

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

HUNGER FOR GOD ...  
HUNGER FOR BREAD

Statement  
of the Delegates  
to the First Congress  
of Asian Seminaries



VOL. LXIV, NOS. 702-703  
MAY-JUNE 1988

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE PHILIPPINE ECCLESIASTICAL REVIEW

EDITOR	VICENTE G. CAJILIG. O.P.
ASSOCIATE EDITORS	JOSE MA. B. TINOKO. O.P. ROMAN CARTER. O.P.
ASSISTANT EDITOR	BENITO VARGAS. O.P.
EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS	JESUS MA. MERINO. O.P. PABLO FERNANDEZ. O.P. BONIFACIO S. GARCIA. O.P.
BUSINESS MANAGER	FLORENCIO TESTERA. O.P.

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, the Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published bi-monthly by the Santo Tomas University Press and is printed at UST Press, Manila, Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946.

Subscription Rates (Effective January 1988):

Philippines:	One Year	Per Copy
Newsprint .....	P 85.00	P 15.00
Bookpaper .....	P100.00	P 17.00
Foreign: .....	US\$ 25.00	US\$ 6.00

Subscriptions are paid in advance. **For the Philippines:** Payment should be made by Postal Money Order, Telegraphic Transfer or Check with Bank Clearing in Manila **only**.

Communications of an editorial nature concerning articles, cases and reviews should be addressed to the Editor. Advertising and subscription inquiries should be addressed to the Business Manager. Orders for renewal or change of address should include both old and new addresses and will go into effect fifteen days after notification.

Articles herein published do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editorial Staff.

Address all communications to:

**BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS**  
University of Santo Tomas  
España, Manila, Philippines  
Tel. No. 731-31-01 local 251

---

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**


---

**EDITORIAL**

- Vicente G. Cajilig, O.P. 290 THE MAKING OF THE FIRST CONGRESS OF RECTORS OF SEMINARIES IN ASIA

**FIRST CONGRESS OF ASIAN FORMATORS**

- Anthony Lobo, D.D. 293 FIRST CONGRESS OF ASIAN RECTORS: A FOREWORD
- Augustinus Card. Casaroli 297 TELEGRAM FROM THE VATICAN
- Mother Teresa 298 PRAYER FOR THE FIRST CONGRESS OF RECTORS OF ASIAN SEMINARIES
- First Congress of Rectors of Asian Seminaries 299 A STATEMENT
- Bruno Torpigliani, D.D. 304 ADDRESS TO THE RECTORS OF ASIAN SEMINARIES
- Alex Meñez 309 IN SEARCH OF A MODEL FORMATION YEAR PROGRAM
- Gaudencio B. Rosales, D.D. 330 TO BEFRIEND THE SPIRIT
- Ramon C. Arguelles 338 ORIENTATION OF FORMATION TOWARDS MISSION
- Fausto Gomez, O.P. 347 FORMATION, JUSTICE AND THE POOR
- Ernest D. Piryns, C.I.C.M. 366 DIALOGUE WITH GREAT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS
- Stephen Kin-Sang Lo 379 AN EXPERIENCE OF DIALOGUE WITH GREAT ASIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS
- Antonio B. Lambino, S.J. 388 INCULTURATION IN ASIA: ON SECOND GEAR GOING ON THIRD
- Norberto M. Castillo, O.P. 396 THE SEMINARY CLASSROOM: THE UNTAPPED COMPONENT
- S. Congr. for the Evangelization of Peoples 404 SOME GUIDELINES ON FORMATION IN MAJOR SEMINARIES
- Jaime Card. Sin 419 ABOUT THREE LOVES

**CASES AND INQUIRIES**

- Excelso Garcia, O.P. 428 THE CONFESSOR AS JUDGE AND HEALER
- 436 CHANGE OF PATRON SAINT
- 438 UNIFORMITY IN THE CONGREGATION

**HOMILETICS**

- Pastor Ybañez 440 HOMILIES FOR AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER
-



## *The Making of the First Congress of Rectors of Seminaries in Asia*

MARCH 1-7, 1988

Bishop Anthony Lobo of Pakistan, Chairman of the Commission on Education and Student Chaplaincy of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) sent Bro. Lawrence Manuel, FSC, Executive Secretary of FABC, to consult with Bishop Nestor Cariño, D.D., Secretary of the CBCP, about getting the help of persons in the preparation of the First Congress of Rectors of Seminaries in Asia in July, 1987. Bishop Cariño in turn recommended us and our office as the secretariat of the Congress. On September 23, 1987, a formal communication designating us and our office as such was received. Indeed, the time given to prepare for the proposed congress was very short for such a big project. We took care of the arrangement of the venue and other secretaries, while Bro. Lawrence took care of the finances, and contacting delegates of all member-nations of the FABC.

Choosing the speakers was not very difficult, for the Philippine Church is gifted with plenty of human resources. This fact is even recognized by other Asian countries. The invited speakers did not hesitate to give their immediate response and willingness to participate; although some asked for some modi-



fication of topics assigned them. The majority of them submitted their papers before the Congress.

The august body of formators that attended the congress came from fourteen Asian countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand. Each was most willing to give his share. Some acted as members of the Steering Committee, some as facilitators, reactors, others prepared the liturgy, some the physical arrangements, and some drafted statements. All in all, there was openness, frankness, sincerity, responsiveness, and the humility and willingness to learn from one another.

All these came out very well because of the prayers and best wishes of many Sisters, contemplatives and active, seminarians, priests and even lay people but most important of all the message of the Holy Father sent through Cardinal Cassaroli: "... (I) encourage all persons to persevere in their sublime task with complete dedication of love as a pledge of grace and in our Lord Jesus Christ."

More effective are the wishes of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, India, who writes:

"Rest assured of my prayers for the success of the Congress. My prayer for you all is that you let Jesus mould you so much in His likeness so that He can live His life in you and seeing this the seminarians under your care may be drawn closer to Jesus. Let us preach the peace of Christ as He did — He went about doing good. Our works of love must be nothing but works of peace. May the peace of Christ be with you all!"

Bishop Lobo was all the time present in the Congress. The following is his comments:

"Among the gains we must be grateful for: inter-religious dialogue, inculturation, the role of mass media, and the commitment to justice and peace. But for all this new wine, the new bottles are not yet ready. While some advocated a revitalized classroom approach, others proposed the inductive method of forming people in the field and then analyzing their experiences. Yet another approach was a kind of laboratory method, which is half-way house between the two models, training seminarians to live the Gospel outside the seminary premises for a year, but equally away from the parish or mission field."

All these were realized in the Asian Church where there is hunger for God and for bread as well.

VICENTE G. CAJILIG, O.P.

---

# FIRST CONGRESS OF ASIAN RECTORS

## A FOREWORD

The first gathering of Asian Rectors in the Philippines was a veritable feast. Even if we say nothing of the daily fare in the refectory, the scenic splendor of Tagaytay was a feast for the eyes; its cool climate was a feast for the lungs; the lectures of the experts were a feast for the mind and the liturgy was a feast of the soul.

Though we came from the different Asian countries of the East and South East and Australia, we formed a friendly community and, even if only for a short time, we experienced a collegiality which was both affective and effective.

This made it possible to absorb the variety of inputs which in a way helped us to gain insights into the various currents, and cross-currents, and to evaluate them in a congenial atmosphere.

In the little group of formators, we lived the dynamic tension that exists in the wider Church. We became aware of the dialectics at work in history in shape of opposing forces, which are never in perfect balance. We need to discern how the Holy Spirit works so that they correct and complement each other. We noted how the secularized West now craves for



Eastern religiosity, while the Sacred East is absorbing modernizing technology.

Spirit-controlled dynamics continue between approaches which are liberal and conservative; between the Church which is universal but also local; between movements which are charismatic and liberationist.

We were challenged to search for a model of formation which would help us to make theology existential, to share not just God-talk but God-experiences; to evangelize but also to be evangelized.

Asia is the birthplace of all the great religions of the world. Yet, except for the Philippines, Christians are minorities everywhere in this continent. This underlines the importance of mission, and this is the context in which we must see this First Congress of Rectors of Asian Seminaries.

"Mission" includes three elements: a sender, the person sent, and the people to whom one is sent. If, over the past twenty years, seminaries have run into difficulties, it is perhaps because too much stress was put on those *to whom* one is sent, and not enough on the close, intimate union between the Father who sends (Lumen Gentium, no. 4) and the one who is sent.

Hence, the trend to stress the social sciences at the expense of spirituality, and anthropology at the expense of theology. There were even instances where covenant obedience was replaced by collective bargaining!

Similarly, the obvious need for "*aggiornamento*" sometimes resulted in programs for training priests for *today* (and for *tomorrow!*) in such a way that the treasures of tradition were ignored.

1968 was the watershed, when secular campuses erupted in Paris, in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, thus ushering in an era of instability in academia (which did not leave our seminaries unscathed)!

Two decades later, we are wiser, more experienced and so had a lot to share. This seminar enabled us to take stock of our gains and losses, strengths and weaknesses.

Among the gains we must be grateful for: inter-religious dialogue, inculturation, the role of mass media, and the commitment to justice and peace. But for all this new wine, the new bottles are not yet ready. While some advocated a revitalized classroom approach, others proposed the inductive method of forming people in the field and then analysing their experiences. Yet another approach was a kind of laboratory method, which is a half-way house between the two models, training seminarians to live the Gospel outside the seminary premises for a year, but equally away from the parish or mission field.

However, the Supreme Model is the mission of Christ, as proclaimed by Himself in Luke 4, 18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me... to preach the Gospel to the poor."

Seminaries must therefore help their products to be "other Christs" who, only because they are closely united with the Father, and consecrated by the Holy Spirit, the First Formator can bring the Gospel to the poor.

Our candidates must therefore be men of God, men of faith, men of prayer and ministers of the sacraments of sacrifice. The Priesthood, we must realize, is a gift to be thankfully received, not a right to be claimed and exploited.

We entrust ourselves to Her who formed the First Priest, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and pray that she help us heed the advice of St. Paul (1 *Timothy* 4, 16): "Do not neglect the spiritual gift which was given to you, when the prophets spoke and the elders laid their hands upon you." As one Rector told me, after a very lively session: "As good servants, we must do the work of the Lord, without forgetting the Lord of work."

I am deeply grateful to Bro. Lawrence Manuel, F.S.C., Secretary of the Office of Education and Students' Chaplaincy,

F.A.B.C. for this most timely work done, and to his wonderful team of helpers. This includes, firstly, Bishop Nestor Cariño, F.A.B.C. Office of Education, who offered to host the meeting in the Philippines and put us in touch with the most competent people. We must thank Bishop Gaudencio Rosales, Chairman of the Commission on Seminaries who not only gave us a talk, but shared his sound advice with us and remained present for most of the time, till his eye operation. The credit for designing the program and selecting and contacting the speakers goes to Fr. Vicente Cajilig, O.P., Secretary General of the University of Santo Tomas. All logistical work of transport and accommodation was most ably looked after by Msgr. Francis de Leon, Rector of the San Carlos Seminary, Manila. Fr. Paul Bernier of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers took care of the liturgy and also the compiling and recording of reports from the early stages till their final form. To all the resource persons who gave us talks, who made this meeting possible, and to the Canossian Sisters of the House of Spirituality, we owe a big debt of gratitude.

The climax of the meeting was the Eucharistic celebration by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, who had just rushed back from the Vatican, and delivered a personal message from His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, to all the Rectors of Asian Seminaries present at Tagaytay. I reproduce his words:

"Tell them that I love them. Your blessing is my blessing. The future of the Church in Asia is in their hands."

† BISHOP ANTHONY LOBO

Auxiliary Bishop of Karachi, Pakistan and  
Chairman, Office of Education Students' Chaplaincy  
Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences



---

# TELEGRAM

## FROM THE VATICAN

On the occasion of the First Congress of Rectors of Asian Seminaries sponsored by the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences the Holy Father sends cordial greetings to all those taking part mindful of the fundamental importance for the Church among the peoples of Asia of the integral formation of priests ministers of God's word and of the divine mysteries. He encourages all present to persevere in their sublime task with complete dedication and love, as a pledge of grace and peace in our Lord Jesus Christ His Holiness imparts his apostolic blessing.

CARDINAL CASAROLI

---

## LETTER FROM MOTHER TERESA

Missionaries of Charity  
54A, Lower Circular Road,  
Calcutta-700016.  
14th February, 1988.

I will not be able to leave India, but I will pray much for you all — that you allow Jesus to use you as the Way to the Father, as the Light to be lit and the Life to be lived; as the joy to be shared and as the Love to be loved. You know my love for all religious and priests — for they are precious to Jesus.

Rest assured of my prayers for the success of the Congress. My prayer for you all is that you let Jesus mould you so much in His likeness so that He can live His life in you and seeing this the Seminarians under your care may be drawn closer to Jesus. Let us preach the peace of Christ as He did — He went about doing good. Our works of love must be nothing but works of peace. May the peace of Christ be with you all!

GOD BLESS YOU,

MOTHER TERESA

---

# First Congress of Rectors of Asian Seminaries

---

## STATEMENT

The delegates of the First Congress of Rectors of Asian Seminaries express their gratitude to the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences for its generosity in providing this opportunity for priestly and religious formators in the region to establish personal contact and to exchange views and experiences of formation in a congenial atmosphere. The delegates were enabled to address important questions respecting the formation of future priests as servants of the Gospel of Christ in the context of the great religious ethos and religious traditions of Asia. "The Council is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole Church depends in great part upon a priestly ministry animated by the spirit of Christ and it solemnly affirms the critical importance of priestly training" (*Optatam totius*, Introduction, cfr. also nos. 4, 5 & 16).

Hunger for God has always characterized the religious traditions of Asia. In our time it is a region where hunger for bread is everywhere felt. Most of our countries are living in a post-colonial and neo-colonial era. We need to hold to our Christian identity in an environment characterized by multi-racialism, religious revivalism, and the resurgence of nationalism.



## HUNGER FOR GOD

### *The Spiritual Dimensions of Formation*

As a mature response to God's call to holiness is fundamental to the Christian vocation, and a hunger for God is basic to the spirituality of the Asian soul, the Congress wished to stress the primacy of the spiritual formation of seminarians in the search for God. For unless seminarians have a deep personal experience of God no vocational discernment is possible. All personnel in the formation process must be aware that they are models for those being formed, and must witness to the personal, cultural and spiritual qualities which are set as goals before those in formation. As the spiritual director will play an essential role in the integration of all these factors within the spiritual life of the seminarian it is imperative that the formation of spiritual directors for seminaries be given high priority. The formation process should be adapted to training seminarians to live in community, so that as priests they may be members and formators of their local ecclesial community and of the diocesan presbyterium. All members of the diocesan presbyterium should be encouraged to see themselves as formators of seminarians, at least in the broader sense.

### *Inter-Faith Dialogue and Mission*

Inter-faith dialogue, which respects the many positive values to be found in Asian religions, should have a prominent part in priestly formation and spirituality. For the formation of seminarians in the Asian context, it is all the more important to recall that missionary activity flows immediately from the very nature of the Church. "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Ad gentes* 2).

### *Inculturation*

Even at present, Christianity is perceived sometimes in Asia as a foreign religion. Seminarians and formators alike need to grow in awareness that the mystery of the incarnation, in which Christ made his own the human condition, identifying

himself with the poor and the suffering in his death and resurrection, provides the paradigm of inculturation of Faith.

## HUNGER FOR BREAD

### *Justice*

Ministry for justice should be prudently adapted to social, political and cultural realities. Our seminarians should be formed, in a spirit of prayerful discernment, to seek the healing and integration of a divided society rather than direct confrontation.

### *Preferential Love of the Poor*

The Congress agreed that a preferential love for the poor is required if the fulfilment of the historical project of God's kingdom is to be realised, and that it provides a key for the integration of the many aspects of inculturation. Seminarians should be helped progressively to develop this love for the poor, unmarred by any note of condescension. To this end, seminarians must be guided in the personal integration of theological principles, experience in working among the poor, and reflection upon that experience in the light of the Gospel. This love for the poor needs to be developed in a more realistic and wholistic manner, so that seminarians and formators alike come to appreciate the positive value of voluntary, evangelical poverty, and the possibility of co-operating with all those genuinely committed to justice in the eradication of the miseries of the poor. Care should be taken so that seminaries do not become or remain merely seed beds for the cultivation of a peculiarly rootless middle-class clergy.

## PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCES

The programme of studies should be so arranged that the whole of philosophy and theology may be done from within the context of the local Church. All the aspects of priestly formation which we have mentioned here should inform the content and methodology of the ecclesiastical disciplines, and not be treated merely within optional or additional courses.

As less than 1% of all the people of Asia is reached from our pulpits, media education is essential to the mission of the Church. Our seminarians should be trained to use the media positively, and also critically, so as to avoid its negative impact.

### *Recommendations to the Bishops of Asia*

In view of the preeminent importance of spiritual formation we ask that an intensive spiritual formation programme for all spiritual directors be facilitated.

We request that the number of spiritual directors provided for a seminary should always be adequately proportionate to the number of seminarians.

The need for a faculty development programme for Asian seminaries is strongly felt, particularly in view of the complex contemporary issues facing the Church and seminary formation in Asia. Where such faculty development programmes exist we appeal to FABC to support and reinforce them as a priority within the diocesan programme.

We ask that provision be made for the appropriate training and continuing education of staff in order that all aspects of the formation of seminarians may flow from the religious, social, political and cultural context of the Church in which they will work.

We ask that provision be made for the establishment of a pool of appropriately qualified teachers in special areas (e.g. social sciences, interfaith dialogue, missiology, inculturation, etc.) who would be able to serve the whole Asian region, on either a rotational or exchange basis.

This Congress, comprising forty-three delegates from fourteen Asian countries, met at Canossa House of Spirituality, Tagaytay City, Philippines, from 1 to 7 March 1988. Gathered together in the Marian Year they place their work and the formation of their seminarians under the protection of the Mother of our Lord.



---

## Address to the Rectors of Asian Seminaries

Your Excellency, Most Reverend Gaudencio Rosales, Chairman of the Episcopal Commission on Seminaries; my brothers in the priesthood:

It gives me much joy and satisfaction to greet you, dear Rectors of Asian Seminaries, and to express my profound gratitude to the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference and the organizers of this Convention for inviting me to address you at the opening session. May I interpret the honor given me as a gesture of your fidelity and unity to our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, whose solicitude and concern for the formation of future priests are universally known and felt.

I shall preface my talk this evening with the words of the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, to seminarians, when he visited Cebu City seven years ago. He said, and I quote: "The precious time of seminary formation is given to you (seminarians), so that a solid foundation may be laid for the task that awaits you as priests" (Feb. 19, 1981).

This brief but meaningful sentence, offers me the material with which I have planned to develop my talk. I shall start by putting down a few concepts of the priesthood, which is the goal of every seminary formation. The clearer the concept is of what a priest should be, the better the vision is formed by the persons responsible for the priestly formation and by the semi-

narians themselves. The proper end of said formation is based on the idea of the priesthood as it arises from divine revelation, interpreted and taught by the Church Magisterium.

I shall not deal extensively by exhausting every aspect of this subject, but I wish to formulate a few thoughts that will inspire our work together in the formation of the priests of tomorrow.

Firstly, we should always have in mind the truth that Christ is the exemplar and pattern of the ministerial priesthood, with whom priests "share His ministry of unceasingly building up of the Church on earth into the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit" (*Presb. Ord.*, 1).

"*Sacerdos alter Christus*" is still the most appropriate phrase that describes the relationship between Christ and the priest. Looking at this venerable expression at close range, it is seen to indicate both a fact and a counsel. The fact consists in that every man raised to the priestly office is by virtue of the sacramental ordination another Christ in his supernatural life and vocation; and the counsel suggests that a priest should be another Christ in the moral order also by his personal life of virtue.

Anyone, therefore, who seeks an exact knowledge of the priesthood and of its essential demands, should raise his eyes to Christ, who is "designated by God as high priest according to the order of Melchizedek" (*Heb.* 5:10).

Next to the phrase "*Sacerdos alter Christus*", I wish to offer for our common reflection the Petrine expression "*Forma gregis ex animo*" reflective of a priest. This designation is taken from the First Letter of St. Peter, that says and I quote: "God's flock is in your midst, give it a shepherd's care. Watch over it willingly as God would have you do, not under constraint; and not for shameful profit either; but generously. Be example to the flock, not lording it over those assigned to you" (1 *Pet.* 5:2-3).

This admonition "Be example to the flock" places the priest as a living pattern for the faithful, implying an obligation to lead a blameless and virtuous life. More than the instructions that a priest imparts, his conduct and way of life have a greater impact upon the community or congregation. Consequently, the members of the priest's community should be able to look upon him as a model and inspiration. I believe it was for the same reason that St. Paul wrote to Titus whom he appointed head of a Christian community in the following words: "Tell the young men to keep themselves completely under control, nor may you yourself fail to set them good example" (*Tit.* 2:6-7).

These reflections lead us to the necessity of a good spiritual training in our seminaries. The *Ratio Fundamentalis* has laid down the principles to be followed, so that the spiritual life of the seminarians may take its main pattern from Christ, with whom future priests have a special relationship through their vocation and ministry.

Allow me to quote a relevant passage from the *Ratio Fundamentalis*: "The student should aim at a close and friendly relationship with the person and mission of Christ, who completed his task (cf. *Jn.* 4:34) in humble submission to the will of the Father. This relationship of necessity demands that a candidate for the priesthood should know how to dedicate his own will, by obedience, to the service of God and his brethren, with sincere faith. One who wishes to have a part with Christ Crucified in the building up of His Body is under a grave obligation not only to learn to accept the Cross, but also to love it, and to take up in a willing and pastoral spirit all the heavy tasks required to carry on his apostolic mission" (*R.F.*, 49).

To be able to live a priestly life, the seminarians gradually attain a firm pattern of life, safeguarded by solid virtues. They do this corresponding to their age and maturity, but always with consistency. Among the principal virtues that the seminarians should develop, obedience occupies an eminent place. It is the

virtue that is most descriptive of Christ "who humbled Himself obediently accepting even death, death on a cross" (*Phil.* 2:8). St. Thomas Aquinas does not hesitate to say that, after the virtue of religion, it is the most perfect of all moral virtues, for the reason that it unites us closer to God than any other virtue (*Summa Theol.* IIa-IIae, q. 104, a.3).

Again, the Ratio Fundamentalis offer us enlightening admonitions, when it says, and I quote: "It lies with the Superiors to train the young men to true and mature obedience in reliance on Christ, who indeed required obedience from His followers, but first showed Himself the principle of obedience in us. The Superiors, then, must exercise authority with prudence and respect for persons. In this matter the young men will surely offer their cooperation, so long as obedience is put forward in its true light, i.e. if it is made clear how all must join in pursuing the common good, and how authority is designated for this" (R.F., 49).

Together with celibacy and the demand to live the life of simplicity, the virtue of obedience cannot be developed without prayer and asceticism. Prayer is the spring that sets in motion God's loving mercy, so that we may be able to accomplish virtues that our fallen human nature finds difficult to attain. For this reason, St. Paul says: "It is God who, in His good will toward you, begets in you any measure of desire or achievement." (*Phil.* 2:13).

Asceticism or discipline in spirituality is needed, if seminarians have to advance in their spiritual growth. Athletes, in the words of St. Paul "deny themselves all sorts of things. They do this to win a crown of leaves that withers, but we a crown that is imperishable" (1 *Cor.* 9:25). In another instance, the Apostle to the Gentiles said: "Train yourselves for the life of piety, for while physical training is to some extent valuable, the discipline of religion is incalculably more so, with the promise



of life here and hereafter" (1 *Tim.* 4:7-8). With the formation for obedience and other priestly virtues, there should be closely combined formation for eucharistic devotion, which is the culmination and fount of ecclesial life and therefore also of the spirituality of the future priest. The Holy Eucharist is to find its eminent and central position in the spiritual development of seminarians.

In connection with the subject of spirituality in seminaries, it should be mentioned that a recommendation was made by the Fourth Colloquium of Spiritual Directors, namely, that the seminary be considered not so much as a center of studies but a school of spirituality. Indeed, more than anything else, the seminary is a place where priestly vocation is cultivated and nurtured, a place where, like the Nazareth of Jesus, the seminarians grow in wisdom, age and grace before God and man.

In recent years, movements to strengthen spirituality in seminary training has been steadily progressing. This is laudable and needs the support of everyone concerned. To help sustain this trend, rectors and spiritual directors should be encouraged to work closely and to find ways and means, so that a truly integral formation may be attained by our future priests.

In conclusion, allow me to borrow the words of the Philippine Program for priestly formation:

"Christ said, 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End' (*Rev.* 22:13). As Christ remains forever, so is His priesthood unchanging, even when communicated to men across the centuries. But this priesthood must be exercised under changing circumstances of time and place; hence, it must be adapted to ever changing pastoral needs and ministerial exigencies. Through this continuing adaptation of its exercise, the priesthood is always renewed to become ever fresh, always revitalized to emerge ever effective, always re-examined to be ever responsive to the call of God in the history of human salvation" (Concl.).

While reiterating my thanks to the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences and to all the organizers of this Convention, I wish to express the Holy See's gratitude to the seminary rectors and their collaborators for their precious service to the Church in the formation of future priests.

Your work, dear seminary rectors, is unparalleled in the ordinary ministry of a priest. Although accompanied with great difficulties, the service you give to the Church is the most excellent of all. May the zeal and enthusiasm that you manifest in the performance of your duties be rewarded abundantly by the Lord.

Finally, a few words of advice. Please welcome always the occasions of frequent contact with the bishop or bishops, for it is in their name and on their behalf that you are serving the seminary. Keep the seminary staff together in brotherly charity and priestly unity. Be a father to the seminarians, always following the rule of "*firmiter in re, suaviter autem in modo*."

I entrust you all to the loving care of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, who plays an essential role in the formation of future priests after the pattern of Christ, her Son. May she help us in our endeavors to invigorate the seminaries so that our efforts in the name of her Son may bring forth a rich harvest of good and holy priests.

MOST REV. BRUNO TORPIGLIANI, D.D.  
*Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines*

---

## In Search of A MODEL FORMATION YEAR PROGRAM

The topic of my talk is "In Search of a Model Formation Year Program." The title given me is well-chosen because the program I will talk about is only a model, one among many. Obviously, it is not the only model. Also, as the title suggests, this program is itself going through a process. It is, in fact, only three years old. Hence, I do not pretend to present it as definitive and complete. Rather I ask for your assistance. I will be grateful if you can offer suggestion to improve the program. I hope that together we can formulate "the" program for the formation year.

To present my talk, I have chosen to approach it *per viam experientiae* (by way of experience). This is certainly not the best methodology but I cannot find another way. For the Formation Year Program has been very much part of my personal spiritual journey—from my hesitant acceptance of the appointment, to the program's formulation on paper and through my actual experience in living it out during these past three years. I therefore ask your apology if I use the first person. Frankly, I feel embarrassed about this.

I was appointed Formation Year Director in 1985. When I accepted the position, I did so as an act of faith: faith in God's guidance, faith in his abiding assistance. Mixed with this faith was a convinced mistrust in my capability. I was

afraid of the job because I had no program. I had no back-up of resource persons. And the house I myself had chosen to be the formation house was a dilapidated building. (I knew this building because I used to give recollections there. But I did not realize how rundown and dirty it was until I myself was to live in it.) I had other insecurities. But the grace of God was stronger than my fears and he helped me overcome my hesitation. Ever the good Father, he gave his assistance. I believe it was he who inspired the program. And I have called it "Nazareth": the hidden life of Jesus in obscure Nazareth. Nazareth — this is to be the program of the formation year.

#### THE TRINITY: MODEL OF THE FORMATION YEAR PROGRAM

At the core of the Christian faith is the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity and the mystery of the incarnation. We believe in one God and this one God is triune, a communion of love of three Persons: the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. We believe that God is love. So much did he love us that he gave us his only Son who offered his life on the cross, and experienced the anguish of God's abandonment when he cried out, "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*" (Mt. 27:46).

The communion of the Blessed Trinity as well as the mystery of God's love in the incarnation and the cry of abandonment is the core doctrine of our faith. Yet, many of us Christians do not find anything "useful or practical". For most of us, it is only a matter of high theological speculation and does not have any influence in our life. Karl Rahner confirms this observation. He said, "as far as many Christians are concerned the doctrine could be erased completely from the treasure of faith and many spiritual writings, sermons, pious exercises and even theological treatises could remain in place with little more than minor adjustments."

Why does this doctrine, which is at the heart of our faith not make any difference in our life? May I venture an answer: we have no experience of the Trinity because we have little ex-



perience of true Christian community life. For the mystery of the Trinity is supposed to open before us a new perspective: that the ground of all being is communion. In community life we discover that our God is a God of communion because he is love, and our fundamental vocation is to participate in this communion.

When I was appointed FY director, my concern was precisely to give the seminarians the experience of community life. The formation house must no less be a reflection of the Trinitarian communion which is its model. Here, the formandi and the director must experience that God is their common Father who loves them and that the Holy Spirit unites them in reciprocal love as brothers in Jesus Christ.

This trinitarian relationship is the background (like a *dulcis in fundo*) of the program and the cornerstone of the formation house. If there should be anything unique about this program it has to be its emphasis on living a community life in constant and mutual charity (*Jn.* 13:34) in order to ensure the presence of Jesus in our midst (*Mt.* 8:20). All relationships and everything that we do must be motivated by love for Jesus in the other and among us. For only in Jesus, through him and with him, is the trinitarian communion possible.

#### THE SPECIFIC POINTS OF THE PROGRAM

The program is called Nazareth — the family experience of Jesus being the closest model here on earth of the trinitarian relationship. Also in Nazareth, Jesus spent his “formative years.”

Nazareth has four (4) phases:

- I. Community life, from June to December, and February to March
- II. Immersion with the family during the Christmas holidays
- III. Life with the bishop for 10 days
- IV. Spiritual-pastoral experience with a parish priest

*Phase I. Community life based on Mathew 18:20 and John 13:34*

This live-in period has *leit-motif* the commandment of reciprocal love, based on Matthew 18:20 and John 13:34-35. The seminarian must learn, first and above all, this most fundamental Christian demand before he can be a priest. The priest, after all, is a man of communion and dialogue (*Orientamenti for Priestly Celibacy*, n. 81: Ratio n. 3), and community life is the salvation of the secular priest (*Christus dominus*, 30: *P. Ordinis*, 8: CIC c. 280, c. 533, 1 and 550, 1).

Our community life is directed by the following guidelines:

1. Family life
2. Poverty
3. Work
4. Exposure to the experience of mature lay Christians
5. Contact with the charisms of the Church
6. Prayer

*The specifics of each guideline*

1. Family life

A healthy family upbringing is an assurance of full human maturity. The seminary or formation house cannot be less than the environment where the sense of family life is at its best. It has to be so because it is part of the human need to have a family, a need which Jesus himself did not give up. He came from the Blessed Trinity, which is itself a communion, and all his life on earth he remained united in this communion. He lived with the family of Nazareth. He formed His apostles as a family. He established the Church whose very essence is communion (LG: *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Synod on the Laity, nn. 15 & 16).

Thus, the seminarian who leaves "father and mother", who leaves the beautiful family environment, should find in the seminary the atmosphere of a home. And if, unfortunately, he comes from a wounded family experience, the seminary should be the balm or therapy to heal the said memory. Here the role of the formator is crucial: to be himself an image of father and mother, brother and friend. The formator himself must be a family man! This, in fact, is the first quality the seminarians desire in their formators. (We need to create our presbyterium into a family. When the priest does not feel the family relationship within the rectory, with his bishop, or among his confreres, he will seek the warmth of it elsewhere or establish his own. For "nature abhors a vacuum.")

One element of our family life is the "family hour". What is it? After the rosary in the evening, we stay together for "light talks". It is a free-wheeling dialogue, no particular agenda, spontaneous, and usually joyful. There are times, however, when the situation is tense because some conflicts have arisen during the day. During the family hour, we bring out these differences and try to resolve them before retiring so that we do not let "the sun go down on our wrath" (*Eph. 4:26*).

This moment is not always easy, especially in the beginning. We grow up in a family culture which does not permit discussion. In most Filipino homes, there is minimum expression, if ever at all, of a child's emotional hurt. Parents' decisions are not questioned, for to do so is a sign of rebelliousness or, worse, of ingratitude. There is the Filipino principle which is the guideline in most homes: "the Filipino child is seen, not heard." Hence we generally do not know how to bring out our grievances. We are afraid to express them. We prefer to show a tranquil external, while seething with anger within. When we finally cannot keep our hurt, our expression of it is violent. (What is true in our homes is also true in our social interactions. And it is also true in our ecclesiastical circles — between the seminary formators and the seminarians, between the bishop and the priests).

The family hour is supposed to teach the seminarians and the formator not to be threatened by differences. On the contrary, here we learn to present our grievances, our hurts and our objections in truth and charity. For diversity is not the opposite of unity. What breaks unity is individualism and angry silence.

The family hour has been for the seminarians and for me as formator, one of the most formative moments of the program. It was here that, I believe, I have grown and discovered a lot about myself. For I have also allowed myself to be questioned.

## 2. Poverty

In Nazareth, the Holy Family lived the simplicity of the life of a poor family. But theirs was not the misery of the lazy poor, nor were they angry in their poverty. They were poor like all the others in the village but they were filled with the abundance of God's presence and love. Jesus, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, was in their midst.

In the formation house, we too live a simple life. Our poverty is having the essentials of a simple life. In the formation year, we hope to realize that a lot of our needs are merely invented or imagined. They are, in reality, luxuries which we can do without. Contrary to what we often picture about our vocation, contrary to the litany of sacrifices we enumerate to our laypeople, ours is a life of ease. Compared to other professions, ours is the most comfortable. And compared to the life of the majority of our people, ours is very leisurely.

No wonder that we have many vocations! The priesthood has become an easy passport to a sure education, instant employment, and easy (if not luxurious) living. In fact, the desire to possess the latest invention in radios, the corruption of pornography, the mentality of ease and the good life and many other influences of **consumerism** — all these have also crept into the lifestyle of not a few priests and seminarians. During the for-



mation year, the seminarians should learn to suffer and deprive themselves of luxuries. In the formation house, we have no television set, no radio and no refrigerator.

Another element of our poverty is to live within a budget. Like in a family, we discuss among us the priorities of our needs and answer these needs according to and within our budget. At the beginning of the Formation Year, the seminarians elect a treasurer. All our expenses are recorded and accounted to the last centavo. I have noticed that, given this responsibility, they are even very strict with expenses. For these past three years, we have always ended the year with a big surplus. Also Providence has never been lacking, a sign of the Father's care.

Another element of our poverty is the "communion of goods". Because we are a family where charity is the supreme law, and the only norm, our life is characterized by sharing. We are poor because we share. And this is the basis of our economy, an economy founded on the experience of the early Christians (*Acts 4:32*). After some months of living together and when we notice that the seminarians are growing in supernatural relationship, I introduce the communion of goods. I ask them to put in common all their personal money. The total amount I apportion equally to each group and each group administers its own finances. While this experience is only for some months, I want them to go through it (which may be for the first and perhaps the last time in their life) so that they can test the limit of their generosity, or discover their selfishness or dishonesty. In either case, the communion of goods reveals to them the kind of person they are at a given time. And through this practice, they learn to share and live in poverty.

### 3. Work

In Nazareth, Jesus worked with his father, Joseph. There are many pronouncements by the Church magisterium on work; I do not intend to add more. For mine would be insignificant, if not a mere repetition.

Work is an integral part of the formation year program. Seminary formation, in general, is soft and intellectualized. Everything is provided for. Hence, we see the sad phenomenon of seminarians coming from poor families and not able to integrate themselves into the life of their manual-laboring parents. They cannot stay long in their homes (preferring to spend their vacation in rectories or elsewhere) because they have become accustomed to the convenience of the seminary. Priests coming from well-off families are often afraid to accept a barrio assignment simply because they have not been used to the hard life. In the formation house, we work, following the admonition and and example of St. Paul (2 *Thess* 3:6-10 and 11-13).

Work in the FY is not the end in itself. Based on the *leit-motif* of mutual charity, it is only a means and opportunity to love and serve. In the formation house, we do all the household chores, because we do not have house help. We go to the market everyday, we cook the meals, we wash and iron each others' clothes, we clean the house and do other manual jobs. During the live-in period, the seminarians are divided into groups and the groupings are changed many times so that they can relate with all and learn to collaborate with so many diverse personalities as possible. Work assignments changes every week so that each group gets to learn and do all the different household chores.

We also raise two piglets and each seminarian is assigned to feed and wash the pigs and clean the pen. Obviously these are dirty jobs. But all these activities are opportunities for the seminarians to learn to work together in love and patience and mutual service. I like to inculcate in them the gospel mentality that the mark of true discipleship is the witness of mutual charity. I cannot emphasize this enough because ironically the common complaint of our lay people is that priests do not seem to know how to live together. We forget that the first and true apostolate is the witness of reciprocal love (Jn 13:35). For this reason, during the live-in period, we do not have "outside" apostolate (which they will have too much of anyway when they become priests). Their apostolate is among themselves: how

they are able to establish brotherly love among themselves. It is not easy. In fact, relationship has not always been peaceful. Expectedly, there have been misunderstandings and quarrels. Hence, we have the family hour to clarify matters and reconcile with one another.

Like in the house of Nazareth, each one helps to keep the house in harmony and order. In fact, what visitors usually notice with our house, despite its dilapidated condition, is one of cleanliness and harmonious simplicity.

And so through manual work, we learn to be patient with one another. As director, I also join them in the various chores, even the laundry. This way, we identify ourselves with the majority of our people who live by the sweat of their brow.

#### 4. Exposure to the experiences of mature lay Christians

Part of the patrimony of the Church is the experience of the laity. It used to be that some priests had a triumphalistic opinion about the superior dignity of the clerical state. This is an illusion, of course, because such has never been the doctrine of the Church. The Church has always maintained the fundamental equality in dignity among the Christifideles based on our common adoption and common vocation to holiness (*Rom 12:4-5; Gal 3:28; Col 3:11; Ph 4:5; I Cor 12:27; LG 32 and CIC c. 208*). Nevertheless, the misconception has continued as a prevalent mentality to the point that some priests consider the lay-people as "second-rate citizens" in the Church. Such that it has created in the priests the "know-all and do-all" attitude. On the part of the laity, it has developed an attitude of non-involvement, believing that the Church is the clergy and thus not finding their role in the mystical Body.

Today we are witnessing the emergence of a laity who are aware of their true dignity as children of God, a laity who are living a spirit-filled life, a laity who are knowledgeable of the Bible, and nourished by the Eucharist. In short, a laity who are dedicated, well-instructed and deeply spiritual.

For these past three years of the formation year, I have invited in lay-people who have deep Christian experience. They come from different backgrounds: couples, the youth, the poor, the Protestants. Their sharing has been for the seminarians an inspiration and a revelation. Many felt a positive sense of humility to know that the lay-people are living "holier" lives than the priests. They are awed by the spontaneity and ease and simplicity by which the lay people share their spiritual experiences. And they seem not able to understand why we priests still feel awkward to mention the name of Jesus outside of our sermons.

Among the salient points in the interventions during the recent Synod on the laity was the concept of Church as communion and the vital significant role the laity have in this communion. By introducing our seminarians to the living Church of the lay people we hope to form new breed of priests who are able to establish proper collaboration and mutual esteem with the laity (*LG 30: AA and GS*), thus together they build up the mystical Body.

##### 5. Contact with the various charisms of the Church

Part of the wealth of the Mystical Body is the various charisms. During the FY, the seminarians are given the opportunity to know the different religious orders and institutes. During the month of September and October, the seminarians go to the Trappist monastery in groups of four. They spend three days and three nights with the monks, to experience their community life, prayer and work. Also, part of the program is contact with the Carmelite nuns. They also go in groups to spend one whole day in Carmel where they listen to the nuns share their story and their prayer experience. During the month of March, we invite the other religious institutes to explain their charism. This year, I scheduled one seminarian each day to join the Assumption Sisters for vespers and to give the reflection. This way, they learn to speak and relate with a discriminating and mature audience.



Through this contact with the various realities of the mystical body, we hope to form a new generation of seminarians who have, as desired by Pope Paul VI, a "passion for the Church."

## 6. Prayer

Another aspect of the FY program is the emphasis on prayer life. The Filipino priest does not seem to have time for prayer. He is engrossed in too much apostolate and struggle for justice, tending to forget the primary duty to establish dialogue with God, which is, after all, the first act of justice. During the FY, other than the usual common prayers, I teach the seminarians the basics of mental prayer. Although they are already theologians, I do not want to presume that they know how to meditate or that they do it. From my personal observation and inquiries from experienced spiritual directors, the evidence to the contrary is more true. And so we have time for prayer exercises. I do not undervalue the contribution of prayer techniques. They have their importance. But at the same time they should be taken for what they truly are, *viz*, techniques. What is the gauge of true prayer life is when one grows in love. Said in another way, one becomes a prayerful man when he becomes a loving person. And conversely, one who is a loving person is a man of prayer.

Why do I insist on developing in the seminarians a deep prayer life? Obviously, because prayer is part of the very essence of the priesthood. The priest, being a man of God, must be a man of prayer.

Besides this obvious reason (which I do not need to elaborate), I have two "practical" reasons:

One: Many of our priests are alone in their parishes. Some are assigned on islands isolated from the rest of the presbyterium. Communications by road, (even if the kilometer distance is short) takes hours, usually under dusty and rough conditions, and sometimes dangerous. The telephone system is still primitive, where it exists, and in most places there is none.

Without the companionship of his fellow priests, without the bishop to provide fatherly care, the priest needs a very deep rapport with God to support him in his aloneness, so that he will not feel lonely. He must know how to pray and find security in prayer.

Another reason is our Asian soul. The Filipino, while externally western, is still Asian at heart. And what is characteristically Asian is the search for the Absolute. The Asian has the inherent craving for union with God. And prayer is one of the most important means to establish a close encounter with the Divinity. However, many of us Filipino priests have given up this beautiful Asian approach. We do not realize that in order to evangelize Asia we have to do it the Asian way, which is by way of prayer. Our people, in fact want to see their priests in prayer, which is typically the Asian posture.

So in the FY program, prayer is our main activity. And because we are a family, we pray together. This is the spirituality of our times: communitarian. We should be saints together. We priests do a lot of things together. It is with hesitancy, if ever, that we invite one another to pray. We still have to learn to pray together.

May I say a little more about "communitarian spirituality"? It used to be that man reached God alone. Emphasis was on the vertical dimension, on individual holiness. The extreme form of this way of perfection was the "*fuga mundi*." Today, one of the signs of the times is community. In fact, the Church of Vatican II defines itself as "*communio*." And rightly so, because the Trinity is communion. Even the secular world is tending towards unity, for solidarity, universal brotherhood, team-management, etc... So today the Spirit shows a way of holiness which is suited to the needs of our times. We go to God together. We discover the brother as the way to God. We love God through the brother and in the brother. This is the spirituality of our times. We help one another become saints. Can we not say that for us diocesan priests, this form of spirituality is

God's timely gift to save us from our individualism, from the evils of the world, which cannot be fought alone? It is the spiritual strategy of Mary to form us to be priests of our times.

While we should become saints together, each one is also held responsible to grow in his personal intimacy with God. For that each seminarian according to his convenience and responsibility, can spend time in private prayer.

I end this section on prayer with a quotation from Mother Theresa of Calcutta: "There is a tremendous hunger for God. It would be tragic if priests were not able to fill up this hunger. We need holy priests to teach us to pray because the fruit of prayer is deepening of faith and the fruit of faith is love and the fruit of love is service."

We come now to Phase II, III and IV. To explain these phases, I will read the pertinent part from my letter to the Western Visayan bishops: i.e. those bishops who have seminarians with me in the formation year.

#### *Phase II: Immersion with the family*

During the Christmas holidays, the seminarians live with their respective families. Perhaps this is their first opportunity to spend Christmas with their families since they needed the the seminary. Surely it is the last time before priestly ordination because after Christmas they will be absorbed by parish commitments. It is hoped that during this period they are given every opportunity to enjoy their stay with their families. It is asked that they may not be given parish assignment. It is also suggested that the parish priest is informed of the unique nature of this Christmas vacation so that he will not be surprised if the seminarian does not involve himself in the parish affairs.

This immersion period is an occasion for the seminarian to live with his family under a new light (hopefully) — not, for example, as a privileged child but, like all the rest of the children, to help in the household chores or in the field. It is hoped

that the seminarian be a loving child and "waste" his time at home rather than spend it with the parish priest or his benefactors, or travelling around with friends. It is also hoped that he immerses himself in all the aspects of his family's life: to suffer the hardship, to bear the burdens and problems and, of course, to participate in all the joys and wonder of family togetherness.

### *Phase III: Life with the Bishop*

After the holidays with the family, the seminarians live for some days with their respective bishops.

The experience of Church is first of all the experience of relationship with the bishop. Between the bishop and his priests, this relationship is one "as between father and sons" (LG 28; CDS 16-28; PO 7). This living and loving presbyterium is easier to achieve when they are still seminarians. Unfortunately they generally have only a "greeting acquaintance-ship" with their bishop. Phase III hopes to establish this unity and loving familiarity hoped for by the Council. The rationale of this initiative is to provide the bishop and the seminarian the chance to know one another personally, thus already setting the foundation for a familiar relationship and a wholesome collaboration for the future. It is hoped that the bishop does not give up this opportunity by entrusting the seminarian, during this period, to the care of another priest, however holy. The idea is for the bishop to create a life of family with the seminarian, his future collaborator, to know him well and to form him himself. This was the method used by St. Augustine with his priests from Hippo: he gathered them, they prayed together, and he himself gave them spiritual instructions.

### *Phase IV: Spiritual-Pastoral life with a parish priest*

For one month the seminarians live with priests of their dioceses to experience community life and prayer with them. The idea of this experience is twofold:



1. to enable the seminarian to have a pastoral exposure. Hence, it is important that he stays with the priest who has a good pastoral program:

2. to live with a priest who can give an exemplary witness of spiritual life. This second idea is equally, if not more, important than the first. My idea here is for the seminarian to experience prayer together with the parish priest, at least the rosary and the breviary. I hope the bishop considers both criteria in selecting the priest: solid pastoral program and deep spiritual life.

We are aware that formation is not the concern of only the seminary formator. It is a task which requires the involvement of significant others. Hence, through these phases, it is hoped that these others participants, viz, the parents who are the first formators; the bishop who must make the final judgment about the fitness of the candidate and whose future collaborator he will be: the presbyterium with whom the future priest will work, and the lay people whom he will serve will all form part of the process. It is my prayer that these vital parts give the proportionate response to the effort put forth by the director in the formation of our future priests. He is only a part of the whole picture of formation. And when the other important parts do not respond, the formation will be greatly handicapped.

#### THE DYNAMICS OF THE PROGRAM: ITS SPIRITUAL PEDAGOGY

How does the program flow? What is its inner dynamism? I must confess that Nazareth is not a product of research, say, from formation textbooks, or consultation with program or management experts. It is rather the result of my personal spiritual experience. Hence, the pedagogy that guides me in bringing about the program is also my own life story.

At the beginning of this talk, I mentioned that the program is also my spiritual journey. Like the journey of every man, my story started with my discovery that God is my loving Father (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). It is also this same discovery that I hope the semi-

narians to realize. Considering that many seminarians have a fear attitude, if not one of suppressed hatred, towards their natural fathers, it is important that the formator heal their memories. Otherwise, all other relationships, with superiors particularly, and even with God, will be on a shaky foundation. In fact, many seminarians cannot relate well with authority because this psychological handicap has not been healed. The role of the formator in the healing process is crucial. He must be himself a loving father, because he has experienced the love of God, his compassion, his mercy and his patience. And the formandi who has thus felt loved, starts (hopefully) his own faith experience in discovering the love of God. And so he learns also to love and starts to love. For he now realizes that God is love and he who lives in love lives in God (1 Jn. 4:15).

The community is the environment which provides the condition for the healing process and where this faith experience starts. For in relationship with other persons, as one grows in love for the others as his brothers he also becomes aware that God is their common Father. As he recognizes God as his Father he also accepts the others as his brothers and sisters whom he should love.

When I discovered that God is my Father who is love, I started to make a radical choice, a commitment to put him as the Ideal, over and everything else. "*Solo Dios basta*" as St. Theresa said. He is the only absolute which does not crumble. Everything else is vanity of vanities, and so even the priesthood which used to be the ultimate and only value, is put in its proper perspective.

In my years of formation work, I have discovered that the priesthood has always been presented as the absolute. Many seminarians, in fact, have been obsessed with it like an idol. One of the surprises of the seminarians in the FY is to realize that they have chosen the priesthood without having chosen God in the first place. (Does this not perhaps explain why practical atheism exists within the Church?)

To choose God means to do his will. The discovery of God as Father leads one, as it has led me, to seek his will, as Jesus had done (Jn 3:45). The will of God, seen under this new light, gives us the possibility to respond with love to the will of God (Mt 7:21). The seminarians should learn to listen to God's voice and sort it out among the many others which claim to their attention. Especially today when we live in a secularized society, our future priests should have the spiritual maturity to know and be guided only by God's will.

There is one will of God which Jesus himself called his own commandment and made its fulfillment the identifying mark of His disciples: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12 and 13:35). The seminarian must be a loving person, therefore, because it is this which identifies him as a Christian. And so he cannot be a priest unless he learns first to love, "to be" love. He has to be a Christian first before he can become a priest. The community life in Nazareth is the formation period in the Christian art of loving. It is the emphasis of the program. It is hoped that during this period the seminarian realizes that the way to God is through the brother.

Community life puts him in the environment where he either loves and thus grows in communion with God and with others and so matures as a human person: or he closes himself in isolation or self-centeredness. Being created in God's image and like the communion of the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, we attain our true human identity and maturity in "ex-stasis", i.e. when we go out of ourselves and love. For me, the first sign of a true vocation is when one has the capacity to love. Community life is the laboratory where this capacity is put to the test.

The demand to love "as" Jesus has loved is not as easy as it sounds. Much less is it a simple theological statement. It is this love (agape), in fact, which is specifically Christian. It is the love which is "new" and the commandment Jesus called his own. This love between persons in the measure of the love of Jesus — viz, the love by which both lose each one in the

other or require death unto themselves — bringing them to share in the paschal mystery of Christ. By thus participating in the death of Jesus they make present in their midst the risen Lord! And where the risen Lord is present there is also the Father and the Holy Spirit (*Jn. 14:23*). Indeed, the whole of paradise, with the Blessed Virgin and the angels and the saints is present here on earth in their midst. This is what is a true Christian community. This is the Church.

Another spiritual pedagogy from which the program flows is the love for the Church, for the Holy Father, particularly. There is the tendency to be parochial in our vision of the Church. We know only the events within our dioceses or of the country. To get out from our campanile mentality and see the beauty of the Church in its universality, I update the seminarians on the beautiful events about the Church. Like the visit of the Holy Father to the Jewish synagogue in Rome where he prayed with the Jews and gave a homily. This was an unprecedented visit which had not happened since the foundation of the See of Peter in Rome. There was also the day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi where the Pope prayed with about 60 leaders of the different major world religions. Likewise the pastoral travels of the Pope which I present without the subtle anticlerical bias of the secular press. According to the seminarians, through these "*aggiornamenti*" they have come to appreciate the Church and love the Holy Father.

Then, there is Mary. She is present in every moment of the day. Like the blue mantle which enveloped the whole earth. Mary is our mother. She takes care of us, prays with us, works with us and above all, teaches us how to love. Like the apostle John, we have taken her into our home. And she is not only a theme, a topic for conference, nor merely an object of devotion. By living like her, she gives us the possibility "to be" Mary today. One seminarian has admitted that in the formation year he has learned to love Mary, especially in the rosary.



Life in the FY has not been easy for me personally. There have been many difficulties. Only a strong personal commitment to Jesus forsaken has made it possible for me to go through the hardship. We live in an age when people do not have the capacity to suffer, and suffering is no more a value. There is need, as I emphasize to the seminarians, for persons willing to accept the cross of Jesus (*Mt. 16:24*). By embracing Jesus who died on the cross and suffered the most painful agony in the mystery of the abandonment when he cried out. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?", every pain, every discouragement and incomprehension... all sufferings lose their anonymity and acquire the face of Jesus. Then we participate in the "*salvifici doloris*."

Finally, the Holy Spirit. When St. Paul spoke at the aeropagus he made reference to the unknown god. The Holy Spirit seems to be the God most unknown to all. Yet, I cannot end this talk without giving credit to the Holy Spirit who has inspired me about the program and has unfolded it moment by moment. It is he who is the Formator, the source of our sanctification. He guides me, gives me the capacity to love, to forgive, to be patient. Above all, it is by his power that we are able to say "Abba," and that we are united as brothers in reciprocal love.

#### DESIDERATUM

In the Eastern tradition of formation, the usual method is the master-disciple relationship. In fact, in Buddhism, among the most careful decision a man must make, about which he should not commit a mistake, is the choice of a good master. And the master, still according to the Eastern pattern of formation, teaches the disciple not through courses or conferences, but by the witness of his life (cf. also *I Cor. 11:1*).

For the past years I have lived a certain lifestyle. I cannot say that this lifestyle is new because it is as old as the gospels; nor is it uniquely mine for many other priests live the same.

It is this lifestyle which I share with the seminarians of the FY. What is this lifestyle? Let me enumerate some of its features.

For one, it is the commitment to love. If I can make love the constant demand of the program, if love is its *leitmotif* it is because I have also set it as a law into myself. Not that I am always successful in loving. God knows how many times I fail. But always I try to start again. After all, in the art of loving, we never become the master. Here, we remain disciples for life. Only one is the Teacher.

Another is the simplicity of life. Especially, simplicity in personal possessions. If the seminarians of the FY live for several months without the daily allurements of the television or the attraction (or is it "destruction" or "distraction") of the betamax, it is because I myself do not have them. Not that these appliances are bad. But one can be happy without them either. We need to present a lifestyle of voluntary poverty, for without it, it is almost impossible to live chastity. The three evangelical counsels are inseparable from each other.

Another is the communion of goods. We are aware of the imbalance of wealth-distribution. Not only in civil society but also in the Church structure. We see the phenomenon of some priests with so much money and others who are living almost in misery. Our experience in the formation year shows that communion of goods is possible. Perhaps with difficulty or even dishonesty in some, but with great effort and self-sacrifice, it can be done. If I can implement communion of goods, it is because I also live it with other priests.

Another aspect of our lifestyle is work. Many of the seminarians before they entered the seminary had experienced the rigors of manual labor, what the FY program gives them is the enthusiasm and the proper motivation. If they acquired a new work perspective, it is also because the director works with them.

The Formation Year is like a laboratory. Like in a laboratory where in the FY a certain lifestyle is true, it can also be true anywhere else. It is my desire, if I may express one, that someday every diocese will provide the atmosphere and create every possibility where the FY lifestyle can be a permanent reality.

## CONCLUSION

The Formation Year Program has been a formation period for myself. As director of the program with the task of forming the seminarians, I have realized that God in his fatherly goodness and patience has also brought about my own formation. This is the greatest blessing of the program. It has been for me a discovery of a lot of things about myself and, I hope, a growth in grace and wisdom before God and men. It is truly a miracle of God's transforming power!

REV. ALEX MEÑEZ

---

# TO BEFRIEND THE SPIRIT

1. Although it has often been overlooked in the past, still formation is one of the most important ministries in the Church. On it depends the orientation and motivation of priests and ministers who ultimately influence the quality of the Church's life. In the seminary spiritual formation is the most serious and decisive of all training given, because it is there where the future priests learn to love and accept the mind and heart of Jesus Christ through a trusting companionship with him (*Mark* 3:13). Despite the innumerable needs of the apostolate today and the near discouraging situations where the Good News need to be shared, nevertheless there remains the basic demands of the spiritual formation. The seminary that is incapable of providing a sound psychological and spiritual training today and defaults in helping the future priests make a mature decision/commitment to transform the world in Jesus is considered a total failure.

## 2. *The Church's Vision on Formation of Seminarians*

Evidently the Church's vision for the priestly education formation is to have ministering priests who are firmly anchored on the basics of the Spirit-Life and are at the same time fully caring for their fellowmen. The present day formation of seminarians admits that together with spiritual forma-



tion given, the seminarians must be helped to mature humanly (emotional and psychological) thus making them capable of serious decisions and commitment to truth, justice and love as lived by Jesus, thus touching people in countless ways particularly the poor (O.T. 11, 19).

A discussion of spiritual formation today in our part of the world necessarily takes into account the different Asian realities like the Old Living Traditions, the religiosity of the people, poverty and destitution, youth, and Asia's inclination to silence and prayer. Not to be overlooked also are the inroads made in this continent and its peoples by modern technology, the "worship of wealth" expressed in a longing for comfortable living and a sense of neo-pagan mastery of matter through consumerism.

### *The Philippine Program*

3. The Philippine Program for the formation of priests has outlined four (4) major areas that concern seminaries in the training of Philippine diocesan priests — the academic, pastoral, spiritual and administrative.

4. Following a study made of the different theological seminaries in the country where the spiritual director as key formator was identified by the seminarians, the Episcopal Commission of Seminaries (CBCP) decided to zero in on the continuing formation of the spiritual formators on one hand, and the coordinated formation of the seminarians on the other. A program for the continuing formation of the formators was studied, prepared and implemented in 1984 but only for the first phase. It was called the Colloquia Series for Spiritual Formators of Diocesan Seminarians in the Philippines. The theme for Fifth Colloquium (1988) is: THE DIOCESAN PRIESTHOOD: its history in the Philippines: the spirituality of the diocesan priest especially in the light of the socio-cultural and economic conditions obtaining right now in the country.

A study on the vision of seminary formation together with the statement of goals (general and specific) for the different

levels of priestly formation has been made. And although the program is still in the process of refinement, the CBCP has allowed some of the seminaries to be guided by the Ratio Fundamental Institutionis Sacerdotalis and the Philippine Program for Priestly formation as assisted by this recent formulation of the vision and goals.

A program for a common retreat for all fourth year theology students preparing for the diaconate was studied: with the approval of the Bishops this common retreat could take place some time in 1989.

5. The Colloquia Series has opened for study and discussion four (4) major areas in the spiritual formation of diocesan seminarians. They are the following:

- a) the natural equipment;
- b) the spiritual life (essence and mystery);
- c) the "how" or the methods of spiritual direction; including discernment of motives;
- d) and the person of the formator.

#### 6. *The natural equipment*

The natural equipment is the human gifts that the seminarian brings with him when he submits himself to formation as a future diocesan priest. These gifts that God has given him as a person are — his sexuality, temperament, friendship, intimacy, culture, influences from the family and others, together with his growth potentials in the same. By the mere listing of these gifts under natural equipment one immediately understands that what is aimed at by this process of formation is not only a priest who is spiritually healthy, but also one who is mentally, emotionally and psychologically whole. A healthy personality in the priesthood!

7. To accomplish this objective of a sound personality the seminarian should be accompanied in the long and complicated

process of individuation through explanation and by allowing him to discover the complexes of feeling, experiences and symbols that permeate and influence his actions as a human being.

This process includes the *intrapersonal* study or reflection on early childhood and adolescent sexuality, temperament, psycho-sexual development and integration. Included also is the study on the interpersonal relationship as in superficial sexual relating, hetero-sexual relating, friendship and intimacy. Evidently there is need here for a third person to objectify relationships.

8. Temperaments — as patterns/forms of inclinations and responses proceeding from the physiological makeup of the individual — are natural equipment of every person. There is no person who is without his peculiar temperament as influenced by the body constitution and shaped by culture, family and earlier training. Psychologists have categorized four (4) general temperaments — the sanguine, melancholic, choleric, and phlegmatic.

9. No matter how richly or little gifted the individual formatee is by God, it must be remembered that he is still graced by a free will and is always under the influence of God's inspiration and grace.

### *The Spiritual Life*

10. It is not possible to define the Spirit, for to define is to put limits and to kill the expansiveness of the Spirit. The Spirit is free and blows on and inspires whomever and wherever it wishes (*Jn. 3:8*). Through an intimacy with the Lord, the Spirit is able to shape the seminarian's attitudes and values and move him to act always in consonance with the ways of Jesus. For that inspiring intimacy there are basic minimal demands, such as:

- a. Union with the Father through Jesus Christ in the Spirit;  
Trinitarian Spirituality;

- b. The Paschal Experience/Mystery and familiarity with its many expressions and recurrences is life;
- c. The desire — sincere and effective — to seek Jesus in the Word, Sacrament, Prayer and the Eucharist; to seek him in the weak, the poor and the dispossessed;
- d. Asceticism as linked to a life of obedience, poverty and celibacy;
- e. Love and devotion to Mary, mother of Jesus and mother of priests.

*The social dimension of the spiritual (Christian) life*

11. The spirit is not merely the opposite of matter: it is the *principium vitae* (anima) that gives expressions and movement to the body. Spiritless, the body is without expression. Whatever is learned and assimilated through the Spirit of Jesus finds expression in the individual's action to improve himself and to transform the world. The necessary elements of a spirituality with a social dimension are:

- a. The proper reading and interpretation of the "signs of the times";
- b. The work of justice and integral development of man as constitutive element of preaching the Good News;
- c. Works of mercy as participation in the love of God;
- d. The non-violence of Jesus as the ethic for transforming both man and his world;
- e. The lesson from the spirituality of the desert and the cross that rejects efficiency, success, money and power (or their equivalents) as norms for Christian action.

The Paschal experience/mystery as the root experience of the Christian is best understood and appreciated in the social aspect/dimension of the spiritual life.



### *The Spirituality of the diocesan priest*

12. There is a spirituality that belongs particularly to the last, who through the Sacrament of Orders, are configured to Christ as head and are made co-workers of the bishops in the work of building up the body of Jesus, the Church. Through the same order they are consecrated to God and become instruments of Jesus uneffecting the unity of God and man (P.O. 12).

13. More must be said about the spirituality of the diocesan priest who must find his holiness in the everyday work he does in union with his bishop and brother priests. In short the very ministry exercised in union with Christ and his brother priests sanctifies the diocesan priest (P.O.: 12). He is ordained and appointed to a particular/local Church for the care and service of the Lord's flock there, forming a very special family of priests — the presbyterium — with the bishop as the father (C.D. 28). Other elements of the spirituality of the diocesan priest are:

- a. special groundings in the spirituality of the Trinity as the soul/anima in building up communities, Christian, basic and ecclesial;
- b. the constitution of a very unique family — the presbyterium of priests and bishop, with the bishop as father, friend and brother;
- c. unity (in life and work) lived in relating with bishop (P.O. 7) with brother priests (P.O. 8) and with others (P.O. 8);
- d. a special bond among priests which also serves as sign/symbol for the larger community (of people) — an intimate sacramental brotherhood: (P.O. 8);
- e. in and with Jesus, a special conversion to the poor witnessed to by the Gospel — inspired of life.
- f. special devotion to Mary, mother and protector of priests the practice of the virtues of Mary — simplicity, poverty, obedience, humility and purity — all in the service of making Jesus known and accepted by all.

### *The "How" (method) of spiritual direction*

14. Spiritual direction can be given in common to a small group or to a larger community. This is better done in conferences, lectures, homilies or in common sharing with the facilitator/formator.

The more intimately personal and most effective method of direction is the individual form. This is the one-to-one exchange — the one Jesus used very often, as with Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Simon the Pharisee, Simon Peter, Mary of Magdala, etc. It is in these intimate dialogues that conscience is formed and attitudes are clarified. The method is also called the interview, communications, individual direction or simply "colloquium". The method requires the art of sensitively listening on the part of the formator listening to what the directee is saying: it calls for the ability to understand what the interviewee is not saying or what he is saying only obliquely or in between.

On the other hand the formatee needs also to practice the art of listening to what is being said or shared by the director. More often than not the formator facilitates the growth in properly understanding the internal process of the formatee's training/formation. On the part of the formatee listening also means refining some of his experiences and getting the meaning of his experience of Jesus.

For both the formator and formatee spiritual direction means listening sensitively to the Holy Spirit, the real formator and director. Fruitful listening is accompanied with great openness, respect and prayer.

### *The person of the formator*

15. The spiritual formator is often called a director. But only the Spirit is the true director. The formator is a fellow pilgrim; he is likewise a traveler in search for the same friend,

Jesus — Lord and God — who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. The director has the same needs, not necessarily less.

If the formator helps to facilitate the seminarian's friendship with Christ, he must first of all be his friend. If he is to clarify most of the directee's questions, he ought first of all to be clear in his understanding of vocation, commitment, obedience, poverty, celibacy, paschal experience, prayer, asceticism and spiritually inspired social transformation.

If the formator would listen, he should be open: if he would dialogue, he should be free of biases. If he would give, he should be more generous in receiving. More than his words it is his life that gives direction, light and encouragement to his younger brother in search.

Spiritual direction is not a science; it is the art of discerning what path, at what pace, with what truth amidst definite needs the Holy Spirit is beckoning both formator and formatee to travel on the way to the Father through the instruction and word of Jesus, while transforming all along the path into a world and people of righteousness, peace and compassion. Formation being an art, the formator does not encourage the formatee to seek for the earliest way to arrive, but the easiest means to encounter and befriend the Spirit.

GAUDENCIO B. ROSALES, D.D.

---

## **ORIENTATION OF FORMATION TOWARDS MISSION**

Since Vatican II missionary awareness in the Church has undergone a major shift. The change is perhaps better expressed as a rediscovery of the original self-understanding of the Church as essentially missionary. "It is clear.... that missionary activity flows immediately from the very nature of the Church." The 'apostolic' character of the Church is probably to be understood primarily and necessarily in this sense. The Church is apostolic not only because she originates from, and is faithful to the teachings of, the holy apostles, but more because she shares in their mission, their being sent. As He had been set by the Father, the Son Himself sent the apostles (cf. *John* 20:21) saying, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (*Mt.* 28:18-20). The Church has received this solemn command of Christ from the apostles and she must fulfil it to the very ends of the earth (cf. *Acts* 1:8)... For the Church is driven by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God. The 1979 Synod of Manila puts it this way: "...the duty, then, has weighed upon the Church from its inceptions to spread the faith and the saving work of Christ..."



## CALL TO A COMMUNITY

The shift in the understanding of the missionary activity of the Church is evident in the fact that missionary vocation is seen less as an individual call, and more as the call to a community. The individual call is not at all denied, but it is viewed in the larger context of the call of the Church as a whole. The concept of a communal vocation in any case is more in keeping with the existential reality of the Church. Besides the Catholic Church is essentially the communion of local Churches.

The missionary task of the Church is perceived as a responsibility of the local community at its basic unit. No longer is an individual called to be missionary in his own right. Instead he is such by virtue of his belonging to a community. An individual may be sent to a mission territory as a representative of a particular local Church who will remain in contact with him and who will be enriched by his exposure to another culture. Even if the local Church stays in its place, the missionary is perceived as the one who embodies in himself the missionary calling of his own particular community.

Nevertheless a new direction is ushered in with the acceptance of the principle of a communitarian vocation to the missions, namely, the possibility of whole basic ecclesial units being uprooted from one cultural setting into another. A small community of, for example, five practicing Catholic families engaged by a business concern to be expatriated to a non-Christian area can under the guidance of, and accompanied by, a priest be a missionary community in the host area.

Evidently in such a situation the missionary trend points to the adoption of a "secular" posture. Especially in surroundings which might be somewhat unfriendly to Christianity such "secular" bearing may be the only available missionary option. A true to life example is the case of a businesswoman from the Philippines who hops regularly between USA, Manila and Beijing. She states that her trip to Beijing brings little reward.

This notwithstanding she persists on her China venture solely for evangelical motive since her fidelity to her religious practices had aroused the curiosity of her Chinese associates and prompted them to take interest in Christianity. A few years ago while I was in charge of the Fil-Mission seminary we perceived the need for future missionaries to know other trades in the event that mission territories would close their doors to Catholic missionaries but welcome skilled workers. To allay fears of applying surreptitious procedures it can be recalled that the first missionaries, including Paul himself who was a tentmaker by profession, practiced their own trade while being totally committed to the spread of the Gospel. Among such pioneering missionaries were spouses Priscilla and Aquila.

## THE IMPORTANT ROLE OF THE LAITY IN THE CHURCH'S MISSION

In this connection one of the implications of the contemporary shift in missionary consciousness is the acceptance of the reality of the vital role of lay people in the missionary activity of the Church. Laymen and women, with or without the priest, but preferably with the latter, ought to be the unseen leaven of faith in others even when they continue to strive after their legitimate secular pursuits. Besides their professional undertakings which can serve as an effective missionary tool the witness of their family life will certainly contribute even more constructively to the Church's missionary activity.

## CONSEQUENCES ON SEMINARY FORMATION

What are the inevitable consequences of this novel situation in the formation of future priests?

Most important of all it must be emphasized that for the candidates to the priestly ministry in Asia, where the Church is an awfully small minority — and this not exclude at all those from predominantly Catholic Philippines — the imperative of

an essentially missionary Church is even more ponderous. The formation of seminarians, whether religious or diocesan, should therefore be geared towards a missionary orientation. No candidate to ministry may be allowed to claim another kind of priestly service other than that of being a missionary. The seminary formation should also prepare the candidates to expect to be sent anywhere, anytime and anyhow with apostolic detachment.

### *1. Revision of Theological Formation*

As a consequence, the theological formation of Asian seminarians will have to undergo a major revision. The demand will be strongly for a less speculative theology towards a more biblico-spiritual and pastoral one with a special emphasis on Eastern spirituality. A return to the pristine situation and mentality prevailing in biblical times might surprise our Asiatic minds when we discover that after all biblical imageries and worldviews are very much in conformity with our Asian way of perception and closer to Asian mental framework than to the Western one. Besides, the spiritual disposition of the Asian soul will surely be a better homing ground for the biblico-spiritual images. It will not be unrealistic at all to expect the Asian candidate to the priesthood to stumble on deeply scriptural themes in the wisdom books of Asia which he must be even more familiar with since they will be excellent starting point for the evangelization of the people belonging to these ancient civilizations.

The present missionary fervor in the Asian Church calls for a theological formation of future priests that is processional, existential and experiential. Such formation can by no means set aside the venerable traditions which the great Asian nations are known for. In the Eastern context a man of God or a missionary (sage or "*sangyasi*") is essentially a mystic. He is called a "seer" who sees and experiences God through his ascetic and contemplative life. The oriental vision that God is

never an object of knowledge but a subject of experience is to be strikingly highlighted. No one can get drunk on an intellectual understanding of the word wine. The missionary has to diffuse the message of salvation he himself has experienced. As St. John says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, and which we have seen with our eyes and which our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life" (1 John 1:1).

## 2. *Understanding the Encounter between Culture and Faith*

The foregoing statement obviously and fully subscribes to the movement of inculturation in Theology. But more than just entering cultures, acknowledging, appreciating, and even more "christianizing" them, the theology that the future missionary-oriented priests should be formed in should be a theology that challenges cultures. Culture should be seen and met with the eyes of faith with the eyes of culture. The Faith and Theology that the Asian priests propagate should be able to adapt cultures in the spirit of the Gospel. For example, there is a beautiful prayer in the "Upanishads" one of the scriptures of Hindu religion; in Sanskrit it is:

*"Asato ma satgamaya  
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya  
Mrutyu ma amrutam gamaya"*  
(God lead me from the untruth to truth  
Lead from darkness to light  
Lead me from death to immortality!)

This prayer embodies the basic aspirations and spiritual thirst of man. But Christ alone could give a real answer to the prayer as He said:

"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6).  
"I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).  
"I am the resurrection and the life and whoever  
believes in me will never die" (John 11:25).



A second example: In India, when the Hindu devotees make offerings in the temple, they get a return gift from there. It is called '*Presada*' (grace). It is a symbolic act that God is pleased with the devotee's symbolic offerings and He blesses him with His grace. In the Holy Eucharist as we offer the body and blood of Jesus Christ, God having accepted our offerings give us the same gifts in communion which signifies that God is pleased with our offerings and He fills us with His grace.

Theological formation therefore has to be markedly more dynamic because of the encounter with the rich, varied and stimulating cultures of this vast continent. It is probably in this continent that the statement of the Second Vatican Council can be best understood, namely, "The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy religions...their efforts need to be enlightened and corrected, although in the loving providence of God they may lead one to the true God and be a preparation for the Gospel." It is most likely the task of the Asian Churches to demonstrate to the world that the Word which after all chose to be incarnated in the Asian context will find its finest expression in the lofty wisdom of Asia. The formation of the Asian seminarians should answer this specific task of the Church in Asia.

If the Asian Church has to fulfill its specifically missionary vocation in this particular time and place, its ministers must be highly motivated towards a missionary apostolate. For this reason the seminary should also integrate in its formation program a missionary exposure immediately before and after ordination. No seminarian therefore can be ordained to the ministry without first being assigned for a whole year in a number of summers to the mission field. And after ordination the first two or three years of ministry have to be devoted in local or foreign missions. This experience will surely change the mentality of the seminarians and the future clergy. In the process even the mentality of the parish or the local Church which a young priest will be ministering to will also have a missionary and Catholic outlook.

### *3. Nurturing Missionary Poverty*

An important missionary attribute that the future priest must also acquire is the spirit and practice of poverty. This is more than mere material poverty which in the context of Asia the Gospel minister must partake of. This is certainly presumed. It may however be wise to insist on the ideas here and declare material poverty as a demand for Asian missionaries. The missionaries from the West could have been more successful in the Asian continent had they been more forgetful of the comforts of the Western civilization. While avoiding generalizations, it can nevertheless be commented that the secure life of white missionaries has interfered with their being more easily inculturated in the local cultures.

The formation of seminarians for the Church of Asia should not be oblivious of the poverty afflicting the immense majority of Asian peoples. The candidate to the priesthood in the missionary context of Asia, ought to experience poverty to understand the life of the throng he is to minister to, reflect sufficiently on it, respond with to the situation and articulate its meaning for the solace of the people.

But the attitude of poverty demanded by the new missionaries especially from Asia is the attitude of coming to a culture bereft of any triumphalistic pretension of bringing new things to the host area, as if all the best things come from outside it. On the contrary, the Asian missionary considers himself at the receiving end of the encounter with a new culture. This attitude affirms the fact that in such encounter between culture and faith both are enriched. The missionary is not one who has all the answers to the questions of man in the host culture. The evangelical answers may already be there in the wisdom of the people in question and the missionary is only to clarify the existence of the hidden truth in their midst. The future priest-missionary has to be formed in such persuasion. It must be emphasized here that formation towards personal and 'ecclesial' humility is necessary in this connection.

#### 4. *Respecting the Right of the Laity*

Another important point in the formation of future Asian missionaries is the importance of underscoring the need to recognize the inalienable right and role of the laity to participate in the mission of the Church. In Asia where an extreme lack of ordained ministers beleaguers the Church a bid to ordain married laypeople is not only for the moment unachievable but also of a rather limited consequence. The candidates for the priesthood in Asian seminaries should be formed in a way that they can acquire the capacity of collaborating with lay people. The future clergy ought to understand first of all that the laity is by no means a "stop gap" of the clergy but a rightful associate. The Asian Church realizes the vital role of the laity in the evangelization of the continent. She cannot but agree with the Cardinal Tomko that... "the missionary dimension is an essential aspect of the mission of the laity."

#### 5. *Promoting Basic Ecclesial Communities*

The recognition on the part of the future priest of the fundamental missionary responsibility of the laity prompts him to devote himself to the formation of the Basic Ecclesial Communities where the task of the laypeople are more clearly defined. Definitely the Asian Church and her clergy cannot ignore this "new form of being Church today... born of the necessity of living more intensely the life of the Church nourished by her teachings and united to her Pastors." While under formation the future priest should already nurture deep trust in the laity and an eagerness to work out with them the important task of starting basic ecclesial communities. He has to develop in himself the art of leading the laity towards greater Christian maturity. In the basic ecclesial unit that must be established with the laity care should be taken to make sure that true *communio* within the basic unit and outside it is established and promoted.

## CONCLUSION

The formation of the future priests especially in this hemisphere needs a missionary orientation. Such orientation should however avoid a too individualistic approach. Instead a more ecclesial missionary method should be preferred, that is, a missionary vocation as an expression of the call of the whole Church, most concretely the local Church he belongs to. The training of the future priests of Asia furthermore should be seen in the context of a greater awareness, the awareness of the Church in Asia. In the words of Fr. Rosales, OFM, in 1981 "Formation for mission is not to be an exclusive responsibility of those in seminaries or houses of formation for religious. Since missionary activity is to be out ever more emphatically the urgency of this activity in Asia and particularly in the Philippines... This is the new era of the Spirit taking possession of his people and leading them to true greatness in the service of the kingdom."

MSGR. RAMON C. ARGUELLES



---

# Formation, Justice and the Poor

## INTRODUCTION

"From all sides there rises," Paul IV wrote in *Octogesima Adveniens*, "a yearning for more justice." It is above all, the yearning of the poor and marginalized of the world, including Asia — "made up of multitudes of poor," according to the Asian bishops — and the Philippines, where over sixty per cent of the people live below the poverty line.

As part of humankind, and particularly as Christians, what are we to do to answer that powerful longing? Faith in Jesus demands from us the praxis of justice and the preferential option for the poor. The Synod of Bishops' *Justice in the World* tells us: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel." Through his visit to the Philippines in February 1981, John Paul II repeated: "Yes, the preferential option for the poor is a Christian option."

The fight against injustice and for justice is, then, a "constitutive" part of the mission of the Church, and therefore, of the People of God; that is, bishops, priests, religious, candidates for the priesthood and religious life, and lay men and women. Truly, there are different ministries in the community of Jesus (Rom. 12:4-5); but, as theologian Joseph Ratzinger wrote in 1962, in a radical sense, there is only one ministry, namely, "the

ministry of service, of fraternal service, which implies necessarily the praxis of justice and the love of preference for the poor.

Within the context of seminary formation, we have been asked to reflect on the Praxis of Justice and the Preferential Option for the Poor. We plan to develop the theme by dividing it into four points: first, we shall speak of justice as part of formation; second, of the praxis of justice as the task of justice; third, of the preferential option for the poor, as the priority of this praxis; fourth, of education for justice as the way to know and witness justice.

## 1. FORMATION AND JUSTICE

Seminary formation appears to us as a dynamic process of theory and praxis to help the candidates for the priesthood become ministers of Christ for the People of God, ministers of the Word and the Sacraments, servants and stewards of God's mysteries.

### 1.1 *Seminary formation*

This formation is tri-dimensional namely, spiritual, theological and pastoral. The three aspects have to be taken wholistically; they do not exclude each other. Quite the contrary, they imply each other. Moreover, as Vatican II underlined, the pastoral aspect — and concern — should penetrate the entire seminary training (OT,19).

The pastoral dimension of seminary formation applies theological science to action. It is, thus, the interaction of orthodoxy for correct doctrine and orthopraxis (or correct action). As it was reported in a Survey on Pastoral Formation administered to 82 theological institutions, members of the Conference of Catholic Theological Institutions (COCTI: 1984), the main subjects of the pastoral formation curriculum were teamwork, individual counselling, group counselling, communications, etc.; the principal pastoral fieldwork was carried out in parishes,

schools, with youth organizations, in hospitals, in other places including working with the poor. (cf. M. Caudron, Editor, *Theological Formation in Context*, Bogota, 1985).

Today, and particularly in many Third World Countries, working with the poor is a priority of pastoral work. Thus, justice has become an important part of seminary formation.

Seminary formators and experts in seminary formation speak of three models of formation: the therapeutic, the prophetic and the ecclesial model. The therapeutic model centers on the psychological growth of the individual; the prophetic model focuses on the formation of a social conscience, underlining social justice, structures and the poor; the ecclesial model stresses the interaction between the person in formation and the community. Obviously the three models do not exclude each other. In Third World countries, the prophetic model appears to be more urgently needed. (cf. B.H. Lescher, C.S.C., "Religious Formation: Beyond the Healing Paradigm," *Review for Religious*, Vol. 42, no. 6, Nov.-Dec. 1983, pp. 853-858).

Seminary formation has to be whollistic and therefore to include spiritual, theological and pastoral formation. This pastoral formation focuses on formation for the ministry of justice and solidarity.

## 1.2 *The Priestly Ministry of Justice*

Justice is the theological category which represents social commitment; for the Christian, it is a mediation of love. It is also part of theological formation, which must be liberating; and part also of spiritual formation, which must produce fruits of justice and love... Justice, particularly as social justice, is the core of prophetic seminary formation.

As future ministers of Christ, those who are formed in our religious houses and seminaries must be formed also in justice. Vatican II teaches us that "constant concern for justice" is one of the prized qualities of the minister of Christ (OT, 11); that the priest should possess "a zealous pursuit of justice," a virtue

deservedly esteemed in human affairs (PO 3); that although the proper mission of the priest is not of the political, economic or social order, but of the religious order (cf. GS. 42), nevertheless he can — and must — contribute a lot to the establishment of a more just secular order (Synod of Bishops' 71, *The Ministerial Priesthood*, I, No. 7).

Although he must ordinarily shun direct political involvement, the priest cannot but be involved in politics indirectly, because he is obliged to be a spokesman of the moral order and of the moral dimension of politics. Moreover, the priest is — we can say — “the professional of evangelization,” the evangelizer; now, promotion of justice belongs to the essence of evangelization, or the mission of the Church, which is spiritual, and temporal, personal and social, eschatological and historical; therefore, the minister of Christ has to promote justice. Ian Linden has written: “If work for social justice is a constitutive dimension of evangelization, what takes place when this dimension is missing is not evangelization.”

We read in the Acts of the Dominicans, General Chapter (Rome, 19-83): “We recommend that those responsible for selecting and forming vocations consider the attitude of the candidates towards apostolic work and their sensitivity with regard to dedication to peace and justice” (Acts, O.P. no. 245).

## 2. THE REAL TASK: THE PRAXIS OF JUSTICE

Christian faith does justice — if it is lived! What matters is that faith is practiced, for only then is it truly saving (Mt. 7:21; I Jn 2:3). Likewise, what is really important is that justice is lived. “To know and not to use,” according to a Buddhist saying, “is not yet to know.”

The positive social practice of justice, or the praxis of justice, is the real task of justice in the Christian perspective. This praxis comprises resisting and fighting injustice nonviolently and promoting justice personally and collectively. It is expressed by announcing justice through words and deeds, and denouncing injustices truly, hopefully and fraternally.



## 2.1. *Announcing Justice*

For a Christian, in particular, the practice of justice has to be orthopraxis, that is correct praxis of justice. Thus, the theory or reflection on justice is required to practice justice, for, as Paulo Freire has said, reflection without action is pure verbalism, while action without reflection is mere activism. What is the justice that the Christian is asked to promote with others?

Justice, one of the four cardinal virtues in classical theology, is defined today as the right of each person to sufficient life-goods (to economic rights, based on the principle of stewardship), to absolute dignity (to cultural rights, based on the principle that each person was created in the image and likeness of God), to socio-political participation (to political rights, based on the principle that each human being is an artisan with others of the Kingdom of God on earth) and to solidarity (to corresponding duties, based on the principle that the human person is the image of God, who is One and Triune). (cf. J.B. McGinnis, *Bread and Justice*, New York: Paulist Press, 1979, p. 9-19).

Strictly speaking solidarity does not seem to belong to the essence of justice, although there cannot be a "just" justice without the compliment of human and Christian solidarity, which is love: in justice, "the other," philosopher J. Pieper has said, remains "another;" almost a stranger.

In biblical perspective, justice is part of love: while in the Old Testament the term justice is preferred to signify also love, in the New Testament the term love is emphasized to imply also justice. Thus, the justice of Jesus is justice-love, through which the disciple gives the other not only what belongs to the other, but also of his own. As A. Nolan has said, "The new thing in the new justice of Jesus is that He brings divine compassion into the historical project of building a just world."

In theological perspective, therefore, justice is a mediation of love — an essential one. So much so that there can be no genuine love without justice: the praxis of justice is the minimum requirement of love, which entails the works of mercy

(beneficence) and the works of justice (promotion of human dignity and rights).

In social ethics, in the social teaching of the Church, justice is considered one of the four key components of a genuine social order with, truth, freedom and love. The four are the real paths to social peace and happiness — the paths of liberation.

In particular, we assert, there can be no authentic development of persons and of peoples without justice; and there can be no peace without justice. Paul VI said, "If you want peace, work for justice."

Traditionally we spoke of a tripartite division of justice: distributive, commutative and legal justice. - Today we still speak of these three, but more of social justice which, although it is not a new kind of justice (for some, it is the three kinds of justice; for many, it is legal and distributive justice), it does reveal a new vision of the social reality centered on the principles of the absolute dignity of all human beings and peoples, of their inalienable rights, of the universal right to have a share in the goods of the earth destined by God for all persons and nations, of the duty of all to work for the common good, the object of justice and according to John Paul II "the new name of peace."

## 2.2. *Denouncing Injustice*

To announce Justice implies also denouncing the privation of justice, that is, injustice. Justice means to give to each person his rights. At the level of reality, however, the definition of justice is not, by and large, true: a great majority of men, women and children of our world are not given their "due," their human rights. The human faces of poverty, hunger, disease illiteracy, discrimination, violence, oppression and unfreedom are the faces of injustice.

Confronting economic, political and cultural injustices, the People of God, the community of believers in Jesus cannot keep

silent, without offending God: an unjust world is a kingdom of evil, in contradiction with the Kingdom of God — a Kingdom of justice, freedom, love and peace. Certainly, God's Kingdom will only be perfectly realized at the end of time; still, Christians are obliged to anticipate the Kingdom through their praxis of justice and love; otherwise, they will not have a share in the eschatological kingdom.

Every Christian, then, in particular he who has to preach the Word of God, is asked by his humanity and his faith to denounce real and true injustices, their causes, and those responsible for them. His denunciation must be done, however, in an evangelical way, that is, as Christ taught us (cf Mt 18:15-17), in the words of the Synod of Bishops (1917), "with charity, prudence and firmness, in sincere dialogue with all parties concerned."

The denunciation of injustice must be directed to the proclamation of justice: to denounce injustice without practicing justice is pharisaic; it does not achieve anything positive, for it leaves to others the fight of justice; it really is a useless word, like "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (I Cor 13:1). In this context, to denounce, almost exclusively, the First World as the cause of all exploitations and oppressions and manipulations is not totally just. We remember the words of theologian Segundo Galilea: "Neocolonialism, unjust international structures, the multinationals, these are part of the problem of poverty and injustice; nevertheless, we in Latin America realize that we must first settle account within our own countries; change must begin with ourselves."

Therefore, to be able to denounce injustice credibly and authentically, we have to try to show basic coherence between verbal and real denunciations of injustice; at least (for, after all, we are sinners — I Jn. 1:8) we have to denounce others from a humble and repentant personal attitude. We remember the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch: "It is better to remain silent and to be than to talk and not be."

### 2.3 *Witnessing Justice*

Announcing justice implies negatively to denounce injustice and positively to proclaim justice by words and deeds; above all, by deeds. The praxis of justice is primarily, for every human being, for every Christian, witnessing justice.

Witnessing justice is an essential element of Christian witnessing, which mean substantial coherence between theory and praxis, between faith and life, between words and deeds. Paul VI said in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: "The Gospel must be proclaimed above all by witness; the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentic Christian life."

The Gospel of Justice must also be proclaimed principally by witnessing justice; that is, by being just and promoting justice. This witnessing is what is most needed today: we have tended to speak a lot about justice and to denounce even more injustices; the real word is not the spoken word, but the lived word.

To promote justice individually and collectively demands for all Christians to opt for the human person, and above all, for the poor human person.

The virtue of justice directs personal and social relationships. Its praxis is based upon the recognition of the human dignity and rights of every human being, and directed to defend and promote that dignity and rights. The unique and equal human dignity of every human person — its being a creature and a child of God — is concretized in a basic series of human rights that arise from the very nature of the human being. From this natural ontological equality stems the ethical responsibility of every man and women to recognize, defend and promote the inalienable rights of all humans.

Promoting rights implies fulfilling our duties, which are corresponding to our rights. Usually we all talk constantly of rights, but little of our duties. In this vital issue of human rights and duties, as in many connected with social life, we have



to pass from the level of formulation to the level of implementation, from lip service to giving witness to justice through the recognition, defence and promotion of human dignity and rights. Confucius said: "By nature men are alike: through practice, they have become apart." What we are asked by our faith in particular is to fight this unjust practice with the praxis of justice.

### 3. THE PRIORITY OF PRAXIS: THE PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR

The promotion of justice is rooted in the equal dignity of all humans, and is carried out by defending the human rights of all; but, primarily, of the poor and oppressed and marginalized. The praxis of justice opts for the human person, and preferentially for the poor human person. Hence, we speak of the preferential option for the poor.

#### 3.1 *The Message and the Meaning*

At the level of message. There seems to be no possible doubt: the so called preferential option for the poor is a necessary option of Christian faith. This must proclaim, by words and deeds, justice, human dignity and rights for all; but in the first place for the "poor." This conclusion is easily drawn from the radical message of the prophets, of Jesus, the theological elaboration of the Fathers of the Church, and of the classical theologians, in particular St. Thomas with his explanation of the right of property. The radicality of this message is now on center stage in the social teachings of the Church and in current theological developments (cf. Vatican II; LG,8; GS,1,21,57; AG,12).

In the Old as well as in the New Testament, the praxis of justice-love is directed principally towards the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. God is their liberator; Jesus the Son of God and a Man-for-others has also a sort of bias in favor of the "little ones." According to Jesus, at the end of time, all persons will be judged on their justice and love — or lack of

them towards the "least" among men, women and children (Mt 25:34-43).

Following the prophetic tradition, the Fathers of the Church, and later on St. Thomas Aquinas, speak strongly of the right of every person to a share in the goods of the earth (cf. II — II, 68,2) and of the grave obligation of the rich people to share with the poor not only out of charity but also, and radically, out of justice. A representative text from St. Basil:

He who takes the clothes from a man is a thief. He who does not clothe the indigent, when he can, does he deserve another name but thief? The bread that you keep belong to the hungry; to the naked, the coat that you hide in your coffers; to the shoeless, the shoes that are dusty at your home; to the miserable, the silver that you hide. In brief, you offend all those who can be helped by you (cf. St. Basil, *Hom. VII in famem*, I: PG 31, 325).

At the level of praxis. The preferential option for the poor has always been the option of the saints, of Mother Mary, St. Paul, St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Teresa of Avila, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Alphonsus Mary de Ligouri. Today, it is becoming more and more an exemplary option of many Christian believers and also communities; by and large, however, it still remains a great challenge for most Christians. Moreover as historian H. de la Costa wrote, "the Church continues to be or at least to be regarded as being in permanent alliance with the elites or ruling class." Thus, in this as in other aspects of Christian faith, the Church as the People of God must pass "from word to action;" that seems to be the International Mission Congress (Manila, 1979) proclaimed, "the only theme worthy of our serious missionary responsibility." In 1983 FABC advised that we all must make the preferential option for the poor "the real pattern of our daily praxis." What is the meaning of the "preferential option for the poor"?

"Option" means decision and commitment in favor of the poor. "Preferential" means the choice of the poor as a priority of Christian witnessing justice and solidarity — a priority

which does not exclude the rich (cf. Lk. 8:1-3; 10:38; Jn. 3:1). "Poor" means the economically poor, the so called "soft belly" of society, and the socially poor, the powerless, the marginalized, the oppressed, the exploited. Poor, therefore, includes many human faces, as the Puebla Document expresses dramatically; the faces of poor and vagrant children, hopeless and frustrated youth, indigenous peoples, peasants, laborers, the underemployed and unemployed, the marginalized urban dwellers, the aged, and the permanently disabled. "Poor" include also women, refugees, ethnic minorities.

In Christian perspective, to opt preferentially for the poor means, in the words of L. Boff, "to opt for the poor and against their poverty," to opt for social justice, to be committed to the transformation of society, from the poor and with the poor not to create a rich society (for this will also be unjust), but to help create a just and fraternal society."

To opt for the poor does not mean, however, to absolutize the poor (Christ is the only absolute); in fact, the authentic option for the poor relativizes the political movements and associations for the poor. The Church, as such, may — and probably should — support and collaborate with those movements and associations, but without identifying herself with them. Why, then does the Church opt for the poor? The second Asian Justice and Peace Consultation (Hong Kong, 1984) answers:

As far as the Church is concerned, it makes this option simply because it is the option of Jesus, the Evangelizer, not because the poor are better than the rich; neither because they are holy and the rich are not; much less because they are majority. To make an option for the poor means to look at this world through the eyes of the poor, especially the poor who have come to realize their human dignity and the injustice done them and are prepared to do something about it. (Final Paper, "Our Quest for Justice," *FABC Papers*, No. 37, p. 46).

### 3.2. *The Implications*

The implications of the option for the poor are many and varied according to the various ministries and charisms of the Church of Christ. It can be witnessed in different ways and degrees of commitment to the point of living for the poor, with the poor and like the poor. What are the implications of the option for all Christians? It implies, at least, to practice poverty in spirit, to live a simple lifestyle, and to share something — or much — with the poor.

Throughout Christian tradition, voluntary poverty has been considered a great Christian virtue and value; interior and exterior poverty, in spirit and in fact, often reaffirmed through a vow. Interior poverty, poverty in spirit is a basic Christian attitude (virtue), a condition for Christian discipleship, a true sign of Christian identity. This implies the power to recognize Jesus in the poor, the downtrodden, the "fallen" on the many roads of injustice, oppression and exploitation. Theologian J.I. Gonzalez Faus once said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit means blessed are those who love the poor, opt for the poor, or identify themselves with the poor."

Poverty in spirit to be authentic must be expressed in a certain external poverty, that is, in a simple style of life, and in sharing with the poor something of what one has.

True poverty in spirit is shown really by a lifestyle that is simple, sober and austere (cf. Lk 12:22-34; Jn 5:1-5; I Tim 6:8). The preferential option for the poor at the level of message is often denied at the level of practice by a luxurious, superfluous, consumeristic, wasteful lifestyle.

A simple style of life leads necessarily to a real solidarity of the poor (cf. Ez 16:49; Gal 2:10); a solidarity which is empathy and sharing with the poor; a theological solidarity which is, as the French bishops said in 1983, one of the forms of saying "God" today: a Christian solidarity which sees Christ in the poor.



Sharing goods with others is the way to salvation (Mt. 19:21; Lk 12:33), while not sharing leads to condemnation as it led the rich man of the parable of Jesus (Lk 16:19 ff; cf. I Jn 3:17). This sharing with the poor is demanded from all Christians; it is a universal demand. The principle of stewardship helps the Christian understand and interiorize this demand; we are only stewards of the earth and of the things we have (cf. Lev 25:23); truly, in the face of gross poverty, what is "mine" belongs also to the poor!

Solidarity with the poor demands today (much more than yesterday) commitment to change unjust and oppressive social structures through dialogue and active non-violence.

The preferential option for the poor is, mainly, an option of charity. In charity, as Yves Congar has said, the Christian realizes more profoundly that "our way to God passes through the poor"; the love of God, the love revealed by the Son of God is love (agape) for all but primarily a love for the poor and the weak; in fact, the revolutionary character of the love of Jesus is found "in his boundless love, and the love of his Father, for the little ones whom the world scorns and condemns."

### *3.3 Formation and the Preferential Option for the Poor*

To denounce injustice credibly, to announce justice efficiently and to witness justice courageously, one needs to be converted to God and to neighbor. To opt preferentially for the poor, practically one must be converted to the poor and, in a sense, by the poor. We read in Proposition No. 17 of the Synod of Bishops 1987 on the Laity: "The candidates to the priesthood and to the diaconate must receive an adequate preparation and pastoral instruction, including the experience of serving the poor."

To be in solidarity with the poor entails to let the poor evangelize us, and therefore, to let them form us. Truly, to be really committed to the poor one needs to be informed and to be formed. As the Dominican Conference on Justice and Peace (Hong Kong, 1984) stated, to be Good News among the poor we

need "to be informed of the cultural, economic and political realities which enslave great multitudes of people." We also need to be formed.

This formation includes, according to this Dominican Conference, "the experience of living with the poor, training in social analysis, philosophy, theology and spirituality firmly situated in the present social dimension." Our latest General Chapter (Avila, 1986) centered on the Mission in the Frontiers including the challenges of justice and peace, of the marginalized, of the great religions, of secular ideologies, and of the sects. (cf. F. Gomez, O.P., (Editor), *The Dominicans' Mission Here and Now*, Manila University of Santo Tomas, 1988).

The formation for mission must inculcate certain attitudes that are appropriated at the personal and communitarian level through the interplay of experience, reflection and action. With regard to the formation for the praxis of justice with the poor, A. Nolan mentions four elements or stages.

In his challenging and illuminating article "Stages of Growth in the Service of the Poor," (*ocus* Nov.-Dec., 1984, no. 415-424), Nolan presents the commitment to the poor as a process in four stages:

1. The stage of compassion which, aided by exposure and information, leads to a twofold action: relief work and a simplification of life style;

2. Second stage: The discovery that poverty is a structural problem, caused by political and economic structures; it leads according to Nolan, to indignation or to anger, to hatred of sin but not of the sinner, and to actions ordered to change the structures and the systems which created poverty.

3. Third stage: The "discovery that the poor must and will save themselves, and that they don't really need you or me," we must, then, learn from the poor, who are God's chosen instruments. Nolan points out here the danger of romanticism;

4. The experience of solidarity, "real solidarity with the poor and the oppressed." Solidarity entails the discovery of our faults and weakness, and the practice of mutual respect, in spite of the differences among those fighting for the poor and with the poor there is the unity of struggle against unjust structures. Nolan ends by saying that "the one really bad thing that can happen to any of us is that we get stuck somewhere along the way."

#### 4. EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE

Facing the seemingly insurmountable task of fighting injustice and promoting justice many men and women and groups of humans continue to be passive, indifferent, silent, insensitive, unconcerned, — selfish. How to change the unjust structures of society? By changing unjust men and women. And how to form new men and women, ready to build in community a just, free and participatory society? Through education for justice.

##### 4.1. *Liberating and Evangelizing Education*

Education aims at the harmonious development of the human person — physically, intellectually and morally. It is a mediation of culture; in reality, the primary task of culture and cultures. For the Christian, education is also a mediation of faith directed to the formation of persons as individual and social beings, as children of God and brothers and sisters of one another.

Education, however, can be a way towards the "domestication" or the "liberation" of persons and peoples. While domesticating education treats the "students" as objects to be manipulated according to the "value" of the status quo, liberating education takes the students as "subjects" in the process of self-realization. While domesticating education feeds information, liberating education leads to communication; while the former develops passive acceptance of ideas, the later, critical thinking.

Liberating education attempts at making human beings more human; that is, just, free, responsible and participatory. In Christian perspective, liberating education is completed and perfected by evangelizing education, which is an important part of the mission of the Church.

Liberating and evangelizing education is an education for "conscientization." This means, basically, a dynamic process of education, that combines dialectically the binomium, reflection-action, action-reflection through which the educators-educated become critically conscious of the social and committed its transformation.

#### 4.2. *Formation of a Social Conscience and Moral Education*

Liberating and evangelizing education is, thus an education for authentic conscientization, that centers upon the formation in community of the conscience of the individuals — social awareness implying social conscience.

Social conscience points out the social dimension of the moral conscience. It is exercised through the practice of social values or virtues, in particular social justice. Thus the formation of a social conscience, aware of the situation of injustice and committed to change it positively, is at the core of moral education, of education for justice.

Education is either moral or immoral education, just or unjust education. In this field, neutrality is not possible. But education — and more so Christian education — must be moral and just; moral education is a part, a dimension of authentic human and Christian education, and the education for justice, a central factor of moral education.

Moral education has been aptly described as "a pilgrimage towards ethical maturity." How can we form ethically mature persons? By helping them live an ideal autonomy (against authoritarianism and manipulation) and realize the ideal of justice (as the complementary element of learning to live in autonomy).

In moral education, as interpreted today, justice becomes the nucleus or the principle of moral axiology. Justice as the



basic ethical category points two main references, namely, equality and reciprocity. On one hand, equality implies that human and social problems are discerned and evaluated (and solved) from and for the basic equality of all human beings; on the other, reciprocity means the understanding of human relations and relationships in key of equitable participation (M. Vidal).

To the basic ethical category of justice, Christian education particularly, that is evangelizing education, adds the most basic category of moral education, of education for justice, that is, Christian solidarity (as social charity and beneficence), which includes and energizes the category of justice.

#### 4.3. *Process, Content and Agents of Education for Justice*

The process of education for justice comprises the following inter-dependent moments: first, awareness of the situation of justice-injustice (to "see" the social situation): secondly, personal and collective discernment, that is, evaluation based on humanity and Gospel (to "judge" the situation), and, thirdly, personal and collective response to strengthen the positive elements of the situation and to discard its negative and dehumanizing elements. This response is given through positive social action, through the praxis of justice (to "act" in order to bridge the gap between, "how the situation is" and "how it should be").

The content of an education for justice, centered on human dignity and rights, includes also the economic, political and cultural analyses of reality; the reflection on the values of justice, truth, freedom, and solidarity, as the bases of a new social order; and the human and Christian principles of social action — human dignity, social justice, the common good, stewardship, subsidiarity, priority of labor over capital. These values and principles are explained and interpreted in Christian perspective by the so-called social teachings of the Church, particularly since Vatican II, and most especially the great social documents such as *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), *Populorum Progressio* (1962), *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971), *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), *Laborem Exercens* (1982). To these universal social documents,

each local community will add the letters from the local Churches and Christian communities.

Education for justice, to be effective and credible, must also be education in justice, that is, an education that does justice, in the different situations of life and milieu in which the Christians find themselves.

Education for justice and injustice entails a dynamic and continuing process — a never ending process for every age, for every person. From a Christian perspective, the principal agents of education for justice and injustice are the family, the parish, socio-religious movements and associations, the mass media of communication, and in particular way, the Catholic schools, privileged places for education in justice.

The Eucharist as the summit and source Christian worship and life — and evangelization — can become, in particular, a potent agent of education for and in justice: to celebrate the sacrifice and sacrament of love means to commit oneself authentically to proclaim justice — to serve humanity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Seminary formation is obviously a difficult task and a very important one: the local Churches of Asia depend heavily on the leadership — or lack of it — of the priests and religious formed in our seminaries and religious houses of formation.

To form well our candidates for the priesthood is our task, to form them anthropologically, spiritually, doctrinally and pastorally. To be able to achieve this in a moderately successful way, we need to continue always our formation: to be re-educated, re-formed, renewed.

This ongoing formation includes also formation in justice and for justice, and therefore, the praxis of justice and of the preferential option for the poor. In fact, the practice of justice by working in some way with the poor is the best method we can use to form our candidates for mission and the ministry of justice.

To educate for justice, we have to be just, as persons and as communities; we have to witness justice. People today are

tired of beautiful words like justice, liberation, commitment — particularly the young, who believe more in what they see than in what they hear. As Paul VI said: "Modern man listens more to witness than to teachers; and if he does listen to teachers it is because they are witnesses."

We have to be, and become more witnesses of Christ. In this witnessing, justice is something, but it is not everything, not even the most important thing. It is a sociological datum that some priests and religious, who were directly involved with social action for justice and peace left their priestly or religious call. We blame nobody; as formators, however, we have to be careful regarding the pastoral program of our seminarians.

Christ is our basic norm and model, and therefore our union with Christ is the most important thing in formation; preferential option for the poor, option for justice and love are Christian options if rooted in Christ. Christ is the only absolute option that comprises the option for justice and love and option for the poor. Hence, we have to have both union with Christ and social commitment, holiness and justice. As the Asian Bishops have said: "the search for holiness and the search for justice, evangelization and the promotion of true human development and liberation are not only opposed but make up today the integral preaching of the "Gospel especially in Asia."

And yet, Christ is the model and the Supreme norm. This is why, above all the candidates for the priesthood:

Should be taught to look for Christ in many places: in faithful meditation on God's word, in active communion with the most holy mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and the Divine Office, in the bishop who sends them, and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the young, the sick, the sinful and the unbelieving (OT, No. 3).

It has been easy for me to speak to you on the Praxis of Justice. It is also easy to denounce injustice. It is not hard to ask others to be just, promote justice and opt preferentially for the poor. As a sinner, that I am, I tell you and tell myself: let us "act justly, love tenderly and, walk humbly with the Lord" (Mi 6:8).

FAUSTO GOMEZ, O.P.

---

## Dialogue with Great Religious Traditions

Religious plurality is a fact. It is unrealistic to think that it will gradually transform itself into one world religion. Instead, the world religions and their offshoots resurge with vigor in the midst of secularizing societies and most of them have become missionary minded. They also try to rediscover their original core and this brings out ever more clearly what their views of man, world, the issues of life and the Ultimate Reality are like. These religions are embodied in the concrete life of millions of people and interreligious dialogue cannot be avoided anymore. Not any religiously minded person, not any religion can afford to live in splendid isolation nowadays.

Dialogue of life is the most common dialogue and, in fact, has existed for centuries. Interreligious dialogue on the level of scholarly meetings is a rather recent phenomenon. Courses of interreligious dialogue in seminary formation do not appear that much in the curriculum. But it is not enough to state that interreligious dialogue is a necessity. It is more important to try to gauge in depth its rationale, its nature and its conditions. I venture to do this on a tentative basis.

### *I. What can we say about religion?*

Interreligious dialogue asks for an understanding of religion. It is dangerous to go into definitions, because they rationalize the religious phenomenon which is in itself more experience and living life than an abstraction. It involves the



quest for *being, meaning and truth*. In order to paraphrase religion as encompassingly as possible, following the line of thinking of Panikkar seems acceptable to me: "Religion is a path man follows in order to reach the purpose of life, or shorter, religion is the way of salvation. One has to add immediately that here the words 'way' and 'salvation' do not claim any specific Christian content; rather, they stand for the existential pilgrimage man undertakes in the belief that this enterprise will help him achieve the final purpose or end of life. A way to fulfillment — if we prefer."<sup>1</sup>

The merit of this paraphrase is to escape biased views that want to limit the qualifier "religion" only to the great world-religions, and even worse, only to the monotheistic religions.

Religion tells us that from past history until now, human beings are in one way or another transcendence-oriented. Religion is inherently and integrally human and *very concretely* human. I mean to say that we are not in a first stage human beings as it were and in a next superimposed stage Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, etc. If we abstract it from concrete beings whose humanity it *informs*, it escapes us. We have always to bear in mind that it is not a thing but a *quality* of one's personal individual and social life.<sup>2</sup>

This can be confirmed by a quick analysis of our paraphrase of religion. First: there is a vision of man as he finds himself now and already appears to be. Second: there is a view of what he can become later whether this later is life beyond life or not. Third: there are the means enabling him to go from the now to the later or there is the way in between. This shows that religion is not just an objectivistic construction of the mind, not just a set of truths but a way of life (being) involving truth and praxis, an actively *going our way towards fulfillment, to Something More*. The quest for being, meaning and truth is a quest requiring man's participation, making con-

<sup>1</sup> R. Panikkar, *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, New York, Paulist Press, 1978, 78.

<sup>2</sup> Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Towards a World Theology. Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1981, 47-55.

crete his personal religious convictions through action in a specific societal and cultural context.

Therefore, in interreligious dialogue, the concern is not so much with the objective classical data of dogma and ritual in the religious traditions of mankind as with the enduring and always renascent basic realities that existentially and actually sustain and give direction to the lives of people today, these realities that allow him to go from the now to the later. Consequently, emphasis must be on the faiths by which people live, much more than on the religions in abstracto.

Is then *tradition* not involved in interreligious dialogue? It would be greatly irresponsible to seek the enduring and always renascent basic realities sustaining us today without any understanding of what they have meant to millions of our ancestors in their cultural setting *yesterday*. There is no view of the present and the future unless we look from within a structure of time and history against the background of yesterday.<sup>3</sup> When it comes to basic realities and ultimate concerns, there is no such thing as a total break with and an unconditioned rejection of what has been built up until now. The faith of a Buddhist, a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, etc. lies in the human heart, in what the religious traditions *mean* to people, in what the universe *means* to them in these same traditions that have been avenues of faith for so many. Interreligious dialogue has to do with human lives in their most intimate, most profound, most primary and most transcendent — in whatever sense — aspects.<sup>4</sup>

## II. *Theological reflection on interreligious dialogue*

On which basis can Christians enter into dialogue with people of other faiths? It seems to me that we can do this on the basis of our common humanity. This is of course something

<sup>3</sup> S. J. Samartha, ed., *Living Faiths and Ultimate Goals. Salvation and World Religions*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1974, VIII-IV.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *o.c.*, 47-48; *The Faith of Other Men*, New York, Harper & Row, 1972, 15-17.

pretty abstract but it can serve at least as a preliminary basis, because it is shaped through different cultural and religious forms or messages. Our common humanity permits us to confer to each other a message and goals f.e. in order to build up a peaceful world, to collaborate for social justice, to acquire mutual respect, to enrich each other, etc.

But does this basis lie only in our common humanity or can we move to a deeper basis for dialogue and towards deeper goals? I think so. As soon as we probe more deeply into man's religious convictions, we discover that religious experience does shelter certain truth-claims and profound similarities and differences. It seems to me that the one who, on the basis of our common humanity wants to collaborate for a better quality of life, has to risk himself into a *dialogue where religious convictions are involved* and it is precisely here that a deepening of the basis and goals of interreligious dialogue appears.

People with a living faith aim at *an ultimate goal, their later* and the ultimate goal of life is the question of *salvation*. Interreligious dialogue must be an encounter on the level of the understanding and experience of the deepest commitments and ultimately on the level of *the Absolute Ground of Being* and this is the level of salvation.<sup>5</sup>

Decisive for the Christian is then the question whether he can relate salvation in the other religions to his own salvation in Christ. This calls for a theological reflection. Does God reveal himself in the many religions, in the heart of the many peoples or not? And consequently, does divine revelation in the religions also effects salvation?

It is clear that the rejection of all religions as demonic constructions is of no use in the dialogue, because in this case there is no revelation and there is no salvation. This is the extreme exclusivistic position of the school of Karl Barth; the

<sup>5</sup> E. Piryns, "The Church and Interreligious Dialogue", *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, Tokyo, Vol. 32 (1978), 176-177, 248; Donald K. Swearer, *Dialogue. The Key to Understanding Other Religions*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press, 1977, 35-36. ,

mainline Protestant model is equally unacceptable: the other religions are bearers of revelation but barren of salvation. It is also meaningless to level off completely the position of Jesus Christ and his Lordship through the acceptance of a total relativism or syncretism.<sup>6</sup>

In the exclusivistic Protestant position and in the mainline Protestant model we discover the reason why the 'Commission on Dialogue with People of Other Faiths and Ideologies' of the World Council of Churches is able to engage in dialogue with non-Christians on the basis only of our common human nature but not on the level of salvation.

The Catholic position is different and is moving much faster than the World Council of Churches. The Vatican II *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions* (Nostra Aetate) accepts the basic value of these religions but does not yet give a theological elaboration.<sup>7</sup> The theological point of view is clearer in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* (Lumen Gentium) that says that the other religions are preparatory ways for Christ and their deepest values can be ennobled and perfected into the glory of God.<sup>8</sup> The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Gaudium et Spes) is the most outspoken document: since Christ died for all men and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God, in the Paschal Mystery.<sup>9</sup> There is between the Christian and the Non-Christian a common ground of acceptance by God and a common ground of fraternity. The Non-Christian, living in his own culture and religion, can live in the Paschal Mystery of Christ, because God manifests himself to him and enters into dialogue with him.

<sup>6</sup> E. Piryns, "Christ and the Religions", *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, Vol. 33 (1979), 162-172.

<sup>7</sup> *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, nr. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, nrs 16-17.

<sup>9</sup> *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, nr. 23.



Vatican II has given us clearance to enter into dialogue with people of other faiths, not only on the basis of our common human nature but also on the basis of salvation in the other religions.

The theological foundation for the interreligious dialogue of the Catholic Church goes back to the johannine Logos-doctrine of an important number of early Church Fathers and apologists. They accepted that a small seed of the Logos-Christ is present in the heart and mind of especially the Greek philosophers. This seed is a preparation for the message of Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>10</sup> The Logos-doctrine had receded into the background through a negative evolution of Catholic theology during the subsequent centuries but was taken up again by Vatican II. But its basis has become enlarged so that nowadays we accept that God's Word is active through the Spirit in the heart of man, his religion and his culture.

Something similar to this viewpoint can be found already in Paul VI's encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (His Church) (1964) where respect for the moral and spiritual values of the Non-Christians is stressed and where the truth held in common by Christians and Muslims is emphasized.<sup>11</sup>

John Paul II, in his encyclical letter *Redemptor Hominis* (The Redeemer of Man) (1979) seems even to express a broader theological view of the religions of the world and leaves behind ecclesiocentrism and the explicit confession of faith in Christ. He writes about the belief of the Non-Christian as being the effect of the Spirit of truth operating outside the visible confines of the Mystical Body; he also affirms that this action of the Spirit in the life of men is operating not in spite of their religious adherence, but rather as its essence and foundation. He affirms that respect for the values of others must lead to approach them, not merely with the expectation of what Chris-

<sup>10</sup> Richard H. Drummond, *Toward a New Age in Christian Theology*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1985, 25-33.

<sup>11</sup> Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, Vatican City, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1964, 69-70.

tians can say and bring and give, but also of what they can learn from others and how they can be challenged and enriched by others.<sup>12</sup>

Official responsibility for clarifying and implementing the decisions of the Council falls upon the 'Roman Secretariat for the Non-Christians.' Its main task is to effect dialogue on the subject of salvation with representatives of other religious traditions. This requires that the Catholic, participants in the dialogue understand the position from which they discuss and also that they learn more about what is understood by salvation in the other traditions.

The word *salvation* is more than a matter of terminology. It goes deep into the varying analyses of the human situation. The religious experience of man is expressed in the different religions as ways of life and, consequently, the view of the nature of salvation in relation to the Ultimate Reality is also different. Hinduism in its monistic and theistic streams sees it in terms of liberation from pain, suffering and loss, from estrangement of various kinds. Monistic Hinduism further defines it as a process of becoming conscious that man's *atman* (spiritual principle) is actually and really the *Mahatman* or the *Brahman*, the all-pervading divine impersonal and cosmic principle (Shankara 788-828). Theistic Hinduism insists that salvation is not identification but communion with the *Brahman* (Ramanuja 1050-1138). The Muslim sees salvation in terms of absolute abandonment and obedience to Allah, the all-powerful, merciful and loving One. Buddhism says that all men are the possessors of the all-embracing Buddha-nature or the Void-of-Self, though they are now ignorant of it; but when one walks along the eightfold path as outlined by the historical Buddha, either through one's own effort or through the help of a savior like Amida, he will once reach the consciousness of being identical with the Buddha-nature itself and this is salvation. The Christian believes that man and world are created entities, issued

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, Vatican iCity, Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1979, 17-18.

from the love of a personal God. They are limited realities, subject to sin and in need of redemption through Jesus Christ, God's life incarnate within this historical world. Through him, man has access to God and can reach salvation. The process of salvation is a collaboration between man and God. God's contribution is his free gift of grace or the gift of himself; man's contribution is that he has to love God and his neighbor. Salvation for the Christian means participation in God's own life.<sup>13</sup>

This deeper basis of interreligious dialogue, the question of salvation in connection with the Ultimate Reality, seems to me the unavoidable prerequisite for collaboration for a better human existence. Seeing interreligious dialogue solely on the basis of our common humanity is too abstract and too lacking in depth.

### III. *Are there certain rules for interreligious dialogue?*

Interreligious dialogue is not first of all a dialogue among religious systems but among persons of living faiths. Therefore, interfaith dialogue is perhaps a better expression than interreligious dialogue.

Different faith experiences must encounter each other in the heart of the respective partners. We must be involved in intra-religious dialogue, because it does not only take place vis à vis the others but also in our own heart (*intra*). We must be receptive for the religious experience of the others.

Apologetics that try to prove the truth and the value of one's own religion over against the truth and the value of another's religion cannot be tolerated. We do not step in a boxing ring! Nobody possesses the whole truth because the full truth is a mystery. Each partner is bound to discover new dimensions of the truth coming from outside (the so-called

<sup>13</sup> E. Piryns, "The Content of the Christian Faith in the Japanese Context", *The Japan Missionary Bulletin*, Vol. 36 (1982), 353-354, elaborates the same idea in relation to Japan.

foreign prophesy) for his own enrichment. This leads to mutual transformation and to conversion to the fuller truth.<sup>14</sup>

Interreligious dialogue is not a purely philosophical discussion, because philosophy deals with intellectual problems. Placing religion on a par with philosophy is the shortest way to kill all dialogue, because religion deals with *theory and praxis*.

Dialogue does not deal exclusively with the historical tradition as past perfect tense. The living encounter among people of different faiths is not a congress of archeology but of creative thinking, seeking new ways that do not break away from the past but continues and extends it.

We need for our dialogue new theological categories concerning absoluteness and uniqueness of Christianity and the other religions or we have at least to see these categories in a new light. Each religion has its own claims. Therefore, as I pointed out to the uselessness of Protestant exclusivism that condemns the other religions beforehand, we may not work within a framework of exclusivistic absoluteness and exclusivistic uniqueness; the framework should be one of relatedness. The many religions do not exclude each other but are related to each other. We have to accept this because of the fact that God is revealingly present in all of them. This brings us to a kind of dialogue which is truly a *greater Catholic ecumenism* in the old Greek sense of the word, an ecumenism encompassing all the religions. I mean to say that the revelation in Jesus Christ has to be brought into relation to other true revelations and vice versa. The following examples might clarify my standpoint.

The core of Buddhism, the impersonal Void-of-Self or Absolute Selflessness can be brought into relation with the Christian personal God, because the buddhist Selflessness throws light on God who emptied himself astonishingly in Jesus Christ (kenosis).<sup>15</sup> Islam stresses strongly the One Supreme Almighty God.

<sup>14</sup> Smith, quoted by Swearer, *o.c.*, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Hans Waldenfels, *Absolute Nothingness. Foundations for a Buddhist-Christian Dialogue*, New York, Paulist Press, 1980, 138-163.



This prompts the Christian to confess his monotheism clearly and warns him to be prudent with the various conceptions of the Trinity, even though it may be true that Islam sees the Trinity of Christianity as a configuration of the Father. Mary and Jesus; Christians may not give the impression that they are backing away from One God in favor of three and must attempt to make plausible muslims the being-Father, being-Son and being-Spirit aspects of God.<sup>16</sup> The *Advaita* (Non-Duality) theology or the unqualified monism of Shankara — the *atman is the Brahman* — That art Thou — needs the Christian insistence on the distinction between the finite and the infinite and vice-versa. The qualified non-dualism of Ramanujā, maintaining that the *atman* and the *Brahman* are distinct realities and that salvation is communion with the Brahman and not complete identity as in the case of Shankara, can be clarified through the communion mysticism of Christianity.

This kind of interreligious dialogue demands a change of consciousness, and in order to meet and converse, the partners must leave their respective fortresses, their own home-ground and their own universe of discourse. This dialogue asks for the participation of first class theologians and is no game for brilliant amateurs. Without the collaboration of specialists, the danger is great of misplaced compromises or dangerous syncretism, on the one hand, and of unnecessary harsh oppositions, on the other hand.<sup>17</sup>

There are of course possibilities for dialogue on different levels, each of which has its own characteristics and consequences. Dialogue among personalities representing officially the leadership of the great religions is necessary. However, this kind of dialogue may, at the present moment, not be allowed to go to the deepest level. Officials are living in the center of their (structured) religion. They are likely to be very much

<sup>16</sup> Arnulf Camps, *Partners in Dialogue. Christianity and Other World Religions*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1983, 87-88.

<sup>17</sup> Jan Van Bragt, "The Buddhist Challenge to Christian Theology," Fausto oGmez, ed., *Asian Religious Traditions and Christianity*, Manila, Univ. of Santo Tomas, 1983, 28-29, 33.

concerned with preserving doctrines and they have to keep the adherents of their religion in mind; their responsibility is great. Understandably enough, they have to fulfill a role of security and are thus less prone to go for quick solutions, because their duties are very practical and immediate. They preferably go along with the proven ways. This shows that interreligious dialogue is not just an ecclesiastical endeavor.

#### IV. *Honesty in interreligious dialogue*

There must be complete honesty and no hidden agenda. Setting up the dialogue for converting the others to one's own religion is unfair.

However, one has to enter the dialogue without suspending his own faith conviction. Sometimes, it is thought that a methodological temporary bracketing of one's own faith is a condition for a fruitful dialogue.<sup>18</sup> This is often called the *phenomenological epochè*. A Christian who wants to participate in the dialogue without engaging his own conviction, as if it were something that should remain untouched, is practicing the epochè. Similarly, a Christian who enters the dialogue with the idea in mind of blotting out as a method, his own faith in order to be more open to his partners, is also practicing the epochè. The intention of the bracketing of one's own faith can be sincere, of course, because it is being done in order to prevent prejudices and short-sightedness. This is, however, a minimalistic attitude and turns the partners into non-partners. The dialogue will be reduced to a meaningless chat.

The bracketing of one's own faith or the epochè kills beforehand any serious dialogue. Since interreligious dialogue is in fact intra-religious dialogue, it must make possible that different faith experiences encounter each other in the heart of the respective partners. A mutual confrontation of everything we are and believe is demanded. Confrontation is not intended

<sup>18</sup> Panikkar, *o.c.*, 39-52.

as a clash but a search for a deeper communication and communion, without precluding any possible transformation of one's personal stand.

The epochè is also impracticable because it is artificial. Whatever I say and do would be influenced by my so-called repressed convictions. It cannot be right to leave out of the dialogue an essential part of the subject matter, our faith conviction. We should be discussing precisely what we have bracketed!

No partner has anything to hide. The degree of maturity for dialogue depends on the willingness to play the game with open cards. If there is no willingness to do so, the partners work with a hidden agenda and are no partners anymore.

Man is a being open towards the *later* and capable of growth. The future of our life and the world are at stake every day. Interreligious dialogue contributes to this growth and to our future. Growth is not simply continuity of an unchanged past. Growth asks for the absorption of ideas and values that were first outside and are now incorporated. Interreligious dialogue implies transformation, newness and conversion.

#### V. *Interreligious dialogue and witness*

The question of interreligious dialogue and witness cannot be avoided. The right to be a Buddhist, a Christian, a Hindu or a Muslim cannot be contested. We must honestly admit that the Christian faith commitment is one among several possible commitments.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, dialogue without witness to our respective ultimate faith commitments lacks necessary tension. Good participants in the dialogue expect to learn and

<sup>19</sup> Stransky's "Response" to Waldron Scott, "No Other Name — An Evangelical Conviction," Gerald H. Anderson & Thomas Stransky, eds., *Christ's Lordship and Religious Pluralism*, Maryknoll, N.Y., Orbis Books, 1981, 84.

to receive from each other. Christians must not hide that they are motivated by the Kingdom or the Reign of God who manifests himself in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus around whose person they gather together as a community. Vice versa, it is not enough to hear from the other that we share a common humanity. The others are expected to teach us what they themselves stand for because of the message of the Buddha, the Hindu sages and Mohammed. Dialogue is an attempt to understand and to express our own particularly not just in terms of our Christian heritage but also in relation to the spiritual heritage of other faiths; therefore witness during dialogue is but natural.

Moreover, interreligious dialogue is also a *verbal* exchange of faith experiences; it is bound up with language in all its possibilities and limitations. Language is one of the many vehicles expressing faith. Also in this respect dialogue cannot do without witness.<sup>20</sup>

ERNEST D. PIRYNS, C.I.C.M.

<sup>20</sup> Waldenfels, *o.c.*, 130-135.



---

# AN EXPERIENCE OF DIALOGUE WITH GREAT ASIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

My task is to share with you an experience on dialogue with great Asian religious traditions, wherein, God willing, you may gain some insights for priestly formation in your seminaries.

I am a layman, so my language will not be totally precise, technical or theological. But it is an experience, and an experience on dialogue at that, wherein the daily life of the laity is very much present, reflections can be made thereon, and formation pointers may be derived therefrom.

I am a consecrated member of the Focolare Movement, which has for one of its goals that of "unity", as expressed in Jesus' words: "That all may be one," i.e. to contribute towards the realization of Jesus' prayer, Father, may they all be one." It can be realized:

—by working for an ever deeper unity among the faithful of the Catholic Church;

—by establishing with brothers and sisters of other churches and ecclesial communities relationships of brotherly communion in Christ and of common witness, pursuing wherever possible, the restoration of unity;

—by working through dialogue and activities of common interest with persons of other religions, so that the most pro-

found union possible in God among all believers can be achieved in order to proclaim Christ;

— by dialoguing with all people of good will and by working with them for common goals in order to strengthen universal brotherhood the world over and to open their hearts to Christ.

Therefore, inter-religious dialogue is inherent in the goals of the Movement. However, this was not pre-meditated. It came out within the life of the Movement, which is necessarily based on God-love and love for each and every brother. Thus the members of the Movement easily and spontaneously enter into dialogue with the brothers of the great religions. For them, dialogue would first of all mean inter-personal relationship on love. This dialogue, as you may be able to intuit, is one of life, and has sprung from contacts with Buddhists in China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Macau, Thailand and Vietnam; with Muslims in Africa and the Middle-East; with Confucianists in Korea; with Jews in the USA; with Shinto in Japan; with Sikhs and Hindus in India and Pakistan; and Taoists in Hong Kong and Taipei.

At this point, I would proceed to relate to you the five areas of our experience, wherein our dialogue of life has taken place. They are: informal dialogues (of life), contacts on the leadership level, comprehensive dialogue with a particular group, namely the Riesho-Kosei-Kai, our School on Oriental Religions, and services related to inter-religious dialogue.

Then I would go on to enlist the insights gained, and finally come up with some reflections and conclusions.

## 2. INFORMAL DIALOGUE OF LIFE

This consists of the day-to-day contacts with the faithful of the great religions or with the adherents of the great religious traditions, living with them together the normal social realities in offices, factories, schools, town communities and all other environments. Exchanges of ideas, experiences of life and con-

victions have taken place, and relationships have been established. This is an ever ongoing process, spontaneous as it is, but also most demanding because it asks of our continuing vigilance in living out what we believe, wherein we could not put up a what we greatly fear, a show of inter-religious dialogue.

I would describe just one very simple example of this dialogue.

This concerns contacts with the brothers of Judaism. In Rome, there have been contacts with the Jewish community in the form of cultural encounters, personal contacts at work, and with their families. 'Citta' Nuova, the publishing house of the Movement, has published a book authored by them: "The Ghetto of Warsaw."

In the States, a Catholic focalarino, being a professor on Judaism, and a Catholic focolarina, have always had intimate contacts with the rabbis and other professors on Judaism.

In Turkey, there was a meeting between Jews and Christians at Istanbul on the occasion of a Jewish feastday. Present were the Chief Rabbi and the Archbishop of Karatas, and some members of the movement. There was much feasting, sharing of joy and then of experiences on living the Word of God. Both of the personalities have desired such things to happen again and continually.

In Luxemburg, the activities of the Focolare Movement regarding dialogue were presented in a joint meeting of leaders of great world religions. The Rabbi and the M.C. appreciated the absence of efforts to convince anyone of one's own ideas or beliefs.

### *Contacts on the leadership level*

The informal contacts blossomed into a singular occasion for Chiara Lubich to have contacts with some leaders of the great religions. The occasion was the awarding to her of the Templeton Foundation Prize for the Progress in Religion, espe-

cially in promoting mutual love. The Tibetan Lamas, headed by the Dalai Lama, the Indian Sikhs, and leaders of other non-Christian religions were among the first to congratulate her. There was a very profound relationship between her and them. Thus the era of dialogue with the great religions for the Movement has begun, she said. This proved to be an inspiration from God; as a matter of fact activities and relationships of dialogue fanned out widely.

God was behind all this, and in 1979, with the awarding of the Templeton Foundation Prize to Nikkyo Niwano, co-founder and president of a Japanese lay Buddhist association by the name of Rissho-Kosei-Kai, who then visited Chiara Lubich, there started a series of profound dialogues between them. In 1981 she was invited by Nikkyo Niwano himself to share her Christian experience to 12,000 of their youths. Plans were laid down for future collaboration, as we will hear later.

The dialogue has continued, and in 1985, on the occasion of the 30th birthday of Nikkyo Niwano, Chiara was invited again to talk, this time, to not only the youths, but also to different groups, including the presentation of a report and assessment of the activities of collaboration in the spirit of dialogue. Nikkyo Niwano did the same, and all this was done before civic and ecclesial authorities who were visibly satisfied.

There has always been an atmosphere of mutual esteem between the two leaders, each for the belief and convictions of the other and this has promoted contacts and relationship between members of the two groups all over the world. The local churches have always been aware of this, and has always given her encouragement and blessings for the endeavours undertaken.

*Comprehensive dialogue with a particular Buddhist group: the Rissho-Kosei-Kai.*

This is an ongoing, everdeepening dialogic process, wherein relationships have turned out to be more and more intimate and



fruitful. It has brought in also other Japanese groups into the worthy cause of dialogic collaboration to work for a better world.

There had been attempts to know each other, including participation of the members of one in the activities of the other, dialogue of life, exchange of spiritual experiences, collaboration in social activities, and in the promotion of a peace-mentality for religious youths.

It is already now a tradition that every year they will come to visit the Philippines, guided by us, have some encounters for their youths with ours, work in our social projects, participate in our annual summer convention, the Mariapolis.

We, too, have always participated in their activities in Japan. This happens also in other places where there are centers of both the Movement and the RKK.

And their youths have also taken part in our international and intercontinental activities, such as the festival for the youths, namely the Genfests, for example, in Manila and Rome.

A consequence of these precious encounters was the co-organization of two international youth forum and encounters. The first took place in 1985, and the second in 1987, both in Manila. The sessions of working together have contributed very much to the mutual esteem and concern, which has become now quite a way of life.

The first Asian Inter-Religious Youth Forum was participated by youths from all over Asia belonging to various non-Christian religions including Muslim, Sikhs, Confucianists, Buddhists, Jews and Shinto. The theme was "On Peace, Development and Participation" by religious youth. Speakers included His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin, Rev. Nakayama, Head of the Youth Section, Rissho-Kosei-Kai, and Dr. Arivaratne, rural development expert from Sri Lanka.

A follow-up inter-Religious Youth Encounter was organized in 1987 and lasted for three days, in the form of a live-in youth

camp. Work, orientation rural visits, prayer sessions, games, workshop and other activities were organized with an aim to provide occasions for vital exchange and mutual enrichment both in life-experiences and cultural and religious heritage. Impressions of participants were most positive, and marked a big step forward in tapping religious resource among youth for the building up of world-peace.

### *School on Oriental Religions*

A dialogue of life without the necessary preparation for it may turn out to be disoriented and therefore risky. It is fundamental to possess a conscientiousness for it, to gain notions on the beliefs of the other partner involved in the dialogue, to have basic ideas on the life-style and mentality of the person in question, in order to grow together with him in a relational dialogue, which will inevitably — though often without ourselves being aware of it — lead to a mutual appreciation of companionship in the common pilgrimage on the Holy Journey of Life.

It was with these ideas in mind, and the fervor of contributing to the efforts of the Church in a spontaneous evangelization, that Chiara Lubich founded the School on Oriental Religions in 1982 to prepare the members of the Focolare Movement for the dialogue of life with the faithful of the great religions. It was not intended to be highly academic, rather, the stress was on the urge to love Jesus in these brothers with the love of Jesus, whose presence is sought in the collectivity ("Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst" (Mt 18: 21), to penetrate the conscience of the non-Christian brother, in whom is also to be found His wondrous presence. Its seat was to be in the Philippines, the only Catholic country in Asia, with its spiritual inheritance which would provide the necessary atmosphere. The Word of Life for it would be "A bruised need he shall not break, and a smouldering wick he shall not quench."

Courses on basic Buddhism and Taoism have been conducted. The professors have been bishops who know the Movement and

who are involved in interreligious dialogue in Asian countries. These courses have then been repeated regularly with the help of video-cassettes in the Philippines, and in other Asian places such as Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Macau.

The "graduates" of this school all turned out to be of the conviction that salvation is granted to all these brothers through Christ in the Spirit by the Father in a manner known only to him, that however, the part of the Christian in this process is not to be ignored through witness, dialogue on all levels, following the example of Christ and with him among them, to live among brothers, to find out their needs and to provide for these needs which may be the explicit Word of God, or acts of brotherly companionship and assistance. They have also learnt to discover great things in the other religions that have brought about their enrichment in their life of faith. All the while they have been ready for the risk in the dialogic process, but they feel that they are now prepared for it.

#### *Services and participation in international organizations*

By services here I mean those to the cause of inter-religious dialogue. Whenever chances presented themselves, we have always tried to be of help. The Rissho-Kosei-Kai may be out here for an orientation program of exposure for their youth, and we will lend our services to bring them around, to push through with their program by seeing to their needs. They have brought youths from the Shinshuren, the League of New Religions (in Japan), and we were there to help them out.

We were also able to participate directly in the life of the Church in Asia when our services were called for in the secretarial tasks during the Third session of the Fourth Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, Nov. 1986, Hong Kong.

Regarding participation in international organizations, we were invited to be part of the permanent committee of the World Conference of Religions and Peace. The efforts and experiences

of the Movement in contributing to the cause of world peace through living out our religion according to the charism received were shared both in Nairobi and Beijing.

We have also been able to benefit from our involvement in several national chapters of the WCRP.

At Assisi, the Movement was invited by the Secretariat for Relations with the Non-Christians to provide "escort" service for several religious leaders. Things like fixing places for them to pray, making reservations for their flights, providing them with warm clothes, medicine, and special food, were done. Much appreciation was expressed by them, perhaps for the love received and for the witness of life.

### 3. INSIGHTS AND REFLECTIONS

Ever since we embarked on this endeavor of interreligious dialogue, ten years have passed. We have had several experiences and gained many insights. It would be next to impossible to list all of these. I shall try to summarize:

— In interreligious dialogue, we must present clearly our standpoint. We have been respected for that. Besides, it makes things easier for quicker exchange. There is no harm nor fear in saying that we are Christians or better still Catholics, and tell them our beliefs.

— In the dialogue of life, we must neglect small details; instances wherein the partner may feel offended must be carefully avoided. We must not feel funny about certain customs. For example, in Thailand the head of a person is taken with great respect. We should not touch it, not even of a child, nor so much as point our feet into the direction of a head.

— There is always a necessity to adapt to their habits. The exchange of gifts which has become a habit in our contacts with the Japanese groups, even after so many years of having known each other, is still being done — even though for some people



this may seem redundant. I can also quote that important outburst of the heart came out on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of Nikkyo Niwano, when he went as far as telling the RKK youths if they feel it from within they could become Catholics, while they could remain Buddhists if they are drawn to Buddhism. And this was done before an inter-religious public.

—Naturally we need time and patience to build up and maintain a relationship. Our sensitiveness for each other, our concern, esteem and respect for one another develops with time.

—After all, God is the author of the whole creation. Certainly, though mysteriously, he is behind all human realities, including the world religions. This thought, with time, has made us understand that interreligious dialogue is not the project or passion of persons, nor of groups of persons, but a direct concern of God himself. Our part to play must be to pray, suffer, offer our sufferings, work and live for it. In this way, we are constantly prepared and do not run into the risk of taking inter-religious dialogue as another activity and get accused of this.

STEPHEN KIN-SANG LO

---

# **INCULTURATION IN ASIA:**

## **on Second Gear going on Third**

The nature of this seminar guides my choice of approach for this paper on inculturation. This is a congress of rectors of Asian seminaries. We have, therefore, a gathering of persons holding an important position of authority. While many of you are professional theologians in your own right, it is not by virtue of this expertise that you are present at this congress. You are participants, rather, by virtue of your office as decision-makers over many significant aspects of the lives of young men who will be the future priests of Asia. Whatever insights theology might contribute, those insights will remain largely without issue if they are not injected into the formation process through the practical decisions of those who can influence orientations and lifestyle. In your hands, therefore, is the power to encourage or to frustrate initiatives for change or renewal. Theologians can help to show the way. It belongs, however, to rectors to lead in actually walking it.

### **OLD THEMES FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE**

The topics which have been lined up for presentation at this Congress have not, I believe, been chosen from a purely academic interest. They represent, in fact, specific challenges not only to theological reflection but also to formation policies. This may not be immediately evident from a simple enumeration of the themes: spirituality, mission, justice, dialogue,

inculturation, communications. But if we placed before our minds a formation program which did the very opposite of the demands implicit in these themes, their practical import might emerge more clearly. Imagine, for example, a formation process which recognized only the importance of academic achievement but not of spiritual maturity. Or think of formation which emphasized personal development at the expense of missionary effectivity. Develop an understanding of salvation without the element of justice or liberation. Teach Christian theology in Asia with no effort to address the relationship between the Gospel and the great religious traditions of the Asian peoples. Form Asian seminarians as though they were strangers in their land, alienating them from the ways of their people and their culture and preparing them to preach a Gospel suited to everyone but their destined listeners.

It should be clear, then, that behind the theological themes of this Congress lie very practical agenda. The topics themselves are not new. They have been making the rounds in Asia and in other parts of the world for over a decade now. Conference after conference, seminar after seminar has been set up to analyze and discuss these familiar themes. We might even be at the threshold of what Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to as "the paralysis of analysis." What is new is the explicit relating of the theological topics to the formation process over which *we* have responsibility. "Spirituality," "mission," "justice and liberation," "dialogue with Asian religions," "communications," "inculturation," serve in this Congress of rectors as guideposts to what is seen as a more adequate formation of priests for ministry to the various local Churches of Asia. We have here a check-list, as it were of the desired qualities of formation for ministry in Asia.

Ideally, then, we should be able to presuppose a basic grasp of the concepts we are treating here and a ready openness to the concrete implications they entail. We should now be beyond the stage of needing to be reassured and convinced of the validity and relevance of imperatives like liberation or incul-

turation which even our super-cautious Magisterium has made a regular part of its thinking and vocabulary. If a battle had to be fought to plant these theological-pastoral signposts on the ecclesiological map, that battle has been won. Mainstream Church attitude today has irrevocably aligned itself with liberation and inculturation. We are not asking questions of "what" "why" any longer; we are now asking the question "how."

### THE ANALOGY OF GEAR SHIFTING

With regard to inculturation, the analogy of gear-shifting has been used. On first gear the force of inertia is overcome and the vehicle is set in motion. This is when questions about the very meaning of inculturation are asked and demands made to explain the reasons for considering it important. There usually is a certain tone of challenge, even of anxiety, about the questions since, as Dostoyevsky testifies, "the step that mortals fear most is to utter a new word." But once the dangerous new word has been uttered, one often discovers that it is neither that new nor that dangerous. Inculturation rightly understood has been happening since the beginning of Christianity as each community of faith, as every generation of believers tried to make its own the message of the Gospel and to realize it within its own worldview and lifestyle. Of course, like everything human, each model of inculturation had its share of light and darkness, of wholeness and brokenness.

But one particular model came to enjoy unparalleled prominence and to hold sway in the Church for many centuries to the point that it was, for all intents and purposes, identified with Christianity itself. This was the inculturation of the faith in Western Europe. This model — justly extolled for the grandeur and magnificence of its achievements — has been a powerful factor in the preservation of the integrity of the Christian ethos through many turbulent years of human history. Thanks to it, countless benefits have accrued to the Church in terms of its life and mission. The very success of the Western model has, however, also meant a narrowing of vision with regard to



other possible and needed models of inculturation within the catholicity of the Church. Indeed, if the very word "inculturation" sounds new and dangerous to some, this is due in no small measure to the hegemony of the favored model. The change-resistant character of this hegemony extends not only to the area of ideas and thought-systems, but also to the sphere of emotions and value priorities. We have to do, therefore, not only with the world of conscious reasoning, decisions and choices, but also with the more subterranean bedrock of ideologies, con-naturalities and presuppositions. Often enough, we are not aware that a certain model of inculturation is preventing us from understanding and sympathizing with needed change, because the model has become for us (as the psychologists would put it) ego-syntonic. Our self-definition, in other words, has come to be identified with a particular model of inculturation. It takes a good amount of courage and generosity as well as, of course, grace to rise above this self-captivity.

#### INCULTURATION ON SECOND GEAR

Inculturation on second gear goes beyond the stage of clarification to that of conviction regarding its importance and necessity. The attitude of openness to what is experienced as new and different brings with it the freedom to let reality speak for itself and to ask the questions: "Where is it happening?" "Who is making it happen?" "How is it happening?" The search for an answer to these questions leads, as I tried to show in an earlier paper, to the discovery that inculturation and the preferential option for the poor are intimately connected. The word inculturation usually calls to mind such aspects as language, art, music, community values and *mores*, etc. These surely are important dimensions of inculturation and they deserve careful attention from all who are sincerely interested in building up the local Church. There is danger, however, of restricting, albeit unconsciously, the scope of inculturation to the culture built upon leisure. Inculturation then becomes largely a question of the impact of Christian religion on "high"

culture. When this happens, the Church will have added fuel to the Marxist critique of religion as an alienating form of consciousness. For, then, the culture of work to which the culture of leisure owes its existence will have been denied its rightful place of honor in evangelization. Failing to give human work its essential significance in the identity and development of the person, the Church would thus be engaging in its missionary activity on the basis of a defective anthropology. Moreover, the self-image of the Church as being on the side of the poor would lack concrete, verifiable foundation.

There is, in brief, no authentic way to an inculturated faith save the one followed by God's only-begotten Son who, in the mystery of the Incarnation truly made his own the human condition, identifying himself more specifically with the poor and the suffering. To give witness beyond all doubt to the absolute dignity of all, Jesus unequivocally threw in his lot with the poor. For the leaven of the Gospel to interpenetrate all over and from within the dough of culture, primacy must be given to inculturating the faith in the house of the poor. We shall return to this point in the last section of our paper.

Shifting to second gear avoids possible engine breakdown from remaining too long on first. It also allows the vehicle to negotiate rough terrain or to go uphill at corresponding speed. This would seem to be a good metaphor for the second stage of inculturation as we have tried to describe it. This seems to be where we're at. For the most part we have gone beyond the phase of capturing and refining the notion of inculturation. We have a working definition of it as somehow related to the logic of the Incarnation. We have received it with sufficient openness to allow for initial acceleration of the process. But we cannot shift yet to third gear.

#### OBSTACLES TO INCULTURATION OF SEMINARY FORMATION

It is still an uphill climb as far as the inculturation of seminary formation is concerned because of various factors. First, the terrain itself is difficult. Change never comes easy when

it involves the conversion of worldviews, mindsets, presuppositions, deep-seated attitudes, habits, preferences, and the like — especially since these root phenomena operate for the most part from an unconscious, unexplicitated level of the personality. Any formator who has grappled with and agonized over the practical issues of inculturation would know what subtle resistances exist both in himself and in others, making it difficult for the presence of inculturation to make headway. It is indeed possible for the demands of inculturation to be perceived as a threat to the continued exercise of one's expertise, or to the stability of one's job, or to the international dimension of a broad-minded formation, or to the prudence which must characterize all important decisions, or to the good order that must be the mark of a reputable seminary. To argue against these obstacles is not to bless any and all proposals and initiatives made in the name of inculturation. It may be confidently affirmed, however, that if any side needs extra support, it is the case for inculturation rather than against it which needs favoring, if only to redress the balance from innumerable years of uncontextualized orientations and programs.

In all probability, there will be no quick shifting from second to third gear in the inculturation process. It will be more like an uphill climb for quite a stretch of road yet, if only because we still have a lot of unlearning and a lot of conversion to undergo. At this stage of Asian history, for reasons which lead some to repentance and others to bitterness, most of us formators do not possess as second nature the basic attitudes or aptitudes for inculturation. This is true of both foreign-born and native-born. In terms of language, lifestyle, training, tastes, gut perceptions and reactions, etc., many of us are so different from the majority of the people for whom and among whom we are sent. What is more, we tend to be very defensive about our inadequacies when confronted either by others or by our own self-awareness. All this is not to deny the courage and generosity that some have brought to the task. It is rather to be honest about our limitations so that we may the better prepare the way for those who will live an inculturated

faith and do inculturated theology with more spontaneity and connaturality.

#### OPTION FOR THE POOR AND THE CHURCH OF THE FUTURE

Our role in the process of inculturation may perhaps be described as transitional. We are to prepare the way for the Christianity of the future. We are those who must part ways resolutely with that manner of understanding and living the faith which does not in the spirit of mutual trust and genuine appreciation clasp hands or link arms with the people of the land and their deepest values. We must follow a different road, we have made a good start, but the prosecution of our journey beyond its initial progress may have to wait for more able travelers than we. These will be the men and women who feel more spontaneously and more effortlessly at home with the native ethos and spirit and can, therefore, do a better and more thorough job of integrating faith and culture.

As long as we still have to climb uphill we cannot shift to third gear. Third gear is when the traffic is flowing more freely and the highway stretches open before us, allowing for greater acceleration. As far as Asian Christianity is concerned, most of us formators bear a strong resemblance to Peter at Jaffa who, as it is related in the Acts of the Apostles (11:1-18) found it extremely difficult to accept the reality that the Mosaic law had been superseded. It took that vision of the scandalous mixture of "clean" and "profane" animals to shock him into openness regarding God's designs for the future. Peter's change of heart regarding the Holy Spirit's will for the salvation of the Gentiles was simply but powerfully expressed in his words: "Who was I to stand in God's way?" (11:17).

Assuming that most of us in this Congress can make Peter's words our own, still are we not constrained to say that the prescriptions and methods of inculturation are so numerous and complicated as to daunt even the most generous of spirits?



That may well be the case, but we can be sure that it is man not God who makes the simple complex. When it is the Holy Spirit who inspires toward a mission there is usually a beautiful simplicity about its implementation no matter how many elements and factors need to be taken into consideration. If, as I believe with all my strength, the movement for inculturation is Spirit-inspired, it ought to be possible to integrate its many dimensions into a simple unity. In the present case, the key to integration, if I may be permitted to suggest it, is the preferential option for the poor. One who truly loves the poor of the land will want with all his heart to speak their language, sing their songs, think their thoughts, use their metaphors, value their images, eat their food, experience their insecurities, participate in their struggles, share their hopes and dreams, etc. in a dialogue of life. Is that not also an accurate description of the life of Jesus, God's personal inculturation into our humanity?

Here in the Philippines, a t-shirt is a great medium to advertise almost any happening momentous or inconsequential, almost any aspiration ridiculous or sublime. There have been t-shirts commemorating Ninoy Aquino's death, the EDSA revolution, Pope John Paul II's visit, the Marian Year, the National Eucharistic Congress, obscure pastoral conferences, unremarkable group dynamics seminars, and so on endlessly. I happened just recently to see a t-shirt urging land reform. The printed words read: "Land reform starts HERE." The word HERE stood right over a big red heart stamped on the left side of the shirt, obviously pointing to the wearer's heart. It was, I thought, a clever way of insisting that land reform can only begin in the hearts of men and women sensitive to the human dignity of the landless poor. It occurred to me that we could very well use the same advertisement for our topic: "Inculturation starts HERE." And for all we know it also, in a certain sense, continues and ends HERE.

ANTONIO B. LAMBINO, S.J.  
Loyola School of Theology

---

## The Seminary Classroom: THE UNTAPPED COMPONENT

Today, is a Saturday and this schedule coincides with my regular teaching hours of two hours a week. Inevitably, I always feel a pang of guilt when, for one reason or another, I miss my classes. Somehow, my formation have succeeded in instilling in us a kind of regularity in class which bordered on being sacral.

The classroom in the seminary is a sacramental, I guess. It is so essential to the totality of the seminary formation program, that its crucial role in the whole set of inputs can never be overemphasized. Within its physical walls constitute the crucible within which learning prepares and concocts the minds and hearts of the priests candidates. As we count with our fingers, the candidate spends a substantial amount of time in his classroom and if we include in our count the number of hours he spends for personal studies, then, we have enough reason to focus our *analyses* on the various *inputs* which enter the matrix of this particular component.

I am a professor of philosophy and I will speak thus. It is perhaps a safe conviction to assert that the philosophical studies constitute the link between whatever studies the candidate brings along with his decision to pursue a priest's career, and the theological studies. The *kind* of philosophy to be taught

and the number of years with which this study will have to be pursued is not an *immediate* concern of our discussion. It is our position that *philosophical studies bear a vital role in the continuum of mutually interdependent components in his academic life, and the other elements which are orchestrated to render a total priestly formation.*

By implication, philosophy assumes a *formative* role and function. It is altogether different from the philosophy which lay people take to pursue careers like law or business. It is not simply an over-the-counter affair where philosophical attempts are displayed in an encyclopedia and the learner is *introduced* to them. While there are other non-ecclesial factors which influence a curriculum structure, vis-a-vis, with government regulations, the choice of the *content* invariably follows the common sense objective of what the learner is expected *to be* and what he is expected *to do*, at the end of the program. This is the reference point, pure and simple. *Reason*, thus, is prepared to understand theology. This was once characterized as *behaving philosophy* towards a *doing theology*. While this so-called "handmaid's role" has experienced severe criticism in the past and even to the present times, we must reaffirm over and over again that we are training the learner in the *context* of a theological concern and he is expected to pursue indigenous pastoral work.

Outstanding among the inputs in the seminary classroom is the quality of the professor who stands before the candidates for the priesthood. When lay professors' services are engaged, discernment in the choice, too, comes to the fore. They can play a very effective role in reinforcing a vocation.

The *modeling role* of the mentor to the learner is perhaps more intensely critical in the seminary. It is not enough to consider the credentials and the experience of the teacher to whom you are entrusting your seminarians to be taught. The terms *instruction* or *teaching* appears wanting in what we really mean here. In the context of *formation*, the *symbiotic process*

which occurs between a mentor-student relationship demands a threshold which we cannot afford to belittle. As an essential component of the total formation program, the mentors are therefore, also expected to teach with their *life*, to form-in, so to say. The science of the mentor is never enough.

How about the clerics in the teaching staff who 'survive' in their *presence* on account of obedience? It is a non-choice situation wherein the major superior or the bishop literally *forces* a priest to teach because they happen to be few in number and choices have long been predestined.

Various formulae have been explored among which are regionalization of centre of studies, consortia, travelling staff, etc.

Seminary teaching to be honestly formative and beyond the literal "minimum requirements to be accomplished" level, obviously demands a different set of "genes" which are expected to have transcended the more attractive *mobility* of the go-go life in the field and the excitement of the no-schedule. Live-in or live-out, the effective seminary professor is one whose schedule parallels the educands. The reason is obvious. The reflective nature of profound and depth sciences we teach only breeds a discipline in the academic life if a prior discipline in lifestyle exists. Learning, if genuine, is built on a degree of regularity, consistency and order where other components militate for such climate of concentration in a happy chemistry of mosaical interdependence. The learner imbibes other *intangibles* from the mentor perhaps more potentially important for the future of his priesthood than the science assigned to be learned.

It is no small wonder then to note that the kind of seminary professor you have now is a fruit of the professor he had before. The temptation of the current professors to teach *what* and *how*, similar to their own professors in the past is very strong. Consciously or unconsciously, the modeling influence had occurred and have taken place. It is a fact of experience



that the good seminary professor is one who has adjusted to the asceticism with which the academe mixes well and has come to love this particular apostolate. An enthusiastic teaching gives way to an enthusiastic learning and happily, everything else follows, vis-a-vis, resourcefulness, research, relevance, goal-orientation, creativity, etc. The daily intense preparation called for and the subsequent on-going programs for faculty development are more easily welcome.

With few exceptions perhaps, the priest professors assigned to the seminary lack the formal training, experience and guidance in the methods of teaching. An intelligent learner does not necessarily equate with an effective teacher. Quite so often, the archaic lecture method is almost always employed and the literal meaning of *lectures* as *reading* is taken in its linear implementation not realizing, that if this is so, there will be no difference between reading in the classroom and private reading.

The same happens with regards to the academic evaluation. The *recall* type of questions is used expecting a what-was-said to a what-you-should-write flow mechanism. This system tempts the learner to be dishonest. What about the situation wherein the same questions are raised in a regular or alternate basis?

If creativity is expected of us in every facet of whatever apostolate we are in, the same element is required of seminary professors. Obviously, there has got to be inputs in terms of formal training in methods of teaching and testing.

Effective teaching is teaching for thinking. The content to be taught is dissected into its behavioral objectives, vis-a-vis, their cognitive, affective and psychomotor components; assignments and other suggested learning experiences; sources, and time-frames. Given the job descriptions which the priest is expected to implement in a targetted time and place (mission), the choice of teaching method enhances the content to be taught.

Educational psychologists have raised some indicators or syndromes which are associated with a habitual *disregard* for thinking processes. These are:

1. Impulsiveness
2. Overdependence upon the teacher
3. Dogmatic, assertive behavior
4. Inflexibility
5. Rote memory questions
6. One-way traffic lecture approach

If classroom teaching in particular and education in general, are meant to effect a behavioral *change* in the educand, then, seminary teaching must be well-planned to insure its *formative* intent.

Learning is an act of the learner, not of the mentor. Or better said, it is the act by which the mentor learns from the learner and vice versa. And the best trophy a mentor can be awarded with is a learner who later on, supercedes the mentor. Hence, the seminary professor is expected to create a climate which breeds thinking, guided and monitored by him with the end result that the seminarian *learns how to learn*. I have witnessed many a vocation waver because they did not find the *challenge* in the seminary most especially in their classes. The absence of what we would call *academic pressure* has given these candidates, time for other interests which no seminary rector will perhaps ever encourage.

A class dialogue in the tradition of the Socratic method has been found one of the more effective ways. Questions can graduate from the very simple recall to dilemma and prognostic types. Some courses may have inherent non-negotiable axioms such as the *preambulae fidei* but certainly, there is a better way to present these to the learner than simply forcing them down on your class in tablets of stone. A processive and analytic manner ends up in a different recall and registration.

One big advantage of the dialogue method is its transcendental effect. Given a 45-minute class period, the interest goes beyond the physical time and place. The learner gets engrossed in the classroom activity and chances are, he starts to be resourceful with his time and readings. Maturity begins to creep in. Poincare calls this the conscious-unconscious cycle.

Having gone through a period of teaching for thinking method, vis-a-vis, comparing, summarizing, classifying, criticizing, looking for assumptions, etc., the mentor may proceed to a higher phase. This is what is called inferential or implicative thinking which I operationally describe as the learners ability to draw interpretations from a series of given facts. The learners are however assiduously guided in this approach, for this may also mean "reading between the lines." Notice that this phase involves applied logic to philosophical and theological matters.

The final phase which I wish to suggest is commonly called the process of imagining. This involves three phases, namely — that of *seeing*, *imagining* and *designing*. I have a happy recollection of a professor in Church History who was quite gifted in the case of colorful language which made the historical events quite much alive. Humor, which he too had, and which he used effectively in character physiognomies, combined to make the class ever alive and lessons better learned. Comic description is a creative way of presenting concepts in easily digestible, nay, very pleasant forms. I prefer the term model paradigm thinking. *Imagining* is the process of conjuring non-traditional forms, of being able to combine previously unrelated structures so that a new emergent whole is constituted. The new emergent product is the model or paradigm. This is the result of what is more than a *cognitive* process.

It is a *coagitare*, to shake together. The cross-fertilization between the mentor-learner relationship and the learner-

learner relationship wind up in self-fertilization which are the seeds of a decision-making activity. This is called the collision-fusion-juxtaposition equation of Kloestler.

The experience for the learner is cathartic. After some time, catharsis leads to more positive effects. The learner becomes more independent, open, trusting, confident, and moves around with a better self-concept. He becomes more teachable because he is treated as such.

My dear rectors, I have expounded to you today, another way of handling our classes in the seminary. The success of such approach in teaching is largely dependent on the seminary professor. I wish to reiterate the importance of the selection and training process or more preferably, a long range program geared towards the training of seminary mentors. This may appear to be an ideal but I am of the opinion that a *serious* and *planned* training program will mean a better quality of harvest even if the laborers are few.

NORBERTO M. CASTILLO, O.P.  
*University of Santo Tomas*



---

## SOME GUIDELINES ON FORMATION IN MAJOR SEMINARIES

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, from October 14-17, 1986, held its XII Plenary Assembly on "Formation in seminaries, in the missions and for the missions, twenty years after the conclusion of Vatican Council II, under the disciplinary, spiritual and cultural aspects."

The Congregation wishes to express its sincere gratitude to their Excellencies the Nuncios, to the Episcopal Conferences, to the individual bishops of the various countries, for their generous contributions to the preparation of this meeting which is so important for the future of the Church and of mission. A special word of gratitude is due also to the rectors and their collaborators for their precious service in the formation of future priests, as well as for having replied almost in their entirety (more than 120 out of 149) to the questionnaire forwarded. The reports prepared on the bases of this information and the suggestions, have simulated and nourished the reflection of the members of the Plenary.

In the Churches dependent on Propaganda, the number of seminarians and seminaries has increased very rapidly in the last years. Today there are more than fourteen thousand major seminarians. These fruits of grace and of a concerted vocational promotion give promise of much hope for the whole Church. But numbers do not suffice; there is need also, and above all, of quality. As the Holy Father mentioned in his discourse to the members of the Plenary, the Church has need of well prepared priests, men of God, unconditionally consecrated to the

service of the Gospel, "prophets of Christian hope and constructors of the Church founded on Peter."<sup>1</sup>

The attention of the Plenary was concentrated on some of the most urgent aspects of common interest regarding the quality of formation in the major seminaries, and certain conclusions were proposed. On the basis of this, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, besides drawing attention to various documents of the Holy See, presented the Episcopal conferences and the bishops, in a spirit of collaboration, with the following *working directives* so that they, together with other related documents of the Holy See, might be put into effect, in collaboration with the superiors of the seminaries.

#### 1. SPECIAL CARE OF THE BISHOPS TOWARDS THE SEMINARIES

The responsibility of the bishops over the formation of future priests<sup>2</sup> assumes, today, a particular urgency in this moment of grace which the young Churches are now experiencing in regard to vocations. In consequence: the Congregation asks the bishops *to take special care of the seminaries*, above all for what concerns the following aspects, which appear to be the most urgent:

- guaranteeing adequate formators in regard to quality and number;
- sustaining closely the work of the formators and way of integral growth of the seminarians;
- watching over with fatherly authority fidelity to the doctrine of the faith and to the Magisterium of content which is being transmitted.

The means of actuating this responsibility on the part of the bishops can vary according to different experiences. One

<sup>1</sup> *Discourse of John Paul II*, 17 October 1986.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. CIC c. 259; *Optatam Totius*, 1.

should be considered irreplaceable: *periodic visits* to the seminaries.<sup>3</sup> These visits have the positive aim of accompanying and sustaining the formators and students by suggesting improvements, of verifying closely and of being vigilant over the quality and fidelity of the formation. It is important that the visits be made by the bishop. When a seminary is interdiocesan a willing and efficacious collaboration on the part of the competent bishops in regard to the seminary is absolutely necessary; moreover, an episcopal commission or a bishop is to be named, who will have the responsibility, in the name of the others, to follow the life and activity of the seminary and carry out the visits. When necessary, priests who are experts and particularly well prepared may be named as visitors who will carry out their task on behalf of the bishops. The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples encourages these periodic visits which express the thoughtful and careful concern of the pastors.

In this same spirit, either by invitation or spontaneously, Propaganda will continue its own apostolic visits to the seminaries, having consulted the Episcopal conferences and bishops concerned.

Apart from this privileged and regular means, visits on the part of the bishops to the seminarians are to be recommended, especially those from their own dioceses, without, however, interfering with the ordinary competence of the superiors of the seminary.

As the Holy Father said: "The concern and the solicitude that the pastor of a diocese lavishes on the seminary can never be excessive."

## 2. IMPORTANCE OF AN UPDATED RATIO FORMATIONIS

In each country there is to be a *Ratio Formationis* drawn up in accord with the general norms of the Church and the directives of the Magisterium, and approved by the Congrega-

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. CIC c. 259, § 2.

tion for the Evangelization of Peoples.<sup>4</sup> Since, however, the *Ratio* in some countries is still in the process of being re-adapted, the Episcopal conferences concerned are asked to provide for the work so that it can be adequately brought to completion.

Certainly no one is unaware of the importance of a healthy legislation for the clarity and unity of formative directives. The *Ratio*, in fact, has for its aim the task of defining and making concrete the orientations and general norms of the different cultural areas for what concerns the principal dimensions of formation, in the light of the concrete directives of the Congregation for Catholic Education.<sup>5</sup>

For the purpose of preciseness, two aspects are again to be recalled: that the *Ratio studiorum* is part of the *Ratio Formationis* and that the charter of each seminary is to be renewed in conformity with the national *Ratio*, the norms of which are to be observed by all the seminaries of the country, whether diocesan or inter-diocesan.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. CHOICE AND TRAINING OF FORMATORS

For a better quality of training in the seminaries, attention must necessarily be paid firstly to the formators.<sup>7</sup> The Congregation, therefore, proposes to the bishops, for the near future, a twofold *commitment* to be considered as *top priority*: first of all, that they choose formators in sufficient number from among the priests best suited for such a demanding ministry,<sup>8</sup> convinced that what counts most in the minds of the students is the priestly authenticity of their formators; and, moreover, that they make every possible effort to guarantee them a good preparation on the spiritual, pedagogical and cultural

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. CIC c. 242 § 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, 19 March 1985, 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. CIC c. 242, § 2; RF 2.

<sup>7</sup> Cfr. OT 5.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. OT 5; RF 30, 31.



levels and, subsequently, to encourage them to maintain a proper and adequate on-going formation.

Obviously it is a question here of formators in the real sense, such as the rector, the vice-rector, the spiritual director, the assistants or moderators, although the criteria offered apply to the choice and formation of all the educators, such as the professors, administrators and others.

Treating of a matter closely linked to the difficulty of personnel, certain precise considerations are also necessary:

*Regarding the choice:*

— The group of formators is to be complete for what concerns its personnel, and proportioned to the number of students, so as to provide for a correct performance of the various functions and to ensure a thorough knowledge of each student and a more personalized formation.<sup>9</sup>

— Unity of spirit and action on the part of the formators which the rector is to be ensured, since he is the one who is responsible, in the name of the bishop, for the seminary, and since final decisions rest with him.<sup>10</sup>

— To promote the spirituality proper to the diocesan priest, it is fitting that the formators be chosen from among the diocesan clergy. This criterion is to be considered preferential, not exclusive. The concrete reality of the missions will suggest how to evaluate this criterion, and at times to give preference in the formation to the contribution of religious priests and also of foreign priests, inserting some of them in the formation team, or entrusting the seminary itself to the care of a well-prepared institute.

<sup>9</sup> Cfr. CIC c. 239, § 1; RF 21, 27.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr. OT 5; CIC c. 260; RF 29.

*Regarding the preparation and permanent formation of the formators:*

— It would be a grave error to engage a priest immediately in the formation of seminarians, without offering him an appropriate preparation. Therefore the Episcopal conferences and bishops, when programming the assignments of their priests, are to give precedence to the preparation of some of them in view of formation in the seminaries.

— Especially on inter-diocesan and national levels, the initiatives of initial and permanent formation are to be fostered for the benefit of seminary formators. The pastors of Churches should themselves organize or send priests to institutes or appropriate courses, in their own country or abroad.

— The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is ready to support and, if need be, to organize in Rome or in other places, formation programmes of short or long duration for priests formators.

#### 4. SELECTION OF CANDIDATES AND VOCATIONAL DISCERNMENT

Vocational promoters and those who admit candidates should thoroughly examine, with *rigorous attention*, their vocational motivations, with particular reference to the sincerity of their intention to follow Christ, accompanied by a good human equilibrium and Christian and apostolic maturity, as well as to possible family interference, and a desire, not always explicit, of social advancement. Likewise, formators must maintain a rigorous attention to vocational discernment during the entire formative span.

This task is particularly timely, above all because of the increase in aspirants and seminarians in the very young Churches, so as to prevent the quality of formation being compromised by subjects who are not well-disposed.

With a view to rendering this directive workable, the following means are being proposed:

— Besides the general criteria of acceptance established by the Church,<sup>11</sup> the national *Ratio* is to determine more detailed norms, applying them to the socio-ecclesial situation in each country.

— To judge the suitability of a young man, one should not be bound merely by scholastic achievements, which, however, are nonetheless important.

— The objective sources of information in regard to a candidate are not to be neglected, such as the priests of the parish from which he comes, the Christian community where he has lived, and especially the families.

— Let them use, as propitious occasions of vocational discernment for seminarians, the rite of admission for candidates<sup>12</sup> and the preparation for the Ministries and Sacred Orders.

## 5. SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE OF THE "PROPAEDEUTIC PERIOD"

Taking into account the positive experience of various Churches, the *highlighting* or *institution* of an appropriate period of time for a more intense spiritual formation, as distinct from the philosophy course, is to be warmly encouraged. This can be regarded as a prolonged time of vocational discernment, of maturation in the spiritual and community life, and even of a possible period for making up a certain amount of cultural preparation in view of philosophy and theology.

The practical organization of the Propaedeutic Period, is left for the Episcopal conferences and the bishops concerned to decide, who appropriately will follow the indications given by the Congregation for Catholic Education in this matter.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. OT 6; CIC c. 241; RF 39; cfr. also Circular Letter of the S.C. for Catholic Education n. 575/83, October 9, 1986.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. CIC c. 1034, §1.

<sup>13</sup> S.C. for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter concerning Some of the More Urgent Aspects of Spiritual Formation in Seminaries*, 6 January 1980.

## 6. SALIENT POINTS IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION

By means of spiritual formation priests are prepared to become true men of God, witnesses of the supernatural, who follow with joy and fervour the call of Jesus Christ to be with him (*Mk.* 3,13-15), and in communion with Mary, Mother of the Church (*Acts* 1,14) at the service of the brethren. To respond to this ideal, there is need for drawing the attention of the formators to a few salient points, which the Propaganda intends to highlight: instruction in *prayer*, not only in its community and specifically liturgical expressions, but also in its personal forms and dimensions;<sup>14</sup> clear and firm instruction in *perfect chastity in celibacy*, as an evangelical value;<sup>15</sup> the acquisition of a *diocesan spirituality* and of a *universal and missionary spirit* proper to ministers of the altar; the use and value to be on *spiritual direction*.

These ideal objectives necessitate a concrete pedagogical orientation:

— Regarding *prayer*, seminarians are to be required to regularly participate in community practices, wisely distributed throughout the day, without conceding too many exceptions; these are to be accompanied by moments of individual prayer so as to enrich their interior life. In this connection, a climate of silence in the seminary and interior recollection should be fostered.

— Particular attention is to be given to the *Eucharist*, the culmination and fount of ecclesial life and therefore also of the spirituality of the future priest. The Eucharist is to find its central position in devotions of the community, in its daily programme and in personal prayer.<sup>16</sup>

— A special reference, at this moment in time should be given to the *Sacrament of Penance*. Each seminary is to have

<sup>14</sup> CIC c. 246; RF 52, 53, 54; S.C. for Catholic Education, *Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries*; 3 June 1979.

<sup>15</sup> OT 10; CIC c. 247; RF 48; S.C. for Catholic Education, *A Guide to Formation in Priestly Celibacy*, 11 April 1974.

<sup>16</sup> CIC c. 246, §1.



ordinary confessors, chosen with care and sufficiently numerous, and the students are to be given full liberty to choose their confessor inside or outside the seminary.<sup>17</sup> The seminarians should be encouraged to approach this Sacrament with frequency and regularity, so as to experience in their lives the inexhaustible mercy of God (*Eph.* 2, 4), of which they themselves will in the future be the dispensers to their brethren. At important times in the life of the seminary, it would be good to make use of communal penance celebrations.

— With regard to education and formation to *perfect chastity in celibacy*, as a first step, insistence should be placed on the proper and unique value of the evangelical proposal for the Kingdom, which requires an attitude of Faith and a response of love (*Mt.* 19, 11-12; *1 Cor.* 7, 7-8), and which is to be developed in a spirit of pastoral charity and sacrifice (*Mt.* 19, 29; *1 Cor.* 8, 19, 22ff.). It is from this higher and superior gospel dimension or vision that the young are to be helped in attaining maturity in the face of those cultural expressions of their nation which highlight marriage and paternity as primary values, in such a way as to become free and capable of responding with generosity to the total call of the Lord.

— Concerning *diocesan spirituality*, the seminarians are to be imbued with a sense of belonging to the diocese, with a sense of the unity of the presbyterium around the bishop, and therefore of obedience to him.<sup>18</sup> This sense of the local Church must necessarily be completed with that of the universal Church, by means of a missionary spirit which is realized in a genuine availability for the work of evangelization of Non-Christians and in a special attachment and obedience to the Supreme Pontiff, the universal Pastor.<sup>19</sup>

— In each seminary there is to be at least one *spiritual director* nominated full time for the animation of community activities regarding the spiritual life, in dependence on the

<sup>17</sup> CIC c. 240, §1.

<sup>18</sup> *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7, 8; CIC c. 255, §2; RF 49, 56.

<sup>19</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 22-23; CIC c. 245, § 2; c. 273.

rector, and for the direction of consciences. Since the present norm of the Church allows the seminarians to freely turn to other priests entrusted by the bishop,<sup>20</sup> it becomes important to maintain a unity of direction in spiritual formation. This unity is guaranteed by the spiritual director nominated for the seminary, with whom the other priests who are engaged in the task of directing the consciences of the alumni must be in complete harmony. It is the duty of the formators to encourage the students to value this indispensable means to spiritual maturity, also in view of its necessity for the whole of life.

#### 7. DETERMINING ASPECTS IN INTELLECTUAL FORMATION

The prophetic task of the priest, as proclaimer of the Word of God, by mandate of, and in the name of Christ (*Mt.* 28, 19-20; *Mk.* 16, 15) also requires an appropriate intellectual formation. In the vast field of this formation, certain aspects, considered to be decisive, are to be specified, which need to be highlighted and which are entrusted to the attentive care of the bishops: *the adequacy of the teaching body, the order to be maintained in the method of teaching and study, the unity of the intellectual content and its fidelity to the Magisterium* of the Church.

In order to put this rather extensive directive into effect, some practical guidelines need to be clearly specified:

— The number of professors should be proportionate to that of the students, so as to avoid classes that are too numerous and depersonalized. Such teachers are to be prepared preferably in ecclesiastical university centres. Even when the professors, by necessity, are residing outside the seminary, they are to form an homogenous and united body, under the responsibility of the rector and prefect of studies. As formators in the full sense of the word, the professors of the sacred sciences are also to be priests.<sup>21</sup> This criterium, in the missions,

<sup>20</sup> OT 5, 8; CIC c. 239, §2.

<sup>21</sup> CIC c. 253; RF 30, 33.

may allow of some exceptions, when laymen of faith, especially if they are members of the consecrated life, are more reliable in the quality of their teaching, or when there are no priests prepared for a certain discipline.

— A distinction must be made between the method of teaching and study for what concerns philosophy and for what concerns theology. The purpose of philosophy is to prepare for theological studies by means of a rational method, which may often differ (a pluralism of method) according to cultures. Systematic theology, on the other hand, is founded on the contents of revelation that has been received, therefore not as a working hypothesis, but as a certainty of faith, which theology is to deepen, explain and transmit in an appropriate manner.<sup>22</sup>

— Notwithstanding the need for respecting the various cultures, it should be recalled that not every philosophy, not every metaphysics is compatible with revelation and with theology. All legitimate pluralism supposes and requires the acceptance of a fundamental nucleus of truths connected with revelation, and elaborated within a philosophical heritage which is perennially valid<sup>23</sup> and which is to be the basis of the teaching of philosophy.

— An organic unity is to be given to the exposition of the content of theology, avoiding fragmentation and dispersion, which can be seen today in certain programmes of teaching. The function of the prefect of studies is particularly important at the time of organizing the discipline around the central themes in such a way that the study is concentrated on the main subjects.<sup>24</sup>

— The seminarians, however, are to be formed in the knowledge and love of revealed truth, such as it has been interpreted

<sup>22</sup> RF 60.

<sup>23</sup> OT 15; S.C. for Catholic Education, *The Teaching of Philosophy in Seminaries*, 20 January 1972, III, 2.

<sup>24</sup> OT 14. 15; CIC c. 254, § 1; RF 63, 77, 87, 90; S.C. for Catholic Education, *Theological Formation of Future Priests*, 22 Feb. '76, 44-47; 63-71.

in tradition and is taught by the Church today. As has already been said, it is the competence of the Bishops to verify that the teaching of the sacred sciences remains faithful to the Magisterium of the Church, and to intervene should the hypotheses or ideologies proposed be contrary to this. In this context the documents of the Holy See will be of great assistance and are to be the object of study both by the professors and students.

— Above all, with regard to doctrinal activity, the use of inculturation requires time, prudent discernment and methodical work, promoted with creativity and, at the same time, with fidelity to revealed doctrine. It is a question of living the mystery of the incarnation of the faith in diverse cultures, integrating all the positive values and promoting an exchange between the Church and cultures, always maintaining and preserving compatibility with revealed data and communion with the universal Church.<sup>25</sup>

— In this context, the Congregation will strive to resolve two practical problems, with the precise intent of helping the professors and seminarians, and of raising the level of study: the preparation and diffusion of textbooks, counting on the collaboration of ecclesiastical higher institutes and specialists; and development of the programme of affiliating philosophical and theological seminaries to the Pontifical Urban University.

#### 8. FORMATION TO A RESPONSIBLE AND CONSISTENT DISCIPLINE

The formators are to use the most suitable pedagogical means for helping the seminarians to acquire a habit of *responsible and consistent discipline*.<sup>26</sup> They are not to be discouraged in the face of possible contrasts and incongruences, and they are to maintain their faith in the value of discipline, regarded as mastery over self, order in life, harmony and unity between duties and actions, and in the need for Christian and priestly

<sup>25</sup> *Ad Gentes* 11, 16, 22; *Gaudium et Spes* 44; *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 62 ff; *Familiaris Consortio* 10; *Slavorum Apostoli* 22.

<sup>26</sup> OT 11, CIC c. 243; RF 49.



asceticism. Discipline, in fact, is indispensable for the good development of the life of the seminary and, above all, for the acquisition of that human and spiritual maturity which is proper to the priesthood.

The following are a few pedagogical orientations to be given emphasis as means of fostering disciplinary formation in view of the priesthood:

— The seminary, in its complex of structures and organizations, is to be an ordered environment which facilitates the ordered comportment of each one.

— The formators are not to be content with the mere external regularity of the community and of persons; rather they should aim at interior maturity and a formation to an obedience based on the Gospel. For this purpose, it will be useful to remain close to each student, assisting him along the way of this interiorization and giving motivation to his various commitments.

— With wisdom and firmness the formators should know how to use those means shown by experience to be valid for training in discipline and obedience, such as: the positive presentation of the seminary rule in such a way that the students can discover its real significance; the punctual and constant observance of the time-table, not only as an expression of group life, but also as a result of their conviction; the request for necessary permissions, which assist in establishing a certain communion with those in charge and corrects the innate desire for independence; the entrusting of tasks to them and examining the outcome of these with those concerned; the programming and community revision of those tasks entrusted to groups, by means of which each one learns to confront himself and to collaborate in truth and charity.

## 9. MATURE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FAMILY

The seminarians require special help in order to become *fully mature in their relationship* with their family, in as far

as there appear to be very diversified situations in the capacity of the families to understand the meaning of the commitments of the priestly life. The formators, and above all the rector, are to find ways of establishing contacts with the families of the seminarians, so as to involve them, as far as possible, in the vocation of their sons.

From an educative point of view, this ought to be maintained today on a twofold level: first of all, that of highlighting the help which the family can offer to him as a seminarian, and later on also to him as a priest, since that is the natural point of reference for any son; and secondly, that of training the students to acquire a right autonomy from their own families, both for achieving that separation which vocation implies (*Mt.* 19, 28ff), and for avoiding both within the seminary and later on, being faced with requests not comformable with their pastoral duties. Advantage is to be taken of the holiday periods to train them in relationships with their families and to concretely verify the maturity of each one.

#### 10. POVERTY AND USE OF GOODS

Sent to bring the joyful news to the poor, the priest proclaims with his life the beatitude of poverty (*Lk.* 6, 20), in imitation of Jesus Christ, who from being rich became poor for the sake of men (*2 Cor.* 8, 9; *Phil.* 2, 6-8). *Poverty of spirit and real poverty* form part of the identity of the priest.

To attain this, the formators should be able to present poverty as an ideal of life, to be believed in with all one's heart and to be realized in concrete situations. The seminarians should learn to limit their needs, to content with what is necessary, know how to distribute what is superfluous, and to share in the lot of the poor to whom they are sent.

It is likewise important to train the seminarians to use the goods which are at their disposal with discretion, in a spirit of fraternity and with respect for their finalities. The forma-

tors are also to be attentive to this aspect of their students' personalities and they should not spare efforts to make them grow in the spirit of rectitude and detachment.<sup>27</sup> It would be useful to initiate them into the realization that the use of the goods of the Church must be honest and disinterested, since one day they will be their custodians and administrators responsible to God, but not their owners.

## 11. PROGRAMMED PASTORAL FORMATION

Pastoral formation, which is an integral part of the preparation for the priesthood, comprises a specific responsibility on the part of the formators and is to be effected in communion with the bishops and pastoral workers of the various Churches. It is required, therefore, that the *pastoral dimension in the seminaries* be expressed, as the Church desires, on both the level of the *spirit* and of *practical undertakings*.<sup>28</sup>

Bearing this objective in mind, four points of a working nature are to be highlighted:

— It is the duty of the formators to programme, follow up and review the pastoral activities of the seminarians, helping them to penetrate the significance of supernatural salvation and ecclesial charity. This also is in agreement with the verification of attitudes and dispositions required for the vocation of a pastor. Pastoral formation cannot be entirely asked of a person outside the seminary.

— The holidays are a particularly favourable time for pastoral formation as an exercise. The formators are to arrange with the bishops, and above all with the parish priests, for the fostering and ordering of the pastoral experiences of the seminarians, not failing to ask them for a report.

<sup>27</sup> OT 9; RF 50.

<sup>28</sup> OT 19-21; CIC cc. 255, 256, 258; RF 58, 94, 97, 99.

— The pastoral year, where it exists, is to be encouraged as a means of the highest order for the growth in maturity of future priests.

— The pastoral experiences of the students are to be harmoniously coordinated with the spiritual life and studies of the students so that no harm might result to them because of these experiences, but rather a growth in their spiritual and intellectual formation.

*Conclusion* — These working directives are to be entrusted to the attention of the Episcopal conferences and each bishop. As the primary directors of the quality of the formation of future priests, it is up to them to insure their implementation with the generous collaboration of the formators of the seminaries.

Under the guidance of the Supreme Pontiff and collaboration with the Congregation for Catholic Education, Propaganda Fide intends to sustain with every possible means this incomparable work, in conformity with its proper mission. Thus, with commitment, hope and joy, the Propaganda and the bishops will bear together the solicitude of the formation of priests, of which the Church has need for the service of the local communities and for the evangelization of the entire world.

*Rome, from the Offices of Propaganda Fide  
April 25, 1987, the Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist*

† JOSEF Card. TOMKO  
Pref.

† JOSE T. SANCHEZ  
Sec.



---

## ABOUT THREE LOVES

You have asked me to do a difficult job: to speak at the end of your convention. For a week now your minds and (I hope) your hearts have been awakened, excited and lifted up by many striking ideas, practical suggestions, sentiments inspiring and confirmative of your own experiences.

But it is some consolation that you have asked me to give this last address in the guise of a homily. I will not have to compete with the learned reflections of your lecturers. I can speak simply. Let me say, then, a few words about *three loves* which I believe we should make sure our seminarians hold like treasures in their hearts before they leave the seminary halls as priests. After all, no matter how important the thought and learning our new priests take away from our seminaries (and I do not want to minimize their value, by any means) . . . yet the loves they bring away with them are far more significant, of far greater weight and consequence in their lives. Did not Saint Jerome already say: "Where is the very core of a man? Plato says it is in his brain. But Jesus says it is in the heart." You professors especially tend to forget that, I am afraid.

## I. THE CROSS

The *first* of these loves is a love of the cross. One of the marks of seminary life which has, only too often, been lost in the rush of "new things" after Vatican II has been any emphasis or even mention of the cross in the seminarians' lives, in the priests' lives. Maybe we have made our own lifestyles too conformed to the world in which we live: the world of "having" and of consumerism, where we do not deny ourselves anything that is "reasonable" or "moderate"; the world of comfort and convenience, of efficiency and "rewards in this world." We have forgotten the words our Blessed Lady said to Bernadette, "I promise you happiness, but not in this world." And so our young priests in the poorer countries among us find it hard to go back to the hardship of the life of a priest in a poor mountain village or some rural community of those who have so little in life. They need the pleasant surroundings of a "good" urban parish, with all that a modern city places at their doorstep. Some will take the first opportunity offered to move to Los Angeles or Toronto or London. It is asking too much that they will spend their days among the people who literally exist from hand-to-mouth... sharing the lives of the majority of our poor people in Asia. The "Theology of Liberation" and the "preferential love or option for the poor" is wonderful stuff for the rhetoric of classrooms and pulpits; but that is as far as it can go. It has little footing in seminary life itself.

No, I will not dwell on this "love" more fully now. Maybe I myself feel uncomfortable, talking about it. Maybe it does not apply to your seminaries, and I must even apologize for speaking about this "loss of love for the cross" in our lives. But just possibly it does apply; just possibly it may raise a question, awaken an uneasiness, trouble the hearts of some of us a little bit. If so, perhaps it served a point to speak of it.

## II. LOVING THE CHURCH

Secondly, let me say something of "loving the church." The Holy Father who made a bishop of the priest Jaime Sin, and

later even a cardinal, spoke so very often of "loving the Church." You may have read the truly moving words he wrote down about his own love for the Church not long before his death, which I hope to share with you in a moment. Someone has written that in our days "the ecclesiology of triumphalism" has been succeeded by an "ecclesiology of disdain." It is the "in" thing to "talk down" the Church among some lay people and priests; sometimes even among some Sisters (*by no means* many of them).

It is so easy to be self-righteous about the sins and failings of the Church, its "violations of human rights," its being "so far behind modern times." No, I do *not* say we should not criticize the Church and churchmen when such criticism is necessary or useful and can bring about reform and renewal. But there is criticism and criticism, and above all there is the "heart and spirit" which lie behind the criticism. Is there in it the presence of love? Does it come from the heart, nourished *not* by harsh self-righteousness, but by a deep — even passionate — love for the Church, the bride of Christ, *Mater Ecclesia*, the Church our mother?

A priest here in Manila has given me his translation of these lines from Pope Paul VI's "*Thoughts Before Death*" which I pass on to you:

"And so I pray to the Lord that he may give me the grace to make of my approaching death a gift of love to the church. I can say truly that I have always love her. It was my love for her which brought me out of my narrow egoism and drew me to her service, and I believe that I have lived for her, and for no other. But I would want her now to know this. I want to dare tell her, as a secret confidence from my heart, which the heart finds courage enough to reveal, only in the last moment of life. Finally I want to know her fully, in her history, in the divine design of God for her, in her final destiny, in all her wholeness and complexity, in her human and imperfect reality, in her failings and sufferings, in the weaknesses and

miseries of so many of her sons, in aspects of her life which are not so attractive, and also, in her constant effort to be faithful, to love, to strive for perfection and for the fullness of charity. Body of Christ, Holy Church: I want to embrace her, to hail her, to love her, in every one who is part of her, in every priest and bishop who helps and guides her, in every soul which lives within her; I want to bless her, I know that when I leave her, I do not really go away from her, but that I unite myself with her more fully and better, for death is only a moving further into the communion of saints."

Have we helped our seminarians and young priests to love the Church like that? To give their lives to the Church with the beauty and intensity of Pope Paul VI's life-long love for her: bride of Christ, our mother?

### III. OUR BLESSED MOTHER

Thirdly, let us dwell briefly on love for Mary, the Holy Mother of the Lord. This is the Marian Year, and it is thus especially fitting that we ask ourselves what we can do for our seminarians and young priests, that their lives maybe deeply enriched by a strong and priestly love for our Blessed Lady.

It is my strong conviction that among the very greatest gifts we can give the seminarians who prepare for their priesthood in our company is a deep filial devotion towards Mary as Mother. The present Holy Father shows us, in his own person, the strength and beauty, the power and grace of a love for our lady at the very center of the priestly person! Not a "kitschy" sentimentality, but a devotion which can underlie the noble pages of *Redemptoris Mater*.

It is my deep conviction that our Asian peoples will be led most surely to Christ and his Church through the Mother of the Lord. This is the history of evangelization in our country;



doctorate theses have demonstrated this. The Latin American theologians and pastors, in their reflections on our Lady of Guadalupe, have shown us how the Virgin of Tepeyac truly "presided" over the coming-to-being of new Christian cultures among the people of Mexico, and among the other peoples of Latin America as well. Cardinal Suenens has often said that, strangely enough, it will be our lady who will lead the separated Christian Churches of east and west to the unity of all Christians. And not only the seers of Fatima and (also, we hear, Medjugorje), but it seems the Holy Father himself — believe that the gift of world peace will come to our world through the intercession of Mary, Queen of Peace, in our age and our time.

In the beauty of Catholic diversity, is it not our common love for the Mother of Jesus which is one of the strongest bond of our underlying unity? I have stood in a little church at Zose in Shanghai and have witnessed, in my mind and heart, the power of her love for the Chinese people and the Chinese Christians' love for her, and their fidelity to her son through 35 years of persecution and suffering... in the strength she won for them by her unfailing and constant maternal love. I have stood in a cathedral in Moscow as blind singers sang, in voices that must have made the angels envious, the ancient *Akathistos* hymn — to Mary the Mother of Christ, *Theotokos*, who at that moving hour was the bond that joined us, Catholic and orthodox, in our common loyalty to Christ and his Church, in that land which has known so much suffering and heroic faithfulness. I have celebrated Mass in the sunlit summer evening, in the little shrine at the dawn gate in Vilnius, and experienced for myself the love and devotion of the Lithuanian Catholics toward Mary, Mother of Mercy, — there under the ancient icon where Pope John Paul II has said, "I have left half of my heart."

It is Mary who is, in the hearts of all Christians, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the motherly bond that makes all of us who follow her son — brothers and sisters, one family, one people. And what if priests come from our seminaries, incapable

of deepening and renewing this great force and power in the life of the Church in Asia and throughout the world, in every clime and place, in every time and age, in every culture and way of life?

Let us recall Pascal's words: "the heart has reasons that reason knows nothing of." I am told the Jesuits end their long formation with a year they call Tertianship; a year known to them as "*schola affectus*" — the "school of the heart." Should not the seminary be first and foremost that also, *the school of the heart*? It is *of course* important to learn the texts in Denzinger and Neuner-Dupuis. Priests today should also know what Cardinal Ratzinger and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) are saying, of course. *Of course* we must develop as fully as possible "the imperial intellect": Saint Augustine said wisely, *intellectum valde ama*, ("we must love the power of our minds.") but our Lord himself told us that what is most important is "what comes from the heart." What our people in the pews, in their humble homes, in their places of work will value most in our priests is "what comes from the heart." Our prayer and our hope, I trust, is that from our seminaries our young priests will take with them, in their hearts, these three great loves: love for the austere beauty and courage of the cross of the Redeemer: "*quia per crucem tuam redemisti mundum*"; a deep and abiding love for the Church, body and bride of the Lord; and a truly filial devotion to our Blessed Lady, Mother of Jesus and our Mother. These three loves shall keep them, and us, constant in what Pope Paul VI called our double fidelity — fidelity to our brothers and sisters, especially the poor, and fidelity, *fortis sicut mors*, to Christ our Saviour — to whose heart we want to bring our peoples and all the peoples of Asia, today and in the years ahead of us.

— God love you, God bless you.

— *Nos cum prole pia*

*Benedicat Virgo Maria.*

† JAIME CARD. SIN  
*Archbishop of Manila*

## CONVENTION OF RECTORS OF ASIAN SEMINARIES

### PARTICIPANTS

#### *Pakistan*

Bishop Anthony Lobo  
St. Patrick's High School  
Sangster Road  
Karachi — 3 — Pakistan

Brother Lawrence Manuel, FSC  
La Salle High School  
Multan, Pakistan

Fr. Arnold Heredia  
Christ the King Seminary  
P.O. Box 17748  
(Hassan Square, behind Noman  
Complex) Karachi — 47, Pakistan

Fr. Giles Amarasekera  
St. Thomas' Minor Seminary  
c/o Bishop's House, P.O. Box 304  
Faisalabad, Pakistan

#### *India*

Fr. Charles Soreng, S.J.  
St. Albert's College  
P.O. Box 5, Ranchi 834001  
India

Fr. P. Arochiadoss, S.J.  
Director "Arulkadal",  
Jesuit Regional Theologate  
98, Santhome High Road  
Madras, 600 028  
India

Fr. Caesar D'Mello  
St. Pius College, AAREY Road  
Goregaon E, Bombay 40063

Fr. J. B. Xavier  
St. Peter's Pontifical Seminary  
Malleswaram West P.O.  
Bangalore 560055

#### *Bangladesh*

Fr. Benjamin Costa  
St. Joseph's Intermediate  
Seminary P.O. Box 3  
1, Kakrail Road, Ramna  
Dhaka 1000

Fr. Bernard Palma  
National Major Seminary  
Block A 112, Road No. 27  
Banani, Dhaka 1213

#### *Thailand*

Fr. Anthony Somsak Namakorn  
Lux Mundi Seminary  
Samphran (Nakorn Pathom)  
73110

Fr. John Bosco Vongsawat  
Keoseni  
Lux Mundi Seminary  
Samphran (Nakorn Pathom)  
73110

#### *Sri Lanka*

Fr. Jacob Nicholas  
St. Francis Xavier Seminary  
Colobogam, Jaffna

#### *Malaysia*

Fr. Pakiam Murphy  
College General  
Jalam Cengai  
11200 Tanjung Bungan  
Penang

Fr. Ha John  
St. Peter's College  
P.O. Box 327  
93704 Kuching, Sarawak

#### *Singapore*

Fr. Chin Noel  
St. Francis Xavier Major  
Seminary  
199 Ponggol, 17th Avenue  
Singapore 1954

#### *South Korea*

Fr. Francis K. Oh  
Catholic University  
90-2 Hye-Hwa-dong, Chongno-gu  
Seoul 110-530

Rev. Dominic Bai, STD  
Suwon Catholic College  
226 Wangnim-ri, Pongdam-myon  
Hwasung-gun Kyonggi-do  
445-890 South Korea

### *Hong Kong*

Fr. Gabriel Lam  
Holy Spirit Seminary  
6 Welfare Road  
Aberdeen, H.K.

### *Japan*

Fr. Ernest Pyrins, CICM  
Orion Institute for Religious  
Research  
2-28-5 Matsubara  
Setagaya-ku  
Tokyo—156

### *Taiwan*

Fr. John Lai  
St. Pius X Major Seminary  
42 Lane 127 Nan-yuan Street  
Tainan City (70423)  
Taiwan, R.O.C.

Fr. John Lao, S.J.  
St. Thomas Aquinas Regional  
Seminary  
69 Kuitzu Road, Tai-shan  
Taipei-hsien (24308)  
Taiwan, R.O.C.

### *Australia*

Fr. Denis Minns, O.P.  
St. Dominic's Priory  
816 Riversdale Road  
Camberwell Victoria  
3124 Australia

Fr. Kevin Kehoe  
St. Columban's College  
North Turramura  
N.S.W. 2074

Fr. G. Iverson  
St. Patrick's College  
Manly, N.S.W. 2095  
Australia

### *Indonesia*

Fr. Robert H. Hardawiryana, S.J.  
Pusat Kateketik, Abubakar Ali 1  
Toromolpos 75, Yogyakarta 55002  
Indonesia

### *Philippines*

Msgr. Francis de Leon  
Rector, San Carlos Seminary  
P.O. Box 148, Makati, M.M.

Msgr. Vicente Salgado  
Rector, St. Joseph Regional  
Seminary  
Jaro, Iloilo 5000

Fr. Jacinto A. Jose  
Rector, Immaculate Conception  
School of Theology  
Vigan, Ilocos Sur

Fr. Joseph Raviolo, S.J.  
Rector, St. John Vianney  
Theological Seminary  
P.O. Box 136  
Cagayan de Oro City 9000

Rev. Fr. Manuel Ginete, C.M.  
Rector, Seminario Mayor de San  
Carlos  
Faculty of Theology  
Mabolo, Cebu City

Fr. Juan Alarcon  
Holy Rosary Major Seminary  
P.O. Box 788 Conception Heights  
Naga City

Fr. Rene A. Ocampo, S.J.  
Loyola House of Studies  
Ateneo de Manila University  
Loyola Heights, Quezon City

Fr. Joey Oliveros  
St. Alphonsus Seminary  
Lucena City  
Msgr. Benjamin Sabillo  
Sacred Heart Seminary  
Palo, Leyte 6501

Fr. Albert Bagood, O.P.  
St. Albert's House  
Dominican Pre-Novitiate  
Letran College  
Calamba, Laguna



Fr. Ruben Elago, M.S.P.  
Rector, Fil-Mission Seminary  
Tagaytay City 4120

or  
M S P Fathers Central House  
9105 Banuyo Street  
San Antonio Village  
Makati, Metro Manila

Rev. Fr. Vicente G. Cajilig, O.P.  
Faculty of Sacred Theology  
University of Santo Tomas  
Manila

Rev. Fr. Paul Bernier, S.S.S.  
34 M. Hemady Avenue  
New Manila, Quezon City

Most Rev. Gaudencio B.  
Rosales, D.D.  
Chairman, Commission on  
Seminaries  
Bishop's House  
Malaybalay, Bukidnon

---

## The Confessor as Judge and Healer

---

*In our religious community we have a monthly discussion of a given fictitious case concerning liturgy, moral theology, administration of the sacraments, canon law, etc. The latest case we discussed dealt with a confessor as judge and healer. Not all of us agreed on various points, for instance on how to question to the penitent, especially in materia turpi or concerning the use of marital debt. Will you comment briefly on the matter?*

*A Religious Confessor*

Our consultant is asking us for a very delicate response: how a confessor should carry out his office properly, especially in questioning penitents. I realize that some confessors may ask penitents questions without the necessary discretion, even causing them scandal, while others might prefer to refrain from raising questions that might be necessary for the integrity of confession and for the spiritual welfare of the penitents. The Church has enacted two canons concerning this matter. We shall try to summarize what commentators have written about them.

### OFFICE OF CONFESSOR

The office and mission of confessor is described in canon 978, § 1, which reads: "In hearing confessions the priest is to

remember that he is at once *both judge and healer*, and he is constituted by God as a *minister of both divine justice and divine mercy*, so that he may contribute to the honour of God and the salvation of souls."

#### MINISTER OF DIVINE JUSTICE AND MERCY

The Church herself reminds confessors that in hearing confessions they are *ministers of the divine justice*. Hence, they must defend God's honor by condemning actions that are offensive to Him and by requiring some satisfaction for sins committed. The confessor has, at all times, to avoid any kind of connivance with the penitent, justifying his falls or hiding possible dangers of falling again into sin. Besides confessors are *ministers of the divine mercy*. Hence confessors must bear in mind that in the exercise of their ministry they are entrusted with the care of souls, realizing human weakness and encouraging sinners with the hope of obtaining divine forgiveness if they have the proper dispositions. Confessors, therefore, are to be compassionate to sinners by bearing in mind human weakness and by encouraging them to abandon their sinful ways and follow the invitation of God to holiness.

The degree of strictness or mercy in confession should not depend on the temper or mood of the confessor but on the dispositions of the penitent. Thus, the priest must be mercifully just with those who refuse to follow his directives, especially in matters of restitution, deep-rooted habits or voluntary occasions of sin, and justly merciful with those who are truly repentant for their sins. In view of this, confessors are given a two-fold office, namely, *the office of judge and the office of healer*. Let us see what these offices imply.

#### CONFESSOR AS JUDGE

As *judge* the confessor must form a fair judgment on the spiritual state and dispositions of the penitent. Therefore, after listening to what the penitent has to say, the confessor is bound to inquire from him whatever is lacking for the integrity

of confession, should this not be declared by the penitent. This integrity being obligatory by divine law with regards to serious sins, the confessor is bound to ask the penitent when the latter does not spontaneously reveal what should be revealed. Today, due perhaps to a lack of religious instruction and occasionally to negligence, it is not uncommon to come across penitents who tell their sins in a rather generic way, by saying for instance: "Father, I committed sins of impurity. I missed Sunday Masses. That's all, Father." In such cases, the confessor is gravely bound to ask for the kind of sin, as for instance: self-indulgence, fornication, etc., and the number of times. Otherwise the confession is essentially defective and although the penitent may be spared from the misfortune of making a bad confession through an excusable ignorance, he remains under the obligation of supplying for the said defect when he comes to the point of realizing it. Fanfani reproves the conduct of those confessors "who never ask questions to the penitents; much more those who do not allow the penitents to finish their confession; having heard a few sins, they give absolution to the penitents" (*Manuale Theoretico-Practicum Theologicæ Moralis*, 1951, IV, p. 486, A).

#### CONFESSOR AS HEALER

As healer the confessor is called to cure the spiritual illness of the patient. Hence he should know his spiritual weaknesses and their causes in order to heal his wounds and prevent future relapses. Therefore, the confessor has to know whether the patient's weakness is habitual or occasional and also what occasions he may have to avoid them in the future. His advice is to be directed to exciting sorrow in the penitent for the sins he has confessed and to preventing their repetition in the future by showing him the means of growing spiritually, such as prayer, worthy reception of the sacraments, mortification, etc. "With regards to this matter," Aertnys-Damen says, "some confessors commit serious mistakes that are the cause for many souls going astray. By not asking his penitents about their illness, the



confessor cannot advise them properly in order to eradicate bad habits and avoid dangerous occasions" (*Theologia Moralís*, 1932, II, n. 441, p. 298).

#### GUIDANCE OF THE CHURCH MAGISTERIUM

The new *Ordo Paenitentiae* issued by the Sacred Congregation of Divine Worship on December 2, 1973 expands the two-fold office of confessor as *judge and healer* by saying: "In order that he may fulfill his ministry properly and faithfully, understand the disorder of souls and apply the appropriate remedies to them, and act as a wise judge, the confessor must acquire the needed knowledge and prudence by constant study under the guidance of the Church's magisterium and especially by praying fervently to God. For the discernment of spirits is indeed a deep knowledge of God's working in the human heart, a gift of the Spirit, and an effect of charity" (n. 10, a). And in the same number (10, c) the Sacred Congregation says: "By receiving repentant sinners and leading them to the light of the truth, the confessor fulfills a paternal function: he reveals the heart of the Father and reflects the image of Christ the Good Shepherd. He should keep in mind that he has been entrusted with the mystery of Christ, who accomplished the saving work of human redemption by mercy and his power is present in the sacrament."

Summarizing what we have said, Pope John Paul II explained that "the confession of sins is required, first of all, because the sinner must be known by the person who in the Sacrament exercises *the role of judge*. He has to evaluate both the seriousness of the sins and the repentance of the penitent; he also exercises *the role of healer*, and must acquaint himself with the conditions of the sick person in order to treat and heal him" (Apostolic Exhortation on *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, of December 2, 1984).

#### DELICATE PROBLEM OF ASKING QUESTION

The delicate point of asking penitents questions is dealt with in canon 979 which reads as follows: "In asking questions

the priest is to act with prudence and discretion, taking into account the condition and the age of the penitent, and he is to refrain from enquiring the name of a partner in sin." Authors dealing on the matter say that questions to the penitent are to be made with *moderation, prudence* and when it is necessary, in order to complete the integrity of the confession and for forming the confessor's judgment on the state and disposition of the penitent.

#### MODERATION AND PRUDENCE

*Moderation* is observed when the questions are directed to matters relating to the confession and they refer to sins not clearly confessed or to sins most probably committed by the penitent, considering his age, state of life, profession and the disposition shown by him.

*Prudence* is necessary in order to avoid whatever may be for the confessor himself and for the penitent an occasion of sin, especially in matters concerning the sixth commandment. Indiscreet questions can open the eyes of the penitent to things he does not know and excite his curiosity, or suspicion that the confessor wants to prolong talk about the matter. Prudence teaches that questions must be formulated gradually from venial sins to serious ones, from general concepts to more detailed and concrete situations, from evil thoughts to sin of action, etc.

#### NECESSARY QUESTIONS ONLY

Questions should be raised *when necessary only*. In this respect, Prummer says that ordinarily questions are not to be formulated until the penitent has finished the confession of his sins, otherwise his attention may be diverted and, as a result, he may forget other sins. However, if the confessor thinks he himself will not easily recall the questions to be asked concerning the nature of the sins already confessed by the penitent he can ask the penitent immediately and, once the latter has answered, let him proceed accusing himself (*Manuale Theologiae Moralis*, 1946, III, pp. 310-311, n. 435, 1).

## DELICATE QUESTIONS

The 1917 Code of Canon Law admonished confessors in canon 888, § 2 not to raise curious or useless questions concerning the sixth commandment. Accordingly, they should refrain from asking young people about things of which they are ignorant. The Holy Office reminded all confessors on May 16, 1943 that they should always bear in mind the danger existing when the penitent is questioned on matters concerning chastity. The dignity of the sacrament, as well as the integrity of confession and the spiritual welfare of the penitent are to guide the confessor.

*Useless questions* are those which obviously are not necessary to complete the accusation of the penitent's sins or to know his dispositions. By divine law the penitent is bound to confess only mortal sins committed after baptism and not directly remitted through a good confession. He is bound, of course, to declare the circumstances changing the kind of sin, if the penitent was conscious of such circumstances when he committed those sins.

Questions concerning *materia turpi* are to be made if the confessor believes with good reason that the penitent, with good or bad faith, refrains from mentioning what is necessary to confess. Consideration of the penitent's condition should also be taken into account. If the confessor is hesitant as to whether he should ask the penitent or not on the foregoing matter, it is preferable not to raise any question. This doctrine is followed with good reason by moralists and confirmed by the Holy Office on May 16, 1943.

## QUESTIONS ABOUT ONE'S ACCOMPLICE

Canon 979 expressly states that the confessor "is to refrain from inquiring the name of a partner in sin." This kind of inquiry can be *formal* or *material*. It is *formal* if the confessor asks directly for the name of the accomplice, or about the circumstances that, not being necessary to declare as the integrity

of confession requires, lead to discover who the accomplice is. The inquiry is *material* if by asking the circumstances surrounding the commission of sin, the identity of the accomplice is accidentally discovered. *Formal* inquiry of the accomplice is prohibited *sub gravi*, according to common opinion; *material* inquiry is not prohibited, although it should be borne in mind that both the knowledge of the accomplice and the commission of sin fall under the sacramental seal.

## TWO EXTREMES TO BE AVOIDED

From what we have said, it can be deduced that two extremes are to be avoided by any confessor. On one hand, there is no need to ask a married person indiscriminately about his using the marital right. There is an obligation to ask him when the confessor reasonably suspects from what the penitent has confessed that he is ashamed or wants to hide something he has wrongly done. As a rule this reasonable suspicion does not exist when the penitent confesses regularly with him or when the penitent confesses with relative frequency. A confessor who indiscriminately makes questions of this kind to married people, does not show much prudence.

## PRUDENCE AND DISCRETION

Undoubtedly great tact is to be used in the method of raising questions. Discretion is shown when questions are formulated in general but are clear enough to invite the penitent to speak out with openness. To raise questions with excessive details might cause the penitent openly to deny possible transgressions.

If it is not correct to raise unnecessary questions, it is also erroneous not to raise questions when necessary. The Holy Office, asked to qualify the following proposition: "A married person should never be asked on onanism, even though there exists reasonable suspicion on his abusing the marital debt," answered: "The proposition, as it sounds, is false, too lax and dangerous in practice" (May 21, 1851). When there is reasonable suspicion that a penitent practices onanism, but he says nothing to the confessor, the latter should ask the former about



it with great prudence and discretion, even if he foresees that the penitent might possibly be disturbed in his beliefs and perhaps will later not receive the sacraments. Vermeersch (*Theologia Moralis*, 1923, IV, p. 67, n. 70) says that if the confessor is silent on such case, the penitent might interpret his silence as an approval of his sinful practice or will think that the matter has no importance at all. Pius XI said in his Encyclical *Casti Connubii* of December 31, 1930 to all confessors: "If any confessor or pastor of souls leads the faithful into these errors or should at least confirm them by approval or by *guilty silence*, let him be mindful of the fact that he must render a strict account to God, the Supreme Judge, for the betrayal of his sacred trust, and let him take to himself the words of Christ: 'They are blind and leaders of the blind: and if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit' (*Matth.* XV, 14)."

Likewise Aertnys-Damen says in this regard: "If there is any reasonable suspicion that the penitent practices onanism, but he does not mention it, the confessor must, as a rule, question him with prudence and discretion" (l.c., n. 916, p. 608, 2). To this Vermeersch adds: "Unless he is positively sure that the penitent does not commit this kind of sin, the confessor should ask married people in a general way whether they have any difficulty in their marital life or whether they are bothered by some scruples" (l.c. IV, p. 68, n. 70). Merkelbach holds that "when through a positive judgment it seems that the penitent does not practice this kind of sin (onanism), the confessor should not ask married people about it" (*Theologia Moralis*, 1935, III, p. 966, n. 958).

The foregoing quotations refer to married people. If the questions are formulated with prudence and tact, there will be no scandal on the penitent's part. As we have said before, common opinion holds that this kind of penitents should be asked about the matter, when there is a well grounded suspicion regarding it of course, the above-mentioned authors speak in general. There may be some exceptions regarding particular cases.

We hope that our consultant will find this summary helpful in order to know the common opinion held by theologians and what canonists teach on points he mentions in the case.

---

## Change of Patron Saint

---

*In some parishes of our diocese, the Patron Saint or the Mystery of dedication of the parish churches is less known than certain other Saints or Mysteries, the feasts of which are celebrated by the whole towns or cities with great solemnity. This means that such Mysteries or Saints are more popular than those titular of the above-mentioned churches. May I ask whether discontent parishes may replace their Patron Saints or Mysteries of dedication with others which are more popular in the locality?*

*A Parish Priest*

The new code of the Church has the following norm: "Each church is to have its own title. Once the church has been dedicated, this title cannot be changed" (can. 1218). The church title is the Saint or Mystery in honor of whom or which the church has been built and dedicated. The church is known, and thus distinguished from other churches by the name of the Saint or Mystery. When the title of the church involves a Saint or an Angel, this Saint or Angel is the *patron* of the church. When the title is that of a Divine Person or Mystery, this Divine Person or Mystery is called *titular* of the church. The reason for this is that the term *patron* means *advocate* which does not apply to a Divine Person or Mystery.

Once the church has been dedicated its title cannot be changed, except by the permission of the Holy See. This was already declared by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on March 23, 1630 and on June 1, 1876.

The prescription of giving a title to each church is not new. Canon 1168, § 1 of the 1917 Code had exactly the same norm as the one we have transcribed from the 1983 Code. Moreover, the 1917 Code added: "Likewise the feast of the title is to be celebrated every year according to the liturgical laws" (can. 1168, § 2).

The patron or titular of the church should not be confused with the patron of the locality. The former is the Saint, Angel or Mystery designated by the local Ordinary when the church was built and dedicated, while the latter is the Saint, Angel or Mystery chosen by a town, a city, diocese or nation and confirmed by the Holy See. In a large city, for instance, there may be several patrons, saints or titular Mysteries of different churches, but there is only one patron of the place.

The 1917 Code made this distinction clearly. Its canon 1168 dealt with the patron or titular of the church, while its canon 1278 dealt with the patron of the place. It said: "It is praiseworthy that nations, dioceses, provinces, confraternities, religious institutes, places and corporations should choose patron Saints with the approval of the Holy See."

The question raised by our consultant can be answered, therefore, by saying: No parish may replace its patron Saint or Mystery with one more popular in the locality, without the permission of the Holy See.

---

## Uniformity in the Congregation

---

*May I humbly offer a correction to your answer to the query: Is there a formal liturgical rule prescribing that the faithful should stand up after the Consecration? Boletín Eclesiástico, Jan.-Feb. 1987 p. 57.*

### ANSWER:

1. *Kneeling during the Acclamation after the Consecration until the Amen after the Doxology, unless the people sing the Acclamation for which they stand and remain standing during the rest of the Eucharist Prayer, was APPROVED.*

*This supersedes what appeared in the Liturgical Information Bulletin in the Philippines, 1970, p. 8. Enclosed is the xerox copy of the Minutes of the Bishops' Meeting (Annual) held in July 9-11, 1984, at the RVM Retreat House, Tagaytay City, page 21.*

*Sacerdos*

*We are most grateful to the priest who has sent to us the foregoing information concerning the case UNIFORMITY IN THE CONGREGATION, published in Boletín Eclesiástico, Jan.-Feb. 1987, page 57.*



I was really surprised. Nothing had appeared in the *Boletín Eclesiástico*, where Fr. Florencio Testera had published whatever the local Hierarchy has issued on ecclesiastical discipline. Not even in his *Canon Law Digest of the Philippine Catholic Church*, recently published (1987) by the same Father, could it be found. So I asked Fr. Testera himself about it. After checking all his notes on the matter, he gave us the following information:

The answer given by our consultant was *approved* by the Episcopal Liturgical Commission and presented to the Bishops' Conference annual meeting of July 9-11, 1984, as stated by our consultant. However, such proposal, *approved* by the Liturgical Commission, has never been acted upon by the Bishops' Conference. Consequently it has not yet been approved by the Conference. It has only been approved by the Liturgical Commission, which has no legislative power.

Fr. Testera has also dealt with this topic in his article Local Legislation on the Eucharist (*Boletín Eclesiástico*, Jul.-Aug., 1987, p. 442).

The solution therefore given to the case published in the *Boletín Eclesiástico*, Jan.-Feb., 1987, p. 57, has not yet been superseded.

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.

**HOMILIES FOR  
AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER  
- YEAR B -**

---

**Are You Being  
Criticized?**

JOHN 6:41-51

*19th SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
AUGUST 7, 1988*

**T**ODAY'S Gospel (*John 6:41-51*) offers for our reflection a part of the chapter which St. John devotes to the Holy Eucharist. The other part will be brought to us next Sunday. Today's Gospel consists of two parts: an introduction and the supreme statement of Jesus: "I am the bread of life."

To the Jews it seems impossible that Jesus could say: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven." They know the origin of Jesus, they know his parents and relatives, they know the town where he was born.

They said: "This man is Jesus son of Joseph, isn't he? We know his father and mother. How, then, does he now say he came down from heaven?"

Indeed, today's Gospel begin with these opening words: "The people started grumbling about him, because he said, 'I am the bread that came down from heaven.'"

Now, why would they find fault in Jesus? It is because we human beings are like that. We criticize everyone and everything.

They murmured in protest, because Jesus claimed: "I am the bread that came down from heaven."

Say whatever you want, there will always be someone to criticize you.

If you are a politician, those of the opposite party will tear you to pieces. If you are a crusader and launch a campaign against any form of vice, people will turn against you.

So you have to keep your mouth shut. But even then criticisms will continue against you. They will call you a "dumb ox", the nickname his classmates in the university gave to St. Thomas Aquinas.

The launching pad of their criticism against Christ is this: "This man is Jesus son of Joseph, isn't he? We know his father and mother." Earlier they had said: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (*John 1:46*).

This is one very common criticism.

One can be born poor, in a small town, but intelligent and talented. He who thinks he is higher than the rest, will criticize him without mercy, devouring him through envy. The one born in the city will cry out: he is a country mouse!

As if from a town and from a very poor family there could never be born great men and even the greatest of men; the Man-God, Jesus Christ!

As if from a bustling there could never be born slow witted, stupid rich ignoramuses.

Now, who did better works than Jesus Christ?

How many sick people did Jesus free from their suffering and pain, and at the same time their household liberated from anguish. But even here the Jews criticized Jesus, claiming that he did it in partnership with the devil, by the crafty power of Beelzebul, the chief of the demons. "It is Beelzebul, the chief of the demons, who gives him power" (*Luke 11:15*).

What can we draw from the lesson that Jesus gives us in the Gospel with his word and with his example?

In the first place let us not get discouraged and abandon the performance of our duty no matter who and how many would criticize, murmur and protest against us.

Secondly, let us follow the advice — a request and at the same time a mandate — of Jesus: "Stop grumbling!"



---

# Communicant in Christ — Christ in Communicant

JOHN 6:51-58

*20th SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
AUGUST 14, 1988*

A group of friends were one day discussing about religion until they came to talk about the Real Presence of Christ under the appearance of the Sacred Host.

"I cannot understand how anybody could believe that. Nay," said one who admitted having been a Catholic and had become a Protestant, "not even God can do a thing like that."

One of those present intervened: "Do you believe in God and as a Christian believe in the Creed?"

"Yes, but nowhere in the Creed is there any mention that God changes the bread into his bodily person."

"How can you say that? Can you recite the Creed?"

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth..."

"Enough. You have said enough. If God did create everything out of nothing, can you not believe that, after that, it is extremely simple for him to change one thing into another? And to leave without any change the external appearances? You and I can not do this, but it must be very easy for God who made all things out of nothing."

Well, God could not only do it but he really did it. This is what the Gospel (*John* 6:51-58) is telling us today.

Let us now take as point for reflection verse 56 which reads: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I live in him."

Now, the idea of eating the flesh of someone is indeed repugnant, repulsive and loathsome, especially to a Jew who keeps God's covenant with Noah which provides: "The one thing you must not eat is meat with blood still in it; I forbid this because the life is in the blood" (*Genesis* 9:4). More so with drinking someone else's blood: — "You must not eat their blood; you must pour it out on the ground like water" (*Deuteronomy* 12:16), says the Lord.

"Flesh and blood" is the customary expression of the Old Testament to mean human life.

When one says nowadays: "I have Christ in me," he says so in line with Christ's declaration: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood... I live in him."

But paradoxically he says "He lives in me."

It means that, as St. Augustine comments, Jesus is greater than I and it is he who eats me. More than me having the universe in me I am in the universe, in the atmosphere, in the light.

That is why Jesus adds: "Whoever eats me will live because of me."

This is the realization of what St. Paul means when he said: "So that it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me" (*Galatians* 2:20).

Our living in him and because of him can be said to be a faint miniature reflection of God the Father living in the Son and of the Son living in the Father and because of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

In the sermons and lectures given us during the recent Eucharistic Year, we repeatedly heard the Greek word "KOINONIA" which is the most antique and most profound word to name the Holy Eucharist. "*Koinonia*" and *Communion*.

The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is (a) a communion or community of life with Christ, (b) a community of life or communion with our fellowmen; (c) therefore, it is a life different from the world, as Jesus said: "I chose you from this world, and you do not belong to it; that is why the world hates you" (*John* 15:19).

To underline this difference, St. Paul says: "You cannot drink from the Lord's cup and also from the cup of demons; you cannot eat at the Lord's table and also at the table of demons" (1 *Corinthians* 10:21).

We are consequently one mystical body with and in Christ, since we all partake of one bread. By "communion" we are members incorporated to Christ.

Whereupon, the obvious conclusions are: equality, unity, love. Also obvious conclusions are the following:

a) The Holy Eucharist is the bread of immortality and pledge of eternal life, of final resurrection. This life passes, but it does not end in death. Jesus rose from the dead and we live in him, we therefore will rise again.

b) Through Holy Communion we need to feel more in solidarity with Christ and with our fellowmen, in solidarity with Christ to complete the work, the sufferings and the redemption of Christ.

c) Do you want to christianize — divinize and humanize — the world? Work for "more communions."

Holy Communion is the grand "antidote", the grand "vaccine" against egoism, exploitation, disequality.

Naturally, if we take a vaccine in a sick condition, instead of curing, it can kill us. St. Paul has already told us that if we receive Holy Communion unworthily, we swallow our own condemnation (1 *Cor.* 11).

But, please, let us concentrate more on the positive side of Holy Communion.

---

## **"This Teaching is Too Hard"**

JOHN 6:60-69

*21st SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
AUGUST 21, 1988*

**T**ODAY'S Gospel (*John* 6:60-69) reveals that there was a group of people who found the statement of Jesus hard, difficult to understand, and more difficult to accept. They said: "This teaching is too hard. Who can listen to it?" Jesus at that point of time was teaching about the Holy Eucharist.

Last Sunday we have partly reflected on this discourse of Jesus on the Holy Eucharist. His revelation of this particular mystery provoked marked differences among his followers.

Some did not accept his words and left him. They were not really his, although they were following him. They judged



things by human standards. They failed to recognize the power of Christ. That is why to them his teaching seemed hard. Much harder to them will his way of life seem: to embrace the cross.

The root-cause of their desertion is the fact that faith in Christ carries an obligation. And we oblige ourselves only when we are in love. The crisis of faith is brought about by the crisis of love, of commitment and surrender. Faith presupposes an openness towards the one in whom we believe; and egoism make us focus everyone and everything on our own wretched selves.

The teaching of Jesus about the Bread of Life, the Holy Eucharist provoked the crisis in those who were not in the proper attitude of faith. That is why they abandoned him. But this came as no surprise to Jesus who knew beforehand who were those who believed in him.

Something similar happens here and now. When our Holy Mother the Church in the name of Christ issues a doctrine of faith and morals, there will also be many who will respond and react like those followers of Christ mentioned in today's Gospel: "This teaching is too hard. Who can listen to it?" And they declare themselves openly in opposition to the teachings of the Holy Father, which actually are those of Jesus Christ.

They want an easy life, less demanding, more attuned to the likes and inclinations of men; in one word: they want a less severe doctrine. Today, like yesterday, the demands of christian life seem unacceptable to many. They go for an easier, better effective and more economical life. The worst is that they want to give an honest appearance to or justification for their action as if it were the authentically Christian for being more human.

But, in spite of these protests, Jesus Christ goes on presenting his teaching; he does not retract. And he asks those who have faithfully followed him: "And you — would you also like to leave?"

Beautiful was the answer of St. Peter who stepped forward to manifest the sentiment of the apostles: "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. And now we believe and know that you are the Holy One who has come from God.

This is the answer that we have to give to Jesus Christ: "Lord, I believe in you; I believe that you are the Son of God; that you have the words that give eternal life." We all must seal this covenant between Jesus Christ and ourselves. We want to be his people; we have to bind ourselves not to mind those who propose doctrines different for his.

Let us now once again renew the faith we professed at baptism and have renewed at various occasions. We want to live in conformity with this faith, by obeying the ordinances of Jesus Christ and of his Church.

One concrete point, in which we have to secure ourselves firm, is what St. Paul discusses in the second reading of today's Mass about the indissolubility of marriage. Many are those who nowadays echo the words: "This teaching is too hard. Who can listen to it?"

But Jesus Christ told us through the Second Vatican Council: "The intimate union of marriage, as a mutual giving of two persons, and the good of the children demand total fidelity from the spouses and require an unbreakable unity between them" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 48).

In the Eucharist Jesus repeats the same words he addressed to the crowd in today's Gospel: "My flesh is the real food; my blood is the real drink." Christ is really present under the species of bread and wine which your eyes see. He who eats his flesh and drinks his blood, lives in Christ and Christ lives in him. Do you believe this?

Let us humbly answer: "You have the words that give eternal life. You speak the truth and I believe it."

---

## From a Person's Heart . . .

MARK 7:1-8. 14-15. 21-23

22nd SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
AUGUST 28, 1988

**T**HERE are natural flowers and there are artificial ones. The artificial flowers are as beautiful as the natural, with a tremendous variety of colors, but they have no life; they are plastic. There is also a true religion that honors God and an artificial religion, a plastic religion that displeases God.

The artificial religion is that which, following the ritualism of the pharisees, contents itself with having good words, correct gestures, courteous formulas which do not go beyond serving as camouflage beneath which many a time are hidden multitudes of crooked intentions and even the desire to use God and the rest of mankind for its own benefit.

Today's Gospel (*Mark* 7:1-8. 14-15. 21-23) reveals God's rejection of all that. "These people," says God, "honor me with their words, but their heart is really far away from me." Those rosaries recited with apparently the greatest devotion, those profound genuflections in front of the Blessed Sacrament, those solemn feasts are plastic flowers if at the very time we celebrate them, our heart is far away from the Lord.

One can see the features of the true religion represented in the four points of the Cross of Christ. The two extreme points of the vertical bar, the top or upper and the base or lower, represent the virtues of faith and of hope.

With faith, without which it is impossible to please God, we honor God with our heart, recognizing his infinite veracity. This faith is strong like the rock of Calvary, because it is grounded on the historical fact of Christ's resurrection.

But the Risen Christ went up to heaven. That is why the top of the cross, like an arrow aiming at heaven tells us that there where Christ is, we shall one day be; with hope we believe. With hope we also honor God with our heart, expecting from his mercy and omnipotence the grace to always do good and the help to reach heaven.

The horizontal bar represents love or charity, because it reminds us of Jesus who totally opened his arms on the cross to redeem everyone. The right arm of the cross represents the love for God whom we love as our supreme and most perfect good. The left arm represents the love for our fellowman whom we love because of our love for God.

The true religion, not unlike the natural flowers, has its root, which is no other than the virtue of faith from which it gushes forth. Hope is like the trunk that sustains it. Love is the flower that turns into a fruit when we love our fellowman as Christ loves us.

The Sacred Readings of today's Mass tells us about the three theological virtues. Because as from the hearts of evil men come forth murder, adultery, theft, robbery, in the same way from the hearts of good men spring forth the virtues opposite to those vices: living Faith, strong Hope and ardent Charity.

Living Faith is the virtue that receives the word of God and puts it into action and does not limit itself to merely listening. St. James in the Second Reading writes: "Act on this word. If all you do is to listen to it, you are deceiving yourselves."

In today's First Reading, Moses told the people: "Obey all the laws that I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the



Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you." What Moses said is what hope is all about — listening to God's laws and precepts, and performing them, *expecting* to enter in and take possession of the land the God of our ancestors is giving us.

True Charity or Love honors God with the heart and with the lips, like King David from whose heart flowed forth the Psalms. It honors God with songs and hymns and canticles, like the Blessed Virgin Mary who intoned the "Magnificat", or Zachariah when he composed the "Benedictus."

In the Responsorial Psalm, David traces out to us the perfect image of a truly religious man who walks on the paths that leads to heaven. This man, says David, is "he who walks blamelessly and does justice; who thinks the truth in his heart and slanders not with his tongue. Who harms not his fellow man, nor takes up a reproach against his neighbor; by whom the reprobate is despised, while he honors those who fear the Lord. Who lends not his money at usury and accepts no bribe against the innocent." This is the man whose heart is not far away from the Lord, but intimately united to him with the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity.

Faith honors God by recognizing him as the infallible truth who cannot deceive nor be deceived. Hope honors God by recognizing him as the one who, with ineffable mercy, is always faithful to his promises. Charity honors God by recognizing him as what he really is: infinite goodness.

He who lives in this manner worships the Lord in spirit and in truth, and his heart is not far away from the Lord.

---

# They Suffer While Making Others Suffer

MARK 7:31-37

*23rd SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
SEPTEMBER 4, 1988*

**T**RY shutting off your ears for a sizeable period of time. Experience how it is when the world of sound is cut off, when the conversation around you, the children's laughter, the sweet melody of music mean nothing to you.

A very fine lady became suddenly confused and irrational. After due examination, the doctor found the source of her trouble. Her hearing was gravely impaired by an impacted ear wax. The naughty ear wax was duly removed and the lady at once returned to her fine good self.

Unfortunately there are not a few christians who are deaf and dumb towards God.

They are wilfully and willingly deaf, because they do not want to listen to the voice of their own conscience, which accuses them of their vices and sins.

They do not want to hear the inspirations of divine grace, which invites and moves them to repentance and conversion.

They do not mind the warnings of their superiors, neither do they want to hear the word of God in the acts of worship.

And because they are deaf, they are also dumb.

They do not pray, they do not talk with God and, because they have no communication with him, the help of divine grace does not come their way and they go from one fall to another, from one sin to another, until they cast themselves headlong into the depths of hell.

But, before they get there, they become like that fine lady turned confused and irrational on account of the impairment of her hearing due to an impacted ear wax. They themselves suffer while all the while making others suffer too.

Now, you must have heard that our Mother the Holy Catholic Church has officially adapted the *preferential option for the poor*.

We have come to mention this "preferential option for the poor" because today's Gospel (Mark 7:31-37) speaks of deafness which the Lord has cured. Today can be the time for us to wonder if we have been miserably deaf to the cries of the poor, to their aspirations for justice, truth, freedom, fellowship; love and peace. It's time to wonder whether the deafness has not afflicted us to the point of thinking that there is nothing we can learn from the poor, much less to emphasize with them. Have we ever look at things and events through the eyes of the poor?

Or are we also dumb that we cannot speak against the violence and injustice and indignities heaped upon the poor?

Our Holy Mother Church is for the poor. The Church founded the first hospitals, the first orphanages. The champion is St. Vincent de Paul. The Church founded the first leprosaria. The Church was the first to raise her voice against slavery. Read the letter of St. Paul to Philemon and the heroic acts of St. Peter Claver.

St. Francis of Assisi saw his Brother Jesus in every poor person. St. Aloysius Gonzaga died embracing a plague-stricken patient.

Sins and deficiencies there are in the Church. But one thing is surely certain: God, Christ, the Church and the Saints are the only true friends of the poor, in their teachings and in their life.

---

## A Risk and a Challenge

MARK 8:27-35

24th SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
SEPTEMBER 11, 1988

**T**ODAY'S Gospel (*Mark* 8:27-35) tells us that on his way to "the villages near Caesarea Philippi" Jesus wanted to gather a feedback, to make a public opinion survey. He asked his disciples: "Tell me, who do people say I am?"

Then he followed this up with another: "What about you? Who do you say I am?"

St. Peter came forward with warm spontaneity: "You are the Messiah," he answered.

Jesus then drew up for them the description of the Messiah, which turns out to the reverse of the human Messiah the Jews expected.

"The Son of Man must suffer much... He will be put to death." This is the promised and much awaited Messiah.



Then Jesus describes the followers of the Messiah: "If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget himself, carry his cross, and follow me."

The sum total: — failure and death is the unequivocal sign of the true Messiah as well as that of his followers. "He made this very clear to them." Perhaps the disciples did not understand. Neither did they want to ask what they did not wish to understand.

The Beatitudes proclaimed by Jesus confirm this, as he declared that blessedness is attained by way of poverty, persecutions, a countless drops of tears; by way of our own death and never by killing anybody.

But bear in mind what St. Paul says: "This small and temporary trouble we suffer will bring us a tremendous and eternal glory, much greater than the trouble" (2 *Corinthians* 4:17). And the proportion between pain and heaven is not only arithmetical: to one of pain correspond two of glory; but it is a geometric proportion: to one of pain correspond three of glory. And this is measured by God's own standard which surpasses all human measurements.

The cross always saves. And let it not be said that it saves only when it is devoid of guilt and culpability. The Cross of Christ came to be because of our guilt and culpability. "He loves us, and by his sacrificial death he has freed us from our sins and made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father. To Jesus Christ be the glory and power forever and ever!" (*Revelation* 1:5-6). The cross was our fault as well as our salvation.

To follow Jesus who is the Son of God and the suffering Messiah, we must carry our cross. To carry the cross means to accept what to us is unpleasant, repugnant, but it leads us to God. It means to undergo the pains of doing our duty.

Before carrying the cross, however, we must forget ourselves or deny ourselves. This means saying "no" to our own selves and saying "yes" to Jesus. It means to abstain, to re-

frain from looking at, eating, drinking, touching or doing what God prohibits, and also refrain from omitting what God commands to be done. It means, to always say "yes" to God: to do what God commands and to avoid what displeases God.

Indeed, our life is replete with work, weariness, fatigue, suffering and pain. Our life is not for us to keep in a safe or a freezer; it is not for thinking only for our own selves... That would be a very useless life.

Really, if everybody held as his life's ideal to live comfortably in one's home, what would life be today.

Life demands risks. And every risk is a challenge, a struggle, but it is at the same time a great opportunity.

This is what Jesus means when he said: "Whoever wants to save his own life will lose it."

---

## Pride — Root of Every Sin

MARK 9:30-37

*25th SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
SEPTEMBER 18, 1988*

**R**EAD the newspaper, listen to the radio or open your television set, and you will get a generous sprinkling of robberies, swindling, assaults, extortions, killings... We live in a world of violence.

The Second Reading of today's Mass (James 3:16-4:3) brings us the words of St. James the apostle: "Where do all fights and quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires for pleasure, which are constantly fighting within you. You want things, but you cannot have them, so you are ready to kill; you strongly desire things, but you cannot get them, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have what you want because you do not ask God for it. And when you ask, you do not receive it, because your motives are bad; you ask for things to use for pleasure."

The deepest root of every sin is pride. And it is part of the mystery of sin that, while sin is degrading, the sinner tends at the same time to increase even more the dreadful evil of pride. Enslaved by pride — call it thirst for power, greed for money, ambition for honors, desire for pleasure, or refined self-love — he tends to suppress this sense of humiliation and to allow pride to gain even more control over his mind-set.

So, Jesus in today's Gospel (Mark 9:30-37) teaches us the virtue of humility.

Jesus Christ teaches us that the truly great and important man is the one who says: How can I use my talents, my gifts, my powers to serve the community, the Church and the family? In other words, the man who says, "How can I make use and take advantage of society, country, family for my prestige and personal ambitions," is a self-seeking man, a parasite, a leech of society, of the Church, of the country, of the family.

The Greeks tell the story of a Spartan named Paederatos. Three hundred men were to be chosen to govern Sparta. Paederatos was a candidate, but he was not elected. One of his friends said to him: "I am sorry you were not elected." Paederatos replied: "I am indeed full of joy to see that in Sparta there are three hundred men more valuable than me."

Paederatos turned into a legend, because he was disposed to give the first place to others.

All our economic, social and political problems would have been solved if each and everyone of us would consider:

— how can I serve, help others? and not: how can I make them serve and help me?

— what can I do for the others? and not: what can I do to take advantage of the rest?

The disunity and disputes in the parish, in the diocese would have ended with this.

Jesus "took a child . . . put his arms around him and said to them: 'Whoever welcome in my name one of these children, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not only me but also the one who sent me.'"

A child is penniless, with no physical strength, without any influence.

Our Lord "always had the nature of God, but . . . of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant . . . and walked the path of obedience all the way to death — on the cross" (*Philippians* 2:6-8). He had as his cradle a manger in one of Bethlehem's stables, as his birthday guests the poor shepherds. In Nazareth he was contented with being an obscure carpenter, doing manual work, the work of a servant, of a slave. His poverty was greater than that of the sparrows and the foxes.

That is why he who welcomes a child, a penniless, weak and uninfluential person, welcomes him and not only him, but also him who sent him.

That is why Jesus could say: "I tell you, whenever you did this for one of the least important of these brothers of mine, you did it for me . . . whenever you refused to help one of these least important ones, you refused to help me" (*Matthew* 25:40, 45).

That is why Christ can say: "Learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit; and you will find rest" (*Matthew* 11:29).



---

# Active and Passive Scandal

MARK 9:38-43. 45. 47-48

26th SUNDAY,  
ORDINARY TIME,  
SEPTEMBER 25, 1988

**T**ODAY'S Gospel (*Mark 9:38-43. 45. 47-48*) brings one statement of our Lord Jesus Christ which we nowadays should take to with all candor and seriousness. Jesus said: "It would be better if anyone who leads astray one of these little ones, were to be plunged in the sea with a great millstone fastened around his neck."

Christ wants to teach us today about avoiding scandal.

Etimologically, scandal comes from a Greek word "skandalon." It is a stone that makes you stumble and fall... it is a snare.

Theologically speaking, scandal is an evil or evil-appearing word or deed that becomes a hazard to another person and occasions his spiritual ruin.

There are two aspects to scandal, active and passive. Active scandal is the scandalous word or deed; passive scandal is the sin that the other commits as a result of this word or deed. In other words, one person gives and another person takes the scandal.

The giving of scandal may be direct or indirect. *Direct* scandal is really seduction, which is the deliberate effort to lead another person into sin, as by persuasion or suggestions.

Much more common is the *indirect* scandal, where the sin of the other is foreseen but not directly intended. For example, guilty of indirect scandal is a student who successfully cheats in school work or games and so he can easily foresee that others will also try it, even if he would not actually want them to.

Even a word or act that is not in itself evil, but only appears so, can give scandal. For example, attending a Protestant church service can scandalize more than you can imagine.

The giving of scandal is always a sin because it represents a lack of concern for the spiritual good of our neighbor. Charity requires us to prize someone else's spiritual welfare and encourage it. The gravity of the sin is measured according to several factors: the intention, the nature of the action, the degree of contempt for the spiritual welfare of our fellowmen, and the resulting sin of that person. All the circumstances of the particular situation must be taken into account to determine the guilt and degree of the scandal.

The principles for judging such matters as scandal and the obligations of a Christian are always those of the law of Christ: the good of men and their salvation.

Reparation must be made for sins of scandal. Contrary good example, however, may suffice as reparation for indirect scandal.

Correlative to the *giving* of scandal is the *taking* of scandal. It is the deliberate use of another's conduct, good or bad, as the occasion or an excuse for one's own sin. To take scandal is always a sin, either mortal or venial. But this is not to be confused with shock or surprise. Behind the taking may be either a malicious disposition or simply weakness, youthful ignorance, undisciplined passions, or bad habits.

But let us not forget that even deliberate enticement to sin can always be resisted, and someone's bad examples can always be rejected.

We should avoid every truly evil word or deed that could give scandal. We must also avoid words and deeds which have the appearance or the sound (*pūs auribus offensiva*) of evil and consequently could give scandal, unless there is some serious reason for them. Sometimes we can prevent this scandal by explaining the matter to those who will see or hear us do things having only the appearance or sound of evil.

If this is impossible, fraternal charity may require the omission of such words and actions.

But let us remember that "the end does not justify the means." In other words, no one may do evil in order that good may come. Therefore, we should never omit whatever is necessary to do to keep God's laws or the natural law, just to avoid scandalizing the weak and the undisciplined. Likewise, we should never omit good and virtuous acts just to avoid exciting the malice of others.

MSGR. PASTOR YBAÑEZ