

Working for Peace

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In this issue where our format calls for words, let our first word be an Easter greeting. We are concerned as always with the current state of the Church in the world and particularly in the Philippines. Here when we celebrate Risen Glory we have more than one death to arise from - not only the Redemptive Death of Christ but what seem like useless deaths as well. We mean death of faith, death of ideals, death of a right sense of community and the deaths of men of goodwill who have stood for peace. Not every death mentioned will bring Resurrection and Life to the world. But all our problems will find solution in Christ.

One of the gravest problems in the Church today is lack of real personalism. We have become institutionalized to the point of seeming to be an amorphous mass not of believers but of (relatively) pious hangers-on. Only the *small* community which deals with people on a one to one basis can by personal encounter with Christ save the Church from the hideous appearance of being a "Sacrament Machine" doling out automatic spiritual panaceas to the crowd. Only by forming the People of God at the grass-roots in word and sacrament can we rediscover the freshness of Christ's Risen Life. Only by bringing each one of us to a reality of sensed and shared community can the Spirit triumph in us.

We have been called to live in upsetting and disappointing times and circumstances. We have seen how pride and greed can turn from mere sinful tendencies into sins of treason and murder, of graft and corruption. And we wonder who is to blame and cannot reckon ourselves totally guiltless. But we know a remedy for sin. For we know Christ! We know there is a righting of wrongs in His Cross. We know that the Power of his Resurrection can penetrate life on a national level.

Let us as men of peace be men of reconciliation. Let us as real evaluators of the tragedy of so much death be the agents of Resurrection and New Life. Let us take a Paschal message from Paschal living and bring it into "Ordinary Time," into our parishes, into our conventos, into our homes and day-to-day concerns. Above all, let us have both the humility and the courage to start all over again when things have gone radically wrong. Then in our loving stance, as well as by our words we shall be known and acknowledged as sincere followers of a crucified and risen Lord.

WORDS FOR TODAY

The Scriptural and Theological Foundations of Basic Ecclesial Communities*

*Fr. Caesar Santos***

Motives for Hope

Basic Ecclesial Communities have, for many years now, been eyed by the Roman Pontiffs with confident hope as useful vehicles to transmit the Gospel message to the grass-roots of society. They have been looked upon as a favorable response to a need, long felt by many quarters of the Church, to reach out to the individual members of the community whose pastoral attention may suffer from neglect - either because of the scarcity of priests, or because of the absence of adequate structures to provide for spiritual formation on a more personalized level.¹ This situation is especially true in the Philippines, both in rural areas where the wide dispersion of the flock from the parish church makes it difficult for pastors to provide regularly for the spiritual needs of the faithful, and also in urban areas where

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¹See the interesting summary of findings based on responses from Regional and National Episcopal Conferences all over the world regarding the proliferation of religious sects and the pastoral challenges they pose: *L'Osservatore Romano* 19-V-86, p. 6. English ed.

large concentrations of people within a given district not only make adequate pastoral attention difficult but also create situations where greater personal and fraternal contact in transmitting the Gospel message becomes more necessary than ever.

Basic Ecclesial Communities have been lauded for their versatility. Because of their manageable size, they can easily be adapted to meet the different pastoral challenges that may arise in a community. Because they are in immediate contact with the grass-roots of a diocese or parish, they can respond with more facility to the problems and needs of each member of the local Church. Moreover, because of the wide scope they allow for personal initiative, they offer the laity a valuable means to contribute their talents and energies to the spiritual upliftment of their community, and thereby be of great help to their parish priests who are more often than not already overburdened with the day-to-day concerns of parish administration.

It is for these reasons that Pope John Paul II, in an address prepared for the members of Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil, described these groups as "a valuable instrument of Christian formation and of a grass-roots penetration of the Gospel in Society."² When the same Pontiff went to Mexico in 1979, he expressed the hope that these communities be "a valid instrument of Christian impulse," useful, among other things, "for a widespread penetration of the Gospel in society."³ In saying this, the Holy Father was only echoing the high expectations of his predecessor Paul VI concerning these groups. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), Pope Paul VI had described the "most fundamental vocation" of Basic Ecclesial Communities in the following terms: "As bearers of the Gospel which is proclaimed to them and as privileged beneficiaries of evangelization, (the Basic Ecclesial Communities) are to become proclaimers of the Gospel themselves."⁴

²Address prepared on the occasion of his July 1980 pastoral visit to Brazil. Appears in the *CELAM Bulletin*, August 1980.

³Address to representatives of National Catholic organizations in Mexico, 29-I-79 (in *L'Osservatore Romano*, English ed., 12-II-79, p. 6).

⁴*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58.

Areas for Concern

While offering pastors a valuable means to reach out more effectively to each member of his flock, and while providing the laity with wide elbow room to contribute to the evangelizing mission of the Church,⁵ Basic Ecclesial Communities have also provided — in some unfortunate cases — the occasion of a dilution of the authentic Gospel message and even of a manipulation of some of these groups to serve objectives foreign to the salvific end of the Church. "Especially present," Pope John Paul II said, "is the danger of getting involved in politics. This involvement can present itself in the very birth and formation of these communities, when they take their origin not from the perspective of the Church, but from criteria and objectives of political ideology. This involvement can also take place under the form of a political instrumentalization of communities that had sprung from an ecclesial perspective."⁶

Before him, Pope Paul VI had forewarned against the tendency of some of these groups to be inspired by a "spirit of bitter criticism of the Church," an "attitude of fault-finding and of rejection with regard to the Church's outward manifestations — her hierarchy and signs," and as a consequence, "their main line of inspiration becomes ideological, and it rarely happens that they do not quickly fall victim to a system, even a party, with all the attendant risks of becoming its instrument."⁷

In the Philippines itself, the growth and development of Basic Ecclesial Communities has not been without its attendant risks of

⁵Pope Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, already pointed to this laudable aspect of the Basic Ecclesial Community structure — that of affording a wide scope for the exercise of personal freedom in the work of spiritual formation. He described these groups as "differing greatly among themselves both within the same region and even more so from one region to another" (no. 58).

⁶Pope John Paul II, Address to Basic Ecclesial Communities of Brazil, *op. cit.*

⁷*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58.

infiltration and manipulation by ideologically-inspired groups. Representatives of the military have several times expressed their suspicions and fears about this,⁸ and warnings from various quarters had prompted an assurance from Msgr. Antonio Mabutas, then President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, that Basic Ecclesial Communities had been instructed to attach themselves to the local parish church and "not to allow themselves to be ensnared by political polarization or fashionable ideologies."⁹

It is with a view to ensuring the fruitfulness of the signal service these communities are expected to render the Church that the Holy Father, in his discourses about them, has constantly endeavored to bring to mind the purpose for their existence and the characteristics that are to distinguish them as genuine instruments of evangelization. I have been asked to develop the theme "The Scriptural and Theological Foundations of Basic Ecclesial Communities." It is within this framework, therefore, that I shall endeavor to elaborate on the recent pronouncements of the Magisterium on this subject.

John Paul II has pointed out two passages from Sacred Scripture, from the Acts of the Apostles, that describe the objective that all Basic Ecclesial Communities must pursue, namely that of forming "true Christian communities like those of our early brothers and sisters in the faith."¹⁰

Purpose of BEC

But some words first about this objective which, according to the mind of the Holy Father, must be common to all Basic Ecclesial Communities — to create Christian Communities patterned after those of the first Christians. To envisage our modern grass-roots com-

⁸See "The BCC's: what are they?," an article in 5 parts appearing in *Business Day*, 20-24 August 1984.

⁹Part IV of the above series: *Business Day*, 23 August 1984, pp. 5 and 9.

¹⁰Pope John Paul II, Homily at Viedma, Argentina, on 7-IV-87 (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 11-V-87, p. 9, English ed.)

munities as replicas of those of the early Christians is much more than a simple "return to the origins": if it meant only that, the exhortation of the Roman Pontiff would hardly carry any meaning at all. Pope John Paul II is aiming at something much deeper: his putting forward these first Christians as models for our lives is based on the fact that, if there was any age in the history of the Church when the faithful were deeply aware of what to be a Christian meant, it was during what one Church historian called the "Age of Apostles and Martyrs." Those first Christians were characterized by the fervor, simplicity, and ardent charity that disciples of Christ ought to have. Being a Christian at that time carried great risks, and if a person asked for baptism, it was because of a deep conviction born of lively faith, that Christ was indeed the Way, Truth and Life. Exceptions to the rule there no doubt were: but, on the whole, the age of the first Christians will always be to the glory of the Church, an age of strong faith, firm hope and vibrant love. One has but to leaf through the Acts of the Apostles to catch a glimpse of the zeal of these brothers and sisters of ours in the faith, fruit of the constant action of the Holy Spirit in their souls. Two passages are of special interest to our study, the passages singled out by John Paul II in a homily given at Viedma, Argentina on April of 1987.

Acts 2:42 - Three Hallmarks of the BEC

The first is from Acts 2:42-47, where the first Christians are described as "continuing steadfastly in the teaching of the Apostles and in the communion of the breaking of the bread and in the prayers." Let us consider each of these three hallmarks of the life of these pioneers in the faith, beginning with the last-mentioned one.

Persevering in prayer. The first Christians, whom we look to with understandable pride as vibrant witnesses to the true nature of the Christian vocation as a call to holiness, were above all prayerful souls: they were not men or women "generous in action but sparing in prayer"¹¹: prayer was the source of all their energies and the secret of their effectiveness as spiritual leaven in the pagan world they lived

¹¹Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*, 937.

in. They nourished their spiritual life on the assiduous meditation of the Word of God and diligently cultivated that personal intimacy with Christ, that lifting up of the mind and heart of Him, which true prayer is. Their dealings with one another and their community gatherings helped to foster this life of prayer, in accordance with the exhortation of St. Paul that they "be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (*Eph* 5:18-19). The Basic Ecclesial Communities, therefore, if they are to fulfill their evangelizing mission in today's world, must strive in the first place to make of each one of their members souls who *persevere in prayer*.

Persevering in the communion of the breaking of the bread. Our first brothers and sisters in the faith knew that, if their spiritual lives were to grow, if their mutual charity was to increase and bear fruit in fraternal expressions of service, they had to seek their strength in the sacraments. The sacraments are channels of sanctifying grace, instituted by Christ himself to nourish our spiritual lives. An intense sacramental life, especially the frequent reception of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist, must be a prime value among the members of a Basic Ecclesial Community, and their formation within that community has to be imparted with a view to making them understand the significance of the sacraments more deeply, and teaching them how to prepare themselves more adequately to receive the sacraments with greater fruitfulness.

Persevering in the doctrine of the Apostles. The first Christians, as is the case with all the faithful disciples of our Lord, were always united with their Shepherds. They obeyed their injunctions to live according to the moral precepts of the Savior. They adhered steadfastly to the doctrine they received from their lips, knowing fully well that in hearing and receiving them, they were hearing and receiving Christ himself.¹² Union with the hierarchy—from the Pope, through the bishop, down to the parish priest within whose parish the Basic Ecclesial Community exercises its apostolate—is another characteristic that ought to mark every initiative, every effort, and every decision the members of that community take in serving the Church and their fellowmen. They must "maintain the sincere communion

¹²Cf. *Mt* 10:40; *Lk* 10:16.

with the past whom the Lord gives to his Church, and with the Magisterium which the Spirit of Christ has entrusted to these pastors,"¹³ and "avoid the ever present temptation of systematic protest and a hypercritical attitude, under the pretext of authenticity and a spirit of collaboration."¹⁴

Ecclesiality

This leads us to that characteristic which John Paul II described as that which should "most profoundly define" the Basic Ecclesial Community, and "without which, it would lose its identity": it is what the Holy Father calls its "ecclesiality."¹⁵ The community must always bear in mind that its mission is identical with the mission of the Church, and that, in striving to create a group of well-formed Christians — well-formed in the faith, in the spirit of charity, in sacramental and liturgical life — it is endeavoring to accomplish nothing else than "to live the Church's life more intensely."¹⁶ Hence, the need to foster "the sincere and loyal unity of the community with its legitimate Pastors and its faithful adherence to the objectives of the Church."¹⁷

The awareness of belonging to the one universal body which is the Church and whose members are governed by and united under the same Head, will permeate the Basic Ecclesial Communities "with the consciousness of being living members of a Church that is a communion" and will instill in them the conviction that "only in the context of this Church Communion can the vocation and mission of the Christian be understood."¹⁸

¹³*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58.

¹⁴*Loc. cit.*

¹⁵Pope John Paul II, Address to Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil, *op. cit.*

¹⁶*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58.

¹⁷Pope John Paul II, Address to Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil, *op. cit.*

¹⁸Pope John Paul II, Homily at Viedma, *op. cit.*

Acts 4:32 - The BEC: A Community of Charity

It is in this context that the Holy Father quotes the second passage of the Acts of the Apostles mentioned earlier. He encourages grass-roots communities "to reproduce that magnificent testimony of the early Church: 'The whole group of believers was united in heart and soul' (Ac 4:32)."¹⁹

Cor unum et anima una! The first Christians were closely united to one another, in a bond of fraternal charity, having the common objective (establishing all things in Christ) and means (intense prayer, frequentation of the sacraments, fidelity to the Magisterium) that ensure a "clear ecclesial identity."²⁰

This unity must be zealously preserved by the Basic Ecclesial Community among the members that form part of the group and also towards other organizations and institutions of the Church.

This is what prompted John Paul II to describe the Basic Ecclesial Community as a "community of charity." Here are his words: "An ecclesial community must necessarily be a community of charity or fraternal love. Not in vain did our Lord, wishing to point out the distinguishing mark of his disciples and followers, proclaim: 'In this will all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (Jn 13:35). It shall be a community of charity to the extent that its members strive to know one another more and more, to live in fellowship, sharing their joys and sorrows, riches and needs. Besides, what is the primary reason for the formation of Basic Communities if not the need and desire to create groups, not composed of numerous members but patterned after a standard more suited to the human need for true dialogue and fellowship? The Basic Community will be a community of charity above all if it becomes an instrument of service — of mutual service in the heart of the same community and service to other brethren, especially those who are in most need."²¹

¹⁹*Loc. cit.*

²⁰Pope John Paul II to slum dwellers in Santiago de Chile, 2-IV-87 (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 13-IV-87, P. 10, English ed.).

²¹Pope John Paul II, Address to Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil, *op. cit.*

It is the spirit of unity and charity that shall give these groups that openness to other initiatives and undertakings in the Church, which Pope Paul VI saw fit to bring to the attention of some Basic Ecclesial Communities in his encyclical *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. "Universal in all things," "never sectarian," "never looking on themselves as the sole beneficiaries or sole agents of evangelization, but being aware that the Church is much more vast and diversified, (these communities) accept the fact that his Church becomes incarnate in other ways than through themselves"²² — such are the marks of a group that assiduously keeps alive its consciousness of being but a part of the larger — Catholic! — undertaking which is the Church, united under the same hierarchy, sharing the same goals, but responding in different ways to the evangelical challenge, each according to his or her own charism.²³

In this way, a vast apostolic panorama opens up, wide enough to encompass the different avenues of service that the personal initiative of individuals embark upon, prompted by God's grace and always in union with the legitimate Pastors.

Formation in the Faith

The immediate objectives of the Basic Ecclesial Communities — all expressions of the spirit of charity animating each one of them — admit of great variety. "In the first place," says the Holy Father, "charity can be lived by helping someone deepen his own faith."²⁴

We see in this remark of John Paul II an important aspect of the role Basic Ecclesial Communities are expected to play if they are to participate actively in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Without faith it is impossible to please God,²⁵ and it is to preserving,

²²*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58.

²³Pope John Paul II, Homily at Viedma, *op. cit.*

²⁴Pope John Paul II, Address to Basic Ecclesial Communities of Brazil, *op. cit.*

²⁵Cf. *Heb* 11:6.

transmitting and applying the faith that the Church devotes all her energies. If Basic Ecclesial Communities are to be truly ecclesial, if they are to be genuine communities of charity, helping men procure the goods that bring them closer to God, they ought to strengthen the faith of their individual members. Whatever be the material objectives they hope to accomplish (vindication of human rights, cooperatives to facilitate agricultural productivity, social welfare projects, etc.), these must be pursued hand-in-hand with a constant endeavor to deepen that faith which, according to St. Paul works through charity.²⁶

In this respect, John Paul II talks of "a great need for a sound preparation and a more profound spirituality" among the members of Basic Ecclesial Communities. These members must be formed in the truths and spirit of the Gospel, they must be helped to learn and practice the Christian virtues, they must be taught the importance of the sacraments, and must be made to realize that God is to be served through the diligent fulfillment of their daily obligations. Thoroughly imbued with the love of Christ, they will be *foci* radiating the light and warmth of the Master wherever they may be. In the first place, they are to radiate this love in the hearth of their homes, in the bosom of their families, which Vatican II has called the "domestic church" — a basic ecclesial community if there ever was one. Such is the "formation and spirituality" the Holy Father referred to as indispensable for our grass-roots communities: "Formation and Spirituality are an inseparable condition for anyone who aspires to lead a Christian life truly dedicated to the building up of a more just and fraternal society . . . You must nourish yourself on the Word of God and on the Sacraments . . . Fulfill the demands and live the sacramental grace of your Baptism and Confirmation, of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and of the Eucharist; may those who have been called to marriage live the grace of this sacrament. . . Be men and women of prayer."²⁷

²⁶Cf. *Gal* 5:6.

²⁷Homily at Viedma, Argentina, *op. cit.*

Responsibility of Leaders

Here the role of the group leader has an importance which is hard to exaggerate. The members have to be formed well in the faith, they must have a firm grasp of the teachings of the Church, meditate on the Word of God, frequent the sacraments, faithfully fulfill the thousand and one obligations that their state in life imposes on them; and since one cannot give what one does not have, do not the group leaders have a special duty to strengthen their own faith while helping others to do same?

John Paul II says, "The leader, called upon to direct the orientation of the community and probably to help its members grow in the faith, must have a serious interest in forming himself in the first place in the faith. The leader does not transmit his own thought or doctrine but that which he learns and receives from the Church. Hence, he has an obligation to diligently accept from the Church whatever she wants to teach him: the correct interpretation of divine Revelation contained in the Bible and in Tradition, the means of salvation, the norms for correct moral behavior, the life of prayer and the liturgy, etc."²⁸

And since the impact of a group leader derives not only from what he says, but above all from how he lives, it is worth recalling those other words of the same Roman Pontiff: "In all cases, a leader of the Basic Ecclesial Community, more than a teacher, is a witness. The community has the right to receive from him a persuasive example of Christian living, of an operative and radiating faith, of far-reaching hope and disinterested love. He must also be a man who believes in prayer, and who prays."²⁹

Firm in the faith, all the members of the Basic Ecclesial Community are then duly equipped to make other possible endeavors on behalf of their neighbor fruitful and effective: undertaking projects to uplift the oppressed, helping out in efforts to care for the

²⁸*Loc. cit.*

²⁹*Loc. cit.*

socially marginalized, defending human rights, promoting greater solidarity within a given community, etc. They will thus be able to guarantee that all their initiatives, as enjoined by the Holy Father, "carry the sign of true charity, as it is described by St. Paul - patient, kind, forgetful of self but solicitous about the needs of others (cf. *1 Cor* 13:4 ff.), or by our Lord in St. John's: 'Greater love than this no man has, that a man should lay down his life for his friends' (*Jn* 15:13)."⁹⁰

⁹⁰*Loc. cit.*

Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II For The Celebration of the World Day of Peace*

*Peace with God the Creator,
Peace with all of Creation*

Introduction

1. In our day, there is a growing awareness that world peace is threatened not only by the arms race, regional conflicts and continued injustices among peoples and nations, but also by a lack of *due respect for nature*, by the plundering of natural resources and by a progressive decline in the quality of life. This sense of precariousness and insecurity that such a situation engenders is a seedbed for collective selfishness, disregard for others and dishonesty.

Faced with the widespread destruction of the environment, people everywhere are coming to understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past. The public in general as well as political leaders are concerned about this problem, and experts from a wide range of disciplines are studying its causes. Moreover, a new ecological awareness is beginning to emerge which, rather than being downplayed, ought to be encouraged to develop into concrete programmes and initiatives.

2. Many ethical values, fundamental to the development of a peaceful society, are particularly relevant to the ecological question. The fact that many challenges facing the world today are interdependent confirms the need for carefully coordinated solutions based on a morally coherent world view.

For Christians, such a world view is grounded in religious convictions drawn from Revelation. That is why I should like to begin this Message with a reflection on the biblical account of creation. I would hope that even those who do not share these same beliefs will find in these pages a common ground for reflection and action.

I. "And God saw that it was good"

3. In the Book of Genesis, where we find God's first self-revelation to humanity (*Gen* 1-3), there is a recurring refrain: "And God saw that it was good." After creating the heavens, the sea, the earth and all it contains, God created man and woman. At this point the refrain changes markedly: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, *it was very good*" (*Gen* 1:31). God entrusted the whole of creation to the man and woman, and only then — as we read — could he rest "from all this work" (*Gen* 2:3).

Adam and Eve's call to share in the unfolding of God's plan of creation brought into play those abilities and gifts which distinguish the human being from all other creatures. At the same time, their call established a fixed relationship between mankind and the rest of creation. Made in the image and likeness of God, Adam and Eve were to have exercised their dominion over the earth (*Gen* 1:28) with wisdom and love. Instead, they destroyed the existing harmony by *deliberately going against the Creator's plan*, that is, by choosing to sin. This resulted not only in man's alienation from himself, in death and fratricide, but also in the earth's "rebellion" against him (cf. *Gen* 3:17-19; 4:12). All of creation became subject to futility, waiting in a mysterious way to be set free and to obtain a glorious liberty together with all the children of God (cf. *Rom* 8:20-21).

4. Christians believe that the Death and Resurrection of Christ accomplished the work of reconciling humanity to the Father, who

"was pleased . . . through (Christ) to reconcile to himself *all things*, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col 1:19-20). Creation was thus made new (cf. Rev 21:5). Once subjected to the bondage of sin and decay (cf. Rom 8:21), it has now received new life while "we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pt 3:13). Thus, the Father "has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery . . . which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite *all things* in him, all things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:9-10).

5. These biblical considerations help us to understand better the relationship between human activity and the whole of creation. When man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order. If man is not at peace with God, then earth itself cannot be at peace: "Therefore the land mourns and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the air and even the fish of the sea are taken away" (Hos 4:3).

The profound sense that the earth is "suffering" is also shared by those who do not profess our faith in God. Indeed, the increasing devastation of the world of nature is apparent to all. It results from the behavior of people who show a callous disregard for the hidden, yet perceivable requirements of the order and harmony which govern nature itself.

People are asking anxiously if it is still possible to remedy the damage which has been done. Clearly, an adequate solution cannot be found merely in a better management or a more rational use of the earth's resources, as important as these may be. Rather, we must go to the source of the problem and face in its entirety that profound moral crisis of which the destruction of the environment is only one troubling aspect.

II. The ecological crisis: a moral problem

6. Certain elements of today's ecological crisis reveal its moral character. First among these is the *indiscriminate application* of advances in science and technology. Many recent discoveries have

brought undeniable benefits to humanity. Indeed, they demonstrate the nobility of the human vocation to participate responsibly in God's creative action in the world. Unfortunately, it is now clear that the application of these discoveries in the fields of industry and agriculture have produced harmful long-term effects. This has led to the painful realization that *we cannot interfere in one area of the ecosystem without paying due attention both to the consequences of such interference in other areas and to the well-being of future generations.*

The gradual depletion of the ozone layer and the related "greenhouse effect" has now reached crisis proportions as a consequence of industrial growth, massive urban concentrations and vastly increased energy needs. Industrial waste, the burning of fossil fuels, unrestricted deforestation, the use of certain types of herbicides, coolants and propellants: all of these are known to harm the atmosphere and environment. The resulting meteorological and atmospheric changes range from damage to health to the possible future submersion of low-lying lands.

While in some cases the damage already done may well be irreversible, in many other cases it can still be halted. It is necessary, however, that the entire human community - individuals, states and international bodies - take seriously the responsibility that is theirs.

7. The most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying the ecological problem is the lack of *respect for life* evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over concern for the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples. In these cases, pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which at times leads to a genuine contempt for man.

On another level, delicate ecological balances are upset by the uncontrolled destruction of animal and plant life or by a reckless exploitation of natural resources. It should be pointed out that all of this, even if carried out in the name of progress and well-being, is ultimately to mankind's disadvantage.

Finally, we can only look with deep concern at the enormous possibilities of biological research. We are not yet in a position to assess the biological disturbance that could result from indiscriminate genetic manipulation and from the unscrupulous development of new forms of plant and animal life, to say nothing of unacceptable experimentation regarding the origins of human life itself. It is evident to all that in any area as delicate as this, indifference to fundamental ethical norms, or their rejection, would lead mankind to the very threshold of self-destruction.

Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress.

The complexity of the ecological question is evident to all. There are, however, certain underlying principles, which, while respecting the legitimate autonomy and the specific competence of those involved, can direct research towards adequate and lasting solutions. These principles are essential to the building of a peaceful society; *no peaceful society can afford to neglect either respect for life or the fact that there is an integrity to creation.*

III. In search of a solution

8. Theology, philosophy and science all speak of a harmonious universe, of a "cosmos" endowed with its own integrity, its own internal, dynamic balance. *This order must be respected.* The human race is called to explore this order, to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity.

On the other hand, the earth is ultimately *a common heritage, the fruits of which are for the benefit of all.* In the words of the Second Vatican Council, "God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all people" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 69). This has direct consequences for the problem at hand. It is manifestly unjust that a privileged few should continue to accumulate excess goods, squandering available resources, while masses of people are living in conditions of misery at the very lowest level of subsistence. Today, the dramatic threat of ecological breakdown is teaching us the

extent to which greed and selfishness - both individual and collective - are contrary to the order of creation, an order which is characterized by mutual interdependence.

9. The concepts of an ordered universe and a common heritage both point to the necessity of a *more internationally coordinated approach to the management of the earth's goods*. In many cases the effects of ecological problems transcend the borders of individual states; hence their solution cannot be found solely on the national level. Recently there have been some promising steps towards such international action, yet the existing mechanisms and bodies are clearly not adequate for the development of a comprehensive plan of action. Political obstacles, forms of exaggerated nationalism and economic interest - to mention only a few factors - impede international cooperation and long-term effective action.

The need for joint action on the international level *does not lessen the responsibility of each individual state*. Not only should each state join with others in implementing internationally accepted standards, but it should also make or facilitate necessary socio-economic adjustments within its own borders, giving special attention to the most vulnerable sectors of society. The state should also actively endeavour within its own territory to prevent destruction of the atmosphere and biosphere, by carefully monitoring, among other things, the impact of new technological or scientific advances. The state also has the responsibility of ensuring that its citizens are not exposed to dangerous pollutants or toxic wastes. *The right to a safe environment* is ever more insistently presented today as a right that must be included in an updated Charter of Human Rights.

IV. The urgent need for a new solidarity

10. The ecological crisis reveals the *urgent moral need for a new solidarity*, especially in relations between the developing nations and those that are highly industrialized. States must increasingly share responsibility, in complimentary ways, for the promotion of a natural and social environment that is both peaceful and healthy. The newly industrialized states cannot, for example, be asked to apply restrictive environmental standards to their emerging industries unless the

industrialized states first apply them within their own boundaries. At the same time, countries in the process of industrialization are not morally free to repeat the errors made in the past by others, and recklessly continue to damage the environment through industrial pollutants, radical deforestation or unlimited exploitation of non-renewable resources. In this context, there is urgent need to find a solution to the treatment and disposal of toxic wastes.

No plan or organization, however, will be able to effect the necessary changes unless world leaders are truly convinced of the absolute need for this new solidarity, which is demanded of them by the ecological crisis and which is essential for peace. *This need represents new opportunities for strengthening cooperative and peaceful relations among states.*

11. It must also be said that the proper ecological balance will not be found without *directly addressing the structural forms of poverty* that exist throughout the world. Rural poverty and unjust land distribution in many countries, for example, have led to subsistence farming and to the exhaustion of the soil. Once their land yields no more, many farmers move on to clear new land, thus accelerating uncontrolled deforestation, or they settle in urban centres which lack the infrastructure to receive them. Likewise, some heavily indebted countries are destroying their natural heritage, at the price of irreparable ecological imbalances, in order to develop new products for export. In the face of such situations it would be wrong to assign responsibility to the poor alone for the negative environmental consequences of their actions. Rather, the poor, to whom the earth is entrusted no less than to others, must be enabled to find a way out of their poverty. This will require a courageous reform of structures, as well as new ways of relating among peoples and states.

12. But there is another dangerous menace which threatens us, namely *war*. Unfortunately, modern science already has the capacity to change the environment for hostile purposes. Alterations of this kind over the long term could have unforeseeable and still more serious consequences. Despite the international agreements which prohibit chemical, bacteriological and biological warfare, the fact is that laboratory research continues to develop new offensive weapons capable of altering the balance of nature.

Today, any form of war on a global scale would lead to incalculable ecological damage. But even local or regional wars, however limited, not only destroy human life and social structures, but also damage the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning the soil and water. The survivors of war are forced to begin a new life in very difficult environmental conditions, which in turn create situations of extreme social unrest, with further negative consequences for the environment.

13. Modern society will find no solution to the ecological problem unless it takes a serious look at its life style. In many parts of the world society is given to instant gratification and consumerism while remaining indifferent to the damage which these cause. As I have already stated, the seriousness of the ecological issue lays bare the depth of man's moral crisis. If an appreciation of the value of the human person and of human life is lacking, we will also lose interest in others and in the earth itself. Simplicity, moderation and discipline, as well as a spirit of sacrifice, must become a part of everyday life, lest all suffer the negative consequences of the careless habits of a few.

An education in ecological responsibility is urgent: responsibility for oneself, for others, and for the earth. This education cannot be rooted in mere sentiment or empty wishes. Its purpose cannot be ideological or political. It must not be based on a rejection of the modern world or a vague desire to return to some "paradise lost". Instead, a true education in responsibility entails a genuine conversion in ways of thought and behavior. Churches and religious bodies, non-governmental and governmental organizations, indeed all members of society, have a precise role to play in such education. The first educator, however, is the family, where the child learns to respect his neighbour and to love nature.

14. Finally, the aesthetic value of creation cannot be overlooked. Our very contact with nature has a deep restorative power; contemplation of its magnificence imparts peace and serenity. The Bible speaks again and again of the goodness and beauty of creation, which is called to glorify God (cf. *Gen* 1:4 ff; *Ps* 8:2; 104:1 ff; *Wis* 13:3-5; *Sir* 39:16, 33, 43:1,9). More difficult perhaps, but no less profound, is the contemplation of the works of human ingenuity. Even cities can have

a beauty all their own, one that ought to motivate people to care for their surroundings. Good urban planning is an important part of environmental protection, and respect for the natural contours of the land is an indispensable prerequisite for ecologically sound development. The relationship between a good aesthetic education and the maintenance of a healthy environment cannot be overlooked.

V. The ecological crisis: a common responsibility

15. Today the ecological crisis has assumed such proportions as to be *the responsibility of everyone*. As I have pointed out, its various aspects demonstrate the need for concerted efforts aimed at establishing the duties and obligations that belong to individuals, peoples, states and the international community. This not only goes hand in hand with efforts to build true peace, but also confirms and reinforces those efforts in a concrete way. When the ecological crisis is set within the broader context of *the search for peace* within society, we can understand better the importance of giving attention to what the earth and its atmosphere are telling us: namely, that there is an order in the universe which must be respected, and that the human person, endowed with the capability of choosing freely, has a grave responsibility to preserve this order for the well-being of future generations. I wish to repeat that *the ecological crisis is a moral issue*.

Even men and women without any particular religious conviction, but with an acute sense of their responsibilities for the common good, recognize their obligation to contribute to the restoration of a healthy environment. All the more should men and women who believe in God the Creator, and who are thus convinced that there is a well-defined unity and order in the world, feel called to address the problem. Christians, in particular, realize that their responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator are an essential part of their faith. As a result, they are conscious of a vast field of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation opening up before them.

16. At the conclusion of this Message, I should like to address directly my brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church, in order to remind them of their serious obligation to care for all of

creation. The commitment of believers to a healthy environment for everyone stems directly from their belief in God the Creator, from their recognition of the effects of original and personal sin, and from the certainty of having been redeemed by Christ. Respect for life and for the dignity of the human person extends also to the rest of creation, which is called to join man in praising God (cf. *Ps* 148:96).

In 1979, I proclaimed Saint Francis of Assisi as the heavenly Patron of those who promote ecology (cf. Apostolic Letter *Inter Sanctos*: AAS 71 [1979], 1509f.). He offers Christians an example of genuine and deep respect for the integrity of creation. As a friend of the poor who was loved by God's creatures, Saint Francis invited all of creation — animals, plants, natural forces, even Brother Sun and Sister Moon — to give honor and praise to the Lord. The poor man of Assisi gives us striking witness that when we are at peace with God we are better able to devote ourselves to building up that peace with all creation which is inseparable from peace among all peoples.

It is my hope that the inspiration of Saint Francis will help us to keep ever alive a sense of "fraternity" with all those good and beautiful things which Almighty God has created. And may he remind us of our serious obligation to respect and watch over them with care, in light of that greater and higher fraternity that exists within the human family.

From the Vatican, 8 December 1989.

Joannes Paulus II

Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*

Congregation for Catholic Education

The Congregation for Catholic Education recently released its "Guidelines for study and teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests." This is the latest in a series of documents published by the Congregation to assist in the renewal of priestly formation. Produced in cooperation with the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, the purpose of the document is to respond to the growing necessity of advancing the formation of Catholics in the repair and promotion of society by ensuring that future priests themselves are well educated in these matters and therefore able to educate the consciences of their parishioners.

From an enquiry conducted in the late 1970s and from reports from bishops and seminaries, it became evident that some seminaries offer very good service in this matter, but that others leave a lot to be desired. In 1982 a commission of experts was asked to prepare a first draft of a document. That draft was submitted for consultation; and,

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after several reworkings, the present text has resulted. It has been revised to keep pace with developments, not least with the present Holy Father's Encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis.

The 90-page document contains 6 chapters and 2 appendices. The first chapter treats the nature of the Church's social doctrine, not by defining it but by describing its particular methodology and its essential components. The second chapter treats the historical dimension, facing the doctrine's progressive formulation in responding to the more urgent problems across the years, especially from the time of Leo XIII. The third chapter treats permanent principles and values, such as the human person, human rights, the common good, etc. The fourth chapter outlines criteria for judgment, since objective judgments require an objective knowledge of reality which is not subordinated to any particular ideology. The fifth chapter offers directives for social action so that through respect for persons, dialogue, Christian discernment and expertise political and social life may be humanized and ennobled. The sixth chapter is devoted to the formation of professors and the organization of studies. The first appendix contains suggestions for the curriculum, while the second is a collection of texts from Magisterial documents corresponding to the numbered paragraphs of the Guidelines.

INTRODUCTION

1. During the last decades, the Congregation for Catholic Education, attentive to the emerging needs of Conciliar renewal, has on numerous occasions offered seminaries and various institutes of theological study appropriate directives for the different areas of priestly formation.¹ At this time, it believes it is useful to address itself

¹Cf. *Ratio fundamentalis institutionis sacerdotalis* (6 January 1970; new edition: 19 March 1985); Circular Letter on *The Teaching of Philosophy in Seminaries* (20 January 1972); *Educational Guidelines for Formation in Priestly Celibacy* (11 April 1974); Circular Letter on *the Teaching of Canon Law for those aspiring to the Priesthood* (2 April 1975); Document on *The Theological Formation of Future Priests* (22 February 1976); *Instruction on Liturgical Formation in Seminaries* (3 June 1979); Circular Letter on *Some More Urgent Aspects of Spiritual Formation in Seminaries* (6 June 1980); *Guidelines for the Formation of Future Priests concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* (19 March 1986).

once again to bishops, educators in seminaries and professors in order to propose some guidelines for the study and teaching of the social doctrine of the Church.

In taking this initiative, it is aware of responding to a real need, which is strongly felt everywhere today, to make the human family benefit from the wealth contained in the Church's social doctrine through the ministry of priests who are well prepared and aware of the numerous tasks awaiting them. Today, at a time so rich in deepening understanding and studies on this topic, as also appears, among other things, from John Paul II's recent Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,² it is very important for candidates for the priesthood to acquire a clear idea about the nature, ends and basic components of this doctrine, in order to be capable of applying it in pastoral activity in its entirety, as formulated and presented by the Magisterium of the Church. The situation in this field is in fact one that requires an appropriate clarification of the different concepts, as will be seen in the various chapters of these "Guidelines."

First of all, it must be noted that two terms are used interchangeably: "social doctrine" and "social teaching" of the Church. The nuances implied by each of them are not overlooked; "doctrine," in fact, stresses more the theoretical aspects of the problem, and "teaching" the historical and practical aspect, but both stand for the same reality. Their alternate use in the Church's social Magisterium, both in the solemn Magisterium and the ordinary papal and episcopal Magisterium, indicates their reciprocal equivalency.

Over and above any conflicts about words and expressions, the reality indicated by social doctrine or social teaching constitutes a "rich heritage" which the Church has progressively acquired by drawing from the Word of God, and being attentive to the changeable situations of peoples throughout the different historical eras.

It is a heritage which must be preserved with fidelity and developed by responding gradually to the new emerging needs of human co-existence.

² John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), n. 41: A.A.S. 80 (1988), page 571.

2. Today social doctrine is called upon with increasingly greater urgency to make its own specific contribution to evangelization, to dialogue with the world, to the Christian interpretation of reality, and to guidelines for pastoral action in order to enlighten the various initiatives on the temporal plane with sound principles. Indeed economic, social, political and cultural structures are experiencing profound and rapid transformations which put the very future of human society at stake and thus they need a sure orientation. It is a matter of promoting real social progress which, in order effectively to ensure the common good of all men, requires a just organization of these structures. If this is not done, there will be a return of great multitude towards that situation of a "quasi-servile yoke," which Leo XIII spoke about in *Rerum Novarum*.³

Therefore, it is obvious that the "grave drama" of the contemporary world caused by the numerous threats that often accompany human progress, "cannot leave anyone indifferent."⁴ For this reason, the irreplaceable evangelizing presence of the Church is becoming more urgent and decisive in the complex world of temporal realities which condition the destiny of mankind.

Nevertheless, although the Church enters into this field, she is aware of her own limits. She does not pretend to provide a solution to all the problems present in the dramatic situation of the contemporary world and, all the more so, because great differences in development exist between nations, and between the situations in which Christians⁵ are engaged. On the other hand, she can and must, in the "light which comes to her from the Gospel,"⁶ provide the principles and necessary guidelines for the correct organization of social life, for the dignity of the human person, and for the common good. The Mag-

³LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (15 May 1891): *Acta Leonis XIII* (1891), page 99.

⁴JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), n. 16: AAS 71 (1979), page 293.

⁵PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), nn. 3-4, pages 402 ff.

⁶VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 3.

isterium, in fact, continues to intervene often in this field with a doctrine that all the faithful are called upon to know, teach and apply. For this reason, a special place must be ensured, in harmony with philosophical and theological studies, for the teaching of this doctrine in the formation of future priests, as John XXIII⁷ clearly stated in this regard, and as is reiterated once again in these "Guidelines." They have been studied in collaboration with the Pontifical Commission "Iustitia et Pax," and approved by the plenary Assembly of the Congregation for Catholic Education.

The document contains six chapters. The first five refer to the nature of the Church's social doctrine; its historical, theoretical and practical dimensions in the three elements it comprises; that is, permanent principles, criteria for judgment, directives for action. The sixth chapter gives some indications on how to ensure an adequate formation in social doctrine for candidates for the priesthood.

I. NATURE OF SOCIAL DOCTRINE

Constitutive elements of social doctrine

3. The uncertainties which come up at times concerning usage of the term "social doctrine" of the Church, and also with regard to its very nature, require a clarification of the epistemological problem which is at the root of these misunderstandings. Although this document does not pretend to deal *ex professo* with, or indeed to resolve, all the epistemological aspects related to reflection on the constitutive elements that express its nature will aid better understanding of the terms in which the problem is raised. In any case, it must be kept in mind that it is proposed here to specify those constitutive elements as they are directly taken from magisterial pronouncements, and not as formulated by various scholars. In fact, a distinction must always be made between the official "social doctrine" of the Church and the various positions of schools which

⁷ JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961): AAS 53 (1961), pages 453-454.

have systematically explained, developed and ordered the social thinking contained in papal documents.⁸

The essential documents describing and defining the nature of social doctrine are presented in this way:⁹ the social teaching of the Church draws its origin from the encounter of the evangelical message and its ethical requirements with the problems that arise in the life of society. The needs that emerge from this encounter become the subject of moral reflection which matures in the Church through scientific research, but also through the experience of the Christian community which must measure itself everyday against the various situations of misery and, above all, with the problems created by the appearance and development of the phenomenon of industrialization and the socio-economic systems related to it.

This doctrine is formed through the use of theology and philosophy, which give it a foundation, and of the human and social sciences which complete it. It is projected onto the ethical aspects of life, without neglecting the technical aspects of the problems, in order to judge them with moral criteria. By basing itself "on principles which are always valid," it implies "contingent judgments" since it develops in relation to the changeable circumstances of history, and is directed essentially towards "Christian action or practice."

Autonomy of social doctrine

4. Although this social doctrine was formed during the nineteenth century as a complement to the treatise on morality dedicated to the virtue of justice, it soon acquired a notable autonomy due to the ongoing organic and systematic development of the Church's moral reflection on the new and complex social problems. Thus it can be stated that social doctrine has an identity of its own with a well-defined theological profile.

⁸PIUS XII, Allocution *Animus noster*, to the Academic Senate and students of the Pontifical Gregorian University of Rome (17 October 1953), page 687.

⁹CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Liberata conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986), n. 72: AAS 79 (1987), pages 585 ff.

Next, there is a "historical dimension" in the social doctrine of the Church because, in it the use of principles is framed in a real view of society and inspired by an awareness of its problems.

Lastly, there is a "practical dimension" because social doctrine does not end only with a statement of permanent principles for reflection, or with the mere interpretation of the historical conditions of society. It also proposes the effective application of these principles in practice by translating them concretely into the ways, and to the extent, that circumstances permit or require it.²⁰

Methodology of social doctrine

7. This threefold dimension aids understanding the dynamic inductive-deductive process of the methodology which, although already followed in the earlier documents in a general way, is better specified in the Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, and taken on decisively in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and in subsequent documents. This method is developed in three phases; seeing, judging, and acting.

Seeing is perception and study of real problems and their causes, the analysis of which, however, belongs to the human and social sciences.

Judging is interpretation of that same reality in the light of the sources of social doctrine which determine the judgment pronounced with regard to social phenomena and their ethical implications. In this intermediate phase is found the function proper to the Magisterium of the Church which consists precisely in interpreting reality from the viewpoint of faith and offering "what it has of its own: a global view about man and humanity."²¹ Obviously in seeing and judging reality, the Church is not and cannot be neutral because she

²⁰ JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961): AAS 53 (1961), page 453.

²¹ PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum, Progressio* (26 March 1967), n. 13: AAS 59 (1967), page 264.

This theological nature of social doctrine is expressed as well in its pastoral objective of service to the world aimed at encouraging integral human development through the practice of Christian liberation in its earthly and transcendent perspective.¹⁶ It is not a matter of communicating only "pure knowledge," but theoretical-practical knowledge with pastoral importance and projection consistent with the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is the correct knowledge about real man and his destiny¹⁶ which the Church can offer as her contribution to the solution of human problems. It can be said that in every age and in every situation, the Church follows this path and carries out a threefold task in society: announcement of the truth about human dignity and rights; denouncement of unjust situations; and contribution to positive changes in society and real human progress.¹⁷

Threefold dimension of social doctrine

6. Social doctrine includes a threefold dimension; theoretical, historical and practical. These dimensions make up its basic structure and are interrelated and inseparable.

First of all, there is "a theoretical dimension" because the Magisterium of the Church has explicitly formulated an organic and systematic reflection in its social documents. The Magisterium indicates the sure path for building relations of coexistence in a new social order according to universal criteria which can be accepted by all.¹⁸ These are permanent ethical principles, not changeable historical judgments or "technical matters, for which (the Magisterium) has neither the equipment nor the mission."¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., n. 31: AAS 68 (1976), page 26.

¹⁶VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, , nn. 12 ff.

¹⁷JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), n. 1: AAS 73 (1981), page 580.

¹⁸JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961): AAS 53 (1961), page 453.

¹⁹PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (15 May 1931): AAS 23 (1931), page 190.

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²¹ PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum, Progressio* (26 March 1967), n. 13: AAS 59 (1967), page 264.

cannot help but adapt to the scale of values enunciated in the Gospel. If, hypothetically speaking, she were to conform to other scales of values, her teaching would not be what it in fact is, but would be reduced to a biased philosophy or ideology.

Action is aimed at implementing these choices. It requires a real conversion, that inner transformation which is availability, openness and transparency to the purifying light of God.

By inviting the faithful to make concrete choices and to act according to the principles and judgments expressed in its social doctrine, the Magisterium offers the fruit of much reflection and pastoral experience matured under the particular assistance promised by Christ to his Church. It is up to the real Christian to follow this doctrine and to make it "the foundation of his wisdom and of his experience in order to translate it concretely into forms of action, participation and commitment."²²

The method of discernment

8. Ethical principles and guidelines cannot be put into practice without an adequate discernment, that leads the entire Christian community and each one in particular to scrutinize "the signs of the times" and to interpret reality in the light of the evangelical message.²³ Although it is not up to the Church to scientifically analyze social reality,²⁴ evaluation of truth leads to investigating the real causes of social ills, and especially of injustice, and to accepting the certain results, not the ideologized ones, of the human sciences. The goal is to arrive, in the light of permanent principles, according to the possibilities and opportunities offered by the circumstances, to make concrete the most appropriate choices which may eliminate injustices

²²PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), n. 38: AAS 68 (1976), pages 29 ff.; VATICAN COUNCIL II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 25.

²³VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4.

²⁴JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), n. 1: AAS 73 (1981), page 580.

and favour the political, economic and cultural transformations needed in individual cases.²⁵

In this perspective, Christian discernment does not only help clarify local, regional or world situations; it also, and principally, helps discover God's plan of salvation, realized in Jesus Christ, for his children in the different period of history. It is obvious that this must be placed in an attitude of fidelity not only to the evangelical sources, but also to the Magisterium of the Church and her legitimate pastors.

Theology and philosophy

9. Since the social doctrine of the Church draws from Revelation truths, elements for evaluation and discernment, and claims for itself the "character of application of the Word of God to the life of men and society,"²⁶ it needs a solid philosophical-theological framework. At its basis, in fact, there is an anthropology drawn from the Gospel which contains, as its "primordial assertion," the idea of man "as image of God, who is not reducible to a mere particle of nature or to an anonymous element of the human city."²⁷ This fundamental assertion is expressed in numerous doctrinal formulations, such as, for example, the doctrine of charity, of being children of God, of new brotherhood in Christ the freedom of the children of God, personal dignity and each man's eternal vocation. These acquire their full meaning and value only the context of supernatural anthropology and the entire Catholic dogma.

Together with these facts derived from Revelation, social doctrine also takes on, recalls and explains various fundamental ethical principles of a rational nature by showing the consistency between

²⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Message *A vous tous* for the 1980 World Day of Peace (8 December 1979): AAS 71 (1979), pages 1572 ff.; PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), n. 4: AAS 63 (1971), page 403.

²⁶ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), n. 8: AAS 80 (1988), page 520.

²⁷ JOHN PAUL II, Allocution *Esta hora* to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla (28 January 1979), Part I, n. 9: AAS 71 (1979), pages 195, 196.

the data revealed and the principles of right reason which regulate human acts in the field of social and political life. Therefore, the need follows from this to turn to philosophical reflection in order to deepen such concepts (as, for instance, the objectivity of truth, reality, the value of the human person, norms of action and criteria of truth), and to illustrate them in the light of ultimate causes. Indeed, the Church teaches that the social encyclicals make an appeal also to "right reason" in order to find the objective norms of human morality which govern not only individual life, but social and international life as well.²⁸ In this viewpoint it becomes evident how a solid philosophical-theological foundation will aid professors and students in avoiding subjective interpretations of concrete social situations, and also in protecting themselves from any possible instrumentalization by them for ideological ends and interests.

Positive sciences

10. Social doctrine also makes use of data from the positive sciences and, particularly, from the social sciences which make up an important instrument, although not an exclusive one, for understanding reality. Recourse to these sciences requires careful discernment, on the basis also of an appropriate philosophical mediation since there can be a risk of twisting them to the pressure of certain ideologies contrary to right reason, to the Christian faith and, in the concrete, to the very facts of historical experience and scientific research. In any case, a "fruitful dialogue"²⁹ between Christian social ethics (theological and philosophical) and the human sciences is not only possible but necessary for understanding social reality. The clear distinction between the competency of the Church, on the one hand, and that of the positive sciences on the other, does not constitute any obstacle to this dialogue but aids it. Therefore, it is in line with the social doctrine of the Church to accept and harmonize appropriately the data offered by the sources mentioned above, and those provided by the positive sciences. Obviously, as principal point

²⁸VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 63.

²⁹PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), n. 40: AAS 63 (1971), page 429.

of reference, it will always have the word and example of Christ and Christian tradition considered in relation to the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Evolution of social doctrine

11. As has already been stated, due to its character of mediation between the Gospel and the concrete reality of man and society, the social doctrine of the Church needs to be continuously updated and made responsive to the new situations of the world and history.³⁰ In fact, decade after decade, it has had a notable evolution. The initial object of this doctrine was the so-called "social question," or the whole series of socio-economic problems which arose in certain areas of the European and American world subsequent to the "industrial revolution." Today the "social question" is no longer limited to particular geographic areas. It has a worldwide dimension³¹ and includes many aspects, including political ones, linked to the relationship between classes and the transformation of society which has already taken place and is still in progress. In any case, "social question" and "social doctrine" continue being co-related terms.

What is important to stress in the development of social doctrine is that, while it preserves a substantial identity as a doctrinal "corpus" with great consistency, it has not been reduced to a closed system, but has shown itself attentive to evolving situations, and capable of responding to new problems, or to their new ways of being raised. This appears evident from an objective analysis of the document of the Popes from Leo XIII to John Paul II, and it becomes even more apparent from Vatican Council II onward.

³⁰PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), n. 29: AAS 66 (1979), page 25.

³¹PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), n. 3: AAS 59 (1967), page 258; JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), n. 2: AAS 73 (1981), page 582; Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), n. 9: AAS 80 (1988), pages 520-523.

Continuity and development

12. The differences in formulation, methodological procedure and style seen in the documents, however, do not compromise the substantial identity and unity of the social doctrine of the Church.

Rightly, therefore, the term "continuity" is used to express the relationship between the documents, even if each one responds in a specific way to the problems of its times. As an example, the "poor," which some recent documents deal with, are not the "proletarians" Leo XIII refers to in the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, nor the "unemployed" who were at the centre of Pius XI's attention in the Encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*. Today they appear immensely greater in number and include those in rich societies who are excluded from benefiting from the goods of the earth with freedom, dignity and security. The problem is all the more serious because in some parts of the world, and especially the Third World, it has become systematic and almost institutionalized.

Furthermore, the problem no longer concerns only the unjust differences between classes, but also enormous imbalances between rich and poor nations.

The task and right to teach

13. With regard to the political community, in respect for, and affirmation of, reciprocal autonomy in each one's field, since both are at the service of the individual and social vocation of human persons, the Church asserts her own competency and right to teach social doctrine concerning the good and salvation of men. For this purpose, she uses all the means at her disposal according to different situations and times.³²

By considering man "in the full truth of his existence, of his personal being and also of his community and social being,"³³ the Church is well aware that the destiny of humanity is linked closely

³²VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 76.

³³JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), n. 14: AAS 71 (1979), page 248.

and indisputably to Christ. She is convinced of the irreplaceable need for the help he offers man and so she cannot abandon him. As John Paul II stated in this regard, the Church participates intimately in the happenings of all humanity, making man the first and fundamental route in the fulfillment of her mission, "the way that leads invariably through the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption."³⁴ In this way she continues the redeeming mission of Christ, and obeys his mandate to preach the Gospel to all peoples,³⁵ and to serve all who are in need, whether as individuals or as groups and social classes, and those who strongly feel the need for transformations and reforms in order to improve living conditions.

In fidelity to her spiritual mission, the Church faces these problems under the moral and pastoral aspect which is proper to her. In the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II refers explicitly to this aspect with regard to development problems, and affirms that it thus falls rightfully within the mission of the Church. She therefore "cannot be accused of going outside her own specific field of competence and, still less, outside the mandate received from the Lord."³⁶

Beyond the circle of the faithful, the Church offers her social doctrine to all men of good will and asserts that its fundamental principles are "demanded by right reason,"³⁷ illuminated and perfected by the Gospel.

II. HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF SOCIAL DOCTRINE

14. Before the attempt by some to sow "doubts and diffidence" concerning the efficacy of social doctrine because it is considered

³⁴Ibid., pages 284-285.

³⁵Matthew 28:19.

³⁶JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), n. 8: AAS 80 (1988), pages 520.

³⁷VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 63.

abstract, deductive, static and lacking in critical strength, John Paul II has recalled many times the urgent need for social action that takes advantage of the "rich and complex heritage" called "social doctrine or social teaching of the Church."³⁸ His predecessors, John XXIII and Paul VI had done the same, as well as the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council.³⁹ From the thinking of the Popes and the Council, there appears the intention to bring about, through Christian social action, the Church's presence in history that will reflect Christ's presence which transforms men's hearts and the unjust structures created by men.

This aspect is particularly felt in the cultural and social conditions of our times. Therefore, the current Magisterium of the Church has stamped a new dynamism of social doctrine which explains the greater attitude of hostility on the part of some, at times assumed acritically, and shows the serious responsibility of those who refuse an instrument so appropriate for the dialogue of the Church with the world and so effective for solving contemporary social problems.

1. Social dimension of the primitive Christian message

History of salvation

15. Social doctrine plunges its roots into the History of Salvation, and finds its origin in the very saving and liberating mission of Jesus Christ and the Church. It is connected with the experience of faith in the salvation and integral liberation of the people of God described first in Genesis, Exodus, the Prophets and the Psalms, and then in the life of Jesus and in the Apostolic Letters.⁴⁰

³⁸ JOHN PAUL II, Allocution *Esta hora* to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate at Puebla (28 January 1979), Part III, n. 7: AAS 71 (1979), page 203.

³⁹ JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961): AAS 53 (1961), pages 453 ff.; PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), n. 4: AAS 68 (1976), page 30; VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 63, 76.

⁴⁰ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), n. 3: AAS 73 (1981), page 553; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Liberatatis conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986), nn. 44-51: AAS 79 (1987), pages 571-575.

16. The mission of Jesus and his life witness have made it obvious that man's true dignity is found in a spirit liberated from evil and renewed by Christ's redeeming grace. Nevertheless, the Gospel shows in an abundance of texts that Jesus was not indifferent or extraneous to the problem of the dignity and rights of the human person, nor to the needs of the weakest, the neediest and the victims of injustice. At all times he stressed a real solidarity with the poorest and lowliest.⁴¹ He fought against injustice, hypocrisy, abuses of power, the greed for profit of the rich who were indifferent to the sufferings of the poor, and vividly reminded all of the final account to be made when he will return in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Several fundamental truths, which have profoundly influenced the social thought of the Church in her journey through the centuries, are clearly contained in the Gospel. Thus for example, Jesus affirms and proclaims an essential equality of dignity among all human beings, men and women, whatever their ethnic origin, nation or race, culture, political membership or social condition. Furthermore, his message contains a convirtue of his very nature when he affirmed the dignity of marriage which constitutes the primary form of communication among persons. From the fundamental equality of dignity among all men and women and from their intrinsic social nature there arises the need that relationships in social life be established according to the criteria of an operative and humane solidarity, that is, according to criteria of justice, vivified and integrated by love.

As well as these values contained in the Gospel there are many others of no less importance and of no less bearing on the social order, such as, for example, the values attendant on the institution of the united and indissoluble family, source of life; the values concerning the origin and nature of authority, which is conceived and exercised as a service to the common good of the social group in which it is directly expressed and on which it operates, in harmony with the universal good of the whole human family.

⁴¹Matthew 11:28-30.

The mission of the Church

17. The Church nourishes herself on the very mystery of Christ, the Gospel incarnate, in order to announce, like him, the Good News of the Kingdom of God and call men to conversion and salvation.⁴² This evangelizing mission of the Church, received from Christ, constitutes her deepest identity. And yet, precisely from this, tasks, guidelines and strength spring spring which can contribute towards building and consolidating the community of men according to divine law.⁴³

In teaching and in social practice, the Church in the early centuries and in the Middle Ages did nothing other than apply and develop the principles and guidelines contained in the Gospel. Moving within the structures of civil society, she sought to humanize them in a spirit of justice and charity, linking the work of evangelization to appropriate charitable-social initiatives. The Fathers of the Church are noted not only as intrepid demoters of charitable institutions (hospitals, orphanages, hospices for pilgrims and strangers) and of socio-cultural conceptions which inaugurated the era of a new humanism rooted in Christ. These were mostly works to supplement the inadequacies and lacunae in the organization of civil society, which shows how capable are souls, permeated by the spirit of the Gospel, of great sacrifices and great creativity. Thanks to the efforts of the Church there were recognized the inviolability of human life, the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage, the dignity of women, the value of human work and of every person, thus contributing to the abolition of slavery which was a normal part of the economic and social system of the ancient world. The progressive development of theological activity, firstly in the monasteries and then in the universities, made possible the scientific elaboration of the basic

⁴²Mark 1:15.

⁴³VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 42-44; PAUL VI, APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), n. 31: AAS 66 (1976), page 26; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986), nn. 63-65: AAS 79 (1987), pages 581 ff.

principles which regulate human coexistence. In this regard, of perennial value is the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas, Francis Suarez, Francis de Vitoria and many others. These, together with various famous philosophers and canonists, prepared the presuppositions and necessary instruments for the working out of a true and proper social doctrine, such as was introduced under the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII and continued by his successors.

The affirmation of this social dimension of Christianity is becoming more urgent every day due to the increasing vast and profound changes which are taking place in society.⁴⁴ In the face of social problems, which have always been present in the different historical periods, but which, in our times, have become much more complex and widespread on a worldwide scale, the Church cannot neglect her ethical and pastoral reflection — in a field which belongs to her — in order to enlighten and guide peoples' efforts and hopes with her social teaching so that even the radical changes required by situations of misery and injustice may be brought about in such a way that favours men's real good.⁴⁵

2. Formation of the historical heritage

Socio-cultural environment

18. In every era, social doctrine, with its principles of reflection, its criteria for judgment and norms of action, has had no other orientation than that of enlightening in a particular way, starting from the faith and tradition of the Church, the real situation of society, especially when human dignity was offended in it.

In this perspective, which is both dynamic and historical, it appears that the real character of social doctrine comes from the conformity of its directives regarding problems of a given historical

⁴⁴PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), n. 14: AAS 65 (1976), page 13.

⁴⁵CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986), n. 72: AAS 79 (1987), page 586.

situation, with the ethical requirements of the evangelical message, that calls for an in-depth transformation of the person and groups in order to achieve an authentic and integral liberation.⁴⁶

Nonetheless, in order to understand the historical development of social doctrine, the socio-cultural context of each document must be penetrated, and the economic, social, political and cultural conditions in which it was issued must be understood. Then, in the various pronouncements the pastoral intention of the Church can be better understood in relation to the situation of the society being examined and the scope of the social problem.

Both the basic principles, directly derived from the Christian concept of the person and human society, and the moral judgments about particular social situations, institutions and structures, enable the meaning of the historical presence of the Church in the world to be grasped. It can be said that every social document is an example and proof of this.

*Nineteenth century changes and
contributions of Catholic thought*

19. In particular one must remember the new situation which was created in the 1800s in Europe and, in part, in the Americas following the industrial revolution, liberalism, capitalism and socialism. In that situation, in line with the ethical and social requirements of the Word of God and the constant teaching of the Fathers of the Church, of the major theologians of the Middle Ages and, particularly, of St. Thomas Aquinas, many Catholics of various countries promoted the reawakening of the Christian conscience with regard to the serious injustices which emerged in that era. In this way a more modern and dynamic concept began to take shape of the form in which the Church must be present and exercise her influence in society. The importance of her presence in the world and the type of function required from her by the new times was better understood. The entire social doctrine of the Church from that time until the present rests on these assumptions. It is therefore in this perspective that the documents of the social Magisterium are to be read and understood.

⁴⁶Ibid., Chapter V: AAS 79 (1987), pages 585 ff.

20. Out of concern for the "workers' question" — that is, the problems deriving from the deplorable situation of the industrial proletariat, Leo XIII intervened with the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), a courageous and farsighted text which prepared the way for the developments of social doctrine made by the Magisterium in subsequent documents. In the Encyclical the Pontiff presents the doctrinal principles which can help cure the "social ill" latent in the "workers' condition."⁴⁷

Having enumerated the errors which led to the "undeserved misery" of the proletariat, and having excluded socialism in particular as the remedy for the "workers' question," *Rerum Novarum* specifies and updates the Catholic doctrine on work, the right to property, the principle of collaboration instead of class struggle as the fundamental means for social change, the rights of the weak, the dignity of the poor and the obligations of the rich, the perfecting of justice through charity, and on the right to form professional associations.

Pius XI

21. Forty years later, when the developments of industrial society had already led to an enormous and ever-growing concentration of strengths and power in the economic-social world and inflamed a cruel class struggle, Pius XI felt the duty and the responsibility to promote a greater awareness, a more precise interpretation, and an urgent application of the moral law⁴⁸ governing human relations in this field, with the intent of overcoming the conflict between classes and arriving at a new social order based on justice and charity. Given this attention to the new historical context, his Encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno*, offers some new elements. It gives an overall view of industrial society and production; it stresses the

⁴⁷LEO XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum Novarum* (15 May 1891): *Acta Leonis XIII* 11 (1891), page 98.

⁴⁸PIUS XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (15 May 1931): AAS 23 (1931), page 191.

need for both capital and labour to contribute to production and economic organization; it sets up the conditions for the re-establishment of the social order to face the "great changes" brought by the new developments of the economy and of socialism.⁴⁹ It does not hesitate to take a position with regard to the attempts made during those years to overcome social antinomies through the corporate system of showing itself favourable to the principles of solidarity and collaboration that inspire it, but warning that the failure to respect freedom of association and action could compromise its desired outcome.

Pius XII

22. During his long pontificate Pius XII did not write any social encyclicals. However, in complete continuity with the doctrine of his predecessors, he intervened authoritatively on the social problems of his times with a wide series of discourses. Among these, his Radio Messages are particularly important in which he specified, formulated and vindicated the ethical-social principles aimed at promoting reconstruction following the debacle of World War II. Due to his sensitivity and intelligence in grasping the "signs of the precursor of Vatican Council II and of the social teaching of the Popes who followed him. The following are the principal points on social doctrine which he best concretized and applied to the problems of his times: the universal destination and use of goods; the rights and duties of workers and employers; the State's function in economic activities; the need for international collaboration in order to bring about greater justice and guarantee peace; the restoration of law as the rule for relations between classes and peoples; the minimum income of the family.⁵⁰

During the war and the postwar period, for many people of all continent and for millions of believers and nonbelievers, the social teaching of Pius XII represented the voice of the universal conscience,

⁴⁹Ibid., AAS 23 (1931), pages 209 ff.

⁵⁰PIUS XII, Discourse *The Solemnity of Pentecost* for the fiftieth anniversary of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1 June 1941): AAS 33 (1941), pages 195 ff.; Christmas Radio Message: on peace and the international order of 1939, 1940, 1950, 1951, 1954: on democracy, 1944; Discourses on the dangers of the technological conception of social life and on the economic enterprise and order of 3 June 1950 and 9 September 1965.

interpreted and proclaimed in close connection with the word of God. With his moral authority and prestige, Pius XII brought the light of Christian wisdom to countless men of every category and social level, to government leaders, men of culture, professionals, entrepreneurs, technical leaders and workers.

In wishing to give value to the tradition of *Rerum Novarum*,⁵¹ he aimed at the formation of an ethical and social conscience which would inspire the actions of peoples and States. Through him that breath of the regenerating Spirit passed into the Church which, as he said in reference to *Rerum Novarum*, did not fail to extend itself beneficially to the whole of humanity.⁵²

John XXIII

23. After World War II, the Church found herself in a new situation under many aspects; the "social question" which was initially limited to the working class, had undergone a process of universalization which involved all classes, all countries and international society itself in which the drama of the Third World was emerging increasingly. The "problem of the modern era" became the object of the Church's reflection and pastoral action and of her Social Magisterium. In fact, the new Encyclical, *Mater et Magistra* (1961) by Pope John XXIII, aims at updating the already known documents, and taking a further step forward in the process of involving the whole Christian community.⁵³ In tackling the more current and important aspects of the "social question,"⁵⁴ the new document makes the existing inequalities stand out both among the various economic sectors and the different countries and regions, and it denounces the phenomena of overpopulation and underdevelopment which, due to

⁵¹PIUS XII, Discourse *The Solemnity of Pentecost* for the fiftieth anniversary of the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1 June 1941): AAS 33 (1941), page 204.

⁵²*Ibid.*, AAS 33 (1941), page 197.

⁵³JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961): AAS 53 (1961), pages 412-413.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, AAS 53 (1961), pages 431-451.

a lack of understanding and solidarity among the nations, bring about unbearable situations especially in the Third World.

John XXIII, in the face of the dangers of a new, nuclear war, after having intervened with a memorable message to peoples and heads of State at the most acute moment of the crisis, issued the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (1963) which is an urgent exhortation to build peace based on respect for the ethical requirements which must preside over relations between men and States.

The style and language of Pope John XXIII's Encyclicals confer on social doctrine a new capacity with regard to its approach and influence on the new situations without neglecting the law of continuity with the preceding tradition. Therefore, one cannot speak of an "epistemological shift." It is certain that the tendency surfaces of giving value to the empirical and the sociological aspects but, at the same time, the theological motivation in social doctrine is accentuated. This is all the more obvious if a comparison is made with the preceding documents in which philosophical reflection predominates and argumentation is based on the principles of natural law. The origins of John XXIII's social encyclicals are certainly derived from the radical transformations both within the States as well as in their reciprocal relations both "in the scientific, technical and economic field" and in the "social and political" one.⁵⁶

During that period other major phenomena began to become urgent in a troubling way. First of all, there were the effects of economic development following postwar reconstruction. The optimism it generated impeded immediate awareness of the contradictions of a system based on the unequal development of the different countries of the world. Furthermore, at the end of that decade, while the process of decolonization of many countries of the Third World War was taking place, another type of colonial domination was already observed of an economic nature, replacing the former political colonialism. This fact is decisive for a stand in conscience and for a counter movement, especially in Latin America where, in order to combat imbalances in development and the situation of new

⁵⁶Ibid.: AAS 53 (1961), pages 412-413.

dependency, a ferment of liberation was unleashed in various ways and forms. This would subsequently generate the different currents of the "theology of liberation" about which the Holy See has made its position known.⁶⁶

Vatican Council II

24. Four years after the publication of *Mater et Magistra*, the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* of the Second Vatican Council was issued on the Church in the contemporary world. If between the two documents too brief a period of time had elapsed for significant changes in the historical situation nonetheless with the new document the path covered by social doctrine was considerable. The Council in fact realized that the world was waiting for a new and stimulating message from the Church. It responded to that expectation with the Constitution in which, in harmony with ecclesiological renewal, a new concept of how to be a community of believers and people of God is reflected. It aroused new interest regarding the doctrine contained in the preceding documents on the witness and life of Christians, as authentic ways of making the presence of God in the world visible.

On the social level, the response of the Church gathered together in the Council became concrete in the presentation of a more dynamic concept of man and society and, in particular, of socio-economic life worked out on the basis of the requirements and correct interpretation of economic development.

According to the chapter of *Gaudium et Spes* dedicated to this problem, the elimination of social and economic inequalities can in fact be based only on the correct understanding of development. This interpretation of social reality on a worldwide scale produced a fundamental shift in the evolving process of social doctrine. It does not allow itself to become absorbed by the socio-economic implications of the two major systems, capitalism and socialism. Instead it opens

⁶⁶ CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis nuntius* on some aspects of the "Theology of Liberation" (6 August 1984): AAS 76 (1984), pages 876-909; Instruction *Libertatis conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986): AAS 79 (1987), pages 534-599.

up to a new concept; the dual dimension or range of development. This concept, in fact, aims at promoting the good of the whole man, "in his totality, taking into account his material needs and the requirements of his intellectual, moral, spiritual and religious life," thereby overcoming the traditional counter-positions between producer and consumer, and the discriminations that offend the dignity of the great human family.⁵⁷

In this perspective one discovers how, at the basis of what the Constitution says about economic and social life, there is an authentically humanistic development concept.

In *Gaudium et Spes* the Church shows how deep her sensitivity is for the growing awareness of inequalities and injustices present in humanity, and especially for the problems of the Third World.

Thus in social doctrine, a personalist and community direction of the economy is strengthened, against all social and economic discrimination, in which man presides and is considered the end, subject and protagonist of development.

It was the first time that a document of the solemn Magisterium of the Church spoke so amply about the directly temporal aspects of Christian life. It must be recognized that the attention given by the Constitution to social, psychological, political, economic, moral and religious changes has increasingly stimulated over the past twenty years the Church's pastoral concern for men's problems and dialogue with the world.

Paul VI

25. A few years after the Council, the Church offered mankind a new and important reflection on social matters with the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (1967) of Paul VI. It can be considered as a development of the chapter on economic and social life in *Gaudium et Spes* while introducing some significant new elements.

In a short time, in fact, awareness had grown further of the inequalities which discriminated against and subjected many Third

⁵⁷VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 64-65.

World countries to situations of injustice and marginalization. This problem was aggravated by particular circumstances; the growth of differences between rich and poor countries, demographic growth in the Third World.

In the poorest and most marginalized regions and peoples, the analysis of underdevelopment and its causes provoked scandal and made the struggle against injustice rage.

In the new historical context in which social conflicts had taken on worldwide dimensions,⁵⁸ the light of *Populorum Progressio* is projected. It offers assistance in grasping all the dimensions of an integral human development and of a development in solidarity of humanity. These two topics are to be considered the axes around which the encyclical is structured. In wishing to convince its receivers of the urgent need for action in solidarity,⁵⁹ the Pope presents development as "the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human" and indicates its characteristics. Less human conditions are found when there are material and moral deficiencies and oppressive structures. Human conditions require having what is necessary, acquiring know-how and culture, respect for the dignity of others, recognition of supreme values and of God, and lastly, the Christian life of faith, hope and charity.⁶⁰ The "passage" from less human to more human conditions which, according to the Pope, is not limited to purely temporal dimensions, must inspire theological reflection on liberation from injustice and on authentic values without which a real development of society is not possible.

Social doctrine finds a door open here for an in-depth and renewed ethical reflection.

Only four years after the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Paul VI issued the Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (1971). It

⁵⁸PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), n. 9: AAS 59 (1967), page 261.

⁵⁹Ibid., n. 61: AAS 59 (1967), page 257.

⁶⁰Ibid., nn. 20-21: AAS 59 (1967), pages 267-268.

was the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*, but the Pope was looking more to the present and future than to the past. In the Western world, new problems had arisen of the so-called "postindustrial society," and the social teaching of the Church had to be adapted to them. Therefore, *Octogesima Adveniens* began a new reflection for understanding the political dimension of Christian existence and commitment, by stimulating on its part a critical sense with regard to the ideologies and utopias underlying the socio-economic systems in force.

John Paul II

26. Ten years later (1981) John Paul II intervened with the great Encyclical *Laborem Exercens*. The intervening decade had left an imprint on the history of the world and of the Church. In the Pope's thinking it is not difficult to perceive the flux of new changes which had been produced. Whereas the 70s had begun with an increased awareness of underdevelopment and the injustices derived from it, towards the middle of that decade the first symptoms appeared of a much deeper crisis produced by the contradictions which the international monetary and economic system concealed, and characterized above all by the enormous rise in the price of oil. In this situation, in the face of all the Western developed countries and those of the Eastern collectivist bloc, the Third World demanded new monetary and trade structures in which the rights of poorer peoples would be respected, as well as justice in economic relations. While the Third World's malaise was growing, some countries, in echoing their suffering, demanded greater justice in the distribution of world income. The entire system of the international division of labour and the structure of the world economy entered into a deep crisis. Consequently, a radical revision was required of the very structures which had led to such an unequal economic development.

Vis-à-vis these numerous and new problems, John Paul II wrote the Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* on the ninetieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. It is in continuity with the previous *Magisterium*, but with an originality all its own⁶¹ both with regard to its method and

⁶¹JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), n. 3: AAS 73 (1981), page 583.

style, and for many aspects of its teaching which are dealt with in relation to the conditions of the time, but follow the main intuitions of Paul VI. The document unfolds in the form of a direct exhortation to all Christians for the purpose of involving them in the transformation of the existing socio-economic systems, and it provides precise guidelines based on the fundamental concern for the integral good of man.⁶² With it the "traditional heritage" of the social doctrine of the Church is expanded by pointing out that the "main key" to the entire "social question" is found in "human work," the most appropriate point of reference for analysing all social problems. By starting with work as a fundamental dimension of human existence, all the other aspects of socio-economic life are dealt with without omitting the cultural and technological aspect.⁶³

Laborem Exercens thus proposed a profound revision of the meaning of work which implies a more equitable redistribution not only of income and wealth, but also of work itself in such a way that there may be employment for all. For this purpose, society must be helped to rediscover the need for moderation in consumption, to reacquire the virtues of sobriety and solidarity, and also to make real sacrifices in order to come out of the current crisis. It is a great proposal which the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has also repeated recently.⁶⁴ And this is valid not only for each one of the individual peoples, but also for relations between nations.

The world situation requires respect for principles and basic values which are to be considered irreplaceable. Indeed, without a reassertion of human dignity and rights as well as of solidarity among peoples, social justice and a new meaning of work, there will be no true human development nor any new order of social coexistence.

On 30 December 1987, on the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*, John Paul II published the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei*

⁶²Ibid., n. 3: AAS 73 (1981), page 584.

⁶³Ibid., n. 4: AAS 73 (1981), page 584.

⁶⁴CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Liber-tatis conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986), nn. 81-91: AAS 79 (1987), pages 591-595.

Socialis, the main axis of which is the notion of development as it was treated in the abovementioned document by Paul VI. In the light of the ever valid teaching of that Encyclical, the Supreme Pontiff wished to examine the world situation twenty years later under this aspect, for the purpose of updating and further deepening the idea of development so that it will respond to the urgent needs of the present moment and be truly human.

Among the causes of lack of development the following are mentioned: the persistent gap, and often even its increase, between North and South; the opposition between the Eastern and Western blocs with the resulting arms race, arms trade and the various obstacles of a political nature that impede decisions concerning cooperation and solidarity among nations. In this context, the demographic question is also mentioned. On the other hand, however, some advances achieved in the field of development are recognized although they are somewhat uncertain, limited and inadequate with respect to the real needs.

With regard to the second major topic of the Encyclical — the nature of real development — first of all, clarifications are offered regarding the difference between “undefined progress” and development. In this regard it is repeated that true development cannot be limited to the multiplication of goods and service, to what one possesses, but must contribute to the fullness of “being” of man. In this way the moral nature of real development is meant to be shown clearly. This important aspect is developed also in the light of Scriptural sources and of the Tradition of the Church. Proof of this moral dimension of development is the insistence in the document on the connection between faithful observance of all human rights (including the right to religious freedom) and the true development of man and peoples.

In the Encyclical, various obstacles to development of a moral nature are also analysed (structures of sin; exclusive desire for profit; thirst for power) and the ways for hopefully overcoming them. In this regard recognition is urged of the interdependence between men and peoples and the resulting recognition of the obligation of solidarity, insisting on its virtuous character, the duty of charity for Christians. All this, however, requires a radical conversion of hearts.

At the end of the document some other specific ways to face the current situation are also indicated; they stress above all the importance of the social doctrine of the Church, its teaching and dissemination at the present time.

27. This brief overall history of the social doctrine of the Church aids in understanding its complexity, richness, dynamism and also its limits. Each document marks a new step forward in the Church's efforts to respond to the problems of society in the various moments of history. In each one of them, one must especially set the pastoral concern to present to the entire Christian community and to all men of good will the fundamental principles, universal criteria and guidelines suitable for suggesting basic choices and consistent practice for every concrete situation. This teaching, therefore, is "not a 'third way' between liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism, nor even a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another,"⁶⁵ but a disinterested service which the Church offers according to the needs of the times and places. Observation of this historical dimension shows that the social doctrine of the Church, expressed clearly and consistently in its essential principles, is not an abstract system, closed and defined once and for all, but a concrete, dynamic and open one. Indeed, attention to reality and evangelical inspiration place the Church in a position of being able to respond to the continuous changes to which the economic, social, political, technological and cultural processes are subjected. It is a task that is always under construction, open to the needs of the new realities and new problems that emerge in these areas.

More recent documents

28. The changes mentioned require an ethical view of the new problems and a more and more differentiated, updated and in-depth response. This is what occurred, for instance, with regard to the questions of private property, socialization, co-management, Third World underdevelopment, the growing gap between rich and poor countries, socio-economic development, the meaning of work, the

⁶⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), n. 41: AAS 80 (1988), page 571.

international debt, the problem of the homeless, the present-day situation of the family, the dignity of women, respect for human life in its origins, and procreation. The most recent documents of the Church point out her deep evangelical sensitivity with regard to the new social problems.⁶⁶

In the spirit of Vatican Council II,⁶⁷ the social doctrine of the Church, composed of "permanent elements" and "contingent elements,"⁶⁸ will continue along its historical path, becoming broadened and enriched through the contribution of all the members of the Church. Along this path the Magisterium will gather up the different items in its official teaching, and reconcile attention to the historical dimension with the sacred duty of not weakening the stability and certainty of fundamental principles and norms, and invite consistent action.

Throughout this long path, the Church will continue making the teachings and values of her social doctrine concrete by proposing principles for reflection and permanent values, criteria for judgment and directives for action.⁶⁹ (TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE)

⁶⁶CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986): AAS 79 (1987), pages 584-599; PONTIFICAL COMMISSION "IUSTITIA ET PAX," Document *At the Service of the Human Community: An Ethical Approach to the International Debt Question* (27 December 1986): *L'Osservatore Romano* (29 January 1987); Document *What Have You Done to Your Homeless Brother? The Church and the Housing Problem* (27 December 1987): *L'Osservatore Romano* (3 February 1988); JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981): AAS 74 (1982), pages 81-191; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *The Gift of Life* on respect for life in its origins and on the dignity of procreation (22 February 1987): *L'Osservatore Romano* (11 March 1987); JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988): *L'Osservatore Romano* (1 October 1988).

⁶⁷VATICAN COUNCIL II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 91.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, Proem, Note 1.

⁶⁹Cf. JOHN XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra* (15 May 1961): AAS 53 (1961), page 454; PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), n. 4: AAS 63 (1971), page 403; JOHN PAUL II, Allocution *Esta hora* to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate at Puebla (28 January 1979), Part III, n. 7: AAS 71 (1979), page 203; CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Instruction *Libertatis conscientia* on Christian freedom and liberation (22 March 1986), n. 72: AAS 79 (1987), page 586.

To Form Filipino Christians Mature in their Faith

*A Pastoral Letter of the
Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines
Announcing 1990 as National Catechetical Year*

At the beginning of this final decade of the 20th century, we your Bishops wish to address you on a fundamental issue of our Christian life and a chief priority of the Catholic Church in the Philippines namely *catechesis*. By catechesis we refer to all "the efforts within the Church to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in His name and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 1).

Occasion

There are many reasons for this focus on catechesis. First, there is the national economic and political situation wherein so many Filipinos continue to suffer in dire poverty, unsupported by the Gospel's social thrust. The growing modernization and industrialization are too often accompanied by a loss of traditional Filipino Christian spiritual values and family rootedness. So many of our youth who comprise almost half of the Philippine population, grow up

in ignorance of even the essentials of our Catholic faith. In many of the 56 different ethnic linguistic groups throughout the Philippines, basic catechetical materials are often still lacking.

Our present *religious* situation also highlights the urgency of catechesis. *Individually*, when challenged today to defend their Catholic beliefs and practices, many Filipino Catholics find they are poorly prepared "to give an explanation for their hope" (1 Pt 3:15). *Communally*, the *Church* activities of the Marian Year of 1987, followed by the 3rd National Eucharistic Year (1988) and the just completed National Bible Year (1989) have, each in its own unique way, brought to clearer light the urgency of a more effective, more comprehensive, and more continuous catechesis in our Catholic communities. Such catechesis, moreover, is a most effective way to prepare all Filipino Catholics for the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines scheduled for January-February 1991.

This catechetical urgency is confirmed by *civic* actions such as the new Constitutional provision for religious education in public schools, and the Department of Education's new *Values Education Program*. Finally, within the *catechetical* area itself, 1990 will see the publication of the long-awaited Universal Catechism from Rome, as well as the first draft of our own National Catholic Catechism for the Philippines.

1990: National Catechetical Year

Therefore, we wish to designate 1990 as "National Catechetical Year" (NCY) in order to focus the attention of all Filipino Catholics on the *urgent* and *perduring task* of *educating* toward *maturity in Christian faith*. "Catechesis is not just a matter of transmitting ideas. It involves above all communicating Christ and his life-giving message, and helping people to give their response of faith and love" (John Paul II, Address to Filipino Catechists).

We view this year as a privileged opportunity for promoting a deeper "conscientization" within our Catholic communities of the primary importance of this catechetical mission. The mission is an ongoing, never-ending, permanent part of our faith-response to Christ's

apostolic mandate: "Go, make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19-20) What is new is this: each and every one of us, Filipino Catholics, are *responsible* for this renewed catechizing mission. We cannot leave it to someone else; we cannot say: "let others do it." We have the responsibility: the challenge is ours. But what precisely is this new challenge?

The new catechetical challenge can be described in terms of three basic aspects:

- A. its *message* and *source* (what?),
- B. its *method* and *means* of communication (how?), and
- C. its *agents* and *audience* (by whom and for whom).

- A. The *message* of this new catechesis must be unmistakably *Christ-centered*. "The definitive aim of catechesis is to put people not only in touch, but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit, and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity" (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 5). This means a catechesis *rooted in the living Word of God* in Sacred Scripture, as proclaimed in the Filipino Catholic community, under the teaching authority of the Church.
- B. The *method* and *means* of this new catechesis must be "*authentically Filipino*," that is, it must be "expressed through images, symbols, and rites that are indigenous to Philippine culture." Catechesis then becomes "a process by which Filipino values can be purified, permeated and strengthened by Gospel values, and Gospel values in turn are concretized and actualized in Filipino values and patterns of action" (National Catechetical Directory of the Philippines, 426, 428).
- C. The *active agent* of this new catechesis must in some way include each and every member of the Christian community. Each one of us is challenged to share personal responsibility, according to our position in the Christian community, in recruiting, forming and supporting competent catechesis, religion teachers, liturgists, and all those who are actually engaged in direct catechesis. Moreover, the *audience* of the *new* catechesis

has been radically changed by the almost incalculable numbers of public school children and their parents.

"Aiming at Fruit That Will Last" (Jn 15:16)

Numerous activities of the National Catechetical Year are planned for the regional, diocesan and parish levels. Beyond celebrating present achievements, these activities should be explicitly aimed at achieving, lasting structural changes — however modest — in the new catechesis' message and source, method and means, agents and audience.

This means activities that make the message of the new catechesis more explicitly "*Christ-centered*" and better "*rooted in the Word of God*," according to the guidelines of our *National Catechetical Directory*. It means actively creating a new catechetical *methodology* that is manifestly more "authentically Filipino, through collaboration with experts in Philippine culture, family life, and thrust for social justice. Finally, it means a concerted campaign for the *growth of catechetical agents* both in number and quality, through the revitalization of the formation programs of the catechetical centers and seminaries, and the Religious Education programs of our Catholic colleges and universities throughout the nation. Such is the new challenge for fruitful action, presented to all Filipino Catholics by the National Catechetical Year.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this proclamation of 1990 as the National Catechetical Year, we your Bishops wish to echo the words of our Holy Father, John Paul II, to those who have devoted their time to catechesis, our catechists:

"The world needs you because it needs catechesis. For the most precious gift that the Church can offer the modern world — confused and restless as it is — is to form Christians sure about their faith. Catechesis does this, and it does this through you."

We, however, wish to point out that catechesis is a task for all, the responsibility of every member of the Christian community: **EVERY CHRISTIAN A CATECHIST**. For as Pope Paul VI emphatically affirmed. "It is unthinkable that the person should accept the Word and give himself to the Kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 24).

For the Catholic Bishop's Conference
of the Philippines:

(Sgd.) + **LEONARDO Z. LEGASPI, O.P., D.D.**
Archbishop of Caceres
President, CBCP

31 January 1990
Tagaytay City

"Seek Peace, Pursue It"

*A Pastoral Letter of the Catholic Bishops
Conference of the Philippines.*

Beloved People of God:

"May God our Father give you grace and peace" (Col 1:2).

Introduction - Situation

Impelled by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and by our love of country, we write you this Letter on peace.

Our times pose the gravest of challenges to all of us as a people. We live in a climate of violence. The daily fare of violence on TV and cinema is tragically lived out in the concrete violence of wanton criminals who have no compunction in killing, kidnapping, robbing, extorting, and terrorizing.

And we suffer violence from various attempts to seize power by groups ranging from the extreme Left to the extreme Right. Ironically, they all similarly invoke "nationalism" for their disparate causes.

Our deep concern over this climate of violence is increased even more by reports that foreign interests have been or may in the future be involved in the efforts of Right and Left to continue the destabilization of our society. In the past, we declared that "no foreign power is to meddle with our political sovereignty" (*CBCP Statement on the 1984 Plebiscite and Election*, 8 January 1984). We reiterate here our condemnation of any unjustified foreign interference in our country's affairs.

We have many times spoken against the armed insurgency of the extreme Left (e.g. *Exhortation Against Violence*, 7 October 1979; *The Fruit of Justice is Peace*, 26 January 1987; *Solidarity for Peace*, 12 July 1988). We need not repeat our condemnation of it, as well as our condemnation of all attempts to seize power by armed means.

Coup d'Etat

As for the tragic series of attempted *coups d'etat* already suffered by our people, we as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines affirm the judgment of a number of our brother Bishops who have already spoken out. The use of arms to overthrow our duly constituted government is immoral and would be tantamount to an unjust usurpation of power. Such a judgment is solidly based on moral principles of the Church, for a violent overthrow of government is moral only when the strictest of conditions are verified, namely:

1. "where there is manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country" (*Populorum Progressio*, 31).
2. when it is taken as a last recourse, all other means having been exhausted;
3. where there is reasonable or well-founded hope of success;
4. when the good to be obtained is proportionate to the damage and harm that would be inflicted.

In no way can it be correctly claimed that the very first two conditions are verified in our society today and it can be very much doubted that even were a *coup d'etat* to succeed, irreparable harm will not be done to our country and people.

We need only to realize the immeasurable damage done by the most recent *coup* attempt: the tragic loss of many lives, the destruction to property, the incalculable setback to our economy, and the breakdown of trust in our society that so badly needs strong unity for development.

In the face of such a morally unjustifiable *coup* attempt, a responsible citizen cannot be morally neutral. One cannot morally support it, rather one is obliged to resist it, and prevent its recurrence. That is, indeed, a serious moral obligation.

It is in the light of such a situation that the words of Scripture are applicable: "Let everyone obey the authorities that are over him, for there is no authority except from God, and all authority that exists is established by God. As a consequence, the man who opposes authority rebels against the ordinance of God; those who resist thus shall draw condemnation upon themselves" (*Rom 13:1-2*).

Armed violence is being justified by would-be leaders of the nation in the name of the people and for the sake of the people. The same unfounded basis for power long claimed by Leftist insurgents is now being claimed by adventurists, military and civilian, of other political persuasions. We believe that such a claim utterly disregards the conviction of the greatest majority of our people whose support of a legitimate government has been evident in so many instances.

We, indeed, recognize that there are serious deficiencies in the present government, but change in our social, economic, and political sphere must not come about by armed means. Recourse to violence to bring about peace today cannot be justified.

The misguided messianism of a minority group with guns and gold, if allowed to prevail, has no prospect of ever being satiated by one violent attempt to seize power. Recent history has shown that once successful, violent seizures of power have been followed by other such attempts.

The Path to Peace

A just social transformation is the path to peace. With profound insight into the nature of peace, Pope Paul VI declared in 1967, during the first Decade of Development, that "development is the new name for peace" (*Populorum Progressio*, 76).

Development to be authentic and integral must "promote the good of every person and of the whole person;" (*Populorum Progressio*, 14) "the fully rounded development of the whole man and of the people" (*Populorum Progressio*, 42). There is no true development when there are excessive economic, social, and cultural inequalities. Such imbalances give rise to tensions and conflicts and endanger peace.

That is why peace and justice are inseparable. Indeed, peace is the fruit of justice (*Is* 32:17). Justice not only requires respect for the fundamental rights and dignity of the human person but also imposes the duty of promoting the common good, that "sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 26).

But justice which begets peace is just one side of the coin. The other side is love. "Hence peace is likewise the fruit of love, which goes beyond what justice can ensure (*Gaudium et Spes*, 78). And peace comes first as God's own love for us, concretely in the gift of his own Son, Jesus, who by dying broke down "the barrier of hostility that kept us apart" and became our Peace (*Eph* 2:14).

This is the reason that reconciliation is a necessary value for peace. Reconciliation, however, is not simply a gesture of forgiveness. In its true sense, reconciliation requires a conversion into the way of justice and love, so that God's peace may be given. Without justice and love, "reconciliation would only be a shallow veneer" (CBCP Statement on Reconciliation Today, 27 November 1983).

If peace is the fruit of love, sin is the absence of love. For this reason, we wage peace by waging war against sinfulness itself. The absence of peace is not merely an ideological or a political and

economic issue. It is a moral issue rooted in two typical attitudes: "the all-consuming desire for profit" and "the thirst for power, with the intention of imposing one's will upon others . . . at any price (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 46). For the man of peace, there is a future (*Ps* 37:37).

Decade of Peace - Suggested Agenda

Because we believe that peace is not simply the absence of war but the fruit of justice and love, as a collegial body of Pastors we wholeheartedly support the government's declaration of a Decade of Peace, 1990 — 2000. It will be, as declared, a decade *of* peace and *to* peace in our land.

For this Decade of Peace, we suggest the following agenda as among those that are essentially required by "the path to peace" (*Lk* 19:45):

1. Transforming values and mentalities into those that are truly oriented to God and to the common good: We need to be a people — and to have leaders — who are *maka-Diyos* and *maka-bayan*. Disvalues such as selfishness and greed must give way to generosity and sharing.
2. Dismantling the structures (systems, e.g., ways of relating and acting in economic and political life supported by laws, policies and entrenched practices) that favor the few and discriminate against the great majority of our people. Monopolies and a system of taxation that lies too heavily on those who have less are such structures that need urgent change.
3. Designing and implementing truly transformative programs of agrarian reform, ecological promotion, and socio-economic development geared towards the eradication of gross imbalances and disparities and permeated by a sensitive care for people and for the earth. Today, we still seem, for instance, unable to implement our laws against indiscriminate and illegal logging.

4. Peacefully resolving questions of self-determination of various groups in our country within the context of national sovereignty, problems such as posed by the MILF, MNLF, and CPLA.
5. Coming decisively to a moral and political resolution of the complex questions that revolve around the tension of national autonomy and inter-dependence among nations as reflected by realities such as various foreign economic interests in our country, our external economic debt, the U.S. military presence, and inadequate transfer of technological knowledge so necessary for our economic growth and self-reliance.
6. Developing a satisfactory and effective educational system that should be critical and liberating and could be more responsive to our country's needs as well as to the needs of the various members of the school community.
7. Freeing once and for all our most disenfranchised sectors, the rural and urban poor, from various forms of bondage, through a sincere practice of the evangelical option for the poor.
8. Effectively checking graft and corruption in private and public life.
9. Conscientiously observing the laws of our country and effectively delivering socio-economic services to our people. Just taxes, for instance, have to be paid faithfully and the government must spend them honestly and wisely for the good of the people.
10. Empowering people in law and in fact in order that decision-making and implementing processes may truly be participatory and oriented to the common good.

Solidarity:

The task of waging peace is formidable. We see it as a moral struggle. We must not delude ourselves into thinking that periodic bursts of enthusiasm will conquer evil. The task of waging peace is slow, painful, demanding and crucifying. It will require a holy endurance and relentless effort. It is not simply the work of one leader or of one government but it is the enterprise of a whole nation.

Peace is the work and fruit of solidarity (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, #39). Solidarity as "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all," (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, #38) is, in essence, rooted in the Gospel imperative of loving God and neighbor.

Solidarity calls us to be ready "to lose" ourselves for the sake of others, to share with them out of justice and love, and to see the face of Christ himself in the needy and the poor. Solidarity calls us to tear down walls that divide our communities. It calls us to communion with God and among ourselves.

Together we can promote peace in a hundred and one different ways, stopping the mad glorification of violence on TV and cinema, organizing peace-promoting and monitoring councils all over our country, educating for justice and peace, in schools, on stage, and on the streets. Active and vigilant People Power through mobilization and prayer — and through generous sacrifice for the common good — will be the means to peace.

As an expression of our own resolve and pledge to be peace-makers, we shall assist towards the organizing of a National Peace Congress where the issues and problems of Peace could be explored in dialogue with people of good will.

Our pilgrimage to peace is one of friends and not of hostile factions. Though we may belong to different classes and tribes, we must band together for peace, listen to God's call of peace together,

and dialogue for peace together, resolutely and ceaselessly seeking peace, pursuing it, beating the swords of war into plowshares of integral development (cf. *Is* 2:4).

Conclusion:

True peace is at once the work of the just and the gift of God, the fruit of His Spirit (*Heb* 12:11; *Jn* 14:27; *Gal* 5:22). It is above all in the Eucharist that we are gifted by God with His peace not only in greeting but in the very Body and Blood of His own Son. By the Eucharist we become peace-makers in spirit and truth, so that we may, in His memory, draw others into the peace and unity of His Kingdom.

We commend our efforts for peace to our loving Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Peace. Because she believed and kept God's Word, she brought forth into our world by the power of the Spirit the Prince of Peace, Jesus the Lord.

May the Lord guide our feet into the way of peace (*Lk* 1:79). May grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be yours (*1 Cor* 1:3).

For the Catholic Bishops' Conference

of the Philippines

(Sgd.) + LEONARDO Z. LEGASPI, O.P., D.D.
Archbishop of Caceres
President, CBCP

Tagaytay City, 31 January 1990.

CBCP Press Releases

1. Prelature of Libmanan

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines today (19 December 1989), received official announcement from the Apostolic Nunciature of the creation by His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, of the *Prelature of Libmanan*, with territories separated from the Archdiocese of Caceres.

The Holy Father appointed the Right Reverend Monsignor Prospero Arellano as the first Bishop-Prelate of the said circumscription.

Msgr. Arellano was born in 17 March 1937 in Bombon, Camarines Sur. He studied at the Ateneo de Naga, thence Aquinas University in Legaspi City and the Holy Rosary Seminary in Naga City.

Ordained priest on 30 March 1963 at the Cathedral of Naga, Msgr. Arellano was assigned as Parish Priest of Iriga City, then Parish of Pili where he is concurrently Vicar Forane. He was also for a time

Rector of the Holy Rosary Major Seminary, Archdiocesan Director of Vocations, and Spiritual Director of the Carmelites.

2. Rt. Rev. Mons. Benjamin Almoneda

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines today (19 December 1989), received official announcement from the Apostolic Nunciature that His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, has appointed the *Rt. Rev. Msgr. Benjamin Almoneda*, presently Rector of the Collegio Filipino in Rome, Italy, as Auxiliary Bishop with special faculties, of the Diocese of Daet, assigning to him the Episcopal See of Timidia.

Msgr. Almoneda was born on 11 April 1930 at Naga City and studied Philosophy and Theology at the San Jose Seminary in Quezon City. He also took special courses in Liturgy and Catechesis in Rome. After his priestly ordination in April 1958, Msgr. Almoneda served as Parish Priest at the Cathedral of Naga, Professor at the Minor Seminary, at the Ateneo de Naga and at the Colegio de Sta. Isabel. He also served for some time as Rector of the Holy Rosary Major Seminary in Naga. Msgr. Almoneda was at one time Director of the Holy Name Society, Archdiocesan Coordinator of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and Spiritual Director of the Young Christian Workers.

3. Most Rev. Deogracias S. Iniguez, Jr. D.D.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines today (5 January 1990), received official announcement from the Apostolic Nunciature that His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, has appointed the *Most Reverend Deogracias S. Iniguez, Jr.*, presently Auxiliary Bishop of Malolos, as the third Bishop of the Diocese of Iba (Zambales).

Bishop Iniguez was born in Cotabato on December 19, 1940. After studies at Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary, the San Carlos Major Seminary and at the University of Sto. Tomas, he was ordained priest in 1963. Since then, Bishop Iniguez has held several positions, namely, Rector of the Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary in

Guiguinto (Bulacan), Parish Priest of San Marcos (Calumpit, Bulacan), currently Parish Priest of Valenzuela (Bulacan), Chancellor of the Diocese of Malolos, and Director of Social Action in the same Diocese.

Bishop Iniguez succeeds the Most Reverend Paciano Aniceto who is now Archbishop of the Diocese of San Fernando (Pampanga) since early last year.

4. Msgrs. Antonio Ranola and Emilio Bataclan

The Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines received official announcement today, 24 February 1990, from the Apostolic Nunciature that the Holy Father has appointed two new Auxiliary Bishops for the Archdiocese of Cebu, namely:

The Very Reverend Monsignori

Antonio Ranola, a priest of the Diocese of Lucena, and
Emilio Bataclan, a priest of the Archdiocese of Cebu.

Msgr. Ranola was born in Manila in 1932 and was ordained priest in 1955 in Lucena City. He studied in the Mt. Carmel Seminary in Lucena, the UST Central Seminary in Manila, and the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem. He holds a Licentiate in Sacred Scriptures from the Biblicum in Rome, and a Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Angelicum University also in Rome. The Bishop-elect served as Assistant Parish Priest in Lopez, Quezon, taught at the Minor Seminary in Lucena and was Rector of the St. Alphonsus School of Theology thereat. He is presently an Assistant Secretary at the Apostolic Nunciature.

Msgr. Bataclan was born in 1940 at Bantayan, Cebu. After studies at the San Carlos Major Seminary, he was ordained priest in 1966 at the Cebu Cathedral. He served as Parish Priest in Mabolo, Cebu, and as Chancellor of that Archdiocese. He is presently Parish Priest of Bogo, Cebu.

On the Immorality of a Coup D'Etat Today

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Peace be with you!

January 1 is celebrated every year in the Catholic Church as World Day of Prayer for Peace. Hence, we wish you the peace of the Lord.

But we realize how fragile peace today is in the Philippines. We want to address to you some urgent words that are to our peace.

We are all aware of the terrible damage caused to human life and property by the last attempted coup d'etat. We want to answer a moral question which is being asked by many in our Archdiocese: Is a seizure of governmental powers by force of arms a legitimate moral choice in the Philippines today? In other words, is it a sin to stage a coup d'etat in order to seize power in the Philippines under present circumstances?

We, the chief pastors in the Archdiocese of Manila where all of the past coup attempts have been centered, wish to answer unequivocally: Under circumstances obtaining in our country today the staging of a coup d'etat, which is a violation of our Constitution is an unlawful usurpation of power; it is a rebellion not only against duly

constituted authority but against God from whom all civil authority is derived (Ro 13:1; see also 1 Pet 2:13-15). In other words, to seize power through a coup d'etat is a sin.

Because it is a sin, one cannot take a morally neutral attitude before an attempt at a coup d'etat. One cannot actively support it and cooperate with it knowingly without incurring guilt. Indeed, one must, to the extent allowed by one's situation and possibilities resist such an evil act, and cooperate with legitimate authority in order to thwart such an attempt.

Why is such a seizure of power through a coup d'etat morally forbidden under present circumstances?

According to accepted moral principles rebellion is allowed only in case of "manifest, long-standing tyranny which would do great damage to fundamental human rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country" (Pope Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio* No. 31).

Under present day circumstances, we cannot speak of a grave and long-standing tyranny of this present duly constituted government which is not yet even four years old. Though there have admittedly been abuses and incompetence, graft and corruption remains, it is nevertheless true that there exist many avenues for the redress of grievances which are available to our citizens. There have been set up social and political structures mandated by the Constitution that allow for change in a peaceful manner. The legislature and the courts continue to function, albeit with deficiencies in an imperfect manner, and the people continue substantially to enjoy their civil liberties.

We wish to remind you that even during the worst days of the past regime the Bishops of the Philippines and the Pope himself advocated only non-violent solutions to the ills of our society. On August 7, 1983 the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines stated: "We have in the recent past rejected violence as an effective human and Christian solution to the problems of communities and nations. We still do" (Pastoral Letter, A Dialogue for Peace). Again, on November 27, 1983, they said: "We call upon Christians who

believe in armed revolution to consider their option against the unique demands of Gospel love and the deepest feelings of the greater majority of our countrymen who yearn for a peaceful and non-violent solution to the problems of our country." And the Pope emphasized to us during his visit here: "Violence can never be a means of solving social conflict . . ." (To the People of the Sugar Plantations).

When in our country and in the whole world today people are asking for participation in the decisions that affect their lives, we should not allow a small group, whether they be a band of political adventurers or opportunists, or military mercenaries to decide the fate of this nation in total disregard of our Constitution and of the desire of the majority of our people. It is clear from the reactions to this last coup attempt that the vast majority of the people for whom the misguided elements claimed to be fighting were not in sympathy with them and continue to reject their pretensions and their methods.

We must nonetheless urge upon the national leadership and all sectors of government without exception, that the present situation and the urgent needs of our people demand profound and thorough-going reforms as well as clear, decisive and forceful action in so many areas, which will no longer brook mere rhetoric and delay. Our government, once again in all its branches, must get its act together, or all of us may forfeit the hard-won constitutional democracy which is now ours. All of us are called to solidarity, collaboration and self-sacrifice in this critical hour.

On this World Day of Prayer for Peace we earnestly exhort you to pray for peace, for our battle is not only against human beings but against satanic powers "who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens" (*Eph 6:12*).

Secondly, we must listen to the Word of God which tells us: "Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth" (*Eph 4:23-24*). Definitely part of this spiritual revolution today must be a change from being bystander or "*usyosos*" into informer and active participants in nation building. We must transcend narrow and self-sacrificing interests in our undivided loyalty to our nation and our people. This cannot be done

without a deep love of our country and the willingness to make the required sacrifices. Let each one believe deep in his heart that the Filipino people is worth living for!

We commend you all to Jesus, the Saviour of the world, and to Mary, the Mother of God. Through her may we receive the enduring peace that her Son came to bring.

**+ JAIME L. CARDINAL, SIN
AND THE AUXILIARY BISHOPS OF MANILA**

1 January 1990

Denial of Holy Communion to Members of Masonic Associations

In our monthly recollection there was a heated discussion on the present Church legislation of Masons. Some of the priests held the opinion that now there is no reason to deny them the Holy Communion, since the present Codex has abolished the penalty of excommunication inflicted by the 1917 Codex upon Masons. Our Bishop, however, has repeatedly insisted that they should not be given the Holy Communion. What is your opinion on the matter?

A Vicar Forane

To make clear our opinion, let us start by quoting the present law on the matter. Canon 1374 reads as follows:

"A person who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or takes office in such an association is to be punished with an interdict."

The 1917 Code mentioned expressly "the Masonic sects or other similar associations, which plot against the Church." The fact that the Masonic Associations are not expressly mentioned in our present Codex does not mean that the Church had changed her attitude toward the Freemasonry. If Freemasonry continues plotting against

the Church it fully falls under the sanction established in Canon 1374, as above quoted.

It is well known the fact that after the new *Codex* was promulgated, Masonic efforts have not been spared to convince Catholics that the Church has abolished the prohibition from joining Masonry and the sanctions attached to it. Masons have even proclaimed that prominent Catholics have joined them and continue practicing the Catholic religion without being molested in the least.

The Magisterium of the Church, however, has clearly reproved this opinion, in order to safeguard the faith of her faithful. The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued on November 26, 1983 a Declaration, stating that the Church has not changed her views on Masons and that her prohibitions against Masonic Societies was still in full force. Since, as the consultant says, some priests are still confused about this matter, we prefer to transcribe the pertinent portion of said Declaration, which is binding on the universal Church. It reads as follows:

"It has been asked whether there has been any change in the Church decision in regard to Masonic Associations since the new Code of Canon Law does not mention them expressly, unlike the previous Code. This Sacred Congregation is in a position to reply that this circumstance is due to an editorial criterion which was followed also in the case of other associations likewise unmentioned inasmuch as they are contained in wider categories.

"Therefore the Church's negative judgment in regard to Masonic Associations remains unchanged since their principles have always been considered irreconcilable with the doctrine of the Church and, therefore, membership in them remains forbidden. The faithful who enrol in Masonic Associations are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion.

"It is not within competence of local ecclesiastical authorities to give a judgment on the nature of Masonic Associations which would imply a derogation from what has been decided above and this is in line with the Declaration of this Sacred Congregation issued on 17 February 1981 (cf. AAS 73 [1981], pp. 240-241).

In an audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II approved and ordered the publication of this Declaration which has been decided in an ordinary meeting of this Sacred Congregation.

"Rome, from the office of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 26 November 1983."

(Sgd.) J. Card. RATZINGER
Prefect

(AAS, LLXXVI, 1984, 300; *Bol. Eccles.* 1984 p. 455)

Moreover, on March 11, 1985, an article with some reflections on the above Declaration of the Sacred Congregation was published in the *L'Osservatore Romano*. Said article, entitled "Irreconcilability between Christian Faith and Freemasonry," corroborates the attitude of the Church concerning the Masonic Associations. It was also published in the *Boletín Ecclesiástico*, 1985, p. 429.

There are some Catholics who still think that the Church has issued her pronouncements on the matter without knowing the reality of particular situations. The contrary is true. Before publishing her declarations, such as the one mentioned before, the Church always makes a scrupulous survey of the situation in the universal Church. To be more specific, "during the years from 1970-1980, the Sacred Congregation was in correspondence with the Episcopal Conferences especially interested in this problem because of the dialogue undertaken by some Catholic personages with representatives of some Lodges which declared that they were not hostile, but were favorable to the Church." The trouble is that these Catholic individuals in some cases were too openminded and easily believed the information given to them by the Masonic Lodges without much difficulty."

It is well known that "a rigid rule of secrecy prevails in Masonic Lodges . . . For some members, this climate of secrecy entails above

all the risk of becoming an instrument of strategies unknown to them . . . The various religious communities to which the individual members of the Lodges belong can be considered only as simple institutionalization of a broader and an elusive truth. Their value appears to be inevitably relative with respect to this broader truth, which instead is shown in the community of good will, i.e., in the Masonic Fraternity.

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

"The relativizing force of such a brotherhood, by its very intrinsic logic, has the capacity to transform the structure of the act of faith in such a radical way as to become unacceptable to a Christian 'to whom his faith is dear'.

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

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

"The Sacred Congregation points out to the faithful that this membership objectively constitutes a grave sin and, by specifying

that the members of a Masonic Association may not receive Holy Communion, it intends to enlighten the conscience of the faithful about a grave consequence which must derive from their belonging to a Masonic Lodge."

Our answer, therefore, to the query of the consultant Vicar Forane is simple. The official stand of the Church is clear. "The faithful who are members of a Masonic Association are in a state of grave sin and may not receive Holy Communion." Moreover, the Declaration of the Sacred Congregation rejects any opinion, even within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, contrary to this official teaching of the Church. "It is not within the competence of local ecclesiastical authorities to give a judgment on the nature of Masonic Associations which would imply a derogation from what has been decided above."
(Excelso Garcia, O.P.)

Parishes Committed to Religious

Our religious community was entrusted before the new Codex with a parish using as its Church the chapel of the community. The commission of the parish to the community was effected after an indult of the Holy See was granted to this effect. The commission of the parish to the community was done "pleno jure," as stated in the Decree of erection of the parish signed by the local Ordinary.

May I ask you what are the effects of the new Codex on the parish so commissioned to the community, since the new Codex differs from the 1917 Codex.

A Religious Superior

In order to clarify the question posed by our consultant, we deem it proper to give a summary of the Church legislation on the matter before the 1983 Codex, in order to see the nature of the parish commission to the religious community.

In the Codex of 1917 parishes were divided into *secular* parishes and *religious* parishes (Canon 456). The former were run by the secular clergy, the latter by religious. Although religious *per se* were not called or destined to govern parishes, by privilege, however, or by

special indult of the Holy See parishes sometimes were given or committed to them for one reason or another.

Union or commission of a parish to a religious community happened in two different ways, namely *quoad temporalia tantum* or *pleno jure*. Canon 1425 of the 1917 Codex gave us the description of both. Its first paragraph said: "If a parish has, by papal indult, been united to a religious house *as to temporalities only*, the religious house is entitled to its revenue, and the Superior must present to the local Ordinary a member of the secular clergy, who is then appointed pastor by the local Ordinary and is entitled to a fair salary from the religious house."

The priest, therefore, to be presented for appointment belonged to the diocesan clergy. He received jurisdiction from the local Ordinary, upon whom he was entirely dependent as to his pastoral rights and obligations. Said secular priest received a financial emolument from the religious house.

The second paragraph of Canon 1425 read: "If a parish, however, is incorporated *pleno jure* with a religious community by the Holy See, the religious Superior may designate one of his subjects to take charge of the same; but the local Ordinary has the right to subject the appointee to an examination and to give him his canonical appointment. Besides, the religious pastor is subject to the jurisdiction, correction and visitation of the local Ordinary in whatever belongs to the care of souls, according to Canon 631. The parish *pleno jure* incorporated to a religious community is a *religious parish*."

Canon 471, §1 stated that a parish which was *pleno jure* commissioned to a religious community must have a *vicar*, who had the actual care of souls. He represented the religious community which was conceived as the *parish habitual curator or pastor*.

The difference between the commission *ad temporalia tantum* and *pleno jure* was clear. The commission *pleno jure* covered both the right of the religious house to the revenues of the parish committed as well as the right of the Superior to present a member of the institute itself to be appointed as pastor of the parish. Both rights made the parish a religious parish. Besides, the fact that the pastor

pastor of the parish was a religious in the *pleno jure* commission gave the religious Superior the right to watch him in the exercise of his parochial ministry. In this sense, the religious pastor was under the cumulative jurisdiction of the local Ordinary and of the religious Superior.

Another observation to be noted is that the revenues of the parish committed *pleno jure* went entirely to the religious community, while in the commission *ad temporalia tantum* there was a deduction for the salary given to the secular priest ruling the parish. The salary of the religious pastor belonged to the community (Canon 630, §3).

The foregoing laws directly referred to parishes commissioned to a religious community. The new Codex of 1983 in its Canon 520 states:

- §1. "A juridical person may not be a parish priest. However, the diocesan Bishop, but not the diocesan Administrator can, with the consent of the competent Superior entrust a parish to a clerical religious institute or to a clerical society of apostolic life, even by establishing it in the church of the institute or society, subject however to the rule that one priest be the parish priest or, if the pastoral care is entrusted to several priests jointly, that there be a moderator as mentioned in canon 517, §1.
- §2. The commission of a parish, dealt with in §1, can be done either in perpetuum or for a determined period of time; in both cases it shall be done through a written agreement between the diocesan Bishop of the competent Superior of the institute or society, wherein it should be specified expressly and accurately whatever concerns the kind of work or ministry to be carried out, the persons to be assigned to such work and the financial conditions."

The following things therefore are clearly determined in canon 520 of the new Codex:

1. A juridical person *may not be parish priest in the future. A priest shall be appointed as parish priest;*

2. A parish can be committed to the community by establishing it *even in the church of the community itself*, which implies that the parish can also be established *outside*.

3. The forgoing commitment can be done in perpetuum or temporarily.

4. The commitment should be done by way of a written agreement between the diocesan Bishop and the competent Superior (Major Superior).

5. Three points should be expressly and accurately determined in the written agreement, namely: a) the kind of work or ministry to be done; b) the persons to be assigned to carry out such work; c) the economic conditions.

With regards to the exercise of the pastoral ministry the new *Codex* reaffirms clearly in Canon 678 that the religious are under the authority of the Bishop, whom they are obliged to follow with devout compliance and reverence in matters concerning the care of souls, the public worship and other works of the apostolate. And in the exercise of external apostolate, the religious are also under their own Superior and he must remain faithful to the discipline of the Institute; which obligation the Bishop himself, if the case arises, should not fail to enforce. In directing the apostolic works of religious, diocesan Bishop and religious Superior should proceed by way of mutual consultation.

Bearing in mind whatever the 1917 *Codex* established for parishes committed to a religious community and what the new *Codex* states on the matter, we can answer the question of our consultant. Since the new *Codex* does not admit that a religious community be the habitual parish priest for its being a juridical person, the religious priest, who was before the actual vicar, representing the community in his pastoral ministry, should be considered now as *true parish priest*, with the rights and obligations of a parish priest. But with regards to other things, we have to bear in mind what canons 4 and 9 of the new Code establish.

Canon 9 reads: "Laws look at the future, not at the past, unless the new laws expressly mention the past. . ."

Canon 520, §1, after stating that "a juridical person may not be parish priest," goes on considering what in the future can be done. "Bishop can entrust a parish to a religious institute." No reference whatsoever is done to the past.

Canon 4 reads: "Acquired rights, and likewise privileges granted by the Apostolic See to either physical or juridical person, which are still in use and have not been revoked, remain, intact, unless they are expressly revoked by the canons of this Code."

It seems that canon 4 requires a clearly express revocation of the acquired rights and privileges. Hence, if the rights and privileges enjoyed by the religious community to which a parish was committed *pleno jure* by virtue of a papal indult, are not expressly revoked by the new Codex, they subsist and should continue being enjoyed by the religious community. (*Excelso Garcia, O.P.*)

Optional Communion in the Hand or in the Tongue

The Apostolic See, since 1969, while maintaining the traditional manner of distributing Communion, namely in the tongue, has granted to those Episcopal Conferences that requested it, the faculty of distributing Communion by placing the host in the hands of the faithful.

The local Conference tried in four occasions in the past to introduce Communion in the hands and four times did it fail. It was only last January 1989 that the Bishops' Conference managed to obtain the two-thirds majority vote required by law. The confirmation of the Conference's decision was granted on 27 February, 1989 by the *Congregatio Pro Cultu Divino* (Prot. N. 358/89) with the following observations:

1. The faithful are not to be obliged to adopt the practice of Communion in the hand, each one is free to communicate in one way or the other;
2. The communicant who has received the Eucharist in the hand is to consume it before returning to his place, moving aside yet facing the altar to allow the person following to approach the minister;
3. Insistence is to be laid upon the importance of the "Amen" said in response to the formula of the minister . . . ; this "Amen" is an affirmation of faith;

4. It is from the Church that the faithful receive the holy Eucharist, which is Communion in the Body of the Lord and in the Church; for this reason the communicant should not take from the paten or container, as would be done for ordinary bread, but the hands must be stretched out to receive it from the minister of Communion;

5. It is necessary that the faithful receive sound catechesis in this matter, and that insistence be laid upon the sentiments of adoration and respect towards the most holy Sacrament;

6. Those with care of souls should insist not only upon the necessary dispositions for the fruitful reception of Communion . . . , but also upon an external attitude which conveys a sense of respect in general and expresses in particular the belief of the faithful in the Eucharist (SCDW, 3 April, 1985); *Notitiae*, 1985, 261-263). (AAS, 1969, 541-546) and the *Ritual De Sacra Communione* of 21 June, 1973, n. 21. (Florencio Testera, O.P.)

213. **Paciano B. Aniceto was named Archbishop of San Fernando on 31 January 1989.**
220. **Sofio G. Balce was named Coadjutor Bishop of Cabanatuan 21 May 1988.**
221. **Angel N. Lagdameo succeeded to the See of Dumaguete on 10 June 1989.**

GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW

Homilies for May and June 1990

Roman Carter, O.P. and Pastor Ybafiez

Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 6, 1990

(Ac 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Pt 2:20b-25; Jn 10:1-10)

Today because of its Gospel is commonly called "Good Shepherd Sunday." Christ, as our Shepherd is both a fulfillment of David his human ancestor, and one who presents the Father's guiding care to the world. But there is nothing static about the mission of Christ. His Risen Love extends his role as Shepherd to his Church. Peter preeminently and with him the apostolic college and their successors all have the role of Shepherds in Christ.

How are they to tend the flock? First, by a call to heartfelt repentance, sacramental life and growth in holiness as seen in the first reading. Secondly, by themselves following the example of Christ in bearing undeserved hardships and even death. This theme of the second reading is crowned by reference to Christ as healer, Shepherd and guardian of souls. Finally, by following Christ as sole true Shepherd wherever he leads them, for he is sure to bring all who follow into the pasture of glory.

It would be wrong in this Age of the Laity to think that only hierarchically constituted officials share in the charism of shepherd-

ing. All Christians, whatever their state or status, are called on at certain times and places to be shepherds of others. The image is strange, but we are all at one time or another both shepherds and sheep. We can easily go wrong, however, if we base our claim to be the shepherds in a given situation on mere natural "leadership" or even God-given talent. We must follow Christ. He must be our example and exemplar. What he has said and done must be our sole true norm for word and deed. This is not easy, for the world resists a leadership it considers to be remotely based. It scorns both our role-playing and our role-model. Once it crucified Christ. Now it may crucify us!

What gives us hope and courage in the midst of our distress? The presence of Jesus our Risen Lord. In no way is he more present than as Eucharistic Victim and Victor. At no time is he more present than here at Mass. Therefore, let us take this presence to our selves. Let us who offer, receive and distribute him, make Christ the constant center not only of our worship here but of our lives.

People around us (at home, at work, at school, in life) long for guidance. We need guidance, too, if we are to bring it to others. Let Christ be our guide. Let us bear forth from this Mass a true sense of being the redeemed flock of the Risen Lord. Then, as he inspires us by the Holy Spirit, let us with humble joy take on our shepherds' role as the occasions for it arise and permit. One in Christ let us go forward to the green pastures of Eternal Life finding him both as Shepherd and Gate, our sole reliance in the Spirit, the one certain expression of the Father's Love. (*R. Carter, O.P.*)

Fifth Sunday of Easter, May 13, 1990

(Ac 6:1-17; 1 Pt 2:4-9; Jn 14:1-12)

The three readings we have heard tell us of growth and change in the Church, of the keystone of the house of God who binds us all together and of Jesus as Way, Truth and Life, the perfect expression of the Father. The concepts tie together if we realize that our Risen Lord is a living Person who is both perfectly divine from all eternity and perfectly human from the moment of his incarnation in the Virgin's womb and forever.

Christ extends his incarnation by the life of his Church, by our life in him. This extended love overcomes divisions of race, language and even function. All men and women everywhere and at every time are provided for by the Church. But the Church had to learn through conflict of interests. We learn through the need for service. We even learn from the necessarily obtrusive sense of neglect expressed by our minorities. We cope with difficulty through innovation. Thus, the Seven (prototypes of Christian Diaconate) were appointed.

All the while another process is taking place. We, as living stones, are being assembled into God's Temple. We often inevitably feel rejected. We feel we should be given a different and better place. St. Peter tells us of Christ's rejection. He was an "irregular" stone. Now he is the corner stone not on a hill in Jerusalem but in the true Zion of God's house. We can lean on him, rest our weight and care on him. For the House built on high will never fall down. We are in it with Christ. That makes us special, a new People of God, priestly and kingly and set apart in Christ.

Finally Christ is Way (the path home). He is Truth (the fullness of revelation). He is the Life, which he both gives and sustains. If we truly believe in him we shall not only achieve fame beyond the stars. Here and now we shall perform his works and the even greater works the Holy Spirit gives us in virtue of Christ's Risen Life.

There is no time or place more apt for realizing these truths in our lives than here and now in this Mass. Our celebration is something new and gives us an opportunity to evaluate, appreciate and rightly use one another in God's service. In the process we are set closer to each other as stones in a building. The cornerstone is Christ. Best of all he (our food and drink) is our heavenward path, our living Word and the life of our spirit. He comes to us in Holy Communion to be all this. But he is much more.

Christ wants us to leave here with hearts renewed. He wants us to serve our brothers in his name. He builds us up in our day to day life related to him and his (each other). And he wants us to perform great works extending his love from pole to pole to the remotest and nearest places and people. He wants us united with him in the Power of the Spirit to glorify the Father by conquering the world! (R. Carter, O.P.)

Sixth Sunday of Easter, May 20, 1990
(Ac 8:5-8, 14-17; 1 Pt 3:15-18; Jn 14:15-21)

The work of God is unexpected. It uses novel methods and has unforeseen results. In today's readings the conversion of strangers, the Christlike suffering of the Church and the Promise of the Spirit show us some of this "holy novelty," this sense of the unexpected which from the earliest times has been a sign of authentic Christianity.

The conversion of the Samaritans was a result of persecution and dispersion in and from Jerusalem. It shows the beginning of a diversification of functions in the Church. Philip the Deacon preaches and works wonders. The Apostles lay on hands. Christian witness, according to St. Peter in the second reading sways lives through its patience and strength. It brings not only believers but detractors to see the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection. But Christianity is never a "do it yourself" cure-all for the world's problems. We need and must have the presence of "another Advocate," the Holy Spirit the Paraclete.

Our temptation is often to a humdrum sort of existence. It is hardly "life;" it is just plodding along, vaguely hoping for the best while striving for nothing. God shakes us, then. We have to reach out to unknown, even despised, persons. But we have to cry for help from Saints in heaven and Bishops on earth to complete our tasks. We are often insulted, overlooked and misjudged. We could protest. Or we could (and should) opt for being Christ-like witnesses so that sorrow can turn to joy, death to resurrection. We can rely on no one but God. Each Divine Person is the object of a special Christian trust: the Spirit within us, Christ our life, the Father our highest, most sustaining love.

This Mass is the Mass of a Church with a mission. Our intentions are limitless. This Mass is a time of encounter with Christ. This encounter is effected by the Spirit. And it is made for the Father's glory and our good. Would that our whole life could be always and everywhere such a prayer, such an encounter, such a touching upon glory. We know that it is not. That is why we should be especially attentive in this place so as to grow right here and now in grace and

knowledge and love. For tomorrow we shall need these things and find them harder to acquire. If we overcome the humdrum here and now with God's help the effect may last.

What do we as Catholic Christians have to offer the world? Let us like Philip share our wonderfilled faith with the most unlikely people. Let us call the attention of the hierarchy to things we cannot do. May God help us when we feel let down in our witness to remember we are witnesses of and to Christ the God-man who once suffered and now reigns. And may he grant us the constant prayerful stance of invoking the Holy Spirit whose advocacy makes the invisible Lord our life still and who gives the strength to keep Christ's commandments and to come victoriously to the Father's love. May all our prayers be answered in the strength of those holy thoughts! (*R. Carter, O.P.*)

Solemnity of the Lord's Ascension, May 27, 1990
(*Ac 1:12-14; Eph 1:17-23; Mt 28:16-20*)

The Church today is celebrating a feast, the feast of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus.

The Ascension is the culminating point and is like the brooch of gold of the whole earthly ministry of Jesus. For Jesus' ministry is like an ascension from Galilee towards Jerusalem and from Jerusalem to heaven.

In reality, Jesus' ascension is his return, his going back to the Father. Jesus came to earth with a very serious mission: to save man. Once this objective was attained, Jesus returned to the Father, full of joy for having faithfully carried out his mission.

Jesus has been exalted by God, who has made him sit at his right hand. Jesus as Lord makes his glorious and definitive entrance into heaven in the mystery of his Ascension.

The readings of today's Mass project the cosmic and universal triumph of Jesus, under whose feet God has put everything.

Jesus himself is aware of this dominion! "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

The Father knows how to reward the toils of his Son. And Jesus is clothed with majesty before all the angels in heaven. He wore a mantle of rags and tatters for several hours during his Passion, now he is vested with a fur cloak for all eternity. He suffered the dishonor of a crown of thorns. Now he carries on his head crown of pure gold. That reed placed in his hand as a scepter of ridicule has been exchanged for a royal scepter, symbol of universal power over the whole world.

It is not strange that St. Paul says that there is no proportion between what we suffer for God and the honor which is going to be ours. The triumph of the ascended Jesus must enliven and encourage us to labor and fight for him with all courage here on earth.

Jesus in his Ascension has gained the promise that we all hope for: the joy of being with God forever.

The Ascension should not be for us Christians a soporific which renders us less sensitive to the problems and struggles of this life. The angels clearly warned the apostles who were left astounded, looking up to heaven, to this effect. Immediately they were sent back to the urgent reality of the moment. "Go once again into the city and continue your life. Now is when everything begins." They will, therefore, be vested here on earth with the "power" of the Spirit of Jesus.

With the Holy Spirit present in them there will never be a task which they cannot perform. No difficulties that can terrify them.

Thanks to the Ascension into heaven, the sudden invasion of the Spirit of Jesus came about on earth. This force is still found today among us. God's power help us to bring in the Kingdom of God wherever we live and work.

In the midst of this triumph of Jesus, the culmination of his work, the nearsightedness of the apostles intrudes itself. Moments

before his going up to heaven, the apostles ask Him if it is now that he will restore the Kingdom of Israel.

Jesus must have felt himself cheated. After three entire years his friends were not capable of capturing the meaning of his preaching and of his message. But Jesus did not lose his patience, nor was he irritated. Something has to be left for the Holy Spirit.

It will be the Spirit at Pentecost who will bring to the attention of the apostles that Jesus did not come to set up the earthly Kingdom of Israel, but to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. This Kingdom will not just involve the Jewish world. It will be a universal kingdom where all men of all races, religions and cultures, will be admitted.

This Kingdom of Jesus rests over three basic pillars: truth, justice and love.

It is not easy nowadays to be a full-pledged Christian. The criteria and values of the contemporary world are in many ways contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.

If we want to be consistent about our faith we will have to foster brotherhood and not hatred among men, hope and not disillusion, joy and not sadness, peace and not war, esteem and not contempt. We must foster what unites us and not what separates us.

If we can be truthful and genuine in our conduct, if we can fight for justice even if it causes others displeasures, if an act of love is more important for us than a thousand words . . . then we are on the right path. Jesus will acknowledge us as his own when he comes again to judge mankind.

Our pending task is not at all easy. At times we feel tired of rowing against the current. But, let us remember that we are not alone in the earnest desire of building a better world, a more brotherly one that will be the Kingdom of God on earth. We have to make this beautiful utopia a reality. For if it is certain that we can never reach the peak, it is no less certain that we can always get near it.

Jesus promises us his presence all through the centuries: "I am with you always until the end of this world," he told us upon taking leave. With his presence and that of the Holy Spirit nothing will be impossible.

If in Jesus the Ascension is the culmination of a way of love and of commitment, let us now decide to put ourselves on to the very same path, and we will, like him, attain triumph.

The Holy Mother Church in her Eucharistic celebrations always makes "memory" of the Passion, Resurrection and glorious Ascension of Jesus into heaven. The Ascension is a mystery which is always present in every Holy Mass. Today in a special way let us put ourselves in contact with our glorified Lord Jesus, who makes us witnesses of his triumph and shares with us the power of his spirit so that we may know how to give testimony of him on earth, each one in the very place assigned to him by God: his family, his place of work, his leisure.

Let us proceed in joy with our Holy Eucharist and partake of the triumph of Jesus. (*P. Ybáñez*)

Pentecost Sunday, June 3, 1990
(*Ac 2:1-11; 1 Co 12:3-7, 12-13; Jn 20:19-23*)

It was almost nightfall; the day was coming to an end. The shadows were starting to darken the streets of the city. The disciples, shut up in the inner part of the apartment, had locked all doors "because of their fear of the Jews." With the Master dead, what lot would befall his disciples?

We live today in materialistic society; gone with the wind are the values of the spirit which would have been the best restraint against the abuses of uncontrolled power and of freedom turned into licentiousness. We find ourselves in an egoistic society, where there is no concern for the common good and its pursuit; nay, the common good is mocked and boycotted when it is thought to be an obstacle to one's own personal gain. In such a selfish society, without moral constraints, mutual trust disappears and fear reigns supreme.

Man lives again and again more in fear," says Pope John Paul II. Man fears that what he produces will be turned into an instrument of self-destruction; he fears that it will be used for violence, as a weapon in the service of enmity and hatred.

Let us read, on the vigil Mass of Pentecost, the chapter of Genesis, which seems to involve the greatest humiliation of men who are proud of their progress: "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and so make a name for ourselves." God confounded them with the Babel of languages, which "scattered them all over the earth."

"Let us make a new earth; let us build a new world," the self-appointed leaders of today are used to saying. Is the secret in piling up stones and bricks and bitumen for mortar, as in Shinar? In promising material goods, increase of wealth, technical progress? In having more and not in "being more"?

Selfishness, like a bad angel, overwhelms men, and they, forgetting the ways that lead to love, to peace, to brotherhood, make stupid calculations to multiply their military power. They assign billions of dollars to build armaments, impressive destructive armaments; to see who can manufacture the highest tower, which can destroy the biggest number of people. All the while they go on sounding with ironic sarcasm: "Let us build a new earth!"

"Peace be with you" was the greeting of Jesus for those who were overcome by fear. And it is the solution: Jesus announces peace and gives peace. He is peace; he brings peace wherever he goes; he gives it as a gift to whoever seeks him and opens the doors for him.

At his Ascension into heaven he announced what will happen: the Holy Spirit would come with his gifts.

When the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles, they were radically transformed. Those who had been holed up in the house and dominated by fear now launched themselves into the streets and openly preached Jesus Christ.

Those unlettered men felt that the Holy Spirit had enlightened them and would give them the right words at every moment. Like an inner fire the Spirit burned and consumed in them all imperfections and mental baseness. Like a hurricane wine, the Spirit gave them unstoppable dynamism.

Pentecost is the coronation of the Easter Time, of the paschal mystery of Jesus which involves these three sublime aspects: the Resurrection, the Ascension into heaven and the Pentecost. The narration of the Acts of the Apostles is like the Constitutional Charter of the Church. But Pentecost is not only the remembrance of a date; it is an acknowledgement of a reality at every moment of the Church and every soul in particular. Pope Paul VI, in the *Credo of the People of God*, says: "We believe in the Holy Spirit who has been sent to us by Christ . . . he enlightens, vivifies, protects and guides the Church, purifying her members, if they do not stay away from grace; his action penetrates up to the depths of the soul."

We cannot see the Holy Spirit; he shows himself by his works. Ordinarily he acts discreetly and silently; at times with a show of grace; he is the source of spiritual energy; he is a dynamic presence.

The Church, which was proclaimed by the apostles as the ark of salvation, must appear as a community of brothers and sisters, with a brotherhood communicated by the action of the Holy Spirit. This has to manifest itself in love. The first Christian communities awakened the interest and admiration of outsiders by their life of union in a love which was translated into good works: by sharing, giving and giving themselves as a reflection of the love of God. Precisely in today's Gospel (Jn 20:19-23) the divine mercy is made evident through the institution of the sacrament of forgiveness.

Before the descent of the Holy Spirit, "they gathered frequently to pray as a group, . . . with Mary the mother of Jesus" (Ac 1:14). Mary, in those days of hiding, implores with her prayers the gifts of the Holy Spirit. She reinforces the prayer of the Apostles. By her attitude she encourages them to persevere.

The Church was born officially on Pentecost day; and Mary, Mother of the Church, welcomes into her arms the new born, which

will endeavour to attain excellence by basing itself on the model of Mary. Looking at Mary, the Apostles saw the type of the Church which they had to announce.

Because the Mother of God "is the type and excellent exemplar of the Church in faith and charity and perfect union with Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*).

Because "the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ . . . For in the mystery of the Church, which is itself rightly called mother and virgin, the Blessed Virgin stands out in eminent and singular fashion as exemplar both of virgin and mother" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 63).

Mary showed "an undefiled faith." The faith the Apostle would preach must be like that.

"The Son whom she brought forth is he whom God placed as the first-born among many brethren, namely the faithful, in whose birth and education she cooperates with a maternal love." With love must we cooperate with the action of the grace that "brings forth to a new and immortal life the sons who are born in baptism, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of God.

"The Virgin in her own life lived an example of that maternal love, by which it behooves that all should be animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church for the regeneration of men" (*Ibidem* nn. 64 & 65).

Enlightened by the Spirit, they anticipated what was to be announced centuries later: "Mary, who since her entry into salvation history unites in herself and re-echoes the greatest teachings of the faith as she is proclaimed and venerated, calls the faithful to her Son and his sacrifice and to the love of the Father" (*Ibidem* n. 65). (P. Ybanez)

Solemnity of the Most Blessed Trinity, June 10, 1990
(Ex 34:4-6, 8-9; Co 13:11-11; Jn 3:16-18)

Today is the feast of the Most Holy Trinity. That there are three divine Persons in one God is a dogma of Catholic Faith. This dogma is ignored by many; viewed with awe and reverence by not a few; accepted by an act of faith. This is like forcing oneself to open to it the doors of the intellect, more than those of the heart.

And, nevertheless, God, by revealing to us this mystery, has revealed his intimate life which, save for the infinite distances, seems to be quite like ours: a life of communication, a family life, a life of giving oneself completely to others . . . Because God, by lifting the veil off the mystery, shows his intimacy of love, his joy of loving and being loved.

When the new earth and the new heavens appear, when the shadows disappear and the sun of eternity shines forth, and in its light the elect contemplate and behold God as he is, such will be our happiness: to see God, joyfully passing from contemplation to love.

Following today's liturgy we read in St. Paul (2 Co 13: 11-13) the ideal of a Christian Community; it must live in peace and in love. The Apostle synthesizes in a trinitarian formula what life of a Christian, and of the Christian Community must be. The farewell salutation concludes: "The grace of Christ Jesus the Lord, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." This is what the priest borrows and usually uses as the opening greeting at the start of Holy Mass.

God is love; St. John thus defines God. It is almost certain that, in St. Paul's invocation he does not refer to the essence of God. He alludes to the act of love; to the goodwill of the Father towards those who are united to Christ.

God is love. God loves because he is a Father. It is wrong to look and lift ourselves up from the level of our earthly fathers to that of God, that is to weigh God in his love in accordance with the love that our father has for us. On the contrary, we must try to measure the

dignity of our earthly parents in accordance with the likeness they have with God the Father.

Our parents — our fathers, our mothers — loving as they love those whom they have begotten, can never believe that they have reached perfection. They have to raise their eyes, their thoughts to God to inspire them always for more.

In spite of failures and imperfections, a father's love is very great. That is why Jesus said: "If you who are bad know how to give good things to your children," it is because God has put into your hearts a participation, a share of His divine paternal love.

The ideal is very high. Towards that we must all direct our thoughts in order to correct our deficiencies, and to aspire always to overcome them.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme "grace", the sovereign gift which the Father gives us. And to live with him and to him is a vital union, which is necessarily indispensable for salvation: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that those who believe in Him shall not perish" (*Jn* 3:16-18).

Adhesion to Jesus is through faith, and through faith we attain the possession of eternal life. For he who believes in him shall not be condemned. This faith is not a faith that is merely intellectual. It is a faith that is lived and manifested in good works.

St. Paul mentions the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, wishing us to have it. By welcoming this divine Guest into our souls, we live the divine life and acquire the boldness to meet trials and difficulties. Christians do this in their personal life and their families, in their relations among themselves. When families love one another, they imitate the Divine Persons of the Holy Trinity. In the event of disunity, the Holy Trinity is expelled and the doors are closed to the Divine Persons, and the bitterness of a broken union sets in.

Jesus, all through his public life, was the revealer of the trinitarian mystery. His was a gradual revelation. He started revealing

the existence of the Father: he comes as one sent by the Father, and sent to save the world, because the Father loves us. He spoke about the Father and with the Father, and he taught us to address God by calling him Father and putting our trust in him.

Above all at the Last Supper, Jesus speaks clearly about the Holy Spirit. He promises to send him as paraclete and advocate and teacher who will complete the teachings of Jesus Himself. This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the announced Spirit burst forth into the infant Church, never to leave it throughout the centuries to come. The same Spirit inhabits soul of the just: "We shall come to him and make our abode in him." Through union with the Holy Spirit comes the fellowship with the Father, with the Son and with all of the members of the Christian community. (*P. Ybáñez*)

Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ, June 17, 1990
(Dt 8:2-3; 14-16; 1 Co 10:16-17; Jn 6:51-59)

Undoubtedly we Christians appear to be rather strange people in the eyes of those who do not share our faith. They believe that we are rigorists, enemies of the flesh, but lo and behold! today we are celebrating with every pomp and joy the "Feast of the Body," the Corpus Christi.

Today we bless, we praise, we incense, we take out in procession through the streets and public places the lovely Body of Jesus Christ, that body which redeemed us all with his toils, and hardships and smiles.

By sad experience we know to what extent a body can debase itself, what degradations it can undergo. That is why perhaps God gives us today the joy and happiness of celebrating with a feast a body, that was altogether peace, light, overflowing joy.

Before the Incarnation, God was very abstract and cerebral for men, sensual and corporal as we are. Therefore, the Lord wanted to come near us and put himself within the reach of our hands, of our lips. Now God is a being whom we can touch, hold, grasp somehow with our eyes, with our taste.

This is what St. John said in his first letter: "What we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we have contemplated and our hands have touched . . ." that is what we announce to you. Such is the Holy Eucharist, this is the Incarnation of God. As one medieval theologian puts it, the Eucharist is "*incarnationis statio fixa*: the Eucharist is an incarnation perpetuated."

How well did the holy Curé of Ars feel this bodiliness of God when, holding the Sacred Host tightly between his rough peasant fingers, he exclaimed: "Ah, if I knew that I was going to be condemned, that I was going to be separated from you all eternity, I would never release you."

We celebrate today the feast of the body of God, which is like our own, and therefore we also celebrate today our own body, since Christ did not stop until he could usher the human body into the glory of heaven and make it enjoy the happiness of God.

This Holy Eucharist is the "nourishment" of Christians. The people of Israel, wandering in the desert of Sinai, were a figure of the Christian people which moves along in search of the new heaven and the new earth. Just as the Lord put his people to the test in the desert, making them undergo bitter dangers, in the same way today his Church — which we are — goes through difficult moments in which faith and hope seem to fail us.

Nevertheless, in the midst of darkness and torments through which his people were passing, the Lord sent them rays of lighting which made them see the horizon and put them once again on the right direction. The water from the rock that quenched the thirst of the people and the manna that served as food for them were two divine interventions in favor of his people.

The Lord today also gives his Christian people food for the journey: the nourishment of the Holy Eucharist. This is the "Viaticum" which every Christian can bring in his "bag". The early Christians used to bring home every Sunday the bread of the Eucharist in order to be able to have it with them all through the week: and when they make a long journey they also carried it with them in order not to be without it during the trip.

Today we have it at our disposal as nourishment in the Holy Communion of every Mass and as presence in all of our churches. We can go to the Holy Eucharist with the faith of the hemorrhagic woman. We can lift up our eyes to it and lower them afterwards in order to relish in silence and in peace the reasons for our happiness.

God made himself bread for us at the outset of the journey. He makes himself a fellow pilgrim on our way. I can see him, touch him, wrap myself in him; if I am sad or find myself lonely, I can come to him; if my vessel runs out of hope I can put it under him, who is the spring of living water. If I feel myself tempted or engulfed in storm of evil passions, I can avail myself of Him, who controlled the storm on lake Tiberias.

We have Jesus within the reach of our hands. We are more fortunate than those who lived with him in Palestine. Today we can eat his mortified, glorified and risen body; a body inundated with joy and filled with the Spirit, which makes us better everyday and will fortify us for the journey which is still left for us to undertake.

The Holy Eucharist unites us with Christ. When we eat this body, in reality we are eating the life and death of Jesus. For at Holy Communion we put ourselves in union with Christ himself. This is what St. Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians: as we all eat the same bread, common to all, that produces the intimate union among those who eat at the same table; Christ Himself, who is received by everyone is the one who unites us altogether and makes us all into one same body, which is no other than his "Mystical Body," which is to say, his Church.

Therefore, there is nothing that can build up the Church better than the Holy Eucharist. We can and we must have reunions of every kind among Christians; cultural events, fiestas, sports . . . all help towards union, but nothing can be compared with the profound union which the Holy Eucharist produces among us. Jesus will always be the best mortar to seal the stones of his Church.

As we nourish ourselves with the Holy Eucharist we do not only unite ourselves more closely with Jesus but we die to what we have

to die to (selfishness, envies, hatreds . . .) and we live to what we have to live to (hope, love, joy, simplicity . . .)

The Holy Eucharist makes us dwell in Christ and makes Him dwell in us, so much so that when we receive Holy Communion knowing what we are doing and eliminating all routine, little by little we are transformed into Jesus. Have you not seen how a very little leaven can ferment a mass of bread and enlarges it? Surely the same thing happens to us Christians when we let Jesus enter into our hearts. Jesus changes us from within.

If at times the experience we have is to the contrary, it is because we receive Holy Communion in the same way as we drink a glass of water, with hardly any preparation at all or without any quiet moment for thanksgiving. Food will be of no use to you, if you do not chew it, if you do not assimilate it . . . why are you then surprised?

But if our Holy Communion is the efficacious moment of Sunday and we give ourselves to it with a genuine desire of uniting ourselves with Christ and of allowing him to "dwell" within us, then shall we be able to prove that to receive Holy Communion is to saturate ourselves with God, that God is with us and we are with him and in him.

Would that this feast of the Body and Blood of Jesus make us appreciate and show gratitude for and completely live our Holy Communion and in this way the words of Jesus be made real: "Just as I have life from the Father, so he who eats me have life from me." So be it. (*P. Ybañez*)

Birth of St. John the Baptist, June 24, 1990

(*Is 49:1-6; Ac 13:22-26; Lk 1:57-66,80*)

Today we celebrate the feast of one of the greatest saints the world has ever had: St. John the Baptist, cousin of Jesus Christ.

Let us note the fact that the Church celebrates only the deaths of most saints, because those are the dates when they enter Heaven to enjoy God. It never celebrates their births since all of them were born in original sin, enemies therefore of God our Lord.

Nevertheless today the the Church does otherwise. Today, the Church celebrates the birth of St. John the Baptist. This tells us his great eminence, his lofty sanctity. Other than the births of Jesus and the Blessed Virgin Mary, the birth of no other saint than John the Baptist is celebrated in the Church. Jesus Himself, speaking of John would say: "Truly I say to you, no one born of woman is greater than John the Baptist."

At first glance it seems strange that a man who lived about two thousand years ago, plunged into the desert of Judea, could have any lesson for us men of the twentieth century with our color televisions and computers and space ships. Nevertheless, the life of this man, roughly clothed with camel's skin and a leader belt, has three principal things to tell us Christians of the twentieth century.

The first thing which the life of the Baptist tells us is that he is a God-chosen man. He is a man whom - as the first reading says - God has chosen even before he was born to be his herald before the rest of men; a man whom he already sanctified before birth, by taking original sin away from him. And, later, once grown up, God brought him to the desert, away from things, from people, from the world in order that he might relish his God and be able to know him better.

There in the desert, in solitude, is where St. John the Baptist prepared himself for the grand mission which awaited him: that of being the precursor of Jesus Christ. There is where he acquired that great holiness that would correspond with the inspired words of the psalm: "I have found a man in accordance with my heart who does everything I ask." This is surely St. John the Baptist: A man always open to God, a man of whom God already knew beforehand that he could ask anything from him, because he was sure that it would be given him.

This should be the first lesson of his life. It should penetrate deep into our heart so that our life too, our day-to-day concrete life, our family life, our religious life, our entertainment life, our life of work . . . may remain open to God, open to the faithful fulfillment of his commandments. Thus God will not be some sort of a "gate-crasher" in our life, but someone who has his place in it, the principal place. If we endeavor to truly put God at the center of our life, our married and

family life, our life of work and of leisure it can quickly be seen how we may obtain from the Lord the typical grace of St. John the Baptist: the grace of a genuine joy.

Even if it seems strange, the “proper and peculiar” grace of St. John the Baptist is the grace of authentic happiness.

St. John the baptist, inspite of his penitent and austere appearance in most paintings, is not a sad nor melancholic man, but a deeply happy saint. And do you know why? Because at the bottom — and in this I hope those who have a little experience would agree with me — at the bottom, genuine happiness, that profound and quiet joy that makes us happy and good is the joy of serving God, that of trying to fulfill faithfully his commandments.

You can laugh loudly, you can sing and shout more than everybody else, and at the bottom it could be that you are sadder than anybody else, that everything you try to do is what is popularly called “a pain killer.”

On the contrary, someone with less noise, with less fuss, could be immensely happier and more contented, because his happiness is not something hollow that only reaches out, but something interior which springs from within, from his heart in peace. This is the joy, that genuine happiness that St. John the Baptist wants today to give to all and to each one of us.

Let us take into account that Christianity is a religion that is happy, full of hope. It is a religion in which God is before all and above all a *Father*, who comforts us when we are sad and takes care of us and forgives us when we have fallen, who always has open arms extended towards us, who is waiting for us there above and is preparing for us the heaven which by our good works we have to gain little by little here on earth. Let us then be happy, always happy, inspite of the sufferings and bad moments which shall not be wanting; always happy with that happiness of St. John the Baptist, who found happiness which springs from the heart, when one feels he is a friend of God.

Let us not believe that the enemy of joy is pain, no, the enemy of joy is not suffering but sin and bad humor.

Let us pray that our life be a full and round Yes to the commandments of God; in that case our life will have that deep and tranquil happiness that filled the soul of St. John the Baptist.

The third feature of the Baptist and also the best known in his having been the "Precursor" of the Lord, "He shall go before the Lord . . . in order to prepare the hearts for him" - his father St. Zechariah said in the hymn of thanksgiving which he intoned to the Lord.

This is the role of the Baptist in his life. To approach people, the people of his time, excessively entangled like those of our time in their things, in their interests, and excessively far from God, in order to help them to meet with God.

St. John did not desire any other thing but to bring souls to Jesus, so that souls might encounter him.

Let us ask this celebrated Saint that he obtain for us the grace of being always for all who come our way paths towards Jesus with our joy and our openness. (*P. Ybanez*)