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The Said and the Seen

Roman Carter, O.P.

Among the features of this issue of Boletin is the Pastoral Instruction Aetatis Novae on social communications issued under the pen of Archbishop Foley who heads the Pontifical Council for Social Communications in Rome. The document, commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the pastoral instruction Communio et Progressio cites many papal, curial and conciliar documents all having to do in whole or in part with the mass media. The document we are publishing now has many useful reflections. A "value" centered emphasis on things moral and ethical is preponderous but not exclusive. In dealing with the media the Church can never forget her bounden duty to proclaim both goodness and truth.

The proclamation of truth in a predominantly Catholic country like the Philippines has its own inherent difficulties. I speak from experience. In the late eighties I hosted, scripted and largely oversaw a series of fifty-two episodes on national television under the program title My Lord and My God. We certainly were not the only religious program on TV. Quite the contrary. Catholics, Protestants, peripheral bodies like the Iglesia Ni Cristo and even somewhat distorted representations of Eastern religions had their contributors. But if we except certain "canned" (pretaped and long delayed in transmission) Pentecostal and fundamentalist programs from America we were one of the few doctrinal programs.

From the outset of my work with the media whether here in the Philippines or in Australia or the United States I have always noted the difficulty, even with Catholic collaborators (directors, producers, script writers and the like), of projecting a viable and credible image of the Church. Influenced by nineteenth century liberal and pragmatic thought and crippled by ignorance or lack of imagination many find it hard to expand their notion of religion beyond that of a vague, comforting sentiment. They think a religious program should be "inspirational." I would rather see it inspired!

However much inspiration we may think we have what we say and what is seen must correspond with some objective reality of faith or morals. If these things correspond with subjective realities of viewers and hearers, too, all the better. Still what we say and show must find a real basis in scripture and tradition. In other words we ought to use the media to make known God's revelation in Christ. And in this I have found the Holy Spirit will more than assist us. He will literally push us forward on our way.

Of course we must take care that our use of whatever freedom of communication we are given is not allowed to degenerate into polemics, scorn for others, elitist complaisance or know-it-all bravado. In other words our tasks as Catholics in the media (especially if we are priests or other leaders placed there by our bishops) must be flavored with a certain humility. It is true that I stand before the camera and use the microphone to share something more than the consolations of grace. I share knowledge. I share experience of life. Hopefully I share love. I cannot share all this very well if my attitude is so superior that my audience find me talking down to them. Nor should I aim "over their heads." But I should try to tell and show them something they have never heard and seen before, not in the sense of sensational novelty but under the aspect of a new and ever-fresh "slant."

Our whole lives are influenced by the media. In a true democracy what we believe and hold as good should, likewise, influence the media. If my classes in theology, philosophy and comparative religion are made more colorful by references to shampoo

advertisements (and I think they are), my influence on and in society should be projected by the Church's participation in what we see and hear day by day. All of us, directly or indirectly, have something to contribute to the media. The media can never become the deluge of neo-paganism many would like to make it as long as we insist on playing our part.

Redemptoris Missio

John Paul II

Chapter VII. Cooperation In Missionary Activity

77. Since they are members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity. "Missionary cooperation" is the expression used to describe the sharing by communities and individual Christians in his right and duty.

Missionary cooperation is rooted and lived, above all, in personal union with Christ. Only if we are united to him as the branches to the vine (cf. *Jn* 15:5) can we produce good fruit. Through holiness of life every Christian can become a fruitful part of the Church's mission. The Second Vatican Council invited all "to a profound interior renewal, so that having a lively awareness of their personal responsibility for the spreading of the Gospel, they may play their part in missionary work among the nations."¹

Sharing in the universal mission therefore is not limited to certain specific activities, but is the sign of maturity in faith and of a Christian life that bears fruit. In this way, individual believers extend the reach of their charity and show concern for those both far and near. They pray for the mission and missionary vocations. They help missionaries and follow their work interest. And when mission-

¹Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 35; cf. *CIC*, cc. 211, 781.

aries return, they welcome them with the same joy with which the first Christian communities heard from the Apostles the marvelous things which God had wrought through their preaching (cf. Ac 14:27).

Prayer and Sacrifice for Missionaries

78. Among the forms of sharing, first place goes to spiritual cooperation through prayer, sacrifice and the witness of Christian life. Prayer should accompany the journey of missionaries so that the proclamation of the word will be effective through God's grace. In his Letters, Saint Paul often asks the faithful to pray for him so that he might proclaim the Gospel with confidence and conviction. Prayer needs to be accompanied by sacrifice. The redemptive value of suffering, accepted and offered to God with love, derives from the sacrifice of Christ himself, who calls the members of his Mystical Body to share in his sufferings, to complete them in their own flesh (cf. Col 1:24). The sacrifice of missionaries should be shared and accompanied by the sacrifices of all the faithful. I therefore urge those engaged in the pastoral care of the sick to teach them about the efficacy of suffering, and to encourage them to offer their sufferings to God for missionaries. By making such an offering, the sick themselves become missionaries, as emphasized by a number of movements which have sprung up among them and for them. The Solemnity of Pentecost — the beginning of the Church's mission — is celebrated in some communities as a "Day of Suffering for the Missions."

*"Here I am, Lord! I am Ready!
Send Me!" (cf. Is 6:8)*

79. Cooperation is expressed above all by promoting missionary vocations. While acknowledging the validity of various ways of being involved in missionary activity, it is necessary at the same time to reaffirm that *a full and lifelong commitment to the work of the missions holds pride of place*, especially in missionary Institutes and Congregations. Promoting such vocations is at the heart of missionary cooperation. Preaching the Gospel requires preachers; the harvest needs labourers. The mission is carried out above all by men and women who are consecrated for life to the work of the Gospel and are prepared to go forth into the whole world to bring salvation.

I wish to call to mind and to recommend this concern for missionary vocations. Conscious of the overall responsibility of Christians to contribute to missionary activity and to the development of poorer peoples, we must ask ourselves how it is that in some countries, while monetary contributions are on the increase, missionary vocations, which are the real measure of self-giving to one's brothers and sisters, are in danger of disappearing. Vocations to the priesthood and the consecrated life are a sure sign of the vitality of a Church.

80. As I think of this serious problem, I appeal with great confidence and affection to families and to young people. Families, especially parents, should be conscious that they ought to "offer a special contribution to the missionary cause of the Church by fostering missionary vocations among their sons and daughters."²

An intense prayer life, a genuine sense of service to one's neighbor and a generous participation in Church activities provide families with conditions that favor vocations among young people. When parents are ready to allow one of their children to leave for the missions, when they have sought this grace from the Lord, he will repay them, in joy, on the day that their son or daughter hears his call.

I ask young people themselves to listen to Christ's words as he says to them what he once said to Simon Peter and to Andrew at the lakeside: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (*Mt* 4:19). May they have the courage to reply as Isaiah did: "Here am I, Lord! I am ready! Send me!" (cf. *Is* 6:8). They will have a wonderful life ahead of them, and they will know the genuine joy of proclaiming the "Good News" to brothers and sisters whom they will lead on the way of salvation.

*It Is More Blessed to Give
than to Receive" (Ac 20:35)*

81. The material and financial needs of the missions are many: not only to set up the Church with minimal structures (chapels, schools for catechists and seminarians, housing), but also to support works of charity, education and human promotion – a vast field of

²Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 54: loc cit., 147.

action especially in poor countries. The missionary Church gives what she receives, and distributes to the poor the material goods that her materially richer sons and daughters generously put at their disposal. Here I wish to thank all those who make sacrifices and contribute to the work of the missions. Their sacrifices and sharing are indispensable for building up the Church and for showing love.

In the matter of material help, it is important to consider the spirit in which donations are made. For this we should reassess our own way of living: the missions ask not only for a contribution but for a sharing in the work of preaching and charity towards the poor. All that we have received from God—life itself as well as material goods—does not belong to us but is given to us for our use. Generosity in giving must always be enlightened and inspired by faith: then we will truly be more blessed in giving than in receiving.

World Mission Day, which seeks to heighten awareness of the missions, as well as to collect funds for them, is an important date in the life of the Church, because it teaches how to give: as an offering made to God, in the Eucharistic celebration and *for all the missions of the world*.

New Forms of Missionary Cooperation

82. Today, cooperation includes new forms—not only economic assistance, but also direct participation. New situations connected with the phenomenon of mobility demand from Christians an authentic missionary spirit.

International tourism has now become a mass phenomenon. This is a positive development if tourists maintain an attitude of respect and desire for mutual cultural enrichment, avoiding ostentation and waste, and seeking contact with other people. But Christians are expected above all to be aware of their obligation to bear witness always to their faith and love of Christ. Firsthand knowledge of the missionary life and of new Christian communities also can be an enriching experience and can strengthen one's faith. Visiting the missions is commendable, especially on the part of young people who go there to serve and to gain an intense experience of the Christian life.

Reasons of work nowadays bring many Christians from young communities to areas where Christianity is unknown and at times prohibited or persecuted. The same is true of members of the faithful from traditionally Christian countries who work for a time in non-Christian countries. These circumstances are certainly an opportunity to live the faith and to bear witness to it. In the early centuries, Christianity spread because Christians, travelling to or settling in regions where Christ had not yet been proclaimed, bore courageous witness to their faith and founded the first communities there.

More numerous are the citizens of mission countries and followers of non-Christian religions who settle in other nations for reasons of study or work, or are forced to do so because of the political or economic situations in their native lands. The presence of these brothers and sisters in traditionally Christian countries is a challenge for the ecclesial communities, and a stimulus to hospitality, dialogue, service, sharing, witness and direct proclamation. In Christian countries, communities and cultural groups are also forming which call for the mission *ad gentes*, and the local Churches, with the help of personnel from the immigrants' own countries and of returning missionaries should respond generously to these situations.

Missionary cooperation can also involve leaders in politics, economics, culture and journalism, as well as experts of the various international bodies. In the modern world it is becoming increasingly difficult to determine geographical or cultural boundaries. There is an increasing interdependence between peoples, and this constitutes a stimulus for Christian witness and evangelization.

*Missionary Promotion and Formation
Among the People of God*

83. Missionary formation is the task of the local Church, assisted by missionaries and their Institutes, and by personnel from the young Churches. This work must be seen not as peripheral but as central to the Christian life. Even for the "new evangelization" of Christian countries the theme of the missions can prove very helpful: the witness of missionaries retains its appeal even for the non-practising and non-believers, and it communicates Christian values. Particular Churches should therefore make the promotion of the missions a key element in the normal pastoral activity of parishes, associations and groups, especially youth groups.

With this end in view, it is necessary to spread information through missionary publications and audiovisual aids. These play an important role in making known the life of the universal Church and in voicing the experiences of missionaries and of the local Churches in which they work. In those younger Churches which are still not able to have a press and other means of their own, it is important that Missionary Institutes devote personnel and resources to these undertakings.

Such formation is entrusted to priests and their associates, to educators and teachers, and to theologians, particularly those who teach in seminaries and centers for the laity. Theological training cannot and should not ignore the Church's universal mission, ecumenism, the study of the great religions and missiology. I recommend that such studies be undertaken especially in seminaries and in houses of formation for men and women Religious, ensuring that some priests or other students specialize in the different fields of missiology.

Activities aimed at promoting interest in the missions must always be geared to these specific goals; namely, informing and forming the People of God to share in the Church's universal mission, promoting vocations *ad gentes* and encouraging cooperation to give an incomplete picture of missionary activity, as if it consisted principally in helping the poor, contributing to the liberation of the oppressed, promoting development or defending human rights. The missionary Church is certainly involved on these fronts but her primary task lies elsewhere: the poor are hungry for God, not just for bread and freedom. Missionary activity must first of all bear witness to and proclaim salvation in Christ, and establish local Churches which then become means of liberation in every sense.

*The Primary Responsibility
of the Pontifical Mission Societies*

84. The leading role in this work of promotion belongs to the *Pontifical Mission Societies*, as I have often pointed out in my Messages for World Mission Day. The four Societies—Propagation of the Faith, Saint Peter the Apostle, Holy Childhood and the Missionary Union—have the common purpose of fostering a universal missionary spirit among the People of God. The Missionary Union has

as its immediate and specific purpose the promotion of missionary consciousness and formation among priests and men and women Religious, who in turn will provide this consciousness and formation within the Christian communities. In addition, the Missionary Union seeks to promote the other Societies, of which it is the "soul."³ "This must be our motto: All the Churches united for the conversion of the whole world."⁴

Because they are under the auspices of the Pope and of the College of Bishops, these Societies, also within the boundaries of the particular Churches, rightly have "the first place. . . since they are the means by which Catholics from their very infancy are imbued with a genuinely universal and missionary spirit; they are also the means which ensure an effective collection of resources for the good of all missions, in accordance with the needs of each one."⁵ Another purpose of the Missionary Societies is the fostering of lifelong vocations *ad gentes*, in both the older and younger Churches. I earnestly recommend their promotional work be increasingly directed to this goal.

In their activities, these Societies depend at the worldwide level on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples; at the local level they depend on the Episcopal Conferences and the Bishops of individual Churches, in collaboration with existing promotional centers. They bring to the Catholic world that spirit of universality and of service to the Church's mission, without which authentic cooperation does not exist.

*Not Only Giving to the Missions
But Receiving from Them as Well*

85. Cooperating in missionary activity means not just giving but also receiving. All the particular Churches, both young and old, are called to give and to receive in the context of the universal

³Cf. PAUL VI, Apostolic Epistle *Graves et Increscentes* (5 September 1966): AAS 58 (1966), 750-756.

⁴P. MANNA, *Le nostre "Chiese" e la propagazione del Vangelo*, Trentola Ducenta, 1952, p. 35.

⁵SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 38.

mission, and none should be closed to the needs of others. The Council states: "By virtue of... catholicity, the individual parts bring their own gifts to the other parts and to the whole Church, in such a way that the whole and individual parts grow greater through the mutual communication of all and their united efforts towards fulness in unity ... Between the different parts of the Church there are bonds of intimate communion with regard to spiritual riches, apostolic workers and temporal assistance."⁶

I exhort all the Churches, and the Bishops, priests, religious and members of the laity, to *be open to the Church's universality*, and to avoid every form of provincialism or exclusiveness, or feelings of self-sufficiency. Local Churches, although rooted in their own people and their own culture, must always maintain an effective sense of the universality of the faith, giving and receiving spiritual gifts, experiences of pastoral work in evangelization and initial proclamation, as well as personnel for the apostolate and material resources.

The temptation to become isolated can be a strong one. The older Churches, involved in new evangelization, may think that their mission is now at home, and thus they may risk slackening their drive towards the non-Christian world, begrudgingly conceding vocations to missionary Institutes, Religious Congregations or other particular Churches. But it is by giving generously of what we have that we will receive. Already the young Churches, many of which are blessed with an abundance of vocations, are in a position to send priests and men and women Religious to the older Churches.

On the other hand, the young Churches are concerned about their own identity, about inculturation, and about their freedom to grow independently of external influences, with the possible result that they close their doors to missionaries. To these Churches I say: Do not isolate yourselves; willingly accept missionaries and support from other Churches, and do likewise throughout the world. Precisely because of the problems that concern you, you need to be in continuous contact with your brothers and sisters in the faith. With every legitimate means, seek to ensure recognition of the freedom to which you have a right, remembering that Christ's disciples must "obey God rather than men" (Ac 5:29).

⁶Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 13.

God Is Preparing a New Springtime for the Gospel

86. If we look at today's world, we are struck by many negative factors that can lead to pessimism. But this feeling is unjustified: we have faith in God our Father and Lord, in his goodness and mercy. As the third Millennium of the Redemption draws near, God is preparing a great springtime for Christianity, and we can already see its first signs. In fact, both in the non-Christian world and in the traditionally Christian world, people are gradually drawing closer to Gospel ideals and values, a development which the Church seeks to encourage. Today in fact there is a new consensus among peoples about these values: the rejection of violence and war; respect for the human person and for human rights; the desire for freedom, justice and brotherhood; the surmounting of different forms of racism and nationalism; the affirmation of the dignity and role of women.

Christian hope sustains us in committing ourselves fully to the new evangelization and to the worldwide mission, and leads us to pray as Jesus taught us: "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (*Mt* 6:10).

The number of those awaiting Christ is still immense: the human and cultural groups not yet reached by the Gospel, or for whom the Church is scarcely present, are so widespread as to require the uniting of all the Church's resources. As she prepares to celebrate the Jubilee of the year 2000, the whole Church is even more committed to a new missionary advent. We must increase our apostolic zeal to pass on to others the light and joy of the faith, and to this high ideal the whole People of God must be educated.

We cannot be content when we consider the millions of our brothers and sisters, who like us have been redeemed by the blood of Christ but who live in ignorance of the love of God. For each believer, as for the entire Church, the missionary task must remain foremost, for it concerns the eternal destiny of humanity and corresponds to God's mysterious and merciful plan.

Chapter VIII. Missionary Spirituality

87. Missionary activity demands a specific spirituality, which applies in particular to all those whom God has called to be missionaries.

This spirituality is expressed first of all by a life of complete docility to the Spirit. It commits us to being molded from within by the Spirit, so that we may become ever more like Christ. It is not possible to bear witness to Christ without reflecting his image, which is made alive in us by grace and the power of the Spirit. This docility then commits us to receive the gifts of fortitude and discernment, which are essential elements of missionary spirituality.

An example of this is found with the Apostles during the Master's public life. Despite their love for him and their generous response to his call, they proved to be incapable of understanding his words and reluctant to follow him along the path of suffering and humiliation. The Spirit transformed them into courageous witnesses to Christ and enlightened heralds of his word. It was the Spirit himself who guided them along the difficult and new paths of mission.

Today, as in the past, that mission is difficult and complex, and demands the courage and light of the Spirit. We often experience the dramatic situation of the first Christian community, which witnessed unbelieving and hostile forces "gathered together against the Lord and his Anointed" (Ac 4:26). Now, as then, we must pray that God will grant us boldness in preaching the Gospel; we must ponder the mysterious ways of the Spirit and allow ourselves to be led by him into all the truth (cf. Jn 16:13).

*Living the Mystery of Christ,
"The One Who Was Sent"*

88. An essential characteristic of missionary spirituality is intimate communion with Christ. We cannot understand or carry out the mission unless we refer it to Christ as the one who was sent to evangelize. Saint Paul describes Christ's attitude: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a Cross" (Ph 2:5-8).

The mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption is thus described as a total self-emptying which leads Christ to experience fully the human condition and to accept totally the Father's plan. This is an emptying of self which is permeated by love and expresses love. The mission follows this same path and leads to the foot of the Cross.

The missionary is required to "renounce himself and everything that up to this point he considered as his own, and to make himself everything to everyone."⁷ This he does by a poverty which sets him free for the Gospel, overcoming attachment to the people and things about him, so that he may become a brother to those to whom he is sent and thus bring them Christ the Savior. This is the goal of missionary spirituality: "To the weak I became weak. . . ; I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the Gospel . . ." (1 Co 9:22-23).

It is precisely because he is "sent that the missionary experiences the consoling presence of Christ, who is with him at every moment of life—"Do not be afraid for I am with you" (Ac 18:9-10)—and who awaits him in the heart of every person.

*Loving the Church and Humanity
As Jesus Did*

89. Missionary spirituality is also marked by apostolic charity, the charity of Christ who came "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (Jn 11:52), of the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep, who searches them out and offers his life for them (cf. Jn 10). Those who have the missionary spirit feel Christ's burning love for souls, and love the Church as Christ did.

The missionary is urged on by "zeal for souls," a zeal inspired by Christ's own charity, which takes the form of concern, tenderness, compassion, openness, availability and interest in people's problems. Jesus' love is very deep: he who "knew what was in man" (Jn 2:25) loved everyone by offering them redemption and suffered when it was rejected.

⁷SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL. Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 24.

The missionary is a person of charity. In order to proclaim to all his brothers and sisters that they are loved by God and are capable of loving, he must show love towards all, giving his life for his neighbor. The missionary is the "universal brother," bearing in himself the Church's spirit, her openness to and interest in all peoples and individuals, especially the least and poorest of his brethren. As such, he overcomes barriers and divisions of race, caste, or ideology. He is a sign of God's love in the world—a love without exclusion or partiality.

Finally, like Christ he must love the Church: "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (*Ep* 5:25). This love, even to the point of giving one's life, is a focal point for him. Only profound love for the Church can sustain the missionary's zeal. His daily pressure, as Saint Paul says, is "anxiety for all the Churches" (*2 Co* 11:28). For every missionary "fidelity to Christ cannot be separated from fidelity to the Church."⁸

The True Missionary Is the Saint

90. The call to mission derives, of its nature, from the call to holiness. A missionary is really such only if he commits himself to the way of holiness: "Holiness must be called a fundamental presupposition and an irreplaceable condition for everyone in fulfilling the mission of salvation in the Church."⁹

The universal call to holiness is closely linked to the *universal call to mission*. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission. This was the earnest desire of the Council, which hoped to be able to "enlighten all people with the brightness of Christ, which gleams over the face of the Church, by preaching the Gospel to every creature."¹⁰ The Church's missionary spirituality is a journey towards holiness.

The renewed impulse to the mission *ad gentes* demands holy missionaries. It is not enough to update pastoral techniques, organize and coordinate ecclesial resources, or delve more deeply into the

⁸SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 14.

⁹Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, 17: loc. cit., 419.

¹⁰Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

biblical and theological foundations of faith. What is needed is the encouragement of a new "ardor for holiness" among missionaries and throughout the Christian community, especially among those who work most closely with missionaries.¹¹

Dear Brothers and Sisters: let us remember the missionary enthusiasm of the first Christian communities. Despite the limited means of travel and communication in those times, the proclamation of the Gospel quickly reached the ends of the earth. And this was the religion of a Man who had died on a cross, "a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (1 Co 1:23)! Underlying the missionary dynamism was the holiness of the first Christians and the first communities.

91. I therefore address myself to the recently baptized members of the young communities and young Churches. Today, you are the hope of this two-thousand-year-old Church of ours: being young in faith, you must be like the first Christians and radiate enthusiasm and courage, in generous devotion to God and neighbor. In a word, you must set yourselves on the path of holiness. Only thus can you be a sign of God in the world and re-live in your own countries the missionary epic of the early Church. You will also be a leaven of missionary spirit for the older Churches.

For their part, missionaries should reflect on the duty of holiness required of them by the gift of their vocation, renew themselves in spirit day by day, and strive to update their doctrinal and pastoral formation. The missionary must be a "contemplative in action." He finds answers to problems in the light of God's word and in personal and community prayer. My contact with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on contemplation. Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way. He is a witness to the experience of God, and must be able to say with the Apostles: "that which we have looked upon . . . concerning the word of life. . . we proclaim also to you" (1 Jn 1:1-3).

¹¹Cf. Address at CELAM Meeting, Port-au-Prince, 9 March 1983: AAS 75 (1983), 771-779; Homily for the Opening of the "Novena of Years" promoted by CELAM, Santo Domingo, 12 October 1984: *Insegnamenti* VII/2 (1984), 885-897.

The missionary is a person of the Beatitudes. Before sending out the Twelve to evangelize, Jesus, in his "missionary discourse" (cf. *Mt* 10), teaches them the paths of mission: poverty, meekness, acceptance of suffering and persecution, the desire for justice and peace, charity—in other words, the Beatitudes, lived out in the apostolic life (cf. *Mt* 5:1-12). By living the Beatitudes, the missionary experiences and shows concretely that the Kingdom of God has already come, and that he has accepted it. The characteristic of every authentic missionary life is the inner joy that comes from faith. In a world tormented and oppressed by so many problems, a world tempted to pessimism, the one who proclaims the "Good News" must be a person who has found true hope in Christ.

Conclusion

92. Today, as never before, the Church has the opportunity of bringing the Gospel, by witness and word, to all people and nations. I see the dawning of a new missionary age, which will become a radiant day bearing an abundant harvest, if all Christians, and missionaries and young Churches in particular respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time.

Like the Apostles after Christ's Ascension, the Church must gather in the Upper Room "together with Mary the Mother of Jesus" (*Ac* 1:14), in order to pray for the Spirit and to gain strength and courage to carry out the missionary mandate. We too, like the Apostles, need to be transformed and guided by the Spirit.

On the eve of the third Millennium the whole Church is invited to live more intensely the mystery of Christ by gratefully cooperating in the work of salvation. The Church does this together with Mary and following the example of Mary, the Church's Mother and model: Mary is the model of that maternal love which should inspire all who cooperate in the Church's apostolic mission for the rebirth of humanity. Therefore, "strengthened by the presence of Christ, the Church journeys through time towards the consummation of the ages and goes to meet the Lord who comes. But on this journey . . . she proceeds along *the path* already trodden by the Virgin Mary."¹²

¹²Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* (25 March 1987), 2: AAS 79 (1987), 362f.

To "Mary's mediation, wholly oriented towards Christ and tending to the revelation of his salvific power,"¹³ I entrust the Church and, in particular, those who commit themselves to carrying out the missionary mandate in today's world. As Christ sent forth his Apostles in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, so too, renewing that same mandate, I extend to all of you my Apostolic Blessing, in the name of the same Most Holy Trinity. Amen.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 7 December, the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes*, in the year 1990, the thirteenth of my Pontificate.

¹³*Ibid.*, 22: loc. cit., 390.

Pastores Dabo Vobis

John Paul II

*POST SYNODAL
APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION
TO THE BISHOPS
CLERGY AND FAITHFUL
ON THE FORMATION OF PRIESTS
IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE PRESENT DAY*

Introduction

1. "I will give you shepherds after my own heart" (*Jr* 3:15).

In these words from the prophet Jeremiah, God promises his people that he will never leave them without shepherds to gather them together and guide them: "I will set shepherds over them [my sheep] who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed" (*Jr* 23:4).

The Church, the People of God, constantly experiences the reality of this prophetic message and continues joyfully to thank God for it. She knows that Jesus Christ himself is the living, supreme and definitive fulfillment of God's promise: "I am the good shepherd" (*Jn* 10:11). He, "the great shepherd of the sheep" (*Heb* 13:20), entrusted to the Apostles and their successors the ministry of shepherding God's flock (cf. *Jn* 21:15ff.; *1 Pt* 5:2).

Without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is at the very heart of her existence and her mission in history, an obedience in response to the command of Christ: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19) and "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19; cf. 1 Co 11:24), i.e., an obedience to the command to announce the Gospel and to renew daily the sacrifice of the giving of the body and the shedding of his blood for the life of the world.

By faith we know the Lord's promise cannot fail. This very promise is the reason and force underlying the Church's rejoicing at the growth and increase of priestly vocations now taking place in some parts of the world. It is also the foundation and impulse for a renewed act of faith and fervent hope in the face of the grave shortage of priests which is being felt in other parts of the world. Everyone is called upon to share complete trust in the unbroken fulfillment of God's promise, which the Synod Fathers expressed in clear and forceful terms: "The Synod with complete trust in the promise of Christ who said: 'Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt 28:20) and aware of the constant activity of the Holy Spirit in the Church, firmly believes that there will never be a complete lack of sacred ministers in the Church. . . . Even though in a number of religions there is a scarcity of clergy, the action of the Father, who raises up vocations, will nonetheless always be at work in the Church."¹

At the conclusion of the Synod, I said that in the face of a crisis of priestly vocations "the first answer which the Church gives lies in a total act of faith in the Holy Spirit. We are deeply convinced that this trusting abandonment will not disappoint if we remain faithful to the graces we have received."²

2. To remain faithful to the grace received! This gift of God does not cancel human freedom; instead it gives rise to freedom, develops freedom and demands freedom.

For this reason, the total trust in God's unconditional faithfulness to his promise is accompanied in the Church by the grave

¹Propositio 2.

²Discourse at the end of the Synod (27 October 1990), 5: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 28 October 1990.

responsibility to cooperate in the action of God who calls, and to contribute towards creating and preserving the conditions in which the good seed, sown by God, can take root and bring forth abundant fruit. The Church must never cease to pray to the Lord of the harvest that he send labourers into his harvest (cf. *Mt 9:38*). She must propose clearly and courageously to teach new generation the vocational call, help people to discern the authenticity of their call from God and to respond to it generously, and give particular care to the formation of candidates for the priesthood.

The formation of future priests, both diocesan and religious, and life-long assiduous care for their personal sanctification in the ministry and for the constant updating of their pastoral commitment are considered by the Church one of the most demanding and important tasks for the future of the evangelization of humanity.

The Church's work of formation is a continuation in time of Christ's own work, which the Evangelist Mark illustrates in these words: "And he went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, to be with him, and to be sent to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (*Mk 3:13-15*).

It can be said that through her work of forming candidates to the priesthood and priests themselves, the Church throughout her history has continued to live passage of the Gospel in various ways and with varying intensity. Today, however, the Church feels called to re-live with a renewed commitment all that the Master did with his Apostles, urged on as she is by the deep and rapid transformations in the societies and culture of our age, by the multiplicity and diversity of contexts in which she announces the Gospel and witnesses to it, by the promising number of priestly vocations being seen in some Dioceses around the world, by the urgency of a new look at the concern of Bishops and their communities about a persisting scarcity of clergy, and by the absolute necessity that the "new evangelization" have priests as its initial "new evangelizers."

It is precisely in this cultural and historical context that the last Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops took place. Dedicated to "the formation of priests in circumstances of the present day," its purpose was to put into practice the Council's teaching on

this matter, making it more up-to-date and incisive in present circumstances, twenty-five years after the Council itself.³

3. Following the texts of the Second Vatican Council regarding the ministry of priests and their formation,⁴ and with the intention of applying to various situations their rich and authoritative teaching, the Church has on various occasions dealt with the subject of the life, ministry and formation of priests.

She has done this in a more solemn way during the Synods of Bishops. Already in October, 1967, the First General Ordinary Assembly of the Synod devoted five general congregations to the subject of the renewal of seminaries. This work gave a decisive impulse to the formulation of the document of the Congregation for Catholic Education entitled, "Fundamental Norms for Priestly Formation."⁵

The Second Ordinary General Assembly held in 1971 spent half its time on the ministerial priesthood. The fruit of the lengthy synodal discussion, incorporated and condensed in some "recommendations," which were submitted to my predecessor Pope Paul VI and read at the opening of the 1974 Synod, referred principally to the teaching on the ministerial priesthood and to some aspects of priestly spirituality and ministry.

On many other occasions the Church's Magisterium has shown its concern for the life and ministry of priests. It may be said that in the years since the council there has not been any subject treated by the Magisterium which has not in some way, explicitly or implicitly, had to do with the presence of priests in the community as well as their role and the need for them in the life of the Church and the world.

In recent years some have voiced a need to return to the theme of the priesthood, treating it from a relatively new point of view, one that was more adapted to present ecclesial and cultural circumstances. Attention has shifted from the question of the priestly life.

³Cf. *Propositio* 1.

⁴Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 28; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*; Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*.

⁵*Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (6 January 1970): AAS 62 (1970), 321-384.

The new generation of those called to the ministerial priesthood display different characteristics in comparison to those of their immediate predecessors. In addition, they live in a world which in many respects is new and undergoing rapid and continual evolution. All of this cannot be ignored when it comes to programming and carrying out the various phases of formation for those approaching the ministerial priesthood.

Moreover, priests who have been actively involved in the ministry for a more or less lengthy period of time seem to be suffering today from an excessive loss of energy in their ever increasing pastoral activities. Likewise, faced with the difficulties of contemporary culture and society, they feel compelled to re-examine their way of life and their pastoral priorities, and they are more and more aware of their need for ongoing formation.

The concern of the 1990 Synod of Bishops and its discussion focused on the increase of vocations to the priesthood and the formation of candidates in an attempt to help them come to know and follow Jesus, as they prepare to be ordained and to live the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which configures them to Christ the Head and Shepherd, the Servant and Spouse of the Church. At the same time, the Synod searched for forms of ongoing formation to provide realistic and effective means of support for priests in their spiritual life and ministry.

This same Synod also sought to answer a request which was made at the previous Synod on the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world. Lay people themselves had asked that priests commit themselves to their formation so that they, the laity, could be suitably helped to fulfil their role in the ecclesial mission which is shared by all. Indeed, "the more the lay apostolate develops, the more strongly is perceived the need to have well-formed holy priests. Thus the very life of the People of God manifests the teaching of the Second Vatican Council concerning the relationship between the common priesthood. For within the mystery of the Church the hierarchy has a ministerial character (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 10). The more the laity's own sense of vocation is deepened, the more what is proper to the priests stands out."⁶

⁶*Discourse at the end of the Synod (27 October 1990), 3: loc. cit.*

4. In the ecclesial experience that is typical of the Synod (that is, "a unique experience on a universal basis of episcopal communion, which strengthens the sense of the universal Church and the sense of responsibility to the Bishops towards the universal Church and her mission, in affective and effective communion around Peter),"⁷ *the voice of the various particular Churches*—and in this Synod, for the first time, the voices of some Churches from the East—were clearly heard and taken to heart. The Churches have proclaimed their faith in the fulfillment of God's promise: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart" (*Jr* 3:15), and they have renewed their pastoral commitment to care for vocations and for the formation of priests, aware that on this depends the future of the Church, her development and her universal mission of salvation.

In this Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, I take up anew the rich legacy resulting from the reflections, endeavours and indications which were made during the Synod's preparation, as well as those which accompanied the work of the Synod Fathers, and as the Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter I add my voice to theirs, addressing it to each and every one of the Exhortation I wish to meet and *each and every priest*, whether diocesan or religious.

Quoting from the "Final Message" of the Synod to the People of God," I make my own the words and the sentiments expressed by the Synod Father: "Brother priests, we want to express our appreciation to you, who are our most important collaborators in the apostolate. You priesthood is absolutely vital. There is no substitute for it. You carry the main burden of priestly ministry though your day-to-day service of the faithful. You are ministers of the Eucharist and ministers of God's mercy in the Sacrament of Penance. It is you who bring comfort to people and guide them in difficult moments in their lives.

"We acknowledge your work and thank you once again, urging you to continue on your chosen path willingly and joyfully. No one should be discouraged as we are doing God's work; the same God who calls us, sends us and remains with us every day of our lives. We are ambassadors of Christ."⁸

⁷*Ibid.*, 1: *loc. cit.*

⁸Message of the Synod Fathers to the People of God, III: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 29-30 October 1990.

Chapter I. Chosen from among Men

The challenges facing priestly formation at the conclusion of the Second Millennium

The priest in his time

5. "Every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God" (*Heb 5:1*).

The Letter to the Hebrews clearly affirms the "*human character*" of God's minister: he comes from the human community and is at its service, imitating Jesus Christ "who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (*Heb 4:15*).

God always calls his priests from specific human and ecclesial contexts, which inevitably influence them; and to these same contexts the priest is sent for the service of Christ's Gospel.

For this reason the Synod desired to "contextualize" the subject of priests, viewing it in terms of today's society and today's Church in preparation for the third millennium. This is indicated in the second part of the topic's formulation: "The formation of priests *in the circumstances of the present day*."

Certainly "there is an essential aspect of the priest that does not change: the priest of tomorrow, no less than the priest of today, must resemble Christ. When Jesus lived on this earth, he manifested in himself the definitive role of the priest, by establishing a ministerial priesthood, with which the Apostles were the first to be invested. This priesthood is destined to last in endless succession throughout history. In this sense the priest of the third millennium will continue the work of the priests who, in the preceding millennia, have animated the life of the Church. In the third millennium the priestly vocation will continue to be the call to live the unique and permanent priesthood of Christ."⁹ It is equally certain that the life and ministry of the priest must also "adapt to every era and circumstance of life. . . For our part we must therefore seek to be as

⁹Angelus (14 January 1990), 2: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15-16 January 1990.

open as possible to light from on high from the Holy Spirit, in order to discover the tendencies of contemporary society, recognize the deepest spiritual needs, determine the most important concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adopt, and thus respond adequately to human expectations."¹⁰

With the duty of bringing together the permanent truth of the priestly ministry and the characteristic requirements of the present day, the Synod Fathers sought to respond to a *few necessary questions*: What are the positive and negative elements in socio cultural and ecclesial contexts which affect boys, adolescents and young men who throughout their lives are called to bring to maturity a project of priestly life? What difficulties are posed by our times, and what new possibilities are offered for the exercise of a priestly ministry which corresponds to the gift received in the Sacrament and the demands of the spiritual life which is consistent with it?

I now mention some elements taken from the Synod Fathers' analysis of the situation, fully aware that the great variety of socio-cultural and ecclesial circumstances in different countries limits by necessity our treatment to only the most evident and widespread phenomena, particularly to those which relate to the question of education and priestly formation.

The Gospel Today: Hopes and Obstacles

6. A number of factors seem to be working towards making people today more deeply aware of the dignity of the human person and more open to religious values, to the Gospel and to the priestly ministry.

Despite many contradictions, society is increasingly witnessing a powerful thirst for justice and peace, a more lively sense that humanity must care for creation and respect nature, a more open search for truth, a greater effort to safeguard human dignity, a growing commitment in many sectors of the world population to a more specific international solidarity and a new ordering of the world in freedom and justice. Parallel to the continued development of the potential offered by science and technology and the exchange

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 3: *loc. cit.*

of information and interaction of cultures, there is a new call for ethics, that is, quest for meaning, and therefore for an objective standard of values which will delineate the possibilities and limits of progress.

In the more specifically religious and Christian sphere, ideological prejudices and the violent rejection of the message of spiritual and religious values are crumbling and there are arising new and unexpected possibilities of evangelization and the rebirth of ecclesial life in many parts of the world. These are evident in an increased love of the Sacred Scriptures; in the vitality and growing vigor of many young Churches and their ever larger role in the defense and promotion of the values of human life and the person; and in the splendid witness of martyrdom provided by the Churches of Central and Eastern Europe as well as that of the faithfulness and courage of other Churches which are still forced to undergo persecution and tribulation for the faith.¹¹

The thirst for God and for an active meaningful relationship with him is so strong today that, where there is a lack of a genuine and full proclamation of the Gospel of Christ, there is a rising spread of forms of religiosity without God and the proliferation of many sects. For all children of the Church, and for priests especially, the increase of these phenomena, even in some traditionally Christian environments, is not only a constant motive to examine our consciences as to the credibility of our witness to the Gospel but at the same time is a sign of how deep and widespread is the search for God.

7. Mingled with these and other positive factors, there are also, however, many problematic or negative elements.

Rationalism is still very widespread and, in the name of a reductive concept of "science," it renders human reason insensitive to an encounter with Revelation and with divine transcendence.

We should take note also of a desperate defense of personal *subjectivity* which tends to close it off in individualism, rendering it incapable of true human relationships. As a result, many, especially children and young people, seek to compensate for this loneliness with substitutes of various kinds, in more or less acute forms of

¹¹Cf. *Propositio* 3.

hedonism or flight from responsibility. Prisoners of the fleeting moment, they seek to "consume" the strongest and most gratifying individual experiences at the level of immediate emotions and sensations, inevitably finding themselves indifferent and "paralyzed" as it were when they come face to face with the summons to embark upon a life project which includes a spiritual and religious dimension and a commitment to solidarity.

Furthermore, despite the fall of ideologies which had made materialism a dogma and the refusal of religion a programme, there is spreading in every part of the world a sort of *practical and existential atheism* which coincides with a secularist outlook on life and human destiny. The individual, "all bound up in himself, this man who makes himself not only the center of his every interest, but dares to propose himself as the principle and reason of all reality,"¹² finds himself ever more bereft of that "supplement of soul" which is all the more necessary to him in proportion as a wide availability of material goods and resources deceives him about his self-sufficiency. There is no longer a need to fight against God; the individual feels he is simply able to do without him.

In this context special mention should be made of *the break-up of the family and an obscuring or distorting of the true meaning of human sexuality*. These phenomena have a very negative effect on the education of young people and on their openness to any kind of religious vocation. Furthermore, one should mention the worsening of social injustices and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few, the fruit of an inhuman capitalism¹³ which increasingly widens the gap between affluent and indigent peoples. In this way tension and unrest are introduced into everyday life, deeply disturbing the lives of people and of whole communities.

There are also worrying and negative factors within the Church herself which have a direct influence on the lives and ministry of priests. For example: the lack of due knowledge of the faith among many believers; a catechesis which has little practical effect, stifled as it is by the mass-media whose messages are more widespread and

¹²Paul VI, *Homily at the 9th Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council* (7 December 1965): AAS 58 (1966), 55.

¹³Cf. *Propositio* 3.

persuasive; and incorrectly understood pluralism in theology, culture and pastoral teaching which, though starting out at times with good intentions, ends up by hindering ecumenical dialogue and threatening the necessary unity of faith; a persistent diffidence towards and almost unacceptance of the Magisterium of the hierarchy; the one-sided tendencies which reduce the richness of the Gospel message and transform the proclamation and witness to the faith into an element of exclusively human and social liberation or into an alienating flight into superstition and religiosity without God.¹⁴

A particularly important phenomenon, even though it is relatively recent in many traditionally Christian countries, is the presence within the same territory of large concentrations of people of different races and religions, thereby resulting in multi-racial and multi-religious societies. While on the one hand this can be an opportunity for a more frequent and fruitful exercise of dialogue, open-mindedness, good relations and a just tolerance, on the other hand the situation can also result in confusion and relativism, above all among people and populations whose faith has not matured.

Added to these factors, and closely linked with the growth of individualism, is the phenomenon of *subjectivism in matters of faith*. An increasing number of Christians seem to have a reduced sensitivity to the universality and objectivity of the doctrine of the faith, because they are subjectively attached to what pleases them, to what corresponds to their own experience, and to what does not impinge on their own habits. In such a context, even the appeal to the inviolability of the individual conscience, in itself a legitimate appeal, may be dangerously marked by ambiguity.

This situation also gives rise to the phenomenon of *belonging to the Church* in ways which are ever more partial and conditional, with a resulting negative influence on the birth of new vocations to the priesthood, on the priest's own self-awareness and on his ministry within the community.

Finally, in many parts of the Church today it is still the scarcity of priests which creates the most serious problem. The faithful are often left to themselves for long periods, without sufficient pastoral

¹⁴Cf. *ibid.*

support. As a result their growth as Christians suffers, not to mention their capacity to become better promoters of evangelization.

Young People: Vocation and Priestly Formation

8. The many contradictions and potentialities marking our societies and cultures, as well as ecclesial communities, are perceived, lived and experienced by our young people with a particular intensity and have immediate and very acute repercussions on their personal growth. Thus, the emergence and development of priestly vocations among boys, adolescents and young men are continually under pressure and facing obstacles.

The lure of the so-called "consumer society" is so strong among young people that they become totally dominated and imprisoned by an individualistic, materialistic and hedonistic interpretation of human existence. Material "well-being," which is so intensely sought after, becomes the one ideal to be striven for in life, a well-being which is to be attained in any way and at any price. There is a refusal of anything that speaks of sacrifice and a rejection of any effort to look for and to practice spiritual and religious values. The all-determining "concern" for *having* supplants the primacy of *being*, and consequently personal and interpersonal values are interpreted and lived not according to the logic of giving and generosity but according to the logic of selfish possession and the exploitation of others.

This is particularly reflected in that *outlook on human sexuality* according to which sexuality's dignity in service to communion and to the reciprocal donation between persons becomes degraded and thereby reduced to nothing more than a consumer good. In this case, many young people undergo an affective experience which, instead of contributing to an harmonious and joyous growth in personality which opens them outwards in an act of self-giving, becomes a serious psychological and ethical process of turning inward towards self, a situation which cannot fail to have grave consequences on them in the future.

In the case of some young people a *distorted sense of freedom* lies at the root of these tendencies. Instead of being understood as obedience to objective and universal truth, freedom is lived out as a blind acquiescence to instinctive forces and to an individual's will to power. Therefore, on the level of thought and behavior, it is almost

natural to find an erosion of internal consent to ethical principles. On the religious level, such a situation, if it does not always lead to an explicit refusal of God, causes widespread indifference and results in a life which, even in its more significant moments and more decisive choices, is lived as if God did not exist. In this context it is difficult not only to respond fully to a vocation to the priesthood but even to understand its very meaning as a special witness to the primacy of "being" over "having," and as a recognition that the significance of life consists in a free and responsible giving of oneself entirely at the service of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God as a priest.

Often the world of young people is a "problem" in the Church community itself. In fact, if in them — more so than in adults — there is present a strong tendency to subjectivize the Christian faith and to belong only partially and conditionally to the life and mission of the Church, and if the Church community is slow for a variety of reasons to initiate and sustain an up-to-date and courageous pastoral care for young people, they risk being left to themselves, at the mercy of their psychological frailty, dissatisfied and critical of a world of adults who, in failing to live the faith in a consistent and mature fashion, do not appear to them as credible models.

Thus we see how difficult it is to present young people with a full and penetrating experience of Christian and ecclesial life and to educate them in it. So, the prospect of having a vocation to the priesthood is far from the actual everyday interests which young men have in life.

9. Nevertheless, there are positive situations and tendencies which bring about and nurture in the heart of adolescents and young men a new readiness, and even a genuine search, for ethical and spiritual values. These naturally offer favorable conditions for embarking on the journey of a vocation which leads towards the total gift of self to Christ and to the Church in the priesthood.

First of all, mention should be made of the decrease of certain phenomena which had caused many problems in the recent past, such as radical rebellion, libertarian tendencies, utopian claims, indiscriminate forms of socialization and violence.

It must be recognized, moreover, that today's young people, with the vigor and vitality typical of their age, are also bearers of

ideals which are coming to the fore in history: the thirst for freedom, the recognition of the inestimable value of the person, the need for authenticity and sincerity, a new conception and style of reciprocity in the rapport between men and women, a convinced and earnest seeking after a more just, sympathetic and united world, openness and dialogue with all, and the commitment to peace.

The fruitful and active development among so many young people today of numerous and varied forms of voluntary service, directed towards the most forgotten and forsaken of our society, represents in these times a particularly important resource for personal growth. It stimulates and sustains young people in a style of life which is less self-interested and more open and sympathetic towards the poor. This way of life can help young men perceive, desire and accept a vocation to stable and total service of others, following the path of complete consecration to God as a priest.

The recent collapse of ideologies, the heavily critical opposition to a world of adults who do not always offer a witness of a life based on moral and transcendent values, and the experience of companions who seek escape through drugs and violence, contribute in no small fashion to making more keen and inescapable the fundamental question as to what values are truly capable of giving the fullest meaning to life, suffering and death. For many young people the question of religion and the need for spirituality are becoming more explicit. This is illustrated in the desire for "desert experiences" and for prayer, in the return to a more personal and regular reading of the Word of God and in the study of theology.

As has happened in their involvement in the sphere of voluntary social service, young people are becoming more actively involved as leaders in the ecclesial community, above all through their membership of various groups, whether traditional but renewed ones or of more recent origin. Their experience of a Church challenged to undertake a "new evangelization" by virtue of her faithfulness to the Spirit who animates her and in response to the demands of a world far from Christ but in need of him, as well as their experience of a Church ever more united with individuals and peoples in the defense and promotion of the dignity of the person and of the human rights of each and every one — these experiences open the hearts and lives of the young to the exciting and demanding ideals which can find

their concrete fulfilment in following Christ and in embracing the priesthood.

Naturally it is not possible to ignore this human and ecclesial situation, characterized by strong ambivalences, not only in the pastoral care of vocations and the formation of future priests, but also in the care of priests in their life and ministry and their ongoing formation. At the same time, while it is possible to detect various forms of "crisis" to which priests are subjected today in their ministry, in their spiritual life and indeed in the very interpretation of the nature and significance of the ministerial priesthood, mention must likewise be made, in a spirit of joy and hope, of the new positive possibilities which the present historical moment is offering to priests for the fulfilment of their mission.

Gospel Discernment

10. The complex situation of the present day, briefly outlined above in general terms and examples, needs not only to be known but also and above all to be interpreted. Only in this way can an adequate answer be given to the fundamental question: How can we form priests who are truly able to respond to the demands of our times and capable of evangelizing the world of today?¹⁵

Knowledge of the situation is important. However, simply to provide data is not enough; what is needed is a "scientific" inquiry in order to sketch a precise and concrete picture of today's socio-cultural and ecclesial circumstances.

Even more important is an *interpretation* of the situation. Such an interpretation is required because of the ambivalence, and at times contradictions, which are characteristic of the present situation where there is a mixture of difficulties and potentialities, negative elements and reasons for hope, obstacles and alternatives, as in the field mentioned in the Gospel where good seed and weeds are both sown and "co-exist" (cf. Mt 13:24ff).

It is not always easy to give an interpretive reading capable of distinguishing good from evil or signs of hope from threats. In the

¹⁵Cf. Synod of Bishops, "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day" — *Lineamenta*, 5-6.

formation of priests it is not sufficient simply to welcome the positive factors and to counteract the negative ones. The positive factors themselves need to be subjected to a careful work of discernment, so that they do not become isolated and contradict one another, becoming absolutes and at odds with one another. The same is true for the negative factors, which are not to be rejected *en bloc* and without distinction, because in each one there may lie hidden some value which awaits liberation and restoration to its full truth.

For a believer the interpretation of the historical situation finds its principle for understanding and its criterion for making practical choices in a new and unique reality, that is, in a gospel discernment. This interpretation is a work which is done in the light and strength provided by the true and living Gospel, which is Jesus Christ, and in virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit. In such a way, *Gospel discernment* gathers from the historical situation, from its events and circumstances, not just a simple "fact" to be precisely recorded yet capable of leaving a person indifferent or passive, but a "task," a challenge to responsible freedom, both of the individual person and of the community. It is a "challenge" which is linked to a "call" which God causes to sound in the historical situation itself. In this situation, and also through it, God calls the believer, and first of all the Church to ensure that "the Gospel of vocation and priesthood" expresses its perennial truth in the changing circumstances of life. In this case, the words of the Second Vatican Council are also applicable to the formation of priests: "The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel, so that in a language intelligible to every generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which people ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics."¹⁶

This Gospel discernment is based on trust in the love of Jesus Christ, who always and tirelessly cares for his Church, (cf. *Ep* 5:29), he the Lord and Master, the Key, the Center and the Purpose of the whole of man's history.¹⁷ This discernment is nourished by the light

¹⁶Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 4.

and strength of the Holy Spirit, who evokes everywhere and in all circumstances obedience to the faith, the joyous courage of following Jesus and the gift of wisdom, which judges all things and is judged by no one (cf. 1 Co 2:15). It rests on the fidelity of the Father to his promises.

In this way the Church feels that she can face the difficulties and challenges of this new period of history and can also provide, in the present and in the future, priests who are well trained to be convinced and fervent ministers of the "new evangelization," faithful and generous servants of Jesus Christ and of the human family. We are not unmindful of difficulties in this regard; they are neither few nor insignificant. However, to surmount these difficulties we have at our disposal our hope, our faith in the unfailing love of Christ, and our certainty that the priestly ministry in the life of the Church and in the world knows no substitute.

(To be continued).

¹⁷Cf. Synod of Bishops, 7th Ordinary General Assembly, *Final Message of the Synod Fathers to the People of God* (28 October 1990), I: *loc. cit.*

Keep Alive the Missionary Spirit which First Established the Church*

John Paul II

*Actively proclaim Christ's Gospel
in a spirit of respectful dialogue*

Dear Friends,

1. Your welcome touches me because it illustrates so well the words of St Paul: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit" (1 Co 12:4). I would like to greet each of you personally and tell you how happy I am to meet in Ziguinchor those who work for the Gospel, united in the same Spirit.

2. With all my heart I thank Bishop Augustin Sagna, your Pastor, for having presented your assembly to me in this Cathedral of St. Anthony of Padua. I am happy to recall here, in thanksgiving, the work of the builders of the living Church – the generations of missionaries who came here to proclaim the Good News. Because we are near the minor seminary of St. Louis, I want to share your gratitude to the Canadian Diocese of Saint-Hyacinthe for the services which their priests and women religious have rendered to you.

3. Among you "there are different working but the same God who produces all of them in everyone" (1 Co 12:6). God unites you

* The Pope Pope in Senegal: Message to priests, religious and lay leaders, 20 February 1992. Published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26 February 1992.

in the same call to follow Christ and to proclaim the kingdom which he has made present. The Second Vatican Council clearly pointed out that "principally the kingdom is revealed in the person of Christ himself, Son of God and Son of man, who came 'to serve and give his life as a ransom for many' (cf. *Mk* 10:45)" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 5).

Fearlessly affirm your faith in Christ

The first goal of my Pastoral Visit to you is *to confirm you in the faith and confirm you in your missionary commitment*, each one according to the gifts he or she has received. In my Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* I addressed the whole Church. Today, I make the same appeals to you. Remember that "faith is strengthened when it is given to others!" Be convinced that there is an "urgency of missionary evangelization [because] it is the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world" (n. 2). Keep alive the missionary spirit which allowed the Church to be planted here. Fearlessly affirm with simplicity your faith in Christ, man's only Savior, the faith you received as a gift from on high, without any merit on your part (cf. *ibid.*, n. 11). This active proclamation should be made in the Gospel spirit of respectful dialogue which you pursue with your fellow-citizens who belong to other religious traditions; however, be true to your convictions "without pretense or close-mindedness, but with truth, humility and frankness, knowing that dialogue can enrich each side" (*ibid.*, n. 56). "Open the doors to Christ!" His Gospel in no way detracts from man's freedom, from the respect that is owed to every culture and to whatever is good in each religion" (*ibid.*, n.3).

4. My dear friends the priests, yours is a particular responsibility in the Church's life and mission. Ordained to participate in the Bishop's priesthood, you fulfil everyone's expectations by being totally men of God. Your vocation demands first of all personal holiness, as was said to you during your ordination. You have given up many things to follow Christ and you can be his faithful servants only if you abide with him in the intimacy of prayer, if you yourselves fully live the sacraments of Eucharist and penance which make people strong in times of trial. Your many responsibilities should not dispense you from nourishing your spiritual life: take time for prayer and meditation; cease-

lessly return to the Word of God, the source of all mission; in your annual retreats let yourselves be seized by the Spirit to renew your conversion. Do not neglect continuing formation, in order to make Christ better known, to strengthen the Christian people and make them in of faith in the one Lord. Base your own words on the rock of the Word of God, received through the Church's rich Tradition. Totally abandoned to Christ, you will be united to your people.

In the freedom of your adherence and your promise to the Lord, be firmly and clearly faithful to chastity in celibacy, renouncing marriage in order to serve the kingdom better; be available and attentive to all Christians; be sure witness to the non-Christians. Form a fraternal presbyterate around your Bishops. Be open to trusting cooperation with all those who take part in the Church's mission. The community needs you, stewards of the mysteries of God, to transmit the sacramental gifts of grace. It needs you also to draw together in unity all those who work for the Gospel at your side.

I am happy to know that a greater number of young men are preparing for the priesthood, and that you have recently been able to dedicate your new major seminary in Brin. For you seminarians, what I just have said to the priests should clarify your response to the Lord's call. In order to follow Christ, you must plp- make a demanding choice, a combination of the spiritual life and study, and renounce other roads which open up to you. You do not make the choice of Jesus Christ in order to find shelter or security in the priesthood. You must be servants in the image of Christ who came to serve. In attaching yourselves to the Lord and his Church, you will soon discover that, having given your all, you will flourish and enter into the joy of your Master.

Religious give witness that only God can fulfil human expectations

5. Brothers and sisters, the religious, your vocation is valuable to all the people of God. By your vows you have been called to give the world your irreplaceable witness of the simple consecration of your lives to God to attest to the fact that God alone can

totally fulfil the expectations of a man or woman. The love of God embraces all those whom he loves. This is true for contemplatives as well as for religious in the apostolic life, each according to the charism of his or her institute. Both groups reserve a primary place for prayer each day. In order to make you capable of this, it is important that your spiritual formation be given greater depth in the novitiate, but also that you take the time and means to renew the sources and experience of prayer throughout your religious life. Thus your work and many services receive greater light.

You have your part in Church's single mission wherever you are. You are also asked to coordinate the activities of the various institutes present under the responsibility of the Bishops who have the care for all the people in their territory. Sometimes it requires patience and discretion, but these qualities are a natural part of your vocation. The vows which you make to the Lord allow you selflessly to provide many pastoral, educational or health-care ministries, or programmes for charity and human development. I give you my encouragement for your work, which I know is often difficult. May the Lord sustain you so that you may keep balance in your religious life while responding to the expectations of your brothers and sisters in the Church and the whole of society.

6. Since the beginning of evangelization, and with the Council in particular, the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and the world has been put in the greater relief. It has become habitual in my pastoral visits for the laity to have an important part in my meetings with the "living forces" of the local Church. And this is fortunate, because it is all the baptized who compose the people of God. They are more conscious of their mission and the responsibilities deriving from it. They communicate their dynamism to the whole Church through specifically lay movements, the leadership functions which they perform – and not only as temporary replacements – by their taking charge of many necessary tasks in the support of the whole of the apostolate. Most of all, however, all the baptized are the first witnesses of the gift of faith, beginning with their marital and family life which reflects Christ's love for his Church and prepares children to discover it in their turn.

In all areas of society, dear laity, you are the baptized who have been entrusted with the mission of spreading the love of the Saviour. Through you, the Church "is a dynamic force in mankind's journey towards the eschatological kingdom, and is the sign and promoter of Gospel values" (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 20). You have the ambition of changing the world because the Gospel is a message of peace for all the people whom God wants to save. In this spirit, accept your responsibility, act for the common good of your country, fight to make honesty and truth win out, support those who are weak. And when someone asks you why you so ardently want everyone to enjoy complete justice, you will help them understand that your dynamism is that of the hope placed in your hearts by the Spirit of Christ (cf. *Rm* 5:5).

Catechists deserve the Church's gratitude for their work

7. I would like to address a particular word to the catechists among the laity which I have just mentioned. I know that they do so with unlimited devotion, with their families accepting precious living conditions in order to be at the service of the community each day. They deserve to be faithfully helped by the priests of their parish and diocesan apostolate directors to accomplish their tasks. Dear catechists, I want to tell you of my esteem and the Church's gratitude to you who have contributed so much to give her a firm foundation in your region. I give thanks to God for the work which you continue to do.

8. Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to encourage all of you to make progress in the fraternal life which is the distinctive sign of the Lord's disciples. After having washed the feet of his Apostles in a magnificent gesture of service, Jesus said to them: "By this will they know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another" (*Jn* 13:35). United by that love, introduced by baptism into new life, take up the missionary proclamation once again with new enthusiasm. In the Encyclical on missionary activity I recalled: "This new life is a gift from God, and people are asked to accept and develop it, if they wish to realize the fullness of their vocation in conformity to Christ" (n.7).

Gospel workers, each according to his or her vocation, continue together to help the Lord's Church take root in your beloved land of Casamance and the whole country. You can be sure that

God is taking care of the seed which you are planting. Through the Holy Spirit he will make it grow and become a beautiful tree bearing abundant fruit.

Members of the Body of Christ who are listening to me, I entrust you to our Lady, Mother of the Church and Mother of all men and women, and I bless you with all my heart.

Aetatis Novae

Pontifical Council for Social Communications

PASTORAL INSTRUCTION ON SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS ON THE TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF 'COMMUNIO ET PROGRESSIO'

Introduction

A Revolution in Human Communications

1. At the dawn of a new era, a vast expansion of human communications is profoundly influencing culture everywhere. Revolutionary technological changes are only part of what is happening. Nowhere today are people untouched by the impact of media upon religious and moral attitudes, political and social systems and education.

It is impossible to ignore, for instance, that geographical and political boundaries were both of very little avail in view of the role played by communications during the "radical transformations" of 1989 and 1990, on whose historical significance the Pope reflects in *Centesimus Annus*.¹

¹Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, nn. 12-23, in AAS, LXXXIII (1991), pp. 807-

It becomes equally evident that "the first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a 'global village.' The means of social communications have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large."²

More than a quarter century after the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's decree on social communications, *Inter Mirifica*, and two decades after the pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio*, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications wishes to reflect on the pastoral implications of this situation.

We do so in the spirit expressed by the closing words of *Communio et Progressio*: "The People of God walk in history. As they. . . advance with their times, they look forward with confidence and even with enthusiasm to whatever the development of communications in a space age may have to offer."³

Taking for granted the continued validity of the principles and insights of these conciliar and postconciliar documents, we wish to apply them to new and emerging realities. We do not pretend to say the final word on a complex, fluid, rapidly changing situation, but simply wish to provide a working tool, and a measure of encouragement, to those confronting the pastoral implications of the new realities.

2. In the years since *Inter Mirifica* and *Communio et Progressio* appeared, people have grown accustomed to expressions like "information society," "mass media culture," and "media generation." Terms like these underline a remarkable fact: today, much that men and women know and think about life is conditioned by the media; to a considerable extent, human experience itself is an experience of media.

Recent decades also have witnessed remarkable developments in the technology of communicating. These include both the rapid

²John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 37, in AAS, LXXXIII (1991), p. 285.

³*Communio et Progressio*, n. 187, in AAS, LXIII (1971), pp. 655-656.

evolution of previously existing technologies and the emergence of new telecommunications and media technologies: satellites, cable television, fiber optics, video cassettes, compact discs, computerized image making and other computer and digital technology, and much else. The use of new media gives rise to what some speak of as "new languages" and has given birth to new possibilities for the mission of the Church as well as to new pastoral problems.

3. Against this background we encourage the pastors and people of the Church to deepen their understanding of issues relating to communications and media, and to translate their understanding into practical policies and workable programs.

"As the Council Fathers looked to the future and tried to discern the context in which the Church would be called upon to carry out her mission, they could clearly see that the progress of technology was already 'transforming the face of the earth' and even reaching out to conquer space. They recognized that developments in communications technology, in particular, were likely to set off chain reactions with unforeseen consequences."⁴

"Far from suggesting that the Church should stand aloof or try to isolate herself from the mainstream of these events, the Council Fathers saw the Church as being in the very midst of human progress, sharing the experiences of the rest of humanity, seeking to understand them and to interpret them in the light of faith. It was for God's faithful people to make creative use of the new discoveries and technologies for the benefit of humanity and the fulfilment of God's plan for the world. . . employing the full potential of the 'computer age' to serve the human and transcendent vocation of every person, and thus to give glory to the Father from whom all good things come."⁵

We express our gratitude to those responsible for the creative communications work underway in the Church everywhere. De-

⁴John Paul II, Message for the World Communications Day 1990, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, Jan. 25, 1990, p. 6; cf. *Gaiudium et Spes*, n. 5, in AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 1028.

⁵*Ibid.*

spite difficulties — arising from limited resources, from the obstacles sometimes placed in the way of the Church's access to media, and from a constant reshaping of culture, values, and attitudes brought about by the pervasive presence of media — much has been, and continues to be, accomplished. The dedicated bishops, clergy, religious and lay people engaged in this critically important apostolate deserve the thanks of all.

Also welcome are those positive ventures in media-related ecumenical involving Catholics and their brothers and sisters of other Churches and ecclesial communities, as well as interreligious cooperation with those of other world religions. It is not only appropriate "but necessary for Christians to work together more effectively in their communications efforts and to act in more direct cooperation with other religions to ensure a united religious presence in the very heart of mass communications."⁶

I. The Context of Social Communications

A. Cultural and social context

4. As more than just a technological revolution, today's revolution in social communications involves a fundamental reshaping of elements by which people comprehend the world about them, and verify and express what they comprehend. The constant availability of images and ideas, and their rapid transmission even from continent to continent, have profound consequences, both positive and negative, for structure and functioning of societies, intercultural communications, and the perception and transmission of values, world views, ideologies, and religious beliefs. The communications revolution affects perceptions even of the Church, and has a significant impact on the Church's own structures and modes of functioning.

All this has striking pastoral implications. The media can be used to proclaim the Gospel or to reduce it to silence in human hearts. As media become ever more intertwined with people's daily lives, they influence how people understand the meaning of life itself.

⁶Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Criteria for Ecumenical and Interreligious Cooperation in Communications*, n. 1, Vatican City, 1989.

Indeed, the power of media extends to defining not only what people will think but even what they will think about. Reality, for many, is what the media recognize as real; what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance. The *de facto* silence can be imposed upon individuals and groups whom the media ignore; and even the voice of the Gospel can be muted, though not entirely stilled, in this way.

It is important therefore that Christians find ways to furnish the missing information to those deprived of it and also to give a voice to the voiceless.

The power of media either to reinforce or override the traditional reference points of religion, culture, and family underlines the continued relevance of the Council's words: "If the media are to be correctly employed, it is essential that all who use them know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully in this domain."⁷

B. Political and economic context

5. The economic structures of nations are inextricably linked to contemporary communications systems. National investment in an efficient communications infrastructure is widely regarded as necessary to economic and political development; and the growing cost of such investment has been a major factor leading governments in a number of countries to adopt policies aimed at increasing market competition. For this and other reasons, public telecommunications and broadcasting systems in many instances have been subjected to policies of deregulation and privatization.

While public system can clearly be misused for purpose of ideological and political manipulation, unregulated commercialization and privatization in broadcasting can also have far-reaching consequences. In practice, and often as a matter of public policy, public accountability for the use of the air waves is devalued. Profit, not service, tends to become the most important measure of success. Profit motives and advertisers' interests exert undue influence on media content: popularity is preferred over quality,

⁷Inter Mirifica, n. 4, in AAS, LVI (1964), p. 146.

and the lowest common denominator prevails. Advertisers move beyond their legitimate role of identifying genuine needs and responding to them, and driven by profit motives, strive to create artificial needs and patterns of consumption.

Commercial pressures also operate across national boundaries at the expense of particular peoples and their cultures. Faced with increasing competition and the need to develop new markets, communications firms become ever more "multinational" in character, at the same time, lack of local production capabilities makes some countries increasingly dependent on foreign material. Thus, the products of the popular media of one culture spread into another, often to the detriment of established art forms and media and the values which they embody.

Even so, the solution to problems arising from unregulated commercialization and privatization does not lie in state control of media but in more regulation according to criteria of public service and greater public accountability. It should be noted in this connection that, although the legal and political frameworks within which media operate in some countries are currently changing strikingly for the better; elsewhere government intervention remains an instrument of oppression and exclusion.

II. The work of the Means of Social Communications

6. *Communio et Progressio* is rooted in a vision of communication as a way toward communion. For "more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion," it declares, communication is "the giving of self in love."⁸ In this respect, communication mirrors the Church's own communion and is capable of contributing to it.

Indeed, the communication of truth can have a redemptive power, which comes from the person of Christ. He is God's Word made flesh and the image of the invisible God. In and through him God's own life is communicated to humanity by the Spirit's action. "Since the creation of the world, invisible realities, God's eternal power and divinity have become visible, recognized through the

⁸*Communio et Progressio*, n. 11, in AAS, LXIII (1971), p. 598.

things he has made",⁹ and now: "The Word has become flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory: the glory of an only Son coming from the Father, filled with enduring love."¹⁰

Here, in the Word made flesh, God's self-communication is definitive. In Jesus' words and deeds the Word is liberating, redemptive, for all humankind. This loving self-revelation of God, combined with humanity's response of faith, constitutes a profound dialogue.

Human history and all human relationships exist within the framework established by this self-communication of God in Christ. History itself is ordered toward becoming a kind of word of God, and it is part of the human vocation to contribute to bringing this about by living out the ongoing, unlimited communication of God's reconciling love in creative new ways. We are to do this through words of hope and deeds of love, that is, through our very way of life. Thus communication must lie at the heart of the Church community.

Christ is both the content and the dynamic source of the Church's communications in proclaiming the Gospel. For the Church itself is "Christ's Mystical Body — the hidden completion of Christ glorified — who 'fills the whole creation.'"¹¹ As a result we move, within the Church and with the help of the word and the sacraments, toward the hope of the last unity where "God will be all in all."¹²

A. Media at the service of persons and cultures

7. for all the good which they do and are capable of doing, mass media, "which can be such effective instruments of unity and understanding, can also sometimes be the vehicles of a deformed outlook on life, on the family, on religion and on morality

⁹Rm 1:20.

¹⁰Jn 1:14.

¹¹Ep 1:23; 4:10.

¹²1 Co 15:28; *Communio et Progressio*, n. 11, in AAS, LXIII (1971), p. 598.

— and outlook that does not respect the true dignity and destiny of the human person.”¹³ it is imperative that media respect and contribute to that integral development of the person which embraces “the cultural, transcendent and religious dimensions of man and society.”¹⁴

One also finds the source of certain individual and social problems in the replacement of human interaction by increased media use and intense attachment to fictitious media characters. Media, after all, cannot take the place of immediate personal contact and interaction among family members and friends. But the solution to this difficulty also may lie largely in the media: through their use in ways — dialogue groups, discussions of films and broadcasts — which stimulate interpersonal communication rather than substituting for it.

B. Media at the service of dialogue with the world

8. The Second Vatican Council underlined the awareness of the People of God that they are “truly and intimately linked with mankind and history.”¹⁵ Those who proclaim God’s Word are obliged to heed and seek to understand the “words” of diverse peoples and cultures, in order not only to learn from them but to help them recognize and accept the Word of God.¹⁶ The Church therefore must maintain an active, listening presence in relation to the world — a kind of presence which both nurtures community and supports people in seeking acceptable solutions to personal and social problems.

Moreover, as the Church always must communicate its message in a manner suited to each age and to the cultures of particular nations and peoples, so today it must communicate in and to the emerging media culture.¹⁷ This is a basic condition for responding to a crucial point made by the Second Vatican Council: the emer-

¹³Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Pornography and Violence in the Media: A Pastoral Response*, n. 7, Vatican City, 1989.

¹⁴John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 46 in AAS, LXXX (1988), p. 579.

¹⁵*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 11, in AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 1034.

¹⁶Cf. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 20, in AAS, LXVIII (1976), pp. 18-19.

¹⁷Cf. *Inter Mirifica*, n. 3, in AAS, LVI (1964), p. 146.

gence of "social, technical, and cultural bonds" linking people ever more closely lends "special urgency" to the Church's task of bringing all to "full union with Christ."¹⁸ Considering how important a contribution the media of social communications can make to its efforts to foster this unity, the Church views them as means "devised under God's Providence" for the promotion of communication and communion among human beings during their earthly pilgrimage.¹⁹

Thus, in seeking to enter into dialogue with the modern world, the Church necessarily desires honest and respectful dialogue with those responsible for the communications media. On the Church's side this dialogue involves efforts to understand the media — their purposes, procedures, forms and genres, internal structures and modalities — and to offer support and encouragement to those involved in media work. On the basis of this sympathetic understanding and support, it becomes possible to offer meaningful proposals for removing obstacles to human progress and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Such dialogue therefore requires that the Church be actively concerned with the secular media, and especially with the shaping of media policy. Christians have in effect a responsibility to make their voice heard in all the media, and their task is not confined merely to the giving out of Church news. The dialogue also involves support for media artists; it requires the development of an anthropology and a theology of communication — not least, so that theology itself may be more communicative, more successful in disclosing Gospel values and applying them to the contemporary realities of the human condition; it requires that Church leaders and pastoral workers respond willingly and prudently to media when requested, while seeking to establish relationships of mutual confidence and respect, based on fundamental common values, with those who are not of our faith.

*C. Media at the service of
human community and progress*

9. Communications in and by the Church is essentially communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ. It is the proclama-

¹⁸Lumen Gentium, n. 1, in AAS, LVII (1965), p. 5.

¹⁹Cf. Communio et Progressio, n. 12, in AAS, LXII (1971), p. 598.

tion of the Gospel as a prophetic, liberating word to the men and women of our times; it is testimony, in the face of radical secularization, to divine truth and to the transcendent destiny of the human person; it is the witness given in solidarity with all believers against conflict and division, to justice and communion among peoples, nations, and cultures.

This understanding of communication on the part of the Church sheds a unique light on social communications and on the role which, in the providential plan of God, the media are intended to play in promoting the integral development of human persons and societies.

D. Media at the service of ecclesial communion

10. Along with all this, it is necessary constantly to recall the importance of the fundamental right of dialogue and information within the Church, as described in *Communio et Progressio*,²⁰ and to continue to seek effective means, including a responsible use of media of social communications, for realizing and protecting this right. In this connection we also have in mind the affirmations of the *Code of Canon Law*, that, besides showing obedience to the pastors of the Church, the faithful "are at liberty to make known their needs, especially their spiritual needs, and their wishes" to these pastors,²¹ and that the faithful, in keeping with their knowledge, competence, and position, have "the right, indeed at times the duty," to express to the pastors their views on matters concerning the good of the Church.²²

Partly this is a matter of maintaining and enhancing the Church's credibility and effectiveness. But, more fundamentally, it is one of the ways of realizing in a concrete manner the Church's character as *communio*, rooted in and mirroring the intimate communion of the Trinity. Among the members of the community of persons who make up the Church, there is a radical equality in dignity and mission which arises from baptism and underlies

²⁰*Ibid.*, nn. 114-121, pp. 634-636.

²¹*Cf.* Canon 212.2, in AAS., LXXV, 2 (1983), p. 34.

²²*Cf.* Canon 212.3, p. 34.

hierarchical structure and diversity of office and function; and this equality necessarily will express itself in an honest and respectful sharing of information and opinions.

It will be well to bear in mind, however, in cases of dissent, that "it is not by seeking to exert the pressure of public opinion that one contributes to the clarification of doctrinal issues and renders service to the truth."²³ In fact, "not all ideas which circulate among the People of God" are to be "simply and purely identified with the 'sense of the Faith.'"²⁴

Why does the Church insist that people have the right to receive correct information? Why does the Church emphasize its right to proclaim authentic Gospel truth? Why does the Church stress the responsibility of its pastors to communicate the truth and to form the faithful to do the same? It is because the whole understanding of what communication in the Church means is based upon the realization that the Word of God communicates himself.

E. Media at the service of a new evangelization

11. Along with traditional means such as witness of life, catechetics, personal contact, popular piety, the liturgy and similar celebrations, the use of media is now essential in evangelization and catechesis. Indeed, "the Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect."²⁵ The media of social communications can and should be instruments in the Church's program of re-evangelization and new evangelization in the contemporary world. In view of the proven efficacy of the old principle "see, judge, act," the audiovisual aspect of media in evangelization should be given due attention.

But it will also be of great importance in the Church's approach to media and culture they do so much to shape always to bear in

²³Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*, n. 30, in AAS, LXXXII (1990), p. 1562.

²⁴Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 35, p. 1565.

²⁵Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 45, in AAS, LXVIII (1976), p. 35.

mind that: "It is not enough to use the media simply spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications. . . with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology."²⁶ Today's evangelization ought to well up from the Church's active, sympathetic presence within the world of communications.

III. Current Challenges

A. The need for a critical evaluation

12. But even as the Church takes a positive, sympathetic approach to media, seeking to enter into the culture created by modern communications in order to evangelize effectively, it is necessary at the very same time that the Church offer a critical evaluation of mass media and their impact upon culture.

As we have said repeatedly, communications technology is a marvelous expression of human genius, and the media confer innumerable benefits upon society. But, as we have also pointed out, the application of communications technology has been a mixed blessing, and its use for good purposes requires sound values and wise choices on the part of individuals, the private sector, governments, and society as a whole. The Church does not presume to dictate these decisions and choices, but it does seek to be of help by indicating ethical and moral criteria which are relevant to the process — criteria which are to be found in both human and Christian values.

B. Solidarity and integral development

13. As matters stand, mass media at times exacerbate individual and social problems which stand in the way of human solidarity and the integral development of the human person. These obstacles include secularism, consumerism, materialism, dehumanization, and lack of concern for the plight of the poor and neglected.²⁷

²⁶John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 37, in AAS, LXXXIII (1991), p. 285.

²⁷Cf. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, n. 41, in AAS, LXXXIII (1991), p. 841.

It is against this background that the Church, recognizing the media of social communications as "the privileged way" today for the creation and transmission of culture,²⁸ acknowledges its own duty to engage in "a work of defense of liberty, respect for the dignity of individuals, and the elevation of the authentic culture of peoples which occurs through a firm and courageous rejection of every form of monopoly and manipulation."²⁹

C. Policies and structures

14. Certain problems in this regard arise specifically from media policies and structures: for example, the unjust exclusion of some groups and classes from access to the means of communications, the systematic abridgement of the fundamental right to information which is practiced in some places, the widespread domination of media by economic, social and political elites.

These things are contrary to the principal purposes, and indeed to the very nature, of the media, whose proper and essential social role consists in contributing to the realization of the human right to information, promoting justice in the pursuit of the common good, and assisting individuals, groups, and peoples in their search for truth. The media carry out these crucial tasks when they foster the exchange of ideas and information among all classes and sectors of society and offer to all responsible voices opportunities to be heard.

D. Defense of the right to information and communications

15. It is not acceptable that the exercise of the freedom of communication should depend upon wealth, education, or political power. The right to communicate is the right of all.

This calls for special national and international efforts, not only to give those who are poor and less powerful access to the information which they need for their individual and social develop-

²⁸John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, n. 44, in AAS, LXXXI (1989), p. 480.

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 481.

ment, but to ensure that they are able to play an effective, responsible role in deciding media content and determining the structures and policies of their national institutions of social communications.

Where legal and political structures foster the domination of the media by elites, the Church for its part must urge respect for the right to communicate, including its own right of access to media, while at the same time seeking alternative models of communications for its own members and for people at large. The right to communicate is part also of the right to religious freedom which should not be confined to freedom of worship.

IV. Pastoral Priorities and Responses

A. Defense of human cultures

16. Considering the situation in many places, sensitivity to the rights and interests of individuals may often call for the Church to promote alternative community media. Often, too, for the sake of evangelization and catechesis the Church must take steps to preserve and promote folk media and other traditional forms of expression, recognizing that in particular societies these can be more effective than newer media in spreading the Gospel because they make possible greater personal participation and reach deeper levels of human feeling and motivation.

The overwhelming presence of mass media in the contemporary world by no means detracts from the importance of alternative media which are open to people's involvement and allow them to be active in production and even in designing the process of communications itself. Then, too, grassroots and traditional media not only provide an important forum for local cultural expression but develop competence for active participation in shaping and using mass media.

Similarly, we view with sympathy the desire of many peoples and groups for more just, equitable systems of communications and information which safeguard them against domination and manipulation, whether from abroad or at the hands of their fellow countrymen. This is a concern of developing nations in relation to developed ones; and often, too, it is a concern of minorities within particular nations, both developed and developing. In all cases

people ought to be able to participate actively, autonomously, and responsibly in the processes of communications which in so many ways help to shape the conditions of their lives.

*B. Development and promotion of
the Church's own media of social communications*

17. Along with its other commitments in the area of communications and media, the Church must continue, in spite of the many difficulties involved, to develop, maintain, and foster its own specifically Catholic instruments and programs for social communications. These include the Catholic press and Catholic publishing houses, Catholic radio and television, offices for public information and media relations, institutes and programs for training in and about media, media research, and Church-related organizations of communications professionals — including especially the international Catholic communications organizations — whose members are knowledgeable and competent collaborators with the episcopal conferences as well as with the bishops individually.

Catholic media work is not simply one more program alongside all the rest of the Church's activities: social communications have a role to play in every aspect of the Church's mission. Thus, not only should there be a pastoral plan for communications, but communications should be an integral part of every pastoral plan, for it has something to contribute to virtually every other apostolate, ministry, and program.

C. The formation of Christian communicators

18. Education and training in communications should be an integral part of the formation of pastoral workers and priests.³⁰ There are several distinct elements and aspects to the education and training which are required. For example, in today's world, so strongly influenced by media, Church personnel required at least a working grasp of the impact which new information technologies and mass media are having upon individuals and society. They

³⁰Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communications*, Vatican City, 1986.

must likewise be prepared to minister both to the "information-rich" and to the "information-poor." The need to know how to invite others into dialogue, avoiding a style of communication which suggests domination, manipulation, or personal gain. As for those who will be actively engaged in media work for the Church, they need to acquire professional skills in media along with doctrinal and spiritual formation.

V. The Need for Pastoral Planning

A. Responsibilities of the Bishops

20. Recognizing the validity, and indeed the urgency, of the claims advanced by communications work, bishops and others responsible for decisions about allocating the Church's limited human and material resources should assign it an appropriate, high priority, taking into account the circumstances of their particular nations, regions, and dioceses.

This need may be even greater now than previously, precisely because, to some degree at least, the great contemporary "Areopagus" of mass media has more or less been neglected by the Church up to this time.³¹ As the Holy Father remarks: "Generally, preference has been given to other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education, while the mass media are left to the initiative of individuals or small groups and enter into pastoral planning only in a secondary way."³² This situation needs correcting.

B. Urgency of a pastoral plan for social communications

21. We therefore strongly recommend that dioceses and episcopal conferences or assemblies include a communications component in every pastoral plan. We further recommend that they develop specific pastoral plans for social communications itself, or else review and bring up to date those plans which already exist,

³¹Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 37, in AAS, LXXXIII (1991), 285.

³²*Ibid.*

in this way fostering the desirable process of periodic re-examination and adaptation. In doing so, bishops should seek the collaboration of professionals in secular media and of the Church's own media-related organizations, including especially the international and national organizations for film, radio-television, and the press.

Episcopal conferences in some regions already have been well served by pastoral plans which concretely identify needs and goals and encourage the coordination of efforts. The results of the study, assessment, and consultation involved in preparing these documents can and should be shared at all levels in the Church, as useful data for pastoral workers. Practical, realistic plans of this sort also can be adapted to the needs of local Churches. They should of course be constantly open to revision and adaptation in light of changing needs.

This document itself concludes elements of a pastoral plan which also indicate issues for possible treatment in pastoral letters and episcopal statements at the national and local levels. These elements reflect suggestions received from episcopal conferences and media professionals.

Conclusion

22. We affirm once again that the Church "sees these media as 'gifts of God' which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation."³³ As the Spirit helped the prophets of old to see the divine plan in the signs of their times, so today the Spirit helps the Church interpret the signs of our times and carry out its prophetic tasks, among which the study, evaluation, and right use of communications technology and the media of social communications are now fundamental.

³³*Communio et Progressio*, n. 2, in AAS, LXIII (1971), pp. 593-594.

Appendix

ELEMENTS OF A PASTORAL PLAN FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

23. Media conditions and the opportunities presented to the Church in the field of social communications differ from nation to nation and even from diocese to diocese within the same country. It naturally follows that the Church's approach to media and the cultural environment they help to form will differ from place to place, and that its plan and participation will be tailored to local situations.

Every episcopal conference and diocese should therefore develop an integrated pastoral plan for communications, preferably in consultation with representatives of international and national Catholic communications organizations and with local media professionals. Furthermore, communications ought to be taken into account in formulating and carrying out all other pastoral plans, including those concerning social service, education, and evangelization. A number of episcopal conferences and dioceses already have developed such plans in which communications needs are identified, goals are articulated, realistic provision is made for financing, and a variety of communications efforts is coordinated.

The following guidelines are offered as assistance to those formulating such pastoral plans or engaged in reassessing plans which exist.

Guidlines for designing Pastoral Plans for Social Communications in a Diocese, Episcopal Conference or Patriarchal Assembly

24. A pastoral plan for social communications should include the following elements:

a) the statement of a vision, based on extensive consultation, which identifies communications strategies for all Church ministries and responds to contemporary issues and conditions;

b) an inventory or assessment which describes the media environment in the territory under consideration, including audiences, public and commercial media producers and directors, financial and technical resources, delivery systems, ecumenical and

educational resources, and Catholic media organizations and communications personnel, including those of religious communities;

c) a proposed structure for Church-related social communications in support of evangelization, catechesis and education, social service, and ecumenical cooperation, and including, as far as possible, public relations, press, radio, television, cinema, cassettes, computer networks, facsimile services and related forms of telecommunications;

d) media education, with special emphasis on the relationship of media and values;

e) pastoral outreach to, and dialogue with, media professionals, with particular attention to their faith development and spiritual growth;

f) means of obtaining and maintaining financial support adequate to the carrying-out of the pastoral plan.

Process for designing a pastoral plan for social communications

25. The plan should offer guidelines and suggestions helpful to Church communicators in establishing realistic goals and priorities for their work. It is recommended that a planning team including Church personnel and media professionals be involved in this process, whose two phases are: 1) research, and 2) design.

Research phase

26. The elements of the research phase are needs assessment, information gathering, and an exploration of alternative models of a pastoral plan. It includes an analysis of the internal communications environment, including the strengths and weaknesses of the Church's current structures and programs for communications as well as the opportunities and challenges these face.

Three types of research will assist in gathering the required information: a needs assessment, a communications audit, and a resource inventory. The first identifies areas of ministry requiring particular attention on the part of the episcopal conference or diocese. The second considers what is now being done — including its effectiveness — so as to identify strengths and weakness of existing communications structures and procedures. The third

identifies communications resources, technology, and personnel available to the Church — including not only the Church's "own" resources but those to which it may have access in the business community, the media industries, and ecumenical settings.

Design phase

27. After gathering and studying these data, the planning team should identify conference or diocesan communications goals and priorities. This is the beginning of the design phase. The planning team should then proceed to address each of the following issues as it relates to local circumstances.

28. *Education.* Communications issues and mass communications are relevant to every level of pastoral ministry, including education. A pastoral social communications plan should attempt:

a) to offer educational opportunities in communications as essential components of the formation of all persons who are engaged in the work of the Church: seminarians, priests, religious brothers and sisters, and lay leaders;

b) to encourage Catholic schools and universities to offer programs and courses related to the communications needs of the Church and society;

c) to offer courses, workshops and seminars in technology, management and communication ethics and policy issues for Church communicators, seminarians, religious and clergy;

d) to plan and carry out programs in media education and media literacy for teachers, parents, and students;

e) to encourage creative artists and writers accurately to reflect Gospel values as they share their gifts through the written word, legitimate theater, radio, television and film for entertainment and education;

f) to identify new strategies for evangelization and catechesis through the application of communications technology and mass communications.

29. *Spiritual Formation and Pastoral Care.* Lay Catholic professionals and others working in either the Church apostolate of social communications or the secular media often look to the

Church for spiritual guidance and pastoral care. A pastoral plan for social communications therefore should seek:

a) to offer opportunities for professional enrichment to lay Catholic and other professional communicators through days of recollection, retreats, seminars, and professional support groups;

b) to offer pastoral care which will provide the necessary support, nourish the communicators' faith and keep alive their sense of dedication in the difficult task of communicating Gospel values and authentic human values to the world.

30. *Cooperation.* Cooperation involves sharing resources among conferences and/or dioceses and between dioceses and other institutions, such as religious communities, universities, and health care facilities. A pastoral plan for social communications should be designed:

a) to enhance relations and encourage mutual consultation between Church representatives and media professionals, who have much to teach the Church about the use of media;

b) to explore cooperative productions through regional and national centers and to encourage the development of joint promotion, marketing, and distribution networks;

c) to promote cooperation with religious congregations working in social communications;

d) to collaborate with ecumenical organizations and with other Churches and religious groups regarding ways of securing and guaranteeing access to the media by religion, and to collaborate in "the more recently-developed media: especially in regard to the common use of satellites, data banks, and cable networks and in informatics generally, beginning with system compatibility";³⁴

e) to cooperate with secular media, especially in regard to common concerns on religious, moral, ethical, cultural, educational and social issues.

³⁴Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Criteria for Ecumenical and Interreligious Cooperation in Communications*, n. 14.

31. *Public Relations.* Public relations by the Church means active communication with the community through both secular and religious media. Involving readiness to communicate Gospel values and to publicize the ministries and programs of the Church, it requires that the Church do all in its power to ensure that its own true image reflects Christ. A pastoral plan for social communications should seek:

a) to maintain public relations offices with adequate human and material resources to make possible effective communication between the Church and the community as a whole;

b) to produce publications and radio, television and video programs of excellent quality which give high visibility to the message of the Gospel and the mission of the Church;

c) to promote media awards and other means of recognition in order to encourage and support media professionals;

d) to celebrate World Communications Day as a means of fostering awareness of the importance of social communications and supporting the communications initiatives of the Church.

32. *Research.* The Church's strategies in the field of social communications must be based on the results of sound media research which have been subjected to informed analysis and evaluation. It is important that communications research include topics and issues of particular relevance to the mission of the Church in the particular nation and region involved. A pastoral plan for social communications should be designed:

a) to encourage institutes of higher studies, research centers, and universities to engage in both applied and fundamental research related to communications needs and concerns of the Church and society;

b) to identify practical ways of interpreting current communication research and applying it to the mission of the Church;

c) to support ongoing theological reflection upon the processes and instruments of social communication and their role in the Church and society.

33. *Communications and Development of Peoples.* Accessible point-to-point communication and mass media offer many people a more adequate opportunity to participate in the modern world economy, to experience freedom of expression, and to contribute to the emergence of peace and justice in the world. A pastoral plan for social communications should be designed:

a) to bring Gospel values to bear upon the broad range of contemporary media activities — from book publishing to satellite communications — so as to contribute to the growth of international solidarity;

b) to defend the public interest and to safeguard religious access to the media by taking informed, responsible positions on matters of communications law and policy, and on the development of communications systems;

c) to analyze the social impact of advanced communications technology and to help prevent undue social disruption and cultural destabilization;

d) to assist professional communicators in articulating and observing ethical standards, especially in regard to the issues of fairness, accuracy, justice, decency, and respect for life;

e) to develop strategies for encouraging more widespread, representative, responsible access to the media;

f) to exercise a prophetic role by speaking out in timely fashion from a Gospel perspective concerning the moral dimensions of significant public issues.

Vatican City, February 22, 1992, Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle.

+JOHN P. FOLEY

President

Msgr. PIERFRANCO PASTORE

Secretary

Christ in the Media As Seen in 'Aetatis Novae'

Dexter H. Irisari

Last January 24, 1992, the Feast of St. Francis of Sales, Pope John Paul II released from the Vatican his message for the 26th *World Communications Day* which falls on May 31. The Pope's message zooms in on "The Proclamation of Christ's Message in the Communications Media."

According to the Pope, the celebration of *World Communications Day* "is a way of acknowledging with gratitude a specific gift of God, a gift which has enormous significance for the period of human history in which we are living, the gift of all those technical means which facilitate, enhance and enrich communications between human beings."

"On this Day, we celebrate the blessings of speech, of hearing and of sight, which enable us to emerge from our isolation and loneliness in order to exchange with those around us the thoughts and sentiments which arise in our hearts. We celebrate the gifts of writing and reading by which the wisdom of our ancestors is placed at our disposal and our own experience and reflection are passed on to the generations that follow us. Then, as if these wonders were of small account, we recognize the value of 'marvels' even more wonderful: 'the marvels of technology which God has destined human genius to discover,' inventions which in our time have immeasurably increased and extended the range over which our communications may carry and have amplified the volume of

our voice so that it can simultaneously come to the ears of multitudes beyond counting."

The Pope avers: "The communications media are the admission ticket of every man and woman to the modern marketplace where thoughts are given public utterance, where ideas are exchanged, news is passed around, and information of all kind is transmitted and received."

The Pope, however, bewails the fact that by these very media "we receive constant reminders of the limitations of our human condition, of the presence of evil in individuals and in society, of the senseless violence and injustice human beings wreak upon one another under so many pretexts. Through the media we often find ourselves in the position of helpless spectators assisting at atrocities committed all over the globe, whether the reason for them be historical rivalries, or racial prejudices, a desire for vengeance, a lust for power, greed for possessions, selfishness, or a lack of respect for human life and human rights."

The Pope urges Christians not just to deplore these happenings and motivations but to endeavor to overcome evil with good (cf. *Rm* 12:21). For him, the Christian response to evil is to hearken to the Good News and to make God's message of salvation in Jesus Christ ever more present. "Christians have a 'good news' to tell. We have Christ's message – and it is our joy to share it with every man and woman of good will who is prepared to listen," he said.

How?

According to the Pope, Christians tell the 'Good News' by the witness of their lives. Then, too, they are obliged to proclaim their beliefs "in the light of day" and "from the housetops" (*Mt* 10:27; *Lk* 12:3), without fear or compromise, adapting the divine message "to people's way of talking and their patterns of thought," and always with a sensitivity towards their actual beliefs and conviction. Further, Christian proclamation must be made with that twofold respect which the Church insists on: respect for all human beings without exception in their quest for answers to the deepest questions of their lives, and respect for the action of the Spirit, already mysteriously present in every human heart.

"Christ, as we remember, forced his teaching on no one. He presented it to all without exclusion, but left each one free to respond to his invitation. This is the pattern which we, his disciples, follow. We claim that all men and women have the right to hear the saving message which he left with us; and we claim for them the right to embrace it if it convinces them. Far from feeling any obligation to apologize for putting Christ's message at the disposal of all, we claim with full conviction that it is our right and obligation to do no less," the Pope observes, adding that there exists a corresponding right and obligation to use for this purpose all the new media of communication and that these "powerful instruments" require specific skills and disciplines on the part of those who use them and that to communicate intelligibly in these "new languages" there is a need for both special aptitude and appropriate training.

The Pope reminds the Catholic media professionals of their awesome responsibility as he encourages them to even greater and more urgent efforts both to communicate the message through the media and to train others to do so.

"In fulfilling her mission, the Church needs to be able to count on a far-reaching and more effective use of the means of social communication," the Pope stresses.

Meanwhile, Archbishop John Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, introduced at a press conference in the Vatican last March 17 the new pastoral instruction *Aetatis Novae*. The instruction is on pastoral planning in social communications. Its Latin title means "at the dawn of a new era," an era which is marked not only by the approach of a new millennium, but also by unanticipated political, economic and religious changes in central and Eastern Europe, and by changes in communications policy, practice and technology throughout the world, like privatization, deregulation, direct broadcast television without frontiers, cable televisions, satellites, fiber optics, revolutionized telecommunications by fax and data transmission, mini-computers, desktop publishing, videocassettes.

According to *Aetatis Novae*, the use of new media gives rise to what some speak of as "new languages" and has given birth to

new possibilities for the mission of the Church as well as to new pastoral problems.

Aetatis Novae contextualizes social communications culturally, socially, politically and economically thus:

“As more than just a technological revolution, today’s revolution in social communications involves a fundamental reshaping of the elements by which people comprehend the world about them, and verify and express what they comprehend. The constant availability of images and ideas, and their rapid transmission even from continent to continent, have profound consequences, both positive and negative, for the psychological, moral and social development of persons, the structure and functioning of societies, intercultural communications, and the perception and transmission of values, world views, ideologies, and religious beliefs. The communications revolution affects perceptions even of the Church, and has a significant impact on the Church’s own structures and modes of functioning.

“All this has striking pastoral implications. The media can be used to proclaim the Gospel or to reduce it to silence in human hearts. As media become ever more intertwined with people’s daily lives, they influence how people understand the meaning of life itself.

“Indeed, the power of media extends to defining not only what people will think but even what they will think about. Reality, for many, is what the media recognize as real; what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance. Thus *de facto* silence can be imposed upon individuals and groups whom the media ignore; and even the voice of the Gospel can be muted, though not entirely stilled, in this way.

“It is important therefore that Christians find ways to furnish the missing information to those deprived of it and also to give a voice to the voiceless.

“The power of media either to reinforce or override the traditional reference points of religion, culture and family underlines the continued relevance of the Council’s words: ‘If the media are to be correctly employed, it is essential that all who use them

know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully in this domain.'

"The economic structures of nations are inextricably linked to contemporary communications systems. National investment in an efficient communications infrastructure is widely regarded as necessary to economic and political development; and the growing cost of such investment has been a major factor leading governments in a number of countries to adopt policies aimed at increasing market competition. For this and other reasons, public telecommunications and broadcasting systems in many instances have been subject to policies of deregulation and privatization.

"While public systems can clearly be misused for purposes of ideological and political manipulation, unregulated commercialization and privatization in broadcasting can also have far-reaching consequences. In practice, and often as a matter of public policy, public accountability for the use of the air waves is devalued. Profit, not service, tends to become the most important measure of success. Profit motives and advertisers' interest exert undue influence on media content: popularity is preferred over quality, and the lowest common denominator prevails. Advertisers move beyond their legitimate role of identifying genuine needs and responding to them, and, driven by profit motives, strive to create artificial needs and patterns of consumption.

"Commercial pressures also operate across national boundaries at the expense of particular peoples and their cultures. Faced with increasing competition and the need to develop new markets, communications firms become ever more "multinational" in character; at the same time, lack of local production capabilities makes some countries increasingly dependent on foreign material. Thus, the products of the popular media of one culture spread into another, often to the detriment of established art forms and media and the values which they embody.

"Even so, the solution to problems arising from unregulated commercialization and privatization does not lie in state control of media but in more regulation according to criteria of public service and in greater public accountability. It should be noted in this connection that, although the legal and political frameworks within which media operate in some countries are currently changing

strikingly for the better, elsewhere government intervention remains an instrument of oppression and exclusion."

Quoting another previous pastoral instruction *Communio et Propaganda*, *Aetatis Novae* declares communication as "the giving of self in love" in the manner of God's Word made flesh, the self-communication of God in Christ. Media should, thus, be at the service of persons and cultures, which entails that they should stimulate interpersonal communication rather than substituting for it. Media should be at the service of dialogue with the world; at the service of human community and progress; at the service of ecclesial communion; and, at the service of a new evangelization.

Among the current challenges of social communications, *Aetatis Novae* mentions:

"As matters stand, mass media at times exacerbate individual and social problems which stand in the way of human solidarity and the integral development of the human person. These obstacles include secularism, consumerism, materialism, dehumanization, and lack of concern for the plight of the poor and neglected.

"It is against this background that the Church, recognizing the media of social communications as 'the privileged way' today for the creation and transmission of culture, acknowledges its own duty to offer formation to communications professionals and to the public, so that they will approach media with 'a critical sense which is animated by a passion for the truth;' it likewise acknowledges its duty to engage in 'a work of defense of liberty, respect for the dignity of individuals, and the elevation of the authentic culture of peoples which occurs through a firm and courageous rejection of every form of monopoly and manipulation.

"Certain problems in this regard arise specifically from media policies and structures: for example, the unjust exclusion of some groups and classes from access to the means of communications, the systematic abridgment of the fundamental right to information which is practiced in some places, the widespread domination of media by economic, social and political elites.

"These things are contrary to the principal purposes, and indeed to the very nature, of the media, whose proper and essen-

tial social role consists in contributing to the realization of the human right to information, promoting justice in the pursuit of the common good, and assisting individuals, groups, and peoples in the search for truth. The media carry out these crucial tasks when they foster the exchange of ideas and information among all classes and sectors of society and offer to all responsible voices opportunities to be heard.

"It is not acceptable that the exercise of the freedom of communication should depend upon wealth, education or political power. The right to communicate is the right of all.

"This calls for special national and international efforts, not only to give those who are poor and less powerful access to the information which they need for their individual and social development, but to ensure that they are able to play an effective, responsible role in deciding media content and determining the structures and policies of their national institutions of social communications.

"Where legal and political structures foster the domination of the media by elites, the Church for its part must urge respect for the right to communicate, including its own right of access to media, while at the same time seeking alternative models of communications for its own members and for people at large. The right to communicate is part also of the right to religious freedom which should not be confined to freedom of worship."

Aetatis Novae delineates these pastoral priorities and responses: defense of human cultures; development and promotion of the Church's own media of social communications; the formation of Christian communicators; and the pastoral care of communications personnel.

Archbishop Foley says about *Aetatis Novae*: "The most obvious new feature in the Pastoral Instruction is its appendix with guidelines for pastoral planning in communications. Not only should the Church have a pastoral plan for communications at every level, but communications should be part of every pastoral plan. This is based upon the fact that it is Christ, the Word of God, who is communicated in every activity of the Church — in edu-

cation, in works of mercy, in the struggle for justice and peace. This communication is designed to lead to communion, to intimate union with Jesus and with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

"The goals of the Church two decades ago are the goals of the Church today — communication of that truth which alone can make us truly free and which can lead to communion and progress at the dawn of a new era."

Truly, the Church enmeshes itself in the media. So it is that Milan (Italy) Archbishop Carlo Card. Martini pens this "A Canticle to the Media," which he based on St. Francis' "Canticle to the Sun":

*Blessed are You, almighty, omnipotent Lord God,
to You alone praise, glory and honor
and every blessing.*

*Blessed are You, my Lord, for all Your creatures,
especially for our Brother Television
who fills the hours of our day.
He is beautiful and radiant, with great splendor,
and he brings to the world, Most High, Your meaning.*

*Blessed are You, my Lord, for our Sister Radio.
Through her voice, news crisscross across the skies
and the world comes closer to us.*

*Blessed are You, my Lord for Brother Newspaper
who informs me about human affairs
stormy and serene
and through whom You nourish me
with knowledge and reflection about so many creatures.*

*Blessed are You, my Lord for those
who, using the Mass Media, still remind us
that nothing is worth more than the human person.*

*Blessed are You for those who, recalling that all things
pass and only You remain,
labor mightily to work in the Media*

*for truth and justice.
And for those who care for the weak
especially for those exploited by the
systems of Mass Communication.*

*Blessed are You, and highly praised, my Lord.
May You be served and thanked with great humility.
Praise the Lord, all you inhabitants of the Global Village
and join your voices to the voices of all creatures.*

Destination: Digos

Roman Carter, O.P.

It all began in late January of this year with a letter from an Abbot. Since I began my ecclesiastical studies with Benedictines "way back when" in the fifties, I suppose letters from Abbots should not have been rare in my life. But I can only think of five or six. This letter from this Abbot was something quite different inasmuch as it overturned by presuppositions. I thought there were only three Abbots in the Philippines: two Benedictines and one Cistercian. The letter was from a fourth. And it came not by post but by messenger service in a big brown envelope. The sender was Abbot Odo Haas and his address was given as St. Benedict's Monastery, Digos, Davao del Sur.

Abbot Odo and his community of sixteen monks at various stages of formation belong to the Missionary Benedictine Congregation of St. Ottilien founded in 1884 and represented in Europe (mostly Germany), Asia (particularly Korea), Africa and both North and South America. The St. Ottilien monks combine an observant conventual life with direct missionary activities dependent on the needs for evangelization in the countries where the needs for evangelization in the countries where they work. Their Archabbot resides at the St. Ottilien Cloister in Bavaria and many prestigious leaders and academics have risen from their ranks including the present Abbot Primate of the whole Benedictine Federation who resides at my alma mater, Sant' Anselmo in Rome.

Abbot Odo asked me in the letter to come and preach a retreat to his community. I agreed in my reply to do so early in

April. I had been recommended for the task by Abbot Andy Formilleza of the Montserrat de Manila. Immediately upon accepting Abbot Odo's requested retreat I began my remote preparation. I decided it would be best to plan for two daily conferences, the first on scripture and the second on monastic spirituality. My idea in this was to take the principles of reflective *lectio divina* as I have come to understand them and apply them, as it were, vocally to a series of topics. These topics could be determined as regards scriptures from a thematic consideration of daily liturgical readings. For patristic and medieval authors other factors struck me as more relevant and more practical. Here, I think, the preacher should abstract a sort of schematic arrangements both from primary sources and commentators including fairly recent ones whose writings are likely to be available for members of the community who may wish to make a subsequent study of given topics either during or after the retreat.

I must admit that remote preparation does not (and usually cannot) occupy the "front" of my mind two or three months before I open my mouth as a retreat conductor. But quite a bit goes on at the "back," in the recesses of my mind where memory and imagination add something really needed to vivify new reading. I should be grateful to omit mention of the great Benedictines of Dom Jean Leclercq, Dom David Knowles, Dom Cuthbert Butler, Dom Columba Marmion and Dom John Chapman as mentors and by-gone "friends" from library shelves as far back as my preparatory days. Only Dom Leclercq is still alive. The rest knew and collaborated or argued with each other at length. Some of their books I began to re-read in early February. Others I saw for the first time. By mid-March this remote preparation had taken enough shape for me to proceed beyond into the realm of the more concrete and exactly itemized proximate phase.

Proximate preparation for the morning sessions had to consist in a careful analysis (inevitable exegetical in nature) of the daily texts to be read at Mass and commented upon in the proposed morning sessions of the retreat. In this process I must admit clinging to old tools which I do not yet consider to be superseded: the Jerusalem Bible, the *Jerome Commentary* and the works of William Barclay are my stand-bys but I do consult other commentaries in Spanish and English as well.

efficient. So all was schedule for an April 1 departure. And on that day I took off for the South. On the plane I was seated next to a young "ham" radio operator who was a graduate of St. Louis University in Baguio. We discussed electronics all the way to Davao. At the airport Fr. Felix Huber, procurator of the Digos Benedictines, and Brother Patrick Mariano, a monk-seminarian, met me and drove me to the monastery.

The sun was rapidly setting as we approached the outskirts of Davao. The roads were in much better condition than they had been ten years ago when I was last in the region. But there were many twists and turns and (largely unmanned) road blocks. The scent of the sea was in the air, together with that of lush tropical vegetation whether wild or cultivated. There was not much to see as the light was fading rapidly, but an air of expectation had gripped me. Had I ever been so far south in the Philippines? How remote was this place? What would I find at my destination?

Warm hospitality was what I found. The Abbot and all his monks and aspirants were lined up on the drive to greet us. All were dressed in white variants of the St. Ottilien habit as adapted to a tropical climate but still showing their rank as professed monks, novices or postulants. The professed wore long scapulars hanging down over the front and back of their tight-sleeved tunics. The novices wore knee-length scapulars. Both of these groups had pointed hoods sewn onto the scapulars at the neck and falling limply above their shoulder blades. The postulants wore a girded tunic but no scapular. Soon the bell would ring for Compline, the last Office of the monastic day. After greeting the Abbot and each member of the community I was whisked off to the refectory for supper which was a simple but more than adequate repast. I lost little time in settling into my en suite quarters, for I knew I should have to be awake and ready for choir shortly after four in the morning.

A monastic day is a day well planned. The planning goes back over at least fifteen centuries and the Rule of St. Benedict is always in mind, whatever the slight variations time and space have allowed or required. Monks get up early both because they are farmers and because they have a great deal of prayer to accomplish before night-fall. According to the Rule "nothing is to be preferred to the *Opus Dei* (the work of God, the Divine Office)"

and, indeed, nothing is. But the newly arrived guest has no idea of the hundreds of details in barns and pastures, in sacristy and storerooms that are being attended to before "vigils" (or the office of the Readings) begins. In a good monastery everything runs like clockwork both as regards smoothness and precision. And all at the early morning hour at least is done in complete and solemn silence. The Abbot himself escorted me to a place in choir on his left and Brother Ludovicos Hao (the sole Korean present) on my left prepared my books. About four volumes are required in each stall for the choral recitation of the Office at Digos. Some of these books contain musical notation.

"Lord, open my lips." So began April 2, the first day of our retreat. In the early hours, after Readings, Lauds and a silent half hour for meditation, the Abbot presided at the Conventual Mass. The Office at Digos is in English but the Eucharistic liturgy is on alternate days in Visayan (more precisely the Cebuano which is the vernacular throughout the Eastern Central and Northern Provinces of Mindanao). After Mass came an ample breakfast, Lenten rigors notwithstanding, with such unique features as homemade cheese and rye bread. After a decent interval for housework and personal reflection the bell rang for the first conference. It was not without fear and trembling of a sort that I sat down in the chapter room and began to talk. For preachers like actors always suffer from a degree of "stage fright," however minimal.

On the three mornings of April 2, 3 and 4 I attempted to expound Exodus 32:7-14 (the Incident of the Golden Calf); Wisdom 2:1a and 12-22 (the Pathos of the Just); and Jeremiah 11:18-20 ("All have turned against me") in the first part of my talk. In the second I dealt with John 5:31-45 (The Witness of Christ as the Father's Work); John 7:1-2, 10 and 25-30 (the Threat of Death and Need for Epiphany) and John 7:40-53 (the Light of Christ before the Darkness of Scribal Contempt). All these are, of course, "rejection themes." Going beyond the literary context I had to make sharp contrast consonant with the texts. The morning sessions, therefore, put things in "black and white" and demanded of my hearers a monastic option. In other words, I tried to show them how seeking God in the prayer, silence and manual labor of their monastery was choosing to walk in the light and how, in harmony

with the missionary ideals of the Congregation of St. Otilien, that light must someday be shared beyond the confines of their cloister walls.

Our afternoon sessions looked at and to St. Gregory the Great as an historic fulfilment of the monastic ideal. St Gregory lived from around 540 till 604. In other words he was born about ten years before St. Benedict died in 550. There is no reason to think they ever met or that St. Gregory was a "Benedictine." He was an aristocrat turned monk who served at various times as a civil servant and curial prelate, as an Abbot and, of course, as Pope for the last fourteen years of his life. As a writer he can be illusive for his practical sense can be mistaken for lack of depth. In fact he is a great contemplative and a great teacher not only of the vast basilica congregations he often addressed but of monks and mystics just as certainly. In the three days of the Digos retreat we tried to work out a theology and anthropology of the spiritual life according to the mind of St. Gregory. In this Dom Cuthbert Butler was our principal guide.

If man is to attain the vision of God he must start where he is and work upward. Through purgation and acts of introverted recollection he comes to the light. In this light a little of God and much of the created universe is seen in terms of disparate things. Man is the seer in this illuminative phase. He can, by grace, be "caught up" in something beyond self and the world. He can, at last, be brought to union with God. This intermediate position drawing man down by nature and up by grace is both connatural and redeemable. Each of us, like Job, can sink into the dark, cling or rise to light. Christ is the initiator into realms of light. But he can be found not only by looking up but by looking down, not only in the beatific vision but in the least of his brethren, not only in contemplation but in service. And Christ's Advents are three. He came in the Incarnation. He will come at the End of Time. And he comes constantly in day-to-day encounters of prayer and kindness.

On the last day of the retreat our Gregorian meditation was on heaven as normal crown of gracefilled human life and the aim of monks. Here much had to be said of "vision," "intuition" and "joyful fruition." Since Christ has attained the heavenly realms our life here below in union with him is not just a trial but a

real joy. And we are already in the Communion of Saints. If rejoicing is our goal we would do poorly to be glum now!

Each day we ate the midday and evening meals in silence and one of the Brothers read to us. Thus in the patristic tradition our minds and spirits were nourished simultaneously with our bodily feeding. Besides my conference, I presided at Mass and preached to a wider audience twice during my stay and Fr. Felix took me on extensive tours of the fields, outbuildings and shops of the monastic compound with its dairy complex, cacao and sugar plantations, wells and roads. We also had a look at the retreat house maintained by the Benedictine Sisters on the property. I had quite a bit of time to myself for browsing in the library, reading, short walks and private prayer. Each evening we prayed Vespers before supper and Compline before bedtime. The singing was grand.

When the retreat was over the professed monks renewed their vows in a simple but touching ceremony. I spent Sunday, April 5, the Fifth Sunday of Lent in their company and on Monday Brother Patrick took me back to Davao City for a priestly Ordination, a night at St. Anselm's House of Studies which the Benedictines maintain for their seminarians and the hurly-burly of trying to get out of Mindanao during an air controller's strike. The complexities of these adventures would require another story and need not be told. What remains important to me is that Digos as a destination was attained and there I shared a life little heard of by many and little talked of even by those who know it. But I see that life as a hidden support in the House of God, as something precious in his sight and of great help to all who are in Christ.

In the Desert with Jesus in Christian Meditation

Macario M. Ofilada IIII

Luke 4:1-13 relates to us the desert experience of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In the words of Fr. John L. McKenzie:

*"The desert is important in the religious conceptions and imagery of Israel. Israel first met Yahweh in the desert, and the story of the desert wandering remains the type of the encounter of man with God. Subsequently in OT (Old Testament) and NT (New Testament) the desert is the place where man meets God, particularly in a crisis."*¹

The desert is the place where we meet God. When I was in Los Angeles three years ago, I was walking along the downtown area not far from St. Vibiana's Cathedral. On a makeshift platform, a "preacher" urged the passersby to repent for the end was near! He also urged the passersby to search for God not in churches, but in the desert! We could immediately dismiss that "preacher" as a nut case, for telling us to look for God, not in churches, but in the desert is a strong statement against established religion. However, as I have reflected on the meaning of his words, I have come to realize that true Christianity is a desert experience.

¹John L. McKenzie, Dictionary of the Bible. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1965), 195-196.

The desert, for me, aside from evoking images of aridity, extreme heat and death, evokes a concept of purgation and my spiritual sensibilities. Having read much of St. John of the Cross, the desert has the connotation of an experience of God in *via negativa*. For St. John of the Cross, the *noche oscura* was his desert experience.

A desert experience is a vital part of everyone's spiritual life. The desert experience calls for the shedding of "unwanted pounds." This sort of spiritual regimen calls for large helpings of self-denial. By real acts of self-denial, we are enabled to experience God in *via negativa*. Jesus, although he was God, willingly allowed himself to undergo a desert experience, if only to show us that the *via negativa* prepares us for our face to face encounter with God in the Beatific Vision.

Luke tells us that Jesus, at the beginning of his desert experience was "filled with the Holy Spirit."² The Spirit led Jesus into his desert experience. And it is this same Spirit that leads us into our desert experiences. The Spirit led Jesus as he relived the desert experiences of his ancestors who had spent forty years in the desert journeying towards the Promised Land. Now, this same Spirit leads us as we relive Christ's desert experience.

During the forty year sojourn of the people in the desert, God's presence was felt or manifested through comparatively weak signs. These signs did not speak much of God's Totality: the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. In our desert experiences, too, we only experience God or God's presence known quite faintly through signs. Cursorily, I have come to consider these faint signs as negative. They are negative because they are characterized by vacuity, emptiness, created simplicity as compared with the Majesty of God. These signs are the polar opposites of God's attributes (which are identified with him), for they say little of God's glory and power.

However, the negativity of these signs is for our good. In our present state, we could not sustain God manifesting himself

²Lk 4:1. (All Scripture texts are from the Jerusalem Bible.)

³Ex 3:6.

positively. Our beings simply cannot contain God. The positive light of God's self-revelation could only be taken in by us in the Beatific Vision.

Moses, at the scene of the burning bush, "covered his face, afraid to look at God."³ For in Israelite lore anyone who sees the face of God dies. The Burning Bush scene was the commencement of Moses' desert experience. As Moses was about to approach the burning bush, God bade him, "Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground."⁴ Man must not attempt to approach God without abandoning his worldly desires and concerns. And Moses' removal of his sandals symbolizes the abandonment of his worldly concerns. It was an act of self-denial on the part of Moses. His renunciation of the comfort of walking with his sandals on is the commencement of his knowing God in *via negativa*.

Jesus, likewise, started his desert experience with an act of self-denial: fasting. It is in self-denial that we begin our road to searching for God. In self-denial, we realize our finitude, that we are nothing before God, and how much we need him. The road to an authentic Christian life starts with self-denial. Jesus himself tells this to us in the Gospel according to St. Mark, "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me."⁵

Meditation, for me, has long been helpful in my on-going desert experience. Very recently, I joined the Christian Meditation Group in my Parish of St. Martin de Porres of United Parañaque. This group has adopted the late Dom John Main, O.S.B., and his disciple, Dom Laurence Freeman, O.S.B., as Spiritual Masters. Meditation, because of the fact that it is an individual endeavor, can make one feel forlorn. And this forlornness can be discouraging. The community experience afforded by meditation groups makes one realize that this forlornness is an experience shared by all. Carroll Stuhlmueller, C.P. in his article on the Gospel according to St. Luke in the Jerome Biblical Commentary notes that from a Matthaean point of view, Jesus' temptation is the temptation of all Israel, whereas Luke presents a more individually personal

³Ex 3:5.

⁵Mk 8:34.

temptation as that of Jesus alone. There are two personal dimensions of the same scenario: communal and individual.⁶ The same is true as regards all Christian meditation.

The key for interrelating Jesus' desert experience which was highlighted by his temptation and Christian meditation is self-denial. Self-denial or self-renunciation is an important part of Christian meditation. I even dare say that it permeates all we know of Christian meditation. Dom John Main explains:

Self-renunciation... is the means of liberating the self for its real purpose which is loving the Other. Meditation is a simple and natural process. It is the process that reveals our real being as a state of open-hearted receptivity to the Spirit of Jesus who dwells in our hearts. This revelation dawns when we renounce, step aside from, the external manifestations of our consciousness such as thoughts, words and images and when instead we move into the level of consciousness itself.⁷

In meditation, we fast as did Jesus. We fast from our own assertive mind patterns in order to experience pure consciousness itself, which is the Other or God. Main continues:

We then become silent because we have entered silence and we are wholly tuned towards the Other. In this fully conscious, fully free silence, we naturally open ourselves to the Word that proceeds from the silence. God's own Word, in whom we are called into being, and in which we ourselves are spoken by the Creator.⁸

Silence is the highest form of man's self-renunciation. For silence is the cessation of man's self-assertiveness, which is his "esse" or act of being. Man is an acting person, as Pope John Paul II tells us. In silence, man reverses his "esse" and becomes passive

⁶Stuhlmueeller "The Gospel According to Luke" in The Jerome Biblical Commentary. Vol. II. Raymond E. Brown, et al., eds. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), p.130.

⁷J. Main. The Way of Unknowing. (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1990) pp. 59-60.

⁸Ibid., 60.

and receptive. It is a surrender of one's "manness" to God who becomes active in him. It is letting God take over. It is letting or allowing our God-given freedom be taken over by God. As Main writes in another work, *The Way of Unknowing*:

It (silence) means that we can be there to listen, to hear with open attention. And it is a very fertile silence that we encounter in our meditation, one that is vibrant with God's presence, vibrant with his love; vibrant in summoning us beyond ourselves, beyond our self-limitations and revealing to us the unimaginable potentiality revealed once we ally ourselves to this enlightening power of love.⁹

Silence, being an act of self-denial, like fasting, has a purgative aspect. Silence cleanses us from unnecessary mind patterns which are considered impurities or distractions in meditation.

It is silence that purifies us and to purify us he (God) allows us to remain in this silence of absence and loss; to experience what it is to be cut off from a sense of his reality; to experience what it is to be cut off from the sense of his presence.

St. John of the Cross felt this abandonment by God in the Spiritual Canticle:

*Adonde te escondiste
Amado, y me dejaste con gemido
Como el ciervo huiste
Habiendome herido
Sali tras ti clamando, y eras ido.*

Where did you hide yourself
Beloved, and you left me wailing?
You fled like the stag
hurting me
I left calling for you, and you were gone.¹¹

⁹J. Main. *The Way of Unknowing*. (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1991), p. 6.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹St. John of the Cross. *Cantico Espiritual*. Author's trans.

This feeling of abandonment is part of the spiritual life. The more we feel abandoned by God, the more we desire him, and the more we are drawn to strive for union with him and not to be far away from him. In this feeling of abandonment, we share in the forlornness of Christ in the desert. In our own forlornness, we may use a *mantra* to comfort us, to be the faded and fading sign of God's reassuring presence in the darkness and aridity of meditation. The *mantra* is the most extreme simplification of language. Language is man's assertiveness. The hermeneutes say that Man is Language. To reduce language to its simplest form is to reduce man to his simplest form where he is on a collision course with the truth of his finitude.

In finitude, we are brought earthward to the ontological fact of our poverty. We realize our nothingness compared with God. John Main's disciple Laurence Freeman explains that this poverty is:

... an essential human experience to pass through. If we don't pass through it, we don't break into reality. And that means that we neither break into the reality or ourselves or discover the destiny that each of us has in God. We call it poverty only because material poverty is a metaphor for us to understand this spiritual condition. It is called poverty because poverty is a state where we have touched rock-bottom (the ground of our being), where we have no further resources of our own while remaining dependent on our Creator.¹²

Because we are poor, we are dependent on God. Because we are poor, we rely on his generosity. We become beggars. We become like dogs asking at least for the scraps dropped from our Master's table. As beggars, we have no right to impose on our benefactor. We just hope for what he pleases to give us. Christian meditation is not the venue for those who seek instant mystical experiences. What I mean by "instant mystical experiences" are ecstasies and the like. What may come as a result of meditation are boredom, itch, numbness of legs or arms, stiff necks, constant distractions. Many are discouraged by these results. But in all

¹²Freeman *Light Within: The Inner Path of Meditation*. (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1990), 73-74.

actuality, they are positive dimensions in meditation. They all come from God. They are marks of our experience of God. In this sense, they can be called mystical experiences. For an experience of God is a mysticism. We do not have to look further. We do not have to ask for anything more in meditation. To look or ask for more is to breach our poverty.

St. Luke records three temptations Our Lord has in his desert experience. Whereas, St. Matthew records the three in a different order and St. Mark speaks of the entire desert experience of temptation in only two verses. Now let us interrelate the temptations our Lord experienced with the temptations which we as meditators encounter in our meditations.

First, was the temptation brought about by hunger. The devil tempted our Lord to turn the stones into bread. But our Lord replied that man should not live by bread alone. Most of us are tempted to give up meditation because of its apparent futility. We hunger for instant and high flown mystical experiences. What we should hunger for in meditation is God alone and not his effects. Not the gifts, but the giver!

Second, was the temptation to power. The devil offered our Lord the kingdoms of the world. Satan touched on man's possible pride. Many view prayer as man's assertiveness before God. Others view prayer only in its discursive aspect. The discursive aspect of prayer is seen as man's right to assert himself before God. In meditation, we do not exert a right. The devil promised Christ the kingdoms of this world. In meditation, we do not seek for the fulfilment of God's promises in our lives. All we want is God and God alone.

Third, was the temptation to attention to self. If there were newspapers in Jesus' times, he would have made the headlines if he had jumped from the highest wall of the temple at the behest of Satan's teasing. In Christian meditation, we follow an example of Jesus. If Jesus had succumbed, then he would have acquired some cheap publicity for manifesting his powers as the Son of God. That would have been an unnecessary attraction of attention to himself. What mattered for Jesus was the will of his Father, not his own. In Christian meditation, we are tempted to pay attention to things that do not matter: to things of everyday life, to images

both religious and otherwise, to crazy thoughts imposed by a rebellious imagination. John Main calls this images "a great enemy of all prayer."¹³ These thoughts and images distract us from our goal. Even religious images are distractions. Religious images in Christian meditation are assertive attempts to visualize God and to place finite standards on an Infinite Being. In Meditation, we can only take God in darkness, in *via negativa*. Paying attention to or making religious images in meditation betrays the poverty of meditation. Such images also make us focus our attention on things which can never measure up to God's Infinite Self. If we focus our attention on these images, we focus it on second rate or third rate goals. If we remain in the darkness of meditation, we do not settle for anything less than an experience of God in totality, in darkness.

The synoptic evangelists dramatize Christ's temptation by making use of Satan as a device for literary highlighting. We need not discard the role of the devil in temptation or his existence. But if we analyze temptations, we find that they proceed from principles of human weakness. Hunger, desire for power or pride, attention seeking, boredom, itch and all forms of distractions proceed from our human nature. And Christ shared all these things with us without sin. If we sin, it is stupid for us to say "the devil made me do it." We must accept responsibility for the evil things we do. Nonetheless, the evil things we do can be traced to our weakness.

Christ's victory over weakness is a precedent for us his followers. One day, we will share fully that triumph over sin by which his desert experience ended. But we are still in the desert. Let us take heart and continue meditating.

¹³J. Main. *Moment of Christ: the Path of Meditation*. (Makati: St. Paul Publications, 1991), 7.

Forming Ecclesial Basic Communities*

Most Rev. Onesimo Gordoncillo, D.D.

With all candor and humility, I welcome the Ladies of Charity from all over the country to our Archdiocese. Please bear with us!

Here in the Archdiocese of Capiz, we are in the process of forming ecclesial basic communities.

What are ecclesial basic communities?

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, describes these communities thus:

"A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young Churches — one sometimes fostered by the Bishops and their Conferences as a pastoral priority — is that of ecclesial basic communities which are proving to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach. There 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 ecclesiastical problems with a view to a 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 on a civilization of love.

*Talk delivered by Most Rev. Onesimo Gordoncillo, Archbishop of Capiz, at the 9th Regional Convention of the Ladies of Charity held in Roxas City, April 23-26, 1992.

"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 the 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 tasks. Thus, these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial 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 be 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. As Pope Paul VI recalled, every community must live in the union with the particular and universal Church, in heartfelt communion with the Church's Pastor and the Magisterium, with a commitment to missionary outreach and without yielding to isolationism or ideological exploitation. 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!' "

It is clear, then, that these ecclesial basic communities are true expressions of communion in the Church. Theologian Walter Kasper has highlighted three aspects of this communion. According to him, the Father, who created us, has called us to participate and share in his divine life. Then, he sent us Jesus Christ through whom God assumed human nature that we might become participants in the divine nature. For Christ has united himself, as it were, in his incarnation with every man and woman and he is the epitome of all communion between God and humankind. Lastly, what happened in Jesus Christ once and for all is continued by the Holy Spirit, who dwells in the Church and in the hearts of the faithful. It is the Spirit who unites the Church in community and ministry. Through the Spirit the Church is in communion-

unity with God, as are the members of the Church among one another.

The words of Jesus reveal to us what communion means. Jesus says: "I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser... Remain in me and I in you" (Jn 15:1-4).

Communion is the unifying bond between the Lord and us, his disciples. It is a living and life-giving communion through which we no longer belong to ourselves but are the Lord's very own. As Jesus says: "I am the vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5). And from this communion which we experience in Christ there flows the communion which we experience with one another. We, after all, are branches of a single vine, namely Jesus Christ.

Having given you this theological background of ecclesial basic communities, kindly allow me now to contextualize them in our Capiceno setting.

Consider this situationer about our people's faith, life and living:

Item One: Majority of our people need to integrate their faith with their day-to-day lives.

Item Two: Our people are poor. Hence, they fall prey to social, economic and political manipulations and exploitations.

Item Three: Our people's lack of understanding and appreciation of the Church's Law, we call Canon Law.

Item Four: Our people's lack of awareness of Vatican II's teachings concerning the role of the laity and their empowerment.

Item Five: There is the shallow integration of the Gospel message into our people's lives.

Item Six: Most of the barangays are very far from the parish centers — geographically, that is.

Item Seven: Our people dichotomize between ecclesiastical and civic activities.

In 1988, three years after my installation as Archbishop of Capiz, the clergy and the laity formulated our vision: *the Archdiocese as a genuine Christian community composed of Small Christian Communities*.

Our mission statement read: "We, the *clergy and committed lay leaders* of the Archdiocese, through the help of the Holy Spirit, will try to do our best to implement the following tasks:

1. to enhance our spiritual life through our constant, filial, sincere dialogue with the Father (*Priestly People*);
2. to help our people become aware of their call to proclaim what they believe and live what they proclaim (*Evangelizing People*);
3. to help our people realize in their lives Christ's new commandment of love and service: "As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me" (*Serving People*);
4. to instill in our people the gratitude they owe to God for the gifts they continuously receive from him and their generous support for his Church (*Thanking People*).

In order to realize these commitments, we then vowed to:

1. be ready to help in the spiritual and pastoral formation of our leaders/people: through seminars, lectures, retreats, workshops, symposia, etc.;
2. help in the implementation of the plans of the local parish communities: through monitoring teams' follow-up, progress reports, encouragements, etc.;
3. acknowledge sincerely and tap with humility the God-given charism of leaders/people: by recruiting, tapping resource leaders and speakers and by encouraging their involvement in pastoral activities and planning;
4. proclaim the Christian message in actual exemplary lives: through continuous, sincere reception of the Sacraments; getting involved in actual catechetical instructions and pastoral programs in the parishes;

5. continuously encourage one another to listen to the word of God so that we will be drawn in communion to the table of the Lord.

After five years of building ecclesial basic communities in the Archdiocese, we are hoping the people will be formed as a community and will embrace this as their way of being Church. We realize it will be a gradual process, requiring a lot of education and formation. But we would want it to be a continuing program. It is a life-long venture, actually. Thank God, the EBC has become a potent tool for reinvigorating and renewing the faith of our people!

General Absolution in the New Codex

Excelso Garcia, O.P.

17. The 1917 Codex did not mention general absolution at all. It was only in 1939, as we have seen before, that Pope Pius XII granted the faculty to impart general absolution without previous individual confession, to military personnel as well as civilians, threatened *by danger of death*, when imminent attacks, actual fighting and frequent air raids unexpectedly took place during the Second World War. Five years later in 1944, the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary issued some norms on how and when the general absolution could be imparted, allowing it also when a *serious and urgent necessity* was present. We have dealt with these two different situations in Chapter 2. Later on, in 1972 the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith came out with some Declarations concerning general absolution, which were the immediate sources of the norms contained in our new Codex on the matter.

We shall study the four canons which refer to general absolution, making only a few observations on each of them.

18. **Canon 960.** — "Individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the sole ordinary means by which a member of the faithful, who is conscious of grave sin, is reconciled with God and with the Church. Physical and moral impossibility alone excuse from such confession, in which case reconciliation may be attained by other means."

This norm is taken from the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith *Sacramentum Paenitentiae* (see

n. 15, I) issued on June 16, 1972. Divine Law, as declared by the Council of Trent, as well as the greatest welfare of souls, as experienced for centuries has proven, require that individual and integral confession and absolution properly made and administered should be preserved. Through such confession the Christian faithful are reconciled with Christ and with the Church. Pope John Paul II teaches on the individual reconciliation of penitents: "Individual and integral confession and absolution is the only normal ordinary way of celebrating the Sacrament of Penance, and *it cannot and must not be allowed to fall into disuse or to be neglected*" (Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, of December 2, 1984: *Boletín Eclesiástico*, 1985, p. 660). And he gives the reason why individual confession and absolution are to be preserved: "First of all, there is the reason of *fidelity* to the will of the Lord Jesus, transmitted by the doctrine of the Church and also the reason of *obedience* to the Church's laws. . . The individual confession and absolution constitute the only *ordinary way* in which the faithful who are conscious of serious sin are reconciled with God and with the Church. From this confirmation of the Church's teaching it is clear that *every serious sin must always be stated*, with its determining circumstances, in an individual confession" (*Ibid.*, *Boletín Eclesiástico*, 1985, p. 662).

Only physical or moral impossibility can excuse the faithful from making an individual and integral confession and from receiving absolution from the priest to whom confession has been made. If physical or moral impossibility exist, reconciliation may be attained through an act of perfect contrition or by receiving general absolution, according to the norms established by the Church. These norms are contained in the three following canons of the new Codex.

19. **Canon 961, §1.** — General absolution, without prior individual confession, cannot be given to a number of penitents together, unless:

1o. *danger of death* threatens and there is no time for the priest or priests to hear the confessions of the individual penitents;

2o. there exists a *grave necessity*, that is, given the number of penitents, there are not enough confessors available to properly

hear the individual confessions within an appropriate time, so that without fault of their own the penitents are deprived of the sacramental grace or of Holy Communion for a lengthy period of time. A sufficient necessity, is not, however, considered to exist when confessors cannot be available merely because of a great gathering of penitents, such as can occur on some major feastday or pilgrimage."

The introductory clause of this canon warns us clearly that general absolution, without previous individual confession, cannot be considered as a normal and ordinary way for reconciliation with God and with His Church. The *sole* ordinary means for such a reconciliation is individual and integral confession and absolution, as stated in canon 960. General absolution is but an exceptional way to reconcile sinners to God and to the Church, in special and exceptional cases only, when individual and integral confession and absolution cannot take place. Canon 961 makes this clear in its first clause: "*General absolution, without prior individual confession, cannot be given to a number of penitents together, unless. . .*"

This warning on general absolution has been given by the magisterium of the Church in the documents issued by the Holy See on this matter. Thus the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary said on March 25, 1944 that outside the danger of death and when there is no serious and urgent necessity, proportionate to the gravity of making an integral and individual confession imposed by divine law, *it is not licit to impart sacramental absolution to a group of persons collectively* (see number 13, II). Likewise the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith declared on June 16, 1972: "the recent custom which tends to substitute the individual sacramental confession with a general or communitarian celebration of penance to obtain forgiveness of sins *is to be reprobated*. Divine law, as declared by the Council of Trent, requires for the welfare of souls that individual sacramental confession properly done should be preserved" (see number 15, I). Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* of December 2, 1984 insists again and again on the exceptional character of this form of reconciliation with God. It is not left to the free choice of pastors or penitents: "While it is true," he says, "that when the conditions required by canonical discipline occur, use may be made

of the general absolution, it must not be forgotten that *this form cannot become an ordinary one, and it cannot and must not be used, except in case of necessity.* . . . The exceptional use of general absolution must never lead to a lesser regard for, still less an abandonment of the ordinary form, nor must it lead to this form being considered an alternative to the ordinary form. It is not in fact left to the freedom of pastors and the faithful to choose from among these forms the one considered most suitable."

The Holy Father has deplored more than once the fact that individual confessions have considerably decreased while Holy Communions are increasing everyday. The church confessionals are becoming sacred ornamental boxes of the past, seldom used in many places. The question can be raised: Is it because the faithful refuse to make their individual confessions or rather do not confess because there are no priests to whom they can confess their sins? If the latter is the answer, is it because there are no priests in the locality due to lack of vocations, or is it because the existing priests do not fulfil their priestly duty? Because to hear confessions is a primary duty of all priests. The fact is real: in some places the administration of the Sacrament of Penance is quite neglected. The general absolution is resorted to instead and the custom reproved by the Sacred Congregation for the Faith in 1972 of neglecting the individual integral confession becomes more serious everyday. To remedy this deplorable situation there is only one remedy: the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the places affected must watch, enforce and implement to the letter the Church legislation on imparting general absolution. The faithful will surely follow these laws. Where confessors are available, individual confession will be the normal way to reconcile the souls to God and to the Church.

Since the use of general absolution is exceptional in character, logically its use is regulated by canonical discipline. To impart, therefore, general absolution against the Church's laws should be considered an abuse, as both the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith have said (see nn. 13, III and 15, XIII).

Cases and Inquiries

Excelso Garcia, O.P.

Books of Baptisms

In the Boletín Eclesiástico of September-October 1991, you answered to an inquiry on Parochial Books. Your answer was rather general, enumerating all parochial books with a brief description. You promised to write more in detail on the books of baptisms and marriages. This is precisely what I need, because our Forane Vicar wants us to include all the data which according to the Church Law should appear in the inscription of the administration of both sacraments, plus other additions to be made, as the case may require. Will you really go ahead with that plan and tell us how the inscription of Baptisms and Marriages should be done? Looking forward to see both soon.

A Young Priest

I am sorry for the delay in publishing the enumeration of all data to be included in the inscription of the administration of sacraments as well. Here are the pertinent norms of the Church Law concerning the baptismal inscription.

Canon 877 reads as follows:

“§ 1. The parish priest of the place where baptism is administered, must write diligently and without delay in the book of baptisms the name of the baptized, mentioning the minister, parents,

godparents and witnesses, if there were any, place and date of the administered baptism, indicating also the date and place of birth."

Two data are to be noted in this paragraph that were not in the 1917 Codex, namely the mention of witnesses, if any, and the date and place of birth.

"§ 2. If the baptized is the child of an unmarried mother, the name of the mother should be registered, when the maternity is publicly known or she herself willingly requests it in writing or before two witnesses; likewise, the name of the father should be written, if his paternity is proved by a public document or he requests it before the parish priest and two witnesses; in other cases, however, the baptized should be registered without mentioning the name of the father or of the parents."

The case of foundlings, i.e., children whose parents are unknown, seems to be covered by the last clause of canon 877, § 2. They should not be considered as illegitimate by the fact that their parents are unknown. They should be registered as foundlings whose parents are unknown.

"§ 3. "If the baptized is an adopted child the names of the adopting parents should be registered, as well as, if it is so done in the civil registrar, the names of the natural parents according to §§ 1 and 2, observing whatever has been established by the Bishops' Conference."

Canon 878 – "If baptism was not administered by the parish priest nor was he present, the minister of baptism, whoever he/she be, must inform about its administration the parish priest of the place where baptism was administered, so that the latter might register the administration according to canon 877, § 1."

The contents of canon 878 apply not only when the minister of baptism was a priest or deacon, but also when the sacrament was administered by a layman, according to canon 861, § 2. It is important therefore to instruct the laity on this particular matter, so that they will inform the parish priest as soon as possible on the administration of any baptism that they might have administered in danger of death, and give the necessary data to be recorded as pointed out in canon 877.

A difference is to be noted between the norms of the new Codex and its corresponding canon 778 of the 11917 Codex. The latter stated that the minister of baptism should notify the proper parish priest of the baptized by virtue of his domicile, while the new Codex says that said information should be given to the parish priest of the place where baptism is administered, so that the latter can register the administration of baptism in his book. It seems that with this change, the parish priest of the place where the baptized has domicile has no obligation of registering the administration of baptism of his parishioners administered out of his own parish. Canon 877, § 1 imposes this obligation on the parish priest of the place where baptism has been administered only. The obligation therefore imposed by the Instruction of the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments of June 29, 1941 upon the proper parish priest by reason of domicile to register not only the reception of baptisms administered within his territory, but also the reception of baptism received by his subjects outside, cannot be sustained anymore. The rule established in 1941 was in consonance with canon 778 of the 1917 Codex. Since this canon has been changed by the new Codex stating that the information would be given not to the parish priest of the place of origin, but to the parish priest of the place where baptism was administered, it is clear that baptisms performed outside the place of origin or domicile are not to be registered in that parish, but only in the parish where baptism was performed.

Contents of the Baptismal Certificate.

Canon 877, § 1 enumerates the data to be registered in the book of baptisms, namely:

- a. *The fact of the administration itself*, specifying the peculiar circumstances surrounding it, as for instance if baptism was administered in danger of death, or sub conditione, etc.
- b. *The name of the baptized*, i.e. the name chosen by him, if adult, or by the parents or godparents or minister. When the baptized is already married, this fact should be stated; otherwise there will be no other ecclesiastical record of his married state, since his marriage was not registered in the book of marriages.

- c. *The name of the minister*, adding in what capacity he has performed baptism, namely as parish priest, assistant, deacon, catechist, simply layman, etc.
- d. *The name of the parents* with their respective family names.

Express mention of the parents' being married canonically should be done, since this circumstance affects the legitimacy of the baptized. "If the baptized is the child of an unmarried mother, the name of the mother should be registered when the maternity is publicly known or the mother herself willingly requests it in writing or before two witnesses; likewise the name of the father should be written if his paternity can be proved by a public document or he requests it before the parish priest and two witnesses; in other cases, however, the baptized should be registered without mentioning the name of the father or of the parents" (can. 877, § 2).

In regards to the registration of illegitimate children the warning given by the Pontifical Commission on July 14, 1922, should be borne in mind: "The name of the parents should be recorded in such a way that any occasion of infamy should be avoided." The new Codex has done away practically with the distinction of illegitimate children into natural and spurious and with the subdivision of the latter into adulterous, sacrilegious, incestuous, nefarious and simply spurious (cans. 1137, 1139). There is no need, therefore, to specify these details on the book of baptisms, as long as the legitimacy or illegitimacy is mentioned.

- e. *The name of the godparents*. Can. 873 prescribes that "there should be one godparent either male or female or two godparents, one male and one female." When the godparents are represented by a proxy, the name of both the godparents and of the proxy should be registered. The Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments stated that the proxy is to be appointed by the godparent who is to be represented, not by the parents of the baptized. In this way the minister can know whether the real god-parent is qualified or not according to can. 874 (AAS, XVIII, p. 46).

- f. *The name of the witnesses*, if any. It is important to prove the fact of having received the sacrament of baptism, as we explained before. It is but proper that the new Codex adds, that the names of witnesses should appear in the baptismal certificate.
- g. *The place where baptism was administered*. The name of the place where baptism was performed should be given, i.e., the name of the parish. If it was performed outside the parish church, the name of church, oratory, hospital, or the address of the house, as the case may be.
- h. *The date of baptism*, i.e., the day, month and year.
- i. *The date and place of birth of the baptized*. Undoubtedly the age of a person has to be determined in many instances and the way of knowing it in a certain way is through an official document. The Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments in her Instruction of June 29, 1941, with reference to the age as a motive cause of a dispensation from diriment impediments, declared: "In testimonial letters the age of the contracting parties should always be declared, which is to be taken from the book of baptism" (AAS, XXXIII, 1914, p. 302). And the Roman Ritual mentions expressly the age of the baptized in the sample it offers for the inscription of baptism in the parish register (Tit. XII, cap. II).
- j. *The performance of ceremonies omitted*. When baptism was administered in danger of death, the parish priest should investigate about the details of its administration. If the validity of baptism is certainly established, he must register the administration in the book of baptisms, stating it was performed in danger of death. Other details that took place should be written, as explained before. The supplying of the omitted ceremonies will take place once the danger of death is overcome, and this fact should be added at the end of the inscription of baptism.
- k. *Signature and seal*. Canon 535, § 3 states that "each parish church must have her own seal; the testimony

which is given on the canonical state of the faithful, as well as all acts that might have juridical importance, should be signed by the parish priest or by his delegate and authenticated with the parochial seal." It is clear therefore that the inscription of baptisms administered should be signed by the parish priest, even if performed by other persons.

Subsequent Additions to the Baptismal Certificate.

Canon 535, § 2 states: "In the book of baptisms should also be recorded the confirmation and all things that belong to the canonical state of the faithful by reason of marriage (except the case of a secret marriage) or by reason of adoption, the reception of sacred orders, the making of perpetual profession pronounced in a religious institute, and of change of rite; such annotations should be mentioned in the baptismal certificates."

a. *The annotation of confirmation* is now more necessary since the new Codex does not compulsorily require a peculiar book for confirmations in each parish, unless otherwise provided by the Bishops' Conference or the Diocesan Bishop (c. 895). The testimony of the reception of confirmation is to be drawn from the book of baptism or from the book of confirmations to be kept in the diocesan curia. Hence, when confirmation was received in a different parish from that of baptism, the parish priest of the former should inform the parish of the latter so that the proper addition can be done in the book of baptisms (can. 895).

Since in the Philippines the local Hierarchy has stated that "each parish shall keep the book or register of confirmations in accordance with canon 535 and 895, the testimony of the reception of confirmation is to be drawn from the book of confirmations kept in the parish.

Even if the place of confirmation be the same as that of baptism, the addition should still be done in the book of baptisms. Besides the prescription of canon 535 § 2, above transcribed, there is a reminder to this effect in can. 895: "the parish priest must inform the parish priest of the place of baptism, so that the annotation be done in accordance with can. 535, § 2." This addition should be recorded at the margin of the baptism description

in a very short way, thus: Confirmed on (date) _____; or Confirmed in (place) _____, on (date) _____, as the case may be.

b. *Adoption.* The fact of a person being adopted should also be recorded in the book baptism. Legal civil adoption constitutes now in the Church's law a diriment impediment for marriage (can. 1094). Canon 110 gives us the reason of this attitude of the Church. It reads as follows: "Children, who are adopted according to the civil legislation are considered children of the person or persons who have adopted them." It is but proper that this fact be recorded in the book of baptisms in order to prevent a possible invalid marriage. In recording the adoption, the name of the adopting person or couple should be clearly specified.

c. *Legitimation.* When a person has been registered in his baptism as illegitimate, and later on he has been legitimated by the subsequent marriage (c. 1161), or by a rescript of the Holy See, (can. 1139), this fact should be recorded in the book of baptism.

d. *The annotation of the contracted marriage* is required by canon 535, § 2 which we transcribed before, and by canon 1122, which reads: "§ 1. The contracted marriage should be mentioned also in the book of baptisms, where the baptism of the spouses is written. § 2. If any of the contracting parties contracted marriage in a parish other than that in which he or she was baptized, the parish priest of the place where the marriage was celebrated should notify as soon as possible the parish priest of the place where baptism was administered." It is worth noting the interest of the Church in mentioning the celebration of marriage in the book of baptism. Besides the repetition of the Codex to this effect, we can also adduce the earnest request of the S. Congr. of the Sacraments on June 29, 1941: "The parish priest who assisted at the celebration of marriage must notify, as soon as possible, such celebration to the parish priest or priests of the place where the parties were baptized. The latter must record the information in their books of baptism and send back to the parish priest who solemnized the marriage a notice on the registration carried out by them. The parish priest who assisted at the marriage should not be at peace until he receives this news, and once he receives it, he should join it to the documents pertinent to such marriage" (AAS, XXXIII, 1941, p. 305).

The reason for this insistence is just to ascertain the freedom of the parties to contract matrimony and to avoid the re-marriage of individuals, who enter into marriage in places far away from the parish where they were baptized.

The marginal annotation on marriage celebration must be short, as this: "He or she contracted marriage with _____ on _____"; or "He/she contracted marriage with _____ in _____ on _____."

The only instance when the celebrated marriage should not be mentioned in the book of baptisms is the celebration of marriage secretly performed. It is registered only in the book of marriages to be kept in the secret archives of the curia (can. 1133).

Besides the celebration of marriage there are other facts related to marriage that should also be recorded in the book of baptisms. Such are:

- a. An invalid marriage can be convalidated simply or *in radice* in the external form. Such *convalidation* should be recorded in the book of baptisms as well as in the book of marriages (can. 1123).
- b. *The declaration of nullity.* Canon 1685 prescribes the following: "As soon as the sentenced is to be executed, the judicial Vicar must notify the same to the Ordinary of the place where the marriage was celebrated. The latter should take care that mention of the sentence of marriage nullity as well as of other possible prohibitions be recorded in the books of marriages and baptisms." Again, it is but proper that the parish priest who solemnized the marriage be informed to make the necessary addition in the book of marriages and be able also to notify the parish priest of the place where baptism was administered about the marriage nullity in order to be recorded also in the book of baptisms.
- c. It is possible that a *ratified not consummated marriage be dissolved* by the Roman Pontiff. Canon 1123 states that "whenever marriage is legitimately dissolved, except by reason of death, the parish priest of the place

where marriage was celebrated should be informed, so that the corresponding annotation be made in the book of marriages and baptisms."

- d. *The reception of sacred orders* should also be registered in the book of baptism. It also constitutes a diriment impediment for marriage (can. 1087). That is why canon 1054 prescribes: "The local Ordinary, in regards to secular clergy and the Major Superior in regards to his own subjects, should notify the parish priest of the place where baptism was administered on the reception of the sacred order so that the corresponding annotation can be done in the book of baptisms, according to canon 535, § 2."
- e. *The perpetual profession in a religious institute* has to be recorded also in the book of baptisms. It constitutes a diriment impediment to marriage (can. 1088). The parish priest of the place where baptism was administered should be informed by the religious superior, so that the former can record this fact in the book of baptisms.
- f. The new Codex prescribes that *the change of rite* should also be recorded in the book of baptism. Canon 111 enumerates when a change of rite takes place.

Festal Homilies for September and October 1992

Roman Carter, O.P.

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time September 6, 1992

Readings: *Ws* 9:13-19

Phm 9b-10 & 12-17

Lk 14:25-33

Three quite distinct themes are presented in today's readings. In the first reading, which is from the book of Wisdom, we find contrasted the divine will and attributes with human faculties and ineptitude. The second reading relates justice to charity in an utterly unique Pauline exposition. And the Gospel propounds causality from a point of view which, while difficult, is certainly that of "Good News." What is presupposed in all three readings is a hidden but real context of faith. Unless we believe, we are faced with three studies in incoherence. If we aggressively disbelieve we are on the verge of a mental slanting into tracts of nonsense.

The Book of Wisdom hovers on the region of intertestamentary literature and was one of the last books included in Greek Old Testament canon. It probably is the work of a pious Alexandrian Jew posing as King Solomon in the first century before Christ. The book involves many literary elements elaborately but inconsistently interwoven with more than a touch of apocalyptic in its sapiential approach. Our section is one of sustained poetic quality in what purports to be Solomon's own prayer towards the end of the first half of the book. It is important to the author that authentic converse

with God be seen in a context of who He is and of who we are not. This approach through near dichotomy may seem to tend towards dualism if superficially read. However, the author is as much a believing Jew as his idealized Solomon is a believing King of Israel. Old Testament faith may well maintain heavy and real contrasts but it never sees God as wholly divorced from nature. Quite the opposite is, indeed, the import of the reading. Because of divine intervention man is set straight.

What a contrast to this subtle thought is the practical but loving pleading of Paul enshrined in the most personal of all his letters. The twenty-five verses of the little Letter to Philemon constitute a veritable gem of New Testament applied morality, a gem too often obscured by the magnificent setting and surrounding bigger and brighter jewels of the Pauline corpus. That our editors in preparing the liturgical lectionary have limited us to eight verses is a pity. It would have been better to read the whole letter for it is manageably short. The story is patent. Philemon who probably lives in Colossae owns a slave named Onesimus who has run away and eventually come to Paul (probably in Rome) and become a Christian who shows real aptitude for leadership. According to Roman law Onesimus must be returned by Paul (a dutiful Roman citizen) to Philemon. According to the law of Christ, however, Onesimus is a brother in the Lord who (whatever his civil status or lack thereof) should be treated as such by his earthly master in whose house the Colossian Church meets. In our verse the imprisoned apostle does not ask for Onesimus' "freedom" in an earthly sense but for him to be welcomed as Philemon would welcome Paul himself. And so one of the best pleas for "kindness" in Christian history is recorded.

In the Gospel Luke has Our Lord Jesus Christ delineate conditions for citizenship in his realm. What a contrast these conditions are with the clinging selfishness of most men and women! Unless we "let go" we can never find a permanent way to relate to Christ much less to be his forever. And how many semi-pagan simpletons want to die and "go to heaven" without having either learned of or lived by the most basic principles of Christianity! We are admonished by Jesus himself that this cannot be done. We must reform ourselves by grace and live the Gospel. This entails both radical renunciation and astute planning, the first in service of the second. Once we are free we can

plan to serve God. If we empty our hands, he can fill them. If we carry the cross of selflessness, he can give us the crown of self-discovery.

We shall never be wise unless we learn that wisdom is a gift and open ourselves to accept it. We shall never be kind if we make a worldly legalism take priority over brotherly love in Christ. We shall never attain glory unless we pass through the "death" of preferring Christ to all persons and all things. All our planning is useless unless it is based on self-denial. But how wise we shall be if we bow in prayer depending on God. How kind we shall be if the most despicable beggar who shows Christian dispositions is important to us as the Apostle Paul. How rich we shall be in God's eyes if having given up all things we plan for his glory alone.

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 13, 1992

Readings: *Ex* 32:7-11 & 13-14

1 Tm 1:12-17

Lk 15:1-32

Delineating the exact theme of today's readings is not easy. We are tempted to say, albeit anthropomorphically, that all three are about "how God changes his mind." Since such a statement is theologically impossible our second stab in the dark might be "how men change their minds about God." But then we should be going from the anthropomorphic (which is at least a metaphorical possibility in Holy Writ) to the anthropocentric which is untrue to both text and context. It would probably be much better and more certain to say that all three texts in today's readings delineate salient aspects of God's relationship with man and man's with God.

In the thirty-second chapter of Exodus the problematic is that of apostasy couched in terms of blatant and unmistakable idolatry. Whatever later situation the Yahwist author has in mind, by putting this passage at the foot of Sinai he is accusing Israel of sin. They have not only put Moses and his role in jeopardy. They have cut themselves off from God. In fact, however, neither Moses nor God can accept this state of affairs as normal. So Moses prays, and God answers him.

Certainly our Gospel, the Parable of the "wastrel" son and "prodigal" father, presents a far more complex situation. Drama is

present and so is compassion but we are dealing with a more intimately human situation of hearth and home ground than Sinai can even imply. However, the ingenuity of the parable is neither in its setting nor the complexity of the narrative Jesus devises but rather in his personal doctrine of forgiveness as exposed by Luke and Luke alone. For here, a little over half way through his Gospel, Luke portrays Christ as both narrator of and actor in his own parable. For here our Lord in all his Sacred Humanity is the "Father"!

As we turn to the First Letter to Timothy we turn to yet another type of human situation. Whereas the Israelites are "caught in the act" and the son struggles home to the father's house in a process of repentance, St. Paul is bewailing past sins in his song of present mercy. All three situations are common enough in the life of a community and in the lives of the individuals who compose it. But each situation has its own prismatic slant, as it were, on theandric happenings, the things that arise as God truly deals with man and as man repents.

Blatant sin will always remain both startling and ugly. The sheer denial of goodness, crass ingratitude and idolatrous pseudo-religion involved in the first reading make the situation "stick out like a sore thumb" in Salvation History. We have all heard the story. We side with Moses in his prayer, and we thank God for its answer. But seldom can we enter deeply enough into the incident's meaning to see that we are the Israelites. Our sin is no less heinous than theirs. Rather, it amounts to the same thing. For all grave sin is turning away from God and finding one Golden Calf or another.

The son who wanders off is each one of us. For spiritually if not materially we have all wasted the riches of grace. We have sought creatures instead of the Creator. And we have fallen into the hungry state of tenders of someone else's swine. But deep in our hearts we have always wanted "to go back home." And now we hear the Father's call through the assurance of Jesus that we shall be welcome. Our very presence at Mass today should mean that we have returned. And what a feast is spread for us!

God is goodness as such. He never delights in sin. Rather he welcomes the slightest tremor of repentance from any human being. Long ago through the saving work of Christ all our sins were taken away and blotted out. The very memory of our countless confessions

should never discourage us. On the contrary, it should make us celebrate with ever louder rejoicing God's abundant, unique, everlasting and irreplaceable mercy. For such is the gift the Father has always had in store for us. Such is the gift Christ has purchased for us with the price of his Blood. Such is the gift the Spirit mediates in our hearts as our consciences are purified and we are exalted the realm of grace.

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time **September 20, 1992**

Readings: *Am* 8:4-7

1 Tm 2:1-8

Lk 16:1-13

Money and salvation! Is there any connection between the two? Or is there something essentially contradictory in the contrast between being rich and being free? Are material things blessings or curses, means or ends or, even worse, means which parade as ends? These are some of the questions raised by this day's peculiar set of Mass readings. Let us try to find answers to them as we examine our texts for this Twenty-fifth Sunday in the third year of our liturgical cycle.

The prophet Amos lived in the middle of the eighth century before Christ and is the first prophet in Israel to have left a written collection of oracles. Although he was a Judean herdsman Amos prophesied at Bethel and Samaria in the northern realm of Jeroboam II during a time of prosperity and relative peace. Amos' claim to fame rests, however, not with his writing or his humble provenance and rejected status. It rests with his Spirit-guided insight that faith and morals are interconnected. An idolater becomes a thief. A religious syncretist or payer of lip service to God becomes an oppressor of the poor. And oppression of the poor in defiance of the Law revealed to Moses was Israel's besetting sin. Jesus stands firmly in the prophetic tradition of Amos, Hosea and the men of old who cried out for justice in the midst of illusory peace. In today's Gospel our Lord demands an option. But he does so in an almost "round about" way arising from his human, temporal and spatial evaluation of the social situation of his own times. This was a situation in which managers or stewards (even if some of them were technically slaves) had immense power and responsibility. Of course they were tempted (as most people

dealing with the property of others are from time to time) to venality and capriciousness. If they felt they might be caught. If they were caught recompense had to be made. It probably came from their own exorbitant fees rather than from anything that could be called the Master's "capital." Being astute was an asset. But Jesus is saying that being poor and free would be better. For to be astute is to be a "son of this world" - clever but lost. To be a "child of light" may involve naivete but it also involves heaven. And the choice is ours not just in the obvious context of finance but the deeper issue of serving God or "trusting" (*ma-mon* in Aramaic) something or someone else.

Seemingly far from social justice or badly balanced books is the stance advocated in the Pauline text of our second reading. For the passage is about prayer, not as a means to an end, but as a duty. It is our duty towards those over us in earthly things and our recognition both of who is over us in all things and through whom we have access to him in the realm of saving grace. Because Christ has redeemed us and wants us to extend that redemption we have the duty of lifting our hands in prayer. But we can only do so if we are at peace and willing to give each man and woman his or her due.

All too often nowadays we tend to think and even to say that all social wrongs are the fault of someone else. The State is to blame or the rich or multinationals. Anyone, except you or me, is wrong and had caused our troubles. Let us search our hearts in the light of Amos' words. Where are my priorities and where are yours? If we discover injustice within and among ourselves let us begin to correct it first before blaming others for larger issues, bad as they may be in themselves.

All of us are tempted to think theft and mismanagement, "graft and corruption" (if we can stomach the threadbare expression) are somehow clever. We are shocked to find that Jesus agrees! But if we read on we come to the real challenge he puts to our own discussions and our very lives in and before him. May he grant us the humility to let go, to go beyond this world and then find in him heavenly light and splendor with riches on high beyond the imagining of the present age.

Let us truly pray to God that his light of Christ which we receive in this and every Mass may spread into the minds and hearts of our leaders in government, industry and education. Let us pray

that all men and women and all their children everywhere may be saved from the darkness of mere temporal and spatial confines and brought to the liberty of the children of God. Let us pray that our Christianity may be vital, active and true; that justice and peace may come to all; and that in Christ, through and with him higher and higher goals (beyond all financial considerations and in the realm of the Spirit) may be attained, held onto and become our joy forever.

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 27, 1992

Readings: *Am* 6:1a & 4-7

1 Tm 6:11-14

Lk 16:19-31

The threat of exile, the heavenly reward of honest poverty and ongoing Christlikeness in obedience to God are the somewhat disparate themes of the readings just heard and proclaimed. Our liturgy of the word is meant to be a time for deep reflection on a great variety of themes so that through us all, clergy, lay ministers and people here assembled, the Good News can come to the world. Our world is just as troubled as that of the eighth century before Christ or the first century after his birth. Our problems may arise from different contexts but both sin and the way out of it remain the same.

Amos' problem and complaint center upon the indolent rich but they touch upon any luxury of the "haves" which is enjoyed at the expense of the "have nots." Furniture, food, drink, musical entertainment and cosmetics of quality have always been expensive and always will be. It is not sinful to be careful of such things in modest measure, but it is sinful to "bring about the ruin of Joseph," to disunite our country and make for resentment among our citizens by greedily accumulating items of luxury. God will not tolerate this. Indeed, Amos tells us, he will curse the self-indulgent with exile. They shall be banished from his presence.

The Lucan story of Dives and Lazarus, as their names appear in the Vulgate, is a classical passage of the third Gospel. Luke uses his own psychological gifts to bring out the relevance of the truth Jesus teaches to men and women as they really are. Here is opulence and hunger, health and sickness, life and death. But here, too, we have heaven and hell in inverse proportion to the listed contrasts. For the poor man is saved and the rich one damned. Lazarus attains to glory while Dives' lot is torment.

When we turn to our second reading we find a serious but poetic admonition to true Christian submission to the will of God. It is an admonition directed to a leader but it is applicable to each and all of us who profess Christ. The metaphor of boxing identifies the author (be he St. Paul or one of his disciples) more as Roman citizen than as Jewish Rabbi, as (in its own way) does the reference to Pontius Pilate. But God and holiness, profession of credal statements before witnesses, due obedience to tradition, keeping oneself from sin and the reference to our Lord's Coming Again are all explicitly Christian concepts or duties. They show the letter for the bit of revelation it is.

All of us lead our lives with a certain number of inevitable and even necessary material things about us. For all of us are bodily creatures. Our acquisitiveness, however, can come under disciplined control much as we may be prone to let it get out of hand. The best check on any "pack rat" instinct is that of real love for neighbor based on love for God. Without love we are as prone to rejection whether human or divine as Israel was destined to exile. Our sense of justice prodded by love must be greater than our sense of security lulled by comfort if we are to be saved.

The rewards of God depend on human responses to his call in real life, day to day situations. If our whole life is "lived up" at the expense of others who are thereby deprived of things wanted and needed the result cannot but be hellish. On the other hand if we voluntarily bear even with an evil lot which we are powerless, economically or otherwise, to overcome, God will take us to Abraham's bosom. Between the portion of the sinning rich and that (after all is said and done) of the indigent poor there is a great, uncrossable gap indeed. No preacher, Jewish or Christian, of Moses or of the Risen Christ, can bridge that gap for another for it has been set by deliberate acts, good or bad, of the human will accepting or rejecting grace.

However, there is great hope for believers. If our real trust is in God we can go forward basing ourselves on principles which will never fail. We can both fight the good fight and gain victory in terms of eternal life. For our loyalty is real and will be acknowledged by Christ himself as clearly one with his own. As time goes by we can wean ourselves from things superfluous, we can witness to truth by our deeds and we can be crowned, please God, with an unperishable diadem in the realms of the just, the Father's own house on high.

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 4, 1992,

Readings: *Hab* 1:2-3 & 2:2-4 2

Tm 1:6-8 & 13-14

Lk 17:5-10

Three readings on faith make up the selections we have just heard from Holy Scripture. St. Jerome called Habakkuk, author of the first, a "wrestler with God." The Gospel is a combination of illustrations of difficulty and perseverance. And the second reading is truly as "pastoral" as the Letter from which it comes, full of reminders of gift and reliance. Neither the Hebrew word *be'emuna'to* nor the Greek word *pistis* mean what "faith" has come to mean to many people. They refer to no mere assent of the mind dominated by revealed truth. Rather they denote utter trust involving one's whole person as such and in every aspect as humbly dependent upon God. Indeed, our term "trust" might better translate them.

What Habakkuk, a possible contemporary of Jeremiah (early sixth century B.C.), in all his pondering of the insoluble problem of evil seems to be trying to say is this: God cares; God hints at solutions; and God blesses those who confide in him. There are, obviously, other people around. They oppress the poor. They treat the meek with violence. They are impatient. And, in the end, they wearily miss the mark. Not so the just. For they never cease to be related to the Lord. Both their patience and their faith, to say nothing of their vision, will save them.

Our Lord teaches us two things about faith in today's Gospel. First of all, it is powerful and overcoming. Even things planted in the ground obey its commands. But, secondly, precisely because it is servicial, faith obeys God, on whom it waits. And those who are truly faithful expect no exaggerated adulation. They regard themselves as servants, relatively useless but on hand to help, nonetheless. The best they do is a mere duty. What merit it has must be awarded by God; it cannot be added up by his servants.

In Second Timothy we find the Pauline author dealing with the need to keep alive all we have received from God in an ecclesial context. Humdrum performance is definitely not acceptable in the service of God. Rather must our witness be explicit, straight forward and frank even if it acknowledges that serving God has caused many

to suffer. Such a stance is only possible for true and thorough believers.

In our world today they are both skeptics and cynics who would keep us from even examining the traces of God's truth. There are those who hold the poor down so that their own gains may remain unassailed. Wickedness and evil men and women are not hard to find. But, listen, Christians, they will never truly succeed! For as Habakkuk promised faith and justice have joined hands. Faithlessness is cursed and will surely die out.

But no true faith is forever and always hidden and silent. The day comes when the believer has to command. And he insists on things supposedly impossible. For he knows the role of service. And a real servant, paradoxical as it may seem, can demand a lot. This is because true service has attained a psychology of realism. A good servant knows how far he can go, what rewards are attainable and what sane limitations he must put upon himself. In the light of all this he acts. He is praised. But he acquiesces to a new and deeper humility. So must we all if God gives us the grace to work wonders.

However, our humility need not consign us to a stifling servility. No! We can become the very agents of the power of God. We can rise not only above our own defects but above the hemmed in expectations of the world around us. How can we do this? Through the faith Christ has taught us! We can put ourselves completely in God's hands, knowing that he who has already blessed us will bless us even more. We can believe God because we trust him. We can love God because he loves us. We can teach our neighbor because our love for God and his love for us are worth sharing. For God the Holy Spirit lives in us and will guard not only whatever precious gift we have received from on high but our very selves into eternal bliss.

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 11, 1992

Readings: 2 K 5:14-17 2

Tm 2:8-13

Lk 17:11-19

Today's readings tell us of healing and strength found in unusual and unexpected situations and of what is involved in the prophetic stance from which such healing and such strength flow

forth. We return to the Second Book of Kings which we last looked at on the Thursday of the Twelfth Week. We continue our Lucan texts appropriate to this third year and, likewise, our reading of the Pastoral Letters ascribed to St. Paul. As often happens in the three year cycle the first reading and the Gospel have a common theme, in this case the power to heal is shown forth in Elisha and both fulfilled and amplified in Christ. The second reading shows how the strength which motivated the prophets and the power of the Risen Christ are ours for practical use in ongoing Christian life.

The author of both Books of Kings, probably writing in exile between 562 and 539 B.C., wants to lead people of wavering faith back to the God of Israel through recalling for them the wonders God performed through Elijah, Elisha and others three hundred years previously. God's promise is to make his works perpetual signs of his presence and to bind himself to Israel forever. If this is so, details in the Elijah and Elisha cycle, colorful as they may be, merely underline a deeper truth: God's will and his ways are surprising. So the whole rigmarole of messages back and forth, washings in the Jordan and trips to and fro serves only to emphasize that God's will is to be done under his conditions in terms of unquestioning human obedience with no respect of persons involved. Elisha freely gives of both his prophecy and his healing gift. Naaman carts off the very soil of Israel to give thanks in his own land on earth from the place where he has been blessed.

Both the circumstances and the characters of the Gospel narrative are quite different from those of the fifth chapter of II Kings. Luke as always paints Jesus as Master and center of the situation. But men approach him directly and in number for his reputation has gone before him. Luke is never a very good geographer but there may be some allusion to Elisha in placing the story "on the border of Samaria." The elements of faith in Christ's power and the Samaritan's return to give thanks certainly recall Naaman's trust in Elisha's God and his return as a foreigner to give thanks and obtain the soil needed for ongoing worship. The great difference in this story is that Jesus works spontaneously and his own people take his work for granted. They think Christ's injunction to obey the Mosaic law frees them from the demands of human civility. They remind us of people today who might pay a stipend for a baptism, wedding or funeral but would never think of thanking the celebrant as part of their thanks to God. Jesus is irked by lack of "personalism."

In the second reading we enter the world of repeated Pauline admonitions to "keep in mind," "recall," "forget not." Timothy is to remember the past so that its Saving Events can penetrate the future. The Risen Lord is still Son of David. His death makes for our life. Our firm faith will transport us to his Reign. Any lack of faith would exclude us therefrom. But whatever we do God on whom can be our sole reliance is forever trustworthy, loyal to himself while drawing us to loyalty to him.

Not many people suffer from leprosy in the sense of Hanson's or some other disease serious afflicting their tissues. But many are outcast from God, in great need and wondering the border between Syria and Israel, Judea and Samaria, the Church and the World. God has given us the Holy Spirit so that we can call out to them in prophecy and touch their lives with the risen power of David's Son who is likewise God's. May that Spirit at work within us give us the power of Elisha and the merciful love of Christ. May we be known both for our gratitude (which generates gratitude) and our humanity which helps others become humane. Most of all, may we be loyal to Christ and to one another. May we never forget the price of our redemption or the prize of our victory. Thus, prophetic, concerned, grateful agents of healing because we have been healed let us press forward by grace to that eternal glory which must be the sure outcome of our salvation.

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

WORLD MISSION SUNDAY

October 18, 1992

Readings: *Ex* 17:8-13

2 Tm 3:14 - 4:2

Lk 18:1-8

This year World Mission Sunday coincides with the XXIXth Sunday in Ordinary Time and, though special readings could be chosen to correspond with the liturgical setting of a Votive Mass for the spread of the Gospel, the readings indicated in the Ordo can well be reckoned suitable for the special homily on the Missions to be preached today. Prayer and proclamation which are the themes of the readings are certainly extremely important in and for any missionary endeavor. An attempt to go forth to the world with no support in holiness would be foolhardy and would lead to failure. While setting

up educational and medical facilities in remote places with no proclamation of the Good News would be to encourage good works while forgetting about faith. In reality prayer for the missions is a common concern of all true believers. And proclamation of God's word is any missionary's primary work.

Probably no group mentioned in the Old Testament has a worse "press" than the Amalekites. They harassed and were countered by Israel from the time of Moses in the incident of the first reading, some one thousand two hundred and thirty years before Christ, 'till their last remnants were crushed by the Simeonites in the time of Hezekiah well over five hundred years later. The Amalekites were savage nomads, desert marauders, who have left no archeological trace for they were too uncivilized to have more than tented fortresses and too rapacious to have artifacts other than stolen ones. Godless, cunning, fearfully brave, they blocked the way of the People of God time and again and were still a bother to David two hundred and fifty years after Joshua first defeated them. To the sacred writer such wretches could only be overcome by prayer. But Moses could not keep his hands aloft to beseech God without help from Aaron and Hur.

Jesus has a rather different approach to and doctrine of prayer from what we find in Exodus. The common element is the incessant quality noteworthy both in Moses and the aggrieved widow. But the reasons for being incessant in supplication, Moses to God and the widow to the judge who neither fears God nor respects man, are really quite different. Moses needs Israel to win. The widow needs basic commodities for life. Ironically she is being deprived of them in all probability because of lacunae in the Law of Moses! The Amalekites are defeated by the prowess of Joshua. The judge is defeated by his own boredom with the widows's nagging. Yet God enters into both situations. God answers prayer. But man must sustain both resistance and even shame before the answer will come. For God helps the helpless who lift their hands in prayer and his reply teaches both his holy fear and the dignity of those who call on him in faith.

The approach of the Second Letter to Timothy is much calmer. It shows that wisdom acquired from on high through the contemplative study of scripture is the surest basis of truly good works. We can only proclaim the message when we have learned it. We can only insist upon it if we have come to live it. But it is our unquestionable duty to transmit what we have received. This involves us in a lifelong

endeavor of learning and discerning. For others will be dependent on us for wisdom leading to salvation through faith. To shirk our task is to risk the awful judgment of God. However our tools are at hand and the Holy Spirit who gave them to us can be counted on to teach us to use them.

The Church in its missionary quest and task is faced with foes more formidable than a host of Amalekites or a whole bench of unjust judges. All the fury of Hell arises and fights against her. Yet she never ceases to evangelize. No time is the wrong time for missionary zeal. Proclaiming the Good News is an ever present priority. But the proclaimers must be prepared and know they have foes. They must stand for civilization against barbarism and be civil rather than uncouth. They must be concerned with and about the helpless as symbolized by the Gospel widow. They must make real decisions on truth and goodness so that the faith will come to be known and loved. And we must all both join and support them in any way we can: by holding up their arms in prayer, by backing their just and peaceful stance, by lending them our support and sharing their patient but optimistic outlook based on all that is truly Christian and Christ-like.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 25, 1992

Readings: *Si* 3 5:15-17 & 20-22
2 *Tm* 4:6-8 & 16-18
Lk 19:9-14

Humility, self-abasement and reliance on God's power alone are qualities stressed in what we have just heard. They cannot but be seen in severe contrast with the pseudo-ideals of "self-made men." And they give the lie to the blasphemous quip: "God helps those who help themselves!" He does not. God helps the helpless. No respecter of persons, he especially attends to the prayer of the humble who are before men inconsolable but before God incessant in supplication. God spurns the boasting of the Pharisee but regards the publican's humble plea. Apostolic witness receives the final touch of greatness in that it both depends on God alone and that its crown is one of righteousness from the hands of the sole righteous judge.

How tempting but how wrong it is to try to gain God's favor by special pleading, by telling him (in effect) how good we are, how loyal and worthy of reward. In truth nothing could so stop the divine ears

as the cry which is a boast. God wants to know we are needy. Our cry must be assimilated to that of orphans and widows. For through our sins we are all bereft of things we should both have and be before the Lord. When we truly get on our knees the very heavens are pierced, and God takes notice of us.

In the Gospel reading everything the Pharisee says is materially true. What is lacking is the formality of love and comparative self-assessment. For if we truly love God we cannot exalt ourselves. He is too high. We are too low. This we must acknowledge. The poor tax-collector has the right attitude. The only thing very distinguishing about him is his sin. He has chosen a task in life which aligns him with a pagan and foreign power. The self-congratulating Pharisee despises the tax collector. Of course he would. God loves both men, but he can only come with justifying grace to the one who is open to him, namely the tax collector. And he gives him inward peace, a very different quality from the smug, self-assurance of the Pharisee. Through self-abasement real stature is acquired in God's eyes, whereas pride only lessens men in his sight.

St. Paul suffered so much. He was so abandoned by those on whom he counted. His work was marred and his life was endangered by indifference and lack of human understanding. But all his reliance right up to the end is placed on the Lord and on no one and nothing else. We can be sure his "crown" is noteworthy. We can be sure no lasting harm befell such a man. The Lord whom he served rescued him from every possible and every unforeseen evil. And for this Paul glorifies Christ and not himself. He would have Timothy and he would have us do likewise.

Precisely when our lives are at their lowest ebb do our prayers become signs of new and hidden strength. When we have let go of all that is not God, of all that is neither of nor from him, we begin to rise from our knees and stand erect. When all that fallen nature would glory in is a thing of the past, all that grace gives us lifts us up and makes us new. But this requires both openness and perseverance on our part. In order to be crowned with glory we must uncover and bow our heads. In order to be judged righteous we must admit our sin. In order to be friends of God we must, bereft of power and position, of pride and prestige, hand over our helpless selves to the Lord and let him fill us with the only portion and gift truly worth having, Eternal Life!

FR. PABLO FERNANDEZ VILLARROEL, O.P.
June 7, 1917 - June 1, 1992

Editor's Note: *Monday, June 1, 1992 was a sad day for the Dominican Community of Santo Tomas in Manila for shortly after midday in the University Hospital, one of our most distinguished and best loved Fathers died. Fr. Pablo Fernandez had played a central role in many of our lives, in the work of the Philippine Church and (as an acknowledged historian and writer) in the ongoing realization of Boletin as a contributor, editorial consultant and friend always ready to help. Our dear confrere is sorely missed. He was a saintly priest, and we beg our readers to join us in prayer for his soul. The homily printed below was preached by Fr. Solis, the Regional Vicar of the Dominican Province of Our Lady of the Rosary at Ssmo. Rosario Church, Manila, during the obsequies of Fr. Pablo Fernandez, O.P., on Wednesday, June 3, 1992.*

*Happy are those who have died in the Lord;
let them rest from their labors
for their good deeds go with them
(Rv 14:13).*

I first met Father Pablo Fernandez in 1962, a few months after I had entered the Novitiate, at the Convent of Santo Domingo in Ocaña, Toledo, Spain. He was assigned to that community shortly after his arrival from the Philippines. The second time we met was in the community of the University of Santo Tomas when I arrived in 1975. We first worked together in the Central

Seminary, where Father Efren Rivera was then Rector, and Father Jesus Mancebo, Spiritual Director; later in the community of UST till I was transferred to San Juan.

During these thirty years, Father Pablo did not change much – neither in his external outlook nor in his faithfulness to religious observances. He was always a man of rigorous asceticism, prayer, obedience and poverty; one distinguished for his simplicity and readiness to share his knowledge and expertise both spiritual and intellectual.

In community meetings he always advocated the spirit of Saint Dominic as the evangelical charism professed and upheld by the Dominican Order. At the Seminary he insisted on the importance of spiritual life as the basic element of seminary formation, and he advocated discipline, silence and prayer as inseparable from academic excellence.

In the confessional and during spiritual direction he taught in words and example the importance and practice of penance as a safeguard for the priestly vocation. For him a serious commitment to the cause of the Kingdom of God required a certain degree of self-denial, which he practiced.

As a Dominican he treasured:

Study. A professor in the Faculty of Theology at UST and a lover of history, Father Pablo left important contributions to the history of the Church in the Philippines and the history of the Dominican missions in the Far East. He generously imparted his knowledge and shared the fruits of his research. He never kept historical data to himself. Seminarians and students of the Graduate School came to him asking for information concerning historical documents, archival material, etc. Researchers from other countries also called on him for help, and he never failed them if he knew how to help.

Vocation and spiritual life. Gifted with the charism of counsel he dedicated much time to this apostolic endeavor both in the Central Seminary and with the other religious groups who called on him.

A lover of vocations he supported the establishment of new religious groups and both guided them in their nascence and justified them as manifestations of divine will.

A man of spiritual life, we have witnessed his rounds on the campus or in the house in Baguio during which he said personal prayers and made devotions, calling upon the Blessed Mother whose rosary and office he recited every day.

Community. He followed the tenets of our constitutions by faithfully participating in community prayers, observing schedules, and sharing all his income, thus observant the strictest poverty.

On June 1, 1992, Father Pablo Fernandez Villarroel, a noted historian and man of God, was called to the Lord.

Father Pablo was born on June 7, 1917 in Pedrosa del Rey, Leon, Spain. After his elementary days in the same village he attended high school at the Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Rosario in La Mejorada, Olmedo, Valladolid. He finished the secondary course in 1932. He started his novitiate on September 8, 1932 and made his first religious profession on September 24, 1933. At the Convento de Santo Tomas, Avila, he took three years of philosophical studies (1933-1936) and finished at Rosaryhill Convent, Hong Kong, where he also began his theological studies (1938-1939). He was assigned to Washington where he was ordained priest on May 31, 1940. There he completed his theological formation with the degree of Lector in 1941. Assigned to the Philippines he obtained from the University of Santo Tomas his Licentiate in Theology in 1945, and Doctorate in Theology in 1946.

The following assignments were entrusted to him:

- 1941-42 Colegio de San Juan de Letran
- 1942-43 Lingayen
- 1943-44 Seminary of Tayabas
- 1944-47 Oeconomus, UST Central Seminary
- 1945-85 Professor, Faculty of Theology, UST
- 1947-53 Assistant, UST High School
- 1953-58 Regent, UST College of Education

- 1957-58 1974-92 Spiritual Director, UST
Central Seminary
- 1958-92 Director of Archives of the University and
the Province of the Holy Rosary (except 1961-
64 after his first heart attack when he was
transferred to the Convento de Santo Dom-
ingo Ocaña, Toledo, Spain).

Among his writings are: *Dominicos Donde Nace el Sol*, Barcelona 1958, 711 pp.; *Las Indulgencias de la Iglesia Primitiva* (Doctoral Thesis); *History of the Church in the Philippines*. Many of his written contributions can be found in publications such as *Philippiniana Sacra*, *Unitas*, *Boletin Ecclesiastico de Filipinas*, *Voz Estudiantil*, *Santo Rosario*, *Campo Misional*, and *Life Today*.

Happy are those who dwell in the house of the Lord and follow in the footsteps of the Lord. Father Pablo Fernandez was a faithful servant who learned that "the man who loves his life loses it, while the man who hates his life in this world preserves it to life eternal."

Fr. Bonifacio Garcia Solis, O.P.

Vatican News

Pope approves universal catechism

On June 25, 1992, Pope John Paul II gave his official approval to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, which as Cardinal Ratzinger pointed out in his presentation of the definitive text to the Pope, is the result of six years of demanding work. The final text is now being translated and prepared for publication at a later date, which the Pope says he hopes is "not too distant." In his remarks the Holy Father said that the Catechism will be a valuable tool for the preparation of national and diocesan catechisms which will be used for the instruction of children, young people and adults. In this way the universal Church will be assisted in her mission of evangelizing a world which has need of the whole and complete Christian message.

Changes in the Episcopate

- The Holy Father accepted the resignation of *Bishop Cesar C. Raval*, SVD of Bangued, the Philippines. It was presented in conformity with canon 401, §1 of the Code of Canon Law.
- The Holy Father also accepted the resignation of *Bishop Felix S. Zafra* of Tagbilaran, the Philippines. It was presented in conformity with canon 401, §2 of the Code of Canon Law.

Next Issue of the Boletin . . .

SECOND PLENARY COUNCIL OF THE PHILIPPINES DECREES

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Editor and Staff of *Boletín Eclesiástico* take pleasure in sharing with our readers our heartfelt happiness in the good news of the election of the then Provincial of the English Dominicans,

FR. TIMOTHY RADCLIFFE,

As LXXXVth Successor of St. Dominic
and Master of the Order of Preachers,
on July 5, 1992 in Mexico City.

AD MULTOS ANNOS!