with the collections. This council can remedy this. And it can save the parish priest from a lot of embarrassments.

The problem, however, is to be able to get the right persons for this council. Persons who will have the qualities as envisioned by the Code. Persons who can sacrifice and work for the Church without vested interest. Persons who cannot be enslaved by money. Persons who can retain their integrity from the beginning to the end.

FR. WILFREDO C. PAGUIO



## FEATURES

### HOLY SEE PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION

The United Nations International Conference on Population took place in Mexico City from 6th to 14th August last, ten years after a similar Conference was held in Bucharest in 1974.

The principal task of the Conference was to give final approval to a set of *Recommendation for the Further Implementation of the World Population Plan of Action* and to review worldwide population trends and policies over the last decade.

The Mexico Conference had a broad agenda of topics before it including development policy and population policy; population growth and population decline, the latter especially in many developed countries; various aspects of migration (international, internal and the problems caused by rapid urbanization and the reduction of agricultural activity, refugees); changes in population structure with the increased number of elderly persons in society; morbidity and mortality — in short, many of the major issues affecting the survival and health of this planet's entire population.

149 national delegations, including one from the Holy See, took part in the Conference, together with representatives of 13 intergovernmental organizations and 153 non-governmental organizations. The Holy See Delegation was headed by Bishop Jan Schotte, Vice-President of the Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax" and included three persons linked with the Pontifical Council for the Family: Rev. Diarmuid Martin, an official, and Drs. Marie Mignon Mascarenas and Andrew Kiura, members.

There was a strong presence among the NGO's of Pro-Life groups, who also held a Conference in Mexico City on the final day of the UN Conference. Natural Family Planning groups (WOOMB, FIDAF and the "Couple to Couple League") made a significant impact through contacts with government delegations and stressing the scientific validity of the natural methods of fertility regulation.

In an intervention, delivered to the Plenary Meeting on 8th August, the Head of the Delegation explained the position of the Holy See regarding the Conference (cf. Documentation 84/2). Further, copies of the Holy Father's Message to the

Secretary General of the Conference (14th June 1984) and of the *Charter of the Rights of the Family* were also distributed to all the delegations.

As is known, the Holy See Delegation at the Bucharest Conference did not associate itself with the consensus regarding the *World Population Plan of Action*. It was explained in a formal statement that it was not possible to accept the fundamental philosophy of the document concerning the family, respect for life and an indiscriminate recourse to means of birth prevention.

The same position was assumed right from the outset of the Mexico City Conference by the Holy See. In particular, attention was drawn to the use of the phrase "*individuals and couples*" when referring to the right to sexual intimacy and procreation. The insertion of the word "*individuals*" at Bucharest involved an implicit recognition of a right of unmarried persons to sexual intimacy and procreation, and thus to family planning services. Such a change of policy reduces the status that should be accorded to marriage as the natural institution to which the transmission of life is exclusively entrusted.

Despite efforts of the Holy See, the Mexico Conference went, however, even farther than Bucharest through the insertion of a request that "suitable family planning information and services should be made available (by governments) to *adolescents*".

The continued advocacy of the rights of individuals, and now even unmarried adolescents, to sexual intimacy, as well as the endorsement and encouragement of family planning methods which the Church cannot endorse, clearly did not permit the Holy See Delegation to associate itself with the Recommendations as a whole which emerged from the Conference nor to offer its complete agreement to the "Declaration of Mexico City", a document accepted by acclamation at the conclusion of the Conference.

The Holy See Delegation was successful, however, in eliminating an ambiguity which ran right through the text of the *Recommendations*. The text used the term "family planning" in such a way that the term could either include or exclude abortion. In addition to successfully requesting a reference in the *Recommendations* to the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child (the Declaration contains a reference to the rights of the child *before and after birth*), the Holy See

presented its own amendment which proposed that "in population programmes abortion should be excluded as a method of family planning". The discussion on the theme was one of the longest and most animated of the entire Conference, with over 50 delegations speaking on the amendment. The original text was slightly altered, in agreement with the delegations of Norway and France, and transposed to another setting in the Recommendations, to read "...abortion, which in no way should be promoted as a means of family planning."

The amendment approved by the Conference is extremely limited: it deals only with abortion as a family planning method. In presenting the text to the Conference, it was made clear that the amendment did not reflect the entirety of the Church's position. The Church's opposition to all forms of abortion had been clearly expressed in the Holy See's intervention. But the fact that the amendment was accepted by the Conference is a step forward: the Conference recognized that abortion was more than a "specific technique" of family planning (as had been claimed) and that the right of national sovereignty cannot be invoked to reject attempts to thwart its promotion as a method of family planning. Governments and international organizations which fund family planning programmes will have to take into account the impact of the amendment. But clearly — as the experience of countries whose national legislation includes similar affirmations shows, it will be necessary for all who work in the defense of human life from the moment of conception to collaborate in a more united and concerted manner to see that what has been achieved, as a first step, on paper now becomes a reality in fact.

The Holy See Delegation was also able to successfully present two amendments which stressed respectively the importance of the family, and especially mothers, in the healthy development of the child, and the family rights of migrants. It also supported the suggestions of a number of delegations which aimed at treating the institution of the family in a more specific manner.

In all, the Holy See Delegation, in the light of the confusion that exists concerning moral values today, especially in the area of sexuality and family life, tried to witness to the coherence and consistency of the Church's teaching on the ethical questions involved on population policy, which is not simply a "politics of numbers" but must be based on a genuine vision of the true integral good of all persons.

# **The Catholic Church and Population Problems**

*(Text of the Intervention of the Head of the Holy See's  
Delegation, Bishop Jan Schotte, at the United Nations  
International Conference on Population,  
Mexico City)*

The Holy See is pleased to participate in the 1984 United Nations International Conference on Population and to consider, along with the member states, observers and international organizations and agencies, the implications of population trends and policies for the future of the entire human family. The Holy See wishes to bring to such meetings and discussions an ethical or moral perspective on the human problems which are under consideration. The viewpoint of the Holy See is obviously shaped by its faith conviction—notably that the universe and each human being is created by God, that each person has been redeemed by Jesus Christ, and through God's providence enjoys a temporal existence and an eternal destiny. But, flowing from this conviction, the Holy See is also inspired by an understanding of the human person and his or her involvement in society that is profoundly humanistic, that is, that focuses on the person in his or her wholeness, respecting all human capacities and potentialities and respecting the need to create a global community where all may live in truth, justice and peace. It is, in a word, a commitment to "making life more human" for all. In this perspective, the Catholic Church, entirely free from every form of political, economic and ideological conditioning, wishes to render a service to man and to the international community carrying out its prophetic mission for the good of the person and of humanity.

The Holy See recognizes the complexities of the questions involved in population issues, as well as their seriousness for the present moment and for the future. Realizing that these issues, if they are to be satisfactorily resolved for the good of mankind must be looked at from an ethical perspective, it wishes to draw attention in the first place to some of the basic values involved in our discussions: the sacredness of human life and

its transmission, the dignity and importance of each person, the inviolability to all human rights, the value of marriage as the natural institution to which the transmission of life is exclusively entrusted, and the need for a global commitment to social justice and socio-economic development. It is in the light of these values — universally recognized by people of various cultures, religions and national backgrounds — that all policies and strategies must be evaluated.

At the 1974 World Conference on Population, the Holy See did not associate itself with the consensus regarding the adoption of the World Population Plan of Action. While it took an active part in the Bucharest Conference and appreciated much of the content of the Plan of Action, it was seriously concerned by some of the currents of reflection which underlay the document, especially those in regard to the family, respect for life and an indiscriminate recourse to means of birth regulation. The questions involved were — and still are — questions concerning fundamental aspects of a basic understanding of the person.

It is in the light of this position that the Holy See has studied the *Recommendations for the Further Implementation of the World Population Plan of Action* and offers the following comments.

### *Population and Development*

The Holy See has carefully studied the demographic events and projections since the World Population Conference in 1974 in Bucharest and has taken part in the preparatory meetings for this Conference throughout the past year. Many of the more pessimistic projections of the past have not materialized, and some trends have developed that were not forecast. Indeed, the world still faces a variety of population problems particular to various regions and nations and often very much related to the overall process of development. We know that, in general, the rate of world population growth has declined, as have fertility and mortality rates. In some developed nations the rates of population growth and fertility have fallen to alarmingly low levels with a corresponding increase in the proportion of elderly persons, while in some developing nations, rates of growth remain quite high. We have seen improvements in

data gathering and analysis, and in extension of census taking to an increasing number of countries, but at the same time, experience reminds us of the complexity and uncertainties of long-range projection.

The *Recommendations for the Further Implementation of the World Population Plan of Action* tell us that the basis for solving population problems is socio-economic transformation, and that population policies should be part of overall policies of socio-economic development, and not a substitute for them.

The Holy See wishes to stress that in all areas of development, and particularly in population policy which touches on aspects of human behaviour which are profoundly linked with the nature and happiness of the person, it is necessary to undertake a critical analysis of the various theories of development and to challenge them at their very basis. Population policies, and the development policies of which they are a part have to do with the well-being of individual persons and the common good.

The *dignity and welfare of the person* constitute a central part of the foundation on which population policies are built. Accordingly the Holy See notes that the spiritual as well as the material well-being of the person must be taken into account in the development process, because spiritual values give meaning to material progress, to technical advances and to the creation of political and social structures that serve the community of persons we call society. Spiritual values enable people to see the real worth of material goods, to work for their attainment without sacrificing other values, and to enjoy life even when some material advantages are absent. Socio-economic development, then, is not simply a matter of economic philosophy or strategies, but it must be an on-going process that respect the value and individuality of every person and in which each person is free to take responsibility for his or her own destiny and growth.

The person is, however, not absolutely autonomous, isolated from all others. Every person is a member of some, often many, communities — the family, the tribal community, the neighbourhood, the social and religious communities, the national and global communities. At the same time, *each person has responsibilities towards the community*. Socio-economic development is intended to broaden the basis for an equitable sharing and ap-

propriate enjoyment of material goods. Scientific and technological progress should find new ways to make it possible for increasing numbers of people not simply to survive, but to live together in dignity, in social unity, harmony and in peace. This requires international cooperation, particularly in economic affairs, in technology, in dialogue among nations, in constantly searching for and discovering new ways to insure development and progress for all. To see all progress as dependent on a decline in population growth betokens a shortness of vision and a failure of nerve, and it often results in policies or initiatives that violate human dignity and threaten the common good. On the contrary, in the light of the great disparities between rich and poor, it is a challenge to the global community to pursue social justice and to find new ways to accelerate the process of development, to assist all nations in developing their resources—human and material, and to develop an appropriate international economic system that is open to all nations and enables all to participate freely and equitably, with due regard for cultural traditions and differences.

The Holy See expresses its concern about the setting of quantitative population growth targets. There is always the danger that the achievement of such targets, especially in terms of declines in population growth and/or fertility rates, will be used as a condition for economic assistance. Bilateral or multilateral economic aid for the advancement of peoples should never be conditioned on a demonstrated decline in birth rates, nor depend on participation in family planning programmes.

### *Morbidity and Mortality*

The Recommendations recognize the worldwide declines in mortality and propose a number of specific measures to further reduce morbidity and mortality. The dignity of the person and the value of human life call for strategies to improve health and insure a longer life span. The Holy See agrees that continued efforts should be made to control infectious and contagious diseases and to improve nutrition and health care systems and insure greater access to health maintenance and primary health care for both adults and children. Particularly important are programs to reduce maternal and infant mortality and to assist in the physical and psycho-social development of children in their early years.

*Reproduction, the family and the status of women*

The family, based on marriage, is the basic unit of society which the state must juridically protect, support and foster. At the same time, the family is 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 society. The status and roles of the family unit should be given highest recognition, and governments should establish appropriate social policies emphasizing the benefits that accrue to the individual couple and to society from stability in marriage.

In fact, it is not possible to treat the question of population seriously, or to indicate valid proposal for a solution to the problems involved, while prescinding from the *institution of the family*. The *Recommendations* mention the irreplaceable role of the family, which the *World Population Plan of Action* recognizes as "the basic unit of society", and they refer to other important functions of the family. Unfortunately, this affirmation of principle is later denied or contradicted. The fundamental concept which underlies the text is in reality marked by a noticeable individualism. The very notion of *family planning* is falsified when it is used and applied not just to married couples but also to individuals and even to unmarried adolescents.

In this context the Holy See calls attention to the wording of the *Recommendations* with regard to responsible decision on the spacing and limiting of births. Prior to the Bucharest Conference the decision was recognized as a prerogative of married couples in their exercise of responsible parenthood. The *World Population Plan of Action* speaks of "individuals and couples", thereby endorsing a viewpoint which accepts sexual intimacy and parenthood as appropriate for unmarried individuals. In doing so, it diminishes the special and exclusive position which belongs to marriage and the family. Moreover, to some degree, the increased incidence of extra-marital sexual activity and out of wedlock pregnancy during the last decade, especially in developed countries, can be attributed to the absence of a universally recognized ethical principle that gives unique status to marriage as the only place in which both sexual intimacy and parenthood are appropriately and responsibly pursued.



The Delegation of the Holy See invites the Conference to reflect on the consequences of this undermining of the family institution. Development programmes which would contribute in any way to the weakening of the family institution or which would infringe on the inalienable rights of families do not lead to genuine human development, but rather to a weakening of the social and cultural fabric and to the alienation of the person from one of the principal dimensions of his or her humanity. Some societies are already having to face the harmful effects of this weakening of the family, with the serious consequences it brings for married couples and especially for women and children.

It is in the light of this situation that the Holy See recently published and distributed a *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, with the aim of reaffirming the essential rights of the institution of the family.

In particular it is the positive duty of governments to create conditions that enable couples to exercise responsibly their fundamental right to form families, to bear and rear their children, without coercion or pressure to conform to the small family model or limit their childbearing to one or two children per family. It is the right of the married couple to make a free, informed and mutual decision, in accordance with objective moral principles, regarding the spacing of births and the size of the family. This decision should be based on their recognition of their responsibilities to God, to themselves, to their children, to their family and to society. In pursuing these decisions couples should be able to rely on those morally licit methods of family planning that are in accordance with the dignity of the person and with the authentic expression of conjugal love. It is the role of governments and international organizations to assist married couples by creating a socio-economic order conducive to family life, childbearing and child rearing, and by providing accurate information on the demographic situation so that couples may properly assess their duties and responsibilities. Couples should be protected from all forms of coercion such as loss of maternal and child health benefits or educational assistance, tax benefits or the imposition of penalties for going beyond a given number of children. They should also be protected from the sometimes subtle pressure that results from antinatalist propaganda campaigns or from quotas assigned to family planning workers for new acceptors. The freedom of

poorer couples is often weakened by offering of incentives which are in the short term attractive, but in the long term are dangerous to conjugal unity and family stability.

The Holy See must also express its opposition, on moral grounds, to abortion, sterilization and contraception.

Among all human rights, the most fundamental is that of the right to life itself: human life must be respected and protected from the moment of conception, and abortion, which is the destruction of a human life during its earliest stages of development, should not be permitted either as a demographic strategy or as a way of dealing with problems related to pregnancy. The practice of abortion has not in fact been arrested by the massive introduction and distribution of contraceptive means. Indeed, abortion constitutes today a problem of such gravity for the human conscience that society cannot ignore it or cover it up. The question cannot leave this Conference indifferent. Despite affirmations to the contrary, and often contrary to the explicit formulations of national legislation, abortion is more and more used as an integral part of family planning programmes, financed even by governments and international organizations. The Holy See makes an appeal to all governments and international organizations to affirm clearly and explicitly the value, the inviolability and the dignity of human life from the moment of conception and therefore to prohibit and exclude abortion — not just in theory but in fact — as an element of family planning.

Sterilization and contraception must also be considered as morally illicit because, through their use, the inherent connection between intimacy and procreation is violated, and it is this inherent connection that gives meaning to human sexuality as a unique and exclusive expression of conjugal love. The *Plan of Action* and the *Recommendations* presented to this Conference make no explicit reference to sterilization, which, in the ten years since Bucharest, has become more and more widely used in family planning programmes in many nations. The Holy See has constantly opposed the practice of sterilization because of the finality with which it destroys one of the person's greatest prerogatives, the ability to procreate, and because as a demographic measure it can be too easily used in violation of human rights, especially among the poor and uninformed. The Holy See urges this Conference to find safeguards that protect

all, and especially women — who are most vulnerable — from any coercion or pressure to undergo sterilization. It is well known that the Catholic Church has always rejected contraception as being morally illicit. That position has not changed but has been reaffirmed with new vigour.

The Holy See supports the proposal in the *Recommendations* which proposes access to natural family planning and which suggests that governments should in this manner provide concrete assistance for couples, which respects their religious and cultural values, in making responsible decisions regarding the spacing of births. Recent scientific studies underscore the validity and reliability of the newer natural methods, and pedagogical techniques have been developed that can be properly implemented and evaluated in various cultures. Women achieve a better understanding and appreciation of their sexuality from instruction in the natural methods, and couples who commit themselves to natural family planning strengthen their communication, mutual respect and shared responsibility in regard to parenthood.

Respect for conscience, as well as the value of these natural methods in fostering stable marriage, require access to instruction in the proper use of these methods. Continued research is helpful to better understand the female fertility cycle.

In matters pertaining to family life and sex education, the Holy See calls attention to the rights of parents to impart values and to establish standards of conduct for their children in the context of ethical principles and a commitment to family life. Educational programmes, either in schools or under the auspices of voluntary agencies, must respect parental rights and should only be carried out under the supervision and with the participation of parents. Education is responsible parenthood and the imparting of information regarding family planning to their children is also primarily a parental right and responsibility. The provision of such information and services in schools and other agencies generally fails to impart ethical standards and values, and at times can encourage sexual behaviour that is in conflict with the values and principles set down by parents. Such programmes should not be established or encouraged by governments or public authorities.

The Holy See has repeatedly advocated appropriate social and personal advancement for women in order to assure the

dignity of women and to provide for genuine human development for future generations. While supporting programmes which aim at the advancement of women in all areas of their life, it is important to remember that the advancement of women is not to be identified exclusively with work outside the home. Adequate recognition must be given to motherhood and the work of mothers in the home because of their value for the woman herself, for the family and society, not only on the material level but also in other aspects, particularly in the field of education.

Mothers must be afforded all the necessary social protection and assistance during pregnancy and for a reasonable time afterwards so that they can be with their children during this vital period of their development. Education of women, and particularly of mothers, is one of the critical determinants of the health, welfare and development of children. Mothers should receive the necessary training so that they can carry out their roles in the areas of education, nutrition and primary health care with both competence and satisfaction. Policies should aim at reducing the heavy work load which many women have to bear in various societies, both developed and developing, and programmes of education for Mothers should lead them to assume fully their role of effective collaboration in family and parental duties and responsibilities.

### *Migration and Aging*

The Holy See recognizes the difficulties involved in internal and international migration patterns, and urges that the human rights of migrants and refugees, as well as their families, be recognized and adequately protected. Migrants and their families have the right to respect for their own culture and to receive support and assistance towards their free integration into the community to which they contribute. In particular, emigrant workers have the right to see their family united as soon as possible.

In the area of internal migration, special problems are caused by the flight from rural areas and from agricultural activities towards the large cities, thus increasing the social problems associated with rapid urbanization and often leading to a decrease in agriculture, with negative effects on food supply and economic growth. The Holy See supports suggestions

which while respecting the rights of freedom of movement, promote regional and rural development and provide adequate incentives for those involved in agriculture.

The Holy See supports the *Recommendations* in regard to respect and recognition of the place and proper role of aging persons in the development of society. It stresses that policies oriented towards insuring the health, well-being and security of the aging should not limit themselves solely to technical and economic assistance. They should stimulate all to discover and appreciate the role of the aging as protagonists in the social community in which they should be considered as an integral part of society and as agents in its development. Their contributions to younger families and to other members of the extended family and their voluntary contribution of time, special competence and personal energy to many community interests and efforts are of special value to the overall society.

### *Conclusion*

These references to the problems of specific sectors of the population draw our attention once again to the fact that when we are dealing with population estimates and trends we are dealing in the first place with people. Demographic information is valuable because it informs us of events and trends which touch the lives and future security of living people and of the coming generations, and because it highlights the significance of population factors in the search for a better future in freedom and dignity for all persons. It is simplistic and unreal to identify population policy with population control: at the heart of population policies is the good, the health and the well-being of the human person who must always be looked upon as an active participant in the life of society, as a precious good to be cherished, and not as a mere object of government policies.

## POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION

# RECONCILIATIO ET PAENITENTIA

### JOHN PAUL II TO THE BISHOPS, CLERGY AND FAITHFUL ON RECONCILIATION AND PENANCE IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH TODAY

#### INTRODUCTION

#### ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE DOCUMENT

1. To speak of RECONCILIATION and PENANCE is, for the men and women of our time, an invitation to rediscover, translated into their own way of speaking, the very words with which our Saviour and Teacher Jesus Christ began his preaching: "Repent, and believe in the gospel",<sup>1</sup> that is to say, accept the good news of love, of adoption as children of God and hence of brotherhood.

Why does the Church put forward once more this subject and this invitation?

The concern to know better and to understand modern man and the contemporary world, to solve their puzzle and reveal their mystery, to discern the ferments of good and evil within them, has long caused many people to direct at man and the world a questioning gaze. It is the gaze of the historian and sociologist, philosopher and theologian, psychologist and humanist, poet and mystic: above all, it is the gaze, anxious yet full of hope, of the pastor.

In an exemplary fashion this is shown on every page of the important Pastoral Constitution of the Second Vatican Council *Gaudium et Spes* on the Church in the Modern World, particularly in its wide-ranging and penetrating Introduction. It is likewise shown in certain documents issued through the wisdom

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<sup>1</sup> Mk. 1:15.

and charity of my esteemed Predecessors, whose admirable pontificates were marked by the historic and prophetic event of that Ecumenical Council.

In common with others, the pastor too can discern, among the various unfortunate characteristics of the world and of humanity in our time, the existence of many deep and painful divisions.

### A shattered world

2. These divisions are seen in the relationships between individuals and groups, and also at the level of larger groups: nations against nations, and blocs of opposing countries, in a headlong quest for dominations. At the root of this alienation it is not hard to discern conflicts which, instead of being resolved through dialogue, grow more acute in confrontation and opposition.

Careful observers, studying the elements that cause division, discover reasons of the most widely different kinds: from the growing disproportion between groups, social classes and countries, to ideological rivalries that are far from dead; from the opposition between economic interests to political polarization; from tribal differences to discrimination for social and religious reasons. Moreover, certain facts that are obvious to all constitute as it were the pitiful face of the division of which they are the fruit, and demonstrate its seriousness in an inescapably concrete way. Among the many other painful social phenomena of our times one can note:

— the trampling upon the basic rights of the human person, the first of these being the rights to life and to a worthy quality of life, which is all the more scandalous in that it coexists with a rhetoric never before known on these same rights;

— hidden attacks and pressures against the freedom of individuals and groups, not excluding the freedom which is most offended against and threatened: the freedom to have, profess and practise one's own faith;

— the various forms of discrimination: racial, cultural, religious, etc.;

— violence and terrorism;

— the use of torture and unjust and unlawful methods of repression;

— the stockpiling of conventional or atomic weapons, the arms race with the spending on military purposes of sums which could be used to alleviate the undeserved misery of peoples that are socially and economically depressed;

— an unfair distribution of the world's resources and of the aspects of civilization, which reaches its highest point in a type of social organization whereby the distance between the human conditions of the rich and the poor becomes ever greater.<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming power of this division makes the world in which we live a world shattered<sup>3</sup> to its very foundations.

Moreover, the Church — without identifying herself *with* the world or being *of* the world — is *in* the world and is engaged *in dialogue with* the world.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore not surprising if one notices in the structure of the Church herself repercussions and signs of the division affecting human society. Over and above the divisions between the Christian Communions that have afflicted her for centuries, the Church today is experiencing within herself sporadic divisions among her own members, divisions caused by differing views or options, in the doctrinal and pastoral field.<sup>5</sup> These divisions too can at times seem incurable.

However disturbing these divisions may seem at first sight, it is only by a careful examination that one can detect their

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, Opening speech at the *Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*: AAS 71 (1979), 198-204.

<sup>3</sup> The idea of a "shattered world" is seen in the works of numerous contemporary writers, both Christian and non-Christian, witnesses of man's condition in this tormented period of history.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 3, 43 and 44; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 12; Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*: AAS 56 (1964), 609-659.

<sup>5</sup> At the very beginning of the Church, the Apostle Paul wrote with words of fire about division in the body of the Church, in the famous passage 1 Cor. 1:10-16. Years later, Saint Clement of Rome was also to write to the Corinthians, to condemn the wounds inside that community: cf. *Letter to the Corinthians*, III-VI; LVII: *Patres Apostolici*, ed. Funk, I, 103-109; 171-173. We know that from the earliest Fathers onwards Christ's seamless robe, which the soldiers did not divide, became an image of the Church's unity: cf. Saint Cyprian, *De Ecclesiae catholicae unitate*, 7: CCL 3/1, 254 f.; Saint Augustine, *In Ioannis Evangelium tractatus*, 118, 4: CCL 36, 656 f.; Saint Bede the Venerable, *In Marci Evangelium expositio*, IV, 15: CCL 120, 630; *In Lucae Evangelium expositio*, VI, 23: CCL 120, 403; *In S. Ioannis Evangelium expositio*, 19: PL 92, 911 f.



root: it is to be found in a *wound* in man's inmost self. In the light of faith, we call it sin: beginning with *original sin*, which all of us bear from birth as an inheritance from our first parents, to the sin which each one of us commits when we abuse our own freedom.

### Longing for reconciliation

3. Nevertheless, that same enquiring gaze, if it is discerning enough, detects in the very midst of division an unmistakable desire among people of good will and true Christians to mend the divisions, to heal the wounds and to re-establish, at all levels, an essential unity. This desire arouses in many people a real longing for reconciliation, even in cases where there is no actual use of this word.

Some consider reconciliation as an impossible dream which ideally might become the lever for a true transformation of society. For others, it is to be gained by arduous efforts and therefore a goal to be reached through serious reflection and action. Whatever the case, the longing for sincere and consistent reconciliation is without a shadow of doubt a fundamental driving force in our society, reflecting an irrepressible desire for peace. And it is as strongly so as the factors of division, even though this is a paradox.

But reconciliation cannot be less profound than the division itself. The longing for reconciliation, and reconciliation itself, will be complete and effective only to the extent that they reach — in order to heal it — that original wound which is the root of all other wounds: namely, sin.

### The Synod's view

4. Therefore, every institution or organization concerned with serving people and saving them in their fundamental dimensions must closely study reconciliation, in order to grasp more fully its meaning and significance, and in order to draw the necessary practical conclusions.

The Church of Jesus Christ could not fail to make this study. With the devotion of a Mother and the understanding of a Teacher, she earnestly and carefully applies herself to detecting in society not only the signs of division but also the no less

eloquent and significant signs of the quest for reconciliation. For she knows that she especially has been given the ability, and assigned the mission, to make known the true and profoundly religious meaning of reconciliation and its full scope. She is thereby already helping to clarify the essential terms of the question of unity and peace.

My Predecessors constantly preached reconciliation, and invited to reconciliation the whole of humanity and every section and portion of the human community that they saw wounded and divided.<sup>6</sup> And I myself, by an interior impulse which — I am certain — was obeying both an inspiration from on high and the appeals of humanity, decided to emphasize the subject of reconciliation, and to do this in two ways, each of them solemn and exacting. In the first place, by convoking the Sixth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops; in the second place, by making reconciliation the centre of the Jubilee Year called to celebrate the 1950th anniversary of the Redemption.<sup>7</sup> Having to assign a theme to the Synod, I found myself fully in accord with the one suggested by many of my brothers in the Episcopate, namely, the fruitful theme of *reconciliation* in close connection with the theme of *penance*.<sup>8</sup>

The term and the very concept of *penance* are very complex. If we link *penance* with the *metanoia* which the Synoptics refer to, it means the inmost change of heart under the influence of the word of God and in the perspective of the King-

<sup>6</sup> The Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, John XXIII's spiritual testament, is often considered a "social document" and even a "political message", and in fact it is if these terms are understood in their broadest sense. As is evident more than twenty years after its publication, the document is in fact more than a strategy for the peaceful coexistence of people and nations; it is a pressing reminder of the higher values without which peace on earth becomes a mere dream. One of these values is precisely that of reconciliation among people, and John XXIII often referred to this subject. With regard to Paul VI, it will suffice to recall that in calling the Church and the world to celebrate the Holy Year of 1975, he wished "renewal and reconciliation" to be the central idea of that important event. Nor can one forget the catechesis which he devoted to this key theme, also in explaining the Jubilee itself.

<sup>7</sup> As I wrote in the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year of the Redemption: "This special time, when all Christians are called upon to realize more profoundly their vocation to reconciliation with the Father in the Son, will only reach its full achievement if it leads to a fresh commitment by each and every person to the service of reconciliation, not only among all the disciples of Christ but also among all men and women": Bull *Aperite Portas Redemptori*, 3: AAS 75 (1983), 93.

<sup>8</sup> The theme of the Synod was, more precisely *Reconciliation and Penance in the Mission of the Church*.

dom.<sup>9</sup> But *penance* also means *changing one's life in harmony with the change of heart*, and in this sense *doing penance* is completed by *bringing forth fruits worthy of penance*:<sup>10</sup> it is one's whole existence that becomes penitential, that is to say, directed towards a continuous striving for what is better. But *doing penance* is something authentic and effective only if it is translated into *deeds and acts of penance*. In this sense, *penance means*, in the Christian theological and spiritual vocabulary, asceticism, that is to say the *concrete daily effort* of a person, supported by God's grace, to lose his or her own life for Christ, as the only means of gaining it;<sup>11</sup> and effort to put off the *old man* and put on the *new*,<sup>12</sup> an effort to overcome in oneself what is *of the flesh* in order that what is *spiritual*<sup>13</sup> may prevail: a continual effort to rise from the things of *here below* to the things of *above*, where Christ is.<sup>14</sup> Penance is therefore a *conversion that passes from the heart to deeds*, and then to the Christian's whole life.

In each of these meanings, *penance* is closely connected with *reconciliation*, for reconciliation with God, with oneself and with others implies overcoming that radical break which is sin. And this is achieved only through the interior transformation or *conversion* which bears fruit in a person's life through acts of penance.

The basic document of the Synod (also called the *Lineamenta*), which was prepared with the sole purpose of presenting the theme while stressing certain fundamental aspects of it, enabled the ecclesial communities throughout the world to reflect for almost two years on these aspects of a question — that of conversion and reconciliation — which concerns everyone. It also enabled them to draw from it a fresh impulse for the Christian life and apostolate. That reflection was further deepened in the more immediate preparation for the work of the Synod, thanks to the *Instrumentum Laboris* which was sent in due course to the Bishops and their collaborators. After that, the Synod Fathers, assisted by all those called to attend the actual sessions, spent a whole month assiduously dealing with the theme itself and with the numerous and varied questions connected

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Mt. 4:17; Mk. 1:15.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Lk. 3:8.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mt. 16:24-26; Mk. 8:34-36; Lk. 9:23-25.

<sup>12</sup> Eph. 4:25 f.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 3:1-20.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Col. 3:1 f.

with it. There emerged from the discussions, from the common study and from the diligent and accurate work done, a large and precious treasure which the final *Propositiones* sum up in their essence.

The Synod's view does not ignore the acts of reconciliation (some of which pass almost unobserved in their daily ordinariness) which, though in differing degrees, serve to resolve the many tensions, to overcome the many conflicts and to conquer the divisions both large and small, by restoring unity. But the Synod's main concern was to discover, in the depth of these scattered acts, the hidden root — reconciliation so to speak "at the source", which takes place in people's hearts and minds.

The Church's charism and likewise her unique nature vis-à-vis reconciliation, at whatever level it needs to be achieved, lie in the fact that she always goes back to that reconciliation at the source. For by reason of her essential mission, the Church feels an obligation to go to the roots of that original wound of sin, in order to bring healing and to re-establish, so to speak, an equally original reconciliation which will be the effective principle of all true reconciliation. This is the reconciliation which the Church had in mind and which she put forward through the Synod.

Sacred Scripture speaks to us of this reconciliation, inviting us to make every effort to attain it.<sup>15</sup> But Scripture also tells us that it is above all a merciful gift of God to humanity.<sup>16</sup> The history of salvation — the salvation of the whole of humanity, as well as of every human being of whatever period — is the wonderful history of a reconciliation: the reconciliation whereby God, as Father, in the Blood and the Cross of his Son made man, reconciles the world to himself and thus brings into being a new family of those who have been reconciled.

Reconciliation becomes necessary because there has been the break of sin from which derive all the other forms of break within man and about him. Reconciliation therefore, in order to be complete, necessarily requires liberation from sin, which is to be rejected in its deepest roots. Thus a close internal link unites *conversion* and *reconciliation*. It is impossible to split these two realities or to speak of one and say nothing of the other.

<sup>15</sup> "We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God": 2 Cor. 5:20.

<sup>16</sup> "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation": Rom. 5:11; cf. Col. 1:20.

The Synod at the same time spoke about the reconciliation of the whole human family and of the conversion of the heart of every individual, of his or her return to God: it did so because it wished to recognize and proclaim the fact that there can be no union among people without an internal change in each individual. *Personal conversion* is the necessary path to *harmony between individuals*.<sup>17</sup> When the Church proclaims the good news of reconciliation, or proposes achieving it through the sacraments, she is exercising a truly prophetic role, condemning the evils of man in their infected source, showing the root of divisions and bringing hope in the possibility of overcoming tensions and conflict and reaching brotherhood, concord and peace at all levels and in all sections of human society. She is changing an historical condition of hatred and violence into a civilization of love. She is offering to everyone the evangelical and sacramental principle of that reconciliation at the source, from which comes every other gesture or act of reconciliation, also at the social level.

It is this reconciliation, the result of conversion, which is dealt with in the present Apostolic Exhortation. For, as happened at the end of the three previous Assemblies of the Synod, this time too the Fathers who had taken part presented the conclusions of the Synod's work to the Bishop of Rome, the universal Pastor of the Church and the Head of the College of Bishops, in his capacity as President of the Synod. I accepted, as a serious and welcome duty of my ministry, the task of drawing from the enormous abundance of the Synod in order to offer to the People of God, as the fruit of the same Synod, a doctrinal and pastoral message on the subject of *penance and reconciliation*. In the first part I shall speak of the Church in the carrying out of her mission of reconciliation, in the work of the conversion of hearts in order to bring about a renewed embrace between man and God, man and his brother, man and the whole of creation. In the second part there will be indicated the radical cause of all wounds and division between people, and in the first place between people and God: namely,

<sup>17</sup> The Second Vatican Council noted: "The dichotomy affecting the modern world is, in fact, a symptom of the deeper dichotomy that is in man himself. He is the meeting point of many conflicting forces. In his condition as a created being he is subject to a thousand shortcomings, but feels untrammelled in his inclinations and destined for a higher form of life. Torn by a welter of anxieties he is compelled to choose between them and repudiate some among them. Worse still, feeble and sinful as he is, he often does the very thing he hates and does not do what he wants (cf. Rom. 7:14 ff.). And so he feels himself divided, and the result is a host of discords in social life": *Gaudium et Spes*, 10.

sin. Afterwards I shall indicate the means that enable the Church to promote and encourage full reconciliation between people and God and, as a consequence, of people with one another.

The document which I now entrust to the sons and daughters of the Church and also to all those who, whether they are believers or not, look to the Church with interest and sincerity, is meant to be a fitting response to what the Synod asked of me. But it is also — and I wish to say this clearly as a duty to truth and justice — something produced by the Synod itself. For the contents of these pages come from the Synod: from its remote and immediate preparation, from the *Instrumentum Laboris*, from the interventions in the Synod Hall and in the circuli minores, and especially from the sixty-three *Propositiones*. Here we have the result of the joint work of the Fathers, who included the representatives of the Eastern Churches, whose theological, spiritual and liturgical heritage is so rich and venerable also with regard to the subject that concerns us here. Furthermore, it was the Council of the Synod Secretariat which evaluated, in two important sessions, the results and orientations of the Synod assembly just after it had ended, which highlighted the dynamics of the already mentioned *Propositiones*, and which then indicated the lines considered most suitable for the preparation of the present document. I am grateful to all those who did this work, and, in fidelity to my mission, I wish here to pass on the elements from the doctrinal and pastoral treasure of the Synod which seem to me providential for people's lives at this magnificent yet difficult moment in history.

It is appropriate — and very significant — to do this while there remains fresh in people's minds the memory of the Holy Year, which was lived in the spirit of penance, conversion and reconciliation. May this Exhortation, entrusted to my Brothers in the Episcopate and to their collaborators, the priests and deacons, to men and women Religious, and to all men and women of upright conscience, be a means of purification, enrichment and deepening in personal faith. May it also be a leaven capable of encouraging the growth in the midst of the world of peace and brotherhood, hope and joy — values which spring from the Gospel as it is accepted, meditated upon and lived day by day after the example of Mary, Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom it pleased God to reconcile all things to himself.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Col. 1:19 f.

## PART ONE

**CONVERSION AND RECONCILIATION:  
THE CHURCH'S TASK AND COMMITMENT**

## CHAPTER ONE

**A PARABLE OF RECONCILIATION**

5. At the beginning of this Apostolic Exhortation there comes into my mind that extraordinary passage in Saint Luke, the deeply religious as well as human substance of which I have already sought to illustrate in a previous document.<sup>19</sup> I refer to the parable of the Prodigal Son.<sup>20</sup>

**From the brother who was lost...**

"There was a man who had two sons; and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me'", says Jesus, as he begins the dramatic story of that young man: the adventurous departure from his father's house, the squandering of all his property in a loose and empty life, the dark days of exile and hunger, but even more of lost dignity, humiliation and shame, and then nostalgia for his own home, the courage to go back, the father's welcome. The father had certainly not forgotten his son, indeed he had kept unchanged his affection and esteem for him. So he had always waited for him, and now he embraces him, and he gives orders for a great feast to celebrate the return of him who "was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found".

This Prodigal Son is man — every human being: bewitched by the temptation to separate himself from his Father in order to lead his own independent existence; disappointed by the emptiness of the mirage which had fascinated him; alone, dishonoured, exploited when he tries to build a world all for himself; sorely tried, even in the depths of his own misery, by the desire to return to communion with his Father. Like the father in the parable, God looks out for the return of his child, em-

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, 5-6: AAS 72 (1980), 1193-1199.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Lk. 15:11-32.

braces him when he arrives and orders the banquet of the new meeting with which the reconciliation is celebrated.

The most striking element of the parable is the father's festive and loving welcome of the returning son: it is a sign of the mercy of God who is always willing to forgive. Let us say at once: reconciliation is principally a *gift of the heavenly Father*.

#### .... to the brother who stayed at home

6. But the parable also brings into the picture the elder brother, who refuses to take his place at the banquet. He rebukes his younger brother for his dissolute wanderings and he rebukes his father for the welcome given to the Prodigal Son, while he himself, a temperate and hard-working person, faithful to father and home, has never been allowed — he says — to have a celebration with his friends. This is a sign that he does not understand the father's goodness. To the extent that this brother, too sure of himself and his own good qualities, jealous and haughty, full of bitterness and anger, is not converted and is not reconciled with his father and brother, the banquet is not yet fully the celebration of a reunion and rediscovery.

Man — every human being — is also this elder brother. Selfishness makes him jealous, hardens his heart, blinds him and shuts him off from other people and from God. The loving kindness and mercy of the father irritate and enrage him: for him the happiness of the brother who has been found again has a bitter taste.<sup>21</sup> From this point of view he too needs to be converted in order to be reconciled.

The parable of the Prodigal Son is above all the story of the inexpressible love of a Father — God — who offers to his son when he comes back to him the gift of full reconciliation. But when the parable evokes, in the figure of the elder son, the selfishness which divides the brothers, it also becomes the story of the human family: it describes our situation and shows the path to be followed. The Prodigal Son, in his anxiety for

<sup>21</sup> In the Old Testament, the *Book of Jonah* is a wonderful anticipation and figure of this aspect of the parable. Jonah's sin is that he was "displeased... exceedingly and he was angry" because God is "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repented of evil". His sin is also that of pitying a castor oil plant "which came into being in a night, and perished in a night" and not understanding that the Lord pities Nineveh: cf. *Jonah*. Ch. 4.



conversion, to return to the arms of his father and to be forgiven, represents those who are aware of the existence in their inmost hearts of a longing for reconciliation at all levels and without reserve, and who realize with an inner certainty that this reconciliation is possible only if it derives from a first and fundamental reconciliation — the one which brings a person back from distant separation to filial friendship with God, whose infinite mercy is clearly known. But if the parable is read from the point of view of the other son, it portrays the situation of the human family, divided by forms of selfishness. It throws light on the difficulty involved in satisfying the desire and longing for one reconciled and united family. It therefore reminds us of the need for a profound transformation of hearts through the rediscovery of the Father's mercy, and through victory over misunderstanding and over hostility among brothers and sisters.

In the light of this inexhaustible parable of the mercy that wipes out sin, the Church takes up the appeal that the parable contains and grasps her mission of working, in imitation of the Lord, for the conversion of hearts and for the reconciliation of people with God and with one another — these being two realities that are intimately connected.

## CHAPTER TWO

### AT THE SOURCES OF RECONCILIATION

#### In the light of Christ the Reconciler

7. As we deduce from the parable of the Prodigal Son, reconciliation is a *gift of God*, an *initiative on his part*. But our faith teaches us that this initiative takes concrete form in the mystery of Christ the Redeemer, the Reconciler and the Liberator of man from sin in all its forms. Saint Paul likewise does not hesitate to sum up in this task and function the incomparable mission of Jesus of Nazareth, the Word and the Son of God made man.

We too can start with this *central mystery of the economy of salvation*, the key to Saint Paul's Christology. "If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son", writes Saint Paul, "much more, now that we are recon-

ciled, shall we be saved by his life. Not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received our reconciliation".<sup>22</sup> Therefore, since "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself", Paul feels inspired to exhort the Christians of Corinth: "Be reconciled to God".<sup>23</sup>

This mission of reconciliation through death on the Cross is spoken of, in another terminology, by the Evangelist John, when he observes that Christ had to die "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad".<sup>24</sup>

But it is once more Saint Paul who enables us to broaden our vision of Christ's work to cosmic dimensions, when he writes that in Christ the Father has reconciled to himself all creatures, those in heaven and those on earth.<sup>25</sup> It can rightly be said of Christ the Redeemer that "in the time of wrath he was taken in exchange"<sup>26</sup> and that, if he is "our peace",<sup>27</sup> he is also our reconciliation.

With every good reason his Passion and Death, sacramentally renewed in the Eucharist, are called by the Liturgy the "Sacrifice of Reconciliation":<sup>28</sup> reconciliation with God, and with the brethren, since Jesus teaches that fraternal reconciliation must take place before the sacrifice is offered.<sup>29</sup>

Beginning with these and other significant passages in the New Testament, we can therefore legitimately relate all our reflections on the whole mission of Christ to his mission as the one who reconciles. Thus there must be proclaimed once more the Church's belief in Christ's redeeming act, in the Paschal Mystery of his Death and Resurrection, as the cause of man's reconciliation in its twofold aspect of liberation from sin and communion of grace with God.

It is precisely before the sad spectacle of the divisions and difficulties in the way of reconciliation *between people* that I invite all to look to the *mysterium Crucis* as the loftiest drama in which Christ perceives and suffers to the greatest possible

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Rom. 5:10 f.; cf. Col. 1:20-22.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Jn. 11:52.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Cor. 1:20.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Sir. 44:17.

<sup>27</sup> Eph. 2:14.

<sup>28</sup> Eucharistic Prayer 5.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Mt. 5:23 f.

extent the tragedy of the division of man from God, so that he cries out in the words of the Psalmist: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"<sup>30</sup> and at the same time accomplishes our reconciliation. With our eyes fixed on the mystery of Golgotha we should be reminded always of that "*vertical*" dimension of division and reconciliation concerning the relationship between man and God, a dimension which in the eyes of faith always prevails over the "*horizontal*" dimension, that is to say, over the reality of division between people and the need for reconciliation between them. For we know that reconciliation between people is and can only be the fruit of the redemptive act of Christ who died and rose again to conquer the kingdom of sin, to re-establish the covenant with God and thus break down the dividing wall<sup>31</sup> which sin had raised up between people.

### The reconciling Church

8. But, as Pope Saint Leo said, speaking of Christ's Passion, "everything that the Son of God did and taught for the reconciliation of the world we know not only from the history of his past actions but we experience it also in the effectiveness of what he accomplishes in the present".<sup>32</sup> We experience the reconciliation which he accomplished in his humanity in the efficacy of the sacred mysteries which are celebrated by his Church, for which he gave his life and which he established as the sign and also the means of salvation.

This is stated by Saint Paul, when he writes that God has given to Christ's Apostles a share in his work of reconciliation. He says: "God... gave us the ministry of reconciliation... and the message of reconciliation".<sup>33</sup>

To the hands and lips of the Apostles, his messengers, the Father has mercifully entrusted a *ministry of reconciliation*, which they carry out in a singular way, by virtue of the power to act "*in persona Christi*". But the message of reconciliation has also been entrusted to the whole community of believers, to the whole fabric of the Church, that is to say, the task of doing everything possible to witness to reconciliation and to bring it about in the world.

<sup>30</sup> Mt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34, Ps. 22 (21):2.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Eph. 2:14-16.

<sup>32</sup> Saint Leo the Great, *Tractatus* 63 (*De passione Domini* 12), 6: CCL 138/A, 386.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 5:18 f.

It can be said that the Second Vatican Council too, in defining the Church as a "sacrament — a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all people", and indicating as the Church's function that of obtaining "full unity in Christ" for the "people of the present day... drawn ever more closely together by social, technical and cultural bonds",<sup>34</sup> recognized that the Church must strive above all to bring all people to full reconciliation.

In intimate connection with Christ's mission, one can therefore sum up the Church's mission, rich and complex as it is, as being her central task of reconciling people: with God, with themselves, with neighbour, with the whole of creation; and this in a permanent manner, since, as I said on another occasion, "the Church is also by her nature always reconciling".<sup>35</sup>

The Church is reconciling inasmuch as she proclaims the message of reconciliation, as she has always done throughout her history, from the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem<sup>36</sup> down to the latest Synod and the recent Jubilee of the Redemption. The originality of this proclamation is in the fact that for the Church reconciliation is closely linked with conversion of heart: this is the necessary path to understanding among human beings.

The Church is also reconciling inasmuch as she shows man the paths and offers the means for reaching this fourfold reconciliation. The paths are precisely those of conversion of heart and victory over sin, whether this latter is selfishness or injustice, arrogance or exploitation of others, attachment to material goods or the unrestrained quest for pleasure. The means are those of faithful and loving attention to God's word; personal and community prayer; and in particular the Sacraments, true signs and instruments of reconciliation, among which there excels, precisely under this aspect, the one which we are rightly accustomed to call the Sacrament of Reconciliation, or Penance, and to which we shall return later on.

### The reconciled Church

9. My venerable Predecessor Paul VI commendably highlighted the fact that the Church, in order to evangelize, must

<sup>34</sup> Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

<sup>35</sup> "The Church is also by her nature always reconciling, handing on to others the gift that she herself has received, the gift of having been forgiven and made one with God"; Pope John Paul II, *Homily at Liverpool*, 3 May 1982: *Insegnamenti*, V, 2 (1982), 1992.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Acts 15:2-33.

begin by showing that she herself has been evangelized, that is to say that she is open to the full and complete proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ in order to listen to it and put it into practice.<sup>37</sup> I too, by bringing together in one document the reflections of the Fourth General Assembly of the Synod, have spoken of a Church that is catechized to the extent that she carries out catechesis.<sup>38</sup>

I now do not hesitate to resume the comparison, in so far as it applies to the theme I am dealing with, in order to assert that the Church, if she is to be *reconciling*, must begin by being a *reconciled Church*. Beneath this simple and indicative expression lies the conviction that the Church, in order ever more effectively to proclaim and propose reconciliation to the world, must become ever more genuinely a community of disciples of Christ (even though it were only "the little flock" of the first days), united in the commitment to be continually converted to the Lord and to live as new people in the spirit and practice of reconciliation.

To the people of our time, so sensitive to the proof of concrete living witness, the Church is called upon to give an example of reconciliation particularly within herself. And for this purpose we must all work to bring peace to people's minds, to reduce tensions, to overcome divisions and to heal wounds that may have been inflicted by brother on brother when the contrast of choices in the field of what is optional becomes acute; and on the contrary we must try to be united in what is essential for Christian faith and life, in accordance with the ancient maxim: In what is doubtful, freedom; in what is necessary, unity; in all things, charity.

It is in accordance with this same criterion that the Church must conduct her ecumenical activity. For in order to be completely reconciled, she knows that she must continue the quest for unity among those who are proud to call themselves Christians but who are separated from one another, also as Churches or Communions, and from the Church of Rome. The latter seeks a unity which, if it is to be the fruit and expression of true reconciliation, is meant to be based neither upon a disguising of the points that divide nor upon compromises which are as easy as they are superficial and fragile. Unity must be the result of a

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 13: AAS 68 (1976), 12 f.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, 24 AAS 71 (1979), 1297.

true conversion of everyone, the result of mutual forgiveness, of theological dialogue and fraternal relations, of prayer and of complete docility to the action of the Holy Spirit, who is also the *Spirit of reconciliation*.

Finally, in order that the Church may say that she is completely reconciled, she feels that it is her duty to strive ever harder, by promoting the "dialogue of salvation",<sup>39</sup> to bring the Gospel to those vast sections of humanity in the modern world that do not share her faith, but even, as a result of growing secularism, keep their distance from her and oppose her with cold indifference, when they do not actually hinder and persecute her. She feels the duty to say once more to everyone in the words of Saint Paul: "Be reconciled to God".<sup>40</sup>

At any rate, the Church promotes reconciliation *in the truth*, knowing well that neither reconciliation nor unity is possible outside or in opposition to the truth.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GOD'S INITIATIVE AND THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY

10. The Church, as a reconciled and reconciling community, cannot forget that at the source of her gift and mission of reconciliation is the initiative, full of compassionate love and mercy, of that God who is love<sup>41</sup> and who out of love created human beings;<sup>42</sup> and he created them so that they might live in friendship with him and in communion with one another.

#### Reconciliation comes from God

God is faithful to his eternal plan even when man, under the impulse of the Evil<sup>43</sup> and carried away by his own pride, abuses the freedom given to him in order to love and generously seek what is good, and refuses to obey his Lord and Father. God is faithful even when man, instead of responding with love

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Pope Paul VI, Encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*: AAS 56 (1964), 609-659.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 5:20.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 4:8.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Wis. 11:23-26; Gen. 1:27; Ps. 8 4-8.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Wis. 2:24.

to God's love, opposes him and treats him like a rival, deluding himself and relying on his own power, with the resulting break of relationship with the one who created him. In spite of this transgression on man's part, *God remains faithful in love*. It is certainly true that the story of the Garden of Eden makes us think about the tragic consequences of rejecting the Father, which becomes evident in man's inner disorder and in the breakdown of harmony between man and woman, brother and brother.<sup>44</sup> Also significant is the Gospel parable of the two brothers who, in different ways, distance themselves from their father and cause a rift between them. Refusal of God's fatherly love and of his loving gifts is always at the root of humanity's divisions.

But we know that God, "rich in mercy",<sup>45</sup> like the father in the parable, does not close his heart to any of his children. He waits for them, looks for them, goes to meet them at the place where the refusal of communion imprisons them in isolation and division. He calls them to gather about his table in the joy of the feast of forgiveness and reconciliation.

This initiative on God's part is made concrete and manifest in the redemptive act of Christ, which radiates through the world by means of the ministry of the Church.

For according to our faith, the Word of God became flesh and came to dwell in the world: he entered into the history of the world, summing it up and recapitulating it in himself.<sup>46</sup> He revealed to us that God is love, and he gave us the "new commandment" of love,<sup>47</sup> at the same time communicating to us the certainty that the path of love is open for all people, so that the effort to establish universal brotherhood is not a vain one.<sup>48</sup> By conquering through his death on the Cross evil and the power of sin, by his loving obedience he brought salvation to all and became "reconciliation" for all. In him God reconciled man to himself.

The Church carries on the proclamation of reconciliation which Christ caused to echo through the villages of Galilee and all Palestine<sup>49</sup> and does not cease to invite all humanity to be

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Gen. 3:12 f.; 4:1-16.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Eph. 2 4.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Eph. 1:10.

<sup>47</sup> Jn. 13:34.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 38.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Mk. 1:15.

converted and to believe in the Good News. She speaks in the name of Christ, making her own the appeal of Saint Paul which we have already recalled: "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God".<sup>50</sup>

Those who accept this appeal enter into the economy of reconciliation and experience the truth contained in that other affirmation of Saint Paul, that Christ "is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility . . . , so making peace" that he "might reconcile us both to God".<sup>51</sup> This text directly concerns the overcoming of the religious division between Israel — as the Chosen People of the Old Testament — and the other peoples, all called to form part of the New Covenant. Nevertheless it contains the affirmation of the new spiritual universality desired by God and accomplished by him through the sacrifice of his Son, the Word made man, without limits or exclusions of any sort, for all those who are converted and who believe in Christ. We are all therefore called to enjoy the fruits of this reconciliation desired by God: every individuals and every people.

### **The Church, the great sacrament of reconciliation**

11. The Church has the mission of proclaiming this reconciliation and as it were of being its sacrament in the world. The Church is the *sacrament*, that is to say the sign and means of reconciliation in different ways, which differ in value but which all come together to obtain what the divine initiative of mercy desires to grant to humanity.

She is a sacrament in the first place by her very existence as a reconciled community which witnesses to and represents in the world the work of Christ.

She is also a sacrament through her service as the custodian and interpreter of Sacred Scripture, which is the Good News of reconciliation inasmuch as it tells each succeeding generation about God's loving plan and shows to each generation the paths to universal reconciliation in Christ.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. 2 Cor. 5:20.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Eph. 2:14-16.



Finally she is a sacrament by reason of the seven Sacraments which, each in its own way, "make the Church".<sup>52</sup> For since they commemorate and renew Christ's Paschal Mystery, all the Sacraments are a source of life for the Church, and in the Church's hands they are means of conversion to God and of reconciliation among people.

### Other means of reconciliation

12. The mission of reconciliation is proper to the whole Church, also and especially to that Church which has already been admitted to the full sharing in divine glory with the Virgin Mary, the Angels and the Saints, who contemplate and adore the thrice holy God. The Church in heaven, the Church on earth and the Church in purgatory are mysteriously united in this cooperation with Christ in reconciling the world to God.

The first means of this salvific action is that of prayer. It is certain that the Blessed Virgin, Mother of Christ and of the Church,<sup>53</sup> and the Saints who have now reached the end of their earthly journey and possess God's glory, sustain by their intercession their brethren who are on pilgrimage through the world, in the commitment to conversion, to faith, to getting up again after every fall, to acting in order to help the growth of communion and peace in the Church and in the world. In the mystery of the Communion of Saints universal reconciliation is accomplished in its most profound form, which is also the most fruitful for the salvation of all.

There is yet another means: that of preaching. The Church, since she is the disciple of the one Teacher Jesus Christ, in her own turn, as Mother and Teacher, untiringly exhorts people to reconciliation. And she does not hesitate to condemn the evil of sin, to proclaim the need for conversion, to invite and ask people to "let themselves be reconciled". In fact, this is her prophetic mission in today's world, just as it was in the world of yesterday. It is the same mission as that of her Teacher and Head, Jesus. Like him, the Church will always carry out this mission with sentiments of merciful love and will bring to

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Saint Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XXII, 17 CCL 48, 835 f.; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III pars, q. 64, art. 2 ad tertium.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Pope Paul VI, *Allocution at the closing of the Third Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council*, 21 November 1964: AAS 56 (1964), 1015-1018.

all people those words of forgiveness and that invitation to hope which come from the Cross.

There is also the often so difficult and demanding means of pastoral action aimed at bringing back every individual — whoever and wherever he or she may be — to the path, at times a long one, leading back to the Father in the communion of all the brethren.

Finally there is the means of witness, which is almost always silent. This is born from a two-fold awareness on the part of the Church: that of being in herself “unfailingly holy”,<sup>54</sup> but also the awareness of the need to go forward and “daily be further purified and renewed, against the day when Christ will present her to himself in all her glory without spot or wrinkle”, for, by reason of her sins, sometimes “the radiance of the Church’s face shines less brightly” in the eyes of those who behold her.<sup>55</sup> This witness cannot fail to assume two fundamental aspects. The first aspect is that of being the sign of that universal charity which Jesus Christ left as an inheritance to his followers, as a proof of belonging to his Kingdom. The second aspect is translation into ever new manifestations of conversion and reconciliation both within the Church and outside her, by the overcoming of tensions, by mutual forgiveness, by growth in the spirit of brotherhood and peace which is to be spread throughout the world. By this means the Church will effectively be able to work for the creation of what my Predecessor Paul VI called the “civilization of love”.

## PART TWO

### THE LOVE THAT IS GREATER THAN SIN

#### The tragedy of man

13. In the words of Saint John the Apostle, “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins”.<sup>56</sup> Written at the very dawn of the Church, these

<sup>54</sup> Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 39.

<sup>55</sup> Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> 1 Jn. 1:8-9.

inspired words introduce better than any other human expression the theme of sin, which is intimately connected with that of reconciliation. These words present the question of sin in its human dimension: sin as an integral part of the truth about man. But they immediately relate the human dimension to its divine dimension, where sin is countered by the truth of divine love, which is just, generous and faithful, and which reveals itself above all in forgiveness and redemption. Thus, Saint John also writes a little further on that "whatever accusations (our conscience) may raise against us, God is greater than our conscience".<sup>57</sup>

*To acknowledge one's sin*, indeed — penetrating still more deeply into the consideration of one's own personhood — *to recognize oneself as being a sinner*, capable of sin and inclined to commit sin, is the essential first step in returning to God. For example, this is the experience of David who, "having done what is evil in the eyes of the Lord" and having been rebuked by the Prophet Nathan,<sup>58</sup> exclaims: "For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight".<sup>59</sup> Similarly, Jesus himself puts the following significant words on the lips and in the heart of the Prodigal Son: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you".<sup>60</sup>

In effect, to become reconciled with God presupposes and includes detaching oneself consciously and with determination from the sin into which one has fallen. It presupposes and includes, therefore, *doing penance* in the fullest sense of the term: repenting, showing this repentance, adopting a real attitude of repentance — which is the attitude of the person who starts out on the road of return to the Father. This is a general law and one which each individual must follow in his or her particular situation. For it is not possible to deal with sin and conversion only in abstract terms.

In the concrete circumstances of sinful humanity in which there can be no conversion without the acknowledgment of one's

<sup>57</sup> 1 Jn. 3:20; cf. my reference to this passage in my Address at the General Audience of 14 March 1984: *Insegnamenti*, VII, 1 (1984), 683.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. 2 Sam. 11-12.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Ps. 50 (51):3-4.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Lk. 15:18 and 21.

own sin, the Church's ministry of reconciliation intervenes in each individual case with a precise penitential purpose. That is, the Church's ministry intervenes in order to bring the person to the "knowledge of self" — in the words of Saint Catherine of Siena<sup>61</sup> — to the rejection of evil, to the re-establishment of friendship with God, to a new interior ordering, to a fresh ecclesial conversion. Indeed, even beyond the boundaries of the Church and the community of believers, the message and ministry of penance are addressed to all men and women, because all need conversion and reconciliation.<sup>62</sup>

In order to carry out this penitential ministry adequately, we shall have to evaluate the consequences of sin with "eyes enlightened"<sup>63</sup> by faith. These consequences of sin are the reasons for division and rupture, not only within each person but also within the various circles of a person's life: in relation to the family, to the professional and social environment, as can often be seen from experience; it is confirmed by the passage in the Bible about the City of Babel and its Tower.<sup>64</sup> Intent on building what was to be at once a symbol and a source of unity, those people found themselves more scattered than before, divided in speech, divided among themselves, incapable of consensus and agreement.

Why did the ambitious project fail? Why did "the builders labour in vain"?<sup>65</sup> They failed because they had set up as a sign and guarantee of the unity they desired a work of their own hands alone, and had forgotten the action of the Lord. They had attended only to the horizontal dimension of work and social life, forgetting the vertical dimension by which they would have been rooted in God, their Creator and Lord, and would have been directed towards him as the ultimate goal of their progress.

Now it can be said that the tragedy of humanity today, as indeed of every period in history, consists precisely in its similarity to the experience of Babel.

<sup>61</sup> *Lettere*, Florence 1970, I, pp. 3 f.; II *Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza*, Rome 1980, *passim*.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Rom. 3:23-26.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Eph. 1:18.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Gen. 11:1-9.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Ps. 127 (126):1.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE MYSTERY OF SIN

14. If we read the passage in the Bible on the City and Tower of Babel in the new light offered by the Gospel, and if we compare it with the other passage on the fall of our first parents, we can draw from it valuable elements for an understanding of the *mystery of sin*. This expression, which echoes what Saint Paul writes concerning the *mystery of evil*,<sup>66</sup> helps us to grasp the obscure and intangible element hidden in sin. Clearly, sin is a good product of man's freedom. But deep within its human reality there are factors at work which place it beyond the merely human, in the border area where man's conscience, will and sensitivity are in contact with the dark forces which, according to Saint Paul, are active in the world almost to the point of ruling it.<sup>67</sup>

#### Disobedience to God

A first point which helps us to understand sin emerges from the biblical narrative on the building of the Tower of Babel: the people sought to build a city, organize themselves into a society and to be strong and powerful *without God*, if not precisely *against God*.<sup>68</sup> In this sense, the story of the first sin in Eden and the story of Babel, in spite of notable differences in content and form, have one thing in common: in both there is an *exclusion of God*, through direct opposition to one of his commandments, through an act of rivalry, through the mistaken pretension of being "like him".<sup>69</sup> In the story of Babel the *exclusion of God* is presented not so much under the aspect of opposition to him as of forgetfulness and indifference towards him, as if God were of no relevance in the sphere of man's joint projects. But in both cases the *relationship to God* is severed with vio-

<sup>66</sup> Cf. 2 Thess. 2:7.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Rom. 7:7-25; Eph. 2:2; 6:12.

<sup>68</sup> The terminology used in the Septuagint Greek translation and in the New Testament for *sin* is significant. The most common term for *sin* is *hamartia*, with its various derivatives. It expresses the concept of offending more or less gravely against a norm or law, or against a person or even a divinity. But *sin* is also called *adikia*, and the concept here is of *acting unjustly*. The Bible also speaks of *parabasis* (*transgression*), *asebeia* (*impiety*) and other concepts. They all convey the image of *sin*.

<sup>69</sup> Gen. 3:5: "... and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"; cf. also v. 22.

ience. In the case of Eden there appears in all its seriousness and tragic reality that which constitutes the ultimate essence and darkness of sin: *disobedience to God*, to his law, to the moral norm that he has given man, inscribing it in his heart and confirming and perfecting it through revelation.

*Exclusion of God, rupture with God, disobedience to God:* throughout the history of mankind this has been and is, in various forms, sin. It can go as far as a very *denial* of God and his existence: this is the phenomenon called *atheism*.

It is the *disobedience* of a person who, by a free act, does not acknowledge God's sovereignty over his or her life, at least at that particular moment in which he or she transgresses God's law.

### Division between brothers

15. In the biblical narratives mentioned above, man's rupture with God leads tragically to divisions between brothers.

In the description of the "first sin", the rupture with Yahweh simultaneously breaks the bond of friendship that had united the human family. Thus the subsequent pages of *Genesis* show us the man and the woman as it were pointing an accusing finger at each other.<sup>70</sup> Later we have the brother hating his brother and finally taking his life.<sup>71</sup>

According to the Babel story, the result of sin is the shattering of the human family, already begun with the first sin and now reaching its most extreme form on the social level.

No one wishing to investigate the mystery of sin can ignore this link between cause and effect. As a rupture with God, sin is an act of disobedience by a creature who rejects, at least implicitly, the very one from whom he came and who sustains him in life. It is therefore a suicidal act. Since by sinning man refuses to submit to God, his internal balance is also destroyed and it is precisely within himself that contradictions and conflicts arise. Wounded in this way, man almost inevitably causes damage to the fabric of his relationship with others and with the created world. This is an objective law and an objec-

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Gen. 3:12.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Gen. 4:2-16.

tive reality, verified in so many ways in the human psyche and in the spiritual life, as well as in society, where it is easy to see the signs and effects of internal disorder.

The mystery of sin is composed of this two-fold wound which the sinner opens in himself and in his relationship with his neighbour. Therefore one can speak of *personal* and *social* sin: from one point of view, every sin is *personal*; from another point of view every sin is *social*, in so far as and because it also has social repercussions.

### Personal sin and social sin

16. Sin, in the proper sense, is always a *personal act*, since it is an act of freedom on the part of an individual person, and not properly of a group or community. This individual may be conditioned, incited and influenced by numerous and powerful external factors. He may also be subjected to tendencies, defects and habits linked with his personal condition. In not a few cases such external and internal factors may attenuate, to a greater or lesser degree, the person's freedom and therefore his responsibility and guilt. But it is a truth of faith, also confirmed by our experience and reason, that the human person is free. This truth cannot be disregarded, in order to place the blame for individual sins on external factors such as structures, systems or other people. Above all, this would be to deny the person's dignity and freedom, which are manifested — even though in a negative and disastrous way — also in this responsibility for sin committed. Hence there is nothing so personal and untransferable in each individual as merit for virtue or responsibility for sin.

As a personal act, sin has its first and most important consequences in the *sinner himself*: that is, in his relationship with God, who is the very foundation of human life; and also in his spirit, weakening his will and clouding his intellect.

At this point we must ask what was being referred to by those who, during the preparation of the Synod and in the course of its actual work, frequently spoke of *social sin*.

The expression and the underlying concept in fact have various meanings.

To speak of *social sin* means in the first place to recognize that, by virtue of a human solidarity which is as mysterious and

intangible as it is real and concrete, each individual's sin in some way affects others. This is the other aspect of that solidarity which on the religious level is developed in the profound and magnificent mystery of the *Communion of Saints*, thanks to which it has been possible to say that "every soul that rises above itself, raises up the world".<sup>72</sup> To this *law of ascent* there unfortunately corresponds the *law of descent*. Consequently one can speak of a *communion of sin*, whereby a soul that lowers itself through sin drags down with itself the Church and, in some way, the whole world. In other words, there is no sin, not even the most intimate and secret one, the most strictly individual one, that exclusively concerns the person committing it. With greater or lesser violence, with greater or lesser harm, every sin has repercussions on the entire ecclesial body and the whole human family. According to this first meaning of the term, every sin can undoubtedly be considered as *social sin*.

Some sins however by their very matter constitute a direct attack on one's neighbour and, more exactly, in the language of the Gospel, against one's brother or sister. They are an offence against God because they are offences against one's neighbour. These sins are usually called *social sins*, and this is the second meaning of the term. In this sense *social sin* is sin against love of neighbour, and in the law of Christ it is all the more serious in that it involves the second Commandment, which is "like unto the first".<sup>73</sup> Likewise, the term *social* applies to every sin against justice in interpersonal relationships, committed either by the individual against the community or by the community against the individual. Also *social* is every sin against the rights of the human person, beginning with the right to life and including the life of the unborn, or against a person's physical integrity. Likewise *social* is every sin against others' freedom, especially against the supreme freedom to believe in God and adore him; *social* is every sin against the dignity and honour of one's neighbour. Also *social* is every sin against the common good and its exigencies in relation to the whole broad spectrum of the rights and duties of citizens. The term *social* can be applied to sins of commission or omission — on the part of political, economic or trade union leaders, who, though in a position to do so, do not work diligently and wisely for the improvement and transformation of society according to the requirements and potential of the given historic moment; as also on non-co-

<sup>72</sup> The expression is from the French writer Elisabeth Leseur, *Journal et pensées de chaque jour*, Paris 1918, p. 31.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Mt. 22:39; Mk. 12:31; Lk. 10:27 f.



operation fail to ensure that their industries can continue to advance the well-being of the workers themselves, of their families, and of the whole of society.

The third meaning of *social sin* refers to the relationships between the various human communities. These relationships are not always in accordance with the plan of God, who intends that there be justice in the world, and freedom and peace between individuals, groups and peoples. Thus the class struggle, whoever the person who leads it or on occasion seeks to give it a theoretical justification, is a *social evil*. Likewise, obstinate confrontation between blocs of nations, between one nation and another, between different groups within the same nation — all this too is a *social evil*. In both cases one may ask whether moral responsibility for these evils, and therefore sin, can be attributed to any person in particular. Now it has to be admitted that realities and situations such as those described, when they become generalized and reach vast proportions as social phenomena, almost always become anonymous, just as their causes are complex and not always identifiable. Hence if one speaks of social sin here, the expression obviously has an analogical meaning. However, to speak even analogically of *social sins* must not cause us to underestimate the responsibility of the individuals involved. It is meant to be an appeal to the consciences of all, so that each may shoulder his or her responsibility seriously and courageously in order to change those disastrous conditions and intolerable situations.

Having said this in the clearest and most unequivocal way, one must add at once that there is one meaning sometimes given to *social sin* that is not legitimate or acceptable, even though it is very common in certain quarters today.<sup>74</sup> This usage contrasts *social sin* and *personal sin*, not without ambiguity, in a way that leads more or less unconsciously to the watering down and almost the abolition of *personal sin*, with the recognition only of *social* guilt and responsibilities. According to this usage, which can readily be seen to derive from non-Christian ideologies and systems — which have possibly been discarded today by the very people who formerly officially upheld them — practically every sin is a social sin, in the sense that blame for it is to be placed not so much on the moral conscience of an individual but rather on some vague entity or anonymous collectivity, such as the situation, the system, society, structures, or institutions.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: Instruction on Certain Aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" *Libertatis Nuntius*, 6 August 1984, VI, 14-15: AAS 76 (1984), 885 f.

Whenever the Church speaks of *situations* of sin, or when she condemns as *social sins* certain situations or the collective behaviour of certain social groups, big or small, or even of whole nations and blocs of nations, she knows and she proclaims that such cases of *social sin* are the result of the accumulation and concentration of many *personal sins*. It is a case of the very personal sins of those who cause or support evil or who exploit it; of those who are in a position to avoid, eliminate or at least limit certain social evils but who fail to do so out of laziness, fear or the conspiracy of silence, through secret complicity or indifference; of those who take refuge in the supposed impossibility of changing the world, and also of those who sidestep the effort and sacrifice required, producing specious reason of a higher order. The real responsibility, then, lies with individuals.

A situation — or likewise an institution, a structure, society itself — is not in itself the subject of moral acts. Hence a situation cannot in itself be good or bad.

At the heart of every *situation of sin* are always to be found sinful people. So true is this that even when such a situation can be changed in its structural and institutional aspects by the force of law, or — as unfortunately more often happens — by the law of force, the change in fact proves to be incomplete, of short duration and ultimately vain and ineffective — not to say counterproductive — if the people directly or indirectly responsible for that situation are not converted.

### Mortal and venial

17. But here we come to a further dimension in the mystery of sin, one on which the human mind has never ceased to ponder: the question of its gravity. It is a question which cannot be overlooked, and one which the Christian conscience has never refused to answer. *Why* and *to what degree* is sin a serious matter in the offence it commits against God and in its effects on man? The Church has a teaching on this matter which she reaffirms in its essential elements, while recognizing that it is not always easy in concrete situations to define clear and exact limits.

Already in the Old Testament, individuals guilty of several kinds of sins — sins committed deliberately,<sup>75</sup> the various forms

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Num. 15:30.

of impurity,<sup>76</sup> idolatry,<sup>77</sup> the worship of false gods<sup>78</sup> — were ordered to be “taken away from the people”, which could also mean to be condemned to death.<sup>79</sup> Contrasted with these were other sins, especially sins committed through ignorance, that were forgiven by means of a sacrificial offering.<sup>80</sup>

In reference also to these texts, the Church has for centuries spoken of *mortal* sin and *venial* sin. But it is above all the New Testament that sheds light on this distinction and these terms. Here there are many passages which enumerate and strongly reprove sins that are particularly deserving of condemnation.<sup>81</sup> There is also the confirmation of the Decalogue by Jesus himself.<sup>82</sup> Here I wish to give special attention to two passages that are significant and impressive.

In a text of his First Letter, Saint John speaks of a sin *which leads to death* (*pros thánaton*), as opposed to a sin which does not lead to death (*mè pros thánaton*).<sup>83</sup> Obviously, the concept of *death* here is a spiritual death. It is a question of the loss of the true life or “eternal life”, which for John is knowledge of the Father and the Son,<sup>84</sup> and communion and intimacy with them. In that passage the sin *that leads to death* seems to be the denial of the Son,<sup>85</sup> or the worship of false gods.<sup>86</sup> At any rate, by this distinction of concepts John seems to wish to emphasize the incalculable seriousness of what constitutes the very essence of sin, namely the rejection of God. This is manifested above all in *apostasy* and *idolatry*: repudiating faith in revealed truth and making certain created realities equal to God, raising them to the status of idols or false gods.<sup>87</sup> But in this passage the Apostle’s intention is also to underline the certainty that comes to the Christian from the fact of having been “born of God” through the coming of the Son: the Christian possesses a power that preserves him from falling into sin; God protects

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Lev. 18:26-30.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Lev. 19:4.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Lev. 20:1-7.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Ex. 21:17.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Lev. 4:2 ff.; 5:1 ff.; Num. 15:22-29.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Mt. 5:28; 6:23; 12:31 f.; 15:19; Mk. 3:28-30, Rom. 1:29-31; 13:13; Is. 4.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Mt. 5:17; 15:1-10; Mk. 10:19; Lk. 18:20.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 5:16 f.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Jn. 17:3.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 2:22.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 5:21.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 5:16-21.

him, and "the evil one does not touch him". If he should sin through weakness or ignorance, he has confidence in being forgiven, also because he is supported by the joint prayer of the community.

In another passage of the New Testament, namely in Saint Matthew's Gospel,<sup>88</sup> Jesus himself speaks of a "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit" that "will not be forgiven" by reason of the fact that in its manifestations it is an obstinate refusal to be converted to the love of the Father of mercies.

Here of course it is a question of extreme and radical manifestations: rejection of God, rejection of his grace, and therefore opposition to the very source of salvation<sup>89</sup> — these are manifestations whereby a person seems to exclude himself voluntarily from the path of forgiveness. It is to be hoped that very few persist to the end in this attitude of rebellion or even defiance of God. Moreover, God in his merciful love is greater than our hearts, as Saint John further teaches us,<sup>90</sup> and can overcome all our psychological and spiritual resistance. So that, as Saint Thomas writes, "considering the omnipotence and mercy of God, no one should despair of the salvation of anyone in this life".<sup>91</sup>

But when we ponder the problem of a rebellious will meeting the infinitely just God, we cannot but experience feelings of salutary "fear and trembling", as Saint Paul suggests.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, Jesus' warning about the sin "that will not be forgiven" confirms the existence of sins which can bring down on the sinner the punishment of "eternal death".

In the light of these and other passages of Sacred Scripture, doctors and theologians, spiritual teachers and pastors have divided sins into *mortal* and *venial*. Saint Augustine, among others, speaks of *letalia* or *mortifera crimina*, contrasting them with *venialia*, *levia* or *quotidiana*.<sup>93</sup> The meaning which he gives to these adjectives was to influence the successive Magisterium

<sup>88</sup> Mt. 12:31 f.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 14, aa. 1-3.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. 1 Jn. 3:20.

<sup>91</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 14, a. 3, ad primum.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Phil. 2:12.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Saint Augustine, *De Spiritu et littera*, XXVIII: CSEL 60, 202 f.; *Enarrat. in ps.* 39, 22: CCL 38, 441; *Enchiridion ad Laurentium de fide et spe et caritate*, XIX, 71: CCL 46, 88; *In Ioannis Evangelium tractatus*, 12, 3, 14: CCL 36, 129.

of the Church. After him, it was Saint Thomas who was to formulate in the clearest possible terms the doctrine which became constant in the Church.

In defining and distinguishing between *mortal* sin and *venial* sins, Saint Thomas and the theology of sin that has its source in him could not be unaware of the biblical reference and therefore of the concept of spiritual death. According to Saint Thomas, in order to live spiritually man must remain in communion with the supreme principle of life, which is God, since God is the ultimate end of man's being and acting. Now sin is a disorder perpetrated by man against this life-principle. And when "through sin, the soul commits a disorder that reaches the point of turning away from its ultimate end — God — to which it is bound by charity, then the sin is mortal; on the other hand, whenever the disorder does not reach the point of a turning away from God, the sin is venial".<sup>94</sup> For this reason venial sin does not deprive the sinner of sanctifying grace, friendship with God, charity, and therefore eternal happiness, whereas just such a deprivation is precisely the consequence of mortal sin.

Furthermore, when sin is considered *from the point of view of the punishment* it merits, for Saint Thomas and other Doctors *mortal sin* is the sin which, if unforgiven, leads to eternal punishment; whereas *venial* sin is the sin that merits merely temporal punishment (that is, a partial punishment which can be expiated on earth or in Purgatory).

Considering sin from the point of view of its *matter*, the ideas of death, of radical rupture with God the Supreme Good, of deviation from the path that leads to God or interruption of the journey towards him (which are all ways of defining mortal sin) are linked with the idea of the gravity of sin's objective content. Hence, in the Church's doctrine and pastoral action, *grave* sin is in practice identified with *mortal* sin.

Here we have the core of the Church's traditional teaching, which was reiterated frequently and vigorously during the recent Synod. The Synod in fact not only reaffirmed the teaching of the Council of Trent concerning the existence and nature of *mortal* and *venial* sins,<sup>95</sup> but it also recalled that *mortal sin* is sin whose object is grave matter and which is also committed with

<sup>94</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 72, a. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Council of Trent, Sessio VI, *De iustificatione* chap. II and Canons 23, 25, 27: *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Bologna 1973, 671, 680 f. (DS 1573, 1575, 1577).

mortal. This threefold distinction might illustrate the fact that there is a scale of seriousness among grave sins. But it still remains true that the essential and decisive distinction is between sin which destroys charity, and sin which does not kill the supernatural life: there is no middle way between life and death.

Likewise, care will have to be taken not to reduce mortal sin to an act of "fundamental option" — as is commonly said today — against God, intending thereby an explicit and formal contempt for God or neighbour. For mortal sin exists also when a person knowingly and willingly, for whatever reason, chooses something gravely disordered. In fact, such a choice already includes contempt for the divine law, a rejection of God's love for humanity and the whole of creation: the person turns away from God and loses charity. Thus the fundamental orientation can be radically changed by individual acts. Clearly there can occur situations which are very complex and obscure from a psychological viewpoint, and which have an influence on the sinner's subjective culpability. But from a consideration of the psychological sphere one cannot proceed to the construction of a theological category, which is what the "fundamental option" precisely is, understanding it in such a way that it objectively changes or casts doubt upon the traditional concept of mortal sin.

While every sincere and prudent attempt to clarify the psychological and theological mystery of sin is to be valued, the Church nevertheless has a duty to remind all scholars in this field of the need to be faithful to the word of God that teaches us also about sin. She likewise has to remind them of the risk of contributing to a further weakening of the sense of sin in the modern world.

### **The loss of the sense of sin**

18. Over the course of generations, the Christian mind has gained from the Gospel as it is read in the ecclesial community a fine sensitivity and an acute perception of the *seeds of death* contained in sin, as well as a sensitivity and an acuteness of perception for identifying them in the thousand guises under which sin shows itself. This is what is commonly called the *sense of sin*.

This sense is rooted in man's moral conscience and is as it were its thermometer. It is linked to the *sense of God*, since it

derives from man's conscious relationship with God as his Creator, Lord and Father. Hence, just as it is impossible to eradicate completely the sense of God or to silence the conscience completely, so the sense of sin is never completely eliminated.

Nevertheless, it happens not infrequently in history, for more or less lengthy periods and under the influence of many different factors, that the moral conscience of many people becomes seriously clouded. "Have we the right idea of conscience?" — I asked two years ago in an Address to the faithful — "Is it not true that modern man is threatened by an eclipse of conscience? By a deformation of conscience? By a numbness or 'deadening' of conscience?"<sup>97</sup> Too many signs indicate that such an eclipse exists in our time. This is all the more disturbing in that conscience, defined by the Council as "the most secret core and sanctuary of a man",<sup>98</sup> is "strictly related to human *freedom*... For this reason conscience, to a great extent, constitutes the basis of man's interior dignity, and, at the same time, of his relationship to God".<sup>99</sup> It is inevitable therefore that in this situation there is closely connected with the moral conscience, the search for truth and the desire to make a responsible use of freedom. When the conscience is weakened the *sense of God* is also obscured, and as a result, with the loss of this decisive inner point of reference, the sense of sin is lost. This explains why my Predecessor Pius XII one day declared, in words that have almost become proverbial, that "the sin of the century is the loss of the sense of sin".<sup>100</sup>

Why has this happened in our time? A glance at certain aspects of contemporary culture can help us to understand the progressive weakening of the sense of sin, precisely because of the crisis of conscience and crisis of the sense of God already mentioned.

"Secularism" is by nature and definition a movement of ideas and behaviour which advocates a humanism totally without God, completely centred upon the cult of action and production and caught up in the heady enthusiasm of consumerism

<sup>97</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Angelus* of 14 March 1982: *Insegnamenti* V, 1 (1982), 861.

<sup>98</sup> Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 16.

<sup>99</sup> Pope John Paul II, *Angelus* of 14 Mach 1982: *Insignamenti* V, I (1982), 860.

<sup>100</sup> Pope Pius XII, *Radio Message* to the United States National Catechetical Congress held in Boston (26 October 1946): *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi*, VIII (1946), 288.

and pleasure-seeking, unconcerned with the danger of 'losing one's soul'. This secularism cannot but undermine the sense of sin. At the very most, sin will be reduced to what offends man. But it is precisely here that we are faced with the bitter experience which I already alluded to in my first Encyclical, namely, that man can build a world without God but this world will end by turning against him.<sup>101</sup> In fact, God is the origin and the supreme end of man, and man carries in himself a divine seed.<sup>102</sup> Hence it is the reality of God that reveals and illustrates the mystery of man. It is therefore vain to hope that there will take root a sense of sin against man and against human values, if there is no sense of offence against God, namely the true sense of sin.

Another reason for the disappearance of the sense of sin in contemporary society is to be found in the errors made in evaluating certain findings of the human sciences. Thus on the basis of certain affirmations of psychology, concern to avoid creating feelings of guilt or to place limits on freedom leads to a refusal ever to admit any shortcoming. Through an undue extrapolation of the criteria of the science of sociology, it finally happens — as I have already said — that all failings are blamed upon society, and the individual is declared innocent of them. Again, a certain cultural anthropology so emphasizes the undeniable environmental and historical conditioning and influences which act upon man, that it reduces his responsibility to the point of not acknowledging his ability to perform truly human acts and therefore his ability to sin.

The sense of sin also easily declines as a result of a system of ethics deriving from a certain historical relativism. This may take the form of an ethical system which relativizes the moral norm, denying its absolute and unconditional value, and as a consequence denying that there can be intrinsically illicit acts, independent of the circumstances in which they are performed by the subject. Herein lies a real "overthrowing and downfall of moral values", and "the problem is not so much one of ignorance of Christian ethics" but ignorance "rather of the meaning, foundations and criteria of the moral attitude".<sup>103</sup> Another

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*, 15: AAS 71 (1979), 286-289.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 3; cf. 1 Jn. 3:9.

<sup>103</sup> Pope John Paul II, Address to the Bishops of the Eastern Region of France (1 April 1982), 2: *Insegnamenti* V, 1 (1982), 1081.



the ecclesial significance of sin and of conversion and to reduce them to merely personal matters; or vice versa, the tendency to nullify the personal value of good and evil and to consider only their community dimension. There also exists the danger, never totally eliminated, of routine ritualism that deprives the Sacrament of its full significance and formative effectiveness.

The restoration of a *proper sense of sin* is the first way of facing the grave spiritual crisis looming over man today. But the sense of sin can only be restored through a *clear reminder of the unchangeable principles of reason and faith* which the moral teaching of the Church has always upheld.

There are good grounds for hoping that a healthy sense of sin will once again flourish, especially in the Christian world and in the Church. This will be aided by sound catechesis, illuminated by the biblical theology of the Covenant, by an attentive listening and trustful openness to the Magisterium of the Church which never ceases to enlighten consciences, and by an ever more careful practice of the Sacrament of Penance.

## CHAPTER TWO

### "MYSTERIUM PIETATIS"

19. In order to understand sin we have had to direct our attention to its nature as made known to us by the revelation of the economy of salvation: this is the *mysterium iniquitatis*. But in this economy sin is not the main principle, still less the victor. Sin fights against another active principle which — to use a beautiful and evocative expression of Saint Paul — we can call the *mysterium or sacramentum pietatis*. Man's sin would be the winner and in the end destructive, God's salvific plan would remain incomplete or even totally defeated, if this *mysterium pietatis* were not made part of the dynamism of history in order to conquer man's sin.

We find this expression in one of Saint Paul's *Pastoral Letters*, the *First Letter to Timothy*. It appears unexpectedly, as if by an exuberant inspiration. The Apostle had previously devoted long paragraphs of his message to his beloved disciple to an explanation of the meaning of the ordering of the community (the liturgical order and the related hierarchical one). Next he had spoken of the role of the heads of the community, before turning to the conduct of Timothy himself in "the church

of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth". Then at the end of the passage, suddenly but with a profound purpose he evokes the element which gives meaning to everything that he has written: "*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion*".<sup>104</sup>

Without in the least betraying the literal sense of the text, we can broaden this magnificent theological insight of Saint Paul into a more complete vision of the role which the truth proclaimed by him plays in the economy of salvation: "Great indeed", we repeat with him, "is the mystery of our religion", because it conquers sin.

But what is the meaning of this expression, in Paul's mind?

### It is Christ himself

20. It is profoundly significant that when Paul presents this "*mysterium pietatis*" he simply transcribes, without making a grammatical link with what he has just written,<sup>105</sup> three lines of a *Christological hymn* which — in the opinion of authoritative scholars — was used in the Greek-speaking Christian communities.

In the words of that hymn, full of theological content and rich in noble beauty, those first-century believers professed their faith in the mystery of Christ, whereby:

— he was made manifest in the reality of human flesh and was constituted by the Holy Spirit as the Just One who offers himself for the unjust;

— he appeared to the angels, having been made greater than them, and he was preached to the nations, as the bearer of salvation;

— he was believed in, in the world, as the one sent by the Father, and by the same Father assumed into heaven, as Lord.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> 1 Tim. 3:15 f.

<sup>105</sup> The text presents a certain difficulty, since the relative pronoun which opens the literal translation does not agree with the neuter "*mysterion*". Some late manuscripts have adjusted the text in order to correct the grammar. But it was Paul's intention merely to put next to what he had written a venerable text which for him was fully explanatory.

<sup>106</sup> The early Christian community expresses its faith in the crucified and glorified Christ, whom the angels adore and who is the Lord. But the striking element of this message remains the phrase "manifested in the flesh": that the eternal Son of God became man is the "great mystery".

The mystery or sacrament of *pietas*, therefore, is the very mystery of Christ. It is, in a striking summary, the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, of the full Passover of Jesus, the Son of God and Son of Mary; the mystery of his Passion and Death, of his Resurrection and glorification. What Saint Paul in quoting the phrases of the hymn wished to emphasize was that *this mystery is the hidden vital principle* which makes the Church the house of God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Following the Pauline teaching, we can affirm that this same *mystery of God's infinite loving kindness towards us* is capable of penetrating to the hidden roots of our iniquity, in order to evoke in the soul a movement of conversion, in order to redeem it and set it on course towards reconciliation.

Saint John too, undoubtedly referring to this mystery, but in his own characteristic language which differs from Saint Paul's, was able to write that "anyone born of God does not sin, but he who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him".<sup>107</sup> In this Johannine affirmation there is an indication of hope, based on the divine promises: the Christian has received the guarantee and the necessary strength not to sin. It is not a question therefore of a sinlessness acquired through one's own virtue or even inherent in man, as the Gnostics thought. It is a result of God's action. In order not to sin the Christian has knowledge of God, as Saint John reminds us in this same passage. But a little before he had written: "No one born of God commits sin; for God's seed abides in him".<sup>108</sup> If by "God's seed" we understand, as some commentators suggest, Jesus the Son of God, then we can say that in order not to sin, or in order to gain freedom from sin, the Christian has within himself the presence of Christ and the mystery of Christ, which is the mystery of God's loving kindness.

### The effort of the Christian

21. But there is another aspect to the *mysterium pietatis*: the *loving kindness of God* towards the Christian must be matched by the *piety of the Christian* towards God. In this second meaning of the word, piety (*eusébeia*) means precisely the conduct of the Christian who responds to God's fatherly loving kindness with his own filial piety.

<sup>107</sup> 1 Jn. 5:18 f.

<sup>108</sup> 1 Jn. 3:9.

In this sense too we can say with Saint Paul that "great indeed is the mystery of our religion". In this too *piety*, as a force for conversion and reconciliation, confronts iniquity and sin. In this case too the essential aspects of the mystery of Christ are the object of *piety* in the sense that the Christian accepts the mystery, contemplates it, and draws from it the spiritual strength necessary for living according to the Gospel. Here too one must say that "no one born of God commits sin"; but the expression has an imperative sense: sustained by the mystery of Christ as by an interior source of spiritual energy, the Christian, being a child of God, is warned not to sin, and indeed receives the commandment not to sin but to live in a manner worthy of "the house of God, that is the Church of the living God".<sup>109</sup>

### Towards a reconciled life

22. Thus the word of Scripture, as it reveals to us the *mystery of pietas*, opens the human intellect to conversion and reconciliation, understood not as lofty abstractions but as concrete Christian values to be achieved in our daily lives.

Deceived by the loss of the sense of sin and at times tempted by an illusion of sinlessness which is not at all Christian, the people of today too need to listen again to Saint John's admonition, as addressed to each one of them personally: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us",<sup>110</sup> and indeed "the whole world is in the power of the evil one".<sup>111</sup> Every individual therefore is invited by the voice of divine truth to examine realistically his or her conscience, and to confess that he or she has been brought forth in iniquity, as we say in the *Miserere* Psalm.<sup>112</sup>

Nevertheless, though threatened by fear and despair, the people of today can feel uplifted by the divine promise which opens to them the hope of full reconciliation.

The mystery of *pietas*, on God's part, is that mercy in which our Lord and Father — I repeat it again — is infinitely rich.<sup>113</sup>  
(Continued on page 370.)

<sup>109</sup> 1 Tim. 3:15.

<sup>110</sup> 1 Jn. 1:8.

<sup>111</sup> 1 Jn. 5:19.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Ps. 51 (50):5.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Eph. 2:4.

# Irreconcilability between Christian Faith and Freemasonry\*

On 26 November 1983 the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a declaration on Masonic associations (cf. AAS LXXVI [1984], 300). At a distance of little more than a year from its publication, it may be useful to outline briefly the significance of this document.

Since the Church began to declare her mind concerning Freemasonry, her negative judgment has been inspired by many reasons, both practical and doctrinal. She judged Freemasonry not merely responsible for subversive activity in her regard, but from the earliest pontifical documents on the subject and, in particular, in the Encyclical *Humanum Genus* by Leo XIII (20 April 1884), the Magisterium of the Church has denounced in Freemasonry philosophical ideas and moral conceptions opposed to Catholic doctrine. For Leo XIII, they essentially led back to a rationalistic naturalism, the inspiration of its plans and activities against the Church. In his Letter to the Italian People *Custodi* (8 December 1892), he wrote: "Let us remember that Christianity and Freemasonry are essentially irreconcilable, so that enrolment in one means separation from the other".

One could not therefore omit to take into consideration the positions of Freemasonry from the doctrinal point of view when, during the years from 1970-1980, the Sacred Congregation was in correspondence with some Episcopal Conferences especially interested in this problem because of the dialogue undertaken by some Catholic personages with representatives of some lodges which declared that they were not hostile, but were even favourable, to the Church.

Now more thorough study has led the S.C.D.F. to confirm its conviction of the basic irreconcilability between the principles of Freemasonry and those of the Christian faith.

Prescinding therefore from consideration of the practical attitude of the various lodges, whether of hostility towards the

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\* Reflections a Year After Declaration of Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. Reprinted from *L'Osservatore Romano*, (English Edition), 11 March 1985.

Church or not, with its declaration of 26 November 1983 the S.C.D.F. intended to take a position on the most profound and, for that matter, the most essential part of the problem: that is, on the level of the irreconcilability of the principles, which means on the level of the faith and its moral requirements.

Beginning from this doctrinal point of view, and in continuity, moreover, with the traditional position of the Church as the aforementioned documents of Leo XIII attest, there arise then the necessary practical consequences, which are valid for all those faithful who may possibly be members of Freemasonry.

Nevertheless, with regard to the affirmation of the irreconcilability between the principles of Freemasonry and the Catholic faith, from some parts are now heard the objection that essential to Freemasonry would be precisely the fact that it does not impose any "principle", in the sense of a philosophical or religious position which is binding for all of its members, but rather that it gathers together, beyond the limits of the various religions and world views, men of good will on the basis of humanistic values comprehensible and acceptable to everyone.

Freemasonry would constitute a cohesive element for all those who believe in the Architect of the Universe and who feel committed with regard to those fundamental moral orientations which are defined, for example, in the Decalogue; it would not separate anyone from his religion, but on the contrary would constitute an incentive to embrace that religion more strongly.

The multiple historical and philosophical problems which are hidden in these affirmations cannot be discussed here. It is certainly not necessary to emphasize that following the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church too is pressing in the direction of collaboration between all men of good will. Nevertheless, becoming a member of Freemasonry decidedly exceeds this legitimate collaboration and has a much more importance and final significance than this.

Above all, it must be remembered that the community of "Freemasons" and its moral obligations are presented as a progressive system of symbols of an extremely binding nature. The rigid rule of secrecy which prevails there further strengthens the weight of the interaction of signs and ideas. For the members, this climate of secrecy entails above all the risk of becoming an instrument of strategies unknown to them.

Even if it is stated that relativism is not assumed as dogma, nevertheless there is really proposed a relativistic symbolic concept, and therefore the relativizing value of such a moral-ritual community, far from being eliminated, proves on the contrary to be decisive.

In this context the various religious communities to which the individual members of the lodges belong can be considered only as simple institutionalizations of a broader and elusive truth. The value of these institutionalizations therefore appears to be inevitably relative with respect to this broader truth, which instead is shown in the community of good will, that is, in the Masonic fraternity.

In any case, for a Catholic Christian, it is not possible to live his relation with God in a twofold mode, that is, dividing it into a supraconfessional humanitarian form and an interior Christian form. He cannot cultivate relations of two types with God, nor express his relation with the Creator through symbolic forms of two types. That would be something completely different from that collaboration, which to him is obvious, with all those who are committed to doing good, even if beginning from different principles. On the one hand, a Catholic Christian cannot at the same time share in the full communion of Christian brotherhood and, on the other, look upon his Christian brother, from the Masonic perspective, as an "outsider".

Even when, as stated earlier, there were no explicit obligation to profess relativism as doctrine, nevertheless the relativizing force of such a brotherhood, by its very intrinsic logic, has the capacity to transform the structure of the act of faith in such a radical way as to become unacceptable to a Christian, "to whom his faith is dear" (Leo XIII).

Moreover, this distortion of the fundamental structure of the act of faith is carried out for the most part in a gentle way and without being noticed: firm adherence to the truth of God, revealed in the Church, becomes simple membership in an institution, considered as a particular expressive form alongside other expressive forms, a more or less just as possible and valid, of man's turning toward the eternal.

The temptation to go in this direction is much stronger today, inasmuch as it corresponds fully to certain convictions prevalent in contemporary mentality. The opinion that truth cannot be known is a typical characteristic of our era and, at the same time, an essential element in its general crisis.

Precisely by considering all these elements, the Declaration of the Sacred Congregation affirms that membership in Masonic associations "remains forbidden by the Church", and the faithful who enrol in them "are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion".

With this last statement, the Sacred Congregation points out to the faithful that this membership objectively constitutes a grave sin and, by specifying that the members of a Masonic association may not receive Holy Communion, it intends to enlighten the conscience of the faithful about a grave consequence which must derive from their belonging to a Masonic lodge.

Finally, the Sacred Congregation declares that "it is not within the competence of local ecclesiastical authorities to give a judgment on the nature of Masonic associations which would imply a derogation from what has been decided above". In this regard, the text also refers to the Declaration of 17 February 1981, which already reserved to the Apostolic See all pronouncements on the nature of these associations which may have implied derogations from the Canon Law then in force (Can. 2335).

In the same way, the new document issued by the S.C.D.F. in November 1983 expresses identical intentions of reserve concerning pronouncements which would differ from the judgment expressed here on the irreconcilability of Masonic principles with the Catholic faith, on the gravity of the act of joining a lodge and on the consequences which arise from it for receiving Holy Communion. This disposition points out that, despite the diversity which may exist among Masonic obediences, in particular in their declared attitude towards the Church, the Apostolic See discerns some common principles in them which require the same evaluation by all ecclesiastical authorities.

In making this Declaration, the S.C.D.F. has not intended to disown the efforts made by those who, with the due authorization of this Congregation, have sought to establish a dialogue with representatives of Freemasonry. But since there was the possibility of spreading among the faithful the erroneous opinion that membership in a Masonic lodge was lawful, it felt that it was its duty to make known to them the authentic thought of the Church in this regard and to warn them about a membership incompatible with the Catholic faith.

Only Jesus Christ is, in fact, the Teacher of Truth, and only in him can Christians find the light and the strength to live according to God's plan, working for the true good of their brethren.



## CANON LAW

# **Dismissal of Members From Religious Institute of Pontifical Right**

The Guidelines herein presented are drawn from strictly canonical provisions and from prudential practices in the implementation of the law on Dismissal.

The matter of Dismissal derives its intrinsic gravity from its terminal nature whereby the previously defined and formally sealed co-option between a Religious Institute and a Member thereof rests subsequently reversed and dissolved at the instance or initiative of the competent Religious Authority.

The Dismissal of Members from Religious Institutes, while considered as a remedial action of last resort in the event that the individual concerned does not at his or her own instance or initiative move for Transfer to another Institute or for Departure from the Institute, is nevertheless held necessary in stipulated cases for the good of the Church as a whole, for the self-protection of the Institute itself, and/or for the ultimate welfare of the said individual.

### **A. TYPES OF DISMISSAL:**

#### **1. *Automatic Dismissals***

This is Dismissal incurred by the individual himself or herself upon the very commission of a pre-established offense against religion or against a special obligation.

#### **2. *Mandatory Dismissal:***

This is Dismissal that should be imposed upon a Member guilty of a pre-determined offense against human life or against human liberty.

#### **1. *Automatic Dismissal:***

This is Dismissal that the competent Religious Authority may institute against a Member for given grave, external, imputable and juridically proven causes.

B. CAUSES FOR DISMISSAL:

1. *For Automatic Dismissal:*

- a. Notorious defection from the Catholic Faith.
- b. Contract of marriage or attempt at marriage contract.

2. *For Mandatory Dismissal:*

- a. Murder, actual procurement of abortion included.
- b. Violent or fraudulent abduction or imprisonment of, mutilation or infliction of a grave wound upon a person.
- c. Concubinage or sin against the Sixth Commandment with scandal.

3. *For Discretionary Dismissal:*

- a. Offense against the Sixth Commandment with force or threat, or in public, or with a minor under sixteen years of age.
- b. Habitual neglect of the obligations of consecrated life.
- c. Repeated violations of the religious vows or of the sacred bonds.
- d. Obstinate disobedience to the lawful orders of Superiors in grave matters.
- e. Grave scandal arising from culpable behavior of a Member.
- f. Obstinate attachment to or diffusion of teachings condemned by the Church Magisterium.
- g. Public adherence to materialistic or atheistic ideologies.
- h. Unlawful absence from the religious house for six months or more, with the intention of self-withdrawal from the authority of Superiors.
- i. Other causes of similar gravity provided for or defined in the particular law governing the Institute.

C. *PROCEDURES IN DISMISSAL:*1. *In Automatic Dismissal:*

- a. Collection of testimonial and/or documentary evidence.
- b. Major Superior with his or her Council immediately makes a written declaration of fact thus automatically and juridically establishing the Dismissal.
- c. Transmission of declaration and supporting evidence to the supreme Moderator for information and communication to the Holy See.

2. *In Mandatory Dismissal:*

- a. Collection of testimonial and/or documentary evidence.
- b. Major Superior presents the evidence of fact and the argument of imputability to the Member, thus giving this the opportunity for defense before either the same major Superior or the supreme Moderator.
- c. Transmission of all the pertinent Instruments of the case, duly signed by the major Superior and the notary, with the opinion of the same Superior, to the supreme Moderator.
- d. Supreme Moderator with his or her Council of four Members at least, collegially deliberate on the case based on the provisions of law, the strength of evidence, the force of the defense, and the weight of the arguments.
- e. Issuance of the Decree of Dismissal by the supreme Moderator with his or her Council, with the following substantial contents even in summary form, for validity: The Law. The Fact. The Conclusion. The Right of the individual dismissed to have Recourse to the higher competent authority within ten days after receipt of a copy of the Decree.
- f. Transmission of the Decree and all pertinent Instruments for confirmation to the Holy See, which suspends the effectivity of the Decree upon receipt of a Recourse.

3. *In Discretionary Dismissal:*

- a. Major Superior in consultation with his or her Council judges to initiate Dismissal procedure against an erring Member on a given grave, external, imputable and juridically provable matter.
- b. Collection of testimonial and/or documentary evidence.
- c. Major Superior gives admonition to the Member in writing or before two Witnesses, with the following substantial contents: Offense(s) of Member and invitation to self-reform. Notification of Dismissal procedure and recognition of the right of the Member to defense before either the same Superior or the supreme Moderator.
- d. Major Superior gives second admonition with the same substantial contents as above stated, fifteen days at least after the first admonition if this proved ineffective in truth and in fact, with or without a defense from the Member.
- e. Major Superior with his or her Council, judging the Dismissal to be in order in terms of either absence of response from the Member, insufficiency of defense or proof of incorrigibility, transmit all the pertinent Instruments of the case, duly signed by the same Superior and the notary, to the supreme Moderator, fifteen days at least after the second admonition.
- f. Supreme Moderator with his or her Council of four Members at least, collegially deliberate on the case based on the provisions of law, the strength of evidence, the force of the defense, and the weight of the arguments.
- g. Issuance of the Decree of Dismissal by the supreme Moderator with his or her Council, with the following substantial contents even in summary form, for validity: The Law. The Fact. The Conclusion. The Right of the individual dismissed to have Recourse to higher competent authority within ten days after receipt of the notification of the Decree.
- h. Transmission of the Decree and all pertinent Instruments for confirmation to the Holy See, which suspends the effectivity of the Decree upon receipt of a Recourse.

The major Superior can and may immediately expel a Member from the Religious House in the case of a grave external scandal or very serious and imminent harm to the Institute if no such action were taken. Even the local Superior can and may take the same action of expulsion in the event that there is danger in delay. In either instance, the major Superior thereafter initiates Dismissal procedure according to law or refers the case to the Holy See.

In any type of Dismissal, including the case of expulsion, the major Superior with his or her Council have a more active and immediate role. While there is no canonical provision to the effect that the supreme Moderator may not take this actual role of the major Superior, the Dismissal procedure as expressedly provided by law is more prudent in the sense that the Member as subject of the procedure has actually two directions for Recourse, viz., the supreme Moderator and the Holy See.

The matter of dismissal of any type, given its sensitive and critical nature, should be well and carefully documented, not only in terms of common public civil and/or ecclesiastical documents, but also with reference to all acts made and actions taken which should therefore be clearly written down and accordingly filed for reference and transmission purposes. A good number of really meritorious Dismissal cases could not be either acted upon or confirmed on account of poor documentation thereof — to the ultimate detriment of the Church, the Institute or the individuals concerned.

† OSCAR V. CRUZ, JCD, DD

## CASES AND INQUIRIES

### I. ATTEMPTED CIVIL MARRIAGE OF A RELIGIOUS PRIEST

A religious priest, teaching in a school, knew a girl whom he married civilly in a place far away from the place they are known. Soon they realized it was a great mistake and decided to keep it secret. Moreover, they agreed to break their relationship. They even managed to take the record of their marriage from the civil registrar's file and destroyed it to avoid its becoming public.

#### Questions:

1. Has the religious priest incurred the penalty imposed by canon 1394, § 1?

2. Is the religious priest *ipso facto* dismissed from the institute, to which he belongs?

3. Is not the secret celebration of civil marriage and destruction of its records a mitigating circumstance, in order to impose a lighter penalty upon the religious priest?

#### A Religious Superior

Canon 1394 § 1, states: "Without prejudice to the provision of canon 194, § 1, n. 3, a cleric who attempts marriage, even if only civilly, incurs a *latae sententiae* suspension . . ." This norm penalizes the violation of the law on celibacy binding to all clerics in accordance with canon 277, § 1. Its violation consists in celebrating a marriage, even civilly only. In the present case, the religious priest went through the civil formality, exchanging true matrimonial consent, although juridically inefficient. He therefore, has incurred the *latae sententiae* suspension imposed by canon 1394, § 1.

With regards to the second question, canon 694, § 1 says: "A member of a religious institute is to be considered automatically dismissed if he: 1) . . . ; 2) has contracted marriage or attempted to do so, even civilly." The law does not leave any doubt about the automatic dismissal of the religious concerned

from the institute. The second paragraph of the same canon explains how the Superior should proceed to the dismissal, by saying: "In this case the Major Superior with his council must, after collecting the evidence, without delay make a declaration of the fact, so that the dismissal is juridically established."

Finally, we have to say that the celebration of civil marriage is never *secret*. Article 57 of the civil Code states that "marriage shall be solemnized *publicly* in the office of the judge in open court or of the mayor, or in church, chapel or temple, as the case may be, and not elsewhere except in marriages contracted on the point of death or in remote places . . ." It is clear, therefore, that there is no *secret* celebration of civil marriage. It is always *public*. The fact that the civil marriage dealt with in the case was celebrated in a place where the contracting parties were unknown does not make the celebration of marriage *secret*.

Likewise, the destruction of the records of the marriage in the civil registrar's file cannot affect the fact itself i.e., change its nature. Such destruction presupposes the marriage celebration which automatically produces in our case two effects, namely: the *latae sententiae* suspension and the dismissal from the religious institute.

In other words, both the celebration of civil marriage in a place where the contracting parties are unknown and the destruction of its records cannot be considered as mitigating circumstances in applying the penalties attached to the fact of the celebration of civil marriage. Both circumstances, however, may help in diminishing the danger of scandal, which the competent ecclesiastical authority may take into account in remitting the *latae sententiae* suspension.

## 2. REMISSION OF THE EXCOMMUNICATION ON ABORTION

*There are censures latae sententiae like the one imposed against abortion, which seems not to be reserved to any authority. Canon 1398 reads: "A person who successfully procures an abortion incurs a latae sententiae excommunication." The question is: Can any confessor absolve from the censure imposed against abortion? If not, who can absolve from it?*

A Parish Priest

Canon 1355 deals with the question posed by our consultant. According to this canon, a *latae sententiae* penalty, not reserved to the Apostolic See, which is established by law but not yet declared, can be remitted by the Ordinary with respect to his subjects and of those actually in his territory or of those who committed the offense in his territory. Moreover, any Bishop, even titular, can do this, but only in the course of sacramental confession.

Besides, canon 566, § 2 states: "In hospitals and prisons and on sea voyages, a chaplain has the further faculty to be exercised only in those places, to absolve from *latae sententiae* censures which are neither reserved nor declared, without prejudice to canon 976."

Canon 976 reads: "Any priest, even though he lacks the faculty to hear confessions, can validly and lawfully absolve any penitents who are in *danger of death*, from any censures and sins, even if an approved priest is present."

Considering, therefore, the prescription concerning abortion, mentioned by our consultant, and the foregoing three canons which deal with the remission of *latae sententiae* censures not reserved, we can formulate our answer in the following way: Any confessor cannot absolve from the excommunication *latae sententiae* incurred by an abortion successfully procured.

The persons who may absolve from the said excommunication are:

1. The offender's proper Ordinary, or the Ordinary of the place where the crime was committed, or any Ordinary within his territory;
2. any Bishop, even titular, only within the sacramental confession;
3. any Confessor in danger of the offender's death;
4. a chaplain of a hospital or prisons, on sea voyages, in their respective places.

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.



## SANCTITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

### *Three Martyrs of Chastity*

- I. *The young lady from Ilocos*
- II. *Maria de los Santos from Lingayen*
- III. *The young woman in the Recollect Missions*

Any LIVES OF SAINTS contains, besides the hundreds of heroines who, for the love of Christ renounced the lawful pleasures and joys of marriage, family and home, also a few who chose to die rather than have their virtue of purity sullied by a lascivious attacker. St. Maria Goretti of Italy is the best known of them in our times. But our country has had some worthy forerunners and peers of hers, and at least three such heroines are recorded in golden letters by reliable historians. The account of their glorious deaths is so laconic and incidental that, one excepted, not even their names have passed to us.

These young ladies are certainly a source of good example for the women of today who are beset by dangers against chastity.

#### *I. The young lady from Ilocos*

In the second half of the 17th century, there lived in Manila a Dominican priest and professor at the University of Sto. Tomas who, due to his extensive knowledge of the Ecclesiastical sciences and remarkable expertise for solving moral cases, was surnamed "the Oracle of the Far East." His name was Father Juan de Paz.

On one occasion, a fellow priest in the Missions brought to his attention the case of a woman who, when confessing her sins, did not seem to present sufficient matter for absolution (i.e., real sins, although venial). The confessor, to secure the matter required, asked her whether she had even told a lie or committed any sin, although only by thought, against chastity or experience any temptation about this delicate virtue. Her answer to the three questions was negative.

The same priest also asked whether some young women, past the age of fourteen, who went to confession every now and then stating that they never experienced any thought against chastity, could be given absolution and be allowed to receive Holy Communion.

Motivated by these queries, Father de Paz, aside from giving a solution to these questions, dedicated a full paragraph to praise the modesty and chastity of some young Filipino women and, as a factual proof of his statements, recounted, although without committing himself in affirming whether she was a true martyr or not, the heroic action of a young Ilocana who chose to lose her life rather than her chastity. Here are his words.

"In addition to what has already been said, one cannot deny that among the Indios, there are some who bring up their daughters in the way of chastity and with as much modesty as possible, and who keep away from their homes anything regarding vanity, so that in these homes, it is very possible that women may reach 18 and 20 years of age keeping the horror and fear of lust given by a good education. It cannot either be universally denied that the virtuous Indias may, out of fear of God, abstain from sin. And when virtue is lacking, there is no absence of the natural sense of shame. So that even though some of them, through bad rearing up, go astray, in others especially during youth, and in women even more so, God puts the sense of shame as guardian of virtue and good habits, which even when there is no fear of God, prevents them from throwing themselves into vice...

"In the uprising of Pangasinan, an army of men from Pangasinan entered the Ilocos province where they did many killings and robberies. A native, called Gumapas, who was a sargeant major, ordered a girl of about 20 years of age to be brought to him. He solicited her, begged her, tried to win her either with promises or threats, but she did not give way to unchastity. The native tried to force her but he could not, and enraged, drew out a *balarao* and slit her open from chest down.

"We do not know whether the resistance of this native lady threatened by a cruel savage overcame the fear of death out of love for virtue or for good reputation; but we do know that in a town of Ilocos there was a woman who preferred to die rather than allowing in her the stain of lust."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cfr. AUST (archives of the University of Santo Tomás), Section "Libros," Vol. 88, fol. 214-214v.

II. *Maria de los Santos from Lingayen*

"In this year 1691, something pitiful and at the same time worthy of remembrance happened in the town of Lingayen. A married Spanish soldier by the name of Felipe de Obregón killed a young woman named María de los Santos, legitimate daughter of Andrés de Lora, a mulato<sup>2</sup> from Nueva España<sup>3</sup> and Inés Ducas, a native woman from Pangasinan. He killed her because she did not want to commit sin with him but to defend her virginity. This tragic incident happened on the day dedicated to St. Peter, a martyr, April 29 of the said year. Here is how it all happened.

"The Spanish soldier Obregón made use of the services of a woman who approached María de los Santos and tricking her, she led her away from her house to a lonely place but still within the sight of her house and not yet outside the town of Lingayen. There the soldier came to solicit the young woman. The procuress left them alone. The soldier started to solicit the young woman but she resisted and they started to fight. As she was resisting, the soldier drew out a dagger and with it, he made some wounds on her arm and cut one of her fingers or she cut it on holding the dagger with her hand. He also made wounds on her side near the waist and the young woman fell down, almost dead. Then he hit her on the neck and severed it almost completely, because the head and the throat were almost cut off. There was a woman who saw the fight from her rice field and so, she started to cry out as if she was calling the pigs to feed them, in order to scare the soldier who, leaving the young woman dead, escaped.

"The Alcalde Mayor was notified and he sent some officials to see what had happened. They found the young woman dead, covering her private parts with her hand. She was taken away and buried according to her social condition.

"A strange thing happened some days later. A carabao ran wild and, running through grasslands and crossing rivers, arrived at the rice fields of Binmaley and Lingayen, and finding the procuress who deceived the young woman, gored her and killed her, leaving her torn to pieces. This fact frightened everyone. The people could not imagine how a carabao from the mountains could come from so far away, overcoming all obstacles,

<sup>2</sup> Mulato: child of black and white.

<sup>3</sup> Nueva España: more or less today's Mexico and Central America.

and how it entered a place full of rice fields and of people, with such a fury. This brought disturbance to the whole area of the beach of Binmaley and Lingayen. It appeared as if it had come only to kill the procuress.

"The women of Pangasinan have a good thing that helps them to avoid many sins and it is that they are enemies of go-betweens, so that in Pangasinan, there are no such people which is common among other Indios. The woman from Pangasinan if a go-between is sent to her, for that very fact she would not give in because they are very prudent and modest."<sup>4</sup>

### III. *The young woman in the Recollect Missions*

In the height of their religious fervor, that is, throughout the 17th century, the Recollects counted among their achievements their ability of producing among the natives privileged souls whom God was pleased to raise to an eminent degree of perfection. God also rewarded every now and then services for the propagation of the faith by granting them martyrs among their own ranks at the hands of the Muslims and on the occasion that we are about to describe, a native young woman, their spiritual daughter at the hands of a perverted Christian in the defense of her chastity.

History does not tell us her name, but her feat should remain engraved in letters of gold in the Annals of Christianity in the Philippines. Here is how it happened.

Both Christians and infidels experienced continually the benefits of Mary for they went to her for help all their problems; lack of water for the fields, or too many locusts or epidemic illnesses; they went to her image and Mary immediately granted their requests. The Virgin Mary, in this particular image, seemed to be the very loving Mother of the Tagabaloyes and they in turn, were very loving children of such a great Lady. It was admirable to see big crowds of pagans go to the town in orderly processions to ask solution for their problems.

Very often the soldiers and the Christians in the town noticed that the holy image went away from her Shrine because they found it with wet dress, dusty or muddy and some-

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. AGOP (*Archivum generale Ordinis Praedicatorum*), Santa Sabina, Rome, XIII-27.

times stained with blood, and it always happened in those occasions that she was seen in the mountains staring off some damage that was threatening the people. It was also common that she would turn her face towards a particular direction different from her usual position; then those who saw the marvel knew that in the direction in which the image looked, there was a needy person in trouble or suffering from a calamity and so, they would come to his help. All these wonders of the Virgin Mary, so visible and tangible, were the main cause why many infidels began to embrace religion there, and they venerated with deep and loving devotion such a beneficent and generous Lady.

Regarding the fact of the Blessed Virgin turning her beautiful face, there happened a particular case. On a certain occasion, the holy image being uncovered and with lighted candles, she turned her head towards the south in the presence of almost the whole town. She remained in the said position for a long while to the great astonishment of all those present, until she turned her face again to its usual position. The motive for that marvel could not be discovered but it did not take long for it to be known. In the town of Poro (also called Bagangan), there was a young India, chaste and devout Christian and of exceptional beauty. A man, blinded by his sensual love, started to go after her. He tried to achieve his purpose using all the possible means that diabolic shrewdness cut-off from the good government of grace usually provides. However, he could not conquer the heart of the young woman nor bring her away from the pure paths of chastity.

And so, one day, he found her in a place where she could not easily escape, and where her cries for help would be useless by force, he took her even further away, threatening her and tried to get by force what she would not give him. But the young woman, fortified from above with a strength not common to her sex, knew how to defend the integrity of her body to dedicate it to God together with her spirit. The aggressor, angered by a blow he received in the struggle hanged her from a tree.

When the parents of the young woman realized that their daughter was missing, they searched for her carefully, using all the necessary means which their love and pain required. Final-

ly, after three days, they found her body hanging from the tree, with her hands crossed and holding the Rosary between them. Her virginal body was surrounded by innumerable bees, which had already formed a honeycomb on her face and mouth. The bees were dispersed with smoke. And then her body was taken down and it was found without bad smell at all but with a certain fragrance superior to all fragrances on earth. They then realized that in the moment when the young woman disappeared from home and from the town, the Virgin turned her face toward the south precisely towards the place where the iragedy occurred.

With this, everybody knew that when the face of the image of the Virgin Mary turned, she was giving help to her devotee delivering her from the death of sin, but that for reasons unknown to us, she permitted that she would suffer in the death of her body. Later on, all particulars were known through the confession of the aggressor himself who gave his permission for the publication.

This marvel served a lot of good, not only for the increase of devotion to Mary through such a beneficial image, but also to the confirmation and extension of the Catholic Faith in those lands which still need the watering of marvels for their minds to give the corresponding fruits, according to the sweat and cultivation of the evangelical works.<sup>5</sup>

PABLO FERNANDEZ, O.P.

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<sup>5</sup> Pedro de San Francisco de Asís, O.A.R., *Historia General de los religiosos descalzos del Orden de los Hermitaños del Grande Padre y Doctor de la Iglesia, San Agustín, de la Congregación de España y de las Indias*, Tomo Cuarto, pp. 290-291.

## HISTORY

# DOMINICAN TOWNS IN PANGASINAN:

### BUNLALACAO

Bunlalacao, a town accepted by the Dominicans in 1743, is described in History as a riverine settlement situated on the left bank of the Agno, near the mountain ranges of Zambales.<sup>1</sup> Its location therefore, must have been near the first site of the ancient Binalatongan.

We have enough documentary evidence to prove that Bunlalacao, together with Santa Barbara, was petitioned by the Dominican Order to be erected as an independent town on December 17, 1740, and as a result of this request, the *Alcalde Mayor* was instructed to inspect the said localities. On March 21, 1741, he reported that he had found a good number of inhabitants in both places.<sup>2</sup>

In 1743, it was officially accepted as a ministry of the Order by the Provincial Chapter held in Manila on that year, and entrusted to the spiritual care of the Vicar of Binalatongan, Father Carlos Lopez, and his assistant, Father Francisco Barroso. In the Chapter held two years afterwards, Father C. Lopez was assigned as its first Vicar.<sup>3</sup>

The need of raising Bunlalacao to the status of an independent Vicariate was also due to the fact that by 1741, its mother-town, Binalatongan, had already been transferred to its third site farther to the East, which was quite far from Bunlalacao.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Serraon, Rev. Melquiades, *A Historical Study on the Dominican Apostolate in San Carlos (Binalatongan), Pangasinan, 1537-1898*, an unpublished thesis, (U.S.T., 1984), p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Rosario Mendoza Cortes, *Pangasinan, 1572-1800*, University of the Philippines Press, Quezon City, 1974, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta Capitulum Provincialium*, II, 279, 282, & 303.

<sup>4</sup> Serraon, *loc. cit.*

And here ends the brief history of Bunlalacao, for its name does not appear anymore in succeeding Chapters or Population statistics.<sup>5</sup>

## SAN ISIDRO LABRADOR

### Its founding

The Dominican Fathers, in charge of Lingayen, founded the town of *Labrador*, as it is called nowadays, and *San Isidro*, as it was known in the past, in 1753 near barrio Tubuan, where, according to the old tradition, the Augustinians, Frs. Rada and Holgado, had erected the first Christian chapel in Pangasinan on the occasion of Salcedo's expedition to dislodge Limahong from the vicinity of Lingayen.<sup>6</sup>

### Location and Boundaries

"It is situated," writes Father Suarez, "on the left bank of the Agno, in a small tongue of land, by the shore of the gulf of Lingayen, close to the bar through which the said river empties into the sea. It is a beautiful town, blessed with a pleasant location, and the healthiest of Pangasinan, although the winds that blow from the nearby mountains are not the best over there."<sup>7</sup>

For its border towns it has Sual on the Northwest, Lingayen on the East, Bugallon on the Southeast and the mountains of Zambales on the West.

### Acceptance

It was officially added to the long list of the Dominican ministries in the Philippines by the Provincial Chapter of 1755, with the following words:

"We accept our house of San Isidro Labrador of Tubuan in Pangasinan province, raising it thereby to the status of a Vicariate . . . In our house of San Isidro de Tubuan, we appoint as Vicar Father Antonio Ruiz."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Ocio, *Monumento Dominicano*, p. 100.

<sup>6</sup> Valentin Marin y Morales, *Ensayo*, II, 656.

<sup>7</sup> Suarez, *op. cit.*, Fol. 187.

<sup>8</sup> *Acta Capitulorum Provincialium*, II, 374, 379.



### A Royal Decree

Among the many towns — over a hundred or so — founded or accepted by the Dominicans in the Philippines through the years, only one, as far as we know, was privileged with a Royal decree, and this town was none other than San Isidro Labrador. Such an extraordinary document deserves, therefore, its publication in full. Here is the tenor of its text as translated into English:

“Royal decree of May 3rd, 1757, approving the founding of San Isidro on the site of Toboan, near the estuary of Sual in Pangasinan Province —

I, the King<sup>9</sup>

“Governor and Captain General<sup>10</sup> of the Philippine Islands and President of my Royal Audiencia thereof, who resides in the city of Manila: By a letter of July 14th, 1755, you notified me that, on request of the Province of the Holy Rosary of the Order of Preachers (which is charged with the spiritual ministration, instruction and catechizing of the natives who inhabit the province of Pangasinan), the *Oidor*, Judge Visitor,<sup>11</sup> of its jurisdiction, granted the license for the founding of a new town under the advocacy of San Isidro Labrador in the site named Toboan, near the bar of the harbour of Sual of the above-mentioned province, with a church and a dwelling for its missionary minister, on condition, however, that the approval of the Central Government would be obtained.

And, although this grace was petitioned in the year 1745, the measures taken to obtain it were delayed until the month of November of 1754 when, having been concluded, they were forwarded by the territorial judge of that Province; and after they had been seen by you, taking into account the advantages that resulted from the founding of the said town, not only in view of the spiritual good of the natives dwelling in its territory, and the well-founded hope that many of the infidels who roam in the nearby mountains would be converted to our faith, but also from the social and economic dimensions, in as much

<sup>9</sup> King Ferdinand VI (1746-1759).

<sup>10</sup> Pedro Manuel de Arandía (1755-1759).

<sup>11</sup> Ignacio de Arzádun y Rebolledo, permanent Judge Visitor of the provinces of Northern Luzon during the late thirties and early forties of the 18th century.

as the said town is located near the bar that serves as harbour, and close to the stores (*almacenes*) of my *Hacienda Real* which exist in its vicinity, and therefore, open to the attacks of the Muslims who harass those seas, without any other protection than that of a native official who is entrusted with its custody, — you, in view of all this, having previously heard the verdict of my Audiencia's Fiscal, gave your approval on some conditions that are inserted in the attestation that you sent enclosed in it.

Therein, you set apart a stipend to be given to the missionary assigned for the spiritual care of its inhabitants, and to be paid from the tributes of the said town. What ever is lacking, would be defrayed by the Royal Coffers in that Province until the number of the tax-payers reaches five hundred, one fourth [of the said tributes] being enough for his support.

You also added that the construction of a fort was being considered for the defense of the harbour and bar of Sual, which [fort] has not yet built for the lack of funds [needed] for its construction and for the maintainance of its garrison.

The said letter and its supporting papers having been examined by my Council of the Indies. We have deemed it proper to give our approval to the measures you have taken for the construction of the aforesaid fort, reminding you (as We do now) that We hope you shall look for the means needed for the building of the projected fort [which is intended] for the defense of the Sual harbour and of the Royal rice-stores that exist therein; for such is my will.

Given at Aranjuez, on May 3rd of the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven."

I, the King  
By order of the King, Our Lord,  
Jose Ignacio de Goyeneche

To the Governor of the Philippines, approving the measures leading to the founding of a mission-town, under the patronage of San Isidro Labrador, in the place named Toboan, within the jurisdiction of the province of Pangasinan, while appraising him of what is expressly said therein."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan", Vol. VII, Doc. 11.

### Ecclesiastical buildings

Initially, the church and convent of Labrador were of boards and *sawali*. Between the years 1771 and 1776, Father Domingo de San Joaquin built them of stronger materials, that is, of a combination of river pebbles and madreporic stones mixed with lime. This construction seems to have been unique in Pangasinan. The church underwent extensive repairs in 1865.<sup>13</sup>

"For the town of San Isidro", comments Father Suárez, "which has always been small, its church was fairly spacious." It was not patterned after any architectural style for, as Father Suárez remarks again — "it can be inferred from this and from several others that our forefathers were not so much concerned about styles as about raising walls and covering them with a roof."<sup>14</sup>

The convent, although also small, was considered as one of the best in Pangasinan.<sup>15</sup>

The cemetery, constructed to the West of the town, was the work of Father Rufino Irazabal. However, he could not roof its chapel due to the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution in 1898.<sup>16</sup>

The school buildings of Labrador, of mortar and stone, were started by Father Pedro Vilanova and enlarged in the year 1892 and 1893 by Father Irazabal.<sup>17</sup>

### Bridges

Towards Toboang and Sual, West of San Isidro, there are two creeks. Over one of them, the Oyong. Father Pedro Casanova built a stone bridge about the years 1842 and 1843. Unluckily, it did not last even for a year, for it was swept away by a strong flood, just as easily as if it were constructed of wood.<sup>18</sup> Of this structure there remained only one of its pillars and the foundation of others, and all were utilized when Governor Peñaranda tried to rebuilt it in later years.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Manuel Mora, "Estado de las casas de la Provincia en Filipinas," MS in APSR, Section "Ministerios", Vol. 2, Fol.

<sup>14</sup> Suárez, p. 187.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Marín, pp. 656-657.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 657.

<sup>18</sup> Suárez, p. 187.

In addition to these, Father Irazabal built some culverts over Toboang creek, and another one near the public square and not far from the Dumalandan wade.<sup>19</sup>

### **A projected canal**

Father Irazabal states in a Report he submitted to Father Provincial in 1877 that, between the years 1820-1840, some Father ministers of Western Pangasinan planned, with the assent of the then incumbent mayors of the Province, to dig a canal, sufficiently deep and wide, which, starting from a creek about a kilometer distant from the town, would terminate in the harbour of Sual.

If such a project had been carried out, it would have brought undeniable advantages to trade, and the towns of Labrador, Salasa, Lingayen, San Carlos, Binmaley and Dagupan would have greatly profited from it, for such a canal, aside from connecting the said towns by water transportation, was also intended to eschew the dangers posed by the bars of Dagupan and Labrador.

It seems that enough funds were appropriated to start the construction but the money vanished in the hands of some irresponsible government officials, and in the end nothing was accomplished. How true it is that history repeats itself!<sup>20</sup>

### **Two tragic incidents**

In the year 1762, with the occasion of the Palaris uprising, the people of Labrador allowed their Pastor to proceed to Asingan, where the Dominican fathers found a temporary shelter, but not without having given him, prior to his departure, twenty five lashes. The last member of the family, which was responsible for this misdemeanor, committed suicide by hanging himself in the courthouse, where he was detained due to unpaid debts. This suicide happened in the year 1850 at the time when Father Pedro Vilanova was the Vicar of the town.<sup>21</sup>

### **A less tragic incident**

In the place named San Pedro Mantir (a corruption of *Martyr*), Father Manuel Eserich, while Vicar of Labrador,

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> González, pp. 88-89.

<sup>21</sup> Suarez, *loc. cit.*

erected a small barrio chapel. However, it was not going to last for long because the Father Recollect minister of Salapsap, believing that the site was within the jurisdictional grounds of his parish, swooped down one day at the head of his parishioners, putting the chapel to the torch.

Later, in the time of Father Manuel Barrio, the matter was brought to the attention of the higher tribunals of justice in the city of Manila which decreed that, after all, the ministers and people of Labrador had been right.<sup>22</sup>

### Population statistics

The population of Labrador, as the following statistics show, was never large. It grew, however, at the same pace as other Pangasinan towns under the shadow of the peace enjoyed by the whole province throughout the 19th century.

1758	-----	920 souls <sup>23</sup>
1775	-----	879 souls <sup>24</sup>
1800	-----	1,683 souls <sup>25</sup>
1824	(together with Sual) ....	1,724 souls <sup>26</sup>
1848	-----	2,063 souls <sup>27</sup>
1875	-----	2,745 souls <sup>28</sup>
1898	-----	2,640 souls <sup>29</sup>
1980	-----	12,120 souls <sup>30</sup>

### VILLASIS

#### Its boundaries

The boundaries of Villasis are aptly described by Father Valentín Marín in his *Ensayo* with the following words: "It

<sup>22</sup> Mora, *loc. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan," Vol. IV, Doc. 1, Fol. 15.

<sup>24</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan," Vol. XI, Doc. 10, Fol. 68.

<sup>25</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Cagayan," 1800, Vol. XVII, Doc. 26.

<sup>26</sup> "Piano che rappresenta il numero di anime che la Provincia del SSmo. Rosario dell' Ordine de' Predicatori tiene a carico suo nell' Isole Filippine, nell' Impero della' Gran China, e nel Regno del Tonchino, secondo la novissime relazioni" (Cfr. AGOP, "Estadísticas, 1824", XIII-27, 500-5-4-a).

<sup>27</sup> Revista Catolica, *loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> *Estado General*, Manila, 1875.

<sup>29</sup> *Estado General*, Manila, 1897.

<sup>30</sup> Cfr. *Special Report*, No. 3, Philippines, 1980, "Population land area and density, (1980), Republic of the Philippines, National Census and Statistics Office, Manila.

borders on the East with the town of Asingan at a distance of 14 kms.; on the North with barrio Bactar of Urdaneta; on the Northwest with the town of Urdaneta at 9 kms.; on the West with Malasiqui, its mother-town, at 24 kms.; on the Southwest, through a pointed stretch of land, with Bayambang; on the South with the municipality of Alcalá; on the Southeast with the Agno which divides both towns of Alcala and Villasis, and runs its course from East to South in that area; and with Rosales (Nueva Ecija) on the East-southwest."<sup>31</sup>

### Its origins

On the initiative of Father Fernando de Santa Maria, backed up by the *principalía* of Malasiqui, Msgr. Miguel Lino de Ezpeleta, bishop of Cebu and acting Governor General of the Philippines, granted on 18 October 1759, the required license for founding a new town in a place called Pandoyocan. To this end, and to attract some fugitives from justice who were wandering the nearby forests, he ordered the Alcalde Mayor of Pangasinan to publish a decree of amnesty in favor of any delinquent, who, fleeing from justice, would have taken to the hills.

They were granted the grace of being able to return to the said place; were promised fair treatment in His Majesty's name, and, in addition to this, a general pardon for whatever offenses they were guilty of. The decree empowered them, at the same time, to elect the ministers of justice needed for the good and orderly government of a future town.

On the 22nd of the same month and year, after acquainting the Dominican Provincial with his plans, he also asked him in his Majesty's name a Religious to take care of the spiritual needs of the people who were to live in the projected town. In accordance with the provision of the decree, the Gobernadorcillo and the other town officials were elected on May 13, 1760. And on August 28 of the same year, Father Provincial appointed Father Jose Azcarate as Pastor of the town.<sup>32</sup>

The Provincial Chapter of 1763 accepted this ministry and gave it Father Manuel de San Jose as its first Vicar.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> P. 653; About years 1840-1842, Father Pedro D. Lluç, Parish Priest of Villasis, founded the "visita" of Pinaglagbang, which is today's Rosales, so named after a Regent of the Audiencia (Gonzalez, p. 91; Ocio, *Compendio*, p. 647.)

<sup>32</sup> Ocio, *Monumento*, p. 101; Gonzalez, p. 88.

<sup>33</sup> *Acta Capitulum Provincialium*, II, 420, 426.

Before the Palaris uprising (1762-1764), Pandoyocan numbered five hundred tributes (about two thousand souls), but after, there were barely one hundred and sixty.<sup>34</sup> This decrease was in part due to the suffering brought about by the fighting, and also to the fact that many of its inhabitants migrated to other places when the years for the exemption of the tribute were over.<sup>35</sup>

In 1769, Pandoyocan was entrusted to the Vicar of Asingan. However, from other sources, it may be inferred that Baltasar F. Calderon, the future founder of the Batanes Mission, was still its Vicar, and from 1773 on he administered it from Asingan, whose Vicar he was. Such state of affairs finally prompted the Superior Government, duly advised by Señor Velilla, Alcalde Mayor of Pangasinan, to suppress it altogether as parish or visita.<sup>36</sup>

### Its restoration

On June 22, 1804, through a proclamation, the restoration of Pandoyocan was officially announced. It seems, however, that the process of restoration did not go on so smoothly as desired since, as far as we know, the said proclamation was not acted upon by the Superior Government until May 2, 1807 when Governor General Mariano F. Folgueras acceded to the desires of the inhabitants of the former Pandoyocan, and he did so only on condition that the restored town would bear one of the family names of his predecessors in the governance of the Philippines, Rafael María de Aguilar y Villasís. Unluckily, this time the plan met with the opposition of the Dominican Provincial and, more concretely, of Father Baltasar F. Calderón. The latter contended that the right place to effect the restoration was not Pandoyocan but Macayo, where Father Santa María had wished to establish the town in 1750. Due to the objection of both religious, the restoration of Pandoyocan, under the name of Villasís, was not successfully carried out until 1814.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Gonzalez, pp. 89-90.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Ocio, *Monumento*, pp. 102-103.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-104.

plastered all over with a coat of fine white lime). The church is a fabric of wooden walls resting on a basement of mortar and stone. It is united to the convent by a very beautiful passage-way, built also of durable materials.

"The convent as well as the church are covered with a galvanized iron roofing. The convent had a good kitchen of solid materials, roofed also with corrugated iron sheets, and linked to the convent by a gallery which rests on brick pillars. This gallery is flanked by wooden railings on both sides, and roofed with iron sheets.

"Of the fence encircling the church yard, where the first and second Sunday processions used to be held, only the foundations were finished and its lay-out traced. All this is still in good condition.

"The bell-tower is all wooden, supported by well-wrought posts (*harigues*) of *bacayao*, and all its timber is of the first class, as it befits a construction so exposed to the inclemency of the weather.

"The cemetery, situated to the right of the road which, starting in Villasis, leads to Asingan, is fenced with a wall of strong materials."<sup>43</sup>

## Schools

According to Buzeta and Bravo, there were in the year 1850 two schools in Villasis.<sup>44</sup> Later, Father Joaquin Palacios (1867-1871) is said to have put up two school buildings for boys and girls, but unluckily both went up in flames in the year 1871. Two other school buildings, constructed under the supervision of Father Ruiz, suffered a similar fate. Reliable historians tell us that this Father provided all barrios, even the remotest ones, with schools. No wonder, therefore, that at the end of his long term (1874-1886) Villasis numbered twenty schools for both sexes within its jurisdiction, all with their respective teachers, men as well as women.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan", Vol. VII, Doc. 34, p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Buzeta, Manuel and Bravo, Felipe, *Diccionario geografico estadistico, historico de las islas Filipinas*, 2 Vols., Madrid: Imprenta de D. Jose C. de la Peña, 1851, Vol. p.

<sup>45</sup> Marin, p. 654; Gonzalez, p. 91.



### Roads and bridges

The building of roads and bridges have always contributed to the prosperity of towns, and the Dominican "Vicars", knowing this well, acted accordingly with the cooperation of the *principalía* and townsfolk. In line with this policy, in the time of Father Ruiz two wooden bridges and three stone culverts were built over the two creeks that cross the road to Urdaneta. The same Father built several similar structures on the road to Asingan, opened a road to Alcalá, and several others leading to the distant barrios.<sup>46</sup>

As a rule, Villasís was well connected with the neighbouring towns by averagely good roads. And here it is good to note that the road from Villasís to Asingan was flanked about mid-19th century by a forest and lined on both sides by the dwellings of the natives.<sup>47</sup>

### Irrigation

Administered alternately and at short intervals by Dominican and secular priests during most of the first half of the 19th century, Villasís barely achieved any material progress for lack of proper direction and a concerted plan of action.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, "its terrain," as Father Suárez writes, "was very extensive and extremely fertile."<sup>49</sup>

Father Lluç must have borne this in mind when during his four-year stay, he began to clear up forests, explore the terrain and foment irrigation. Following this line of action, Father Francisco Catalá obtained from the *principalía* of Asingan permission for the townsfolk of Villasís to dig a canal in 1855, which soon provided them with enough water for the irrigation of their fields. From that date, the town began to experience an increase of wealth. In fact, Villasís prospered so much, especially under the vigorous action of Father Ruiz, that when he left for another assignment in 1888, the number of its *cabeceras* had gone up from twenty one to fifty five.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Marin, p. 654.

<sup>47</sup> Another precious item recorded by Father Suarez in his invaluable manuscript is that in the middle of the 19th century, Villasís abounded in centuries-old forests, from which, in or about the year 1844, the timber for the construction of the bridge *Oquendo* and the boat *Preciosa* was extracted.

<sup>48</sup> Suarez, p. 199.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Gonzalez, p. 93.

### Agricultural projects

It seems as if the Vicars of Villasís had vied with one another in their concern for the increase in the material prosperity of Villasís. Thus Father Blas Jiménez (1842-1846) promoted the sowing of indigo and wheat, and Father Palacios imitated him by promoting on a large scale the planting of coconut and *bonga* trees.<sup>51</sup>

### Population statistics

The following population figures are indicative of the demographic growth of Villasís, with its unavoidable ups and downs:

1765	.....	805 souls <sup>52</sup>
1776	.....	344 souls <sup>53</sup>
1812	(as a "visita" of Asingan) ..	317 souls <sup>54</sup>
1839	.....	2,460 souls <sup>55</sup>
1852	.....	1,601 souls <sup>56</sup>
1875	.....	7,225 souls <sup>57</sup>
1897	.....	10,632 souls <sup>58</sup>
1980	.....	39,126 souls <sup>59</sup>

PABLO FERNÁNDEZ, O.P.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>52</sup> Gonzalez, p. 93.

<sup>53</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan", Vol. XI, Doc. 12, fol. 133.

<sup>54</sup> "Numero de almas de la provincia de Pangasinan, obispado de Nueva Segovia", año 1812, in APSR, MSS, Section "Pangasinan", Vol. XII, Doc. 32, Fol. 61. According to this document, the number of tributes for this year in Pangasinan were 16,814, and of souls 77,847 (*Ibid.*, fol. 57).

<sup>55</sup> "Plan que manifiesta el numero de almas que la provincia del Santísimo Rosario del Sagrado Orden de Predicadores tiene a su cargo en las Islas Filipinas, etc., segun las certificaciones de la numeracion del año 1839 (Cfr. AGOP, Section "Province of Our Lady of the Rosary, Statistics).

<sup>56</sup> *Revista Catolica*, Julio de 1853, No. CXXXIII, p. 380.

<sup>57</sup> *Estado de almas* . . . , 1875.

<sup>58</sup> *Estado de almas* . . . , 1897.

<sup>59</sup> Taken from: Special Report No. 3, Philippines, 1980, Population land area and density, 1980, Republic of the Philippines, National Census and Statistics Office, Manila.

## DOCUMENTATION

### ARCHDIOCESE OF TUGUEGARAO

Archbishop's Residence  
Tuguegarao, Cagayan

To the People of God  
in the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao:

#### *The Occasion*

On April 10, 1910 the Apostolic document "Quae Mare Sinico" created and separated the Diocesis Tuguegaraoana, from the See of Nueva Segovia. This year therefore marks the Diamond jubilee of our ecclesiastical jurisdiction. We rejoice not only because seventy-five years have passed but more because God has fondly blessed our land and our people, ever faithful to His promises.

#### *Our Celebration*

A diamond jubilee is not a negligible event; celebration is in order. In the midst of an economic crisis that has plunged a considerable number of our people into situations of privation and desperation we cannot, however, mark diamond jubilee by pompous and extravagant funfare. Our priests and lay leaders, however, for some time now, have been engaged in pastoral activities and programs designed to enable the Christian faithful, especially in small communities and in rural areas to participate more fully and more maturely in our lives as members of the believing community, the Church.

#### *Our Programs*

Newly ordained priests of the Archdiocese have been entrusted with the mission of visiting different parishes; to the faithful in far-flung barrios and sitios they have brought the Gospel by catechizing, administering the Sacraments and witnessing. This program of missions we intend to continue until a significant portion of the territory of the Archdiocese shall have been visited. There are activities scheduled by the Archdiocesan Marian Committee some of which have already been successfully concluded, like the Marian Assembly and Marian symposia

throughout the Archdiocese. There is an ongoing Archdiocesan biblical apostolate engaged in the task of inviting families and small communities to organize bible sharing and study groups. One of the blessings we pray for in this year of our jubilee is that our faithful may live more fruitfully by God's Word. In the area of pastoral involvement and participation, the Apostolate of the Laity has directed itself to revitalizing and streamlining pastoral councils in the parishes of our Archdiocese. Among our priorities this year is the intensification of the catechetical movement as well as an all-out campaign for priestly and religious vocations.

### *The Meaning of a Diamond Jubilee*

The celebration of a Diamond Jubilee is an occasion for *thanksgiving*. The Catholic faith is indeed God's great gift to the people of Cagayan; it is also a priceless legacy from our forebears. For this very reason it is also a *challenge* for it is opportune to ask ourselves how faithfully we have proclaimed the Gospel, how authentically we have witnessed to our faith. In the Old Testament the prophets have persistently asserted that celebrations are not acceptable to God unless the people rid themselves of oppression, redress the grievances of those who have been unjustly treated and side with the poor and the sorrowing. May this be the great concern of our faithful people in this year of our jubilee. Like a diamond that sparkles because of its facets, may our Catholic Christian faith permeate our society, our culture and its values, our political life, its institutions and characters, our business concerns and establishments. We call on the Patroness of the Cagayan Valley, Our Lady of Piat, especially on this Marian Year, to lead us on the path of peace, justice and reconciliation towards her Son. As we rejoice at this celebration of our jubilee and the second millenium of her birth may our voices join her own in that ageless, exalted hymn: My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

† TEODULFO S. DOMINGO, D.D.  
Archbishop of Tuguegarao

† DIOSDADO A. TALAMAYAN, D.D.  
Titular Bishop of Giro  
Auxiliary Bishop of Tuguegarao

ARZOBISPADO DE MANILA  
Manila, Philippines

C. No. 35  
S. 1984

TO: BELOVED PARISH PRIESTS & PAROCHIAL VICARS  
IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA

RE: THE OBLIGATORY USE OF THE OFFICIAL TAGALOG  
TRANSLATION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL IN THE  
ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA

Dear Monsignor/Father:

After allowing a considerable period of time to acquaint the priests of the Archdiocese of Manila with the official Tagalog translation of the complete latest edition of the Roman Missal and after consulting the regional bishops and the ad-hoc review committee, I would like to follow up the decree which I, in my capacity as President of the CBCP, signed on November 22, 1981 concerning the obligatory use of the said translation.

From the beginning of September this year, the said translation is to be used in the Archdiocese of Manila in compliance with the provision of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy concerning the faithful adherence to the authority of the Apostolic See confirming the result of the decision of the Catholic Bishops' Conference (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 22; *Codex iuris Canonici*, Canon 838).

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Yours very devotedly in Christ,

† JAIME CARDINAL L. SIN, D.D.  
Archbishop of Manila

August 26, 1984

# *Appointment of* *Msgr. Florentino Cinense*

Joannes Paulus Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei

dilecto Filio FLORENTINO CINENSE, Vicario Generali dioecesis Cabanatuanensis, electo Episcopo Ecclesiae Sancti Josephi in Insulis Philippinis, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Romani est Pontificis singulis dioecesibus aptos Episcopos praepondere, iis tamen attentiore mente et studio prospicere, quae recens fuerint conditae. Cum igitur assignandus esset Episcopus Ecclesiae Sancti Josephi conditae. Cum igitur assignandus esset Episcopus Ecclesiae Sancti Josephi in Insulis Philippinis, quam die XVI mensis Februarii hoc anno per Apostolicas sub plumbo Litteras — Saepe catholicorum utilitas — fundavimus et metropolitane Sedis Lingayensis-Dagupanensis suffraganeam fecimus, tu, dilecte Fili, congruis dotibus praeditus. Nobis es visus idoneus ad eam regendam. De consilio igitur Venerabilium Fratrum Nostrorum S.R.E. Cardinalium qui Sacrae Congregationi pro Episcopis praesunt, Apostolica nostra usi potestate te nominamus Episcopum dioecesis SANCTI JOSEPHI IN INSULIS PHILIPPINIS, cum omnibus iuribus et obligationibus. Antequam autem episcopalem ordinationem accipias, iuxta statutas liturgicas normas, tuum erit, teste quovis Episcopofidei professionem facere atque iusiurandum dare fidelitatis erga Nos et Successores Nostros formulasque adhibitas ad Sacram Congregationem pro Episcopis mittere, usitato more signatas sigilloque impressas. Mandamus praeterea ut de hac nominatione tua certiores fiant clerus ac populus Sancti Josephi in Insulis Philippinis ad normam iuris; quos dilectos filios hortamur ut te debita reverentia colant tibi que volentes pareant. Pro te, denique, dilecte Fili, Christum, Pastorem aeternum, suppliciter deprecamur ut, Virgine intercedente Maria, te supernis confirmet donis ut episcopale ministerium tuum valeas diligentissime implere. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo quarto mensis Maii, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo octogesimo quarto, Pontificatus Nostri sexto.

Joannes Paulus II

Marcellus Rossetti, Protonot. Apost.

## HOMILETICS

# HOMILIES FOR JULY AND AUGUST

## FOURTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

July 7, 1985

### Readings:

Eze 2:2-5

2 Cor 12:7-10

Mk 6:1-6

### REJECTED BY HIS OWN

The Shah of Persia, once a mighty ancient empire, was ousted from his country and had to flee for his life. It was not that another nation had warred against him and defeated him, but his own people rose up and rejected him. Whatever brought it about, the fact remains that the Shah who at the time of his inauguration sat in a jewel-studded throne, wearing a robe glittering with diamonds amid much pomp and ceremony, was now rejected by his own people, scorned, hated and disowned. The glory of this world passes quickly!

1. Jesus was not only rejected by his own people in today's gospel, but by his own townsmen! It was the people of Nazareth who rose up and rejected him. Nazareth, where he had grown up since boyhood, observing all the laws and customs of his people. Nazareth, where he had plied his carpenter's trade faithfully and conscientiously every day, coming to the aid of his fellow-townsmen. Nazareth, where he had never given the slightest offence to anyone, nor any occasion for complaints. Nazareth, where his loving patience had always been an inspiration to his neighbors! Now when he came to them as a prophet sent by God with a message as to how they should live in order to be saved, this same Nazareth rejects him! Perhaps that cut more deeply into his heart than his failures at Capernaum and Chorazin whom he later on chastised severely (Mt. 11:21f). No wonder John the Evangelist in his old age would write in a sad tone in the prologue of his Gospel: "To his own he came, yet his own did not accept him" (Jn. 1:11).

2. Rejection is one of the hardest things for man to bear. Everyone wishes to be accepted, especially by his own, and more so if he comes to do good to them. A doctor who knows that his patient is hopelessly lost unless he takes the medicines and treatments prescribed, feels frustrated and saddened if the patient rejects them, for he knows only too well the sad outcome of such a refusal. Jesus the divine Physician came to serve and not to be served (Mt. 20:28). He came to give life to man and that in abundance (Jn. 10:10). He enabled man to become God's son (Js. 1:13). But the one requisite is to accept him for what he is: the One sent by the Father as Savior of the world. Unless mankind accepts him and his message of Good News "then there is no other name under heaven in which man can be saved" as St. Peter told the leaders of his people (Acts 4:12). That is why Jesus is deeply disappointed and experiences such frustration when his own people whom he loved rejected him. They symbolize the nation as a whole who would also reject their Messiah-King and Savior as he stood condemned before Pilate. They also symbolize the world hostile to Christ, the world which refuses the saving power of the divine Physician to bring it true happiness and everlasting peace.

3. Why did the people of Nazareth reject Jesus? You heard the questions they were asking each other. They had to admit his wisdom and his power, yet instead of seeing all this as a sign of his divine mission, they took offense. In their eyes he was such an ordinary man, just a carpenter. He could boast of no education like the scribes and Pharisees. His relatives were not of the upper elite class. He made no promise of what they were hankering after: material prosperity, liberation from the hated foreigner, a glorious future for Israel once more. He was not the type of Messiah they wanted. He was not to their taste. What was lacking? Faith. Faith that rises above all such natural considerations, and lives in an atmosphere of supernatural belief. They judged by the exterior, not by the light offered from on high. Even Jesus was greatly surprised at their lack of faith, his own people, his own townsmen!

There is an old saying: "Familiarity breeds contempt". We must look beyond the natural side of those sent to us by God to bring us the Good News and the saying means to live as God wills. In faith, we as People of God, must accept the mes-



sengers he sends us, listen to the message given us, despite the weaknesses of human nature, and God will bring salvation to his People through his instruments whom he has chosen for his work.

## FIFTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

July 14, 1985

### Readings:

Amos 7:12-15

Eph 1:3-14

Mk 6:7-13

### FAVOR POURED OUT

A child is not grateful by birth. He is, on the contrary, quite selfish, looking only for his own needs and wants. But when he has been trained to say "Thank you" for any favor done to him, he grows up well-mannered and pleasing to all. The Holy Father once visited an orphanage in Rome and one little tot was so pleased that she offered to the Pope what she treasured most: her little doll. What a beautiful act of a child! A grateful heart.

1. Today's second reading shows us the immense love of God pouring itself out in abundant favor toward his people. It is St. Paul's hymn of gratitude, which has a Trinitarian dimension because it touches on the work of the three Divine Persons in regard to man's salvation. Man's happiness and destiny is entirely bound up with Christ, the Beloved of the Father. In him we are God's chosen children, destined to be holy and without the least blemish one day in heaven, and that for all eternity. Once this imperfect life with its failures, its sins and its ailments is over, there dawns an eternity where love permeates all things. As sons in the one Son of God we are destined to enjoy all the inheritance belonging to Christ the Lord, God's Beloved One. Ought not our hearts lift up in praise and thanksgiving for such immense favor bestowed on us? If we appreciate so much an inheritance left us in someone's last will, if we gratefully accept benefits bestowed on us, let us say, by the company for which we work, then we ought all

the more appreciate and gratefully receive the spiritual benefits of the Father in heaven who has given so much in the heavenly realm toward which we inevitably tend!

2. It was Christ, God's Beloved Son, who underwent death for us to set us free from the yoke of sin and Satan. He alone wrought our redemption and paid the price of his Blood. He poured out on us abundant wisdom and gave us insights to realize his great plan. For Christ is the Center of the universe, the one in whom all things in heaven and on earth meet in harmony. The Father has been pleased to bring all things together under the Headship of Christ, by whom the universe came into being and for whose glory it was created. He is the New Adam in whom regenerated mankind finds fulfillment and purpose. To Christ every person, rich or poor, learned or uneducated, can look up to with hope, that this life on earth has a purpose, and all suffering has a deeper meaning, as Jesus so eminently manifested by his patient commitment to his Father's will. In Christ we have all the means necessary to reach that destiny to which we are invited. Again, ought we not break forth in praise of God for his great favor!

3. Once risen from the dead, Christ poured out on all believers the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was promised of old, but only given after Christ had accomplished his Paschal Mystery, and exalted on high at God's right hand (Acts 2:42). The Spirit is like a seal which men stamp on documents to denote ownership and possession. So being "sealed" with the Holy Spirit we are God's own possession. It is a bold comparison used by St. Paul, yet it aptly expressed how the Spirit by his presence really transforms us into God's children. Having been "sealed" by the Spirit in our sacramental baptism, we are recognized by the Father as his own, while the Spirit cries within us: "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). He is the guarantee of the full possession of God in heaven (Rom. 8:11). A third time, then we are invited to praise the Lord for his glorious deeds.

All worthy of our love and praise is the Most Blessed Trinity! Each of the three divine persons has been intimately taken up with our well being here on earth, and our eternal happiness in the world to come. Let words of praise and songs of blessing frequently rise up from our lips and hearts, for the wonderful deeds he has accomplished and continues to accomplish on our behalf. With the Virgin Mother we will sing often her Magnificat, "for he who is mighty has done great things for us".

## SIXTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

July 21, 1985

## Readings:

Jer 23:1-6

Eph 2:13-18

Mk 6:30-34

## HUNGRY FOR GOD

Indoctrination and brain-washing are common words today. They refer to methods used by persons who wish to gain their own ends over those they want to control. Knowledge always plays a great part in determining man's actions. He reads the newspapers and periodicals to form his social and political views. He attend college and university to be better equipped for a life career. Man must learn much before he can act properly and to advantage.

1. When Jesus saw the crowds gathered before him, the first thing mentioned of him was that he had compassion on them because they were like scattered sheep with no one to tend to their needs. But the first action he took was not to heal their ailments or still their hunger, but "that he began to teach them many things". He realized that *people were hungry for God*, and what they needed above all was knowledge of God's love, knowledge of his plan of love for them, and the means offered by the Lord to be made use of in order to gain happiness forever. Therefore he unfolded before them the Good News, teaching them many valuable things.

Only by instruction and knowledge of God's ways would they deepen their faith as well as their hope in the good things God had prepared for them. He whetted their appetite for the things of God. Thus they would learn how to respond with love towards their Father in heaven as well as toward their fellowmen as their Father willed it. Love follows on knowledge. If we do not know a person, how can we love that person? If we do not know God, how can we love God properly? If we are not mindful that our fellowmen are objects of God's love just as we are, how can we love them as Christ bids us to?

2. Knowledge of God and of our holy faith is so necessary today when we are bombarded by all kinds of entertainment in the movies and the TV; as well as all kinds of thrillers in books and magazines. But how much time does God's chosen People give to knowing better God himself, and the beautiful realities of their Catholic religion? How much do our people understand God's plan for them, his ways of treating man in this exile on earth? Yet often when people are given the opportunity to learn more of God and things divine, they respond avidly. Why? Because all along without knowing it, they were hungry for God.

Where can we find clearly the mind of God expressed for his children to learn and to follow? In the word of God. The Sacred Scriptures are written under the impetus of the Holy Spirit "so that the man of God may be fully competent and equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:17). But how many will take time daily to read a few passages of the word of God from the Gospels, which are Christ's words of Spirit and life. Or how many will read for themselves the dynamic words of St. Paul's letters? How many realize that the writings of the prophets speak also to us in our day, and that they give the blue-prints how God treats his People, not only those of the Old Covenant, but also of the New? In these pages we see how God rewards his People for their fidelity to him, but gives them the medicine of chastisement when they failed in their covenant-love by going over to false gods and material prosperity. Once they turned to him in sincere compunction, it is admirable to read how quickly he took them back. Nor ought we neglect the psalms which for centuries was the sole prayer-book of God's People.

3. It is regrettable that many religion classes today in our high schools and colleges are mostly or even merely on psychology. Psychology is good in itself, but it only educates the natural man. Religion gives him supernatural insights and the outlook he needs for his life as regenerated in Christ, and a follower of the Crucified. He is destined for something above anything that his nature can by itself attain. He is destined for the vision of the Triune God, to know and to love the infinitely lovable Being for an eternity of complete well being. Let educators insist that once again our people especially our youth get to know well the fundamentals of our Catholic faith, and that they grow daily by deeper insight into the marvellous dimensions of that faith. God can still the hunger of the heart of man.

In World War II the armed forces in a certain place were shown the movie "The Song of Bernadette", the story of the apparitions of our Lady to the child Bernadette Soubirous. At the end they were given the choice of another movie that same night or a repeat of "The Song of Bernadette". To a man they clamored for a repeat. The men had tasted the goodness of God. They became hungry for more. We too ought to take up good reading material on the things of God, for it is surprising how our thirst for God increases for Him who alone can slake it.

## SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

July 28, 1985

### Readings:

2 Kings 4:42-44

Eph 4:1-6

Jn 6:1-15

### BIG DIVIDENDS

People want to get the most out of their money. They invest it where it can bring them the highest interest. They take chances on the lottery or sweep-stakes, hoping for a small amount to win a large sum. They purchase shares that promise the best dividends. Several years ago when xerox duplicating machines came on the market those who bought up shares for a moderate price, soon became the recipients of large returns because of the giant strides that xerox had made in short time. Small amounts produced big dividends.

1. It is worthy of note that in today's gospel-scene, Jesus does not create the food to nourish the immense crowd, but asks first of all for a contribution from his own. A little lad had brought along five barley loaves and two fish. Presumably he had not only intended to nourish himself but also to sell them to others. But when asked to give them to Jesus, he sacrificed both his own nourishment as well as the proceeds he would obtained by selling the rest. It was a relatively small thing that he gave up, but he made the total sacrifice of it and kept nothing back. What must have been his immense surprise when Jesus fed that great throng of five thousand with five loaves

and two fish! How glad he was then to have made the sacrifice. Not only was he himself nourished fully but he was instrumental in feeding that vast crowd. One loaf fed a thousand! What dividends!

2. This is the way the Lord works. He asked us for a small contribution, a small sacrifice of our time or talent or treasure, only to reward it with divine bounty and munificence. He asked the Samaritan women for merely a drink of water (John 4), but imparted knowledge of the Living Water (the Spirit); he brought her step by step to a conversion from her sinful life to acknowledge her need of a Messiah. Then finally he granted to her the supreme revelation that he himself was the Messiah-King of Israel, something he had shown reluctance to do even to Israel's great ones. What dividends she got from merely sharing a drink of water! Nor was that all. She became the instrument of evangelization for all her townsmen.

When Peter was asked to give up his means of livelihood as a fisherman, what a return he received by becoming the Chief Fisherman for the heavenly waters! He gave up a few fish and received thousands for the messianic banquet. When the Virgin-Mother was asked to give the Savior his body, what an exchange was hers! She became thereby the Mother of God's Son, and Mother of his entire Body-Person, the Church. To all his followers Jesus promises such bountiful returns: "Everyone who has given up home, brothers or sisters, father or mother, wife or children or property for my sake, will receive many times as much and inherit everlasting life" (Mt. 19:29).

3. When the Lord asks for a contribution of our time, our talent or our treasures, he is never outdone in generosity. He told us in the Gospel: "Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they pour into the fold of your garment" (Lk. 6:38). "Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these lowly ones because he is a disciple will not want for reward" (Mt. 10:42). It is a proven fact that those who sacrifice themselves for others are blessed by God with deep inner happiness. In the words of Dr. Tom Dooley who worked unremittingly for thousands of unfortunate people in Vietnam, Laos and other places; "The only way man can achieve happiness is to strive for the happiness of others".

In the Early Church, people brought up to the altar at the presentation of the gifts at Mass, the bread they themselves had made and the wine also. That made them set apart for sacred use. Then at communion time, the same gifts which had meantime been transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ at the consecration, were returned to those who gave them. What immense dividends!

## EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

August 4, 1985

### Readings:

Ex 16:2-4. 12-15

Eph 4:17. 20-24

Jn 6:24-35

### MANNA FROM HEAVEN

St. Louis of France was kneeling one day in his chapel before the Blessed Sacrament when a man rushed in and urged him to come out quickly for a miracle had taken place. Most people would have rushed out at once to see the miracle and add to the general commotion. St. Louis remained unperturbed before the Tabernacle. When asked why he had not heeded the report, he said: "I need no greater miracle than my Lord and my God present in the Blessed Sacrament."

1. The marvel of the Eucharist is the product of the infinite inventiveness of the mind of God. To think that the Son of God not only deigned to take on our human nature, a body and a created soul, a human finite mind and human will, but even deigned to hide both humanity and divinity under the appearance of a small wafer of bread, is something so overwhelming that the mind of man is unable to express its admiration adequately. Had the Lord chosen some exotic or rare food, people would travel for days to obtain it, once they believed it was the Body and Blood of the Savior. But because he chose such ordinary food and drink (wine is the common drink in Palestine), it is hardly appreciated as it ought to be. That is why faith is so necessary to grasp both the fact and the depth of this most Blessed Sacrament. It is truly a heavenly Manna.

2. Faith it was that Jesus demanded from his contemporaries and it is faith that he demands of us. He tried to make them understand that the manna of old was merely a passing figure of the reality. The reality was he himself, the true Manna which the Father had sent from heaven. He was the Bread of Life. No one needs to buy this Bread with money or earthly exchange of goods. They need only to come in sincere faith to still their hunger and quench their thirst, and it would be given to them freely. But the Jews were unwilling to accept this, because they saw in Jesus a mere man from Nazareth, and would not believe he was God's Son, sent to be their Bread of Life.

There are millions of pagans and Moslems today who do not have this faith either. Not only that. Even among those who call themselves Catholics, how many have the proper faith and appreciation for the Blessed Sacrament? Perhaps they have received the Eucharist from childhood on, but how many receive out of habit rather than any deep conviction? Do they really believe in the meaning of the Eucharist? Again it is their faith that needs to be revitalized, if the Eucharist is to have its full effect in the heart of man. Just as the manna kept God's People alive in the desert-sojourn, so it is this heavenly Manna that keeps man spiritually alive in this earthly sojourn, and enables him to reach that life that never ends.

3. To come in and reverently genuflect before the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle manifests our Catholic faith. Jesus our Lord is truly present there. To remain quietly with him for a while in the spirit of prayer and sacrifice takes a greater faith, and many are not able to stand the test. They have to get going. To remain longer is too demanding. Yet how long would they wait in the ante-chamber or vestibule of the president or a high dignitary even to enjoy a brief visit with that person! What a contrast! Our Lord and Savior, our divine Brother is here day and night in the Tabernacle, only for our sakes, and we find it difficult to exercise true faith and love toward him there? Who else can nourish us with the Bread that strengthens us to walk the journey even to the heights of the mountain as Elijah did?

Blessed are those who find their peace and their joy, remaining in the Presence of the Lord in the Tabernacle, when they have the opportunity! They have tasted the true Manna



from heaven and know its sweetness. They do not tire of this heavenly Manna as the Israelites did. For them this is the Manna which has in itself all delights.

If it is the express will of our Divine Kuya that we come to him to be nourished by him, is it not the height of indifference and ingratitude not to accede to his wishes. In the long run it is we who are the beneficiaries. The Manna is there to sustain us who are God's children.

## NINETEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

August 11, 1985

### Readings:

1 Kings 19:4-8

Jn 6:41-51

Jn 6:41-51

### DRAWN BY A MAGNET

A magnet has the peculiar characteristic to draw definite particles to itself by an inner magnetic power. It is used on a smaller scale and also in larger factories. We likewise speak of magnetic personalities, whereby persons draw others to themselves by the dynamism of their character, or their beauty or some other quality, which greatly appeals to others. Then too there are some who possess special magnetic powers which endow them with exceptional abilities.

1. Jesus compares the work of the heart of man to a magnet, when he speaks of the Father drawing someone. It is an apt comparison, for it describes well the divine action on a man attracting him to Christ. This is God's grace. It is needed if anyone is to accept Christ for what he really is, and above all to accept his teaching on his mysterious Presence in the Eucharistic Bread of Life. No mind, no reasoning powers, no deduction could ever arrive at the reality of these mysteries. Revelation is necessary first. One can only believe it because Jesus has declared it.

Even then the grace of faith is needed to accept the word of Jesus. The Father must "draw" him to Jesus. This is why

the Jews grumbled and complained. They could not see how this man in front of them whom they knew merely as a man, could claim to be from heaven, and above all to be the Bread of Life for their eternal salvation. So Jesus made it clear that the Father had a say in it too. He had to draw men to Jesus and only then will they accept the profound mystery of the Incarnation and the Eucharist. It is the Father who first attracts by his mysterious action we call grace. It works on man's mind and heart like a magnet, yet there is a difference. A magnet is irresistible when it draws iron particles, but man is free to resist the loving attraction of God. We are free to accept or reject the grace of God. Little man has a free will and he can refuse to believe!

2. Once, anyone moved by God's grace commits himself to Christ, the work of Christ can go on apace. He nourishes the child of God. He continues to give growth to the Christ-life within a man. Even if death overtakes him, this life is to be everlasting. Jesus solves the apparent contradiction by solemnly promising in today's gospel that he would raise up on the last day all those whom the Father had drawn to him and given over to him. The Lord wants to emphasize this property of the Bread of Life, so as to make us appreciate it fully. The goal is life forever with God in love.

That is why it is very desirable to receive the Lord in Holy Viaticum when death approaches. The word "viaticum" comes from two Latin words which give it the meaning "on the way with you". Jesus wants to accompany all those who are his own to the Father's House. He will go on the way home with them. With the Lord near, fear of death is overcome and the dying man is well protected against the final onslaughts of the Evil One. Thus Jesus is not only the Bread that gives Life forever, but he is also the Way to the eternal home (John 14:6). Death is only a temporary state, for the Lord is risen from the dead and will raise up someday all who have received him with faith and have partaken during this life of the Tree of Life.

Love of the Eucharist is a special grace. But it can be obtained by prayer. If we meditate on the great gift that the Father has given us in his Son's special Presence in the Blessed Sacrament, we would be drawn inevitably toward a more frequent reception of that Sacrament. With a little encouragement children will gladly receive the Lord frequently although

there ought not be any moral force used to induce them. The best inducement is the good example of their elders. If all would realize what this Sacrament means for us in this life and in the afterlife, we would spare no effort to receive it often and worthily. Jesus asks no admission price. He only wishes our love and acceptance.

## TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

August 18, 1985

### Readings:

Prov 9:1-6

Eph 5:15-20

Jn 6:51-59

### THE MEAL THAT MAKES COMMUNITY

You are invited to a banquet on a special occasion. There are many well known guests. There is a large amount of food on the table and a variety of drinks. You eat well and thoroughly enjoy the company of others with whom you are soon bound in jovial friendship. Yet, after some time the banquet is over. You return home, separated from the other guests. Next day you are hungry and thirsty again. But the banquet of the Lord joins in everlasting friendship both with God and with man. And Jesus says explicitly: The man who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. And: No one who comes to me shall ever be hungry; no one who believes in me shall ever thirst.

1. Who would ever have thought that Christ would devise such a wonderful meal as the Eucharist? It is a banquet that is a bond of union between God and his People and between each member of Christ. It is truly the Eucharist that makes community. Jesus wanted to be so closely united with each of us that he himself became our sacred Banquet. On special occasions a host might deign to cook the meal himself if he is an expert and ever serve the guests if he so desires. But Jesus goes much further. He himself is the Food offered to the guests! If the Jews were angry at his words, it is only because they understood him in a materialistic way, after the manner of

cannibals. But Jesus had in mind the mystery of the Eucharist. Man would eat his Flesh and drink his Blood but it would be in a sacramental manner, under the appearance of bread and wine.

2. When we partake of food and drink, they are transformed into our blood-cells and become part of us, so that we continue to live and be healthy and strong, warding off all poisonous germs. But when we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ it works in reverse. *Christ transforms us more and more into himself.* We become more like unto him each time we receive him in communion, and more united with the great community of Christ's members, the family of God. That is why he states so emphatically that unless we eat his Flesh and drink his Blood, we will not have life in us at all, much less continue to live of his life. Every human heart longs to live fully, and that is exactly what he offers us. The more we partake of him in the Eucharist, the stronger becomes our Christian life, the easier we find it to ward off temptations and sin, for these are the germs that bring on death. With St. Paul we can say: I live, no not I, but Christ lives in me (Gal. 2:20). Again he tells the Corinthians: "The loaf of bread is one, so we many as we are, are one Body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17).

3. Jesus also points out in today's gospel that the chief effect of this Eucharistic meal is interpersonal relations between the Lord and ourselves. It is intercommunion in its highest form: Christ in us and we in Christ. What closer union is thinkable? So great is this mutual union, that it faithfully reflects the very union of the divine Son with his Father. That union is perfect in the Love of the Spirit. So Holy Communion brings about our union with God in the oneness of Spirit. That is community at its best. As the Blessed Trinity is the source and model of all community life, so the Eucharist brings about the actual community life of all in God. Can man desire anything more than to live the very life of God in community?

Today, the Mass is again taking the first place in all manifestations of our Catholic religion. It always held that place but at times private devotions tended to eclipse it. It must hold the first place in the heart of every sincere Catholic. It is the Body and Blood of the Lord offered in sacrifice, and given to

God's People as their sacrificial meal. Once this is realized, people will again walk long distances to be present at the eucharistic celebration, youth will not be bored by attending it, men will take the lead in bearing witness to their staunch faith in the Eucharistic Lord, present in sacrifice for those he loves.

## TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

August 25, 1985

### Readings:

Jos 24:1-2, 15-17, 18

Eph 5:21-32

Jn 6:60-69

### IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT GIVES LIFE

What a masterpiece is the human body! All the members are coordinated so that the best effect is obtained. Continually the heart sends the blood pulsing through the arteries. How faithfully the brain reacts to the least impulse! Without let-up the lungs breathe in oxygen and give out waste matter. Each organ has its own task to perform without encroaching on any of the others. The more one studies the human body, the more one marvels at it. Yet what gives it life energy, movement, purpose? The spirit in man, that life-giving principle the soul. Without the inner spirit, the body lies lifeless. It cannot move, it cannot act. And soon it decays and turns to dust. The same holds good in the supernatural realm. It is the Spirit that gives life.

1. As long as Jesus fed the crowds, healed their ailments and showed himself interested in their well-being, they flocked to him, held him in greatest esteem, followed him wherever he went and wanted to proclaim him as king. But when he continued to reveal to them the deep mysteries of his divine message, the realities of the supernatural world and of his kingdom, realities which men's minds would not be able to grasp by mere human reasoning, without the help of the Spirit of

God, many backed down. They lacked the gift of faith. Thus when he revealed to them the mystery of the Eucharist, that he would give them his Body and Blood for their nourishment, they became angry and departed from him. They walked no more with him. Jesus was deserted by the large number of his one-time followers.

Turning to the twelve he asked them if they too wanted to leave. He was willing to give them up also, and begin all over again, but he would not back down from his statements which he demanded to be taken on his word, that is, on faith. A year later at the last supper he would make it clear that they would eat his Flesh and drink his Blood in a sacrament, under the appearance of bread and wine, but now he did not explain. They had to take him on faith: "I solemnly assure you: if you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his Blood, you have no life in you".

2. It must have been a keen disappointment for the Heart of Christ to see the crowds dwindle away, whom he had taught so often, healed their ailments, and fed in the wilderness. Instead of gratefully accepting his offer, and trusting that he knew what he was about, they broke out in angry complaints. Then he told them frankly: What you need is the Spirit. "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless." Why did they not ask him for the Spirit to help them accept his words on faith? Why did they not say with the Samaritan woman: "Give me of this water so that I do not again grow thirsty" (Jn. 4:15). Why did they not cry out with the father of the boy who was possessed: "I do believe. Help me to believe still more" (Mk. 9:24) ?

This is what is needed today: renewal in the Spirit of Christ so as to revitalize our faith in the Eucharist. Only the Spirit can make us penetrate more deeply into this mystery of God's love. Day and night our Eucharistic Lord remains with us in thousands of churches and chapels all over the world, especially in this Catholic land of ours. Every night the theaters in the cities are crowded, and so are the other places of amusements. How many faithful adorers will come to spend some time and manifest their staunch faith in their Eucharistic Lord? These

are the saviors of mankind together with the Savior himself, praying for their fellowmen. On them the Spirit rests.

3. How well did Simon Peter respond in the name of all in today's gospel: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life". The heart of man will not find rest and fulfillment in anyone else than in Christ his Lord and Savior. He deserves our loyal allegiance. He appreciates our coming to him, and remaining with him a while, or if this is not possible because of our duties, then at least that we unite with him spiritually and think of him there in the Tabernacle, praying for us and offering himself continually to the Father for us. He alone can solve all our problems or at least give us the strength to carry our cross in this life. He alone can heal our wounds. Not only does the Eucharist refresh and strengthen us for the daily battle, but gives us the guarantee for a life that never ends. That life is worth striving for.

Love of the word of God and love of the Eucharist go hand in hand, because they constitute the two fold table by which God refreshes and nourishes his children. We ought to be aware that since Vatican II, the Mass is presented as having two parts only: the liturgy of the word and the liturgy of the Eucharist. Both are important. The first part is intended to prepare our minds and hearts by the readings and explanation of the written word of God, so that the People of God could be further nourished with the Incarnate Son of God personally in the Eucharist. But if many of the faithful come late for Mass on Sundays, they miss so much of the part which is intended to prepare their minds and hearts. Only when they regain a love for hearing the word of God will they better appreciate receiving the personal Word of God in the Eucharist.

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