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Paschal Healing

Roman Carter, O.P.

Although the "heavy" celebrations of Holy Week and Easter as central events of the Paschal Mystery are long-since elapsed dates on our calendars, something of their resonance and effects are meant to sound and rise forth in our hearts and our lives all year long. For always and everywhere we are an "Easter People" whose joyful hope propels us constantly and consistently towards God. Every Mass and every Sunday help us to "keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us and is risen from the dead. . ." for the truth of this Easter song suits itself to incessant proclamation.

To proclaim, of course, is one thing. To live what is proclaimed can be (and all too often sadly is) quite another. We can easily forget that the Paschal Mystery is healing mystery. We can reduce it to a mere sign of hope for some future "rounding off" (however cosmic) and all too individualistic a reward. But a mystery which heals is not like that. Its graces and its saving work are day-to-day happenings in the spirit. Healing is ever necessary and must be ever renewed, for this mortal life is one of bruises, wounds and pains leading, if we are not careful, to an inevitable end, grim as it is incurable. Yet the Death and Resurrection of Christ are meant as a sanatio for our demise and pignus or pledge of our rising. This depth of meaning can never come across as real unless and until Jesus is himself our physician and healer.

All Christian healing derives from and is centered in the Second Divine Person. Our Risen Lord by his Father's infinitely good will and his Spirit's powerful cooperation is ever at work to

heal in the lives of his faithful. But this healing is not an as it were 'automatic' concomitant of his Risen Presence among us. It must be both beseeched and appropriated. Our wholeness in Christ, far from being some sort of spiritual "added extra" must needs be the aim and the result of our prayers. If we do not seek, we shall not find. If we do not ask, we shall not have. Unless we knock, the door remains closed. And Jesus the Risen Lord desires our seeking, asking and knocking as signs of our ongoing trust in him.

Appropriation of paschal healing is a somewhat trickier and less easily decipherable matter. Here we must acknowledge that Christ has sent the Holy Spirit for particular and discernible gifts which, though they are for the use and well being of all his Body on earth (the whole Church), are given concretely and explicitly to certain definite persons. Not everyone has the gift of healing, though all can pray for it and rightly want it. What is often misunderstood (especially by priests) is that this gift has often been given us long since but merely waits a "stirring up," usually brought on by compassion for the dire needs of others, to be exercised. I know many priests who celebrate Healing Masses and I do, too. What we are attempting in these celebrations is but the rightful appropriation of true and consequential effects of Calvary and the Empty Tomb.

However, we can never allow ourselves to neglect the underlying veracity of the statement that we are mere instruments (however alive and lively) in the hands of the Risen Savior. It is his touch (not ours) which heals. We act in a truly priestly manner when we call upon him. He acts gloriously and powerfully when he answers our prayers. Both the driving initiative and the salvific purpose are his and although the process of healing touches upon and even embeds itself in earthly realities, the power through which it is carried out is divine.

The Catholic Church is a hospital. It caters not only to sinners in their spiritual malaise but to all who are ill within or without, in mind or body. Not only have we the Power of Keys with which to forgive and reconcile those who need such ministry and seek it in contrition, we have the Power to Heal all who are confused, distressed, hurting and laid low. If true spiritual recuperation is the Church's loftiest task and commission, mental

readjustment and physical relief are by no means outside her scope. There was a time when we left such things to the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and numberless (but hardly nameless) angels and saints. There is much to be said for this. After all, Christ's Mother is salus infirmorum, the Health of the Sick. St. Raphael is the angel of healing not only for Tobias and his family but for us as well. St. Martin de Porres is as thaumaturgic in heaven as he ever was on earth. But we are the ones who must ask their prayers.

Pascal healing can take place and no doubt will when we learn to accept the fullest implications of the Incarnation. Christ has assumed our humanity not just to "sanate" it in his own Person but to make us whole by his Presence and Healing Touch. The wonders he works day-by-day in our midst may seem small and of little worth in the eyes of this passing world. But we know that by them we are lifted up and in their context we are changed. We never ascribe this exaltation or transformation to our own ingenuity. Rather "to God be the glory" is our cry. Jesus Christ as Risen Lord has touched us in the Power of the Spirit not only in Paschaltide but whenever we have called on him. May his paschal healing, then, be at work in us all our days and find complete fruition in the Father's House forever!

Redemptoris Missio

John Paul II

Chapter V. The Paths of Mission

41. "Missionary activity is nothing other and nothing less than the manifestation or epiphany of God's plan and its fulfilment in the world and in history; in this history God, by means of missions, clearly accomplishes the history of salvation."¹ What paths does the Church follow in order to achieve this goal?

Mission is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways. Among these ways, some have particular importance in the present situation of the Church and the world.

The First Form of Evangelization Is Witness

42. People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers,² in experience than in teaching, and in life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the "witness" *par excellence* (Rv 1:5; 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ (cf. Jn 15:26-27).

¹SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 9; cf. Chapter II, 10-18.

²Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41: *loc. cit.*, 31f.

The first form of witness is *the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community*, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who, despite all his or her human limitations and defects, lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of God and of transcendent realities. But everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness,³ in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary.

The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity towards the poor, the weak and those who suffer. The complete generosity underlying this attitude and these actions stands in marked contrast to human selfishness. It raises precise questions which lead to God and to the Gospel. A commitment to peace, justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel when it is a sign of concern for persons and is directed towards integral human development.⁴

43. Christians and Christian communities are very much a part of the life of their respective nations and can be a sign of the Gospel in their fidelity to their native land, people and national culture, while always preserving the freedom brought by Christ. Christianity is open to universal brotherhood, for all men and women are sons and daughters of the same Father and brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Church is called to bear witness to Christ by taking courageous and prophetic stands in the face of the corruption of political or economic power; by not seeking her own glory and material wealth; by using her resources to serve the poorest of the poor and by imitating Christ's own simplicity of life. The Church and her missionaries must also bear the witness of humility, above all with regard to themselves – a humility which allows them to make a personal and communal examination of conscience in order to correct in their behavior whatever is contrary to the Gospel and disfigures the face of Christ.

³Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 28 35, 38; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the World of Today *Gaudium et Spes*, 43; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 11-12.

⁴Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 21, 42: AAS 59 (1967), 267f, 278.

The Initial Proclamation of Christ the Savior

44. Proclamation is the permanent priority of mission. The Church cannot elude Christ's explicit mandate, nor deprive men and women of the "Good News" about their being loved and saved by God. "Evangelization will always contain—as the foundation, centre and at the same time the summit of its dynamism—a clear proclamation that, in Jesus Christ. . . salvation is offered to all men, as a gift of God's grace and mercy."⁶ All forms of missionary activity are directed to this proclamation, which reveals and gives access to the mystery hidden for ages and made known in Christ (cf. *Ep* 3:3-9; *Col* 1:25-29), the mystery which lies at the heart of the Church's mission and life, as the hinge on which all evangelization turns.

In the complex reality of mission, initial proclamation has a central and irreplaceable role, since it introduces man "into the mystery of the love of God, who invites him to enter into a personal relationship with himself in Christ"⁶ and opens the way to conversion. Faith is born of preaching, and every ecclesial community draws its origin and life from the personal response of each believer to that preaching.⁷ Just as the whole economy of salvation has its centre in Christ, so too, all missionary activity is directed to the proclamation of his mystery.

The subject of proclamation is Christ who was crucified, died and is risen: through him is accomplished our full and authentic liberation from evil, sin and death; through him God bestows "new life" that is divine and eternal. This is the "Good News" which changes man and his history, and which all peoples have a right to hear. This proclamation is to be made within the context of the lives of the individuals and peoples who receive it. It is to be made with an attitude of love and esteem towards those who hear it, in language which is practical and adapted to the situation. In this proclamation the Spirit is at work and establishes a communion between the

⁶PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 27: *loc. cit.*, 23.

⁶SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 13.

⁷Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15: *loc. cit.*, 13-15; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 13-14.

missionary and his hearers, a communion which is possible inasmuch as both enter into communion with God the Father through Christ.⁸

45. Proclamation, because it is made in union with the entire ecclesial community, is never a merely personal act. The missionary is present and carries out his work by virtue of mandate he has received; even if he finds himself alone, he remains joined by invisible but profound bonds to the evangelizing activity of the whole Church.⁹ Sooner or later, his hearers come to recognize in him the community which sent him and which supports him.

Proclamation is inspired by faith, which gives rise to enthusiasm and fervour in the missionary. As already mentioned, the Acts of the Apostles uses the word *parrhesia* to describe this attitude, a word which means to speak frankly and with courage. This term is found also in Saint Paul: "We had courage in our God to declare to you the Gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains; that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ep 6:18-20).

In proclaiming Christ to non-Christians, the missionary is convinced that, through the working of the Spirit, there already exist in individuals and peoples an expectation, even if an unconscious one, of knowing the truth about God, about man, and about how we are to be set free from sin and death. The missionary's enthusiasm in proclaiming Christ comes from the conviction that he is responding to that expectation, and so he does not become discouraged or cease his witness even when he is called to manifest his faith in an environment that is hostile or indifferent. He knows that the Spirit of the Father is speaking through him (cf. Mt 10:17-20; Lk 12:11-12) and he can say with the Apostles: "We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit" (Ac 5:32). He knows that he is not proclaiming a human truth, but the "word of God," which has an intrinsic and mysterious power of its own (cf. Ro 1:16).

The supreme test is the giving of one's life, to the point of accepting death in order to bear witness to one's faith in Jesus Christ. Throughout Christian history, martyrs, that is "witnesses,"

⁸Cf. Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 42, 64: loc. cit., 857-859, 892-894.

⁹Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 60: loc. cit., 50f.

have always been numerous and indispensable to the spread of the Gospel. In our own age, there are many: Bishops, priests, men and women Religious, lay people – often unknown heroes who give their lives to bear witness to the faith. They are *par excellence* the heralds and witnesses of the faith.

Conversion and Baptism

46. The proclamation of the word of God has *Christian conversion* as its aim: a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel through faith. Conversion is a gift of God, a work of the Blessed Trinity. It is the Spirit who opens people's hearts so that they can believe in Christ and "confess him" (cf. *1 Co* 12:3); of those who draw near to him through faith Jesus says: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (*Jn* 6:44).

From the outset, conversion is expressed in faith which is total and radical, and which neither limits nor hinders God's gift. At the same time, it gives rise to a dynamic and lifelong process which demands a continual turning away from "life according to the flesh" to "life according to the Spirit" (cf. *Ro* 8:3-13). Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple.

The Church calls all people to this conversion, following the example of John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Christ by "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (*Mk* 1:4), as well as the example of Christ himself, who "after John was arrested, . . . came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of God and saying: "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel" (*Mk* 1:14-15).

Nowadays the call to conversion which missionaries address to non-Christians is put into question or passed over in silence. It is seen as an act of "proselytizing"; it is claimed that it is enough to build communities capable of working for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. What is overlooked is that every person has the right to hear the "Good News" of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ, so that each one can live out in its fullness his or her proper calling. This lofty reality is expressed in the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God," and in the

unconscious but ardent desire of the woman: "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst" (*Jn* 4:10,15).

47. The Apostles, prompted by the Spirit, invited all to change their lives, to be converted and to be baptized. Immediately after the event of Pentecost, Peter spoke convincingly to the crowd: "When they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, '*Repent* and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (*Ac* 2:37-38). That very day some three thousand persons were baptized. And again, after the healing of the lame man, Peter spoke to the crowd and repeated: "*Repent*, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out!" (*Ac* 3:19).

Conversion to Christ is joined to baptism not only because of the Church's practice, but also by the will of Christ himself, who sent the Apostles to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them (cf. *Mt* 28:19). Conversion is also joined to Baptism because of the intrinsic need to receive the fulness of new life in Christ. As Jesus says to Nicodemus: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God" (*Jn* 3:5). In Baptism, in fact, we are born anew to the life of God's children, united to Jesus Christ and anointed in the Holy Spirit. Baptism is not simply a seal of conversion, a kind of external sign indicating conversion and attesting to it. Rather, it is the Sacrament which signifies and effects rebirth from the Spirit, establishes real and unbreakable bonds with the Blessed Trinity, and makes us member of the Body of Christ, which is the Church.

All this needs to be said, since not a few people, precisely in those areas involved in the mission *ad gentes*, tend to separate conversion to Christ from Baptism, regarding Baptism as unnecessary. It is true that in some places sociological considerations associated with Baptism obscure its genuine meaning as an act of faith. This is due to a variety of historical and cultural factors which must be removed where they still exist, so that the Sacrament of spiritual rebirth can be seen for what it truly is. Local ecclesial communities must devote themselves to this task. It is also true that many profess an interior commitment to Christ and his message yet do not wish to be committed sacramentally, since, owing to prejudice or because of the failings of Christians,

they find it difficult to grasp the true nature of the Church as a mystery of faith and love.¹⁰ I wish to encourage such people to be fully open to Christ, and to remind them that, if they feel drawn to Christ, it was he himself who desired that the Church should be the "place" where they would in fact find him. At the same time, I invite the Christian faithful, both individually and as communities, to bear authentic witness to Christ through the new life they have received.

Certainly, every convert is a gift to the Church and represents a serious responsibility for her, not only because converts have to be prepared for baptism through the catechumenate and then be guided by religious instruction, but also because—especially in the case of adults—such converts bring with them a kind of new energy, an enthusiasm for the faith, and a desire to see the Gospel lived out in the Church. They would be greatly disappointed if, having entered the ecclesial community, they were to find a life lacking fervour and without signs of renewal! We cannot preach conversion unless we ourselves are converted anew every day.

Forming Local Churches

48. Conversion and Baptism give entry into a Church already in existence or require the establishment of new communities which confess Jesus as Savior and Lord. This is part of God's plan, for it pleases him "to call human beings to share in his own life not merely as individuals, without any unifying bond between them, but rather to make them into a people in which his children, who had been widely scattered, might be gathered together in unity."¹¹

The mission *ad gentes* has this objective: to found Christian communities and develop Churches to their full maturity. This is a central and determining goal of missionary activity, so much so that the mission is not completed until it succeeds in building a new particular Church which functions normally in its local setting. The

¹⁰Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 6-9.

¹¹SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 2; cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 9.

Decree *Ad Gentes* deals with this subject at length,¹² and since the Council, a line of theological reflection has developed which emphasizes that the whole mystery of the Church is contained in each particular Church, provided it does not isolate itself but remains in communion with the universal Church and becomes missionary in its own turn. Here we are speaking of a great and lengthy process, in which it is hard to identify the precise stage at which missionary activity properly so-called comes to an end and is replaced by pastoral activity. Even so, certain points must remain clear.

49. It is necessary first and foremost to strive to establish Christian communities which are "a sign of the presence of God in the world"¹³ and which grow until they become Churches. Notwithstanding the high number of dioceses, there are still very large areas where there are no local Churches or where their number is insufficient in relation to the vastness of the territory and the density of the population. There is still much to be done in implanting and developing the Church. This phase of ecclesial history, called the *plantatio Ecclesiae*, has not reached its end; indeed, for much of the human race it has yet to begin.

Responsibility for this task belongs to the universal Church and to the particular Churches, to the whole people of God and to all its missionary forces. Every Church, even one made up of recent converts, is missionary by its very nature, and is both evangelized and evangelizing. Faith must always be presented as a gift of God to be lived out in community (families, parishes, associations), and to be extended to others through witness in word and deed. The evangelizing activity of the Christian community, first in its own locality, and then elsewhere as part of the Church's universal mission, is the clearest sign of a mature faith. A radical conversion in thinking is required in order to become missionary, and this holds true both for individuals and entire communities. The Lord is always calling us to come out of ourselves and to share with others the goods we possess, starting with the most precious gift of all—our faith. The effectiveness of the Church's organizations, movements, parishes

¹²Cf. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, Chapter III, 19-22.

¹³*Ibid.*, 15.

and apostolic works must be measured in the light of this missionary imperative. Only by becoming missionary will the Christian community be able to overcome its internal divisions and tensions, and rediscover its unity and its strength of faith.

Missionary personnel coming from other Churches and countries must work in communion with their local counterparts for the development of the Christian community. In particular, it falls to missionary personnel – in accordance with the directives of the Bishops and in cooperation with those responsible at the local level – to foster the spread of the faith and the expansion of the Church in non-Christian environments and among non-Christian groups, and to encourage a missionary sense within the particular Churches, so that pastoral concern will always be combined with concern for the mission *ad gentes*. In this way, every Church will make its own the solicitude of Christ the Good Shepherd, who fully devotes himself to his flock, but at the same time is mindful of the “other sheep, that are not of this fold” (*Jn* 10:16).

50. This solicitude will serve as a motivation and stimulus for a renewed commitment to ecumenism. The relationship between *ecumenical activity* and *missionary activity* makes it necessary to consider two closely associated factors. On the one hand, we must recognize that “the division among Christians damages the holy work of preaching the Gospel to every creature and is barrier for many in their approach to the faith.”¹⁴ The fact that the Good News of reconciliation is preached by Christians who are divided among themselves weakens their witness. It is thus urgent to work for the unity of Christians, so that missionary activity can be more effective. At the same time we must not forget that efforts towards unity are themselves a sign of the work of reconciliation which God is bringing about in our midst.

On the other hand, it is true that some kind of communion, though imperfect, exists among all those who have received Baptism in Christ. On this basis the Council established the principle that “while all appearance of indifferentism and confusion is ruled out, as well as any appearance of unhealthy rivalry, Catholics should collaborate in a spirit of fellowship with their separated brothers and

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 6.

sisters in accordance with the norms of the Decree on Ecumenism: by a common profession of faith in God and in Jesus Christ before the nations – to the extent that this is possible – and by their cooperation in social and technical as well as in cultural and religious matters.”¹⁵

Ecumenical activity and harmonious witness to Jesus Christ by Christians who belong to different Churches and Ecclesial Communities has already borne abundant fruit. But it is ever more urgent that they work and bear witness at this time when Christian and para-Christian sects are sowing confusion by their activity. The expansion of these sects represents a threat for the Catholic Church and for all the Ecclesial Communities with which she is engaged in dialogue. Wherever possible, and in the light of local circumstances, the response of Christians can itself be an ecumenical one.

*Ecclesial Basic Communities”
as a Force for Evangelization*

51. A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young Churches – one sometimes fostered by the Bishops and their Conference as a pastoral priority – is that of “ecclesial basic communities” (also known by other names) which are proving to be good centres for Christian formation and missionary outreach. These are groups of Christians who, at the level of the family or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion on human and ecclesial problems with a view to common commitment. These communities are a sign of vitality, within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a “civilization of love.”

These communities decentralize and organize the parish community, to which they always remain united. They take root in less privileged and rural areas, and become a leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor and neglected, and of commitment to the transformation of society. Within them, the individual Christian experiences community and therefore senses that he or she is playing an active role and is encouraged to share in the common task. Thus, these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 15; cf. Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3.

proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries. At the same time, by being imbued with Christ's love, they also show how divisions, tribalism and racism can overcome.

Every community, if it is to be Christian, must be founded on Christ and live in him, as it listens to the word of God, focuses its prayer on the Eucharist, lives in a communion marked by oneness of heart and soul, and shares according to the needs of its members (cf. Ac 2:42-47). As Pope Paul VI recalled, every community must live in union with the particular and the universal Church, in heartfelt communion with the Church's Pastors and the Magisterium, with a commitment to missionary outreach and without yielding to isolationism or ideological exploitation.¹⁶ And the Synod of Bishops stated: "Because the Church is communion, the new 'basic communities,' if they truly live in unity with the Church, are a true expression of communion and a means for the construction of a more profound communion. They are thus cause for great hope for the life of the Church."¹⁷

*Incarnating the Gospel
in Peoples' Cultures*

52. As she carries out missionary activity among the nations, the Church encounters different cultures and becomes involved in the process of inculturation. The need for such involvement has marked the Church's pilgrimage throughout her history, but today it is particularly urgent.

The process of the Church's insertion into peoples' cultures is a lengthy one. It is not a matter of purely external adaption, for inculturation "means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures."¹⁸ The process is thus a profound and all-embracing one, which involves the Christian message and also the Church's reflection and practice. But at the same time it is a difficult process, for it must in no way compromise the distinctiveness and integrity of the Christian faith.

¹⁶Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58: *loc. cit.*, 46-49.

¹⁷Extraordinary Assembly of 1985, *Final Report*, II, C, 6.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, II, D, 4.

Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community.¹⁹ She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within.²⁰ Through inculturation the Church for her part, becomes a more effective instrument of mission.

Thanks to this action within the local Churches, the universal Church herself is enriched with forms of expression and values in the various sectors of Christian life, such as evangelization, worship, theology and charitable works. She comes to know and to express better the mystery of Christ, all the while being motivated to continual renewal. During my Pastoral Visits to the young Churches I have repeatedly dealt with those themes, which are present in the Council and the subsequent Magisterium.²¹

Inculturation is a slow journey, which accompanies the whole of missionary life. It involves those working in the Church's mission *ad gentes*, the Christian communities as they develop, and the Bishops, who have the task of providing discernment and encouragement for its implementation.²²

53. Missionaries, who come from other Churches and countries, must immerse themselves in the cultural milieu of those to whom they are sent, moving beyond their own cultural limitations. Hence they must learn the language of the place in which they work, become familiar with the most important expressions of the local culture, and discover its values through direct experience. Only if they have this kind of awareness will they be able to bring to the

¹⁹Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (16 October 1979), 53: AAS 71 (1979), 1320; Encyclical Epistle *Slavorum Apostoli* (2 June 1985), 21: AAS 77 (1985), 802f.

²⁰Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20: *loc. cit.*, 18f.

²¹Address to the Bishops of Zaire, Kinshasa, 3 May 1980, 4-6: AAS 72 (1980), 432-435; Address to the Bishops of Kenya, Nairobi, 7 May 1980, 6: AAS 72 (1980), 497; Address to the Bishops of India, Delhi, 1 February 1986, 5: AAS 78 (1986), 748f; Homily at Cartagena, 6 July 1986, 7-8: AAS 79 (1987), 105f; cf. also Encyclical Epistle *Slavorum Apostoli*, 21-22; *loc. cit.*, 802-804.

²²Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 22.

people the knowledge of the hidden mystery (cf. *Ro* 16:25-27; *Ep* 3:3) in a credible and fruitful way. It is not of course a matter of missionaries renouncing their own cultural identity, but of understanding, appreciating, fostering and evangelizing the culture of the environment in which they are working, and therefore of equipping themselves to communicate effectively with it, adopting a manner of living which is a sign of Gospel witness and of solidarity with the people.

Developing ecclesial communities, inspired by the Gospel, will gradually be able to express their Christian experience in original ways and forms that are consonant with their own cultural traditions, provided that those traditions are in harmony with the objective requirements of the faith itself. To this end, especially in the more delicate areas of inculturation, particular Churches of the same region should work in communion with each other²³ and with the whole Church, convinced that only through attention both to the universal Church and to the particular Churches will they be capable of translating the treasure of faith into a legitimate variety of expressions.²⁴ Groups which have been evangelized will thus provide the elements for a "translation" of the Gospel message,²⁵ keeping in mind the positive elements acquired down the centuries from Christianity's contact with different cultures and not forgetting the dangers of alterations which have sometimes occurred.²⁶

54. In this regard, certain guidelines remain basic. Properly applied inculturation must be guided by two principles: "compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church."²⁷ Bishops, as guardians of the "deposit of faith," will take care to ensure fidelity and in particular, to provide discernment,²⁸ for which a deeply

²³Cf. *ibid.*

²⁴Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 64: *loc. cit.*, 55.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 63: *loc. cit.*, 53: Particular Churches "have the task of assimilating the essence of the Gospel message and of transposing it, without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, into the language that these people understand, then of proclaiming it in this language . . . And the word 'language' should be understood here less in the semantic or literary sense than in the sense which one may call anthropological or cultural."

²⁶Cf. Address at the General Audience of 13 April 1988: *Insegnamenti* XI/1 (1988), 877-881.

²⁷Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 10: AAS 74 (1982), 91, which speaks of inculturation "in the context of marriage and the family."

²⁸Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 63-65; *loc. cit.*, 53-56.

balanced approach is required. In fact there is a risk of passing uncritically from a form of alienation from culture to an overestimation of culture. Since culture is a human creation and is therefore marked by sin, it too needs to be "healed, ennobled and perfected."²⁹

This kind of process needs to take place gradually, in such a way that it really is an expression of the community's Christian experience. As Pope Paul VI said in Kampala: "it will require an incubation of the Christian 'mystery' in the genius of your people in order that its native voice, more clearly and frankly, may then be raised harmoniously in the chorus of other voices in the universal Church."³⁰ In effect, inculturation must involve the whole people of God, and not just a few experts, since the people reflect the authentic "*sensus fidei*" which must never be lost sight of. Inculturation needs to be guided and encouraged, but not forced, lest it give rise to negative reactions among Christians. It must be an expression of the community's life, one which must mature within the community itself, and not be exclusively the result of erudite research. The safeguarding of traditional values is the work of a mature faith.

*Dialogue with our Brothers and
Sisters of other Religions*

55. Inter-religious dialogue is a part of the Church's evangelizing mission. Understood as a method and means of mutual knowledge and enrichment, dialogue is not in opposition to the mission *ad gentes*; indeed, it has special links with that mission and is one of its expressions. This mission, in fact, is addressed to those who do not know Christ and his Gospel, and who belong for the most part to other religions. In Christ, God calls all peoples to himself and he wishes to share with them the fulness of his revelation and love. He does not fail to make himself present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain "gaps, insufficiencies and errors."³¹ All of this has been given

²⁹SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 17.

³⁰Address to those participating in the Symposium of African Bishops at Kampala, 31 July 1969, 2: AAS 61 (1969), 577.

³¹PAUL VI, Address at the opening of the Second Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, 29 September 1963; AAS 55 (1963), 858; cf. SECOND VATICAN

ample emphasis by the Council and the subsequent Magisterium, without detracting in any way from the fact that *salvation comes from Christ and that dialogue does not dispense from evangelization*.³²

In the light of the economy of salvation, the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in inter-religious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission *ad gentes*. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they are interchangeable.

I recently wrote to the Bishops of Asia: "Although the Church gladly acknowledges whatever is true and holy in the religious traditions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam as a reflection of that truth which enlightens all men, this does not lessen her duty and resolve to proclaim without fail Jesus Christ who is 'the way, the truth and the life'... The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people."³³ Indeed Christ himself "while expressly insisting on the need for faith and Baptism at the same time confirmed *the need for the Church*, into which people enter through Baptism as through a door."³⁴ Dialogue should be conducted and implemented with the conviction

ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*, 2; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 16; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 9; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 53: *loc. cit.*, 41f.

³²Cf. Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964): AAS 56 (1964), 609-659, Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 11, 41; Secretariat For Non-Christians, Document *L'atteggiamento della Chiesa di fronte ai seguaci di altre religioni*, Riflessioni e Orientamenti su dialogo e missione (4 September 1984): AAS 76 (1984), 816-828.

³³Letter to the Fifth Plenary Assembly of Asian Bishops' Conferences (23 June 1990), 4: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 18 July 1990.

³⁴SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 14; cf. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 7.

that the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fulness of the means of salvation.³⁵

56. Dialogue does not originate from tactical concerns or self-interest, but is an activity with its own guiding principles, requirements and dignity. It is demanded by deep respect for everything that has been brought about in human beings by the Spirit who blows where he wills.³⁶ Through dialogue, the Church seeks to uncover the "seeds of the Word,"³⁷ a "ray of that truth which enlightens all men,"³⁸ these are found in individuals and in the religious traditions of mankind. Dialogue is based on hope and love, and will bear fruit in the Spirit. Other religions constitute a positive challenge for the Church: they stimulate her both to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ's presence and of the working of the Spirit, as well as to examine more deeply her own identity and to bear witness to the fulness of Revelation which she has received for the good of all.

This gives rise to the spirit which must enliven dialogue in the context of mission. Those engaged in this dialogue must be consistent with their own religious traditions and convictions, and be open to understanding those of the other party without pretence or close-mindedness, but with truth, humility and frankness, knowing that dialogue can enrich each side. There must be no abandonment of principles nor false irenicism, but instead a witness given and received for mutual advancement on the road of religious inquiry and experience, and at the same time for the elimination of prejudice, intolerance and misunderstandings. Dialogue leads to inner purification and conversion which, if pursued with docility to the Holy Spirit, will be spiritually fruitful.

57. A vast field lies open to dialogue, which can assume many forms and expressions: from changes between experts in religious

³⁵Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 7.

³⁶Cf. Encyclical letter *Redemptoris Hominis*, 12: *loc. cit.*, 279.

³⁷SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 11, 15.

³⁸SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religion *Nostra Aetate*, 2.

traditions or official representatives of those traditions to cooperate for integral development and the safeguarding of religious values; and from a sharing of their spiritual experiences to the so-called "dialogue of life," through which believers of different religions bear witness before each other in daily life to their own human and spiritual values, and help each other to live according to those values in order to build a more just and fraternal society.

Each member of the faithful and all Christian communities are called to practice dialogue, although not always to the same degree or in the same way. The contribution of the laity is indispensable in this area, for they "can favour the relations which ought to be established with the followers of various religions through their example in the situations in which they live and in their activities."³⁹ Some of them also will be able to make a contribution through research and study.⁴⁰

I am well aware that many missionaries and Christian communities find in the difficult and often misunderstood path of dialogue their only way of bearing sincere witness to Christ and offering generous service to others. I wish to encourage them to persevere with faith and love, even in places where their efforts are not well received. Dialogue is a path towards the Kingdom and will certainly bear fruit, even if the times and seasons are known only to the Father (cf. Ac 1:7).

Promoting Development by Forming Consciences

58. The mission *ad gentes* is still being carried out today, for the most part in the southern regions of the world, where action on behalf of integral development and liberation from all forms of oppression is most urgently needed. The Church has always been able to generate among the peoples she evangelizes a drive towards progress. Today, more than in the past, missionaries are being recognized as *promoters of development* by governments and inter-

³⁹Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 35: *loc. cit.*, 458.

⁴⁰Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 41.

national experts, who are impressed at the remarkable results achieved with scanty means.

In the Encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, I stated that "the Church does not have technical solutions to offer for the problem of under-development as such," but "offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about man applying this truth to a concrete situation."⁴¹ The Conference of Latin American Bishops at Puebla stated that "the best service we can offer to our brother is evangelization, which helps him to live and act as a son of God, sets him free from injustices and assists his overall development."⁴² It is not the Church's mission to work directly on the economic, technical or political levels, or to contribute materially to development. Rather, her mission consists essentially in offering people an opportunity not to "have more" but to "be more," by awakening their consciences through the Gospel. "Authentic human development must be rooted in an ever deeper evangelization."⁴³

The Church and her missionaries also promote development through schools, hospitals, printing presses, universities and experimental farms. But a people's development does not derive primarily from money, material assistance or technological means, but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of ways of thinking and patterns of behaviour. *Man is the principal agent of development*, not money or technology. The Church forms consciences by revealing to peoples the God whom they seek and do not yet know, the grandeur of man created in God's image and loved by him, the equality of all men and women as God's sons and daughters, the mastery of man over nature created by God and placed at man's service and the obligation to work for the development of the whole person and of all mankind.

⁴¹Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 41: AAS 80 (1988), 570f.

⁴²*Documents of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Puebla* (1979), 3760 (1145).

⁴³*Address to Clergy and Religious, Jakarta, 10 October 1989, 5: L'Osservatore Romano, 11 October 1989.*

59. Through the Gospel message, the Church offers a force for liberation which promotes development precisely because it leads to conversion of heart and of ways of thinking, fosters the recognition of each person's dignity, encourages solidarity, commitment and service of one's neighbour, and gives everyone a place in God's plan, which is the building of his Kingdom of peace and justice, beginning already in this life. This is the Biblical perspective of the "new heavens and the new earth" (cf. *Is* 65:17; *2 Pt* 3:13; *Rev* 21:1), which has been the stimulus and goal for mankind's advancement in history. Man's development derives from God, from the model of Jesus-God and man-and must lead back to God.⁴⁴ That is why there is a close connection between the proclamation of the Gospel and human promotion.

The contribution of the Church and of evangelization of the development of peoples concerns not only the struggle against material poverty and underdevelopment in the South of the world, but also concerns the North, which is prone to a moral and spiritual poverty caused by "overdevelopment."⁴⁵ A certain way of thinking, uninfluenced by a religious outlook and widespread in some parts of today's world, is based on the idea that increasing wealth and the promotion of economic and technical growth is enough for people to develop on the human level. But a soulless development cannot suffice for human beings, and an excess of affluence is as harmful as excessive poverty. This is a "development model" which the North has constructed and is now spreading to the South, where a sense of religion as well as human are in danger of being overwhelmed by a wave of consumerism.

"Fight hunger by changing your lifestyle" is a motto which has appeared in Church circles and which shows the people of the rich nations how to become brothers and sisters of the poor. We need to turn to a more austere way of life which will favour a new model of development that gives attention to ethical and religious values. To the poor, *missionary activity* brings light and an impulse towards true development, while a new evangelization ought to create among

⁴⁴Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 14-21, 40-42: *loc. cit.*, 266-268, 277f. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* 27-41: *loc. cit.*, 547-572.

⁴⁵Cf. Encyclical letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 28: *loc. cit.*, 548-550.

the wealthy a realization that the time has arrived for them to become true brothers and sisters of the poor through the conversion of all to an "integral development" open to the Absolute.⁴⁶

*Charity: Source and Criterion
of Mission*

60. As I said during my Pastoral Visit to Brazil: "The Church all over the world wishes to be the Church of the poor . . . she wishes to draw out all the truth contained in the Beatitudes of Christ, and especially in the first one: 'Blessed the poor in spirit' . . . She wishes to teach this truth and she wishes to put it into practice, just as Jesus came to do and to teach."⁴⁷

The young Churches, which for the most part are to be found among peoples suffering from widespread poverty, often give voice to this concern as an integral part of their mission. The Conference of Latin American Bishops at Puebla, after recalling the example of Jesus, wrote that "the poor deserve preferential attention, whatever their moral or personal situation. They have been made in the image and likeness of God to be his children, but this image has been obscured and even violated. For this reason, God has become their defender and loves them. It follows that the poor are those to whom the mission is first addressed, and their evangelization is *par excellence* the sign and proof of the mission of Jesus."⁴⁸

In fidelity to the spirit of the Beatitudes, the Church is called to be on the side of those who are poor and oppressed in any way. I therefore exhort the disciples of Christ and all Christian communities – from families to dioceses, from parishes to Religious Institutes – to carry out a sincere review of their lives regarding their solidarity with the poor. At the same time, I express gratitude to the missionaries who, by their loving presence and humble service to people, are

⁴⁶Cf. *ibid.*, Chap. IV, 27-34: *loc. cit.*, 547-560, Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*, 19-21, 41-42: *loc. cit.*, 266-268, 277f.

⁴⁷Address to the residents of "Favela Vidigal" in Rio de Janeiro, 2 July 1980, 4: AAS 72 (1980), 854.

⁴⁸*Documents of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Puebla, (1979), 3757 (1142).*

working for the integral development of individuals and of society through schools, health-care centres, leprosaria, homes for the handicapped and the elderly, projects for the promotion of women, and other similar apostolates. I thank the priests, religious Brothers and Sisters, and members of the laity for their dedication, and I also encourage the volunteers from non-governmental organizations who in ever increasing numbers are devoting themselves to works of charity and human promotion.

It is in fact these “works of charity” that reveal the soul of all missionary activity: love, which has been and remains *the driving force of mission*, and is also “the sole criterion for judging what is to be done or not done, changed or not changed. It is the principle which must direct every action, and the end to which that action must be directed. When we act with a view to charity, or are inspired by charity, nothing is unseemly and everything is good.”⁴⁹

Chapter VI. Leaders and Workers in the Missionary Apostolate

61. Without witnesses there can be no witness, just as without missionaries there can be no missionary activity. Jesus chooses and sends people forth to be his witnesses and apostles, so that they may share in his mission and continue his saving work: “You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Ac 1:8).

The twelve are first to work in the Church’s universal mission. They constitute a “collegial subject” of that mission, having been chosen by Jesus to be with him and to be sent forth “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt 10:6). This collegiality does not prevent certain figures from assuming prominence within the group, such as James, John and above all Peter, who is so prominent as to justify the expression: “Peter and the other Apostles” (Ac 2:13, 37). It was thanks to Peter that the horizons of the Church’s universal mission were expanded, and the way was prepared for the outstanding missionary work of Paul, who by God’s will was called and sent forth to the nations (cf. Gal 1:15-16).

⁴⁹ISAAC OF STELLA, *Sermon 31*, PL 194, 1793.

In the early Church's missionary expansion, we find alongside the Apostles, other lesser figures who should not be overlooked. These include individuals, groups and communities. A typical example is the local Church at Antioch which, after being evangelized, becomes an evangelizing community which sends missionaries to others (cf. Ac 13:2-3). The early Church experiences her mission as a community task, while acknowledging in her midst certain "special envoys" or "missionaries devoted to Gentiles," such as Paul and Barnabas.

62. What was done at the beginning of Christianity to further its universal mission remains valid and urgent today. *The Church is missionary by her very nature*, for Christ's mandate is not something contingent or external, but reaches the very heart of the Church. It follows that the universal Church and each individual Church is sent forth to the nations. Precisely "so that this missionary zeal may flourish among the people of their own country," it is highly appropriate that young Churches should "share as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church. They should themselves send missionaries to proclaim the Gospel all over the world, even though they are suffering from a shortage of clergy."⁵⁰ Many are already doing so, and I strongly encourage them to continue.

In this essential bond between the universal Church and the particular Churches the authentic and full missionary nature of the Church finds practical expression: "In a world where the lessening of distance makes the world increasingly smaller, the Church's communities ought to be connected with each other, exchange vital energies and resources, and commit themselves as a group to the one and common mission of proclaiming and living the Gospel . . . So-called younger Churches have need of the strength of the older Churches and the older ones need the witness and the impulse of the younger, so that each Church can draw on the riches of the other Churches."⁵¹

⁵⁰SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 20.

⁵¹Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 35: loc. cit., 458.

*Those Primarily Responsible
for Missionary Activity*

63. Just as the Risen Lord gave the universal missionary mandate to the College of the Apostles with Peter as its head, so this same responsibility now rests primarily with the College of Bishops, headed by the Successor of Peter.⁵² Conscious of this responsibility, I feel the duty to give expression to it in my meetings with the Bishops, both with regard to new evangelization and the universal mission. I have travelled all over the world in order "to proclaim the Gospel, to 'strengthen the brothers' in the faith, to console the Church, to meet people. They are journeys of faith . . . they are likewise opportunities for 'travelling catechesis, for evangelical proclamation in spreading the Gospel and the apostolic Magisterium to the full extent of the world."⁵³

My brother Bishops are directly responsible, together with me, for the evangelization of the world, both as members of the College of Bishops and as Pastors of the particular Churches. In this regard the Council states: "The charge of announcing the Gospel throughout the world belongs to the body of shepherds, to all of whom in common Christ gave the command."⁵⁴ It also stated that the Bishops "have been consecrated not only for a particular diocese but for the salvation of the entire world."⁵⁵ This collegial responsibility has certain practical consequences. Thus, "the Synod of Bishops . . . should, among the concerns of general importance, pay special attention to missionary activity, the greatest and holiest duty of the Church."⁵⁶ The same responsibility is reflected to varying degrees in Episcopal Conferences and their organisms at a continental level, which must make their own contribution to the missionary task.⁵⁷

⁵²Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 38.

⁵³Address to Cardinals and those associated in the work of the Roman Curia, Vatican City and the Vicariate of Rome, 28 June 1980, 10: *Insegnamenti*, III/1 (1980), 1887.

⁵⁴Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23.

⁵⁵Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 38.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁷Cf. *ibid.*, 38.

Each Bishop too, as the Pastor of a particular Church, has a wide raging missionary duty. It falls to him "as the ruler and centre of unity in the diocesan apostolate, to promote missionary activity, to direct and coordinate it . . . Let him also see to it that apostolic activity is not limited only to those who are already converted, but that a fair share both of personnel and funds be devoted to the evangelization of non-Christians."⁵⁸

64. Each particular Church must be generous and open to the needs of the other Churches. Cooperation between the Churches, in an authentic reciprocity that prepares them both to give and to receive, is a source of enrichment for all of them and touches the various spheres of ecclesial life. In this respect, the declaration of the Bishops at Puebla is exemplary: "The hour has finally come for Latin America . . . to be projected beyond her frontiers, *ad gentes*. Certainly we have need of missionaries ourselves, nevertheless we must give from our own poverty."⁵⁹

In the same spirit, I exhort Bishops and Episcopal Conferences to act generously in implementing the provisions of the *Norms* which the Congregation for the Clergy issued regarding cooperation between particular Churches and especially regarding the better distribution of clergy in the world.⁶⁰

The Church's mission is wider than the "communion among the Churches;" it ought to be directed not only to aiding re-evangelization but also and primarily to missionary activity as such. I appeal to all the Churches, young and old alike, to share in this concern of mine by seeking to overcome the various obstacles and increase missionary vocations.

Missionaries and Religious Institutes *'Ad Gentes'*

65. Now, as in the past, among those involved in the missionary apostolate a place of fundamental importance is held by the persons and institutions to whom the Decree *Ad Gentes* devotes

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 30.

⁵⁹*Documents of the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Puebla* (1979): 2941 (368).

⁶⁰Cf. *Norms for the Cooperation of the Local Churches among Themselves and especially for a Better Distribution of the Clergy in the World Postquam Apostoli* (25 March 1980): AAS 72 (1980), 343-364.

the special chapter entitled "Missionaries."⁶¹ This requires careful reflection, especially on the part of missionaries themselves, who may be led, as a result of changes occurring within the missionary field, no longer to understand the meaning of their vocation and no longer to know exactly what the Church expects of them today.

The following words of the Council are a point of reference: "Although the task of spreading the faith, to the best of one's ability, falls to each disciple of Christ, the Lord always calls from the number of his disciples those whom he wishes, so that they may be with him and that he may send them to preach to the nations. Accordingly, through the Holy Spirit, who distributes his gifts as he wishes for the good of all, Christ stirs up a missionary vocation in the hearts of individuals, and at the same time raises up in the Church those Institutes which undertake the duty of evangelization, which is the responsibility of the whole Church, as their special task."⁶²

What is involved, therefore, is a "special vocation," patterned on that of the Apostles. It is manifested in a total commitment to evangelization, a commitment which involves the missionary's whole person and life, and demands a self-giving without limits of energy or time. Those who have received this vocation, "sent by legitimate authority, go out, in faith and obedience, to those who are far from Christ, set aside for the work to which they have been called as ministers of the Gospel."⁶³ Missionaries must always meditate on the response demanded by the gift they have received, and continually keep their doctrinal and apostolic formation up to date.

66. Missionary Institutes, drawing from their experience and creativity while remaining faithful to their founding charism, must employ all means necessary to ensure the adequate preparations of candidates and the renewal of their members' spiritual, moral and physical energies.⁶⁴ They should sense that they are a vital part of the ecclesial community and should carry out their work in commun-

⁶¹Cf. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, Chapter IV, 23-27.

⁶²*Ibid.*, 23.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 23, 27.

ion with it. Indeed, "every Institute exists for the Church and must enrich her with its distinctive characteristics, according to a particular spirit and a specific mission;" the guardians of this fidelity to the founding charism are the Bishops themselves.⁶⁵

In general, Missionary Institutes came into being in the Churches located in traditionally Christian countries, and historically they have been the means employed by the Congregation of *Propaganda Fide* for the spread of the faith and the founding of new Churches. Today, these Institutes are receiving more and more candidates from the young Churches which they founded, while new Missionary Institutes have arisen in countries which previously only received missionaries, but are now also sending them. This is a praiseworthy trend which demonstrates the continuing validity and relevance of the specific missionary vocation of these Institutes. They remain "absolutely necessary;"⁶⁶ not only for missionary activity *ad gentes*, in keeping with their tradition, but also for stirring up missionary fervour both in the Churches of traditionally Christian countries and in the younger Churches.

The special vocation of missionaries "*for life*" retains all its validity: it is the model of the Church's missionary commitment, which always stands in need of radical and total self-giving, of new and bold endeavours. Therefore the men and the women missionaries who have devoted their whole lives to bearing witness to the Risen Lord among the nations must not allow themselves to be daunted by doubts, misunderstanding, rejection or persecution. They should revive the grace of their specific charism and courageously press on, preferring – in a spirit of faith, obedience and communion with their Pastors – to seek the lowliest and most demanding places.

⁶⁵Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR INSTITUTES and SACRED CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directives for Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church *Mutuae Relationes* (14 May 1978), 14b: AAS 70 (1978), 482; cf. n. 28: *loc. cit.*, 490.

⁶⁶SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 27.

Diocesan Priests For the Universal Mission

67. As co-workers of the Bishops, priests are called by virtue of the Sacrament of Orders to share in concern for the Church's mission: "The spiritual gift that priests have received in ordination prepares them, not for any narrow and limited mission, but for *the most universal and all-embracing mission of salvation* 'to the end of the earth.' For every priestly ministry shares in the universal scope of the mission that Christ entrusted to his Apostles."⁶⁷ For this reason, the formation of candidates to the priesthood must aim at giving them "*the true Catholic spirit*, whereby they will learn to transcend the bounds of their own diocese, country or rite, and come to the aid of the whole Church, in readiness to preach the Gospel anywhere."⁶⁸ All priests must have the mind and heart of missionaries — open to the needs of the Church and the world, with concern for those farthest away, and especially for the non-Christian groups in their own area. They should have at heart, in their prayers and particularly at the Eucharistic Sacrifice, the concern of the whole Church for all humanity.

Especially in those areas where Christians are a minority, priests must be filled with special missionary zeal and commitment. The Lord entrusts to them not only the pastoral care of the Christian community, but also and above all the evangelization of those of their fellow-citizens who do not belong to Christ's flock. Priests will "not fail to make themselves readily available to the Holy Spirit and the Bishop, to be sent to preach the Gospel beyond the borders of their country. This will demand of them not only maturity in their vocation, but also an uncommon readiness to detach themselves from their own homeland, culture and family, and a special ability to adapt to other cultures with understanding and respect for them."⁶⁹

⁶⁷SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 10; cf. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 39.

⁶⁸SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 20; cf. "Guide de la vie pastorale pour les pretres diocésains qui dependent de la Congregation pour L'Evangélisation des Peuples", Rome, 1989.

⁶⁹*Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples*, 14 April 1989, 4 : AAS 81 (1989), 1140.

68. In his Encyclical *Fidei Donum*, Pope Pius XII, with prophetic insight, encouraged Bishops to offer some of their priests for temporary service in the Churches of Africa, and gave his approval to projects already existing for that purpose. Twenty-five years later, I pointed out the striking newness of that Encyclical, which "surmounted the territorial dimension of priestly service in order to direct it towards the entire Church."⁷⁰ Today it is clear how effective and fruitful this experience has been. Indeed, *Fidei Donum* priests are a unique sign of the bond of communion existing among the Churches. They make a valuable contribution to the growth of needy ecclesial communities, while drawing from them freshness and liveliness of faith. Of course, the missionary service of the diocesan priest must conform to certain criteria and conditions. The priests to be sent should be selected from among the most suitable candidates, and should be duly prepared for the particular work that awaits them.⁷¹ With an open and fraternal attitude, they should become part of the new setting of the Church which welcomes them, and form one presbyterate with the local priests, under the authority of the Bishop.⁷² I hope that a spirit of service will increase among the priests of the long-established Churches, and that it will be fostered among priests of the Churches of more recent origin.

The Missionary Fruitfulness of Consecrated Life

69. From the inexhaustible and manifold richness of the Spirit come the vocations of the *Institutes of Consecrated Life*, whose members, "because of the dedication to the service of the Church deriving from their very consecration, have an obligation to play a special part in missionary activity, in a manner appropriate to their Institute."⁷³ History witnesses to the outstanding service rendered by Religious Families in the spread of the faith and the formation of

⁷⁰Message for World Mission Day, 1982: *Insegnamenti* V/2 (1982), 1879.

⁷¹Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 38; SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Norms *Postquam Apostoli*, 24-25; *loc. cit.*, 361.

⁷²Cf. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Norms *Postquam Apostoli*, 29: *loc. cit.*, 362f; SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 20.

⁷³CIC, c. 783.

new Churches: from the ancient monastic institutions, to the medieval Orders, up to the more recent Congregations.

(a) Echoing the Council, I invite *Institutes of Contemplative Life* to establish communities in the young Churches, so as to "bear glorious witness among non-Christians to the majesty and the love of God, as well as to unity in Christ."⁷⁴ This presence is beneficial throughout the non-Christians world, especially in those areas where religious traditions hold the contemplative life in great esteem for its asceticism and its search for the Absolute.

(b) To *Institutes of Active Life*, I would recommend the immense opportunities for works of charity, for the proclamation of the Gospel, for Christian education, cultural endeavours and solidarity with the poor and those suffering from discrimination, abandonment and oppression. Whether they pursue a strictly missionary goal or not, such Institutes should ask themselves how willing and able they are to broaden their action in order to extend God's Kingdom. In recent times many Institutes have responded to this request, which I hope will be given even greater consideration and implementation for a more authentic service. The Church needs to make known the great Gospel values of which she is the bearer. No one witnesses more effectively to these values than those who profess the consecrated life in chastity, poverty and obedience, in a total gift of self to God and in complete readiness to serve man and society after the example of Christ.⁷⁵

70. I extend a special word of appreciation to the missionary Religious Sisters, in whom virginity for the sake of the Kingdom is transformed into a motherhood in the spirit that is rich and fruitful. It is precisely the mission *ad gentes* that offers them vast scope for "the gift of self with love in a total and undivided manner."⁷⁶ The example and activity of women who through virginity are consecrated to love of God and neighbour, especially the very poor, are an indispensable evangelical sign among those peoples and cultures

⁷⁴Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 40.

⁷⁵Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 69: *loc. cit.*, 58f.

⁷⁶Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988), 20: AAS 80 (1988), 1703.

where women still have far to go on the way towards human promotion and liberation. It is my hope that many young Christian women will be attracted to giving themselves generously to Christ, and will draw strength and joy from their consecration in order to bear witness to him among the peoples who do not know him.

All the Laity are Missionaries by Baptism

71. Recent Popes have stressed the importance of the role of the laity in missionary activity.⁷⁷ In the Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, I spoke explicitly of the Church's "permanent mission of bringing the Gospel to the multitudes – the millions and millions of men and women – who as yet do not know Christ the Redeemer of humanity,"⁷⁸ and of the responsibility of the lay faithful in this regard. The mission *ad gentes* is incumbent upon the entire people of God. Whereas the foundation of a new Church requires the Eucharist and hence the priestly ministry, missionary activity, which is carried out in a wide variety of ways, is the task of all the Christian faithful.

It is clear that from the very origins of Christianity, the laity – as individuals, families, and entire communities – shared in spreading the faith. Pope Pius XII recalled this fact in his first Encyclical on the missions,⁷⁹ in which he pointed out some instances of lay missions. In modern times, this active participation of lay men and women missionaries has not been lacking. How can we forget the important role played by women: their work in the family, in schools, in political, social and cultural life, and especially their teaching of Christian doctrine? Indeed, it is necessary to recognize – and it is a title of honour – that some Churches owe their origins to the activity of lay men and women missionaries.

The Second Vatican Council confirmed this tradition in its description of the missionary character of the entire People of God and

⁷⁷Cf. PIUS XII, Encyclical Letter *Evangelii Praecones*: loc. cit., 510ff, Encyclical Letter *Fidei Donum*: loc. cit., 228ff; JOHN XXIII, Encyclical *Princeps Pastorum*: loc. cit., 855 ff; PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 70-73: loc. cit., 59-63.

⁷⁸Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 35: loc. cit., 457.

⁷⁹Cf. Encyclical Letter *Evangelii Praecones*: loc. cit., 510-514.

the apostolate of the laity in particular,⁸⁰ emphasizing the specific contribution to missionary activity which they are called to make.⁸¹ The need for all the faithful to share in this responsibility is not merely a matter of making the apostolate more effective; it is a right and duty based on their baptismal dignity, whereby "the faithful participate, for their part, in the threefold mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King."⁸¹ Therefore, "they are bound by the general obligation and they have the right, whether as individuals or in associations, to strive so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all people throughout the world. This obligation is all the more insistent in circumstances in which only through them are people able to hear the Gospel and to know Christ."⁸² Furthermore, because of their secular character, they especially are called "to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and ordering these in accordance with the will of God."⁸³

72. The sphere in which lay people are present and active as missionaries is very extensive. "Their own field . . . is the vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics . . ."⁸⁴ on the local, national and international levels. Within the Church, there are various types of services, functions, ministries and ways of promoting the Christian life. I call to mind, as a new development occurring in many Churches in recent times, the rapid growth of "ecclesial movements" filled with missionary dynamism. When these movements humbly seek to become part of the life of local Churches and are welcomed by Bishops and priests within diocesan and parish structures, they represent a true gift of God both for new evangelization and for missionary activity properly so-called. I therefore recommend that they bespread, and that they be used to give fresh energy, especially among young people, to the Christian life and to evangelization, within a pluralistic view of the ways in which Christians can associate and express themselves.

⁸⁰Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 17, 33ff.

⁸¹Cf. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 35-36, 41.

⁸²Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 14: *loc. cit.*, 410.

⁸³*CIC*, c. 225, 1; cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicum Actuositatem*, 6, 13.

⁸⁴SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 31; cf. *CIC*, c. 225, 2.

Within missionary activity, the different forms of the lay apostolate should be held in esteem, with respect for their nature and aims. Lay missionary associations, international Christian volunteer organizations, ecclesial movements, groups and sodalities of different kinds – all these should be involved in the mission *ad gentes* as cooperators with the local Churches. In this way the growth of a mature and responsible laity will be fostered, a laity whom the younger Churches are recognizing as “an essential and undeniable element in the *plantatio Ecclesiae*.”⁸⁵

The Work of Catechists and the Variety of Ministries

73. Among the laity who become evangelizers, catechists have a place of honour. The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church speaks of them as “that army of catechists, both men and women, worthy of praise, to whom missionary work among the nations owes so much. Imbued with the apostolic spirit, they make a singular and absolutely necessary contribution to the spread of the faith and of the Church by their strenuous efforts.”⁸⁶ It is with good reason that the older and established Churches, committed to a new evangelization, have increased the numbers of their catechists in mission lands . . . Churches that are flourishing today would not have been built up without them.”⁸⁷

Even with the extension of the services rendered by lay people both within and outside the Church, there is always need for the ministry of catechists, a ministry with its own characteristics. Catechists are specialists, direct witnesses and irreplaceable evangelizers who, as I have often stated and experienced during my missionary journeys, represent the basic strength of Christian communities, especially in the young Churches. The new Code of Canon Law acknowledges the tasks, qualities and qualifications catechists.⁸⁸

⁸⁵PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 70: *loc. cit.* 60.

⁸⁶Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 35: *loc. cit.*, 458.

⁸⁷SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 17.

⁸⁸Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*, 66: *loc. cit.*, 1331.

However, it must not be forgotten that the work of catechists is becoming more and more difficult and demanding as a result of ecclesial and cultural changes. What the Council suggested is still valid today: a more careful doctrinal and pedagogical training, continuing spiritual and apostolic renewal, and the need to provide "a decent standard of living and social security."⁸⁹ It is also important to make efforts to establish and support schools for catechists, which are to be approved by the Episcopal Conferences and confer diplomas officially recognized by the latter.⁹⁰

74. Besides catechists, mention must also be made of other ways of serving the Church and her mission; namely, other Church personnel: leaders of prayer, song and liturgy; leaders of basic ecclesial communities and Bible study groups; those in charge of charitable works; administrators of Church resources; leaders in the various forms of the apostolate; religion teachers in schools. All the members of the laity ought to devote a part of their time to the Church, living their faith authentically.

*The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples
and other Structures for Missionary Activity*

75. Leaders and agents of missionary pastoral activity should sense their unity within the communion which characterizes the Mystical Body. Christ prayed for this at the Last Supper when he said: "Even as you, Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21). The fruitfulness of missionary activity is to be found in this communion.

But since the Church is also communion which is invisible and organic, her mission requires an external and ordered union between the various responsibilities and functions involved, in such a way that all the members "may in harmony spend their energies for the building up of the Church."⁹¹

⁸⁹Cf. c. 785, 1.

⁹⁰Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 17.

⁹¹Cf. Plenary Assembly of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1969, on catechists, and the related "Instruction" of April 1970: *Bibliographia*

To the Congregation responsible for missionary activity it falls to direct and coordinate throughout the world the work of evangelizing peoples and of missionary cooperation, with due regard for the competence of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches.⁹² Hence, its task is to recruit missionaries and distribute them in accordance with the more urgent needs of various religions . . . draw up an ordered plan of action, issue norms and directives, as well as principles which are appropriate for the work of evangelization, and assist in the initial stages of their work.⁹³ I can only confirm these wise directives. In order to re-launch the mission *ad gentes*, a centre of outreach, direction and coordination is needed, namely, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. I invite the Episcopal Conferences and their various bodies, the Major Superiors of Orders, Congregations and Institutes, as well as lay organizations involved in missionary activity, to cooperate faithfully with this Dicastery, which has the authority necessary to plan and direct missionary activity and cooperation worldwide.

The same Congregation, which has behind it a long and illustrious history, is called to play a role of primary importance with regard to reflection and programmes of action which the Church needs in order to be more decisively oriented towards the mission in its various forms. To this end, the Congregation should maintain close relations with the other Dicasteries of the Holy See, with the local Churches and the various missionary forces. In an ecclesiology of communion in which the entire Church is missionary, but in which specific vocations and institutions for missionary work *ad gentes* remain indispensable, the guiding and coordinating role of the Congregation for the Evangelization of peoples remain very important in order to ensure a united effort in confronting great questions of common concern, with due regard for the competence proper to each authority and structure.

Missionaria 34 (1970), 197-212 and S.C. de Propaganda Fide Memoria Rerum, III/2 (1976), 821-831.

⁹²SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 28.

⁹³Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988), 85: AAS 80 (1988), 881; cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 29.

76. Episcopal Conferences and their various groupings have great importance in directing and coordinating missionary activity on the national and regional levels. The Council asks them to "confer together in dealing with more important questions and urgent problems, without, however, overlooking local differences,"⁹⁴ and to consider the complex issue of inculturation. In fact, large-scale and regular activity is already taking place in this area, with visible results. It is an activity which must be intensified and better coordinated with that of other bodies of the same Conferences, so that missionary concern will not be left to the care of only one sector or body, but will be shared by all.

The bodies and institutions involved in missionary activity should join forces and initiatives as opportunity suggests. Conferences of Major Superiors should have this same concern in their own sphere, maintaining contact with Episcopal Conferences in accordance with established directives and norms,⁹⁵ and also having recourse to mixed commissions.⁹⁶ Also desirable are meetings and other forms of cooperation between the various missionary institutions, both in formation and study,⁹⁷ as well as in the actual apostolate.

⁹⁴SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 29: Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, 86: *loc. cit.*, 882.

⁹⁵Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 31.

⁹⁶Cf. *ibid.*, 33.

⁹⁷Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctate* (6 August 1966), II, 43: AAS 58 (1966), 782.

Message for the XXIX World Day of Prayer for Vocations*

John Paul II

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate,
Dearest Brothers and Sisters of the entire world!

1. "The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit" (Ac 13:52). This is what we hear in the liturgy of the fourth Sunday of the Easter Season; and, in fact, each community, when it sees a growth in the number those who discover the hidden treasure of the heavenly reign and leave everything to dedicate themselves entirely to the things of the Lord (cf. *Mt* 13:44), feels itself overflowing with the joy which comes from the Word of God and from the mysterious action of his Spirit.

Comforted, therefore, by these words from the holy book and from this experience, the Church celebrates each year a special Day of Prayer for Vocations, confident in the promise that whatever she asks the Father in the name of the Lord, he will give her (cf. *Jn* 16:23).

Considering this upcoming anniversary, this year I wish to invite you to pray that the Holy Spirit lead a growing number of faithful, especially young people, to commit themselves in the love of God with all their heart, all their soul and all their strength (cf. *Dt* 6:5; *Mt* 22:37; *Mk* 12:30), to serve him in those particular

*Fourth Sunday in Eastertide, 10 May 1992.

forms of Christian life which are carried out *in religious consecration*. This is expressed in various ways, be it in the priestly state, in the profession of vows, in the choice of monasteries or apostolic communities, or in the secular state.

2. The Second Vatican Council recognized that this "special gift" is a sign of election, since it permits those who welcome it to conform themselves more deeply to "that kind of poor and virginal life which Christ the Lord chose for himself and which his Virgin Mother embraced also" (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 46).

My reverend predecessor Paul VI was able to affirm that the consecrated life is a "privileged testimony of a constant search of God, of a unique and undivided love for Christ, of an absolute devotion to the growth of his reign. Without this concrete sign, the love which animates the entire Church is at risk to grow cold, the paradox of the Gospel to become blunted, and the 'salt' of faith to water itself down in a world in a phase of secularization" (Apos. Exhort. *Evangelica testificatio*, 3).

The vocation of those consecrated, in fact, requires the active proclamation of the Gospel in apostolic works and in services of charity which correspond to an authentically ecclesial way of action.

The Church, in the course of its history, has always been enlivened and supported by many men and women religious, witnesses of unlimited love for the Lord Jesus, while in times closer to us has found valid assistance in many consecrated persons who, living in the world, have desired to be for the world the leaven of sanctification and the yeast for initiatives inspired by the Gospel.

3. We must strongly affirm that even today, there is need for the testimony of consecrated life, so that mankind will never forget that his true dimension is the eternal. Mankind is destined to inhabit "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pt 3:13), and proclaim that true happiness is found only in the infinite love of God.

How much poorer would our world be if the presence of those consecrated to this Love would be weakened; and how much

poorer would society be if it was not led to raise its gaze to the heavens where true joy is to be found!

The Church, also, would be much poorer if there were fewer who would manifest concretely and firmly the perennial validity of the gift of one's own life for the Reign of Heaven.

The Christian people needs men and women, who, in offering themselves to the Lord, find the full justification of their very existence and in this way assume the duty to be the "light of the peoples" and "salt of the earth," builders of hope to those whom they meet of the enduring novelty of the Christian ideal.

4. We cannot deny that in some areas the number of those who agree to consecrate themselves to Christ is diminishing. From this, we see the need for an increasing pledge of prayer and initiatives able to impede this crisis from having grave consequences for the people of God.

Therefore, I invite my *Brothers in the Episcopate* to promote, especially between the clergy and laity, knowledge of high esteem for consecrated life. In seminaries, above all, they should assure that courses and instructions on the value of religious consecration are not lacking.

Secondly, I exhort *priests* not to forego proposing to youth this high and noble ideal. We all know how important is the work of a spiritual guide so that the seeds of vocation planted by grace may grow and mature.

To *catechists*, I recommend the presentation, with coherent solidarity in doctrine, of this divine gift which the Lord has given to his Church.

To *parents*, I say, confiding in their Christian sensitivity nourished by a live faith, that they can taste the joy of the divine gift which enters into their homes when a son or daughter is called by the Lord into his service.

To *theologians and writers* of religious disciplines, I address a warm invitation so that they dedicate themselves to describe in a good light, according to the Catholic tradition, the theological significance of the consecrated life.

To *educators*, I recommend that they frequently present the great figures of consecrated life, religious and secular, who have served the Church and society in various fields.

To *Religious Families* and to *Institutes of Secular Life*, I mention that the first and most constructive vocational pastoral work is personal witness, when it is expressed with a life full of joy in the service of the Lord.

I also exhort members of *Institutes of Contemplative Life* to consider that the true secret to spiritual renewal and of apostolic fruitfulness of consecrated life has its roots in their prayer. Rich is the spiritual and doctrinal patrimony which contemplative possess, while the world seeks in that richness a response to the questions constantly raised by our age.

But most of all, I address myself to the youth of today, and I say to them: "Let yourselves be seduced by the Eternal One," repeating the words of the ancient prophet: "You seduced me, Lord, . . . you were too strong for me and you triumphed" (*Jr* 20:7).

Let yourselves be charmed by Christ, the Infinite appeared in your midst in visible and imitable form. Let yourselves be attracted by his example, which has changed the history of the world and directed it toward an exultant goal. Let yourselves be loved by the love of the Holy Spirit, who wishes to turn you away from worldly things to begin in you the life of the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and true holiness (cf. *Ep* 4:24).

Fall in love with Jesus Christ, to live his very life, so that our world may have life in the light of the Gospel.

5. We entrust to the Virgin Mary the great cause of consecrated life. To her, Mother of Vocations, following the invitations of her words, "Do whatever he tells you" (*Jn* 2:5), we ask:

*O Virgin Mary, to you we commend our
young people, in particular the youth
called to closely follow your Son.*

*You know the difficulties, the struggles,
the obstacles they must face.*

*Assist them to utter their "yes" to
the divine call, as you did at the
invitation of the Angel.*

*Draw them near to your heart so that
they can understand with you the beauty
and the joy that awaits them when the
Omnipotent calls them witnesses of His love and
make them able to inspire the Church
with their consecration.*

*O Virgin Mary, help us to rejoice with
you in seeing the love brought by your
Son, received, guarded, and returned.
Obtain that we may see even in our own
days the wonders of the mysterious action
of the Holy Spirit.*

With my Blessing.

*From the Vatican, November 1, 1991, the Solemnity of All
Saints, the 14th year of my Pontificate.*

Formation in the Social Teachings of the Church

Orlando B. Quevedo, D.D.

Introduction

In the past 30 years interest in the social teachings of the Church has wafted and waned with every issue of a social document by the Church. Much interest was generated by the theological reflections of Liberation Theology on Latin America realities. The 1971 statement of the Synod of Bishops declaring the "action for justice and participation in the transformation of the world are a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel" generated both interest and controversy in what the Church had to say about the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres of life. (Within the Church the controversy had to do with the meaning of the word "constitutive." Does it mean "essential" or does it mean "integral?" Paul VI's 1974 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, described the intimate linkage between liberation and salvation but without using any of the controversial words. Still his treatment of the matter put much of the controversy to rest).

The personality of Pope John Paul II, his pastoral visits to various parts of the Third World and his forthright statements there on socio-economic and political issues, his activities vis-a-vis his own country, Poland, shaking off the yoke of communism, have attracted more than casual interest in the world press. Consequently, his social encyclicals have had more than the usual

coverage. The efforts of local Churches to open themselves to dialogue with their own particular milieu in the way that the universal Church did with the world at Vatican II raised key issues – and interest – regarding “the social question.”

All these, nevertheless, have not apparently erased the fact that with regard to social teachings the general posture, even within the Church, is one of ignorance. Appalling may not be too heavy a word to describe the lack of familiarity that priests, and even bishops, exhibit on this matter. Perhaps what a slim but popular volume outlining the social documents of the Church since *Rerum Novarum* asserts is not far from the truth – that the social heritage of the Church is her “best kept secret” (*Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secrets*, eds. Peter Henriot *et al.*, 1988). And the secret seems to be shared only by specialists among the clergy.

The social doctrine of the Church (“... two terms are used interchangeably: ‘social doctrine’ and ‘social teaching’ of the Church. The nuances implied by each are not overlooked; ‘doctrine,’ in fact, stresses more the theoretical aspects of the problem, and ‘teaching’ the historical and practical aspect, but both stand for the same reality. Their alternate use in the Church’s social magisterium . . . indicates their reciprocal equivalency” *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church’s Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*, Rome, 1988, n. 1) should be part of the normal formation of the laity regarding “faith and morals” for to them especially belongs the task of renewing the social order. Here as in apparently most areas of religious and moral education the role of priests and religious remains dominant. The “emerging laity” has not yet fully emerged to take the leading role in social transformation. But even were the laity to assume finally their rightful role, priests and religious need to have an adequate and functional grasp of the social teachings of the Church if their preaching of the word of God is to be truly contextualized, relevant and socially transformative.

This paper then intends to give a general sketch of the emphases that have to be given in the teaching of the social doctrine of the Church, and how the teaching has to be done – both considered in the Asian context.

A. Some Basic Directives

In 1970 the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education published *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*. On the need for knowledge regarding social issues, the document states:

#69. Right from their first seminary years, and increasingly as they grow older and more mature, the students should be introduced to the social problems of their own country in particular. Their studies, their contact with people and the world around them, and the events of daily life should make them acquainted with questions and disputes of a social order, and they should come to grips with them, with their real significance, the pros and cons, problems and consequences inherent in them and learn to see where, in the light of the natural law and the precepts of the Gospel, just and equitable solutions are to be found.

#79. . . . However, since a solid training in social questions is of considerable importance in making for a successful pastoral ministry, efforts should be made to reserve a definite number of lectures, as many as are necessary, for the Social Doctrine of the Church in order that the students may learn the means of adapting the teaching and the principles of the Gospel to the life of society.

Other references regarding the study of sociology, training in the modern apostolate as in Catholic Action, together with practical works of the apostolate may be found in #94 to 97 on "Strictly Pastoral Formation."

The new code of Canon Law has a very brief reference in Can. 256 #2: "The students are to be instructed in the needs of the universal Church so that they have a concern for the promotion of vocations, for missionary questions, for ecumenical concerns and other more urgent issues including those of a social nature."

What appears from a reading of the above documents is an apparent lack of consistency with other documents which consider human development as intimately linked with the preaching of the Gospel. So skimpy is their treatment of the social question as an imperative in the formation of priests that it seems to be treated only as an *obiter dicta*.

They are in fact nothing more than brief expansions of the rudimentary recommendation of Vatican II's *Optatum Totius* that seminarians "should be taught to use correctly the aids provided by pedagogy, psychology and sociology, in keeping with the regulations of ecclesiastical authority. They should also be carefully taught how to inspire and encourage apostolic action among the laity, and to promote various and more effective forms of apostolate (#20).

In sum, the Vatican II decree on the training of priests *Optatum Totius* (1956), the *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (1970), and the new Code of Canon Law (1983) in its chapter on the formation of clerics do not sufficiently consider the intimate linkage between human development and the preaching of the word of God and, therefore, do not adequately integrate the teaching of the social doctrine of the Church in the total formation of priests.

If gauged on the curricula of the Philippine major seminaries, the above observation would also hold true regarding present formation processes.

This fundamental *lacuna* is, thankfully, filled by the *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests* which the Congregation for Catholic Education issued in 1988.

Linking social doctrine with salvation and integral liberation the *Guidelines* state: "Social doctrine . . . finds its origin in the very saving and liberating mission of Jesus Christ and the Church. It is connected with the experience of faith in the salvation and integral liberation of the people of God . . ." (no. 15).

The *Guidelines*, therefore, enjoin that "a special place must be ensured, in harmony with philosophical and theological studies, for the teaching of this doctrine in the formation of future priests . . ." (no. 2). "Required and elective courses on this discipline must be included in the program" of formation (no. 73). For this purpose, "it is absolutely necessary for knowledge about the major social encyclicals to be ensured during formation" (*Loc. cit.*).

The above observations point to the need for a Christology and ecclesiology which would properly integrate the Church's mission in the temporal order with the primary mission of evangelization.

In getting familiar with each of the social documents of the Church, not only should their doctrinal content be studied but also their historical, socio-economic, political and cultural context. The continuity and development of social teachings should be taken at the collegiate or philosophy level after the course on social ethics. The course should cover nn. 14 to 28 of the *Guidelines*. In studying the documents, nn. 3 to 13 of the *Guidelines* would surely be likewise covered.

Such a course can then be followed by another, devoted to a general overview of the doctrinal content of the social teachings of the Church, their philosophical and theological, including biblical and patristic foundations, their functions as general principles, criteria for judgment and as directives for action. The course content would consist of nn. 30 to 65 of the *Guidelines*. But note that some of the course content could very well be treated in Moral Theology: Social Questions. And there could also be a course on the major social issues confronting the local church.

B. A Course on Social Justice – The Asian Situation

In its "Index of Topics which may be Useful in the Teaching the Social Doctrine of the Church in Seminaries," the *Guidelines* suggest a study of the social question of the Third World (see IV, n. 9).

The following is a general sketch of a suggested course dealing with "the social question" in Asia. The sketch can be adapted for a course on social issues in a particular country.

1. *The Process of the Course.*

For such a study, I strongly recommend the use of a process called the Pastoral Spiral. The process was developed and popularized by the Bishops Institute for Social Action (BISA), sponsored by the Office of Human Development (OHD) which is the Social

Action, Justice and Peace office of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference (FABC).

Stage one: Situation/Reality

This stage is concerned with "seeing" or "scrutinizing the signs of the times." It involves more than an academic analysis of the situation and necessitates an "immersion-exposure" process of knowing the reality. Through "immersion" a more systematic knowledge of the reality by means of social and structural analysis would emerge. But in the context especially of Asia, mere social and structural analysis is not enough. It has to be complemented by cultural analysis which would explore the cultural underpinnings of the situation or reality under study.

Stage two: Reflection in Faith

In this stage the analysis of reality goes deeper. Both the reality and its analysis are subjected to the light of faith and the teachings of the Church. The general question is: what do the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church say about the situation? Here the dynamic interplay or interaction between faith and life takes place. On the one hand, reality may clarify, or even suggest a direction for development of, the social teachings of the Church. On the other hand, reflection in faith may result in a denunciation of the situation. The second stage is, therefore, basically a process of faith-discernment.

Stage three: Response, Judgment, Decision

At this stage a conscience-response is made regarding the situation or reality. The response could be either an affirmation or denunciation. A pastoral decision is made either to reinforce the positive situation, or to purify or change the negative. The decision does not remain at the level of the mind or of theory. It has to lead into PRAXIS.

Stage four: Planning

Praxis is not haphazard. It must be orthopraxis and requires adequate planning as to how the pastoral decision could be implemented realistically with the time and resources available.

Such pastoral planning would be in line with strategic pastoral management.

Stage five: Action

This is where Praxis-proper is taking place. Praxis is a transformative experience. In the realm of social action, justice and peace, praxis is invariably communitarian in nature. The communitarian character of action in the socio-economic, political and cultural fields should actually pervade the whole process of the Pastoral Spiral. Action can refer to a series of activities organized and coordinated in order to transform the situation.

Stage six: Evaluation

Evaluation is undertaken at two levels — at the level of the action taken and at the level of the entire process from analysis to action. Is the action taken with regard to the situation effective? Is it transformative of the situation? Does it, for instance, genuinely bring the power of the Gospel to bear on the situation? At the level process, is there consistency from stage one to stage four? Has the reality and power of the Lord's grace been considered? What has prayer contributed to both the process and the action?

Stage seven: New situation or reality

The completion of a first pastoral spiral necessarily results in a new situation. Even where the expected transformation from the application of pastoral action has not materialized, a new learning and value, a deeper realization of the intransigence of the situation and of the need for better responses shall have emerged. There is thus a newness in the apparently old situation. A new pastoral spiral can begin.

Summing up: The pastoral spiral when used in the formation of seminarians in the social teachings of the Church is more than just an academic course. It incorporates what the *Guidelines* and the *Ratio Fundamentalis* require as necessary in formation, i.e. involvement in the "practical works of the apostolate." More specifically the *Guidelines* state: "During the period of formation, it is suggested that students be directed toward experiences of a pastoral and social nature which place them in direct contact with the problems studied" (no. 76). The Pastoral Spiral is also a

method of discerning as well as of theologizing — contextually — both of which are necessary for formation to be integral. It is the Asian Bishops' formation program of BISA experience that is being translated into the seminary formation context.

2. *Social Issues in Asia.*

The first step in the Pastoral Spiral process then is an encounter with the Asian situation. Identifying the major social issues in Asia, analyzing them through tools of social analysis, should be a personal and group task. Library research would be necessary but it should not take the place of personal and group participation.

The first hand knowledge of some selected issues through immersion-exposure would be most advantageous. Certain values and attitudes emerge from personal and group participation especially when the process is by way of immersion-exposure.

What are the major issues that need to be studied? It is possible to cull them from the papers and Final Statements of various FABC plenary assemblies and from BISA reports. The statements and reports usually synthesize the thinking of an Asia-wide group. Through the years the issues have not changed very much. Undoubtedly, one required course on Social Justice in Asia would not be adequate to treat all major issues in depth. Judicious selection is required.

A list of major social issues in Asia would include the following (the classification is tentative, an attempt to veer away from the usual social, political, economic, cultural quadrant of analysis):

On outlooks, values, and cultural attitudes.

1. faith-justice dualism in Asia
2. the challenge of religious pluralism
3. religious fundamentalism
4. secularism
5. models of development
6. modernization and industrialization

7. threats to culture, e.g. disintegration of traditional values and patterns of life
8. unresponsive educational systems

In quest of justice.

1. massive poverty and under-development
2. widespread inequality, the widening gap between rich and poor
3. unjust economic, political structures and relationships
4. dependency and exploitation
5. multi-national corporations and local elites
6. unfair international business and trade relationships
7. external debt burden
8. lack of people's access to resources and benefits of development
9. assaults against the dignity of human life and human dignity
10. the demographic problem

In quest of truth, integrity and freedom.

1. ignorance and illiteracy
2. corruption in public office
3. manipulation of mass media
4. authoritarian regimes, repression of freedoms
5. new forms of imperialism

In quest of peace and love.

1. threats to peace e.g. militarism
2. ethnic conflicts
3. nuclear threats
4. arms trade

Special Sectoral Concern.

1. alienation of youth
2. discrimination against women
3. problems of workers
4. problems of peasant farmers and fisherfolk
5. problems of tribal groups and minorities
6. refugees, slumdweller, and overseas workers

There is no attempt in the above to be comprehensive or to prioritize. The issues are, however, those that often recur in FABC analysis of the Asian reality.

Analysis should include an inquiry into their interrelationships, their root causes, their structural support, and their impact on Asian societies. Seminarians also have to identify, analyze, and explore the positive elements in Asian society that are signs of renewal and social transformation.

3. Reflection in Faith.

In view of the Asian situation, a number of social teachings of the Church would have to be emphasized by the course. Their philosophical, scriptural, theological roots as well as their development in history would have to be explored with the seminarians.

The following principles, criteria for judgment, directives for action and themes need emphasis (there is no attempt here to be sequential):

1. Integral Development: development as "the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human" (PP); critique of models of development; the development of the person, the whole person, and of all persons; development as both material and spiritual; the primacy of "being" over "having."

2. Social Justice and the Common Good: as applied both at local and international levels; equity and fairness in business and trade; fair distribution of and access to resources and benefits of development; a sense of service and of the common good as requirements of authority; the common good as the right of all sectors of society, requiring integral development.

3. Peace and Active Non-Violence: peace as the fruit of justice; the path to peace by way of peace; forms of violence; violence in various ideologies; the disarmament debate; wars and conflicts; strategies of non-violence; development as the new name of peace; the Asian notion of peace and non-violence;.

4. Love and Preferential Option for the Poor: the linkage between justice and love; love beyond justice; love of preference for the poor, solidarity with the poor – a Church of the Poor; poverty as evil and as evangelical; social ministry with the poor; reconciliation.

5. Universal Purpose of Created Goods and the Right of Private Property: everyone's access to the goods of the earth as a primary principle; private property as a relative right; the subordination of private property to life, the social dimension of private property; the renewal of private property – urban land reform, agrarian reform; democratization of wealth.

6. Human Dignity and Solidarity: the human person as the fundamental path for the Church; human rights – universality; defense and promotion of the dignity and rights of the human person; religious freedom; solidarity as evangelical love solidarity between peoples, between countries; North-South relations; East-West relations; international solidarity.

7. Freedom, Participation and Co-Responsibility: the directive function of the State and subsidiarity; democracy; power as service for the common good; everyone's access to decisions in the different areas and levels of social life; conscientization and organization of the poor; empowerment of people for participation; the role of non-governmental organizations and people's organizations in development.

8. Integrity of Creation: stewardship; ecological degradation; ecosystems; sustainable development; ecological ethics and policies; the Asian concept of harmony with creation.

9. Faith, Culture and Ideology: the concept of ideology; ideology as a blueprint for development; capitalism and socialism; the primacy of faith over ideology; assessing ideologies in Asia; cultural changes today; dialogue between culture and faith; inculturation and development; the Church in a minority situation;

inter-religious dialogue for development; social communications and the promotion of culture and social justice.

10. Church and politics: Christian socio-political commitment; roles in the Church regarding socio-economic and political involvement; guidelines for political involvement; the problem of graft and corruption; renewing the political order; democratizing power.

11. Work: value and dignity of work; work as "the key to the social question;" primacy of work over capital; the social function of capital; workers' rights and duties; work crisis in Asia; unemployment and underemployment; the problem of just wages; co-management; the role of workers organizations; strikes, agrarian workers and the problem of feudalism and tenancy; the right to land; the social function of capital; the plight of overseas workers; slumdwellers, simple fisherfolk.

12. Women: dignity and rights; the condition of women in Asian societies; exploitation and degradation; the role of women in social transformation.

Such are the major principles, values and themes that I would consider as urgently needed. By no means do I consider the listing as comprehensive. A more systematic reflection on the social teachings of the Church as they impinge on the Asian situation would surely reveal other emphases needed.

Seminarians themselves should do the reflection in faith, make pastoral decisions and plan how such decisions could be implemented both in and outside the seminary in so far as their program of formation allows.

C. Value Formation and Spirituality of Social Transformation

Knowledge of the social teachings of the Church is not an end in itself. Its more important functions are to serve as an indispensable aid for the formation of a mature social conscience and for pastoral leadership. Skills in facilitation and organization will be necessary if priests are to lead in the empowering of people so that they can assume their rightful task of renewing the social order. Value formation for social renewal is, therefore, an essential task.

The values which candidates to the priesthood must form within themselves through the years of formation are: a love of preference for the poor, respect for human dignity, a commitment to solidarity and to social transformation, respect for the integrity of creation, sensitivity to religious pluralism, commitment to dialogue as a transformative human and religious value, active non-violence, a deep sense of the common good, an orientation towards service, participation and co-responsibility in the task of evangelization and liberation, a centering on Christ as liberator.

The above values likewise spell out certain elements of the spirituality that has to be developed. It could be called a spirituality of social transformation.

The Final Message of the Fifth Plenary Assembly of FABC at Bandung, Indonesia on July 27, 1990 stated that the "spirituality for our times" is "nothing more and nothing less than a following of Jesus-in-mission, an authentic discipleship in the context of Asia." Authentic discipleship is credible only by witness. It integrates every aspect of Christian life and removes any dichotomy between faith and life, between love and action. An abiding sense and awareness of God, his presence and mystery brings complete trust in the Lord. "Renunciation and simplicity, compassion for and solidarity with all, especially with the poor, meekness and humility – virtues promoted by active non-violence – are some of the significant features of the spirituality we need . . . it is a spirituality of harmony" that challenges the disharmonies of our Asian world.

To the above, we add the reflections of the Fourth FABC Plenary Assembly in Tokyo, Japan in 1986 on Lay Spirituality. "Discipleship is rooted in the realities of Asia. Christian spirituality must be incarnated. It grows and matures in the midst of continuous tensions and struggles with the destructive powers of sin and its consequences, of conflict and injustice. Christian spirituality must also be Christocentric and inspired by the Spirit of Jesus, the Liberator." It is also ecclesial and communitarian, based on the word of God which speaks not only in the Scriptures and in the Church but also in "persons and events, in the ebb and flow of life." To be a disciple of Jesus is to become a memory of him and this fact impels the disciple "to seek the Reign of God

in the world, to be poor, to thirst for justice." It is an immersion into the wellspring of Asian reality so that it may have life. Communion, solidarity, compassion, justice, love are keynotes of a spirituality of discipleship."

D. Seminary Formators in Social Teachings

It is now rather clear that the formation in the Social Doctrine of the Church is not the task of just anyone who may have the time to do so. The *Guidelines* require the professor to have the following qualifications: he should be "chosen from among the best, and to master solid doctrine adequate pastoral experience together with a good spiritual and pedagogical formation." He must also "have a broad and deep theological formation, competency in social morality and knowledge at least of the basic elements of the modern social sciences." Likewise required is a close collaboration with professors "of morality, dogmatics and pastoral care in order to ensure the coherence, unity and solidarity of their teaching."

I would simply add to the above the need for a teacher: who has in-depth knowledge of the socio-economic, political, and cultural realities of Asia and of his own country; who is also a witness in terms of the values and the spirituality that I have already indicated.

Conclusion

In 1990 the FABC Plenary Assembly resolved: "that the social doctrine of the Church be part of formation in faith for everyone, at all levels of laity, religious and clergy" and "that the formation of a faith-inspired social conscience be a priority task in catechesis, media, schools and other apostolates of formation." It would seem from the above resolution that the resolution of the 1974 FABC Plenary Assembly in Taipei (some fifteen years ago!) has not been really implemented. The 1974 resolution stated: "that the social teaching of the Church especially of the 1971 Synod on Justice be organically incorporated into the body of Christian instruction and preaching at all levels; in catechisms for children and adults, in courses of formation for the laity and

religious, and above all in the theological and pastoral formation and renewal of priests, young and old.”

In this Year of the Social Teachings of the Church celebrating the centennial of the great social encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, through this gathering of Asian Seminary Rectors and Formators I believe that, finally, some serious efforts to implement the resolution will be made. Integral evangelization is, after all, the mission of the Church and, therefore, formation for saving liberation, far from being foreign to the evangelization process, cannot be separated from it.

Your task in the formation of priests in Asia is most important. It reaches into future generations and determines to a large extent our way of being Church in Asia, beyond the third millennium. May the Lord bless you and your ministry.

*Asian Seminary Rectors
and Formators Meeting
Tagaytay City, Philippines
October 25, 1991*

Contemporary Challenges to the Priest in Asia Today

Antonio B. de los Reyes

The Final Statement of the Fifth Plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference in Bandung on July 27, 1990, presents a lucid and enlightening portrait of the emergent Asian Church – her challenges and hopes, her summons to renewal, her pastoral imperatives and directions, and her call for a responsive spirituality. Two challenges emerged from the Statement: the challenge of ferment and change, and the challenge of continuing injustice. Our bishops view Asia “in crisis” – one that opens out to danger, but to opportunity as well. And in this very crisis, they sense the “stirrings” of the creative Spirit of God, disclosing before our eyes the prospects of grace even in the midst of turmoil. Our bishops thus propose:

“The challenge for the Church is to work for justice and peace along with the Christians of other Churches, together with our sisters and brothers of other faiths and with all people of goodwill, to make the Kingdom of God visibly present in Asia.”

In essence, this challenge is the mission declared by our Lord Jesus as his own, at the synagogue of Nazareth, the first public statement inaugurating his ministry:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, he has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord” (*Lk* 4:18-19).

At no other time in the history of salvation have the people of the world become more inclined to listen to the Christian Gospel than now, this century, today. At no other time than today has mankind matured to the possibility of a collective recognition of the Gospel imperatives of solidarity, of compassion, of love – the values for which our Lord Jesus lived and died and rose again in glory. For in his search for peace and prosperity, man has turned to virtually every means and methods and message available to the human mind and heart. And yet our human answers have failed to settle the restlessnesses or to satisfy the hungers of the peoples of the world. Everywhere today, the transience and frailty of human answers are unveiled: the emptiness of unbridled capitalism in the West, the meaninglessness of regimented communism in the East, even the helplessness of irresolute nationalism in the emerging nations of the Third World, particularly Asia.

Fr. Walter Burghardt, S.J. identifies seven hungers of the human family; these may very well be hungers of the Third World. These are: the hunger for *food*, for *freedom and justice*, for *peace*, for *truth*, for *understanding*, for *God*, and finally, for *Jesus*. Perhaps all these hungers can be summed up into one: man's hunger to be fully human, and therefore fully alive, and yet, as the history of mankind reveals, it is ironic that our hunger to be fully human and fully alive cannot be sated by purely human nourishment, by purely human sources of life.

In no other region of the world today are all the seven hungers of the human heart present than in the Third World – Asia and Africa. But because we are of the Asian Church, let us examine the hungers of Asia.

When we survey the soil and the soul of Asia, we are at once elated and alarmed. We see a vast and divided land, much of it ravaged by either the greed of colonizers or by the harshness of nature. And yet the land endures in its fruitfulness, hungering itself to be husbanded, so that it can minister to the hunger of its people. We see the face of the land changing, succumbing to the intrusions of the West with its gospel of modernization, industrialization, consumerism. These forces slowly transform hectares of its food-growing fields into cement-built centers that will lure millions away from their rural homes with the empty hope of meaningless work in the hard arenas of industry. Yet, vast tracts

of land which could have provided precious food for self-sustenance have been converted into plantations for sugar, cotton, rubber, fiber, spices – to satisfy the luxuries of the West, leaving whole farming communities at the mercy of external markets beyond their control. The Church and her ministers are therefore immediately confronted with the challenge of the first temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Can Asia's hunger for bread be satisfied by the stones of commercialism? The first face of Asia is that of a wilderness. Although blessed with a bountiful soil, she has been seduced, to forsake that ground, to sell her birthright for the mess of pottage that Western civilization offers. And so the gift that God bestowed on Asia to purposefully partake of the fruits of the land and the sea from the toil of her hands, is now regarded as a curse. And the blessing is falsely seen as progress – translated for the average Asian as a cramped low-cost house in the inner city with a television set as its altar, and a salary unproportionate to the excessively high cost of living, as its Eucharist. The Church and her ministers must assure those who are left in the fields, thinking of themselves as deprived and forsaken, that theirs is the true blessing. For bread comes not from stone but from soil and toil, and the Word of God can better be grasped in the metaphor of grain becoming bread by being sown, reaped, threshed, ground, baked, blessed and given.

And for those trapped in the labyrinth of the city, the Church and her ministers must enable the discovery of answers to two vital questions: "What is the true bread of life," and, "How can this humble bread be multiplied?" The Church and her ministers in Asia must be prepared and trained to confront poverty and powerlessness, to be at home in their midst, and to present the light of the Word of God not only as God's Gospel of life, but as a practical blueprint for survival and productivity, for fruitfulness even in the world of the here and now, that is required of all true disciples. Christian ministers must then be, more than contemplative, men who are not cowed by inertia and despair, but resolved to inspire and galvanize God's people into constructive action, incarnating the Gospel and allowing it to achieve its true end – that of providing the essentials of a fully human life – nourishment for survival and for strength, yes even for prosperity, in the way that God's providence wills for his children.

The second face of Asia is the face of injustice and oppression; and it is a difficult, if not distressing, face to view. For although at times and places the Church and her ministers were victims; at other times and places, the Church herself fostered that injustice and inflicted that oppression. In the last half of this millennium, Western Christian nations, in search of lands to rule and peoples to enslave, colonized the tribes of Asia. That yoke of exploitation and slavery persisted even when these Asian nation-states were granted their independence; for the elites of these Asian states assumed, in turn, the role of colonizing their own peoples. The creators of social, economic and political inequity perpetuated the structures of institutional injustice. And now the vast majority of the masses live under almost total control of a small minority; wealth and power are concentrated in the hands of the dominant few. Unless the Church and her ministers are prepared to hold up the cross as a liberating force from these encrusted systems of concentrated power, there will be neither relevance nor meaning in her ministry.

And yet the paradox, and also the grace, in the Church's prophetic roles as an advocate of justice and freedom, is Christ's own admonition that his role is not to condemn, but to save. The Church's movements of liberation and emancipation cannot but include her ministries of healing and reconciliation. I am convinced that the great ministry of social, economic and political liberation, which forms the cross that the Church and her ministers are to embrace as Christ did, must be viewed not merely as empowering the powerless, but perhaps even more critically, saving the powerful from the curse of power. And the Gospel of Christ is the only key that can open the gates of sharing and solidarity that stand between the powerless and the powerful. Power is not a quantity which is lessened in some if it is increased in others; rather it is a force that can be multiplied beyond measure, if it is shaped in love and solidified in wisdom. And only Christ's Gospel of love and wisdom can create the power that is inexhaustible and boundless.

And so the Church and her ministers must exude that openness to all – that dialogic and creative openness that enabled Christ to sit with joy at the table with both the wealthy and the poor, both Jew and Gentile, both slave and freeman. She must

hold on to that openness, because it is indispensable in creating the synergy capable of inspiring – even among protagonists – that warmth of solidarity, that oneness of spirit which releases God's blessings.

A third face of Asia is the turbulence that marks its political adolescence. Despite the freedoms won by her peoples – whether by abandonment or by revolt—peace seems a remote promise, a distant hope. The craving for Western democracy is frustrated by either the absence of supportive systems and institutions (such as cultural homogeneity and economic equality), or by the persistence of inhibitive values and forces (such as tribalism and paternalism). Congestion and unemployment in Asian primate cities engender crime and violence. Rare is the Asia leader who was neither a perpetrator or a victim of violence. This is indeed the paradox of Asia: Why such violence must emerge from the cradle of pacifism, having given birth to ancient religions which have enshrined contemplative tranquility: Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Shintoism. Was it perhaps an infection of the violence of their Western colonizers (all of them Christian states), from which social injustice, world wars and organized crime emerged and was exported to their colonies? As Fr. Walbert Buhlmann, author of "The Coming of the Third Church" succinctly articulates the enigma: Why is the spirit of the Gospel of Christ clearly on the side of those who do not know that Gospel, rather than on those who proclaim to know it? Why did Christianity come to a standstill in Asia, after sporadic rises from the mission of the last two centuries? Is it because the witness of the First and Second Churches – the Churches of the East and the West – have not brought peace, but violence, to the world? Is the Christian Gospel of peace and brotherhood credible in the eyes of Asian peoples, who were brutally roused from their mysticism and serenity by the violent invasions of the West? The Third Church will rise in Asian lands and contain sixty percent of all humanity; she must convince the new generations of Asians that in the face of this boiling ferment, social peace, and not merely spiritual meekness, is the heritage bequeathed by Christ to those who believe in him, and that peace can be gained through faithfulness of his Word. The Church and her ministers will be faced with the challenge of regaining in the hearts of Asian peoples, the trust that was shattered by Asia's bleak experience from the violence and tension

of the First and the Second Churches. The Church and her ministers must be the heralds of a new peace, an Asian peace, that draws strength from the Asian people's innate love for quietude and harmony, and is centered on that eternal promise, in Christ's own words, of a peace that the world can neither understand nor offer – a peace made possible only by the power of the Spirit of Christ.

A fourth face of Asia is the paucity of education for the vast majority of the populace. Almost forty percent of Asians are youth, many of them deprived of knowledge and even of the ability to search for the truth. For many, the immediate reality is the only truth, even if that reality is clothed in injustice or deceit, or are products of imprisoning custom or superstitious folklore. The greatest toll is exacted by this darkness on the states of life itself—maternal, infant and child morality, malnutrition and disease. Beyond that, the deprivation of knowledge locks entire peoples into primitive ways of livelihood which almost always despoil the environment. And yet the little education pumped into Asian minds have been alien truths – teachings relevant to environments other than their own. Consequently, those who imbibe those imported truths work to either construct alien environments in Asian localities, or cut their Asian roots and emigrate into environments kinder and more rewarding to their knowledge. The Church and her ministers then face the challenge drawing the peoples of Asia out of the prisons of ignorance and discerning with them truths that will set them free – truths with which to build lives viable in their own environments and capable of inwardly strengthening their human resources not only for worship but for work. But the more critical contribution that the Church and her ministers can offer Asian peoples, is the preaching of a Christian gospel that will form values rooted on the wisdom of the Spirit of God, with which they can transform knowledge into life.

A fifth face of Asia is its diversity, its multifaceted character, the apparent absence of a unifying element, almost as if her uniqueness is the very complexity and pluralism she embodies. And this pluralism is not only a collective Asian reality; it is also true of many of her nations taken individually. Several Asian nations are really federations of tribal communities, most of whom

are ethnically different from each other. It is unrealistic to speak of a national culture, much less an Asian culture; or of a national character, much less Asian character. Her diversity is reflected in the number of languages used not only across Asia, but even within her national territories. Perspective, mind-sets, even worldviews are different, and often the urge to generalize suffers from the irrelevancy of abstraction, and sometimes invites hostility. But this pluralism may even be a grace for the Church, for the challenge it poses is how to bring the Christian gospel, and therefore the possibility of "Church," to the personal arena of the individual Asian believer, and how to construct the parameters of the universal Church within the immediate face-to-face community that touches the most profound areas of that believer's life. It is a challenge that not only dispels the barrier of pluralism, but makes an ally of it. For it is not as Asians or as Asian nations that Asia's hunger for identity can be satisfied. Rather, it is as singular, unique individuals – sons or daughters of God, known to the Father by name, precious in his eyes and glorious even in their smallness and simplicity. And the fullness of Christian love and faith can be lived in the intimacy of his little Church, his family, and in the communion of his small Christian community. The Church and its ministers, therefore, must be builders of faith and life in microcosm, offering identity in its simplest form – even in the midst of diversity and complexity; she must enable persons to discover the meaning of the Gospel truths in the reality of their day-to-day lives and at the very heart of their homes – a life in the Spirit of Christ lived in reality, however harsh and burdened it may be.

The sixth face of Asia is its devotion to many gods. It is perhaps the most religious of all continents, but numerically the least Christian. And yet its source seems to be a deeply – rooted reverence for the profound and mysterious, a sensitivity to that which transcends the visible and material; and perhaps even the simple recognition of the many sensate attributes of the Triune God we worship as Christians. To be sure, there are reflections of this multiplicity in the way God enabled us to grasp him. The character of Yahweh – the One Who is – is expressed in the Old Testament, with at least six other appellations: The Provider; the Giver of Peace; the Shepherd of Israel; the Healer; the Source of Righteousness; the Sanctifier; the Banner of victory. The chal-

lenge of the Church and her ministers is then how to be vessels of God's revelation of himself in the face of the many other gods given worship or least feared, by the peoples of Asia.

I differ from the prevailing view that in the spirit of ecumenism, we are not only to respect the beliefs of non-Christian religions, but also to infuse our worship of God in the practices and rituals of these other Asian religions or to regard their ways as equally valid ways of knowing and encountering the God we worship. This is tantamount to accepting all gods as true and all beliefs as valid. I also differ from the view that in the name of "inculturation" we must baptize their beliefs and rituals in our hope of infusing their religions with the Spirit of our God. History reveals that no real change of gods, happens through this syncretistic approach. But neither do I align with the fundamentalist approach of challenging, as Elijah did to the prophets of Baal, the efficacy of their non-Christian gods through a test of signs and wonders. Rather, I believe that the Church and her ministers must advocate the true Gospel of Christ in its totality and fulness, and must witness faithfully to that Gospel. And I believe that the end of this living advocacy is neither to challenge nor to condemn, but to offer light without imputing darkness. In this sense, the ministers to the Church are called to be witnesses for Christ, and to witness to their fullest extent of authenticity and advocacy, even if it leads to martyrdom for the sake of Christ's truth. The challenge to the Church and her ministers in the midst of the idolatry and polytheism of Asia, is to be faithful to the one true God, yet to open their hearts and minds to non-believers as persons loved by the Lord and given a portion of his Spirit – and therefore to reflect his love for them and seek God's Spirit in them, and to invite them into God's own household and kingdom.

The seventh face of Asia is the absence, and yet the indispensability, of the Person and Message of Jesus – God made flesh and made one with man, who revealed and gave himself totally to us, and who showed us how to live out the paradoxes of wealth in dispossession and power in love. Perhaps it is the spiritualism of the mystical religions of Asia, their basic mistrust of the fleshly and earthly, their disbelief in the worthiness of the human condition, that prevents them from understanding the person of Jesus. For what Jesus conveys clearly in the gospel is that, while humanity has no righteousness of its own, it is raised to worthi-

ness when it is lived in the way that Jesus taught and showed – in the way of self-giving love. This means that life must be lived with others; this means it must be lived in the context of the human community, responsive to the concrete human condition. Yet, the human condition is to be trusted not in itself, but as the vessel through which God works his power. To become truly the body of Christ, the human community must first receive his Spirit.

The challenge to the Church and her ministers, then, is to walk in Asia as Jesus once walked in the land of Israel – to bless her humanity and reality as Jesus did, and yet not be engulfed in her humanish and worldliness – to share the Spirit of Christ empowers his Body. The challenge to the ministers of the Church is to be at home with the human, as Jesus was at home with the tax collectors and prostitutes, with centurions and lepers, and yet to offer them a wealth that only Jesus can offer – as he did to the Samaritan woman at the well – the living water of the Spirit which will transform them within and through which they can in turn transform the world around them. The challenge to the Church and her ministers is to invite them all who are thirsty and who hunger, to the banquet and the fountain – as they are, in their concrete human condition, and to allow the Spirit of God to work in them, to change them and be one with them.

Let me conclude by recalling the recent words of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of Angola and Sao Tome: The Seminary must be “open to the demands of the contemporary world.”

The contemporary world of Asia needs men and women who will inspire confidence and catalize action: Humble heroes and worshipful warriors wielding the prophetic swords of the gospel, yet ambassadors of peace and solidarity and sharing. Asia needs ministers who can empower with love and enable with wisdom; listeners and advocates who can echo the pains and cries of voiceless multitudes. Asia needs witnesses and workers with no allegiances other than to the Church and to God; new Christs who will immerse themselves in the human and bless it with the anointing of the divine.

I believe that Asia is the most likely theatre for the ultimate confrontation between the Kingdom and the world. You are to train the leaders of troops who will face that final battle. We, the laity, are your troops. Together, let us win the war with Christ!

The Relevance of Beatification

Fr. Roberto A. Latorre

In the last few years, there has been a notable increase in the cases of beatification and canonization that have reached their culmination. This is mainly due to the procedural streamlining in the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, brought about by the Apostolic Constitution *Divini Perfectionis Magister* (1983). But we could also attribute it to the interest of the present Pope, John Paul II, who has put in a staggering pace of work in the slow-moving Vatican halls. Yet if we look at the persons who have been recently raised to the altars, we can see that the progress of the different causes does not depend only on external factors, such as when the cause was started. Certain causes have progressed because of their special relevance.

Recent Canonization Processes

There is a special significance in the fact, for example, that the Church has advanced the cause of a St. Maximilian Kolbe, a Franciscan friar, founder of the Militia of the Immaculata, who died as recently as the last World War in the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz. Giving his life as a ransom for a fellow prisoner provides a model of solidarity and sacrifice in a world wrapped up in selfishness. Or we can think of the children visionaries, Francisco and Jacinta Marto, soon to be beatified, whose co-visionary is still alive in a Carmelite convent, to whom Our Lady of Fatima appeared and whose message continues to be as relevant in our days as in 1917. Another cause that has been

exceptionally speedy is that of a mother who preferred to proceed with the delivery of her baby, rather than to have it aborted, thus sacrificing her life for her child. Is this not a powerful message today when some women are undergoing abortion for the flimsiest reasons?

Since the last step in any process of beatification or of canonization is the meticulous verification of a miracle attributed to the Blessed or the Venerable, it is ultimately God himself, the source of all miracles, who wills that certain causes proceed faster than others. Yet if God chooses some causes to move ahead, it must certainly be for some good that will accrue to the Church and for the salvation of souls.

The "First-fruits" of Vatican II

The beatification of the Venerable Josemaria Escriva will take place on May 17, 1992. He is not a figure from the last century. His beatification takes place barely seventeen years from his death in Rome on June 26, 1975. In his beatification rites, a great number of people will be attending who have personally known the future *Beatus*. And the majority of these will not be old decrepit remnants of the old guard. Many will be at the prime of their life – teenagers in the early seventies who are now reaching their forties.

It is no secret that Msgr. Escriva and Opus Dei, the institution he founded, have been much-maligned and unjustly accused by some sectors of being old-fashioned and conservative – of being "pre-Vatican II." Nothing could be farther from the truth. And Msgr. Escriva's forthcoming beatification, with the public acknowledgement of his being a forerunner of the Second Vatican Council in the very core of its message,¹ is the clearest answer to this accusation. But it is not only as a forerunner that his figure is very significant for the Church. It is also in the great battle to authentically implement Vatican II *after* the council, that we can see the relevance of his figure.

¹Cf. *Rivista Diocesana di Roma*, pp. 372-373, March-April 1981.

Many persons have been beatified or canonized after the Second Vatican Council. But Msgr. Escriva is the first to be beatified, and will probably be the first to be canonized, who lived during the council and died ten years after, when the implementation of the council was in full swing.

The Church through the Vatican II Years

The Second Vatican Council ended in 1965 on an optimistic note from most of the conciliar Fathers. The decrees and resolutions promised a new season of spring for the Catholic Church.

Its vision of the Church would make it possible to tap the great resources of that silent majority, the laity in the Church, making them realize their active role in the ecclesial structure. But the moving spirit behind this potential mobilization of the laity was the core of the message of Vatican II – the universal call to holiness and the apostolate.

The openness to the world, the need to dialogue with non-Catholics and non-Christians, the reform of the liturgy to bring it closer to the people – these were all great expectations in the Church that had to clean its own house and rediscover its unused treasures hidden in the attic. Vatican II promised renewal, but not a revolution. The documents of the Council always maintained the continuity of the proposed reforms with previous practices. Church teaching would be the same, though enriched by a new vision of the Church itself. New practices would still preserve the character of the former rites. The Catholic identity would not be lost.

After the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI and other members of the hierarchy began authentically to implement the Vatican Council through the normal channels of Church governance. Post-conciliar documents were drawn up, many implementing the resolutions of the Vatican Council and clarifying important points of doctrine and discipline. The Church law (the Code of Canon Law) was revised to reflect the enrichment made by the council. A liturgical reform was painstakingly carried out that made the liturgy more accessible to the faithful and encouraged participation. But it did not authorize the liturgical abuses that were being perpetrated, which tended to desacralize the liturgy and expose the sacraments to abuse.

Some quarters falsely blamed the Second Vatican Council for some confusion that appeared in the Church, which was really due to the influence of secularism. These were the traditionalists, led by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who eventually broke from communion with the Pope. They asked for the repudiation of Vatican II.

Others, the perpetrators of the confusion and secularization, attributed their actuations to the Second Vatican Council. But as the post-conciliar documents came out and as the authentic interpretation of the council became clearer, they could no longer invoke the letter of the council for their justification. They began to invoke a so-called "spirit of the council" — a strange spirit that contradicted the letter. They would ignore the conciliar and post-conciliar documents altogether and position themselves for a future "Vatican Three."

The Catholic Church, unlike these two positions, simply remained faithful to her own position. Unfortunately, those who were faithful to the beleaguered Church were often branded as "pre-conciliar." And when it would be pointed out that they were just following the authentic "post-conciliar" regulations, they would be labeled as "conservative." Paradoxically, the present Pope, who vigorously participated in the council as the Archbishop of Cracow, would himself be labeled as "pre-conciliar" or at least "conservative" and opposed to the spirit of the council.

The Church is a living organism. Progress in the Church takes place as in a body—it does not reject what was in the past, it builds on it. Growth is an enrichment, not a break. There is continuity in the Tradition of the Church. All the ecumenical councils are organs of the Holy Spirit, and so is the latest one.

Pope John Paul II's inaugural encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* was very explicit in his intention to vindicate and implement the much misunderstood Council. Pope John Paul II would be the first Pope to publicly acknowledge and even ask for an apology for the liturgical abuses that were perpetrated at the expense of the council.² In 1985, twenty years after the Second Vatican Council,

²Cf. *Dominicae Cenae* (1980) and *Vigésimus Quintus Annus* (1986).

the Pope called a special Synod of Bishops to make an evaluation of what had happened so far. That synod reconfirmed the need to follow the Second Vatican Council, but always in its authentic form.

Msgr. Escriva and Vatican II

When the Second Vatican Council was convened, Msgr. Escriva was living in Rome and he was directing the growth of the work from his office at Villa Tevere. He was already a well-known personality, considered as a pioneer of lay spirituality — a field that would be one of the main topics of the conciliar discussions. He asked the members to pray for the success of the ecumenical council and he himself made the personal sacrifice of allowing his closest collaborator, Msgr. Alvaro del Portillo, to devote himself to the tasks of the council, upon request of the Pope. Msgr. del Portillo became President of the preparatory commission for *De laicis*, as well as Secretary of the conciliar commission on *De disciplina cleri et populi christiani*, and an Expert (*"peritus"*) in many other conciliar commissions. Although this meant a greater burden of work for Msgr. Escriva, he would joyfully say, "It doesn't matter, my children. The Holy Father wants it. We should always serve the Church as the Church wishes."³

He closely followed the progress of the council and met with numerous conciliar fathers who would visit him or dine with him at Villa Tevere. One significant anecdote during this time shows his vision of Vatican II and his awareness of the spiritual thrust required to sustain such a vision. In an informal gathering of conciliar Fathers and Experts, someone talked of a topic that was then in vogue: that the laity had the task of Christianizing the structures of the world, in order to transform them. With his insight, perhaps from years of helping laymen put this into practice, Msgr. Escriva pointed out, "Provided they have a contemplative soul, Your Excellency! Because if not, they will not transform anything. It will be they who will be transformed. Instead of Christianizing the world, it is the Christian who will become worldly."⁴

³*Articulos del Postulador* (1979), No. 209.

⁴*Ibid.*, no. 212.

At the end of Vatican II, Msgr. Escriva looked forward to the fruits of that council. In fact, the council had somehow "canonized" the message of Opus Dei. It had even made possible the future juridical status of the Work, as part of the hierarchical structure of the Church in the form of a secular juridical circumscription – the Personal Prelature. At the same time, his love for the Church, supernatural outlook, and his knowledge of the history of the Church made him foresee the difficulties that would arise in the period of the application of the conciliar decrees. He did not jump the gun. He always did things united to the Holy See and followed its indications without precipitation.

As President General of Opus Dei, he took the necessary steps to put into practice the normative decisions of the Council. He made sure that these were fulfilled faithfully and he courageously avoided any deviation. He constantly preached about the need to be loyal to the Church and to live a deep Christian life, always united to the Hierarchy.⁵

When the confusion in the post-conciliar Church began, Msgr. Escriva was greatly grieved by the harm that was happening to the Church and to the faithful. His first concern was to take care of the Work which God had entrusted to him. He took measures to make sure that his children in Opus Dei would not be adversely affected by the doctrinal errors circulating then. He took even better care of the ascetical and doctrinal formation of the members, urging them to be always faithful and loyal to the Church and to the Pope. In 1971, referring to the many defections of priests and religious and the crisis of the seminaries, he told his children, "I am suffering, why should I hide it? And I suffer also thinking of the sufferings of the Pope. And I think that we are all to blame, to the extent that we have not known how to be faithful."⁶

Years of Catechesis

But he did not limit himself to lamenting the sad state of affairs. In the last years of his life, he embarked on a series of

⁵*Ibid.*, no. 215.

⁶*Ibid.*, no. 648.

catechetical trips, addressing people of all walks of life, encouraging them in their Christian life and somehow putting an antidote to the doctrinal and practical aberrations that they would be subject to. Here are some of the issues, related to the post-conciliar period, that he addressed during these gatherings:

The Aim of the Church. When there were people who wanted to change the aim of the Church into a merely temporal one (confusing Vatican II's openness to the world with worldliness), he reiterated the supernatural aim of the Church – the eternal salvation of souls.

The Identity of the Priest. In the face of the secularization of the priestly image, making him into some kind of social worker or political leader, Msgr. Escriva stressed the sacred character of the ministerial priesthood. While being one of the forerunners in promoting the common priesthood of the faithful, he always defended the irreplaceability of the ministerial priesthood.

The Christian Life. He emphasized the need for prayer and contemplation in the midst of one's daily occupations for the ordinary Christian, thus bringing the genuine Christian spirit into earthly realities and achieving a unity of Faith and Life. This was stressed in the light of the growing paganism of the environment, especially in the West. He encouraged the practice of traditional devotions, like the Holy Rosary, which some people at that time considered as "outmoded by the council."

The Sacramental Life. As the practice of individual confession began to decline, he encouraged his priests to devote many hours a day to hearing confessions, at the same time that he moved the lay persons to go regularly to confession and to bring their friends to the priests in the confessional.

Ecumenism. Even before Vatican II, Opus Dei was the first association of the Church that was allowed to accept non-Catholic and even non-Christians to be associated with it as cooperators. In the post-conciliar period, when some unauthorized ecumenical efforts compromised Catholic dogma, Msgr. Escriva practiced openness and kindness with non-Catholics, while stressing his conviction of being in the truth. He would invariably tell such persons that he would be willing to lay down his life to defend their

freedom to believe what they believed, and that he wholeheartedly respected their freedom of religion. At the same time, he would tell them that he could not abdicate his own position as a Catholic priest because then, he would be dishonest to himself and to them as well. These persons ended up appreciating the affection and honesty of Msgr. Escriva.

Liturgy. As liturgical abuses took place, he took measures to follow very faithfully the rubrics of the approved liturgical books. He always encouraged a sense of piety and reverence in liturgical celebrations.

Offering His Life for the Church

We could go on enumerating the many different fields in the post-conciliar period where we see Msgr. Escriva faithfully implementing and defending the authentic decrees and positions of the Second Vatican Council. But we cannot forget that if he is being beatified, it is ultimately because of the heroism of his life, sustained until his last moment on earth.

He kept up his effort to help the suffering Church until his death on June 26, 1975. In the last years of his life, he prayed constantly for the Church and offered up his life for its welfare. On the very day of his death, and there are eye witness accounts of this, he had explicitly renewed this offering. He had asked someone to tell a close friend of the Pope that "everyday, for years now, I have been offering the Holy Mass for the Church and for the Pope . . . I have offered my life to the Lord for the Pope, whoever he may be."⁷

He then talked to a group of daughters of his, ordinary laywomen, to be more aware of their "priestly soul." He told them to pray in order to "help our Holy Mother the Church, that is in great need and which is suffering so much in the world at these moments. We have to love the Church very much, and the Pope, whoever he may be. Pray to the Lord so that our service to the Church and to the Pope may be effective."⁸

⁷*Ibid.*, no. 1264.

⁸*Ibid.*, no. 1264.

For some time, his close collaborators would hear him say that he was offering his life, "and a thousand more lives if I had them," for the Church and for the Pope. He would say: "I am praying to God to take me, for the Church. Here, I am just a hindrance. In heaven I could help much more."⁹ When he returned to his room, after that get-together with his daughters on June 26, 1975, God accepted the offering of his life for the good of the Church.

⁹*Ibid.*, no. 1266.

The Sign of Light

Miguel A. Bernad, S.J.

*Eratis enim aliquando tenebrae,
nunc autem lux in Domino.*

(Ep 5:8)

The Bible opens and closes with the mention of light. The first book, Genesis, begins with an account of creation:

*And God said, "Let there be light,"
and there was light.*

(Gn 1:3)

The last chapter of the book, the Apocalypse, describes the glory of the Blessed in heaven:

*And they will need no light from lamps or the
sun, for God himself will give them light.*

(Rv 22:4)

But between those two passages, there is a vast difference, for Genesis deals with the creation of natural light, the physical illumination that comes from sun, moon and stars. The passage from the Apocalypse, on the other hand, deals with the supernatural light that comes from God himself.

And between these two extremes, there are various shades of meaning in the use of the word light.

I. Both in the Bible and in ordinary speech, it is usual to employ "light" and "darkness" as metaphors for knowledge and ignorance. Those who know are "enlightened;" those who don't know are "in the dark." And since light is needed for seeing, the verb "to see" is also used of the mind. A person "sees" when he understands; he is "blind" when fails or refuses to grasp something.

The Rationalists of the 18th century, with the arrogance that comes from a little learning, called their age "the Enlightenment," not realizing that in many ways it was really an era of darkness.

The medieval scholastics contrasted philosophy and theology by the kind of light they used. Although both were sciences dealing with "all things according to their ultimate causes," philosophy approached its subject with the "light of reason," theology with the aid of the "light of revelation."

In this ordinary metaphorical sense the psalms use "light" to signify knowledge and instruction.

*Thy word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.*

(Ps 119:105)

The Hebrew poet says confidently, "The Lord is my light and my salvation" (Ps 27:1), but when beset by doubt and difficulty he cries out to the Lord for knowledge and guidance:

*Send out thy light and thy truth,
let them lead me.*

(Ps 43:3)

"Light" is also used to signify the kind of instruction given by good example. Of John the Baptist Jesus said, "He was a shining light" (Jn 5:35). To his own disciples Jesus said, "You are the light of the world" and he reminded them that a candle is not lighted to be hidden but to illumine the whole room (Mt 5:9).

In a related meaning, "light" is also used to convey the idea of fame, of well-merited approval. If you live upright life and

prefers acts of justice and of mercy, like feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, "Then shall your light break forth like the dawn" (Is 58:8).

"To walk in the light" is a phrase meaning to live in accordance with God's law. "Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord," says Isaiah (2:5).

II. The coming of the Messiah was foretold as an era of great illumination. Isaiah says, and Matthew quotes him:

*The people who walked in darkness have seen
a great light.*

(Is 9:2; cf. Mt 4:16)

A later prophet (the Second Isaiah) foretells a time when all nations will bask in the light emanating from Jerusalem:

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you...
And nations shall come to your light.*

(Is 60:1-2)

The actual coming of the Messiah is likewise associated with light. The birth of Jesus is announced to the shepherds by angels bathed in light: "And the glory of the Lord shone around them" (Lk 2:9).

When the child was brought to the temple, the old man, Simeon, spoke of him as

*a light for the revelation of the Gentiles
and for glory for thy people Israel.*

(Lk 2:32)

At the transfiguration, Jesus revealed his divine character not by word but by appearing to his three disciples as if aflame with light. His face "shone like the sun," and his garments were so dazzlingly bright that the evangelists had difficulty describing the fact. Mark says the clothes were so white "as no fuller on earth could bleach them." Matthew simply says "his garments became white as light" (Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2).

Long afterwards, recalling that unforgettable sight, John would say, "We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (*Jn* 1:14).

In short, light is associated with the Messiah. So it is appropriate that when Jesus died on the cross, "there was darkness over all the land" (*Mt* 27:48).

It is obvious that we are dealing here not with a simple comparison or simile or metaphor, but with symbol. The Messiah and his coming are symbolized by light.

The profundity of meaning contained in that symbol may be guessed at when Jesus applies "light" to himself:

*I am the light of the world;
he who follows me will not walk in darkness
but shall have the light of life.*

(*Jn* 8:12)

This "light" is no more metaphor, it implies a mysterious reality in which "light" is also "life."

III. Which brings us to the Prologue of John's Gospel and his use of the light imagery.

The Prologue speaks of a "Word" that existed in God from all eternity. It was through that Divine Word that God created all things – a thought echoed elsewhere: for instance in Paul's letter to the Colossians (1:16) and in the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:2). The Prologue then identifies this Word with the man Jesus. He is the Word-made-flesh who has come to "pitch his tent" among us.

The passage that interests us is the following:

*In him was life
and the life was the light of man
and the light shines in the darkness
and the darkness has not overcome it.*

(*Jn* 1:4-5)

There is here an identification of "life" and "light": the "life" that is in him is also the "light" of mankind. He is the "light of the world;" he is also the giver of life. To Martha he said,

*I am the resurrection and the life;
he who believes in me, though he die,
yet shall he live;
and whoever lives and believes in me
shall never die.*

(Jn 11:25-26)

To his apostles he said,

*I am the way and the truth and the life;
no one comes to the Father but by me.*

(Jn 14:6)

Changing the metaphor, he tells the Samaritan woman that he could give her "living water," namely "a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (Jn 4:10:14).

Milton in *Paradise Lost* speaks of Jesus, Son of God, as a beam of light co-eternal with the Father who is Himself eternal light:

*Hail holy light, offspring of Heaven first-born!
Or of the Eternal co-eternal beam.*

(PL III, 1-2)

Milton's imagery is of course derived from the Bible. The Old Testament speaks of Wisdom as "a pure emanation of the Almighty" and "a reflection of eternal light" (Ws 7:5-26). (The Vulgate gives the picture better: *Candor est enim lucis alternae*, suggesting that God is the eternal light and wisdom is the brightness emanating from it.)

That same image is echoed in the Epistle to the Hebrews and applied explicitly to Jesus as Son of God. "He *reflects* the glory of God," is the rendering of the Revised Standard Version, which does not quite reproduce the metaphor of the Greek original (*apaugasma tes doxes*). The New English Bible renders it better: "the Son who is the *effulgence* of God's splendor" (Heb 1:3).

That image has passed into the Creed: *lumen de lumine* — light from light. God the Father is light. So is the Son who comes from him.

It is singularly appropriate that the great Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Vatican II opens with a reference to Christ as the light of the world: *Lumen gentium cum sit Christus*.

V. We now come to the use of "light" as applied to God the Father and to the Blessed Trinity.

God, who is the "Father of lights" (*Pater luminum*, *Ja* 1:7), dwells in "inaccessible light" (*1 Tm* 6:16). He is clothed "in light as with a garment" (*Ps* 104:2).

But it is more than that. He is not merely surrounded by light. Light belongs to his very essence. "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all," says John in his first letter (*1 Jn* 1:3).

The essential — incandescent — brightness of God is brilliantly expressed by Dante in a passage that gives poetic expression to the metaphysics of the medieval schools. He portrays the Blessed Trinity as "eternal light" that is self-subsisting, and the three Persons are mutually knowing and mutually loving each other.

*O luce eterna, che sola in te sidi,
sola t'intendi, e da te inteletta
ed intendente te, ami ed arridi!*

— Paradiso XXXIII.124

*(Oh eternal light, that alone exists by yourself!
You alone know yourself
And knowing yourself and being known by yourself,
You love and smile.)*

Because no mortal creature by its own natural powers can see that flaming Reality who is the Triune God, a special help is given to enable the Blessed to see God "face to face." Whatever the Hebrew poet may have originally meant, his words lend themselves to this notion: "In thy light we shall see light" — *in lumine tuo videbimus lumen* (*Ps* 36:91).

That is why (as mentioned earlier) the Blessed in heaven "will need no light from lamps or the sun, for God himself will give them light" (Rv 22:4).

VI. The Hebrew psalms used the phrase "the light of thy countenance" quite often, meaning God's blessings and benevolent protection. That phrase, used in the Christian liturgy, has a deeper symbolism. The Canon of the Mass includes a prayer for the dead: *In lumen vultus tui admitte*: "Admit them to the contemplation of the light of your face."

(The Spanish translation has always appealed to me as particularly beautiful: "*Admitelos a contemplar la luz de tu rostro.*")

The "light of thy face" is the beatific vision of the Triune God. That is what we ask on behalf of the dead, that they may be granted the ultimate reward of seeing God face to face, but we ask it using the light imagery:

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord,
and let perpetual light shine upon them.*

VII. In liturgical celebrations "light" is also used to refer to Christ as the light of the world. This is done in dramatic fashion in the Easter Vigil of Holy Saturday night.

The ceremony begins outside the church with the blessing of the fire, from which the Paschal Candle is lit. The Candle is then carried in solemn procession up the center aisle of the church where all the lights have been extinguished. In the darkness, the Paschal Candle is the only source of light. Three times during the procession the celebrant sings out, "*Lumen Christi.*" (The Light of Christ), to which the people reply, "*Deo Gratias*" (Thanks be to God). The Candle is then set upon its candlestand in the sanctuary and honored with incense. The deacon or celebrant then chants the "*Paschal Proclamation*" (*paschale praeconium*) in which there is a kind of ambiguity between the symbol and the thing symbolized: for the song begins by praising the Candle, but before long the object of praise is the Risen Christ whom the lighted Candle represents. Even Adam's sin is called fortunate: *O felix culpa qui talem meruit salvatorem* (O happy fault that merited such a Savior). That Savior is compared to the Morning Star, the harbinger of daylight: "that Morning Star that knows no setting."

It is good to point out to people that in Christian celebrations, whether in church or elsewhere (as in the blessing of a house), the lighted candle has more than a utilitarian value. Originally needed for illumination (before electric lights were invented) the lighted candle has also a symbolic role. It serves to remind us of the presence of him who said, "I am the light of the world."

VIII. On moonlight nights the moon is a source of light, yet we know that it has no light of its own but merely reflects the sun's rays. The sun as it were communicates its light-giving role to the moon, making the moon in turn a source of light. That seems to be the imagery behind St. Paul's remark to the Ephesians: "You were once darkness, but now light in the Lord" (Ep 5:8).

Darkness in this case was a sinful state of the pagans before they became Christians. But "light in the Lord" – *lux in Domino* – connotes more than just the state of being a Christian, more even than merely the practice of virtues. It is a symbolic way of saying that, just as Christ is "the reflection of God's glory," so the Christian is the reflection of Christ's light. Christ's "light" being also (as we have seen) eternal life.

This idea of the Christian being "light in the Lord" is symbolized in the baptismal ceremony. Towards the close of the celebration two objects are brought in. One of the white garment, that the newly baptized person is urged to "keep white until he can present it unblemished to God" at the end of his life. The other is the lighted candle. In giving it the priest says, "Receive the light of Christ." The gesture is deeply symbolic, for the newly baptized person (infant or adult) has become in fact "light in the Lord."

IX. The Divine Office includes several prayers that use the symbolism of light. We quote two from the Breviary. One is a morning prayer at the end of Lauds:

*Lord, as a new day dawns, send the radiance of
your light to shine in our hearts.*

The other is a night prayer at the end of Compline on Tuesdays:

*Lord, fill this night with your radiance.
May we sleep in peace and rise with joy to
welcome the light of a new day.¹*

¹The Scripture passages are quoted from the Revised Standard Version (RSV).

Jubilee Homily*

Joseph Card. Bernardin

What a joy it is for me to be with you this afternoon to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Cardinal Sin's episcopal ordination! Not only it is a joy; it is also a great honor because Cardinal Sin is one of our best known churchmen; a bishop who is respected and admired for his faith and courage by so many people – both Catholic and non-Catholic – here in the Philippines and throughout the world. I have had the privilege of attending, with him, a number of Synods and other ecclesial gatherings in Rome, and I know the high regard in which he is held.

The biblical readings for the Feast of St. Joseph help shape our joyous celebration this afternoon. They introduce us to three important figures in the history of salvation and lead us deeper into the very mystery of God.

St. Paul helps us reflect on Abraham, the preeminent man of faith in the Old Testament. The story of Abraham is about an old man and his wife. They are simple people, but they played a significant role in God's plan of salvation. Despite the fact that Abraham and Sarah were barren and well beyond the age of childbearing, God promised them an heir and great prosperity. They believed God's mysterious promises and began a long, difficult journey into the unknown. Abraham believed that God can

*Homily in the Mass of Thanksgiving for the Episcopal Silver Jubilee of Cardinal Sin at the Manila Cathedral, 18 March 1992.

bring life out of death, fertility out of barrenness. As such, Abraham became a model for all true believers.

Through the prophet Nathan God unconditionally promises King David that his house, his dynasty, will last forever. This promise comes from a gracious God, and its fulfillment will be his work. Nathan's utterance also introduces the concept of a future Messiah whom God would send to right all wrong and establish the kingdom of God. This would not be an easy task. It would meet resistance because injustice and evil have deep roots in the world. But ultimately, God's Anointed will set things right and be victorious over the powers of evil, injustice, and violence. And so, as believers, we trust and confess that God will keep his promise of bringing justice to the entire human family. Ultimately, God's plan will overcome all resistance and intransigence.

The third important person described in today's readings is Joseph, of the house of David. Like the story of Abraham and Sarah, that of Joseph and Mary is about simple people who had a profound impact on the history of our salvation. Like Abraham and Sarah, they also face seemingly impossible obstacles to carry out their God-given mission in life.

Joseph is a good man, a just man, a man faithful to God's law. He is also confused and embarrassed. His dreams and hopes for a happy marriage are shattered. He cannot take Mary for his wife according to the law because she is with child. In order to spare her the humiliation of a shameful public trial, Joseph plans to divorce her quietly.

But this plan is interrupted by a messenger sent by God. The angel tells Joseph of Mary's virginal conception by the Holy Spirit. Mary's son will be called Son of David, Jesus, Immanuel. But this requires Joseph's cooperation. He has to assume the legal obligations of paternity, thereby making the child a member of David's family. Joseph may well not yet understand the significance of his adopted son's other names, but God's powerful promises to David are being fulfilled – in the humble town of Nazareth. Jesus will be the descendant of both Abraham and David, and the fulfillment of God's promises to them and to his people.

Every man who is ordained, whether as priest or bishop, is charged in a unique way to proclaim that same Lord Jesus and his gospel to all the world. This has been the driving force of Cardinal Sin's life and ministry as a bishop, as one who has been charged by the Good Shepherd to lead, encourage, nourish, and protect the flock committed to his pastoral care. This was the task of the original Twelve. Today, nearly 2,000 years later, the task remains the same: to proclaim the gospel to every creature. Cardinal Sin's episcopal motto, *Serviam* – "I will serve" – symbolizes his desire and commitment to spend his life in the service of the gospel. Indeed, in his ministry he has reflected the faith, courage, and dedication of those wonderful people mentioned in today's liturgy who, in various ways, were related to the Savior's appearance: Abraham and Sarah, David, Joseph and Mary.

To carry out this awesome task of proclaiming Jesus and his gospel, the Church, as the Second Vatican Council told us, must constantly scrutinize "the signs of the time," interpret them in the light of the gospel, and show how the gospel speaks to the hopes and aspirations, the anxieties and concerns of each generation. The genius of the Council was that it addressed some of the most important issues of our times, setting the course for the Catholic community as we approach the third millennium of Christianity. Significantly, Cardinal Sin's episcopate began just a little over a year after the close of the Council, and he has spent the last quarter century implementing its teaching and insights in an Archdiocese and in a country that have experienced many critical changes and challenges.

Today, we describe the office of the bishop primarily in terms of service – service of Jesus and his people. A bishop serves Jesus, and he serves his people for the Lord's sake, by teaching, sanctifying, and shepherding the community of believers entrusted to his loving care. He serves them, in other words, in *word, sacramental sign, and pastoral care and leadership*

(1) The first responsibility of a bishop is to teach and preach the *word of God*. "Teach them to observe everything I have commanded you," Jesus told the disciples. So committed must a bishop be to the proclamation of God's Word, that St. Paul's words must ever ring in his ears: "I am ruined if I do not preach it!"

But who can preach what he does not know? Who can inspire others with what he himself has not experienced? How can one speak of love if he has not experienced love himself?

This means that God's Word must take deep root in him who preaches, so he can speak it from conviction, from the heart, in season and out of season. And he must be faithful to the Word he preaches – uncovering its deepest meaning, pondering it prayerfully in his heart, proclaiming it in all its integrity. Only then will his teaching touch the hearts and minds of people, only then will it speak to their deepest longings.

The teaching office of bishop also has a prophetic dimension. Like Jesus, a bishop is called and sent "to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives." This will not always be easy. There will be pressure to compromise, to engage in the "soft-sell." Indeed, given the issues we must confront today, it may well be fear that will be most seductive. Like all prophets, a bishop can expect opposition and even rejection. But he has the consolation of knowing that he is supported by God's gift of courage, perseverance, and fidelity.

What a model Cardinal Sin has been for us as a teacher and prophet!

(2) The second form of episcopal service is *sacramental ministry*, especially that of the Eucharist. A bishop must confirm his brothers and sisters in their faith. In the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church experiences in a unique way the presence and community of Jesus. When he celebrates the Eucharist with and for his priests and people, the bishop is at the very heart of his ministry, for there, more than anywhere else, he builds up, transforms, and restores all persons in Christ.

And if that is so, then the bishop himself must feel transformed, built up, and restored by the one who loved him even unto death! How completely his own life must be crucified and consumed, reflecting the very mystery of Christ's death and resurrection! In his life and ministry Cardinal Sin has tried to live in such a way that he could say with St. Paul, "Now I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me."

(3) The third area of episcopal service is pastoral care and leadership – after the example of the Good Shepherd. Jesus, ever compassionate toward those entrusted to his care, sent forth disciples, sharing with them his own authority, so they could speak and act in his name. A bishop must exercise this gift of authority with wisdom, and when needed, with firmness, without making easy concessions, without fear or cowardice. In no way, however, does this mean that one exercises authority by lording it over people. Quite the opposite. Authority must be exercised with the prudence and latitude which would be expected of a good shepherd who knows how to judge persons and the times, potentials and limitations, talents and strengths, as well as frailty. At times, it is exercised more through caring presence than through formal counsel and directives. Indeed, Cardinal Sin served notice that this was his understanding of authority when he first presented himself to the priests of the Archdiocese as their “elder brother.”

In an exemplary way Cardinal Sin has lived up to these expectations as a *teacher and prophet*, as a *minister of the sacraments*, especially the Eucharist, and as shepherd. His leadership has made a significant difference in the many ecclesial and social challenges which have faced the Philippines in recent years. In particular, with the entire world watching and with the support of the Bishops, he made a pastoral judgment in 1986 which brought a peaceful change to the country rather than chaos and violence.

Cardinal Sin, in the names of your brother Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops, and in my own name, I congratulate you on the past quarter century of service you have given the Church, both here in the Philippines and universally. I also want to convey the Chicago Filipino community's congratulations and best wishes. Today, as we remember the past, we thank God for the many blessings he has showered upon us through your life and ministry. And we pray that the Lord will give you many more fruitful and productive years. We need your wisdom and your courage as we prepare to enter the third millennium of Christianity.

I now call upon all who are gathered here to remember that, while those who are ordained – whether as bishops, priests, or deacons – participate in the priestly office in a unique way, all who are baptized truly share in Christ's priesthood. Therefore, the

context in which bishops exercise their ministry is one of intimate collaboration with all the clergy, religious, and faithful, each complementing the other, each making his or her own contribution to Jesus' mission and work in the Church and in the world.

May this 25th anniversary of Cardinal Sin's episcopal ordination, then, be an occasion for renewal and recommitment on the part of all. May we all open our minds and hearts to the Holy Spirit, so that, together, we may become effective instruments of the Lord, bringing his love and mercy, his compassion and healing, to a broken but eagerly awaiting world.

Tomorrow Began Today*

Jaime Card. Sin

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

"My Soul Proclaims the Greatness of the Lord,
My Spirit Find Joy in God My Savior" (*Lk* 1:48).

The proceedings of an Education Seminar for Superiors General of Religious Institutes held in Rome several years back were published under a catching title: "Tomorrow Began Yesterday." This is exactly how, as Pastor of the Manila Archdiocese, I feel in this anniversary celebration of my Episcopal Ordination. My eyes are turned to the future, "tomorrow," as I reflect in the past, and I cannot but entertain dreams full of hope for the local Church of Manila, knowing that "Tomorrow Began Yesterday" . . . and also "Tomorrow Began Today."

Today I exult with immense joy and sing praise to the Lord for so many blessings, I value with a very special affection the many religious men and women living and working in the Archdiocese, who make the Church in Manila the object of the holy envy by the other dioceses.

"Tomorrow Began Yesterday." Yesterday! In 1565 the first Augustinians with Andres de Urdaneta arrived in the Philippines

*Homily delivered by His Eminence, Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, during the Eucharistic celebration with the Religious of the Archdiocese of Manila, held at Christ the King Seminary, Quezon City, last March 16, 1992.

and by 1571 they had already set foot in Manila. They were followed by the Franciscans in 1578, the Jesuits in 1581, the Dominicans in 1587, and the Augustinian Recollects in 1606. Much later they were joined by many other religious institutes. Today the Archdiocese of Manila counts with 46 religious institutes of men with their 1,020 priests and 125 brothers. They are in charge of 56 parishes (one fourth of the Manila parishes) with 187 priests attending to this parish apostolate.

"Tomorrow Began Yesterday" for the women religious too. In 1621 the first batch of Sisters, the Santa Clara Nuns, arrived in Manila to establish the first Monastery in the islands. They opened the door to what would be later on an uninterrupted flow of missionaries, and to the establishment of local congregations. Today Manila is blessed with the presence of 130 Institutes of religious women with their 4,492 sisters. Truly God's blessing to the Archdiocese.

If I now turn my eyes to the educational field, I find the religious men and women in the Archdiocese directing - owning and/or administering - 4 universities, 22 colleges, 64 high schools with their corresponding elementary section not to mention many other elementary schools, including parish schools, which they direct or in which they work. My dear fathers, brothers, sisters: A total of 340,000 students are in your hands, from you to receive their Christian formation, you will illumine and fortify their faith, they will become responsible citizens, men and women for others because of you.

Nor is this all: You have the responsibility of 8 major seminaries and schools of theology some of them open to seminarians from all over the country. You are forming priests and bishops and religious sisters and lay leaders for the whole country. You are involved in hospitals and clinics as administrators, nurses, workers or chaplains. You work in the promotion of justice and in the defense of human rights; you are present in the slums, you have shown remarkable preferential love for the poor so intensely proclaimed by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. You supply priests for the celebration of over 700 Masses and services on Sundays in parishes and barrio chapels. You direct retreats, you pray . . .

My heart exults at these blessings, "*Magnificat anima mea dominum!*" Indeed, what would happen to the Manila Archdiocese if one day, *per impossible*, all the religious in Manila would decide to go on indefinite strike and leave . . . what a pastoral catastrophe would befall the Church in Manila!

So, I wish to take this opportunity to thank first of all the good Lord for his special providence with the Archdiocese. And then I wish to thank you, and in you all the religious in the Archdiocese, for the generous gift of your persons, your presence, your services, your love . . . yesterday and today!

But where do we go from here? Let us now look at "tomorrow," this "tomorrow" that began yesterday and today!"

At the beginning of the Vatican Council, the prime abbot of a monastic confederation emphasized how things had changed in the Church as far as the relations between monks. And religious on the one side and the bishops on the other were concerned. We have definitely overcome, he said, those mutual suspicions or hidden fears that blurred in times past the sense of "communion" which should have prevailed. Today certainly no one would accept the unorthodox aphorism that we often heard in the past – and which he quoted in jest: "*Monachus vitet mulieres et episcopos!*" The monk should avoid women and bishops!

How could we ever think of avoiding the thousands of Sisters without whom the work of the apostolate would be handicapped without repair? Also, I am sure that you do not want to avoid your pastor, even with his human limitations. And most certainly, I do not want, I cannot even think of avoiding you, my dear men and women religious, on whose spiritual fervor, witness of life, and apostolic dedication I, as your pastor, count for the good of this local Church so dear to you and so dear to me.

Let us therefore now dream together! I have a dream for tomorrow, a dream triggered by the dream of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines as expressed in the final conciliar document from which I glean a few flowers:

I dream that the religious life in the Archdiocese will also be prophecy in the manner of Christ's own prophetic life as an urgent

dimension in the light of our evangelizing task as a Church and in the context of our history (cf. p. 82).

This is my dream, this is my hope, this is my prayer.

That the Good Lord who has given men and women the particular call and gift of committing themselves to Christ's discipleship in a way that is radical and explicit, formal and public, institutional and collective, be always active in you (cf. p. 83);

That the Church in Manila take a giant steps in its pilgrimage into the kingdom because its religious men and women, with Christ at the center of their lives, will live their passion for justice, compassion and identification with the poor, radical openness to God's word and resolute commitment to his will, refusal to rest comfortably on laurels of the past, and restlessness for a better tomorrow (cf. p. 92);

That religious men and women, consecrated to God by baptism and by the profession of evangelical counsels, exercise their duty of building up God's kingdom on earth in close union with the rest of the Church and, according to the specific charism of their institute, work together with the clergy and laity as a team (cf. p. 130 and art. 60).

I dream that the Church in Manila will be an ideal Church,

When your shepherd and the major religious superiors in the Archdiocese work together in discerning and deciding what responses in ministry are to be made and how they are to be implemented (Art. 62, p. 130);

When truly working mechanisms will be set up to promote regular dialogue among religious themselves, and between religious and planners of pastoral programs in the Archdiocese in order to achieve a more fruitful collaboration (cf. art. 62, p. 131);

When you, as religious collaborate with all the bishops, clergy and laity in the Church of Manila, but with freedom to live your charism in the way prescribed by your institutes, understanding them properly and

utilizing them as God's gift to the Archdiocese (cf. art. 64, p. 131).

This is my dream, this is my hope, this is my prayer.

Allow me then to make a suggestion that will give some concrete form to our "Tomorrow." Would it not be possible that we join forces in a very dynamic way for the promotion of vocations in the Archdiocese both to the priesthood and to the religious life? The Holy Father has indicated many times that the question of vocations is "the fundamental problem of the Church," and therefore the fundamental problem of every particular Church, of every religious family, the answer will depend very much on what image of lived vocation is being offered by us and received . . . by whom?

Obviously mainly by the youth. The youth is looking for prophets who are "signs." There is always the fascination the person of Christ exercises on the youth by his life-style, by the radical following he ignites. In his message of November 1, 1991, announcing the journey of vocations for May 10, 1992, the Pope exhorts the bishops to promote particularly among the clergy and the lay faithful the knowledge and esteem of consecrated life while reminding the religious families that the most effective pastoral of vocations is the personal testimony of life, fully convinced that we cannot live our consecration in a mediocre way. This may be a very concrete way of collaboration to achieve our dreams. We can work, we should work, we will work together in the promotion of vocations to realize the "Tomorrow that Began Yesterday."

I cannot end this homily without reflecting on the fact that the proto-type of God's true, existential gift to the Church is Mary, the Virgin from Nazareth. She had no share in power of Peter, she did not fill the office of an apostle.

She had to move the Church by inspiration, not by any external power. And yet, can the impact of her person on the Church ever be measured? She is the proto-type of religious vocation, she received a gift that did not originate in any external structure; yet she received a spiritual mission from God. The Holy Spirit has inspired a great number of men and women to follow

Mary in virginity and poverty. For this she could also say: "My soul proclaim the greatness of the Lord."

With her whose life was an eminently consecrated life, when I celebrate God's gift to me in this anniversary of my ordination today surrounded by another great gift – the crown of all of you, religious men and women, consecrated to him in various forms, in institutes of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life, and secular institutes – I want to thank God in union with Mary, the Mother of my vocation. I thank him for having given you to me and to the Church of Manila. I want to thank you also for what you have done, what you are doing, and what you will still do, and above all for what you are. With particular affection I thank you for what you are *to me* and *for me*. And yes: We will work together for the "Tomorrow that Began Yesterday."

Declarations of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in 1972 on General Absolution

Excelso Garcia, O.P.

15. Many local Ordinaries, considering the difficulties experienced by the faithful under them of making individual confession due to the shortage of priests, and bothered by the emerging unlawful custom of imparting sacramental absolution to large gatherings after making an act of general confession alone, requested the Holy See to promulgate specific norms on the nature of the Sacrament of Penance and to give some guidelines for the Christian Faithful on how to receive this sacrament faithfully.

After a careful study of the problems involved and having in mind the Instruction issued by the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary on March 25, 1944, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith made the following declarations in her Instruction *Sacramentum Paenitentiae* on June 16, 1972 (AAS, 1972, p. 510; *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, 1972, pp. 427 ff.):

I. The doctrine of the Council of Trent is to be firmly held and put into practice. Consequently the recent custom, which tends to substitute the individual sacramental confession with a general or communitarian celebration of penance to obtain forgiveness of mortal sins is to be reprovved. Divine Law, as declared by the Council of Trent, requires for the welfare of souls that individual sacramental confession properly done should be preserved. Individual and integral confession and absolution are the only ordi-

nary and normal form by which Christian faithful are reconciled to God and to the Church, unless it be physically or morally impossible to confess this way.

II. It can happen, however, that some particular circumstances require to impart absolution to a great number of penitents, without previous individual confession. This can happen, for instance, when *danger of death* is threatening and there is no time for the priest or priests present to hear the individual confession of the penitents. In such a case, any priest has the faculty to impart general absolution to the penitents, exhorting them before, if there is time, to make an act of contrition.

III. Outside the danger of death, sacramental absolution may licitly be imparted collectively to a gathering of faithful who have made a general confession and have been exhorted to make an act of contrition, as long as there exists a *serious necessity*, namely: when considering the number of penitents, there are not enough confessors to confess them properly within a reasonable period of time, so that the penitents would be deprived otherwise of sacramental grace or Sacred Communion for a long time, without their own fault. However, this cannot be done by reason of a numerous gathering of faithful alone, if there are confessors available, as for instance on occasion of a solemn feast day or a pilgrimage.

IV. Local Ordinaries and to some extent priests also are bound in conscience to do something to prevent that the number of confessors become insufficient to fulfill this sacred ministry, while they involve themselves in temporal affairs or other not so necessary ministries, especially if these can be carried out by deacons and suitable lay people.

V. It belongs to the local Ordinary to judge whether the conditions mentioned in n. III are present, and to decide when it is licit to impart the sacramental absolution collectively, after conferring with other members of the Bishops Conference. If, besides the cases determined by the local Ordinary, another *grave necessity* to impart collectively the general absolution arises, the priest should make recourse to the local Ordinary first, if possible, in order to impart the absolution licitly; if it is not possible, he has to inform the Ordinary about the necessity and the absolution given, as soon as possible.

VI. With regard to the faithful, they are absolutely required, in order to receive fruitfully the sacramental absolution which will be imparted collectively, to be properly disposed, i.e., to make an act of contrition, to propose not to sin again, to be determined to repair any scandal and possible damages, and resolve to confess in due time all mortal sins, not yet remitted, if any, that cannot be confessed at the moment. The priest should diligently inform the faithful about these dispositions and conditions, since all of them are required to receive the sacrament validly.

VII. Penitents whose mortal sins have been remitted by general absolution, are bound to confess them in an individual sacramental confession before receiving another collective general absolution, unless impeded by a just cause. They are strictly bound to do so within a year. And they should not forget the serious obligation binding all Christian faithful to confess, at least once a year, if they have committed mortal sin.

VIII. Priests should instruct the faithful that those who are aware of being in mortal sin are forbidden to evade, willfully or out of negligence, to confess their mortal sins in individual sacramental confessions, while waiting for an occasion when general absolution will be imparted collectively.

IX. In order that Christian faithful may fulfill their obligation to make an individual sacramental confession, it is necessary that confessors be available in the churches on days and time convenient for the faithful.

In remote or hard to be reached places, seldom visited by a priest within a year, let the priest, whenever he goes there, hear the confession of some penitents and give general absolution to the others, if conditions stated in n. III are fulfilled. In this way all faithful will be able to make at least an individual confession yearly.

X. Christian faithful should be instructed that liturgical celebrations and communitarian penitential rites are very useful to achieve a more fruitful preparation to the sacramental confession of sins and to amend one's life. But these should never be confused with sacramental confession and absolution. If penitents make their individual sacramental confession during these liturgi-

cal celebrations or communitarian penitential rites, each penitent must receive absolution from the confessor who heard his confession. In case sacramental absolution be given collectively, it should be done according to the special rites established by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship. This kind of celebration must be performed outside the Mass.

XI. Penitents who need to repair scandal can certainly, as long as they are sincere to amend their lives and are serious to repair the scandal, receive general absolution collectively; however, they should not take Holy Communion until the scandal is already repaired according to the confessor to whom they should approach. With regards to absolution from censures which are reserved, the existing laws should be followed: recourse is to be computed from the time of the individual confession to be made.

XIII. Sacramental absolutions collectively imparted, which do not conform to the foregoing norms are to be considered as serious abuses which all pastors should prevent to happen out of awareness of the moral duty enjoined upon them for the welfare of souls and for the protection of the dignity of the Sacrament of Penance.

16. We can summarize all the contents of the foregoing Declarations of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, into three categories:

a. *doctrinal principles.* The doctrine of the Council of Trent must be held firmly and put into practice. Divine law requires for the welfare of souls that individual sacramental confession be preserved. It is the only normal and ordinary form of reconciliation with God and with the Church. This individual confession cannot be substituted by a general or communitarian celebration of penance. General absolution may be imparted when *danger of death* is threatening and when a *serious and grave necessity exists*, with no possibility for individual confession. It cannot be imparted, however, by reason of a numerous gathering of faithful alone if there are confessors available, as on feastdays and pilgrimages. Those faithful who have received general absolution are still bound to confess once a year, according to the Church precept.

b. *Priests may impart general absolution in danger of death.* In case of a *serious and grave necessity* they need the license of the

Ordinary, if possible; otherwise, they have to notify the local Ordinary about the necessity and the given absolution. In both cases, *in danger of death* and in case of *grave necessity*, they can give general absolution when there is no time to make individual confession. They must exhort penitents to make an act of contrition. They should not impart general absolution by reason of the great number of penitents alone, if there are confessors available, as on feast days or pilgrimages. Priests should help in conscience make themselves available for confessions to prevent lack of confessors. In remote and out of the way places, the priest should hear the confession of at least some penitents on each visit so that all of them will be able to make individual confession at least once a year. All priests should instruct the Christian faithful not to confuse liturgical and communitarian penitential rites with individual sacramental confession and absolution, and should tell them that when they make their individual confession during a communitarian rite, they should receive general absolution given by the confessor to whom they have confessed their sins. Whenever sacramental absolution is imparted collectively, it should be done according to the prescribed rite, always outside the Mass. With regards to absolution of censures, which are reserved, the existing laws should be followed. Sacramental absolutions, collectively imparted, which do not conform to these norms are to be considered as serious abuses, which all priests should prevent from happening out of awareness of their moral duty which involves the welfare of souls and respect for the dignity of Sacrament of Penance.

c. *With regard to the faithful.* In order to receive fruitfully general absolution, the Christian faithful are required to make an act of contrition and propose not to sin again, to repair any scandal and possible damages, and resolve to confess in due time within a year, but before receiving another general absolution, all mortal sins not yet remitted, if any, that could not be confessed at the moment. Those who have to repair scandal and damages, should not take Holy Communion until the scandal and damages are repaired. They are seriously forbidden to evade willfully or by negligence to confess their mortal sins, remitted by general absolution, in individual sacramental confession before they receive another general absolution. When they make their individual sacramental confession during a liturgical celebration or communitarian-

ian penitential rite, they should receive absolution from the confessor to whom they have confessed their sins and not from another priest.

All the foregoing Declarations of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith refer, in one way or another, to general or collective absolution. They are the main source of the three canons of our present Church law on general absolution.

Festal Homilies for July and August 1992

Roman Carter, O.P.

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 5, 1992

*Readings: Is 66:10-15
Gal 6:14-18
Lk 10:1-12, 17-20*

Themes of peace and identification with Christ stand out in the readings for this fourteenth Sunday of Year C of the cycle. Jerusalem as the veritable wet nurse of the servants of Yahweh puts in the glow of a spotlight on collectivity the subject of the first reading. The Gospel treats of a more concrete and concise collectivity that of the seventy-two as instructed, commissioned and bearers of fruit in the following of Christ. When we turn to the second reading, as we shall do last, the accent is so individual as to border on the autobiographic, but we must remember that St. Paul (even in the conclusion of a letter) is primarily one who exhorts on basis of a live and lived theology.

As we turn to the very last chapter of the great roll of Isaiah let us be mindful that it is Trito-Isaiah (the third and final contributor to the massive whole) who writes. He obviously wants to give a definitive conclusion to the materials collected as late as 500 B.C. And in this conclusion he wishes to assign Jerusalem permanent, motherly and (as far as possible) universal role. His song begins with unabashed rejoicing and continues as a singular, but by no means unique, example of "feminine messianism" in its

worked out development. The sense of initial ecstasy is boundless, the earthy image of breastfeeding is in no way crude but tender beyond compare. Jerusalem becomes in the poem the universal mother of believers and the image par excellence of the Church. God gives her peace like a fast flowing river on whose banks all nations can be content. She is the comfort of her children given by God in love. His hand through her workings will caress the true and furiously strike the false.

The type of peace to be proffered by the seventy-two is rather different in the circumstances of its being imparted but of the same depth of quality and breadth of outreach. For it is the peace of God. Here Luke is dependent on "Q" material and the mission of the Twelve in chapter nine is much like that of the seventy-two in chapter ten. How the number seventy-two was arrived at has been subject to fanciful conjecture and probably does not matter. The important thing is that the Church involves sizable numbers in her mission, and Luke pre-dates this to Christ. The mission itself is both urgent and pacific. Peace begets peace. Common sense and the New Law determine both procedures and details, but the message is certain: the nearness of God's reign.

Since repentance is being offered, those who reject it will have a worse fate than Sodom to which no such thing was offered. The results of the mission are good. Indeed, they involve the triumph of good over the evil one. Satan falls like lightning and his accusations hold water no more. But whatever exorcistic authority Christ's disciples hold, their interior growth and heavenly "record" are more important than feats, however wonderful, which can remain superficial and lead to shallow vanity.

St. Paul concludes his terse, sharp and challenging letter to the Galatians not with tender, personal greetings as in other writings but with a stern (almost stubborn) reminder of all he has said against the pernicious Judaizers who are the bane of this local Church. Paul sees himself by baptism and apostolate a sharer in the cross of Christ. This sharing is in a life-giving principle not in exterior, bodily marks which as such are indifferent. We become new creation through a glorious Lord. The true "Israel of God" is the people of faith, not the people of picayune and self-congratulatory observances. Paul has been marked by illness, by flogging, by a thousand contretemps. He will not allow himself to be pes-

tered by pious idiocy. Finally, as a gesture of reconciliation, he greets the wayward Galatians as "brothers" worthy of Christ's grace.

From all this we can conclude that the Church is always ready to "mother" us, to give us love, joy and peace. Furthermore, Christ's urgent commission to us his members is one of peace based on growth in the Holy Spirit. But the conformity required of us by apostolic teaching is no external towing of the line. It is deep, internal identity in suffering crowned with glory. Only by childlike receptivity can we be fed. Only by having peace within can we spread it abroad. Only by being claimed ~~by~~ and for Christ can we appear before the world as God's own people to proclaim and to share his gracious will for all.

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 12, 1992

Readings: Dt 30:10-14

Col 1:15-20

Lk 10:25-37

Our readings on this Sunday in Year C cover a wide range of inspired thought taken from extremely varied portions of Scripture written over and alluding to an even wider range of time. Deuteronomy is a hard book to date with exactitude though many scholars would "anchor" it in the seventh century before Christ. Because of the great variety of its content including apparently archaic elements many would extend both its composition and its redaction over a long period from the ninth century to the sixth. St. Luke seems to have written at a period when Christian preaching to pagans had taken on some definitive and stylized turns. Opinions range from the early sixties of our era to 85 A.D. A large percentage of scholars would say after the fall of Jerusalem to Roman force in 70 A.D. Colossians offers greater problems, for its dating depends not on its Pauline doctrine but on its authorship as ascribed to Paul. If Paul wrote it and wrote it in Rome it would date from before 63 A.D. If it is someone else's redacting of re-elaborated Pauline ideas it could, of course, date from the seventies and that might account for its "High" Christology among other things.

The context of our passage from Deuteronomy is that of a liturgical homily addressed to the exilic community sometime between 587 and 538 B.C. The speaker (possibly a Levite with knowledge of the prophetic words of Jeremiah which he faintly echoes) has exhorted the people on a return to their land in terms of repentance by putting his own words on the lips of Moses in Moab over seven hundred years earlier. His art of oratory is powerful and has a strong beauty in Hebrew. But beyond these material considerations the formality of Torah lore is shot through with wisdom. The return to the Lord is not just to be to the letter of his Law but a return involving the listeners' whole heart and being. For the Law is given in human language easy enough to understand. God who acts in freedom and power evokes from his people a response which demands rethinking, in depth meditation and heartfelt renewal.

In the gospel Christ is already heading towards Jerusalem, in the direction of death and resurrection. Luke, dependent as in last Sunday's selection on Q, now pauses to tell a parable all his own in characterization, impact and depth of caring. This is the renowned "Parable of the Good Samaritan." Rather than posit his illustration in terms of the Law, Luke (a Gentile) has our Lord talk in Johannine terms of "eternal life." The poignant reply to "Who is my neighbor?" is, therefore, all the more telling. Of course the characters in the parable are a mere device for the type of *surprising social critique* Luke loves to give. The man who is robbed is all mankind, the Samaritan is Jesus and the conventional religiosity of both priest and Levite is as ineffectual as it is lacking in sensitivity. Luke's point is that Christ cares. Judaism as formalized cult and dead letter morality does not. And so the showing of mercy wins the day even if a supposed Samaritan heretic and schismatic is the one who shows it!

In Colossians we are not only dealing with a different type of literature but with loftier and more theologically central ideas than those exposed by Deuteronomy and Luke. For here we center our thoughts on neither a foreshadowing nor a metaphorical image of Christ but on Jesus "as he really is" in the Presence of the Father. And just how is he? Supreme, in the Pauline text and its theology. Not only does our Lord free us from all dark powers, he is in himself the eternal agent of God's creation. Nothing and no

one can surpass him. Creation depends on him. So does his Body, the Church. For he is sovereign Head of all. By his resurrection he has brought humanity as such to new heights. By his death peace and reconciliation are universally available.

God our Father wants us to obey him in spirit and in truth and to transcend by his spirit every letter of the Law finding for it new dimensions in the "easy yoke and light burden" of Christ. Jesus himself wants us to serve one another and all mankind in generous gladness with no concern for the race, nationality or professed creed of any man, woman or child in need. Our mission is universal for such is our love. Our neighbor is anyone, anywhere and everyone, everywhere. But to know this obedience as reality and to practice this love in truth we must have a clear contemplation of our model, the Lord of glory. When Jesus as the Father's Word and as man's Redeemer is at the center of our lives all other things fall into place. He acknowledges our faith and gives us the grace to trust him still more. He spurs us to services of our neighbor overcoming every trace of unregenerate shyness or chauvinism which lingers in our hearts. And he brings us to the Father, to the Promised Land, to new and eternal life in a rapport of obedience which binds us not with legalistic fetters but frees us as loving sons and daughters for union with our God.

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 19, 1992

Readings: Gn 18:1-10
Col 1:24-28
Lk 10:38-42

Two readings on hospitality (the first and the gospel) and one on a world-wide apostolic mission might seem to have little to hold them together. But, of course, they are in reality three readings on and in the virtue of faith. Abraham, Martha, her sister Mary and Paul have through the "three men" (Yahweh in fact) and Jesus triumphant found faith. We, as we hear of them and try to follow their exacting example, can be built up and augmented in faith, too. For this to happen, of course, we must go beyond the apparent (whatever is merely obviously to the senses) to the divine reality which, although in itself it transcends the powers of our perception, raises us up and takes us beyond our-

selves, far even from the promises of God into the realm of the God of all promise.

Each of the sacred authors we read today helps us in a different way. But diverse as their presentations may be each one hurls before us the gauntlet of God's challenge. "J" the author of Genesis 18 wants us to know that God's promises are made to real men and women truly alive in time and space, to people who eat and drink and entertain their guests. And so he does not present Abraham as approached by a grand theophany but by three beings who appear human enough with feet to wash and capabilities of lying down on the ground or leaning against a shady tree. To honor their presence the hospitable patriarch brings milk and cream and veal. He does this as rapidly as his time and circumstances allow. He has no cold storage system with exact temperature controls; nor can he count on microwave devices. All he has are beasts and servants. But what he does (his best) is accepted by God. And a son is promised.

Poor Martha! Living a good eighteen centuries or more later than Abraham, she has many more "modern conveniences." She lives in a house, not a tent. And the house may well be manorial. Though no servants are mentioned she probably has quite a few. But she is a busy-body, a domestic workaholic. The table settings, the crockery, the goblets, the viands, the wine well mixed with water, all draw and keep her thus divided attention. A stickler for detail she has lost the "big picture." Not so her sister, Mary. All Mary wants is to contemplate the Word. She leaves the busy-ness to Martha. And isn't Martha peeved? "Lord, tell her . . ." But Jesus has come not for the distracting details which will always fall into place in good catering. He has come to fulfil God's promise. For he is the true son of Abraham, perceptible only in faith. Thus Mary who clings to her place at his feet, having found faith, loves his very Presence as the one thing necessary.

St. Paul has some strange things to say in our passage of Colossians. For centuries people have wondered what he means in reference to completing Christ's sufferings. Probably he means that to proclaim Christ all over the world is going to cost in terms of time, effort and even persecution. If it is Paul who writes it has already cost him dearly. But of course, the real impact of these

verses goes beyond literary or theological riddles. What we are presented with in truth is Christ our hope of glory. The last verse uses the Greek *pas* (all) four times to stress how universal is the perfect and perfecting promise of God in Christ. Through the baring of this universal message Paul both utilizes and transcends his own weary stance.

We can turn hospitality into mere point winning and favor gaining. There is nothing particularly promising about either one. We can be meticulous to a fault and, all the while lead lives of misery, wrought in gloom and headed for doom. For we can exalt things over persons and empty ourselves for nothing. We can suffer and grow tired and complain. And nothing will necessarily come of all that, either. Or we can live in faith. A life of faith is always open to divine surprises, unexpected children. A life of faith unifies all our concerns and makes our thoughts, words and deeds "one-pointed." In faith we can (whatever the cost in toil, pain and fatigue) get to the central mystery. We can find Christ. We can find hope. Better still, we can spread what we have found to all throughout the whole wide world!

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
July 26, 1992

Readings: Gn 18:20-32
Col 2:12-14
Lk 11:1-13

In our readings today we hear Abraham pleading a lost cause, our Lord teaching his doctrine of prayer and St. Paul expounding the right relationship of Christians with God as effected by baptism and conformed with Christ's paschal mystery. The rather tenuous thread that binds and links these themes is the central question of man's access to God. How can what is human (however elevated) truly relate to what is divine? This is, of course, no vague, speculative conundrum reserved to the aulae of a decadent scholasticism. No; it is a practical question for our day to day lives in which we constantly ask and hear asked why some people pray efficaciously and find strength and joy in the Lord and others simply do not.

Abraham in Genesis 18 is face to face with the powers and the problem of evil. This evil, again, is no object of moral speculation however fine. It is evil incarnate, the sinful men of Sodom in their sin. Abraham's vision and will are good but limited. Yahweh's will is infinitely better and his vision both universal and eternal. Abraham perceives within the bounds of earthly experience something of the temporal and spatial relationship of cause and effect. Yahweh is cause of all and knows every effect in its ultimate nuance from all eternity. The sealed fate of Sodom and Gomorrah can no more be changed by Abraham's prayers than can the destruction of sin by Christ be changed by yours or mine. However, God would treat Abraham amiss were he to exclude the patriarch from a greater vision and allow him to wallow in the mire of conjecture. The imagery is primitive for the message is concrete. God becomes an agent of his own purpose and "investigates" the Cities of the Plain. Abraham puts forth his plea for fifty, forty-five, forty, twenty, ten. Note he never says, "one." The responsibility for the sins of Sodom is collective. God's mercy, furthermore, is inexhaustible. But there is no way Abraham can win. For Sodom is condemned for its own callousness and this is beyond the competence of Abraham's prayer or responsibility.

The Lucan account of the Lord's Prayer is quite different in context from Matthew's. But the content, while abbreviated, is basically the same. The difference between the Our Father in Luke and Matthew's version is taken to be one of liturgical usages which varied in the local Churches in which the Gospels were written or evolved. Like many synagogal prayers these variants were composed in rhyming verse. As John the Baptist's disciples had a "method" of prayer, Christ's yearn for one. Jesus teaches them to call God, "Father," to acknowledge his abiding holiness (both in Jesus himself and in the promised Spirit) and the need for the Kingdom as the cleansing realm of the Holy Spirit. The petition for bread has a "day after day" Eucharistic nuance. Forgiveness is likewise ongoing, whereas the "test" will be the future and last onslaught of the evil one. In short, the prayer gives God rightful glory and presents our needs both of the moment and for time to come in a succinct form.

When we turn to Colossians we find St. Paul analyzing the whole Christian experience in terms of direct reference to Christ's work of merit. The effects of this meritorious and salvific action are appropriated to us first of all as the waters of Baptism are applied. In a profound and efficacious sense our Christian initiation transforms us through killing what was old by Christ's death and burial and bringing to new and lasting life our true selves through his resurrection. But for Christian life to be viable and authentic this appropriation must be constantly renewed. What was nailed to the cross must be contemplated as firmly there affixed lest we forget how great a debt was canceled when Christ in his saving work first dealt with sin.

How often we are tempted to engage like Abraham in "prayers" without thought, for things God never could will. How often we attempt to give him "commands." He is not a computer. He cannot be programmed. There is no use arguing with God about his will which will never be moved by us when our intentions are evil or mixed with evil. God does not condone sin, he forgives it when men repent. So let us desist from any further attempts at "magical manipulation" hiding under the euphemism of "intercessory prayer." For true intercession ever insists, "your will, not mine, be done."

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he was not teaching so many words or phrases. He was teaching a method of placing ourselves openly before God, giving him acknowledgement, calling on him in faith for ongoing needs and asking for the grace of perseverance. We need not say two thousand "Our Fathers" a day to praise and beseech him. If we say one (or any other prayer along its lines) well we shall have addressed him in spirit and in truth.

However, whatever we do in way of prayer be it the humblest petition or the highest act of contemplation all must be done with a memory ever thankfully fixed on Christ. For he has died for us and has risen again. He has baptized us through his ministers into his death and raised us up again. He wills to raise us higher and higher, from strength to strength, from glory to glory till we are truly and completely his forever!

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 2, 1992

Readings: Qo 1:2 & 2:21-23

Col 3:1-5, 9-11

Lk 12:13-21

This year's readings for the Eighteenth Sunday all concern themselves with where, why and wherefore in the life of man. Our human nature in its earthly state is very much restricted (not to say modified) by our physical reality. Whatever else may be said about any of us, it is true that we must be "somewhere" and that place is exclusive of all others. If I am "here," I am not "there," however much I might dream of being or would like to be. This limitation of space is, of course, so concomitant with that of time that some philosophers of scientific bent regard the two realities as simultaneous and inseparable. For all intents and purposes only religions and their theologies either separate or transcend time and space, imaginatively, really and finally. And in this Christianity has adopted an approach as drastic as it is all-pervasive.

The first reading is taken from one of the strangest and most disheartening pieces of literature to find its way into our Bible. The book is a unique example of Jewish nihilism in a state of nearly desperate *welt-schmerz*. In Hebrew the book is called Qoheleth, "a man of the assembly." This in Greek and Latin is "Ecclesiastes" and both St. Jerome and Martin Luther translate it "preacher." The book is a collection of gloomy reflections, probably from the third and fourth centuries before Christ, on a series of unconnected subjects. Our reading, apart from the introductory words on vanity in general, is from a discussion of the vanity of toil. The author claims, quite fictitiously, to be a king and "son of David" and thus able to talk of riches and pleasure from a regal point of view. Labor is seen as a vain pursuit resulting in no lasting pleasure but merely leaving all one has earned to someone else. The author finds no consolation in having related heirs and is simply stunned by the ugliness of inevitable death.

In the Gospel Jesus raises a similar question but both his way of posing it and his implicit answer are different from Qoheleth's ponderous meditation. For our Lord is talking about hoard-

ing rather than earning. He tells the story of a rich fool. Such an avaricious man accumulates much, thinking he will have much. Then he contemplates pleasure in possession. But how he has tricked himself! God requires his soul. Tonight he must die. But he could have had real treasure, that of the Spirit, in the sight of God.

Thank God for the second reading! The author of Colossians is blithely unconcerned about earthly life as such. Whatever involves us in time and space is for him merely a means. The end is heavenly. The end is eternal. And the transition from means to end has already been made even if it is not yet finally realized. We can have thoughts in heaven. We can converse with God in heaven. For we have died and are now "hidden with Christ in God." Of course this means we must constantly slay every new growth of evil that threatens what baptism has accomplished for us. And we must eschew the petty considerations of the here and the now. Christ must be "all in all" for us if we are to maintain ourselves in grace.

Perhaps none of us is tempted very often to sink to the gloom of Qoheleth. "All is vanity" must remain the slogan of a relatively joyless elite. Few of us, no matter how hard we work, will ever have such abundance as could be considered problematic. Furthermore, we all love our heirs as younger brothers and sisters in Christ. But we can store spiritual treasure for ourselves, and we should. Most consoling of all considerations, however, is the profound Pauline thought that what is already accomplished by Christ is applicable in our lives as soon as we know it.

At this Mass let us rejoice that we are one with Christ in talking to and pleading with the Father. Let us rejoice that this altar holds not just bread and watered wine but our very lives. Let us rejoice that no care based on our physical limitations, no concern of time or limiting obstacle of space can, in the end, hold us down. Soon these annoying factors will be cleared away. Then, if Christ is already at the center of our lives, "all in all" will, indeed, be all. Nothing further will be needed: no toil, no reward, no pain, no pleasure, no garnering and no inheritance of material things. For spirit will triumph. Our renewed and undistorted image will appear and our likeness to Christ (our new self) will

never change or fade away. This reality, once complete, will endure forever!

Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 9, 1992

Readings: Ws 18:6-9
Heb 11:1-2 & 8-19
Lk 12:32-48

"Philosophy of religion" may well seem like a strange phrase, too contemporary and alarmingly abstract, with which to sum up and categorize the contents of today's three readings. However, we must insist that today's liturgy of the word presents us with an unusual (and hard to handle) "study in meaning" rather unlike our usual Sunday fare. The philosophic problem is to decipher meaning from content and context with neither doing them violence nor lessening the impact caused by their truly inspired truth. In any study of religious literature this problem is found to be as frequent as it is typical of the genre. But when we deal with the Bible, the Koran, with Judaism, Christianity or Islam it is complicated by the sociological datum that what is meant is also believed. It is believed not just by the author, commentator or individual reader or listener but by a community with a history, a community alive, articulate and searching for new depth within its own history as an ongoing and inescapable reality of faith.

The first reading recapitulates Exodus according to the singular modality of Wisdom. What we have here is but a relatively short snippet on what Fr. Addison Wright in the *Jerome* calls a "digressive diptych," a literary device of complex poetical characteristics in which syllables and lines play an amazingly symmetrical role. Content is far from accidental but it has to be made to fit rhythm. And all this is done with great artistry in Greek by a very late author, possibly one who lived in the first century before Christ in Alexandria. Whoever he is, he is not King Solomon. But wherever he is writing from his message is Jewish to the core. He writes both as a propagandist for and a lover of the lore of his people. His anthropomorphism unlike that of Penteteuch is anything but naive.

Curiously, the author of the Letter to the Hebrews (who is certainly not St. Paul) is a character as intent on propaganda and

as in love with his subject as the author of Wisdom is. But he is a Christian and, indeed, an almost "ultra-Christian" in his high and elaborate defense of Jesus and his primitive community. But he, too, depends on "lore," on hand-me-down legends fraught with meaning but obscured by their very sense of color. His rendition of Abraham's obedience in three unlikely situations (the last being the sacrifice of Isaac) becomes a veritable peon of faith. His harking back to anthropomorphism in Genesis is balanced by a sophistication of meaning as regards divine purpose so completely Christian as to transcend the Old Testament sense (however late and well developed) of the author of Wisdom.

St. Luke is, of course, a very different writer from the other two. Whatever may be said of the Aramaic-speaking witnesses who enter into the sources and background of his writing, Luke himself is Graeco-Roman through and through. But he is first and foremost a believer in Christ. Therefore, when he recounts the parable of vigilance and loyalty he does so in the tense context of a faith at once fulfilled in Christ as mediator of its divine object and not yet complete in the writer or the reader. But he is writing of Christ's earthly life and, in contrast, we have already received the Holy Spirit. The tension of what is already accomplished both in Christ and in us and what is yet to come in the Second Coming and our perfection in him is the sustained problematic element which pervades Lucan theology. It can only find temporal resolution in watchful work and utterly responsible loyalty.

How then are we to apply these teachings on the meaning of man's right relationship with the Father as mediated by Christ and enlivened by the Spirit to our lives? Certainly we should do ill to concentrate on vengeance, destruction, strange promises, human sacrifice or night work. These are but illustrative "counters" in a religious context where we are supposed to know how to move them on the "board" of Salvation History recalled, our "religion game," if you like. No; it is the meaning that counts. As God cared once for Israel in Egypt, he cares about us now. As God demanded pilgrimage and trust from Abraham long ago, he demands the same from us wherever and whenever we are. As Jesus cries, "stay awake, take care, beware and expect what you deserve" to the apostolic band gathered round him on earth, he cries out the same to us with ever greater urgency. To be related to God

requires a sense of reliance. To follow Christ is to follow one both fulfilling and fulfilled. To live in the Holy Spirit is to be open to God's word which, however obscurely it may be written on paper or proclaimed in public, burns gently but constantly in our hearts.

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 16, 1992

Readings: Jr 38:4-6 & 8-10

Heb 12:1-4

Lk 12:49-53

The prophet Jeremiah in dire straights, Christ as cause of dissension and encouragement in the battle against evil are the themes of today's readings. They certainly give cause for pausing in this mid-August time. We are asked to reflect on the price to be paid both for true commitment and its heavenly reward. Our reflection need not be pessimistic but it must be realistic. We cannot pretend that friendship with God, whether in terms of prophetic stance, messianic mission or day-to-day rigors of discipleship, is easily found or maintained. But we can assume perseverance will make for a greater happiness than those without trials and tribulation could ever know. And this happiness will be appreciated beyond telling because of the sorrow it has overcome.

Never has Jeremiah been brought so low. He is in the miry well, sunken in mud and awaiting death. Then, by royal order, he is released. Why this anguish and suffering, this cruel torture and this release into still another prison? He has predicted the fall of Jerusalem. He has spoken for God, only to be rejected by ambitious but blind sinners.

The twelfth chapter of Hebrews tries to deal with the problem of evil. Of course the problem has no solution just some remedies in outlook and patient endurance. The counsel of the author of Hebrews is so typically Christian that it is often taken for granted or misunderstood. The basic insight is that good can come from evil if the evil is borne not with condoning but in light of an outcome bound to be good. In short, evil as discipline or even punishment is both bearable and conducive to good. Evil as such remains bad. Therefore, though it can and sometimes must be borne, it should never be sought. Our Lord "endured" the cross

and extolled its necessity but he did not cling to the sins of others which caused his death. He forgave them and rid himself, thus, of them forever. Thus whatever evil we endure as long as it leads to good should be put up with at the time. Later for true freedom before God we must discard and even "forget" it.

The brief passage from St. Luke's Gospel which is our gospel reading today shows how unwilling is our Lord Jesus Christ to accept any compromise with evil. Like Jeremiah he will be unpopular. As outlined in Hebrews he will undergo punishment. But, come what may, he will never allow a "peace" that is the mere "cessation of hostilities" for his divine hostility to Satan and all evil-doers set in their practices will remain till the end of time. Acquiescing to the status quo was always wrong for Christ and is always wrong for Christians. For perfection (however "unpopular") is his goal and ours.

Few of us will be subject to the cruelty Jeremiah underwent. But all of us who opt for truth and goodness on basis of true faith will suffer petty persecution and even insolence from family and friends. For most of our families and friends are at best semi-pagan and some are sunk in sin. All of us configured to Christ can learn to bear with many evils. For the Risen Lord has raised our sights to the Highest Good. Meanwhile we must learn in the school of Christ to reject all compromise with this passing world. We must learn that antiquated customs and archaic thought patterns are not "values" but mere temptations to align ourselves with the self-congratulation of the proud. True Christian peace comes from dependence on God alone, from having divine and heavenly standards and from walking the way of the Cross to the glory of the Kingdom. Without God's grace none of this would be possible. In the power of the Holy Spirit all good things are possible. May our basic option ever be that of Christ himself!

Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time
August 23, 1992

Readings: *Is 66:18-21*
 Heb 12:5-7 & 11-13
 Lk 13:22-30

Our first reading today is from the grand "finale" of the great roll called Isaiah, one of the most central and basic books of the

whole Old Testament. The second reading is from the enigmatic but equally fundamental Letter to the Hebrews, a late first century document of uncertain provenance traditionally attached as a coda or appendix to the Pauline corpus. And the gospel, like most this year, is from that according to St. Luke. The readings in effect tell such different stories and presuppose such different world views that they are hard to lump together and even harder to analyze for analogous points.

What we are dealing with in the final sections of Trito-Isaiah is a prose account of the glory of the Lord perceptible at last by Gentiles. The means of perception is a sign. Just what sign seems to elude the prophet as much as it does the reader. Evidently it somehow coincides with the invitation to come to Jerusalem to be "priests and Levites" to the Lord. Of course, we as Christians see the sign as God Incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ inviting all men and women of every nation to his New Jerusalem.

The reading from Hebrews continues the strain began last Sunday on the merit of discipline applied now to all the sons of God rather than to the Eternal Son alone. Taking a large chunk from the book of Proverbs the author applies it as loving discipline. Then the image changes to that of racing analogous to journeying. In any case hardship must be borne to attain the goal in question which is, of course, eternal rather than temporal.

In the passage we have just proclaimed from St. Luke the salvation of the Remnant alluded to by Amos and Isaiah and salient as a feature of Matthew is involved. The "Q" dependence is generally accepted by scholars. And the point of the passage is not that intensity of effort is needed by that timing of what leads to salvation must be correct. The time to strive is not in "kingdom come" but now. Jesus knows those to whom he has imparted justification by faith in a context of mutual recognition and mutual love, ours and his. He knows no one else. But he knows more universally than some would suspect, and he gives a proverb of love suitable to more than one situation "the last and first" being of varied levels of Christian experience and from many times and places.

We ourselves are surprisingly invited by the Lord. But our goal will be attained only at the end of a hard path and we must

suffer some weariness and pain in the homecoming process. Still the Lord encourages us to understand that intimacy with him is of far greater importance than any racial or even religious considerations. What he wants is for us to sit down at the banquet. What he rejects is a display of pseudo-credentials. And so in all things we must be hopeful. We must claim our rights not as would have the pompous Jews of Jesus' time but precisely as the excluded and hard pressed sons and daughters of God. But we shall know we are of the elect if the road is rocky and we have much to bear. For then a sense of divine familiarity will overtake us at last.

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 30, 1992

*Readings: Si 3:19-21 & 30-31
Heb 12:18-19 & 22-24
Lk 14:1 & 7-14*

The book of Jesus, son of Eleazar, son of Sira, referred to in Greek as Sirach and in Latin as Ecclesiasticus dates from around 180 B.C. It is basically an apology for Judaism the general plan of which is hard to trace. Originally written in Hebrew, large fragments of the original text having been recovered between 1896 and 1963, for centuries it was found only in the Greek recension. The part used for today's reading comes from the third subsection of a long introductory section on morals and man. Our topic is duty towards parents. This is treated in light of the divine command of Exodus 20:12 and its reward.

The second reading continues the selections from Hebrews which have characterized the last four Sundays. In rounding off the teachings on discipline and obedience the author becomes almost lavishly poetic in his imagery and gives a sense of the universal fulfillment of all Old Testament images by selecting a few. This fulfillment is not found in the Church as earthly community but in the heavenly finality of Christian truth. Here the Church is the assembly of the first-born and Christ himself the plenitudinous antitype of Abel. Here all judgment and completion is found in the very presence of God himself.

From St. Luke's gospel we have as today's gospel reading a section of the so-called "Lucan Symposium." The setting is a banquet

at a Pharisee's house. Jesus uses the occasion to teach something more than etiquette. He has no particular interest in pharisaical "values" as such. What interests our Lord is the Kingdom and the humility it requires. We are not humiliated, "given a poor image" or "put down" by Christian teaching. Rather, we are reminded what are our depths compared with the supreme height of God and of how we must depend on him for salvation. And then, to cap all, St. Luke has Jesus tell us in what Godlikeness truly consists. The bliss of serving those who can in no way help themselves.

As often happens on these Sundays in Ordinary Time our readings leave a very disjointed impression. What is heavenly about loving my parents? Nothing could appear more earthly. How can type fulfillment in the nascent conflicts between late Judaism and early Christianity faze me at the end of a chaotic, war-torn and economically disastrous century? Eyes on heaven seem to distract from earth. "Pie in the sky" solves no actual problems. And, finally, who cares where he or she sits at the banquet as long as he or she gets there? Unselfish and kind service is all very well of course but only for those whose largess is affordable.

Reward in its most interior sense and its deepest pacifying effect is the theme that ties these passages together. It is not a passing or perishable prize which we as Catholic Christians seek. We want God. We long for his presence. We want to savor his beauty and contemplate his truth. That would be heavenly. That would be heaven itself. But we realize that to attain such transcendent bliss we must be reformed within. We must cast out the leaven of pride and ambition for being "*Numero Uno*" and seek the lowest place. Then we can be called higher and in the process of mounting from rank to rank, never anxious over our own status but only concerned with the goal, attain the Kingdom. And as we rise from glory to glory we shall have more and more opportunity of finding what God is like as in imitation of Christ we invite, tend to, nourish and lift up the poor.