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OUR LADY OF OMEGA AND ALPHA, TOO!

Thirty years ago when I began to study theology at Hawkesyard Priory in the English Midlands under the late Fr. Cornelius Ernst the course Fundamental Theology (previously divided into the tracts de Ecclesia and de Revelatione) began with the Last Things. I suppose beginning theology with eschatology has marked me for life. It has certainly made me raise teleological questions where others might not, but it has slanted by perspective towards Christ as Omega in many other ways as well. I can never approach time as cyclic. Biblical linearity has won me over as I await "the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord." Nor can I value time (whatever myriads it may contain) as of much importance compared with God's Eternity.

Thus, the Lord's Incarnation and earthly life pose special problems for me, as does his relationship with his blessed Mother. For Christ cannot be "reduced" to temporality. He can only "assume" it. But if he assumes it, he elevates it. If he assumes it through Mary, he elevates her. And in her elevation as his Mother she is personally mother to all he is. As mother of a divine person she is Mother of Alpha and Omega. But as a human person her temporality shares everything but sin with ours. Thus she is both "Our Lady of Omega" and "Our Lady of Every Moment of Our Lives." This implies a motherly function best described, I think, a "protection." In one of the great American cities the Russian Orthodox have a cathedral called "Holy Virgin Protection," rather strange English, but what a profound truth.

From now until the end of time Mary is our protection. The grace of Christ, poured into us by the Holy Spirit, is (in other words) surrounded by her loving care. She acts as armor, as interior fortification, against her enemies and ours. In the Dominican office we pray "Da mihi virtutem contra hostes tuos: Give me strength against your enemies" after our evening greeting to Mary in the Salve Regina. And we fully expect Mary to perform what we request if we can learn to discern that the enemies of her purity, of her Christ-centeredness and of her complete subjection to the will of God are our enemies, too. Day by day, hour by hour, instant by instant this Marian protection is available.

However, Mary is "Mother of Alpha," too. She is the "Mother of the Beginning, of the Uncreated, Eternally Existing Word." We need not imagine her as before all time save in the mind of God. But since the divine person she conceived and bore is the beginning and the ageless "beginner," she becomes (through her unbreakable relationship with him) not only "Our Lady of the Alpha" but "Our Lady of Each New Start." What a consolation for the afflicted that is. However often we stray like sheep, however often we fall like romping children, there is someone to pick us up. And Mary does so with motherly care.

Our liturgical year is almost over. Another one is about to begin. Our Lady of Ordinary Time will be Our Lady of Advent, too, and of every other season. Careful though she is of time inasmuch as it still involves us her children in its net, she is still more concerned about eternity, not, indeed, for God (who can and does take care of himself) but for us. Mary is very concerned lest we become "stuck" in time and forget our real destiny. She calls us to penance not just for the sake of reparation but for the sake of perfection. As "Holy Mother" she wants us to be holy, as "Blessed Mother" she wants us to be happy. But this holiness and this happiness are not little "touches of grace" to be enjoyed from time to time. They are not little "spiritual highs" of temporary bliss, suddenly lost and soon forgotten. The new beginnings we find through Mary's prayers are meant to last. They are meant to render us interiorly, permanently disposed to God, the way she is. We can and should be very thankful for all Mary has done in the history of salvation in the past, for the whole world and for each one of us.

We can and should be thankful of her protective care at the present moment. Most of all, however, we should long for that reality always present to God where Mary is body and soul in the divine presence. We should long for that Omega which only Alpha can bring when beyond time and in utterly transformed space we shall join Mary in the unending hymn of praise. As we make the transition from Ordinary Time into Advent, from Advent into Christmas and beyond may our love grow stronger, may our hope find firmer base, may our faith be like Mary's, so that we are God's own and he is ours not just for another year which will pass into history like all the rest but for eternal life which must last forever.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

MARY: IMAGE AND BEGINNING OF THE CHURCH*

*Every Hail Mary recalls
God's mysterious gift to humanity*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. Today on the eve of the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin and the first Saturday of the month, it gives me great joy to be here in this place, sanctified for so many centuries by the penance and prayers of the Christian community of the Veneto region. I still cherish the most vivid memory of last 13 May which I spent at the Sanctuary of Fatima ten years after the painful event in St. Peter's Square, as well as of 15 August, where I had a deeply moving experience shared by an immense multitude of young people from all parts of the world, including the countries of Eastern Europe.

Here I am now at the feet of Our Lady of Monte Berico, continuing a significant pilgrimage of Marian devotion. I know that the Holy Mother of God has been honored on this blessed hill since the distant year of 1428, when the Bishop of Vicenza confirmed the authenticity of the message Mary addressed to a humble

*On September 7, 1991, the Holy Father went to the Marian shrine of Monte Berico in the Diocese of Vicenza (Italy) where he led the recitation of the Rosary, especially for the intention of peace in Yugoslavia. During the course of the evening's ceremonies the Pope addressed the many pilgrims who had come to join him in prayer. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 23 September 1991.

local woman, Vincenza Pasini. Our Lady was calling all baptized people to conversion and to a deeper commitment to Christian life. Together with the authorities and with the people entrusted to his pastoral care, the Bishop climbed the slopes of this hill to venerate and to invoke the Mother of God, as we too have done today.

2. Reciting the Rosary a short time ago, we faithfully repeated the words of the angel: "Hail Mary" - and the words of St. Elizabeth: "Blessed are you among women" (cf. *Lk* 1:28 ff.), reliving the same attitude of *loving trust* that your ancestors felt for her, the Mother of the Redeemer. In difficult and even critical situations, in times of disaster, invasion and war, from their faith in God the Father, in Jesus Christ the Redeemer and in the Holy Spirit, Love, they managed to find the basis of their intrepid fortitude which constantly supported them, nourishing their hope in the never failing divine intervention.

In each "Hail Mary" they would re-evoke the mysterious gift made by God to humanity, to each person in the incarnation of the Word, and they knew well that the condition of this mortal life may draw support and protection from the Mother of God, since Mary is the one who gave the world our Savior and with ineffable affection prays for us sinners "now and at the hour of our death."

Like them, in the "Hail Mary," this simple prayer that children learn at their mother's knees, we also invoke Our Lady, full of grace; we entrust ourselves to her intercession, we bless her divine Son, the fruit of her womb, echoing the words of the Gospel: "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts at which you nursed" (*Lk* 11:27). We likewise proclaim that her motherly help is indispensable at the most crucial moments of our existence: the present and "the hour of death," the decisive moment of the passing to eternal life.

3. These simple considerations give us the chance to reflect briefly on the importance of prayer: that which is public and liturgical and that which is private, personal and familiar: the prayer we recite with our lips, repeating ancient, venerable words, and that which rises silently from our heart, accompanied by the deepest feelings in our soul.

In a special way, as we meditate on the "mysteries," the Rosary involves the person's entire expressive capacity in vocal

prayer. Enabling us to relive the moments of joy and pain in the lives of Christ and of his Immaculate Mother, it nourishes the soul, it guides us to dialogue with the Lord and to contemplation. In the Rosary, we also remember our human condition tainted by sin and we implore divine forgiveness. We beg for the grace we need, first and foremost, to avoid evil and to live in friendship with the Lord, being conformed to his Gospel. The life of the Redeemer, wonderfully marked by the power of the Father and the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit, appears to us through the joyful, sorrowful and glorious "mysteries" as the model of our baptismal vocation, oriented towards imitating and following our Divine Master.

4. Marian prayer, then, is an inner pilgrimage which, with Our Lady's help, leads the believer to the spiritual mountain of holiness. It teaches us about ecclesial communion by listening to her, the one who occupies the highest place in the Church and is the closest to Christ. For us all, Mary is the model of active charity, since "embracing God's saving will with a full heart and impeded by no sin, she devoted herself totally as a handmaid of the Lord to the person and work of her Son. In subordination to him and along with him by the grace of almighty God she served the mystery of redemption" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 56). Mary is the image and the beginning of the Church, to which she remains vitally united by her communion with the Redeemer. This is why it is not possible to think of living true devotion to Our Lady if not in full harmony with the Church and one's own Bishop. Those who do not take care to be at the same time obedient sons and daughters of the Church, which has the role of verifying the legitimacy of the various forms of religious devotion, would be deluding themselves that they were accepted by Mary as her children. Not by chance did Vatican II warn with all solemnity of its Magisterium: "Let the faithful remember moreover that true devotion consists neither in fruitless and passing emotion, nor in a certain vain credulity. Rather, it proceeds from true faith" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 67).

5. Dear brothers and sisters, like your forefathers more than 550 years ago who climbed this hill repentant because they were aware of their own misery, but exultant because their Bishop had convinced them of Mary's intervention, in the same way we

too have come to lay ourselves at her feet, inspired with great confidence. The Gospel and the centuries-old Christian tradition comfort and encourage us: "Mary is present *in the Church* as the Mother of Christ . . . and embraces each and everyone *through the Church*" (*Redemptoris Mater*, no. 47).

"*Show yourself a Mother*," your forebears wrote under the image of the Madonna of Monte Berico. "*Show yourself a Mother*," we, too, repeat with affection, aware of the profound bond that exists between the Mother of Christ and the Church, between love of Christ and love for the Church. Mary, as we know, "present in the mystery of Christ, remains constantly present also in the mystery of the Church" (*Redemptoris Mater*, n. 42). Comforted by such a truth, we wish in turn to be her devoted children, remaining faithful sons and daughters of the Church, in line with the Christian generations which have preceded us. We long to love Mary in time and in eternity.

6. Our Lady of Monte Berico, chief patroness of the town and Diocese of Vicenza, may you turn your merciful gaze toward us.

Show yourself our Mother! Show yourself the Mother of those who are suffering and who aspire to justice and peace.

"Show yourself the Mother of every person who fights for life which does not die.

Mother of the humanity redeemed by the blood of Christ. Mother of perfect love, of hope and peace, Holy Mother of the Redeemer" (Act of Entrustment to Mary, Fatima, 13 May 1991, *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20 May 1991).

Show yourself our Mother, Mother of unity and hope, while with the whole Church we cry again: "Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope . . . after this exile, show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of your womb! O clement, O loving, O sweet, Virgin Mary!"

With these feelings, I impart a special blessing to you all, especially to the sick, the elderly, and the children.

JOHN PAUL II

MARY IS MODEL FOR TODAY'S MOTHERS*

*Holy Father on pastoral visit to Vicenza in
Italy's Veneto region*

1. *"That he might be the first-born of many brothers" (Rm 8:29).*

On today's feast of the Nativity of Mary the liturgy introduces us into the mystery of the birth of the Son of God, a mystery which embraces the origins of every creature. It especially concerns *the Virgin Mary* (cf. *Lk 1:27*), predestined from all eternity to be the *Mother of the Son - the Word* - in the providential plan of the Incarnation to this truth of faith which is so dear to us - *the eternal predestination of Mary* of Nazareth and *her call* to be the Mother of the Son of God - is connected the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, that is, of her particular justification and *sanctification* from the first moment of her conception. Also joined to it is the special *glory* with which the Blessed Trinity surrounded Mary in her Assumption into heaven.

Dear brothers and sisters, first of all I want to contemplate with you in Mary *the mystery of her motherhood* intimately united to that of her origin.

Mary is the Mother: the Mother of Christ, the Mother of all humankind. She is the model of all human motherhood. In her every

*On September 8, 1991, during his visit to Vicenza, the Holy Father celebrated Mass in Querini Park. Joining the Pope in the concelebration were the Bishops of the region and some 500 priests of the diocese. The Pope preached the homily based on the readings for the feast of the Nativity of Mary. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 16 September 1991.

earthly mother finds the authentic meaning of her own mission: to give life and to continue to cultivate it in the totality of its expressions.

Mothers who are listening to me, how great is the task which God entrusts to you! How important is your role in the education of your children, the fruit of your family's love. I think of the Christian mothers of the Veneto region who, in the past and still today, fulfill their role with self-denial, a spirit of sacrifice and fidelity, handing on the faith and lasting Christian values to their families.

I am thinking also of you, mothers of priests, associated by a special claim in Christ's salvific work, of which your sons are the apostles and privileged servants. In the Mother of God you find support, especially at times of doubt and trial. Looking to her, you can understand the truth of the words of the apostle Paul: "Those he foreknew he predestined to share the image of his Son, that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers" (*Rm* 8:29).

2. Celebrating the Nativity of Mary, the Church looks to the birth of Christ. She recalls *Bethlehem-Ephrathah*, the place which the prophet Micah foretold. She recalls the extraordinary circumstances preceding the Lord's birth according to the account of the evangelist Matthew. The *divine plan* revealed in the annunciation to Mary also involves Joseph, to whom the Virgin was betrothed. Like Mary, he participates in the mystery of the Incarnation; he is "introduced" into it *by the divine messenger*: "Have no fear about taking Mary as your wife. It is by the Holy Spirit that she has conceived this child. She is to have a son and you are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins" (*Mt* 1:20-21).

Thus the words of the prophet Isaiah are fulfilled: "The virgin shall be with child and give birth to a son, and they shall call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God is with us' " (*Mt* 1:23; cf. *Is* 7:14).

In this birth the eternal divine election is truly fulfilled. It is a fulfillment of *the particular love with which the Lord, according to the words of the psalm, has surrounded "the gates of Zion"* (*Ps* 87 [86]:2). God chose the house of David and the people of Israel so that through this people and this house the Father's universal plan would be fulfilled: that is, that the Son became man, a descendant of the house of David, a son of the people of Israel, and *could come into the world*

as "*the first-born of many brothers*" and his divine sonship would thus become the image and principle of adoption as sons and daughters for all the members of the human race.

This is the reason why the psalmist says of Zion: "One and all were born in her; and he who has established her is the Most High Lord" (*Ps* 87 [86]:5). From this springs the inexhaustible source of the birth of new sons and daughters by divine adoption. Christ's birth at Bethlehem is *the beginning of the rebirth of man* through supernatural grace. Mary's birth is *the preparation* for this beginning of the new creation in the plan of divine salvation.

4. Today the feast, however, is an invitation to recall *the free gift which God gives to each person*, as he did to Mary. "For if by . . . that one person's transgression the many died, how much more did the grace of God and the gracious gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many" (*Rm* 5:15). *Salvation is a gift.*

It would be interesting and helpful for us to delve into *the silence of Mary* in the Gospel, her life which was "hidden with Christ in God" (cf. *Col* 3:3). Her words are few but they express total surrender. Only in her meeting with her cousin Elizabeth does Luke's Gospel record her canticle of praise wherein she "rejoices in God [her] Savior" because, through "the lowliness of his handmaid" he has done "great things" (*Lk* 1:46-49). These are few words in which we clearly see the adoration of the creature who knows that by election she has become involved in the plan of salvation and has filled with the grace of every spiritual blessing.

The profound awareness that Mary has of God's gratuitous gift becomes a stimulus for us to see how our lives *place too much confidence in human means* and are too little inclined to contemplation and prayer. Is this not the deepest root of faith? Is this not why the faith sometimes survives as some kind of magical act, lacking any sincere prayer and trusting abandonment to God's almighty providence?

5. Mary's Nativity is, then, an invitation to *spiritual rebirth and to conversion*. It is an invitation to grow in faith.

Let us look to Mary's example. She experiences the mystery of God in faith and through faith, "she is therefore blessed, because 'she has believed' and continues to believe day after day amidst all the

trials and the adversities of Jesus' infancy and then during the years of the hidden life at Nazareth," until she stood beneath the cross, "joining herself with her maternal spirit to his sacrifice, lovingly consenting to the immolation of the victim to whom she had given birth" (*Redemptoris Mater*, nn. 17-18).

The Blessed Virgin's faith is one marked by a particular effort of the heart, united to a kind of "night of faith" (cf. *Redemptoris Mater*, n. 17). Therefore Mary is the first of those "little ones" about whom Jesus will one day say: "Father, . . . you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little ones" (*Mt* 11:25).

The Christian needs to be reborn constantly in faith, in all circumstances being open to the Lord's will. Today's person needs to *place God at the center of life once again*, not merely being content with correct social behavior. The radicalness of the Gospel begins precisely in putting God in the first place, in considering one's choices in the light of faith, in trusting in God's plan, as Abraham did, even without any human hope (cf. *Rm* 4:18).

This is why the "obedience of faith" after the example of Mary is essential for living as Christians in a society which has transformed "mystery" into "a problem to solve" and has lost the transcendent dimension of its own destiny.

6. We are called to "make all things new" (cf. *Rv* 21:5), compelled by Christ's love. It is the Lord's Passover which, through us, must reach institutions, culture, relations among individuals and peoples, and transform the world. Is this not the *newness of life* which the world asks of Christians?

Peoples have met and they have gained an awareness of their interdependence by which the destiny of one depends on the destiny of the others. Hence the necessity of broad understanding and agreement and of a just, integrated development; *our longing for our common Father* shows us the way. The Church, journeying towards the Third Millennium, needs Christians who are *new creatures*, open to the world's needs, but thoroughly faithful to the demands of the Spirit. May you too, dear brothers and sisters, feel the commitment *to be a living part of this new creation*. Do not be attracted by other ideals. May Christ, and he alone, be the source of your existence.

7. With this wish I greet all of you who are participating in this Eucharist; with esteem and affection I greet Bishop Pietro Giacomo Nonis of Vicenza, and I thank him for the sentiments he expressed in your name at the beginning of this celebration. I also give a fraternal greeting to Cardinal Ce, to the Bishops of the whole region, and to all the prelates present.

I offer my deferential greeting to the civil and military authorities present here, among whom I express my special thanks to Hon. Carlo Bernini, Minister of Transportation. A special greeting goes to the priests, the Bishops first collaborators in guiding the Christian people, to the religious, to the laity who are involved in various ecclesial movements and associations, and to the children and young people who are always so filled with enthusiasm and capable of appreciation. May each person accept the invitation from today's liturgy as addressed personally to him or her.

8. *"God makes all things work together for the good of those who have been called according to his decree" (Rm 8:28).*

Mary loved fully. Therefore the memory of her birth is alive in all the Churches throughout the world and shines like a light of hope which saves.

It also shines in this community of Vicenza, which I am happy to visit today and to confirm in its traditions of enlightened faith and active charity.

In the nativity of Mary the Church already praises Emmanuel, the one who saves his people from their sins (cf. *Is 7:14*). She gives thanks for the gift of Mary, Mother of God and our Mother.

May our vocations be fulfilled under her protection and through her intercession, according to God's eternal plan.

Help us, O Mary,

Mother of hope and source of Life!

Amen!

JOHN PAUL II

MARY TEACHES US ABOUT LOVE*

1. "*Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!*" (Lk 11:27).

From out of the crowd surrounding Jesus there comes *the voice of a woman*. It is Jesus whom she addresses: she expresses gratitude for the good that he does, for the truth that he proclaims, for the Good News.

At the same time the voice *addresses the Mother of Jesus*, who is not physically present among the crowd, but is there nonetheless . . . is present in him. Mothers always live in their children. Mary lived in Christ: as a man he was her Son and, as such, bore within himself the inheritance of his Mother. He resembled her. The bond which had been created between Son and Mother when Mary carried him under her heart, in her womb, *continued in both of them*:

"Blessed is the womb . . ."

Had not the Holy Spirit already announced this beforehand in Mary's own words: "*All generations will call me blessed*" (Lk 1:48)?

*On August 18, 1991, the Father went to the Marian shrine at Mariapoca, approximately 250 kilometers from Budapest. At the most important shrine for Byzantine-rite Catholics, the Holy Father celebrated the divine Liturgy in the Byzantine rite on the esplanade outside the Church. During the Mass the Pope preached this homily. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 2 September 1991.

2. In the course of my pilgrimage in the land of Hungary, I have come to this place where the prediction heard in the Gospel has been fulfilled in a particular way in every generation.

How many lips and how many tongues have repeated the words of blessing from the Gospel of Luke through the generations?

"Blessed is the womb that bore you!" (*Lk 11:27*).

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (*Lk 11:42*).

With you I too repeat those words of blessing on the day of the great traditional pilgrimage, as I venerate with deep joy the icon of the Virgin Mother of God, the original of which is kept in the Cathedral of Saint Stephen in Vienna.

In the name of Mary I greet all of you, those who live in this city and the pilgrims from Hungary and from other, neighboring nations. I offer a fraternal greeting to Bishop Szilard Keresztes of the Diocese of Hajdudorog for the Byzantine-rite Catholics of all Hungary, and I thank him for the gracious words which he addressed to me at the beginning of this celebration. I greet Archbishop Istvan Seregely of the Archdiocese of Eger, in whose territory Mariapocs is located, and the other Bishops present. I greet the priests, the men and women religious, the laity, and in particular the infirm and the young people. I also want to bid a warm welcome to the pilgrims who have come from neighboring countries: Hungarians, Ukrainians, Slovaks, Ruthenians and Romanians.

With special affection I greet the Hungarian pilgrims who have come from neighboring nations and villages in order to meet the Successor of Peter with their Hungarian brothers and sisters. Today the task of each of you is to use the freedom you have won according to the laws of love and the ends of Christian life, in a relationship of mutual friendship with will Christians and all nations.

Remain faithful to your spiritual heritage! Defend your faith! God bless you.

[The Pope then greeted the pilgrims from Ukraine, Slovakia, Ruthenia and Romania in their respective languages, encouraging them to remain faithful to Christian values and their culture, respecting all others at the same time.]

I am pleased to meet you in this holy place and to take part in your pilgrimage. Many of you have had to face a long journey, even crossing borders, in order to come here and join your Hungarian brothers and sisters and the numerous people from other nations gathered to venerate the Virgin Mary. Every shrine of the Blessed Mother is a place of peace and reconciliation. For you and for your compatriots I ask the Blessed Virgin that this meeting may be an incentive and stimulus towards mutual understanding and constructive cooperation. Among you there are people who speak different languages and live in different cultures, but still belong to the same great human family. Two years ago, in the Message for the annual World Day of Peace, I emphasized that minorities have a right to exist, to preserve their own culture, to use their own language and to have relations with groups having a common cultural and historical heritage, even when they live in the territory of other States (cf. Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January 1989, 5ff.). May God grant to the sons and daughters of this and neighboring countries the nobility of heart needed to respect these fundamental rights at all times, so that through the generous efforts of all it will be possible to construct a peace enriched by the contributions made by each group's legitimate differences.

[The Pope repeated the words of blessing in Hungarian, Ruthenian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Romanian:]

"Blessed is the womb that bore you!" (Lk 11:27).

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Lk 1:42)]

3. *These words of blessing, proclaimed by a woman in the crowd surrounding Jesus, are addressed first of all to him: they concern the Mother only in view of the Son.*

At Marian shrines, in fact, it is the Son who is given particular glory. His Mother, we can say, "is concealed" completely in his mystery: in the divine mystery which the Apostle Paul speaks about in the Letter to the Philippians.

Jesus Christ, "though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, *but emptied himself*, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he *humbled himself* and became obedient *unto death*, even death on a Cross" (Ph 2:6-8).

Mary took part in a profound way in this mystery. From the moment of the Annunciation, from the birth on that Bethlehem night, she took part, through faith, in the great mystery of the "emptying" of the Son of God who, as her Son, born in the likeness of men, took the form of a servant.

Many of you, dear brothers and sisters, in union with whole Catholic Church of Byzantine rite, have also had to take the Cross of Christ upon your own shoulders during the difficult years of the persecution. Bishops, priests, religious and laity suffered for the Christian faith and for attachment to their Church. Today, all together, in the square before this shrine, in the one Church of the Catholic Byzantine rite which was able legally to survive during the persecution, we wish to thank God for the gifts of grace which he continued to bestow upon you even during the time of suffering. Now that that dark period is over, we celebrate the Eucharist according to the magnificent Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom and bear witness to the rich variety of the Church, wherein the traditions of East and West meet and draw mutual enrichment. And we express our certainty that the sufferings of the martyrs will be the inspiration and stimulus for a new commitment to the Christian life.

At this shrine of the Blessed Virgin, I wish to implore with confidence the providential grace of the Most Holy Trinity to assist the Orthodox Churches of the various traditions. Europe stands at the threshold of a new era, in which it is obvious that there is an urgent need for unity. This need invites the autocephalous Churches and the other Churches to seek reconciliation among themselves.

For this intention let us lift our prayer to Our Lady of Sorrows, to Mary who was able to remain fearlessly at her Son's side, even at the foot of the Cross.

The path of faith led Mary to follow Christ even to the Cross, where he "humbled himself and became obedient unto death."

And Mary proceeded along this path entirely through faith and her maternal love. She had the same mind which was in Christ Jesus (cf. *Ph* 2:5), in her Redeemer.

4. When we visit Marian shrines, we do so in order to obey the words spoken by Jesus in response to the woman: "*Blessed . . . are those who hear the word of God and keep it!*" (*Lk* 11:28).

These words refer in the first place to *Mary and find their complete fulfillment in her*, the one who, as the Council teaches, "*made progress in her pilgrimage of faith, and maintained faithfully her union with her Son*" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 58).

Jesus' words also refer to us; they commit us to hear the words of God and to *observe* what is asked of us therein. We, too, desire, as pilgrims in this place, to have Mary as a maternal "guide" along the path of this faith abounding in good works, along the path which leads to Christ. We, too, wish to have the same mind which was in Mary, as it had been in her Son.

5. With Mary's own mind we wish to reflect on our daily reality, on the condition of our communities at this particular moment of history. May Mary, the loving Mother holding her divine Son in her arms, grant this nation a renewal and revival of society and of *family life*, which is one of the most precious of human values" (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 1). May she guide families to construct the fidelity and stability of their endeavors upon Christ, the center of each human life. May she assist them to base their own specific mission in the world and in the Church upon love.

"God is love" (*1 Jn* 4:8): by creating humanity in his own image he inscribed within our being a spiritual need for love as the fundamental innate vocation of every human being (cf. *Familiaris Consortio*, 11). But the love the Savior speaks about is certainly not that of the world. For the Christian, loving means opening oneself to others, accepting the other as a part of oneself; it means *giving oneself freely to the other* in order to help him to attain his full potential.

Is this not the way Christ loves his Church? Did he not give himself up completely to make her holy (cf. *Ep* 5:25-33)? In the family, through Christian marriage, spouses carry out their mis-

sion of love by drawing refreshment at the inexhaustible fountain-head of the heart of Christ. In the lowly family of Nazareth they recognize the model of their daily growth in service and welcome; from the holy family they learn to express themselves in lives marked by simplicity and fruitfulness, ever attentive to the great hopes and expectations of mankind.

6. As I wrote in *Familiaris Consortio*: according to the will of Christ, "a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. This total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally" (n. 11). Therefore, no one, not even the State, can break the bond of love. For this reason, when marriage is contracted according to the Church's laws, the sacred bond subsists and perdures despite possible civil divorce, and it binds the spouses together until death.

True love is a magnificent and mysterious source of life which, while leading the spouses to that profound reciprocal "knowledge" which makes them "one flesh" (cf. *Gn* 2:24), is not exhausted within the couple alone but opens them to others: to children, family members and society. In this way the spouses become cooperators with God in building a new society in which human rights and the life of every human person can be truly accepted, safeguarded, defended and advanced.

In particular, their mutual love gives rise to the life of children as a permanent sign of their conjugal unity and an extraordinary synthesis of their fatherhood and motherhood. With children parents receive from God a new responsibility which expands the mission of the family! Is not abortion the death of a living mystery of love? In this regard, do not consider it out of place if I urge you to read the most recent Pastoral Letter which your bishops have addressed to the Hungarian people, the contents of which are very timely.

7. The path of family life *is not without difficulties and risks*. As spouses, you know this very well. But if you have faith, you also know that you are not alone. God is there beside you, and he

will not let the help of his grace fail those who confidently call upon him in prayer and make regular use of the sacraments. But you must be convinced of one thing: necessary as it is to become involved in various material enterprises, it is even more necessary to grow spiritually in contact with Christ, hearing his word and never abandoning his law. *Worldly interests and spiritual aspirations are not mutually exclusive*, but need to be harmonized and integrated. The Gospel warns us (cf. *Lk* 10:38-42) against letting ourselves become totally absorbed by material activities. Unlike Martha, bustling about her many duties, Mary, seated at the feet of the Master and listening to his word, chose "the good portion" (*Lk* 10:42). With these words Jesus wished to stress how important it is that Christians in their desire to make their family grow in supernatural love, should devote time and attention to God through personal and liturgical prayer.

Here, too, the Blessed Virgin remains the most sublime model. "Pondering in her heart" (cf. *Lk* 2:19) God's gifts, she confides every problem to the merciful heart of her Son. "They have no wine" (cf. *Jn* 2:3), she tells her Son at the wedding feast of Cana. As I wrote at the conclusion of *Familiaris Consortio*: "May the Virgin Mary, who is the Mother of the Church, also be the Mother of 'the Church at home.' Thanks to her motherly aid, may each Christian family really become a 'little Church' in which the mystery of the Church of Christ is mirrored and given new life. May she, the Handmaid of the Lord, be an example of humble and generous acceptance of the will of God. May she, the Sorrowful Mother at the foot of the Cross, comfort the sufferings and dry the tears of those in distress because of the difficulties of their families" (n. 86).

8. Mary was present at Calvary, silently participating in the hour of Christ's suffering and death. With her we draw near to the mystery of the Cross. The words of the Apostle to the Gentiles in the *Letter to the Philippians* open us to the fullness of mystery of Christ. After the "emptying" of the Son of God in human form, after the "humiliation" of the Cross, the Pauline hymn resounds with the "exaltation" and the glory of Christ:

*Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed upon him the name
which is above every name,*

*that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father (2:9-11).*

Mary, she who "has chosen the good portion" (cf. *Lk* 10:42), bears in herself a significant reflection of the glory of her Son. Just as during his earthly journey she inseparably accompanied him – *Socia Christi* -- in his emptying and his humiliation, so too does she now share in his exaltation.

And this exaltation of the Mother through her sharing in the glory of her Son is proclaimed by all the faithful of Hungary: Magna Dominia Hungarorum.

They proclaim it through countless generations!

Truly "blessed is the womb that bore you"!

"Blessed are you among women!"

Blessed is she who "heard the word of God" and as a Mother kept it for us all!

She is the Mother: his Mother and ours, from generation to generation!

Amen!

JOHN PAUL II

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IS NOT OUT-DATED*

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,

1. With deep affection in Christ I greet you, the Archbishops and Bishops of the ecclesiastical provinces of *Valladolid and Valencia* who in this meeting are completing your visit "*ad limina Apostolorum*." This visit has a deep ecclesial meaning because it manifests your communion and that of the particular Church which you govern and shepherd with the Successor of Peter, to whom the Lord gave the task of presiding in charity over the universal Church.

Your particular Churches are located in different regions of Spain with their own characteristics and traditions. The dioceses of the ecclesiastical province of Valladolid, in the land of Castilla la Vieja and Leon, are Churches of ancient Christian tradition, which maintain a high level of religious practice, although suffering a notable decline in population, which is also reflected in the median age of the clergy. The dioceses of the ecclesiastical province of Valencia, on Spain's eastern coast are on the shores of the Mediterranean, with the exception of Albacete, which belongs to

*On September 23, 1991, the Holy Father received the Bishops of the Spanish ecclesiastical provinces of Valladolid and Valencia at the conclusion of their *ad limina* visit to Rome. In his address the Pope spoke about the problems facing Spanish society, and the progress being made in the "new evangelization." This is a translation of the Pope's discourse. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 7 October 1991.

the noble region of La Mancha. These dioceses also have deep Christian roots and traditions, although immigration trends and the phenomenon of tourism have to a certain degree affected the life of your people.

2. I am pleased to learn that all your Churches are presently involved in a serious, renewed effort at evangelization. I see that you are fully aware that among you there is a need for a new ecclesial, pastoral stage which we have referred to as the "new evangelization" because in it you can count on an enviable departure point: the extraordinary wealth and vitality of the Christian tradition of your people.

Indeed, the deep-rooted faith in God throughout its many centuries of activity, has managed to permeate the concept of life, criteria of personal and social behavior, manners of expression and, to put it briefly, the culture of each of your regions. And this achievement is not a simple heritage of the past without active possibilities for the present. A large part of the men and women of your land continue to find in the faith the fundamental meaning of their life, for they turn to God in life's crucial moments. A rich popular piety translates into the language of the simple people the great truths and values of the gospel, incarnates them in the characteristics peculiar to each culture and converts the great Christian symbols into so many other identifying signs for the whole of the group. On the other hand, we cannot pass over in silence the large proportion of Christians who, with growing conviction, go to the Eucharistic celebration every Sunday and frequently receive the sacraments.

In this fertile ground of piety you Churches have made notable efforts at renewal through the diocesan synods and assemblies, and have managed to give greater depth to Christian formation, which is also reflected in the more active participation of the lay faithful in the Church's tasks.

4. However, all of these hopeful situations, dear brothers, cannot allow us to forget that among your people there is, unfortunately, also the worrisome phenomenon of de-Christianization. The serious consequences of this change of mentality and custom do not escape your pastoral concern. The first of these is the development of an atmosphere "in which economic well-being and

consumerism . . . inspire and sustain a life lived as if God did not exist" (*Christifideles Laici*, 34). Frequently, religious indifference filters into the personal and collective conscience, and for many people God ceases to be the origin and goal, the meaning and ultimate reason for life. On the other hand, there is no lack of those who, for the sake of a mistaken understanding of progress tend to identify the Church with outdated attitudes. They have no difficulty in tolerating her as the vestige of an old culture, but they consider her message and words irrelevant, not giving them a hearing and discrediting them as something already *pasé*.

The most dramatic consequences of the absence of God in human horizons, however, occur in the area of concrete behavior, in the field of morality, as the Spanish Bishops have repeatedly denounced (cf. Pastoral Instruction "*La verdad os hará libres*" [The truth will set you free]). When God is taken away, rather than seeking and adhering to objective truth, human freedom is frequently changed into something arbitrary and autonomous which decides what is good based on individual selfish interests. In this way the desire for freedom becomes a source of slavery. Indeed, the exaltation of possessions and the consumption of material goods lead to a purely economic understanding of development, which degrades the personal dignity of the human being and impoverishes many so that the few may become richer. In the name of human rights, frequently seen from a narcissistic and hedonistic individualism, sexual permissiveness, divorce, abortion and genetic manipulation are promoted. These are an affront to the most basic right: the right to life. The eager search for facile pleasure causes trauma to countless people and the often seek refuge in drugs, alcoholism and violence.

5. This cultural climate affects not only non-believers, but Christians as well, who in their own being experience the bitter division between their heart and mentality as believers and thinkers, structures and pressure of a society based on agnosticism and indifference.

Faced with this neopaganism, the Church in Spain must respond with a renewed witness and a determined effort at evangelization, one which is able to create a new cultural synthesis capable of transforming with the strength of the Gospel "the criteria of judgment, the standard of valued, the incentives and life stan-

dards of the human race" (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19). It is necessary to proclaim with new energy and conviction that meeting God and accepting him are indispensable conditions for discovering the truth about man, and that the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ is the source and pledge of one's own humanity, the key for understanding man and the world, as well as the foundation and bulwark of freedom, and safeguard of the total fulfillment of one's authentic human capacity.

Therefore you hope to overcome religious indifference with a determined, clear proclamation of the Gospel. Indeed, the faith is being strengthened day by day, thanks to the Word of God which the Spirit is making heard through preaching, teaching and catechesis. Evangelization is first of all the proclamation that "in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became man, died and rose again from the dead, salvation is offered to everyone as the gift of the grace and mercy of God himself" (*ibid.*, 27).

6. The Word, however, achieves its full effectiveness and persuasive power when it becomes a saving event in the sacramental action which transforms the life of persons and changes them into witnesses. Therefore, a specific and essential form of the Christian proclamation is witness, which reveals to others the grace and joy that each one has found in Christ, and invites them to share it as an enriching experience of life. The new evangelization then needs *new witnesses*, that is to say, people who have experienced a real change in their life because of their contact with Jesus Christ, and who are capable of passing that experience on to others. It also needs new communities "in which the faith may radiate and fulfill the basic meaning of adherence to the person of Christ and his Gospel, of an encounter and sacramental communion with him, and of an existence lived in charity and in service (*Christifideles Laici*, 34).

Only these Christians, inspired by the ideal of holiness, will be able to make humanity itself new. The laity have the particular task of grounding in the faith their cultural creativity and the necessary power for reforming institutions, practices, economic and social structures, thinking and the whole framework of society. It is up to them to evangelize that which I have called "the privileged places of culture" (*ibid.*, 44), in which the mentality and values which will shape the social conscience are directed and

conditioned. The world of thought and centers of research and teaching, the mass media, economic labor and political organizations, family associations" these are the great fields in which the new cultural synthesis must be expressed, illuminated by the faith.

This is the important challenge which is presented to your Churches: to create a renewed society, a more just and fraternal one, inspired by the commandment of love and placing its hope in God, in order thus to become more deeply human. This is the historical social goal of the new evangelization, which we have called "the civilization of love and solidarity" (Cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 5 and 6).

7. The troubling crisis of moral values to which I referred particularly affects family life. Thus it seems to show symptoms such as the large decline in marriages, the lowering of the birth rate, the spread of the divorce mentality. These symptoms indicate a serious deterioration of the values which have given cohesiveness and strength to the family and to society itself in Spain.

Therefore, it is necessary and urgent to act in the face of these challenges and demands which this situation raises by promoting a more effective family apostolate which, as I expressed in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, tends to restore the Christian identity of marriage and the family, turning it into a community of persons at the service of the transmission of human life and the faith, the primary and vital cell of society, a believing and evangelizing community, a true "domestic Church," a center of communion and ecclesial service.

It is necessary then to create an authentic family humanism which will bring about what we have called "the culture of life and the civilization of love." This humanism must be based on respect for the dignity of the person, in all stages of life, because he has been created in God's image and redeemed by Jesus Christ, as well as in the recognition of the primacy of genuine human values in the face of blind ideologies which deny the transcendent and which recent history has discredited, showing their true face.

Among these values special emphasis must be given to the dignity of the love between a man and a woman; fidelity as a basic demand of marital love, which brings about the full and exclusive

gift of self in the spouses; respect for human life as a fruit of the same love between spouses; the responsibility, not to be renounced, of parents to support and educate their children.

Therefore, you must constantly encourage your priests to dedicate their best energies the spiritual care and continuing formation of married people, especially in their mission as parents. May they support and empower the various family movements and associations aimed at fostering a conjugal and family spirituality, the Christian formation of families and the defense of its values in the face of the deterioration caused by the dominant culture. Finally, it is necessary to promote with greater determination the formation of lay people who are committed to defending the family institution and its values in the area of legislation, teaching, and the mass media. A family apostolate that is revitalized to that degree will make its beneficial influence felt in other areas, especially in the youth apostolate, vocations, and, in the final analysis, in the flourishing of your dioceses and the Spanish society itself.

8. At the end of this meeting, I want to tell you again of my fraternal esteem and ask that as you return to your Dioceses you bring the Pope's greeting and affection to all the people, to Christian families, the priests, and religious who with generosity and dedication proclaim the Good News of salvation and give witness of service, fidelity and an apostolic spirit.

Upon you and your faithful I invoke the motherly protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so venerated under different titles in each and every one of your dioceses. I give you my blessing.

JOHN PAUL II

CHRIST FULLY ANSWERS THE SOCIAL QUESTION*

*Pope John Paul II visits
the birthplace of Pope Leo XIII
to commemorate the 100th anniversary
of 'Rerum Novarum'*

1. "Observe the commandments of the Lord, your God . . . for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations" (*Dt* 4:2-6).

These precepts of Deuteronomy constitute an obligation for Israel, deriving from her covenant with Yahweh: an ethical programme based on his Word. The law of the Lord, given to Moses on Sinai, is thus transformed for the people of the Old Testament into a mission of witness: Israel realizes that she has been chosen to proclaim, along with the truth of the one, transcendent God, the holiness of his will, his justice and his wisdom.

Today, too, this message of the commandments represents a fundamental and obligatory patrimony for the Church, the People of the new covenant. She has been called to proclaim to all the nations the divine "wisdom" and "intelligence" by revealing their interior perfection. She fulfills this mission by following Christ, her Teacher and Lord, who did not come to abolish, but to fulfill the law (cf. *Mt* 5:17). The fulfillment of the law is Love. Jesus asks:

*On Sunday, 1 September 1991, Pope John Paul II "repaid a debt of gratitude" to Pope Leo XIII by visiting Carpineto Romano, the town where the author of *Rerum Novarum* was born on 2 March 1810. After celebrating Mass in the main square the Pope visited the Pecci family home and met with family members.

During the Mass the Pope preached the homily, relating the readings of the 22nd Sunday in ordinary time to the life and learning of Gioacchino Pecci, the future Pope Leo XIII, whom he called "a witness to the precept of charity and the value of the commandments." *L'Osservatore*, 16 September 1991.

"What is written in the law? How do you read it? . . . You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself" (*Lk* 10:26-27).

2. Dear brothers and sisters, these texts from today's liturgy were very much part of the spirit of venerable Pope Leo XIII, who was born here in Carpineto Romano. Here he spent his childhood years and in the shadow of this parish his vocation began to blossom. Therefore, I am happy to call his memory to mind with you during the 100th anniversary of his Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*.

I thank God that he raised up in our times such a witness to the precept of charity and the value of the commandments. The Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* is a rigorous and enlightened proclamation of the duty of justice, in the context of a love which is inspired by the holiness of God and by his mercy towards human beings, especially the lowly and the poor.

In a historical period marked by profound cultural changes and acute social tensions which had come to pass between capital and labor, Leo XIII wanted to give a clear formulation to Church's thought in such an important area. He did so with courage, as if challenging not only the secular world, but the very conscience of the Catholic world as well. With his prophetic intervention he helped consolidate Christian social doctrine.

The Popes who followed him in this century continued in his steps and were able to work out a systematic teaching on questions concerning the common good as opportune occasions gradually occurred over the course of many years.

With Leo XIII we want to say again today, in the light of recent world events as well, that *the complete answer to the social question comes through Christ* and through accepting his word of truth. We say this not only because Christ, the incarnate Word, reveals man to himself and is, therefore, able to enlighten his way to the good which he seeks, but also because human history constantly shows that it is only on the law of Gospel charity, placed as a foundation and guide for cooperation in solidarity, that one can construct a civil coexistence that respects the person and is open to the great ideals of progress and peace.

3. I greet Bishop Luigi Belloli of Anagni-Alatri, Cardinal Camillo Ruini, President of the Italian Episcopal Conference and Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and all my venerable brother Bishops of the Lazio region.

I also respectfully acknowledge the Minister of Labor, Hon. Franco Marini, the President of the Lazio region, the Mayor of Carpineto and all the civil authorities who are here. I express to all of them my gratitude for taking part in this Eucharistic celebration in memory of Pope Leo XIII here in his hometown.

In a special way I spiritually embrace you, my brothers and sisters of Carpineto and the surrounding area, and I thank you for your cordial welcome.

With cordial thanks I mention the members of the Pecci family, in which Gioacchino grew up and was raised in that spirit of faith and service which distinguished him in his ecclesial service, both as an Apostolic Nuncio and as the Pastor of the Diocese of Perugia, where he was able to lay the foundations of his social teaching by drafting pastoral letters of noteworthy importance.

4. The social question, Pope Leo recalled, by its very nature concerns the moral sphere. Therefore, there is a strict connection between social and ethical duties, the principles of which are to be sought in the natural law, which is the foundation of each person's moral conscience, inasmuch as he or she is a person. Moreover, in regard to the serious conflicts at that time, he wrote: "The forces of social change have split states between two classes separated by an enormous gulf. On one side stands the extremely powerful party because extremely rich, which, being in possession of the whole industry and trade, turns all means of production to the service of its own ends and is able to take no small part in the government of the State. On the other side stands the multitude of the weak, destitute of resources, filled with bitterness and always ready to revolt" (*Rerum Novarum*, n. 39). And he indicated that the peaceful resolution of this condition was to reduce "the vast distance between the greatest wealth and the greatest poverty" (*ibid.*).

The observations of my venerable Predecessor still retain their value and timeliness in our day. If he rightly pointed out the

social and economic inequality which then existed within individual nations, today this worrisome difference can be observed on a global scale. A great part of humanity lives in precarious conditions and calls out to the peoples who possess enormous wealth, while the gap of social imbalances, on the planet as well as within States, unfortunately tends to widen.

In this new and contemporary situation, marked by the interdependence of peoples and fostered by an ever increasing network of relations and communication, the problem of an equitable distribution of the material, intellectual and spiritual resources, which constitute the "human" patrimony of the entire world community and which are the basis of its integral development, must be faced in light of a conscientious social justice, one which aims at achieving a real *sharing by all in the goods which should be at the service of everyone*. In this regard, as I recalled in the recent Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*: "the Church has no models to present; models that are real and truly effective can only arise within the framework of different historical situations, through the efforts of all those who responsibly confront concrete problems in all their social, economic, political and cultural aspects, as these interact with one another. For such a task the Church offers her social teaching as an *indispensable and ideal orientation*" (n. 43).

Therefore, how necessary to humanity today and above all to those who are the leaders of its destiny do the *virtues of wisdom and solidarity seem!*

5. "Every worthwhile gift comes from above, descending from the Father of the heavenly luminaries" (*Jm* 1:17).

The "gift" for social wisdom also descends from the law of God and from his grace. In his goodness, the heavenly Father gives a "word of truth" which regenerates human beings and guides their way to peace and to authentic and integral progress, in which the person is recognized as the "first fruit of his creatures" (*Jm* 1:17). In light of this, the social doctrine of the Church is an expression and implementation of this divine plan and of the *Gospel of love*. God speaks to the human heart. It is within the heart that choices and decisions are made. He invites the heart to conversion and reconciliation. He calls it to honor him with concrete gestures of service and solidarity. Unfortunately, it can happen that a human being "pays God lip service but his heart is

far from him" (cf. *Mk* 7:6). To prevent this from happening a great education and cultural effort is necessary and urgent in order to enlighten the human spirit, to make it open and available, enabling it to grow in the task of receptivity and cooperation.

It is a good thing to be devoted to, and to work for, a better life; but everyone has the duty *to build up this progress in conjunction with others for the good of all*, in the generous and peaceful sharing of the earth's resources, which are a gift for all humanity.

6. "Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? . . . He who walks blamelessly . . . who harms not his fellow man . . . but who honors those who fear the Lord" (*Pss* 14 [15]: *passim*).

"To sojourn in the Lord's tent" means to abide by the covenant, to live in fidelity to the pact established with God. It means to remain united with Christ: he is the perfect and definitive "tent" of a covenant which does not fail or fall short.

Who, then, will be able to dwell in the Lord's tent, i.e., to be always in perfect communion with Christ? "He who does justice," the expression of God's universal love.

This is the obligation laid on believers and all persons of good will! For this we call upon the help of the Lord as we continue our celebration of the Eucharist in memory of Pope Leo XIII, an enlightened and courageous Pastor of the Church.

We want to dwell "on your holy mountain," O Lord! We want to sojourn in the temple of your Covenant! We want to grow in the love of Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of all humanity! Thus, we shall give evidence of "wisdom and intelligence to the nations." We shall be the builders of true peace, of authentic and integral progress.

"He who does these things shall never be disturbed" (*Pss* 14 [15]:5).

Amen.

JOHN PAUL II

THE WITNESS OF ACTIONS

Reflection on 'Centesimus Annus'

The African sun was cruelly hot and the policeman at the check-point was hungry and hostile. He wanted money from me, a foreigner presumed to be wealthy. But his manner changed as soon as he saw from my driving license that I was a Catholic missionary. "So you are a Catholic priest; I was educated in a Catholic school in my home village – and when my mother was sick, we took her to the Sisters' clinic to be healed." After my encounter with that policeman I drove on thinking that, though he was slightly corrupt, at least he had been touched by the Church's message. But obviously it was not so much the preaching of the Gospel which had touched him but the witness of those committed Church people who had gone out into a remote village to provide schooling for a forgotten people and health care for the needy.

I use this story to introduce my commentary on two sections of the latest social Encyclical, *Centesimus Annus*, issued by John Paul II to commemorate *Rerum Novarum* issued a hundred years ago. The key passages I was asked to comment on are:

"As far as the Church is concerned the social message of the Gospel must not be a theory, but above all else a basis and motivation for action . . . Today more than ever, the Church is aware that her social message will gain credibility more immediately from the *witness of action* than a result of its internal logic and consistency. This awareness is also a source of her preferential option for the poor, which is never exclusive or discriminatory towards other groups" (n. 57).

"... The Church has always been present and active among the needy, offering them material assistance in ways that neither humiliate them nor reduce them to mere objects of assistance, but which help them to escape their precarious situation by promoting their dignity as persons" (n. 49).

When the missionaries set about building schools and establishing health centers in remote areas they were responding to the expressed needs of the local people - and especially of those in remote and neglected areas. Because of their involvement in the schools and the health services there was no likelihood that the missionaries would remain on the margins of the life of the people. They had found an entry point into the everyday "worldly" concerns of the people.

The missionaries were not using education and health services simply as a kind of bribe to induce people to become converts. They saw an intimate connection between the Good News of Jesus Christ on the one hand and the schools and hospitals on the other. They were concerned not just with the spiritual needs of their adopted people but with their overall human welfare. (Nowadays we would say that the missionaries were concerned about the integral human development of their people - but that term was not part of the missionary vocabulary of 40 years ago).

The Church health-care and school systems could be called "vehicles of evangelization" in so far as they "carried" many of the basic values of the Christian faith. For example, the Church hospitals and clinics were accessible to all, and the fact that they were built in the most remote villages showed the special concern of the Church for individuals or groups who are disadvantaged in society. In this way they became a practical embodiment of Christian faith - and especially for one central aspect of it, namely, a particular concern for those who are most needy.

In fact they were signs of the Church's preferential but not exclusive option for the poor - long before that term was coined.

Option for the poor

To make an option for the poor is to commit oneself to resist the injustice, oppression, exploitation and marginalization of people

which permeate many aspects of public life. It is a commitment to transform society into a place where human rights and the dignity of all are respected. The aim is to restore a sense of their own dignity to oppressed or neglected people and to give some effective power back to those who have been left out on the margins.

The most obvious forms of powerlessness are in the economic and political spheres – for example, not to have enough to eat or to be tortured by security forces. But structural injustices exist also in the cultural, socio-sexual, and ecclesiastical sectors of life. For instance, women find that in business and social life most of the positions of power are held by men. And in the Church, lay people often find that the clergy hold almost all the power. To make an option for the poor is to seek to redress the balance in these spheres as well as in political and economic affairs.

Those who make an option for the poor choose to be in solidarity with groups who are deprived – to share to some degree in their experience of being mistreated, by-passed, or left helpless. This experience of solidarity leads to action to overcome structural injustice. To be effective, this action has to be based on a careful analysis of the basic causes of the injustice. And to make one's option for the poor really productive one must find realistic alternatives to replace the unjust structures.

This account of the meaning of a preferential option for the poor, indicates why, as the Pope says, it can never be "exclusive or discriminatory towards other groups." For this option is a practical means of promoting the virtue of justice. Therefore it would be totally inconsistent if it meant doing an injustice to others. Perhaps the simplest explanation of how the Church's option for the poor can be both an *option* and at the same time *nondiscriminatory* is to be found in the words of Pope Leo XIII in *Rerum Novarum*:

... When there is question of defending the rights of individuals, the poor and badly off have a claim to special consideration. The richer class have many ways of shielding themselves ... " (n. 29).

It is clear, then, that the reason why we are called to make an option for the poor is not to bring about a new injustice in

society but simply to redress the existing balance which is weighted so heavily in favor of the rich and the powerful.

The Pope's new Encyclical lists a variety of ways in which the Church, from the very beginning, bore witness to social justice and particular concern for the poor. It is interesting to note that he does not confine himself to mentioning such things as the hospitals and shelters which were founded for the poor. He also includes the fact that "down through the centuries monks tilled the land" (n. 57). It may be noted that after the breakdown of the Roman Empire this agricultural work of monks was a major contribution to the economic development of the world of that time.

It is very important that Church people should make wise choices when they discern how best to give witness to justice and concern for the poor. They must choose the means that are most appropriate for the particular time, place and situation. One reason for the success of Catholic missionaries in the first half of this century was their choice of education and health care as their two major "vehicles of evangelization." This choice provided the missionaries with a most effective contact point with the local community. Working to establish schools and health clinics, they came into daily contact with community authorities and leaders of all kinds. The missionaries came to be respected by the local chiefs for their ability to bring services which were keenly wanted by most of the local people. The missionaries also found themselves playing a significant role in the national development policies of the countries where they were working. Yet in all this they were giving a most effective witness to the particular concern of the Church for these sectors of society that were in great need – and even for whole peoples who had been "left behind."

All this meant that the Church was not concerned merely with "churchy" matters or promoting herself. Rather she saw herself as serving the community as a whole. In other words Christians were not just building up the Church but promoting the Kingdom of God – even though at the time they might not have used these words to describe what they were doing. This gave them a better understanding of the real purpose of the Church – she is meant to look outward to the wider society. Furthermore, the Christian community was clearly seen by others

to be concerned about such broader issues – and this made it more attractive.

A changed situation

In recent times the missionary situation has changed very considerably. The building and running of schools and hospitals has largely been taken over by governments. Even in countries where the Church still plays a role in this kind of work her contribution is relatively small. For this reason alone commitment by the Church to establishing or running schools or hospitals is no longer such a striking means of witnessing to the basic values of Christianity. In the new situation, these may no longer be the most appropriate “vehicles of evangelization.”

But there are also other good reasons for questioning the appropriateness of commitment to schools and hospitals as the best missionary strategy for today. The Church cannot easily compete with the State in providing education and health care for the masses, since she does not have access to funds from taxes and other large source of revenue. Furthermore, in many of the so-called developing countries, Western-style education and health systems have given rise to social injustice – largely because they are not well integrated into the fabric of the local society and culture. Because they are costly it often happens that the poorest cannot afford them – and their very presence tends to widen the gap between the rich and the poor. And the keen demand for these scarce commodities can easily give rise to a significant amount of bribery and corruption within the systems of education and health care.

For these various reasons the institutional Church in recent years has been much less involved than in the past in building and staffing schools and hospitals. Some would say that this kind of “side-lining” of the Church is inevitable – an intrinsic part of the increasing secularization of modern life. But that is not true. In fact there are missionary situations where the Church has begun to play a far more active role in shaping society than she has in the past. An outstanding example is the role the Church has played in the defense of human rights in what is called “the cone” of South America (e.g., the southern tip of the continent). Some

years ago both Chile and Argentina were governed by extremely repressive regimes. The security forces were guilty of gross offenses against human rights, and people were "disappearing" daily. Church leaders in these countries, actively supported by Church leaders from other parts of Latin America and even from other continents, set up offices for the defense of human rights and campaigned with great courage and persistence against these abuses.

The result was two-fold. Firstly, the Church helped to bring about a situation where, despite the efforts of the tyrannical regimes to cling to power, somewhat more democratic governments were eventually restored. Secondly, the Church came to be seen as a champion of the oppressed and the victimized. Consequently she found herself allied to other champions of human dignity and liberty, for instance, the corps of dedicated lawyers and journalists who devoted their energy and risked their lives in a non-violent struggle against oppression. In the past, many of these people would have been hostile to the Church or alienated from her. But because of the Church's stance the committed people often became actively involved in Church life and the Christian faith became for them a source of life and energy, a beacon of hope in an oppressive society. This is a good example of the Church discovering a new and powerful "vehicle of evangelization" and a most effective way of making a preferential option for the poor.

Something similar, but on a less dramatic scale, is happening in many parts of Africa and Asia. It is also happening in what the Pope sometimes calls "the fourth world," i.e., the major pockets of poverty and deprivation in the Western world – in the great cities and, to a lesser extent, in towns and rural areas as well. Committed Church people have become very involved in working for human development of all kinds with people in poor or deprived areas and committed lay people have moved out of teaching and the administration of schools and into various kinds of informal education such as literacy programmes or education in fundamental human rights. Some have become involved in initiating or running programmes with groups of women to help them have a better self-image and to facilitate them in meeting some of their urgent needs such as creches or recreational facilities. Similarly, many of those who had previously been involved in staffing and

running excellent hospitals have now chosen to move out into the community and become involved in health education or primary health care programmes.

The option in today's world

Why this major change of direction? Undoubtedly a most important inspiration has been the new emphasis in recent times on a preferential option for the poor, an option to which the Pope refers in the quotation above. Inspired by this ideal, committed Christians have begun to look closely at the role they have been playing in society. Many of those who had devoted their lives to providing high quality education for young people have begun to question the social value of their work. They have come to believe that their educational work was doing little to lessen the gap between the privileged classes and those who are poor and underprivileged. Similarly, quite a lot of committed Christians are moving out of hospital work and into primary health care. They do so because they believe that the present hospital system is not the best way of meeting the health needs of those who are poor and underprivileged.

What we see then is that committed Christians have been looking for more relevant and effective ways of witnessing to Christian values in today's world. It is not that there is anything in principle wrong about working in a school or a hospital. But the careful discernment of Church people in certain key situations has led them to the conclusion that the fundamental values of the Christian faith can be witnessed to more effectively in other ways. These new approaches are invariably related to some aspect of work for "human development." Quite often the focus is particularly on the promotion of justice in society and the defense of the rights of the poor and marginalized.

Among those who find themselves in leadership roles "on the frontiers" there is a good deal of experimentation in the search for more effective "vehicles of evangelization." Some missionaries or local Church leaders are convinced that the Church needs to get involved in agricultural development; for others the way forward lies in credit unions; and there are some who think that involvement in literacy work will provide the Church with the ideal

"vehicle of evangelization." All of these are useful in particular situations, but if their witness potential is to be fully realized it is essential that the people themselves be actively involved in choosing the kind of development they wish.

Perhaps the most important contribution that Church people can make towards the human development of a community is to help them in using a process that really *empowers* them in making key choices about matters affecting their own lives. This is especially important for those who are poor or marginalized, because they frequently feel helpless and may even have lost a sense of their dignity. In recent years many Church people have begun to introduce an approach which enables all the members of the group to play an active role in decision making. This new approach is sometimes called "the psycho-social method" because it takes account both of the social situation and of the psychological needs of the people. It seeks to promote the participation of all. At the same time it encourages those who have a special talent for leadership to use that gift for the welfare of the community. Frequently this means enabling people to see that real leadership is not a matter of dominating or controlling others but rather of encouraging them to work for consensus and inspiring them to carry out the commitments which are taken on by the whole group. All this is a most effective way of putting into practice in the modern situation the words of *Centesimus Annus* quoted above.

"... The Church has always been present and active among the needy, offering them material assistance in ways that neither humiliate them nor reduce them to mere objects of assistance, but which help them to escape their precarious situation by promoting their dignity as persons" (n. 49).

Those who begin their involvement in human development work by using this approach find it fairly easy to ensure that the values of solidarity, justice, participation and special concern for the poor pervade the various development programmes which are started as a result of the initial community reflection and commitment. So it frequently happens that there emerges in a given area a whole variety of projects, all using a very participative method. These projects may range from primary health care to youth work, from women's awareness groups to human rights groups, and from

literacy programmes to income-generating projects (e.g., agriculture or craftwork). Each of these programmes or projects can then become a very powerful *specialized* "vehicle of evangelization" which carries into a particular sphere of human living such fundamental Christian values as social justice and special concern for the poor.

There are many dioceses where the Church first became involved in using the psycho-social method to promote the more secular aspects of human development such as agricultural projects or primary health care. But gradually the laity, the priests and the Bishops became aware that this participative method could be of great value for parish councils and other groups concerned with the pastoral and religious dimensions of Church life. So it came to be used in all the organizational aspects of parishes and even of the whole diocese.

As a result, diocesan synods in some areas have been organized from the ground up rather than from the top down. There is widespread consultation of people even in remote rural areas. The views of "grassroots" people are fed up the line by locally chosen representatives; so diocesan policies are based on an assessment of their situation by the whole community. In this way the institutional Church herself is able to give witness in her own structures and procedures to fundamental Christian values such as solidarity, justice, accountability, participation, respect for the views of all, and particular concern to make those who are "on the margins" feel valued. This is an example of what it can mean in practice for the Church to make a preferential option for the poor.

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TOTA PULCHRA ES

*Some Thoughts on the Mother of God,
my poor self and her great beauty.*

"Consider the Blessed Virgin Mary," the radio-priest said. As I recall, I was ten going on eleven and the program was a radio presentation of the Perpetual Novena in Honor of Our Sorrowful Mother. It was broadcast week after week on Friday evenings from the Basilica of Our Lady of Sorrows on West Jackson Boulevard in Chicago. The priests who conducted the novena and preached over air were members of the Order of Servants of Mary, popularly called Servite Fathers. Their Order was founded on the outskirts of Florence in the thirteenth century. Their whole apostolate is intensely Marian.

Consideration of the Blessed Virgin Mary was to be more a part of my life than I could have realized when I first heard the words quoted above. Over the years I would advance from the mildly Tractarian catechesis of my boyhood to mainstream Anglo-Catholicism as found in America in the 'forties and early 'fifties and on to an Anglo-Papal "extremism" (which used "Hail Mary" as a rallying cry), adopted after a trip to the Bahamas in 1954. Past that I would run hurriedly into the awaiting arms of the Holy Roman Church in 1956. But along the way I came to know Mary as Mother and Guide in ways so mysterious as to be reckoned, by me, at least, as I look back, as manifestations of the love of God. No; I don't mean I saw visions or was showered with roses or possessed alchemical rosary links. All I mean is that Mary played a role in my Christian life, that the role in question was loving and beautiful and that, like all true Marian works, it brought me nearer to Christ.

The next scene that stands out in my memory took place in the Conventual Church of the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It was in the summer of my fourteenth year. I had been allowed by my parents to spend part of my summer vacation in the East with the members of the Society whom we called "Cowley Fathers." Their church in Cambridge had the stolidly Ephesian dedication to "St. Mary, the Mother of God," rather unusual in Anglican nomenclature but doctrinally logical as all Anglicans and Lutherans, in contrast with most Calvinists and nearly all of the more radically Reformed, accept the decrees of the Council of Ephesus without demur. It was on a twilit June evening a hushed hour before compline that I knelt, rosary in hand, before an alabaster statue "of chaste and severe beauty" of our Blessed Lady holding the Holy Child. Like much in that church it was based on a French model. The novice master came along carrying a bunch of *yellow* roses which he proceeded to arrange before the statue below with twinkled a dozen or more blue votive candles. The whole scene was something new for me: exquisite art, flickering and slowly dimming light and *yellow* roses. I must admit that at that point in my life I knew precious little about flowers. I don't know much more now. But I thought "roses are red" was fairly universally true, though some roses are rose, and, I must have known, some were white. But yellow! I couldn't quite believe it. Such an offering to Mary before her shrine could not but strike me as "exotic" – something rich and wonderful out of a world of near fantasy. And yet such a gift to such a person seemed at the same time "just right." I was beginning to perceive a "beyondness" (I can call it "transcendence" today but I wouldn't have then) proper to Mary. I was coming to feel she *deserved* what was rare and wondrous, some sort of out of the ordinary homage.

Later on, as I studied under another Anglican religious community, the Order of the Holy Cross, in the mountains of Tennessee, I would come for the first time to know that Mary was more than a person to be considered or an object of homage. She was also the subject of theological controversy. In our religion classes we learned to distinguish *latria* and *dulia* and that *hyperdulia* belonged to Mary. In Church history we learned that Mary is rightly called by anyone with orthodox belief in the Incarnation, "Mother of God." We also learned that the Immaculate Conception

was defined Roman Catholic doctrine since the middle of the nineteenth century. Were we supposed to believe it? Various positions were brought forward from "take it or leave it" to "drop it, it's exaggerated and detracts from the Incarnation." But in between was the position of the religious I admired most, which was "this doctrine is logical, makes sense, fits into an overall scheme of things that is Catholic and must not be rejected just because it is Roman. Things Roman *can* be right." As I look back I wonder if admiration for the man or for his thought were too big a factor in swaying me. I only know that from that time forward I have always *believed* the doctrine, and I reckon that a grace.

As I grew up, becoming a college boy and then a sailor, I traveled the world and found in Cuba, Spain, France, Italy and the isles of Greece a different outlook on Mary. I am tempted to call it a "different feeling about her" than what I had known among Anglicans and Catholics in America in my youth.

As far back as 1950 when the doctrine of the Assumption was defined I had "happened" (supposedly coincidentally) into Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago the very day and hour the newly defined dogma was promulgated. Cardinal Stritch as Ordinary presided and sought the loyal acquiescence, explicit and verbal, of all present to the doctrine as defined and explained. I joined in assent. Again, from that moment my faith in what the Church teaches about Mary, glorious in body and soul, has never wavered.

In Europe I came to visit many Marian shrines but my most memorable experience was in Rome where in 1955 I knelt for the first time before the image of *Salus Populi Romani* in Sta. Maria Maggiore. The *ikon* is attributed to St. Luke. Though not that old it is very ancient and much revered. Something about it pierced my heart. Here was Mary as "Mother of Fair Hope," indeed, venerated unashamedly by generations of generations of the Roman people and of those who looked to Rome as the center of unity. I began to see how Mary was "Mother of the Church" (a title given to her by Pope Paul VI) in the Roman, the Mother of Churches.

The singular grace of conversion came to me a year and a half later. Reconciled with the Holy See I began to pursue the study of Latin and that of monastic history and Gregorian chant in what have since become the New England Abbeys of Glas-

tonbury and Portsmouth. But I had itchy feet and soon took off on a pilgrimage from which as yet I have not returned. So I was to spend four years in Rome and five in England, three in Switzerland, seven in Spain. I was to visit Pompei and Loretto, and Lourdes and Fatima, and would one day celebrate the sacred mysteries in Walsingham, "England's Nazareth." I went to Montserrat and Zaragoza, to Lluç on Mallorca and La Candelaria on Tenerife. But all along *Salus Populi Romani* would be my favorite "advocation" and the Liberian basilica in Rome my favorite shrine. I have wondered far from Europe: to Australia, New Zealand, the South Seas and the Philippines. In some of these places there is very little devotion to Mary, in others a sort I find of little personal appeal. But wherever the Church is, Mary is.

If I am to say that Mary is beautiful, in fact, *tota pulchra*, "all fair," what am I supposed to mean? I can know nothing of any *material* or *physical* beauty in her life here on earth, not that I doubt there was a great deal. Scripture is silent about such things. New Testament authors do not really *care* what people "look like." Our Lord himself is never described in terms of height or coloring, girth or stance. Much less so his holy Mother about whom so little materially is said. But there is a "beauty of Mary" which shines through in the New Testament, especially in Luke and John. Her words (few as they are) are exquisite and her deeds are replete with all that is right and true.

We can think of Mary as *tota pulchra* because in her sinlessness there is a right ordering of her life. What light surrounds her is not externally added as a sort of ornament. It shines from within. God has done something to, with and in her found in no other mere creature. She participates in a wondrous way beyond all other mere human beings in the very beauty of God. In Mary we find a harmony interiorly maintained in contemplative poise which is more than a mere individual calming of the heart. This harmony shares something of that of all creation as it came once fresh from the hand of God. But it has a special accent all its own which Mary gives back to the world of the redeemed. Sinlessness, all-purity, seen thus is selflessness. Mary exists to show forth her Son, to make much of God, to mother and befriend those whose balance is upset. There is an exquisite self-forgetfulness, a real humility about her which somehow makes the meager treatment

allotted to her by the sacred writers understandable. It is as if she were saying to them, "Do not talk about me. Talk about my Son. Talk about his Father. Let the Spirit speak at length through you as he has so seemingly briefly through me."

Beyond all this there is a glory in Mary which shines forth. It shines forth doctrinally in that apex of creation which she is as Mother of God, as Immaculately Conceived, as Assumed into Heaven. It shines forth liturgically in treasures old and new, things venerable, things popular. It shines forth devotionally in the much frequented shrines of our blessed Mother throughout the world, in the daily repeated and constantly meditated fifteen mysteries of the rosary, in countless novenas, incessant prayers.

Three New Testament images stand out in my memory as summing up thoughts of the Mother of fair love: Mary at Cana, Mary at the Cross, Mary in the Cenaculum. In all three pictures Mary is interceding for the embarrassed wedding organizers, for the whole world in need of redemption, for the Church about to receive that same Holy Spirit by whose power she had conceived in her womb the Son of God. In all three how "unruffled" Mary is. She is insistent that her Son be obeyed. She is constant amid overwhelming pain and grief. She is firm in hope for she has tasted deeply and seen with the inner eye the Goodness of the Lord to be shared with all mankind.

In line with the teaching of *Lumen Gentium* we can only see Mary in the context of Christ's redemptive work and can but reverence her for her union of mind and heart with those of her Son. Redeemed as she is in a more exalted fashion than the rest of us her special relationship with the Divine Persons remains unique: the Father's daughter, the Son's Mother and the Holy Spirit's Temple in ways no one else can be.

Mary's relationship with us is a truly ecclesial mystery. St. Augustine has called her "Mother of the members of Christ" and Paul VI, "Mother of the Church" which means the same. She is both pre-eminent type of the Church and our unique model in faith and love. Christ brings us salvation. Mary intentionally unites herself with him in his saving work and shares it as God wills. Hers is the highest place in heaven after Christ and yet of all women she is happy to be closest to us. She waited in humble

silence as one of the anawin, and she has been lifted up on high and has fulfilled every Old Testament figure of the Daughter of Zion.

We must never forget the humanity of Mary. She is no docile puppet in God's hands. She is a real woman who gives real assent to God's will. In this she is the antitype of Eve who through vascilation consented sinfully to death. Mary, rather, through firm decision contributes to life, life for herself and all mankind. Thus, while descended from Adam, the daughter of Joachim and Anna is, in the foreseen and preapplied merits of her Son, a "new creation." Her commitment (unimpeded by any sin original or actual) is as wholehearted as her cooperation with the divine plan is free.

Thus, in the Gospel and in the mysteries of the rosary based in large measure upon it, we see the constant union of Jesus and Mary even when they are physically separated. Christ remains our sole mediator with the Father. But Mary will always be our chief intercessor with the Son. Her influence in and for our lives is a manifestation of Christ's love which flows through her from him, rests upon him, totally depends on him, draws all its power from him and fosters our union in faith with him through her.

The grace of divine Motherhood perdures in Mary through all eternity neither subtracting from nor adding to the dignity of Christ. She through her unique role becomes the first example of the manifold mediation for and within the Church which he as Incarnate Lord allows creatures to share. Her cooperation in the saving plan, her hidden sanctity, her unbroken faithfulness and exemplary virtues equip her for the role of "Mother *in* the Church" and, also, "Mother of the Church," a motherhood conceded and confirmed by Jesus Christ himself on the cross as he gave her as mother to the Beloved Disciple who represents us all.

Light shines forth from Mary for the Light of the World has broken through to creatures as her Son. Light shines forth from Mary because she herself is elevated by and to his Presence. Light shines forth from Mary in no mere likeness of light but in a radiance that has become essential, identified with her very being. And she who is closest to God reaches out to us with that Light. She enfolds us with motherly care. By her intercession she exalts

us and brings us nearer to **the Light**. And the Light of Lights, Christ, likewise reaches out **to us from and through** his Mother. He touches us and makes us glow. He confirms us in his love. He gives us Light and makes us light, and, with his Mother as Model and Guide, we walk from the shadows into a brilliance unending in splendor.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

MARIAN SHRINES IN THE HOLY LAND

Visiting the Holy Land offers one the unique opportunity to retrace not only the footsteps of Jesus from his early childhood to the final events of his passion, death and resurrection, but also to visit the Gospel sites where the Blessed Virgin Mary lived and died. The shrines erected down through the centuries by Christians are today the landmarks for such a journey of faith and love.

Church of St. Anne

Near St. Stephen's Gate, leading to the Kedron Valley, there is the Church of St. Anne. It was built by the Crusaders in 1100 to commemorate the place where Mary was born. An ancient tradition, maintained by the church of Jerusalem, upholds that Mary was born in Jerusalem in a house near the Temple. By the beginning of the third century Christians had already built a small oratory which two centuries later became the site of a great basilica in honor of St. Mary. During the reign of the Persians the church fell into a heap of ruins. It was again rebuilt and the faithful there began to celebrate the Nativity of Mary on September 8 each year. On the arrival of the Crusaders the name of the church was changed from St. Mary's to St. Anne's. At the beginning of the 19th century the church of the Crusaders was abandoned and began once again to fall into ruins. It was a blessing that the French Government had the building restored, 1863-1877, and the church was again used for divine worship and committed to the care of the White Fathers founded by Cardinal

Lavigerie. This church was declared a minor Basilica by the Holy See in 1954.

Entering the church pilgrims are amazed at the austere beauty and strength of this building which has stood for eight centuries of time and of men. The church is erected above a crypt venerated as the birthplace of Mary and the house of her parents, Joachim and Anne. Beneath the high altar a delicate statue representing the newly born Mary seems to smile upon the visitors who come to see where Mary *"was born, tended and formed, and prepared for her role as Mother of God, who is the universal King"* (St. Andrew of Crete, PG 97, 870).

Church of Annunciation

Nazareth, enshrined in the green hills of Galilee, is known throughout the world for being the place chosen by God for the Annunciation of the Birth of his Son. The angel Gabriel was sent by God *"to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary"* (Lk 1:27). When the angel opened before Mary's eyes the mystery hidden for generations and centuries and asked her to play a role in this divine design, Mary's answer was: *"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word"* (Lk 1:38). At that very moment the redemption of mankind began to take place. *"The word was made flesh and dwelt among us"* (Jn 1:14).

The site of this wondrous event could have hardly remained unknown to the early Christians. There is good evidence that the first building erected close to the house of Mary in Nazareth was a church-synagogue frequented by Judeo-Christians. A Byzantine church was built during the 5th century. It remained in use up to the 12th century, although it was damaged and repaired several times. When the Crusaders came, they replaced the old church with a magnificent basilica which could not, however, be preserved from the ravages of time and climate. In 1959 a plan of construction presented by Giovanni Muzio was approved by the current custodians, the Franciscan Fathers. The architectural structure involved two interconnected churches, one above the other, preserving in full the remains of the ancient churches. As pilgrims enter the church their attraction is focussed on the Grotto

of the Annunciation. Looking through the "occulus" in the centre of the Upper Church, they can see "the House of Mary" in all its beauty and simplicity. In front of the Grotto there is a marble altar with the following inscription: "*Verbum Caro Factum Est*" (The word was made here flesh). Serving as a background to this altar are the poor and humble remains of Mary's home.

While contemplating the holy place, one is led to ponder on the mysterious ways of God. In this obscure and modest place the Incarnation of God took place, and Mary, a hereto for unknown girl, was chosen to be the Mother of God. Certainly the designs of God puzzle man's mind. "*How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge – and how impossible to penetrate his motives or understand his methods!*" (Rm 11:33-34).

Church of the Visitation

Ain Karem, a small village, perched on the southern slopes of the Judean hills, has been pointed out traditionally as the place where the eventful meeting of the Mother of God with the mother of John, the Precursor occurred. "*Now in those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town of Judea. And she entered the house of Zechariah and saluted Elizabeth . . . And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And cried out with a loud voice, saying: 'Blessed are thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb!' . . . And Mary said: 'My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior' "*" (Lk 1:39-48).

A new church to commemorate the arrival of Mary at Ain Karem, an event made visible in the elegant iron gate in front of the shrine, was constructed in 1939 on a plan submitted by A. Barluzzi. The ruins of an ancient church served as its foundation. The crypt is a precious relic of the "summer house" of Zechariah where Elizabeth retired after she had conceived to contemplate "what the Lord has done for me" and to await the visit of her kinswoman Mary.

The Upper Church, one of the most artistic and colorful in the Holy Land, is a place of beauty and quiet. The whole ambience rings forth like a hymn of glory to the Mother of God. In the apse is the Virgin portrayed as glorifying the Lord. Five frescoes recall the titles of Mary: *Mother of God, Refuge of Sinners, Dispenser of*

all graces, Help of Christians and Immaculate Conception. On the pillars are verses of the *Magnificat* and angels given to song and music. The most attractive thing in the Patio of the Church is the *Magnificat* written in 41 languages. The place is decorated with roses of all kinds and colors, to echo of Mary's words: "*All generations will call me blessed.*"

Church of the Holy Sepulchre

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre stands over Golgotha, the place where Jesus was crucified and was buried. Entering the main door and turning to the right we are at the foot of Mt. Calvary. We must ascend fourteen steps before reaching the height of Calvary, where there are two chapels. One is believed to be on the site where Jesus was crucified and the other on that where he was stripped of his garments and nailed to the cross. In this same place, tradition says, Mary received in her arms the lifeless body of Jesus taken down from the cross. As a commemoration of this sorrowful moment a little altar has been placed between the two other altars with a most devout and impressive image of *Our Lady of Dolours*. This statue was a gift of Maria I of Portugal in 1778 and represents poignantly the prophecy of Simeon to Mary: "*And a sword will pierce your own soul, too*" (Lk 12:35).

The Church of The Dormition

An ancient tradition of the Church of Jerusalem attests that after Jesus' death the Blessed Virgin Mary lived for the rest of her life in a house located on Mount Zion, near the Cenacle. When in the 4th century the great basilica "*Sancta Sion*," the Mother of all Churches, was erected to commemorate the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the House of Mary was also included within its precincts. When the Crusaders arrived they found that the church had been totally demolished by the Persians and the Arab Muslims. A magnificent church was then rebuilt with three naves, one to commemorate the *Last Supper of the Lord*, the second in honor of the *Descent of the Holy Spirit*, and the third to venerate the *Dormition of the Virgin Mary*. In the following centuries the church of the Crusaders suffered a typical fate of destruction and abandonment. But providence came to the rescue. This holy place was restored by Wilhelm II, Emperor of Germany, who bought this

property for the Benedictines and built the majestic church and tower which can be seen today. All this was the work of architect Renard, who created a replica, at least the interior, of Charlemagne's main palace Chapel at Aix les Chapel. In the apse of the church a sparkling mosaic can be admired with the Virgin and her Child. Going down to the crypt we find the Altar of the Dormition before which lies depicted in the peaceful slumber of death the statue of the Virgin Mary. A visit to the side chapels reveals beautiful altars adorned with mosaics and bronzes. The place seems to be permeated with a deep air of mystical devotion.

Church of the Assumption

In the Kedron Valley there are four ancient tombs said to be those of Absalom, Josaphat, St. James and St. Zechariah. In fact the whole Valley appears to be a huge necropolis in which Jews, Moslems and Christians alike have chosen to be buried. It is also in this Valley, at the foot of Mount Olives that the Church of Assumption is situated to commemorate the burial place of Virgin Mary. Shortly after the Council of Ephesus (431) where Mary was proclaimed "Mother of God," a chapel was built over the crypt. This was venerated as the Tomb of the Virgin. The Crusaders could only find in this site a little edicule over the Tomb of the Virgin Mary. They put up a church in 1130 and entrusted its care to the Benedictines of Cluny. When the Saracens later invaded Jerusalem the Sanctuary of the Assumption was miraculously spared because of the veneration which they themselves held for the Mother of Jesus.

For some two hundred years or more the Franciscan Fathers had the exclusive possession of this shrine. However, in 1757 the Greek Orthodox took over the place and since then they have enjoyed possession. We must descend a flight of forty-five steps to reach the underground church with its icon-covered walls and hundreds of olive oil lamps hanging from the vault. The sepulchral chamber, where the Virgin was laid, shows, as in the case of the Sepulchre of Christ, that the rocky mass containing the tomb was separated from the surrounding rock. From this Tomb Mary was assumed into heaven, body and soul. The sepulchre of Mary, like that of Christ, is empty. Christ, having fulfilled his salvific mission, rose again as the culmination of the total offering he had

made of himself on the cross. Mary, for her part, being the Mother of the Son of God, was brought into heaven in the company of the angels to receive glory and reward for her upmost fidelity and love in the work God had given her. *"The Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exulted by the Lord as Queen of all, in order that she might be the more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of Lords and the conqueror of sin and death"* (Lumen Gentium, 59).

PEDRO G. TEJERO, O.P.

DOMINICAN MARIAN SHRINES

The Philippines and Spain have been and are still related historically and culturally. But the noblest of the Philippine's relationship with Spain has been that of a spiritual daughter, for it was through the preaching of the Spanish missionaries that she first received the precious gift and legacy of the Catholic faith. And together with the faith, she also received those spiritual and temporal blessings which flow from the Gospel. One of these blessings is the manifest profession of faith by means of the many shrines which are scattered all over the archipelago like the beads of the rosary, if not literally "from Aparri to Jolo," certainly from Piat in Cagayan to Zamboanga in Mindanao.

Most of the shrines in the Philippines are Marian, and it is well said that the country is *pueblo de Maria*.

Among those dedicated to Mary, there stand out most conspicuously the shrines of Our Lady of the Rosary in Santo Domingo Church in Quezon City, of Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag in Pangasinan, of Our Lady of Peace and Good Voyage in Antipolo, Rizal, and of Our Lady of Peñafrancia in Naga. If one adds to the first two shrines that of Our Lady of Piat in Cagayan, Our Lady of the Rosary in Orani, Bataan, and the Santuario del Santo Cristo in San Juan del Monte in Metro Manila, we have a complete list of the shrines which were founded and maintained by the Order of Preachers in the Philippines. Some of them like Piat and Orani have passed into the spiritual care of diocesan clergy.

Our Lady of the Rosary in Quezon City

Among Dominican shrines in the Philippines, that of Our Lady of the Rosary in Santo Domingo in Quezon City rightly deserves first place both for its antiquity and importance. It dates from the 16th century and is located in the national capital. In 1954 – a Marian Year – Our Lady of the Rosary's shrine was declared by the Philippine Hierarchy the "National Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary."

The image of Our Lady venerated at Sto. Domingo was sculptured at the request of then Acting Governor General of the Philippines Don Luis Perez Dasmariñas. Under the direction of Captain Hernando de los Rios Coronel, a Chinese artisan sculpted it. It is fifty-six inches tall. Its head and hands are of ivory. The Holy Child is entirely of ivory. It was carved with such skill that after almost 400 years, it still retains its majestic and imposing beauty which commands reverence and devotion before its presence. Thereafter, neither the Chinese sculptor nor the Christian captain was able to produce a similar one no matter how hard they tried.

For more than a century the image was enthroned in one of the side altars of the Sto. Domingo Church in Intramuros, in a niche protected with iron grills. In 1712, Fr. Pedro de Mejorda built in her honor a stately chapel which was an extension of the transept on the right side. It was from this chapel that the image of the Lady of the Rosary presided over the fortunes of the Philippines for centuries. From this throne she witnessed the growth and maintenance of the Catholic Faith in the archipelago.

In 1646, fifteen well-armed Dutch ships attacked the Philippines. To challenge them, two old galleons which had served as merchant ships along the Pacific routes in Acapulco trade were speedily armed, and they easily won over them five resounding victories by the miraculous help of the Lady of the Rosary to whom the Filipino fighters prayed for help. This has come down in history as the famous victories of La Naval de Manila.

In 1906, the venerable image was canonically crowned in most solemn rites on the 5th day of October.

In the Second World War, the Church of Santo Domingo in Intramuros was bombed and completely destroyed. The image of the Lady of the Rosary, spared from the catastrophe, was housed at the University of Santo Tomas from 1942 to 1954 in which year it was carried in solemn procession to her new shrine in Santo Domingo Church in Quezon City.

Recently, Our Lady of the Rosary of La Naval, as she has come to be known, has been declared the Patroness of Quezon City.

Our Lady of the Rosary in Orani

Sometime in the 17th century a few villagers of the then "*Partido de Bataan*" went hunting in the neighborhood of the "*visita*" of Orani and, as they were returning, they found an image of Our Lady of the Rosary under a *camachile* tree. From there they took it to Samal, enthroning it in the main altar of the town church. To their amazement when they went to Mass early next morning, the image was missing. Sometime later it was found under the same tree. Brought back to Samal, twice she disappeared, and again to be found in the aforesaid place; a clear indication that the Lady wished to be worshiped there. Such an unusual occurrence eventually led to the construction of a church and to the founding of the town of Orani.

When the Japanese occupied Bataan, the image was in the church of Orani. About March 1942 the people of Orani were able to visit the town and they brought the image to Sapang Lucas, Lubao, Pampanga. In September of the same year the image was returned to Orani. The whole town was jubilant and gave its Patroness a warm welcome. For fear of the Japanese who had threatened to burn the town the image was transferred to Tamban on January 7, 1945, a fish pond near Hermosa. Later it was installed in a small but beautiful and costly chapel built by a devotee by the side of a river, not far from the parochial church.

Our Lady of the Rosary of Orani has been looked upon as the universal refuge not only for the people of Bataan but also of Zambales, Pampanga, Bulacan and even of Manila. In answer to their prayers, she has often mercifully extended to them her motherly protection, even in extraordinary ways, when beset by the calamities that frequently visited the Philippines in the past,

such as: attacks from Muslims or Negritos, earthquakes, typhoons, fires, droughts, locusts, epidemics, etc. Her feast, celebrated on the first Sunday of October, draws large crowds from the neighboring provinces, besides Bataan itself.

Our Lady of the Rosary in Piat

In describing the origins of the sanctuary of Our Lady of the Rosary in Piat, we have not found better words than those of the classical Dominican historian, Father Diego Aduarte, as summarized in Blair and Robertson:

"In the church of the village of Piat there was an image of Our Lady on one of the side altars. It had been made in Macao and had been set up in the church of our order in the city of Nueva Segovia, whence it was taken to the church of Piat. Here the image was greatly beloved; and when Father Juan de Santa Ana gave it away to another village, after having received a second image of much greater beauty, the people begged so earnestly to have it returned that the vicar was obliged to have another painted on canvass and sent to the village of Tuguegarao and to have the first image brought back. While the Father was considering where it would best be put, the idea occurred to him that it would be well to establish a shrine on the road between Piat and Tuao, at a distance of about a league and a half from each of the towns. This shrine was set up on St. Stephen's day in 1623" (XXXI, pp. 210-211).

Mary was not slow in showering her favors on her devotees. There is an episode reported by historians and handed down by tradition, of a time when the Itawes valley – where the sanctuary stands – was afflicted by a persistent drought and the specter of famine consequent to it. The townspeople prayed hard to their beloved Lady, while humbly confessing their sins, and on that same day in the afternoon, heavy rain fell on their fields. In due time they obtained a bountiful harvest.

In more recent times, when the Japanese "zoned" the town and their stay was extended because of heavy rains, the commanding officer ordered the parish priest to "tell Santa Maria" to make the rains stop so that they might go away. The whole town prayed

and pleaded with her, and the next day in mid-rainy season, the rains suddenly stopped.

The culminating point of the people's devotion of Our Lady of Piat was her canonical coronation in June of 1954.

Our Lady of the Rosary of Manaoag

According to a pious tradition, early in the seventeenth century, Our Lady appeared to a convert calling to him from atop a small shrub on a hill. The folks, headed by their Dominican pastors, interpreting this extraordinary event as a desire of Our Lady to draw the people towards her in that place, started the construction of a makeshift chapel – which in the passing of the years was to give way to a more durable structure – in order to house therein an image that in all appearances was ordered from Mexico by the Dominican Fathers. Her apparition gave the image as well as the town the name of Manaoag, whose meaning is “to call.”

Its main feast is celebrated on the third Wednesday after Easter Sunday and is attended not only by the people of Manaoag, but also by many pilgrims from Pangasinan and the neighboring provinces. Many other flock to Our Lady outside of that day to look for solace in their trials or to thank her for the favors bestowed on them.

Upon the request of Father Mariano Rodriguez, then Vicar of the Sanctuary of Manaoag, His Holiness Pius XI granted on 12 August 1925 the solemn coronation of the image. This was done on April 1926 in the presence of high ecclesiastical dignitaries, civil authorities and an immense populace which in the expression of their love for their Lady overflowed the plaza, filling the neighboring houses, balconies and rooftops, and even the branches of trees.

Here as elsewhere the Virgin has responded to the love of her devotees with countless graces and occasionally undeniable miraculous interventions. No wonder that the devotion to the Virgin of Manaoag, going beyond the boundaries of Pangasinan, has spread far and wide into the Ilocos, Central Luzon, Manila and even Southern Luzon.

PABLO FERNANDEZ, O.P.

PHILIPPINE EPISCOPOLOGY ADDENDA ET CORRIGENDA, 1991

The following list updates and corrects entries in the *Philippine Episcopology* previously published in the *Boletín* and continues the *Episcopology* with the details of the episcopal ordinations of those bishops consecrated subsequent to the final installment.

36. *Juan Angel Rodriguez* – the second assistant at his consecration was Isidoro de Arevalo, chanter of the cathedral chapter of Caceres, not Canon Magdano de Axebuto. (source: *Iuramenta* 3, fol. 254, in the Vatican Archives)
67. *Gregorio Meliton Martinez Santa Cruz* – The two co-consecrators at his consecration were Tomas Iglesias Barcones, Patriarch of the West Indies and Antonio Maria Claret y Clara, Titular Archbishop of Trajanopolis. (source: *Iuramenta* 1859-75 [1862])
74. *Casimiro Herrera Perez* – born on 2 March 1824; priest on 18 June 1850.
87. *James Jordan Carroll* – He was consecrated in the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Manila.
92. *Maurice Patrick Foley* – He was consecrated at Saint Augustine, Florida, in the Cathedral of Saint Augustine.
95. *James Paul McCloskey* – He was consecrated at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul.

128. *Patrick Harmon Shanley* – consecrated at Quezon City, in the chapel of the Monastery of the Carmelite Nuns on Gilmore Avenue.
135. *Patrick Cronin* – died at Cagayan de Oro 19 February 1991.
136. *Epifanio Surban Belmonte* – The official date of his resignation was 30 May 1989. He died on 25 May 1990.
141. *Francis Joseph McSorley* – died at Jolo.
144. *Charles Quentin Bertram Olwell* – He was consecrated in the Cathedral of Saint Anthony of Padua in Marbel; he died at North Palm Beach, Florida.
149. *Joseph William Regan* – He was consecrated in Christ the King Cathedral in Tagum.
162. Full name: *Carmelo Dominador Morelos y Flores*.
165. *Jose T. Sanchez* – Secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith until 21 June 1991; Created Cardinal 28 June 1991; Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy and President of the Pontifical Commission for the Conservation of the Artistic and Historical Patrimony of the Church 1 July 1991.
183. *Federico G. Limon* – He resigned as Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan on 15 July 1991.
185. *Philip Francis Smith* – He was consecrated at Jolo in Mount Carmel Cathedral.
192. Full name: *Ricardo Tancinco y Pido*.
194. Full name: *Celestino Enverga y Rojo*; he died on 16 October 1990.
201. *Oscar V. Cruz* – He was named Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan on 15 July 1991.
204. Full name: *Leonardo Legaspi y Zamora*.
206. Full name: *Pedro Dean y Rosales*.
207. Full name: *Jesus Dosado y Armamento*.

213. Full name: *Paciano Aniceto y Basilio*.
214. *Pedro G. Magugat* – He died on 5 May 1990.
218. Full name: *George Eli Dion* – He was consecrated at Mount Carmel Cathedral in Jolo.
220. Full name: *Sofio Balce y Guinto* – He succeeded to the see of Cabanatuan on 11 November 1990.
227. Full name: *Patricio Alo y Hacbang*.
228. *Filomeno Bactol y Gonzales* – Named first Bishop of Naval 29 November 1988.
233. Full name: *Ciceron Tumbocon y Santa Maria* – He died on 11 November 1990.
241. Full name: *Florentino Cinense y Ferrer*
243. Full name: *Juan de Dios Pueblos y Mataflorida*.
245. *Patricio Lopez y Maqui* – died at Manila 20 February 1991.

The following consecrations have taken place subsequent to the publication of the last installment of the Philippine Episcopology:

259. 1989, 21 June, at Manila. Cardinal Jaime Sin y Lachica, Archbishop of Manila, assisted by Msgr. Nicolas Mondejar, Bishop of San Carlos and Msgr. Vicente Salgado y Garrucho, Bishop of Romblon, consecrated: *Msgr. Warlito Cajandig y Itucas*, Titular Bishop of Ausafa, Vicar Apostolic of Calapan; born at Dumarao (Capiz) 30 January 1944; priest 21 March 1970; named 17 April 1989.
260. 1990, 6 January, at Rome, Saint Peter's Basilica. Pope John Paul II, assisted by Msgr. Giovanni Battista Re, Titular Archbishop of Vescovio and Msgr. Miroslav Stefan Marusyn, Titular Archbishop of Cadi, consecrated: *Msgr. Benjamin Almoneda*, Titular Bishop of Timida, Auxiliary of Daet; born at Caceres 11 April 1930; priest 22 March 1958; named 19 December 1989; Bishop of Daet 7 June 1991.

261. 1990, 19 March, at Libmanan, Cathedral of Saint James the Apostle. Msgr. Bruno Torpigliani, Titular Archbishop of Malliana, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Concordio Ma. Sarte, Bishop of Legazpi and by Msgr. Benjamin Almoneda, Titular of Timida, consecrated: *Msgr. Prospero Arellano y Nale*, first Bishop-Prelate of Libmanan; born at San Roque, Bombon (Caceres) 17 January 1937; priest 30 March 1963 in the cathedral of Caceres; named 9 December 1989.
262. 1990, 4 April, at Lucena, San Fernando Cathedral. Msgr. Bruno Torpigliani, Titular Archbishop of Malliana, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Ruben T. Pro-fugo, Bishop of Lucena and by Msgr. Angel N. Lagdameo, Bishop of Dumaguete, consecrated: *Msgr. Antonio Rañola y Racelis*, Titular Bishop of Claterna, Auxiliary of Cebu; born at Manila 16 May 1932; priest 26 March 1955; named 24 February 1990.
263. 1990, 19 April, at Cebu, Metropolitan Cathedral. Msgr. Bruno Torpigliani, Titular Archbishop of Malliana, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Leopoldo Tumulak y Sumaylo, Titular Bishop of Lesvi and by Msgr. Camilo Gregorio y Diaz, Bishop of Bacolod, consecrated: *Msgr. Emilio Bataclan y Layon*, Titular Bishop of Gunela, Auxiliary of Cebu; born at Doong, Bantayan Island (Cebu) 20 September 1940; priest 1 May 1966 at Cebu; named 24 February 1990.
264. 1991, 6 January, at Rome, Saint Peter's Basilica. Pope John Paul II, assisted by Msgr. Giovanni Battista Re, Titular Archbishop of Vescovio and by Msgr. Justin Francis Rigali, Titular Archbishop of Bolsena, consecrated *Msgr. Osvaldo Padilla*, Titular Archbishop of Pia, Apostolic Nuncio to Panama, born at Sogod (Cebu) 5 August 1942; priest 20 February 1966; named 17 December 1990.

NOTICE

Reverend Father Andre Chapeau, O.S.B., Monk of the Abbey of Saint-Paul-de-Wisques, France, one of the co-authors of Philippine Episcopology, died at his abbey on 23 June 1991, several weeks short of his seventy-fourth birthday. Dom Chapeau was one

of the most distinguished researchers on the Catholic hierarchy, having devoted almost forty years of his life to research on the episcopate. He would have celebrated forty-four years of religious profession on 15 August 1991 and forty years of priesthood on 19 August 1991.

Andre Chapeau made major contributions to the study of the episcopate. He was held in high esteem and deep affection by his colleagues who mourn his passing. We thank God for the great gift

CHARLES N. BRANSOM, et al.

CASES AND INQUIRIES

1. Refusal to Take Holy Communion from Lay Ministers

In one parish there is an association of devotees to the Blessed Sacrament who take Holy Communion in the traditional way, on the tongue and kneeling down. There is no difficulty about their preference.

The conflict comes when they refuse to take Holy Communion from lay ministers and seek out whatever priest is giving Holy Communion. The priest when he sees them coming, changes his place at the Communion rail so that these devotees will be forced to avail themselves of the lay ministers, like it or not. These devotees absolutely refuse to receive from the hands of lay ministers and prefer to go without Holy Communion, rather than do so.

Questions: Is the priest obliged to give Holy Communion himself to the faithful who refuse to receive it from lay ministers? How do you view the conduct of priests who evade giving Communion to the sort of people mentioned? How do you view the conduct of such devotees who would rather go without Communion than receive it from the hands of lay ministers?

A Bishop

Three questions are proposed by our consultant, each of which we shall try to answer to the best of our ability.

1. "Is the priest obliged to give Holy Communion himself to the faithful who refuse to receive it from lay ministers?" Yes. In the context of the proposed case the priest should not change place at the Communion rail, forcing those who refuse to take Communion from lay ministers, to take it unwillingly from them. During the distribution of Holy Communion the priest's changing place should not happen at all. The reason is clear. He cannot do so without calling the attention of the whole congregation to what he is doing, with consequent scandal to the faithful. The time for Holy Communion is not a time to correct the personal errors of individuals. The priest should remain where he is and give Holy Communion to those who approach him. To do so does not imply his approval of what such communicants do, if they jump from place to place.

2. "How do you view the conduct of the priests who evade giving Communion to the sort of people mentioned?" In the proposed case the conduct of the priest cannot be approved. He should not change places at the Communion rail, in order to evade giving Communion to those who refuse to take it from lay ministers, as explained in the answer to the first question.

There are, however, instances when a priest may rightly evade giving Holy Communion to them. Such is the case when the priest, being legitimately impeded, is approached and requested by the members of the association to give them Holy Communion and a lay minister is at hand who can distribute Holy Communion to them. If the priest can use the help of lay ministers in such a situation for other communicants, he is not obliged to give Holy Communion himself to those who refuse to avail themselves of the services of lay ministers, who are after all approved by the Church. In this case there is no scandal whatsoever. Moreover, the priest is giving them the assistance approved by the Church for other members of the faithful. Are these devout associates entitled to receive special assistance precisely because they refuse to accept what the Church has approved? By no means.

3. "How do you view the conduct of such devotees who would rather go without Communion than receive it from the hands of lay ministers?"

The conduct of these persons who would rather go without Holy Communion than receive it from the hands of lay ministers is deplorable. The Church has already approved the help of lay ministers to distribute Holy Communion. Of course, the Church has determined in what circumstances lay ministers can distribute the Holy Communion. It belongs to the Bishop to see to it that their ministry be performed according to the Church's norms. Lay people are not competent in this matter. If any individuals see any anomaly in the performance of lay ministers, they should inform the competent authority about it, so that any abuse can be corrected.

To refuse to take Holy Communion from the hands of lay ministers is a serious mistake. It implies that the devotees in question consider themselves above the Church's authority. For the Church allows lay ministers to help priests in their holy ministry. These persons mention canon 230 when they say: "Our belief is that a violation of the law – in this instance canons 230 and 910 – is a corruption of the law." Thus, it seems that they consider a violation of the law (consequently a corruption of the law) the approval granted by the Church to lay ministers. Canon 230, § 3 reads as follows: "Where the needs of the Church require and ministers are not available, lay people, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can supply certain functions . . . and distribute Holy Communion, in accordance with the provisions of the law." So the approval of lay ministers to distribute Holy Communion is in perfect accordance with canon 230. It is not a corruption of law. It is a perfect implementation of canon 230.

What is really against the Church's law (against canon 230) is that a person should refuse to take Holy Communion from lay ministers. This is so true that "they would rather go without Communion than receive it from the hands of lay ministers." These persons need a deeper instruction on the Holy Eucharist.

At this point it would be interesting to know what the by-laws of their association say on the matter. If what they do is a reflection of their by-laws, these certainly cannot be approved by the ecclesiastical authority. Moreover, considering that apparently this attitude is not taken only by some members of the association but by the association itself, as a body, I dare say that the association should be warned seriously to change its attitude or

else not expect to be tolerated in the future by the Church as it is in the present.

The best solution would be to have a dialogue between the Bishop (or his representative) and the President of the association in order to exchange views and reach such a compromise as one in which the Church's laws are respected and followed in every way.

2. Use of the Church in Parishes Entrusted to Religious Houses

I have found your cases on parishes entrusted to religious communities most interesting. Since the Church of our community is also a parish church, I would like to know how its use should be regulated in order to avoid possible conflicts. I do not think the community can give up its use. We have no other place to hold the community religious acts. Are there some norms concerning this matter?

A Religious Superior

The case posed by the religious superior is worth being studied carefully. The community's church has to be used by both the parish and the community. The community has not given up the use of the church, when it was entrusted with the parish. The community is the **owner** of the church and it may continue using it. On the other **hand**, the community has freely accepted the commitment of the **parish**. Thus, the use of the church has to be regulated by some **agreement** or set of rules in order to avoid friction and conflict.

In a religious **community** one of its members takes care, as a rule, of the church. In the constitutions of all religious institutes or in their directory there always is, or there always should be, a provision concerning this office. When the commission of the parish to the community is *pleno iure*, the parish priest, being a member of the community, can also be the caretaker of the church; or this office can be held by another member of the community. It is up to the religious superior with his council to decide which is better in this case. However, in case the parish is committed to the community *quod temporalia tantum*, the parish priest is not a member

of the community, but a secular priest. In such case, a member of the community should take care of the church.

In any case, the important thing is not to hinder the parochial ministry, rather to respect the rights of the parish priest in carrying out his obligations as pastor of the parish. This is absolutely necessary. The religious community has freely accepted this obligation when it was entrusted with the parish. We have explained in our case on the "Acquired Rights not Abrogated by the New Codex" (*Boletín Eclesiástico*, July-August 1990) that the community, in order to counteract the inconveniences occasioned by the parish and at the same time by way of compensation, enjoys the right to the revenues of the parish (can. 1425 of the 1917 Codex), if it was entrusted by papal indult with the parish before 1983. If this commission took place after 1983, it is implied that an agreement between the diocesan Bishop and the religious Superior has been entered into on the matter, according to canon 520, § 2 of the new Codex.

Taking into account the foregoing observations, a few items taken from the 1917 Codex and from some commentators who deal with this matter may help avoid some possible conflicts concerning the use of the church both by the community and by the parish.

1. The parochial Mass should be celebrated at a fixed hour every day. On Sundays and Holidays of Obligation more Masses should be scheduled, if possible, in order to facilitate the parishioners in fulfilling their obligation to hear Mass and listen to the Word of God (cans. 528, § 1; 1247 of the new Codex).

2. Wedding Masses, as well as funeral Masses should be pre-arranged by the parish priest with the member of the community in charge of the church, giving preference, as much as possible, to the parish obligations.

3. Collections made during the Masses, mentioned in numbers 1 & 2 belong to the parish; others made during Masses held by the members of the community, as well as during retreats and recollections of students academically trained under the direction of the community, belong to the church, i.e. to the religious house.

4. Boxes placed at the pedestal of images inside the church for offerings of the faithful to maintain and repair the church or its furniture as well as for its ornamentation are under the community, responsible for such undertakings. The parish, however, may have at the entrance of the church a box where parishioners may drop their offerings to help the projects of the parish.

5. The administration of baptisms should be performed according to a fixed and carefully pre-arranged schedule, to be posted at the door of the church for the information and guidance of the parishioners.

6. The baptismal font falls exclusively under parish care, as does the custody of sacred oils for baptism and the anointing of the sick.

7. It is the duty of the community to have custody of the Blessed Sacrament. However, a key to the tabernacle should be kept also by the parish priest (can. 415, § 3, n. 1 of the 1917 Codex).

8. A confessional should be reserved for the parish priest, so that he may fully carry out his pastoral obligation to hear confessions (can. 892, § 1 of the 1917 Codex). When he took possession of his pastoral office, the parish priest was taken by the Bishop or his delegate to the confessional where he should carry out one of the main obligations of his pastoral ministry (cfr. cans. 528, § 2 and 986 of the 1983 Codex). Other priests of the community should also help him in hearing confessions, as much as possible, especially before Christmas, during Lent and Holy Week.

9. It belongs to the religious Superior to see to it that sacred rites be performed by the parish priest and other priests in accordance with liturgical laws (can. 415, § 3, n. 2 of the 1917 Codex).

10. Since the church belongs to the religious community, its conservation, improvements, ornamentation, etc. fall under the community's responsibility. That is why the community may solicit, receive, collect and administer offerings from the faithful for this purpose (cans. 415, § 3, 3o; 630, of the 1917 Codex).

Bearing in mind the foregoing observations, it will not be difficult to use the church in an orderly manner for the spiritual welfare of both the parish and the community. In cases where an

apparent conflict may arise, the goodwill of the parties concerned will be used to find a way to solve any problems. When a true desire to do things for the glory of God and welfare of souls is present, no real conflict should exist. The parish and religious community seek the same goal, namely the building up of the Body of Christ. Any inconvenience should be looked upon and borne with this in view. Human motivations should never interfere with or hinder the pursuing and achievement of this supernatural goal.

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.

FESTAL HOMILIES FOR JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 1992

Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

January 1, 1992

(Nb 6:22-27; Ga 4:4-7; Lk 2:16-21)

The liturgy of the New Year's Mass is rich in meaning and conducive to practical applications for our Christian life.

There are three main points emphasized in today's liturgy: 1) Mary is proclaimed Mother of God (*Prayers of the Mass*); 2) The Child of Bethlehem is given the name of Jesus on the eighth day after his birth (*Gospel*); 3) Through Jesus' power we have all become children of God.

In view of the current relevance of the Dogma of Mary's Divine Maternity we shall focus this homily on that topic.

Of the different titles given to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the greatest of them all is that she is the Mother of God: "*Sancta Dei Genitrix*," "*Theotokos*," "God-bearer." Undoubtedly this is her most sublime privilege and the source of all the other graces and prerogatives with which God has enriched her.

No sooner had the early Church spread throughout the whole world than Mary's Divine Maternity was an object of the people's faith and the reason for their Marian cult and veneration. Christian art as seen in the catacombs of Rome and in the ancient Basilicas itself bears witness of this fact.

In the fifth century a controversy arose over the relation of Christ's humanity to his divinity. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, invented the distinction of God the Son and Jesus the man. Such teaching led to the following erroneous conclusion: in Christ there were two distinct persons, one divine and the other human, joined in some kind of higher personal unity. Consequently Nestorius condemned the use of the title "Mother of God" for the Blessed Virgin Mary. He said that the title of "Mother of Christ" would be more appropriate for her.

The most vigorous opponent of Nestorius was St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria. He defended the use of the title of "Mother of God" and described the union of the two natures in Christ as hypostatic, that is, integral to and found within the one, whole person of Christ. Under the leadership of St. Cyril, the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus (January 1, 431) condemned the teachings of Nestorius, and Mary was acclaimed unanimously by bishops and faithful as *Theotokos*, Mother of God.

With the coming of Protestantism in the sixteenth century, certain factors of the old Nestorian heresy were again revived. Most Protestants – even up till now – generally refuse the title of Mother of God to Mary. They prefer to simply call her "The Mother of Jesus."

Catholic teaching on this point was and is that, from its first moment of its being Christ's human nature existed as the human nature of the Word and never as a single, detached, independently existing nature. God and man are one in Christ. He is one person in two natures. It is evident, of course, that Jesus never received from Mary his divine nature. What Mary gave to Jesus was his human nature. As St. Thomas explains this mystery: "Since, therefore, the human nature was taken by the Divine Person at the very beginning of his conception, it follows that it can be truly said that God was conceived and born of the Virgin. Now from this is a woman called a man's mother, that she conceived him and gave birth to him. Therefore, the Blessed Virgin is the Mother of God" (III, 35, 5).

Application. 1) When we call Blessed Mary "Mother of all men," "Mediatrice of all graces" and "Mother of the Church," we should think first of her noblest and greatest title: Mother of God.

2) If a Jehovah's Witness or a member of the *Iglesia ni Cristo* attacks in front of us the Divine Maternity of Mary, we should know well how to counteract their assaults. 3) Given the fact that the Church begins the New Year under the guidance and protection of Blessed Virgin Mary, we should be confident of her protection and offer her our true devotion.

PEDRO G. TEJERO, O.P.

Epiphany of Our Lord

January 5, 1992

(Is 60:1-6; Ep 3:2-3a, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12)

Introduction. The feast of the Epiphany is peculiar. On this day the Church celebrates the whole mystery of salvation under the aspect of Christ's manifestation. What is being manifested in Christ? We must remember that by the end of the Old Testament times, the Chosen People were those with Jewish descent. Salvation was thought of as only for them. With the birth of Christ salvation was also brought to the Gentiles. So today, we see the Gentiles also honoring Christ as their King in Matthew in contrast to the scene of the Nativity in Luke where shepherds – the chosen – were alone present. St. Paul, years later, was led to exclaim: "... in Christ Jesus the Gentiles are now co-heirs with the Jews, members of the same body and sharers of the promise through the preaching of the gospel" (*Second Reading*).

With today's feast, also called Theophany – the manifestation of God – the Christmas season traditionally ends, since at last the whole reality and meaning of Christ's birth into and for the whole world is manifested, the total meaning of his messiahship is revealed . . . "The Lord and ruler is coming; kingship is his and government and power" (*Entrance Hymn*).

Theologico-scriptural reflection. As was true during the night of the birth of Christ, a single intriguing sign catches our attention, the presence of the bright star. As the star guided the shepherds' tracks to the Christ child's manger, so did the same celestial body navigate the long journey of the three Wise Men to

the place of the Messiah's birth: "We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage" (*Gospel Reading*).

Christ is manifested to us as the star which attracts us to follow and seek it out as our one true destiny whether we be Jews or Gentiles. He has been revealed to us by the Father as his "Son to the nations by the guidance of a star" (*Opening Prayer*). He so attracts us because Christ is not only the light that has come but is "the glory of the Lord that shines upon us . . . and due to him nations shall walk by his light and kings by his shining radiance" (*First Reading*).

Often a star likewise appears in the heaven of our soul since like the Three Kings "we have seen his star" also, "and have come to adore the Lord" (*Alleluia*). This unique experience is an inspiration from God clearly and forcefully urging us to a life of generosity and intimately calling us to a life of union with Him.

Like the Magi, we must always follow our star with unfaltering faith, selfless generosity and unhesitating promptness. We should be led to this star "by light of faith . . . beyond the limits which this world imposes, to the life where the Spirit makes all life complete" (*Opening and Alternate Opening Prayer*).

If we allow our star to guide us, it will surely lead us to God. It will take us to Christ the One whom we all are seeking. Hence we invoke: "By the guidance of a star, lead us to your glory in heaven" (*Opening Prayer*).

The quest for our star is difficult. Just as the Magi did not give up their quest – as the star at several points in their travel disappeared from their sight – so, too, following their example, should we be brave and persevering.

Practical Applications. In our life as Christians, we follow Christ through his cross, and so trials come and we suffer periods of interior darkness. These trials of faith can be overcome only by the exercise of pure naked trust and humility. As St. Paul explains, we are "experiencing fresh hardships here now, but I have not lost confidence because I know who it is that I have put my trust in, and I have no doubt at all that he is able to take care of all that I have entrusted to him . . . (2 Tm 1:12).

In this spirit, let us join the company of the Three Kings in their journey to adore the new-born King and drink from the revelation thus experienced and manifested. We may not carry a load of gold, frankincense and myrrh to present to Christ because our coffers are poor, but from our hearts let us bring forth something fit to offer him – “the sacrifice and food they symbolize” (*Prayer over the Gift*).

And thus “having seen his star . . . and come with gifts to adore the Lord” (*Communion Antiphon*) we may be able always “to recognize Christ in the Eucharist and welcome him with love” (*Prayer after Communion*).

JOSE MA. TINOKO, O.P.

Baptism of Our Lord

January 12, 1992

(Is 42:1-4, 67; Ac 10:34-38; Lk 3:15-16, 21-22)

My faithful friends, the problems which beset us in an attempt to analyze the truth of the mystery of the Baptism of Christ beggar the imagination. For what we are presented with on this Sunday is no crass, chronological “fact” such as might be recorded on the page of a relatively trustworthy newspaper. No; what confronts us is an event of salvation history laden with supratemporal aspectuality and replete with transtemporal implications. Yes; here we have something of the “unlimitedness” of the Word of God, and it is by no means easy to deal with it.

Our first reading, taken as it is from what we for seven centuries have called the “forty-second chapter” of the great roll which Jews contemporary with Christ called “Isaiah,” is so beset with problematic possibilities that we are tempted to gaze on it in awe as a thing of poetic delight rather than take it seriously as applicable to a real Man and real men. Type is piled upon type. The Servant fulfills Moses, David, indeed the very national destiny of Israel. But who is he? Why does he suffer? Is the liberation he effects literally for the blind, the prisoners, the dungeon-chained captives of darkness? This curious teacher-king and legislator-prophet is someone to be found concretely nowhere on the pages

of the annals of Israel. Of course he cannot be found in time at all until he deigns to enter it. For the Servant is the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Gospel tells us briefly, almost glancingly, of the Baptism of Jesus. Luke rounds off the story of John by bluntly excluding him by the confession of his own lips from any messianic claim. But the one who is to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire enters the story as already baptized and at prayer. What, then, is important: the baptism or the prayer? The prayer seems to be. Why bother then with the baptism at all? Other Gospel have other answers but Luke has one from heaven. The Father answers the prayer of Jesus by calling him, in effect, the Suffering Servant.

Let us look at this more closely. First there is an exterior happening to which Luke gives an almost off-hand allusion: Christ has been baptized, evidently by John (though Luke does not explicitly say so). Jesus in his earthly human body is submerged in the waters of the River Jordan. He rises out of the water and turns to his Father in prayer. The Father replies calling him "Son, beloved one, the favor-reposed." This is an interior happening. There is brought to the consciousness of the human mind of Jesus just what his mission is, what "type" he is to fulfill, how the Deutero-Isaian prophecy is really about him. It is not about some mysterious character in the past. It is not about a restored Jewry. It is about him, Jesus of Nazareth. He learns it. He ponders it. He knows it in the depth of his being. But, as yet, no one else does. It is his messianic secret with which he must cope.

In the Old Testament prophecy, the First Servant Song is declared to the heavenly court. In Luke's Gospel (as such) it is declared to us. But in the mysterious event of Christ's Baptism the Holy Spirit who descends in dovelike vision leads our Lord into the desert, to hunger, to thirst, to deprivation of body and spirit and to diabolic temptation. What Good News! Jesus Christ, true God and true man, destined from all eternity to redeem us is called to suffer the ignominious consequences of his Incarnation. But in all his pain and troubles, sorrows and woes, the Holy Spirit by whose power he was conceived in Mary's spotless womb, never leaves him. And this acknowledged descent of the Holy Spirit, the effect of the answered yearning of the human consciousness of Jesus is

the Father's gift to him and to us. It is fire, it is life, it is strength beyond natural force or telling.

How can such an overwhelming, such an unthinkable gift come to us? Only through the baptized and prayerful Christ who wills for us (in our lesser and participative measure) what is his by right. But, like all God's gifts, this one has its surprising aspects.

To see these aspects of the unexpected we must turn to the second reading. Peter, in proclaiming the kerygma to Cornelius and his household of converts, gives the content of Christian mystery which requires internal assent. Without an act of faith the wettest baptism with the purest water in the world avails nothing. But with this assent all barriers of previous times and dispensations are thrown down. All men and women everywhere are called to the union with God, the fulfilled longing which sacramental (that is "mysterious") baptism brings.

So we have, you see, in Old Testament shadows obscure but telling, an Event of Jesus deep in meaning for him and for us, an application in faith to the same Church to which we here today belong. But none of this is easy to understand, much less imagine. We have deep within ourselves to admit the ways of God are strange. But the call of God is real. It is a call to immersion, not in Jordan water but in him. It is a call to prayer for light and the clarification which that light can alone give. Best of all it is a call which, when we respond in openness as Jesus did at the outset of his earthly ministry, is also an answer. The answer is a gift. The gift is Spirit and New Life.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

Feast of Santo Niño

January 19, 1992

(Is 9:1-6; Ep 1:3-6, 15-18; Lk 2:41-52)

Help a Child to Grow

Whenever I see a child I always think of growth. Childhood is a stage of life which involves growing. The following questions

are pointers for reflection as we celebrate the Feast of Santo Niño. Do we allow a child to grow in physical stature, by giving him proper nutritional care? To grow in mind, by helping him to see things and discern them? To grow in wisdom, by giving him proper discipline or training in life? To grow in the grace of God, by giving him Jesus Christ, the sacrament of Baptism, teaching prayer and about religious teachings and Christian atmosphere? Or do we hinder children's growth? Because of lack of time for them, negligence, lack of skill or knowledge of child care and child psychology, or lack of responsible parenthood attitudes, or lack of any concern at all? Do we serve as stumbling blocks for the growth in the Kingdom of God? Do we respect children's rights and give them the dignity which they deserve?

All children deserve to grow. All have an inherent right to grow. This should be guaranteed by the parents themselves. They must help their children to grow in body, in wisdom and in the grace of God. Parents are directly responsible for the growth of their children.

In the finding of Jesus in the temple, he was discovered among the Jewish teachers. Probably Jesus was known to them, because, ordinarily a child was not recognized by the Jewish mentality to be among them. Jesus was found to be listening and asking questions to these Jewish teachers. They must have had an open minded attitude towards Jesus. They allowed him to mingle among them. They must have allowed Jesus to learn things in life. He listened and asked them questions so that he could know more and understand better. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers. They must have helped Jesus to grow in wisdom and in knowledge by adopting an open-minded attitude.

The same thing with his parents. They adopted an open-minded attitude towards Jesus. In fact, his mother treasured all these things in her heart. Though his parents did not understand Jesus' answer after questioning him "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you," they did not scold Jesus. Rather, they allowed him to grow in obedience to them.

Adults as we are, older than these young people around us, we must respect them. First, we must respect ourselves. No to contraception, no to abortion, no to child prostitution, no to child abuse, and all such evils. Only then we can respect them if we know who we are.

Help children to grow in knowledge. Teach them well, show them the beauty of the world, not violence, quarrels or corruption. Support them in their discovery of life, by molding this discovery into real human Christian values. Help children grow in love by remembering the passages such as . . . *if the child lives . . . , he learns . . .* – “If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence. If a child lives with praise, he learns to appreciate. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith. If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself. If a child lives with acceptance and feeling, he learns to find love in the world.” Children learn what they live.

Help children to grow in a Christian atmosphere. Help them to grow according to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ.

GALLARDO A. BOMBASE, JR., O.P.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 26, 1992

(*Ne* 8:2-6, 8-10; *1 Co* 12:12-30; *Lk* 1:1-4, 14-21)

Dressed in green vestments I greet you as we begin five Sundays of Ordinary Time after the Advent – Christmas season has elapsed and before Lent takes us to Easter and Pentecost. This year our Gospel readings are from St. Luke whose writings (the Gospel and Acts) take up nearly a third of the New Testament. For Luke Jesus is always Lord, and God's compassion is limitless.

Nehemiah, probably writing about Deuteronomy as newly incorporated into the post exilic Torah, insists that the law of God

should give us joy rather than sorrow. What he means is that if God is so good as to reveal his will our correspondence with that will should give us inward gladness. Even if the Law of God is too hard for us to follow using our own efforts alone, God will fulfill in us his Law through our cooperation in grace.

Of course this grace is truly given only in, through and by Jesus Christ. We could know nothing of Christ if nothing were handed down from the time of his earthly life to ours. Luke wants to share with us who and what Christ was on earth for his eyewitness followers, who and what Christ is as Risen Lord in the ongoing life of the Church and who and what Christ is meant to be for each one of us. Luke presents Christ at the beginning of his ministry as a rather rustic Galilean village Rabbi, close to his own roots, preaching at the place where he grew up but expounding the Law and the Prophets in a new and different way. The novelty of Jesus is not something that consists of his explanations or exhibitions of texts as such. His novelty is rather in their *application* which he makes to himself and the world at hand.

The word of God for Jesus is not just some fine Hebrew calligraphy found on synagogue rolls. The word of God is an eternal pronouncement manifest in time through Jesus' own transparency to it. The word of God is heard, lived, fulfilled and joyfully proclaimed in a new manner.

St. Paul teaches us in the second reading that this new manner of presentation of eternal truth belongs to us as well as to the Risen Christ. For we form parts (separate and different as we may be) of his one body. The mystery of the Incarnation is extended into time by us. We are "hands" and "ears" and "eyes," members of one "function" or "dignity" or another. Christ needs and uses each of us. He needs and uses all of us together.

How wrong it is to be "down in the dumps" and discouraged about our sins or about the apparent evils of this world. We should rejoice that we know higher and better things. How futile it is to try to live without Christ at the center of our lives: teaching, expounding, fulfilling and proclaiming himself. And how disastrous it would be for us to "opt out" of our missionary reality because each of us is not like someone else. May God, rather, give

us the grace to be ourselves submitted to his will. May he make us true associates, friends and imitators of the Lord Jesus. Most of all may he give us his joy which is, indeed, our strength.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

Presentation of Jesus

February 2, 1992

(*MI 3:1-4; Heb 2:14-18; Lk 2:22-40*)

This year the Presentation falls on a Sunday and is exalted, therefore, to the rank of "Solemnity." It is an ancient feast, probably first celebrated at Jerusalem in the fourth century. It came to the West in the seventh and, with its candle-bearing procession, has retained in its rites and proper hymnody a large dosage of Eastern flavor.

Central to the readings is the Gospel set as if it were a precious stone in the varied mountings of Old and New Testament readings: the steel of Malachi and the gold-plating of Hebrews. The prophecy in Malachi ("my messenger") is neither very brilliant nor very moving. In fact it tends to be dull, common place, restricted in language and boringly didactic. The prophet writes in the cloudy autumn of the fifth century before Christ. His "love-hate relationship" with the second Temple, poorly rebuilt and routinely ministered in, restricts his limited themes yet more. Nonetheless, in our first reading at today's Mass he breaks forth with something of basic beauty: the perfecting presence of the Lord himself elevating the tawdry building and its routinary ministers ("the sons of Levi") to new and acceptable status.

It was not into such a shambles that Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus four centuries and a quarter later. The third, Herodian Temple was a thing of architectural and decorative splendor and its rites were conducted (due as much to Pharisaical nagging as to any possible gusto on part of the hireling priests) with liturgical grandeur and rubrical precision. It is a context Gentile Luke had never entered, but his sources and Jewish Christian contemporaries no doubt informed him well.

What a story of pathos amid glory! The Holy Family presents the offering of the poor in lieu of the lamb which would by the prescripts of Exodus 13 and Leviticus 12 have been the better symbol of a first born son's presentation and his mother's purification. In this poverty she who is all pure is ceremonially "purified" by the impure priests, and he who is present to the whole universe is brought to a geographic "presence" of God, pinpointed in a sacred place which is but the passing shadow of his human existence in a glorified body which will ever be the eternal, real "Temple" of God. The enigmatic figures of Simeon (with his words of strange and strained messianism) and the ancient charismatic Anna with her outburst of thanks and clarification, increase the pathos and set a seal of contrast between the helpless babe with a mission of suffering and the sumptuous surroundings of a religious act he undergoes so as to render it fulfilled.

When we turn to Hebrews we see a new brilliance, the gold plating over Malachi's steel which can truly enhance the dark but brilliant stone of the Presentation. Now Christ is no longer the presented child substituted for by two cheap birds. He is the compassionate and trustworthy high priest who in, by and through himself accomplishes true and thorough atonement. But he can only do this through total immersion, as it were, in the mystery of his own Incarnation. He who is the fulfilling antitype of every sacrifice of the Old Law uses his own life-giving death to counteract and overwhelm Satan's power over death, the cause of the fear filled slavery of unredeemed humanity. And our Lord can triumph as he does because, knowing temptation, he has won by his victory the power of checking temptation for and in us.

Thus, in the light of his glory, this day becomes a true "Festival of Light." Christ, the Light of the World, is presented, not in the ruins of an earthly Jerusalem, but to all creation by his Mother, "*la candelaria*" and we come singing, our own candles in hand, to proclaim the power of his humility, of his obscure infancy, childhood and youth, of his suffering and death, all seen as a veritable divine invasion of our sinsick world. And his light penetrates all our gloom. the well-set gem of his mysteries flickers, glows and lifts our hearts to wonder. The humility of a person who is God raises us to a glory unthinkable for mere mortal men and women. The grace of what we celebrate transforms us.

Suddenly, we identify ourselves with Mary and with Jesus, too. The enigmatic prophecy of Simeon starts to make sense. Anna's praises become our own. And the Temple is not a place but a Person. The Purification-Presentation is not a long-ago happening in a far-off place but an ongoing mystery in the working out of our salvation. Thus, our oblation becomes a "Candle-mass" and in the light of Christ we see a Light no one can darken.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 9, 1992

(Is 6:1-8; 1 Co 15:1-13; Lk 5:1-11)

Not all realities of life can be seen through the naked eye. There are things that go beyond our own feelings and imaginations.

This was the experience of Peter and the other disciples of Christ. They have toiled the whole night trying to catch fish to no avail. They were expert fishermen and experience told them that their efforts were wasted. That is why they were reluctant to obey Christ in casting their nets again. They were like people who have done their best and can do no more. They are like those who struggle to stand up despite the storms of life and yet continue to fall and have given up hope of struggle. They are like Christians nowadays who might want a life patterned after Christ yet after so many temptations in this modern world will exclaim: "It's an impossible dream."

Yet, Peter's faith in God prevailed. He lowered his net. The fish were a-plenty.

This is what faith does to us. It is an acceptance of a reality that we cannot humanly perceive, because it lies beyond us, because we trust in God's Word and promise. Perhaps, it is not important to think that Jesus created a shoal of fish for that particular occasion. In the sea of Galilee there were phenomenal shoals which covered the sea as if it was solid for as much as an

acre. Perhaps, Jesus' keen eye saw such a shoal and what was in fact the result of his keen sight made what he saw look like a miracle to his followers. We need the eye that really sees. The eyes of FAITH.

Yet, to have faith in God we must have eyes that are focused on him rather than on ourselves. To focus on ourselves would be to limit our own vision of life, to be discouraged by our own weaknesses and to end all struggles when human strength would fail us. We also have the tendency to be proud of our achievements and to glory in our successes no matter how inadequate they may be. The more we remain content in our own selves the less we need God.

That is why Peter acknowledges his own sinfulness: that of relying on his own experience as a fisherman. Paul considered himself the least of the Apostles, unworthy to be called by that title (*I Co 15:10*).

The Eucharistic celebration is a reality that goes beyond mere attendance and participation. Christ becomes tangible to us on the level of faith. Though, perhaps, we are Peters, doubting Thomases and Nathaniels witnessing this Mystery, we should hear the Lord once he says: "Let down your nets for a catch" (*Lk 5:4*). "Have faith. I am here."

RODEL E. ALIGAN, O.P.

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 16, 1992

(*Jr 17:5-8; 1 Co 15:12, 16-20; Lk 6:17, 20-26*)

This Sixth Sunday of the Year in the third cycle is one on which the Church stresses through the readings the Old Testament concept of total reliance and dependence upon God which in Christ becomes a happy trust and joyful hope. These virtues and concepts are hard for men and women, excluding the richest and the poorest, to accept in our contemporary world. The blasphemous adage: "God helps those who help themselves" which canonizes any dishonest entrepreneur who appears on the scene and

foolhardy exaltation of "leadership" as a quality (one which can well bolster the egos of dictators, however unscrupulous they may be) wreck havoc on simple human persons whom God has called to strive not for success but for real perfection.

Jeremiah way back in the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ was aware of problems like ours. In his "sapiential sayings" dating from his ministry under King Jehoiakim (609-598) the prophet curses and blesses in due proportion those who trust in men and things temporal and those who trust in Yahweh, the God of hope. The first are slaves of death. The second are children of life. Death is withering. Life is ever green and fruitful. The wise man is alive to the truth that in God alone is real hope. In him alone should we trust. The first psalm and many other Old Testament passages dealing with wisdom echo Jeremiah.

Our Lord Jesus Christ goes much further in the "beatitudes" and "woes" which Luke records. For true happiness does not consist in getting what we want but in poverty, hunger, tears and persecution borne for the love of God and his lasting rewards. And cursed are the rich, the satiated and the hilarious of whom this world speaks well. Jesus sends them to blazes with the false prophets they resemble.

We could read Jeremiah and Luke with only a sense of light reliance or one of a far off "pie in the sky when we die bye and bye" sort of hope. But the second reading intervenes. Reliance and hope, St. Paul is saying in effect, are actual concerns, matters of life and death, here and now for us and all Christians. Either Christ has risen, or he has not. If he has, all is well and good for believers. If he has not, Christianity is a cruel waste of time. And there is no "middle position"!

Those of us who gather here Sunday after Sunday (and day by day) are engaged in offering Christ to the Father in the power of the spirit. That is what we say and attempt to do. An "objective observer" with a big car in his garage, loads of food on his table and a giggle in his throat might evaluate things otherwise. He would say we dress up and gawk while old words are repeated over relatively worthless things. Then we delude ourselves into the pretense of mystery and mutter "Body of Christ" and other (for him) equally inane remarks. Of course he has no hope and needs

none. He trusts in himself and others who are as evil or worse than he is. His life is pleasure and his goal is Hell. Meanwhile he "enjoys" himself 'till his heart, liver, kidneys or mind give out.

How different is our vocation! Gathered round the table of the Lord we know we have a lot to put up with, that worldliness and indifference invade our homes (yes, even our conventos) every time we pick up the newspaper or turn on the television. But we have learned here at God's altar many secrets about life and death. We know how eternity transcends time and how resurrection (and our faith therein) can overcome the grave. Let us, therefore, be strong and take courage. Let us derive from the Lord Jesus the green tree sap of life. Let our happiness, based on his victory, shine through every instant of seeming gloom. And let us be known as "glory people," so touched by God that we rely on no one else, so blessed by him that our strength which finds its sole source in his love, endures forever.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 23, 1992

(1 S 26:2, 7-9, 12-13; 1 Co 15:45-49; Lk 6:27-38)

Today, friends and brethren, the Lord calls us through his Church to consider how "otherworldly" we ought to be when faced with the problem of those who hate us. Saul hated David. Satan hated Adam. A great number of Jews of his time hated the Lord Jesus. We accept this negativity not as a reality for it is in truth what Shakespeare calls "a thing of naught" but as a necessary evil. And there is plenty of it in our lives if by his grace we are truly serving the Lord.

In the first reading we see what David could have done with Saul. To have killed that evil king would have seemed "right" to the social climbers who were hanging on David's sleeves. It would have been disastrous to real rule, however. David's reign was blessed by God because David respected not the crazy egoism of Saul (who was in dire need of psychiatric care) but the anointing

of the Lord. Like St. Augustine David distinguished between sin (in this case evil as mental disease) and sinner, a man made in God's image and likeness anointed by God for a task however ill performed. So he let Saul escape, knowing the Lord would give him, David, a greater day because of his magnanimity. For nothing petty can enter into the service of God.

In the Gospel our Lord legislates positively in favor of our enemies and persecutors. Years ago we used to sing a rather trite little ditty that said (among other sugary things) "And they'll know we are Christians by our love." True enough, if by love we mean equanimity in the face of hostility, calm when violence confronts us and indifference to surface sentiments. Jesus warns us that "love" for those who "love" us, doing good for the thankful, lending money to those who repay us, all these things have no merit. Sinners do as much. Our generosity must reach a higher level and extend to villains and blackguards. Otherwise who can call us Godlike?

Of course we shall never attain the compassion, the generosity, the sheer selflessness of Christian love if we follow the ways of fallen nature. In that case we shall be like Adam "of the earth, earthly." The man we must follow is the heaven sent and heaven attaining Christ. He died for his enemies. In him we can spare ours a few coins, a smile, good will and real Christian approval in all things that accord with God's will. Then we shall be ambassadors of Christ. Then we shall be the Father's children. Then we shall be the Spirit's temples and the in the midst of sin and death the shining lights of God's glory which lasts forever.

ROMAN CARTER, O.P.

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THEME FOR 1992 WORLD DAY OF PEACE ANNOUNCED* •

In December 1967 Pope Paul VI addressed all true friends of peace, inviting them to join each year in reflecting on the "fundamental good of peace."

Twenty-five years later, His Holiness John Paul II wants to confirm the timeliness of this annual reflection, choosing as the theme of his Message for the World Day of Peace for 1992 the following: **"BELIEVERS UNITED IN BUILDING PEACE."**

The bond between religion and peace concerns both civil and political organization of society. The topic is therefore of universal interest. In many parts of the world religious faith has normally contributed to the peaceful development of society; in others, however, it is at the center of tensions or even of conflicts between peoples or is manipulated and placed at the service of limited political purposes. If all religions believe in peace and profess love for their neighbor, how is it possible that it is so often used to divide peoples and place them in opposition to one another, to harm the very structure of the life of society and to upset relations between States? What is religion's real contribution to peace and what are its basic conditions? How can religion help us achieve the "peace" objective most effectively?

Pope John Paul II invites those who are seeking peace with sincere hearts to reflect with him on this important topic. He

**L'Osservatore Romano*, 7 October 1991.

especially invites Christians to remember that true peace is always a gift of God which must be asked for in prayer and seconded with concrete activity on behalf of peace. As Pope Paul VI said in his first Message for the World Day of Peace in 1968, it is "in the genius of the Christian religion because for the Christian to proclaim peace is to announce Jesus Christ: 'He is our peace' (*Ep* 2:14) and his is 'the Gospel of peace' (*Ep* 6:15)."

At the same time the Pope exhorts other believers to call on the forces of peace which are found in the healthiest roots of their religions, putting them at the service of the true good of the international community and not of division and war. Lastly, he encourages Christians and all believers to cooperate in creating the spiritual, ethical and social conditions necessary for peace.

An essential contribution on behalf of peace which only believers can offer is prayer for peace. As Pope John Paul II said in addressing representatives of the world's religions gathered in Assisi for the World Day of Prayer for Peace, such prayer attests to the fact that "in the great battle for peace, humanity, in its very diversity, must draw from its deepest and most vivifying sources where its conscience is formed and upon which is founded the moral action of all people" [27 October 1986, n. 2: *Insegnamenti*, IX, 2 (1986), p. 1250]. Those who pray for peace in the depths of their heart cannot fail to be involved so that peace may be brought about among all peoples.

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