

In this Issue

EDITORIAL

498 *EX UMBRIS LUX*

WORDS FOR TODAY

* *John Paul II*

501 MESSAGE FOR WORLD
MISSION SUNDAY

506 HOLY SEE AND THE
'EARTH SUMMIT'

511 PASTORES DABO VOBIS

**SECOND PLENARY COUNCIL
OF THE PHILIPPINES**

* *Maximiliano Rebollo, O.P.*

524 PROCLAMATION OF THE
SECOND PLENARY COUNCIL
OF THE PHILIPPINES

* *Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D.*

527 THE KAIROS OF THE PCP II
IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

534 DECREE OF PROMULGATION
OF THE DECREES ENACTED
BY THE PCP II

536 DECRETUM

* *Congregatio Pro Episcopis*

537 *NOTA EXPLICATIVA
PRAEVIA* TO THE DECREES
OF PCP II

* *PCP II*

538 DECREES

PASTORAL WORDS

* *Excelso Garcia, O.P.*

571 GENERAL ABSOLUTION

GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW

* *Roman Carter, O.P.*

579 FESTAL HOMILIES FOR
NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER
1992

Ex Umbris Lux

Roman Carter, O.P.

As have lived all men and women everywhere and always, so we, too, live in a time of change. In this issue we publish the codified results of the efforts of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, decrees and documents to change our lives. In our last issue we congratulated, albeit on the last page, as we went to press, the new Master of the Order of Preachers. As I consider all of our readers to be (at least in a loose and nebulous sense but perhaps more strictly than they or we admit) members of our "Dominican Family" I should like to devote a few words to Fr. Timothy Radcliffe, the new Master, and to our hopes for the next nine years.

Our new presiding officer, general superior and guide is the eighty-sixth man in history to hold this post of "Master" a title accorded to the first, our Founder and Patron, St. Dominic de Guzman even before the Order was founded in 1216. In the seven hundred and seventy-six years since that time, the Masters of the Friars-Preachers of many Provinces and nations have been elected by our unique democratic process involving Priors Provincial, Definitors and Delegates. Fr. Radcliffe is the first English friar to be accorded the task. Of his predecessors, a good half were Italians, seventeen were Spaniards, a dozen Frenchmen and the rest from other nations of Europe, including two Irishmen. Only once was a Mexican Master. A South African was once canonically elected but immediately resigned.

Fr. Timothy comes to his new role armed with good experience both pastoral and academic. He was born in London forty-seven years ago and educated by the Benedictines at their renowned abbey school at Downside in the West Country. The future Master joined the Dominicans when he was barely twenty. As I recall I met him during his novitiate year and have seen him briefly two or three times afterwards. He is an amazingly personable and truly unforgettable man with twinkling eyes, kindly manners and an air of selfless interest in others, their lives and their problems. His lengthy hair and rumpled appearance cannot hide his depth of wit or block his outgoing grace.

On one of the occasions when I was in Oxford de paso (and staying for reasons of ecumenical research with Russian Orthodox friends) I stopped in at Blackfriars for a short afternoon visit. There was Fr. Timothy, by then as I recall sub-prior of the house, who received me seated in his room before a portrait painter who was doing his likeness in oils. I well remember my silly banter that in the Dominican Order its Masters are usually painted, whereas I knew of a certain abbey of Premonstratensians in Austria where every member in Solemn Vows was thus honored. Could I have been projecting a hint of "prophecy" (in the popular sense)?

Fr. Timothy studied for the priesthood at Hawkesyard in the Midlands, at Blackfriars, Oxford (where he took a "first" in theology at the University) and at our studium in Paris where he was awarded the Licentiate. He was ordained in the early seventies and his first work was at the University of London where he was Catholic Chaplain. Soon he returned to Oxford, was made a member of the Faculty of Theology of the University and began teaching scripture at Blackfriars where he was elected and re-elected Prior. In 1988 his Province in Chapter elected him Prior Provincial, major superior of houses and friars in England and Scotland and West Indian missions. His recent writings published in New Blackfriars include "Christ in Hebrews: Cultic Irony" (1987) "Tradition and Creativity" and "The Gift of Memory" (1989), his University Sermon "Deus Illuminatio Mea" preached in April 1991 and several more. The very titles reflect something of his socio-religious concern.

Two blended characteristics seem to be salient in Fr. Timothy's life and work thus far. He is courageously innovative and he

is humanly concerned. His will to change and his personalism are seen as he works for the care of AIDS patients, presides over meetings of regular superiors and chats with friends, coffee mug in hand.

The new Master has promised the Rector of the University of Santo Tomas (of which Fr. Timothy is now, of course, Grand Chancellor ex officio) that he will come to the Philippines late this year or in early 1993. We all look forward to meeting him and hope that he may share in the Philippines something of the charm and warmth of his caring personality of which we have heard so much. We also hope that under such a Master our Order and our convento will become fresher and more humane, as we work with him into the Twenty-first Century. We hope that he will guide us in unexplored paths and lead us and all we serve (including the readers of Boletín) nearer to God in Christ.

words for today

Message for World Mission Sunday*

John Paul II

Faith is not a private privilege

Beloved Brothers and Sisters!

1. World Mission Sunday, instituted in 1926 by Pope Pius XI at the request of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, calls us each year in the spirit of the Church's unity and universality, to a renewed commitment to everyone's responsibility for the spread of the Gospel message.

As we approach the Third Millennium of the Redemption, our universal mission becomes even more urgent. We cannot remain indifferent when we think of the millions of men and women who, like us, have been redeemed by the Blood of Christ, yet still do not have sufficient knowledge of God's love. No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church, can withdraw from the supreme duty of proclaiming Christ to all peoples. Today two-thirds of humanity do not know Christ; they need him and his message of salvation.

Since the Church is by her very nature missionary, evangelization constitutes a duty and a right for every one of her members

*On the feast of Pentecost, as is his custom, the Holy Father issued his annual message for World Mission Sunday, which this year will be observed throughout the universal Church on 18 October 1992. In his message the Pope recalls that it is especially within the family that love for missions develops.

(cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 17; *Ad Gentes*, nn. 28, 35-38). The Lord calls us to go beyond ourselves and to share with others the blessings we have received, beginning with the gift of faith, which cannot be considered as a private privilege but must be seen as a gift to be shared with those who have not yet received it. Such activity will benefit faith itself since faith is strengthened when it is shared.

Contribution of prayers and of suffering, and of our very self

2. On World Mission Sunday every particular Church, the youngest as well as those long established, those freely developing along with those suffering persecution, those with sufficient resources and those weighed down by poverty, feel the duty of reaching out of themselves to share in the responsibility for the mission *ad gentes*.

Responding therefore to the invitation of "Mission Sunday," each member will dutifully participate in the universal mission of the Church most of all through spiritual cooperation, accompanying and sustaining the efforts of our missionaries by prayer. Jesus himself spoke of the need "to pray always" (*Lk* 18:1) and gave witness through the sacrifice of his very life. As disciples of Christ, let us too offer our life to God, through Christ, the first missionary.

In this regard the prayer and the sacrifice of the sick take on great value when their suffering is intimately associated to the passion of Christ. Those who are dedicated to the care of the sick will not fail to instruct them and encourage them to offer their suffering in union with Christ Crucified for the salvation of the world (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 78).

Our sacrifice requires concrete and visible expression. For some this means accepting the privileged sacrifice and priceless blessing of a special missionary vocation, "going forth" with the Gospel wherever the Spirit leads.

This "going forth" finds its greatest manifestation in the sending of the Apostles on mission in the New Testament: "You will

receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Ac 1:8).

We are all missionaries

3. As we celebrate the fifth centenary of the evangelization of the Americas we are reminded of the European missionaries who brought the Gospel to the people they found on those shores. We approach this celebration with humility and truth, giving thanks to God for the blessings he has given to these ancient and noble peoples.

Today we see with joy that missionaries come not only from the more established Churches but also from the Churches of Africa, Asia and Latin America, where many dedicate their lives to the initial proclamation of the Gospel. In many countries the precious and indispensable work of the local catechists continues, moved by a strong missionary spirit which makes them untiring animators of faith and hope.

While not all are called to the lifelong missionary vocation *ad gentes*, all must pray for and foster a missionary spirit both in their own hearts and in their faith communities. Bishops and priests particularly must realize they are primarily responsible for this universal mission and the formation of enthusiastic, mission-conscious believers. But it is especially within the family unit that the laity will develop love for the missionary vocation (*Ad Gentes*, n. 41) since the family, "the domestic Church," is the privileged place for mission evangelization.

Apostolate of animation for collection of funds

4. So that World Mission Sunday may assume its full significance and value in full solidarity with the missions, it must be prepared with care and lived with real fervor. The celebration of the Eucharist constitutes the central moment in which the missionary problem comes to light and stimulates a responsible sharing on the part of every baptized person, every Christian family and every Church institution. But we must not neglect other means and opportunities for mission animation. We invite those respon-

sible to foster and organize initiatives which will contribute to the success of this "Day." Together with information to encourage the missionary consciousness of every baptized person, collections for mission assistance should be encouraged. This objective is an important part of the Church's responsibility. It was even so for the mission and ministry of Jesus and the Twelve, who were assisted by generous persons (cf. *Lk* 8:3).

The material and financial needs of the missions are many and growing daily. Financial sacrifices from the faithful "are essential for sustaining and building up the Church and for showing love" (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 81). The Society for the Propagation of the Faith in this regard provides for the universal mission and through its central fund of solidarity avoids any discrimination in the distribution of aid to the Churches, especially the poorest. World Mission Sunday for almost seventy years now constitutes the most important ecclesial mobilization in encouraging spiritual and material cooperation for the missions. In this regard I feel it my duty to recall the wise disposition of my predecessors Popes Pius XI and John XXIII, who stipulated that all offerings collected on World Mission Sunday be destined in their entirety to the needs of the mission *ad gentes*.

There is good reason for missionary hope and optimism

5. Dear brothers and sisters, insofar as we support the Church's missionary activity, we are faithful to her missionary nature. St. Paul charged Timothy "to proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient" (2 *Tm* 4:2). Paul's message is now addressed to us. All can, indeed, all must be directly engaged in building up the Church and in helping her members grow and mature in the profession of their faith, for "missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive" (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 2).

As we near the jubilee celebration of the Incarnation of the year 2000, I see the dawn of a new missionary age. Although at first sight we may be struck by negative factors in the world picture, we must look beyond these for signs of people drawing ever closer to the Gospel: the rejection of violence and war; re-

spect for the human person and human rights; the desire for freedom, justice and brotherhood (*Redemptoris Missio*, n. 86).

It is the same Christian hope that sustains us in committing ourselves fully to the new evangelization and to the mission to the nations. This hope 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; *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 86). There is reason for much hope in the increase of missionary vocations especially in the young Churches, as well as in the fraternal aid among the Churches through the exchange of clergy, in the spirit of the Encyclical *Fidei Donum*.

Words of homage to the missionaries for their witness

6. I end this message with an expression of appreciation and admiration for all workers in the Gospel vineyard throughout the world. We need only to look at the many missionaries martyred in recent years to realize the great spirit of sacrifice of these men and women who consecrate their lives to the service of the Gospel. May the spirit that filled Paul, Apostle to the nations, guide and protect all missionaries and all who witness to Jesus in word, in deed and in the example of their lives.

I offer my gratitude as well to all who support the Church's missionary efforts in prayer, sacrifice and solidarity. May all find in Mary, who offered an unconditional "yes" to God, a model and inspiration for a generous apostolic commitment.

With these sentiments in mind, I cordially impart to all my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of divine favor.

Vatican City, 7 June 1992.

Holy See and the 'Earth Summit'

The position of the Holy See regarding *Environment and Development* has been set out in various discourses of His Holiness Pope John Paul II and in particular in the Message for the World Day of Peace 1990: "*Peace with God the Creator, Peace with all Creation.*" The basic principles that should guide our considerations of environmental issues are the *integrity of all creation and respect for life and the dignity of the human person.*

1. As the title of the above message suggests, the basic inspiration of the Holy See's concern is religious in nature, but it also contains reference to many fundamental moral considerations which are shared by persons of good will. The ecological crisis is essentially a moral crisis and the solution of many of the ecological problems confronting the entire human family requires strategies and motivation "based on a morally coherent worldview" (Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace* 1990, n. 2). The international community cannot overlook this ethical dimension.

2. *The human person occupies a central place within the world and the promotion of the dignity and the rights of all persons without distinction* "is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial and scientific development. . . Pollu-

'Memorandum on the Holy See's position on environment and development. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 10 June 1992.

tion and environmental destruction are the result of an unnatural and reductionist vision which at times leads to genuine contempt for man" (*Message for the World Day of Peace* 1990, n. 7).

3. The human person has a responsibility of stewardship in regard to all creation with which he or she lives in interdependence. When persons consciously ignore or transgress the order of any aspect of creation, they provoke a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order and the well-being of future generations (cf. *Message for the World Day of Peace* 1990, n. 6).

4. The goods of the earth — including those produced by human activity — are for the benefit of all. All peoples and countries have a right to fundamental access to those goods — natural, spiritual, intellectual and technological — which are necessary for their integral development.

5. An adequate *policy of development* must be based on the dignity and rights of the human person and on the common good. "The Holy See notes that the spiritual as well as the material well-being of the person must be taken into account in the development process because spiritual values give meaning to material progress, to technical advances and to the creation of political and social structures that serve the community of persons we call society" (*Holy See's Intervention at 1984 World Population Conference*).

Maintaining and projecting the common good requires the *solidarity of all* those concerned. Solidarity implies an awareness and an acceptance of co-responsibility for the causes and solutions relative to the ecological challenge. Recognizing the shared responsibility of all for the causes of the ecological crisis will make possible a dialogue, based on mutual trust and respect, in seeking solutions. Equity may however demand that the universal duty to foster solidarity be differentiated and complementary according to the needs and abilities of the parties.

6. In the field of technology, States, in accord with the duty of solidarity and giving due consideration to the rights of the developers of such technology, have an obligation to ensure a just and *equitable transfer of appropriate technology* which is favorable

to sustaining the development process and protecting the environment.

7. *Clearly defined ethical principles* must prevail in the area of biotechnology, which touches closely on the dignity and integrity of the human person. The human person is much more than a composite of biochemical elements, and he or she should not be made the subject of biological or chemical experiments for the sake of biotechnological progress. All interventions on the genetic structure or heritage of the person that are not aimed at correcting anomalies constitute a violation of the right to bodily integrity (cf. Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, 22 October 1983, 4, c). Science and technology are at the service of the human person and ethical principles must prevail over any other interest, especially purely economic interests. Where possible, appropriate legal instruments must be found to ensure respect for ethical principles.

8. The damage to the human and natural environment caused by war is an increasingly serious problem. Pope John Paul II noted already in 1990: "Today, any form of war on a global scale would lead to incalculable ecological damage. But even local or regional wars, however limited, not only destroy human life and social structures, but also damage the land, ruining crops and vegetation as well as poisoning the soil and water. The survivors of war are forced to begin a new life in very difficult environmental conditions (*Message for the World Day of Peace 1990*, n. 12).

9. The relationship of development and the environment to population growth is complex and often tenuous. In recent decades population growth rates have fallen in most areas of the world, while they still remain high in some of the least developed countries. Population growth, of and by itself, is seldom the primary cause of environmental problems. In most cases, there are no causal links between the numbers of people and the degradation of environment. In fact, the less-populated nations of the North are directly or indirectly responsible for most of the abuse of the global environment. Therefore, policies aimed at reducing population do little to help solve urgent problems of environment and development. True solutions to these problems must involve not only sound

economic planning and technology but justice for all the peoples of the earth.

The Holy See is especially concerned about strategies that make population decline the primary factor in overcoming ecological problems. Programmes for reducing population directed and financed by the developed nations of the North easily become a substitute for justice and development in the developing nations of the South. These programmes evade the question of the just distribution and development of the abundant resources of the earth. On many occasions the Holy See has expressed its opposition to the setting of quantitative population targets or goals, which involve the violation of human dignity and human rights. Systematic campaigns against birth, directed towards the poorest populations, may even lead to a "tendency towards a form of racism, or the promotion of equally racist forms of eugenics (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, n. 25).

10. In policies and strategies to protect the environment must also respect the family unit, which is "the natural and fundamental group unit of society and the state" (cf. *U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights* 16, 3). The Holy See emphasizes that "society and in particular manner the State and International Organizations, must protect the family through measures of a political, economic, social and juridical character, which aim at consolidating the unity and stability of the family so that it can exercise its specific functions" (Holy See, *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, Preamble, I).

Accordingly, the Holy See opposes those strategies which in any way attempt to limit the freedom of couples in deciding about the size of the family or the spacing of births (cf. *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, 3a). In international relations, economic aid for the advancement of peoples should not be conditioned on acceptance of programmes of contraception, sterilization or abortion (cf. *Holy See's intervention at 1984 World Population Conference*; also, *John Paul II to Rafael Salas*, 1984, n. 6). In this way, the Holy See defends the human rights of women and men in developing countries who are subjected to programmes of population control which do not respect their consciences, their rights and dignity, or their ethnic and religious cultures.

Surgical or pharmaceutical methods of abortion continue to be promoted as a method of birth control in the context of policies and programmes aimed at reducing population. Such practice runs contrary to Recommendation 18 of the 1984 International Conference on Population, Mexico City: namely, that abortion should not be promoted as a method of family planning. The Holy See objects to family planning programmes which include abortion as a method of family planning or which pressure couples to use sterilization or other methods of contraception that are morally objectionable.

Pastores Dabo Vobis

John Paul II

Chapter II.

HE HAS ANOINTED ME AND HAS SENT ME FORTH

The Nature and Mission of the Ministerial Priesthood

A Look at the Priest

11. "The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him" (*Lk* 4:20). What the Evangelist Luke says about the people in the synagogue at Nazareth that Sabbath, listening to Jesus' commentary on the words of the Prophet Isaiah which he had just read, can be applied to all Christians. They are always called to recognize in Jesus of Nazareth the definitive fulfillment of the message of the Prophets: "And he began to say to them, ~Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing' " (*Lk* 4:21). The "Scripture" he had read was this: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord: (*Lk* 4:18-19; cf. *Is* 61:1-2). Jesus thus presents himself as filled with the Spirit, "consecrated with an anointing," "sent to preach good news to the poor." He is the Messiah, the Messiah who is Priest, Prophet and King.

These are the features of Christ upon which the eyes of faith and love of Christians should be fixed. Using this "contemplation" as a starting point and making continual reference to it, the synod Fathers reflected on the problem of priestly formation in present day circumstances. This problem cannot be solved without previous reflection upon the goal of formation, that is, the ministerial priesthood, or, more precisely, the ministerial priesthood as a participation, in the church, the very priesthood of Jesus Christ. Knowledge of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood is an essential presupposition, and at the same time the surest guide and incentive towards the development of pastoral activities in the Church for fostering and discerning vocations to the priesthood and training those called to the ordained ministry.

A correct and in-depth awareness of the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood is the path which must be taken — and in fact the Synod did take it — in order to emerge from the crisis of *priestly identity*. In the Final Address to the synod I stated: "This crisis arose in the years immediately following the council. It was based on an erroneous understanding of — and sometimes even a conscious bias against — the doctrine of the Conciliar Magisterium. Undoubtedly, herein lies one of the reasons for the great number of defections experienced then by the Church, losses which did serious harm to pastoral ministry and priestly vocations, especially missionary vocations. It is as though the 1990 Synod, rediscovering by means of the many statements which we heard in this hall, the full depth of priestly identity, has striven to instill hope in the wake of these sad losses. These statements showed an awareness of the specific ontological bond which unites the priesthood to Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd. This identity is built upon the type of formation which must be provided for priesthood, and then endure throughout the priest's whole life. This was the precise purpose of the Synod."¹⁸

For this reason the Synod considered it necessary to summarize the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood, as the Church's faith has acknowledge them down the centuries of its

¹⁸*Discourse at the end of the Synod* (27 October 1990), 4: *loc. cit.*; cf. *Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 1991* (10 March 1991): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15 March 1991.

history and as the Second Vatican Council has presented them anew to the people of our day.¹⁹

In the Church as Mystery, Communion and Mission

12. "The priest's identity," as the Synod Fathers wrote, "like every Christian identity, has its source in the Blessed Trinity,"²⁰ which is revealed and is communicated to people in Christ, establishing, in him and through the Spirit, the Church as "the seed and the beginning of the Kingdom."²¹ The Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, summarizing the Council's teaching, presents the Church as mystery, communion and mission: "She is mystery because the very life and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the gift gratuitously offered to all those who are born of water and the Spirit (cf. *Jn* 3:5), and called to relieve the very *communion* of God and to manifest it and communicate it in history (mission)."²²

It is within the Church's mystery, as a mystery of Trinitarian communion in missionary tension, that every Christian identity is revealed and likewise the specific identity of the priest and his ministry. Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the Sacrament of Orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is configured in a special way as Head and Shepherd of his people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world.²³

In this way the fundamentally "relational" dimension of priestly identity can be understood. Through the priesthood which arises

¹⁹Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*; Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (6 January 1970): *loc. cit.*, 321-384; Synod of Bishops, 2nd Ordinary General Assembly, 1971.

²⁰*Propositio* 7.

²¹Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 5.

²²Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), 8: AAS 81 (1989), 405; cf. Synod of Bishops, 2nd Extraordinary General Assembly, 1985.

²³Cf. *Propositio* 7.

from the depths of the ineffable mystery of God, that is, from the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's gift of unity, the priest sacramentally enters into communion with the Bishop and with other priests,²⁴ in order to serve the People of God who are the Church and to draw all mankind to Christ in accordance with the Lord's Prayer: "Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given men, that they may be one, even as we are one. . . even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (*Jn* 17:11, 21).

Consequently, the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except through this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and are prolonged in the communion of the Church, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity all humanity.²⁵ In this context the ecclesiology of communion becomes decisive for understanding the identity of the priest, his essential dignity, and this vocation and mission among the People of God and in the world. Reference to the Church is therefore necessary, even if it is not primary, in defining the identity of the priest. As a *mystery*, the Church is essentially related to Jesus Christ. She is his fullness, his body, his spouse. She is the "sign" and living "memorial" of her permanent presence and activity in our midst and on our behalf. The priest finds the full truth of his identity in being a derivation, a specific participation in and continuation of Christ himself, the one High Priest of the new and eternal Covenant. The priest is a living and transparent image of Christ the Priest. The priesthood of Christ, the expression of his absolute "newness" in salvation history, constitutes the one source and essential model of the priesthood shared by all Christians and the priest in particular. Reference to Christ is thus the absolute necessary key for understanding the reality of priesthood.

²⁴Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7-8.

²⁵Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

The fundamental relationship with Christ the Head and Shepherd

13. Jesus Christ has revealed in himself the perfect and definitive features of the priesthood of the new Covenant.²⁶ He did this throughout his earthly life, but especially in the central event of his Passion, Death and Resurrection.

As the author of the Letter to the Hebrews writes, Jesus, being a man like us and at the same time the only begotten Son of God, is in his very being the perfect mediator between the Father and humanity (cf. *Heb* 8-9). Thanks to the gift of his Holy Spirit he gives us immediate access to God: "god has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (*Ga* 4:6; cf. *Rm* 8:15).

Jesus brought his role as mediator to complete fulfillment when he offered himself on the Cross, thereby opening to us, once and for all, access to the heavenly sanctuary, to the Father's house (cf. *Heb* 9:24-28). Compared with Jesus, Moses and all other "mediators" between God and his people in the Old Testament — kings, priests and prophets — are no more than "figures" and "shadows of the good things to come" instead of "the true form of these realities" (cf. *Heb* 10:1).

Jesus is the promised Good Shepherd (cf. *Ez* 34), who knows each one of his sheep, who offers his life for them and who wishes to gather them together as one flock with one shepherd (cf. *Jn* 10:11-16). He is the Shepherd who has come "not to be served but to serve" (*Mt* 20:28), who in the Paschal action of the washing of the feet (cf. *Jn* 13:1-20) leaves to his disciples a model of service to one another and who freely offers himself as the "innocent lamb" sacrificed for our redemption (cf. *Jn* 1:36; *Rev* 5:6, 12).

With the one definitive sacrifice of the Cross, Jesus communicated to all his disciples the dignity and mission of priests of the new and eternal Covenant. And thus the promise which God had made to Israel was fulfilled: "you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (*Ex* 19:6). According to Saint Peter, the whole people of the New Covenant is established as "a spiritual house," "a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable

²⁶Cf. *Propositio* 7.

to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 2:5). The baptized are "living stones" who build the spiritual edifice by keeping close to Christ, "that living stone. . . in God's sight chosen and precious" (1 Pt 2:4). The new priestly people which is the Church not only has its authentic image in Christ, but also receives from him a real ontological share in his one eternal priesthood, to which she must conform every aspect of her life.

14. For the sake of his universal priesthood of the new Covenant Jesus gathered disciples during his earthly mission (Lk 10:1-12) and with a specific and authoritative mandate he called and appointed the Twelve "to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons" (Mk 3:14-15).

For this reason, already during his public ministry (cf. Mt 16:18), and then most fully after his Death and Resurrection (cf. Mt 28; Jn 20; 21), Jesus had conferred on Peter and the Twelve entirely special powers with regard to the future community and the evangelization of all peoples. After having called them to follow him, he kept them at his side and lived with them imparting his teaching of salvation to them through word and example, and finally he sent them out to all mankind. To enable them to carry this mission Jesus confers upon the Apostles, by a specific Paschal outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the same messianic authority which he had received from the Father, conferred in its fullness in his Resurrection: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:18-20).

Jesus thus established a close relationship between the ministry entrusted to the Apostles and his own mission: "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me" (Mt 10:40); "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me" (Lk 10:16). Indeed, in the light of the Paschal event of the Death and Resurrection, the Fourth Gospel affirms this with great force and clarity: "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jn 20:21; cf. 13:20; 17:18). Just as Jesus has a mission which comes to him directly from God and makes present the very au-

thority of God (cf. *Mt* 7:29, 21-23; *Mk* 1:27; 11:28; *Lk* 20:2; 24:19), so too the Apostles have a mission which comes to them from Jesus. And just as "the Son can do nothing of his accord" (*Jn* 5:19) such that his teaching is not his own but the teaching of the One who sent him (cf. *Jn* 7:16), so Jesus says to the Apostles: apart from me you can do nothing (*Jn* 15:5). Their mission is not theirs but is the same mission of Jesus. All this is possible not as a result of human abilities, but only with the "gift" of Christ and his Spirit, with the "Sacrament": "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (*Jn* 20:22-23). And so the Apostles, not by special merit of their own, but only through a gratuitous participation in the grace of Christ, prolong throughout history to the end of time the same mission of Jesus on behalf of Humanity.

The sign and presupposition of the authenticity and fruitfulness of this mission is the Apostles' unity with Jesus and, in him, with one another and with the Father, as the priestly prayer of our Lord, which sums up his mission, bears witness (cf. *Jn* 17:20-23).

15. In their turn, the Apostles, appointed by the Lord, progressively carried out their mission by calling, in various but complementary ways, other men as Bishops, as priests and as deacons, in order to fulfill the command of the Risen Jesus who sent them forth to all people in every age.

The writings of the New Testament are unanimous in stressing that it is the same Spirit of Christ who introduces these men chosen from among their brethren into the ministry. Through the laying on of hands (cf. *Ac* 6:6; *1 Tm* 4:14; 5:22; *2 Tm* 1:6) which transmits the gift of the Spirit, they are called and empowered to continue the same ministry of reconciliation, of shepherding the flock of God and of reaching (cf. *Ac* 20:28; *1 Pt* 5:2).

Therefore, priests are called to prolong the presence of Christ, the One High Priest, embodying his way of life and making him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care. We find this clearly and precisely stated in the First Letter of Peter: "I exhort the *elders* among you, as a *fellow elder* and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is

to be revealed. Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory" (1 Pt 5:1-4).

In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd, authoritatively proclaiming his Word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation, particularly in Baptism, Penance and the Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the Head and Shepherd.²⁷

This is the ordinary and proper way in which ordained ministers share in the one priesthood of Christ. By the sacramental anointing of Holy Orders, the Holy Spirit configures them in a new and special way to Jesus Christ the Head and Shepherd; he forms and strengthens them with his pastoral charity; and he gives them an authoritative role in the church as servants of the proclamation of the Gospel to every people and of the fullness of Christian life of all the baptized.

The truth of the priest as it emerges from the Word of God, that is, from Jesus Christ himself and from his constitutive plan for the Church, is thus proclaimed with joyful gratitude by the Preface of the Liturgy of the Chrism Mass: "By your Holy Spirit you anointed your only Son High Priest of the new and eternal Covenant. With wisdom and love you have planned that this one priesthood should continue in the Church. Christ gives the dignity of a royal priesthood to the people he has made his own. From these, with a brother's love, he chooses men to share his sacred ministry by the laying on of hands. He appointed them to renew in his name the sacrifice of redemption as they set before your family his paschal meal. He calls them to lead your holy people in love, nourish them by your word, and strengthen them through the

²⁷*Ibid.*

sacraments. Father, they are to give their lives in your service and for the salvation of your people as they strive to grow in the likeness of Christ and honor you by their courageous witness of faith and love."

Serving the Church and the World

16. The priest's fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd. Indeed, the priest participates in a specific and authoritative way in the "consecration/anointing" and in the "mission" of Christ (cf. *Lk* 4:18-19). But intimately linked to this relationship is the priest relationship with the Church. It is not a question of "relations which are merely juxtaposed, but rather of ones which are interiorly united in a kind of mutual immanence. The priest's relation to the Church is inscribed in the very relation which the priest has to Christ, such that the "sacramental representation" to Christ serves as the basis of inspiration for the relation of the priest to the Church.

In this sense the Synod Fathers wrote: "inasmuch as he represents Christ the Head, Shepherd and Spouse of the Church, the priest is placed not only *in the Church* but also *in the forefront of the Church*. The priesthood, along with the word of God and the sacramental signs which it serves, belongs to the constitutive elements of the Church. The ministry of the priest is entirely on behalf of the Church; it aims at promoting the exercise of the common priesthood of the entire people of God; it is ordered not only to the particular Church but also the universal Church (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 10), in communion with the Bishop, with Peter and under Peter. Through the priesthood of the Bishop, the priesthood of the second order is incorporated in the apostolic structure of the Church. In this way priests, like the Apostles, act as ambassadors of Christ (cf. *2 Co* 5:20). This is the basis of the missionary character of every priest."²⁸

Therefore, the ordained ministry arises with the Church and has in Bishops, and in priests who are related to and are in communion with them, a particular relation to the original ministry of the Apostles — to which it truly "succeeds" — even though with regard to the latter it assumes different forms.

²⁸*Propositio* 7.

Consequently, the ordained priesthood ought not to be thought of as existing prior to the Church, because it is totally at the service of the Church. Nor should it be considered as posterior to the ecclesial community, as if the Church could be imagined as already established without this priesthood.

The relation of the priest to Jesus Christ, and in him to his Church, is found in the very *being* of the priest, by virtue of his sacramental consecration/anointing, and in his *activity*, that is in his mission or ministry. In particular, "the priest minister is the servant of Christ present in the *Church as mystery, communion and mission*. In virtue of his participation in the 'anointing' and 'mission' of Christ, the priest can continue Christ's prayer, word, sacrifice and salvific action in the Church. In this way, the priest is a *servant of the Church as mystery* because he actuates the Church's sacramental signs of the presence of the Risen Christ. He is a *servant of the Church as communion* because — in union with the Bishop and closely related to the presbyterate — he builds up the unity of the Church community in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services. Finally, the priest is a servant to the Church as mission because he makes the community a herald and witness of the Gospel."²⁹

Thus, by his very nature and sacramental mission, the priest appears in the structure of the Church as a sign of the absolute priority and gratuitousness of the grace given to the Church by the Risen Christ. Through the ministerial priesthood the Church becomes aware in faith that her being comes not from herself but from the grace of Christ in the Holy Spirit. The Apostles and their successors, inasmuch as they exercise an authority which comes to them from Christ, the Head and Shepherd, are placed — with their ministry — *in the forefront of the Church* as a visible continuation and sacramental sign of Christ in his own position before the Church and the world, as the enduring and ever-new source of salvation, he "who is Head of the Church, his Body, and is himself its Savior" (Ep 5:23).

17. By its very nature, the ordained ministry can be carried out only to the extent that the priest is united to Christ through

²⁹Synod of Bishops, 8th Ordinary General Assembly, "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the present Day," *Instrumentum Laboris*, 16; cf. *Propositio* 7.

sacramental participation in the priestly order, and thus to the extent that he is in hierarchical communion with his own Bishop. The ordained ministry has a radical "*communitarian form*" and can only be carried out as "a collective work."³⁰ The Council dealt extensively with this communal aspect of the nature of the priesthood,³¹ examining in succession the relationship of the priest with his own Bishop, with other priests and with the lay faithful.

The ministry of priests is above all communion and a responsible and necessary cooperation with the Bishop's ministry, in concern for the universal Church and for the individual particular Church, for whose service they form with the Bishop a single presbyterate.

Each priest, whether diocesan or religious, is united to the other members of this presbyterate on the basis of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and by particular bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and fraternity. All priests in fact, whether diocesan or religious, share in the one priesthood of Christ the Head and Shepherd; "they work for the same cause, namely, the building up of the Body of Christ, which demands a variety of functions and new adaptations, especially at the present time,"³² and is enriched down the centuries by ever-new charisms.

Finally, because their role and task within the Church do not replace but promote the baptismal priesthood of the entire people of God, leading it to its full ecclesial realization, priests have a positive and helping relationship to the laity. Priests are there to serve the faith, hope and charity of the laity. They recognize and uphold, as brothers and friends, the dignity of the laity as children of God and help them to exercise fully their specific role in the overall context of the Church's mission.³³ The ministerial priesthood conferred by the Sacrament of Holy Orders and the common or "royal" priesthood of the faithful, which differ essentially and not only in degree,³⁴ are ordered one to the other, for

³⁰Angelus (25 February 1990): *L'Osservatore Romano*, 26-27 February 1990.

³¹Cf. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7-9.

³²*Ibid.*, 8; cf. *Propositio* 7.

³³Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 9.

³⁴Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 10.

each in its own way derives from the one priesthood of Christ. Indeed, the ministerial priesthood does not of itself signify a greater degree of holiness with regard to the common priesthood of the faithful; through it, Christ gives to priests, in the Spirit, a particular gift so that they can help the People of God to exercise faithfully and fully the common priesthood which it has received.³⁵

18. As the Council points out, "the spiritual gift which priests have received in ordination does not prepare them merely for limited and circumscribed mission, but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation to the end of the earth. The reason is that every priestly ministry shares in the fullness of the mission entrusted by Christ to the Apostles."³⁶ By the very nature of their ministry, they should therefore be penetrated and animated by a profound missionary spirit and "with that truly Catholic spirit which habitually looks beyond the boundaries of diocese, country or rite, to meet the needs of the whole Church, being prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere."³⁷

Furthermore, precisely because within the Church's life the priests is a man of communion, in his relations with all people he must be a man of mission and dialogue. Deeply rooted in the truth and charity of Christ, and impelled by the desire and imperative to proclaim Christ's salvation to all, the priest is called to witness in all his relationships to fraternity, service and a common quest for the truth, as well as a concern for the promotion of justice and peace. This is the case above all with the brethren of other Churches and Christian denominations; but it also extends to the followers of other religions: to people of good will, and in particular to the poor and the defenseless, and to all who year, even if they do not know it or cannot express it, for the truth and the salvation of Christ, in accordance with the words of Jesus who said: "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners" (*Mk* 2:17).

Today in particular, the pressing pastoral task of the new evangelization calls for the involvement of the entire People of God, and requires a new fervor, new methods and a new expres-

³⁵Cf. *Propositio* 7.

³⁶Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 10.

³⁷Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam Totius*, 20.

sion for the announcing and witnessing of the Gospel. This task demands priests who are deeply and fully immersed in the mystery of Christ and capable of embodying a new style of pastoral life, marked by a profound communion with the Pope, the Bishops and other priests, and a fruitful cooperation with the lay faithful, always respecting and fostering the different roles, charisms and ministries present within the ecclesial community.³⁸

"Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Lk 4:21). Let us listen, once again, to these words of Jesus, in the light of the ministerial priesthood which we have presented in its nature and mission. The "today" to which Jesus refers, precisely because it belongs to and defines the "fullness of time," the time of full and definitive salvation, indicates the time of the Church. The consecration and mission of Christ: "The Spirit of the Lord. . . has anointed me and has sent me to preach good news to the poor. . ." (cf. Lk 4:18), are the living branch from which bud the consecration and mission of the Church, the "fullness" of Christ (cf. Ep 1:23). In the rebirth of Baptism the Spirit of the Lord is poured out on all believers, consecrating them as a spiritual temple and a holy priesthood and sending them forth to make known the marvels of him who out of darkness has called them into his marvelous light (cf. 1 Pt 2:4-10). *The priest shares in Christ's consecration and mission in a specific and authoritative way, through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, by virtue of which he is configured in his being to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, and shares in the mission of "preaching the good news to the poor" in the name and person of Christ himself.*

In their Final Message the Synod Fathers summarized briefly but eloquently the "truth," or better the "mystery" and "gift" of the ministerial priesthood, when they stated: "We derive our identity ultimately from the love of the Father, we turn our gaze to the Son, sent by the Father as High Priest and Good shepherd. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are united sacramentally to him in the ministerial priesthood. Our priestly life and activity continue the life and activity of Christ himself. Here lies our identity, our true dignity, the source of our joy, the very basis of our life."³⁹

³⁸Cf. *Propositio* 12.

³⁹*Final Message of the Synod Fathers to the People of God* (28 October 1990), III: *loc. cit.*

Second Plenary Council of the Philippines

Proclamation of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines

Maximiliano Rebollo, O.P.

On July 22 the Philippine Hierarchy, with a large number of the clergy and laity gathered in the Manila Cathedral for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in which the solemn proclamation of the Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines as approved by the Holy See took place. Under the presidency of Msgr. Leonardo Legaspi, the Plenary Council performed its last official act witnessed by the President of the Republic, Mr. Fidel V. Ramos, and other dignitaries of Church and State.

At the end of the gospel and before the homily, Msgr. Gian Vincenzo Moreni, Papal Nuncio to the Philippines handed the approved document to Msgr. Legaspi, who received it as President of the Plenary Council and he, in turn, handed it over to Msgr. Morelos who is the present president of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. After this brief ceremony Archbishop Legaspi delivered the homily in which he stressed the importance and significance of PCP II, its aims and goals as well as the strategies to be observed for the proper implementation of the its resolutions. Then he proceeded to the reading of the decree by which the document is solemnly proclaimed to the whole Philippine Church. These are his words: *"I, therefore, in my capacity as President of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, in accordance with the provision of Canon 446 CIC and pursuant to the advice of the said Congregation for Bishops, wish to promulgate and do hereby solemnly promulgate the Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines."*

But the solemn proclamation would have been incomplete without its acceptance, so after the homily the congregation made its profession of faith by singing the Nicene Creed, professing adherence to the Church's magisterium both solemn and ordinary, and the acceptance of the decrees of PCP II with these words: *"I promise to faithfully implement the decrees and statutes of the Second Plenary Council."*

According to the Decree of Promulgation, the promulgation as such will take effect on August 22, 1992 or one month after the date of public promulgation: *"In accordance with canons 8 par. 2 and 202 par. 2 CIC the Decrees become effective and acquire their binding force for the Catholic Church all over the Philippines one month after the date of this promulgation, this July 22, 1992."* Thus the Philippine Church enters into a new era, an era of hope, openness to new horizons, and many expectations.

In his homily, Msgr. Legaspi wondered what will happen to the Second Plenary Council after the Decrees are promulgated. Thus he echoed the question which was in the minds of many; after all this, what? What will be the impact on the Philippine Church, and how will this Council affect the Philippine community in general and the Christian community in particular? Will not this depend as much on the perfection of the document itself as on the content attitude that the individual and community take toward the Decrees of PCP II? As a product of human endeavor it could not be perfect, and the document cannot satisfy all. Moreover, it is subject to improvement. But such is not the question of the present moment. The document with its merits (and it has many) and lacks must be accepted as a program for action, as a pastoral tool which the Philippine Church has prepared for its own renewal. Thus, implementation calls for:

1. Knowing and understanding the document. Knowledge and understanding require serious reading and, even more, a conscientious study, in order to grasp what the Fathers of the Council *"want to tell us in the name of God."*

2. This serious reflection has begun at the national level by the establishment of the National Secretariat of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines under the leadership of Msgr. Legaspi. At the diocesan level it has to be followed up by the

establishment of diocesan secretariats of PCP II which will coordinate all efforts of the dioceses.

3. At the parochial level two courses of action are imperative. First, the establishment of study groups, the organization of seminars, and other proper means so that the faithful may become fully aware of the decrees of PCP II. Second, at the same time, all parish organizations should undertake the study on how they will carry out the instructions of the PCP II. They must adjust the expression of their charism in accordance with PCP II without losing their identity. The whole parish should be involved in this effort, it should not be left to the parish priest alone or to the parish council, rather all organizations are called upon to participate in the implementation of the decrees of PCP II.

4. The national seminaries and schools of theology are called to carry out the mission of study in special way. Their efforts should involve teams with sufficient mobility to help the dioceses and parishes in understanding the theological dimension of the document.

The diocesan seminary under the leadership of the bishop can form a diocesan team which will act as the core resource for the diocese. In this way they can better help the parishes who often lack trained personnel.

5. To reach each and every Christian in the Philippines, the whole community must be involved. This is the concern of everyone. For you and I should concern ourselves with evangelization of our neighbor.

The *Boletin Ecclesiastico* wants to contribute in a small but a typical way to this endeavor. Last year in the January-February issue it published the information regarding the preparation of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. In the following pages you will find the whole document, as it was approved by Rome, proclaimed by His Excellency, Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi, and accepted by the Philippine Church represented by the Hierarchy, the participant Fathers of the Council and other members of the Community who were present in the Manila Cathedral on July 22, 1992

The Kairos of the PCP II Implementation Stage*

Most Rev. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D.

*"And they remained faithful
to the teaching of the apostles,
to the brotherhood,
to the breaking of the bread
and to the prayers."*

(Ac 2:42)

Our Gospel text describes the first Christian community that emerged from the Upper Room in Jerusalem shortly after the Pentecost. The early Christian identity was predicated on its fidelity to the apostolic teaching, its commitment to fraternal service, its sharing in the breaking of the bread and its devotion to prayer.

This description can also be applied to the Christian community that emerged from the San Carlos Pastoral Formation Complex at the end of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. In my concluding homily delivered in this same cathedral last February 17th, 1992, I had ventured to entitle the participants of PCP II as "the first evangelizers of the message of the Plenary Council to the Filipino people." They took on this identity because, in the course of the four week of conciliar life and discussions, they, like the early New Testament Community, were — "faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers."

*Homily at the promulgation of the PCP-II Decrees, Manila Cathedral, 22 July 1992.

We come together once more under propitious times. A new government has been installed bringing with it new hopes. Economic managers promise more jobs; urban planners talk of more low-cost houses; military strategists are considering amnesty offers while municipal authorities welcome the wider participation of the citizenry.

The Church in the Philippines is likewise engaged in offering our weary and impoverished people — new hopes, new plans, new horizons of justice and dignity. The blueprint has been worked out and laboriously designed during the Second Plenary Council. It envisions a Church renewed, as a Church of the Poor, which calls upon her Community of Disciples to reform our lives and structures so that the love and justice of God might reign in our land.

What compelling vision is there to embody the mind and spirit of the Second Plenary Council? At the start of this year, during the 64th Bishops' Plenary Assembly in Tagaytay City, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines approved a Vision Statement, which to their mind, is a synthesis of the Acts and Decrees of PCP II. That statement reads thus:

*To bring about a New Evangelization in the Philippines,
that will revitalize the Faith of the Filipinos,
through the proclamation of the complete truth
about Christ, His Church, and humanity:
through the instrumentality of the Church of the Poor
which announces a message
of integral liberation
thereby challenging the faithful to participate
as a Community of Disciples,
in establishing a society that is more just and fraternal
and which serves as a clear sign
of the definitive Kingdom of God.*

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ, we have now entered into our moment of *kairos*: a providential period where crisis becomes challenging turning-points and where problems become occasions to share in the adventure of God's creative process. The time of *kairos* is an opportunity to respond to the call of the Spirit to carry on the New Evangelization with courage and faith so that we might attain the noble goals we agreed upon in PCP II, namely:

“...to bring forth a free nation, nurturing a civilization of life and love — where human dignity and solidarity are respected and promoted; where moral principles prevail in socio-economic life and structures; where justice, love and solidarity are the inner driving forces of development...”

Inspiring though these words are, still, the goal of our PCP II efforts was not meant to formulate a vision of rhetorical import but rather a vision oriented towards a pragmatic plan of action. Our task was not to provide food for the passive contemplation but to offer a blueprint for a renewed and vigorous evangelization. As the Letter of St. James tells us: “Be doers of the word, and not listeners only.” (*Jm* 1:22).

How do we go about implementing the 132 Decrees of PCP II as contextualized within the 115-page record of its 4 main divisions, namely: (a) Our World — The Philippines: Lights and Shadows; (b) Envisioning a Church Renewed; (c) A Renewed Integral Evangelization; and (d) the Community of Disciples: Workers of Renewal?

Shall we do this in haphazard way without any coordinated planning? Shall our implementing activities be done in a *ningas cogon* manner without any continuity? After all the monumental efforts of the 489 participants who worked and prayed for four weeks to produce the Acts and Resolutions of PCP II — will there be at the end only a handful of publications, the memory of a few meetings and a multitude of regrets over what should have been done?

I would like to propose a methodology for the Implementation Stage of PCP II. It is an approach taken from the Angelus Message of Pope John Paul II and which he quoted in the apostolic exhortation on Priestly formation. The essence of this method is as follows:

- (1) to be open as possible to light from on high from the Holy Spirit;
- (2) to discover the tendencies of contemporary society, recognize its deepest spiritual needs;

- (3) to determine the most important concrete tasks and the pastoral methods to adopt.

(Pastores Dabo Vobis 5)

This methodology says that efforts to understand our socio-economic and political reality, which is a continuing task of PCP II, should be based on a pastoral discernment open to the illuminating graces of the Spirit. The second aspect of this approach is the identification of society's contemporary aspirations and the roots of its deepest spiritual yearnings. Here we touch on culture which is the basic repository of our people's mores and values — an indigenous culture where the drama of the First Evangelization was played out and which is now the arena for the New Evangelization.

After almost 500 years of Christianity, what traits does Filipino culture exhibit? Gone generally are the pantheons of gods that inhabited the pre-Magellanic world of our ancestors. But in their place we have an array of new gods inserted into our culture by secular invaders; the gods of greed, of arrogance, of violence. Gone, too, are the inhuman systems of slavery, polygamy and child labor, but in their place our culture is degraded by the presence of graft and corruption and by the absence of civic consciousness and social civility in our daily life.

Accordingly, any New Evangelization must confront Filipino culture at its best and at its worst. The Acts and Decrees of the PCP II impel each one of us to identify those dark corners of our culture where the light of the Gospel has not penetrated. We need not start our evangelization at the highest levels of our society where the mega-structures of the political and economic spheres are to be found. We must start bringing in Gospel values in the ordinary transactions that distinguish our daily lives. I mean by this our family life. Our neighborhood interactions. Our treatment of household help and workers. The safety of our streets and the cleanliness of our day-to-day environment. The simplicity which we should celebrate festivities. The austerity of our possessions in the face of materialistic pressure.

We need to bring back the virtues of respect, of love, of justice, of decency, of humility — in our daily environment, in our

ordinary dealings, in the small and unassuming corners of our personal and professional lives. For this, we need not mobilize big rallies. We need not join big organizations. To insert these values, which I once termed the "Culture of the Beatitudes," we need not enjoy a Cabinet appointment nor even write a newspaper column.

We only need to be an individual who has welcomed the promptings of the Spirit. We only need to be a loving mother or father determined that their children will not travel along polluted and dangerous highways for the rest of their lives. We need only to be citizens who have internalized the PCP II promoted values of *pagkakaisa*, *pakikipagkapwa-tao* and *pagkabayani*.

With great insight and keen discernment, our PCP II deliberations caught the deepest longing of the Filipino — and that is for *kaayusan*. *Kaayusan!* A Filipino society where order, not chaos, prevails in our communities. A Filipino political system, where honor and honesty, not graft and corruption, are the hallmarks of its service to the public. A Filipino military and police organization where discipline and respect for human rights are upheld. That is *kaayusan!* An environment of justice and tranquility befitting the children of God. To bring about this overarching value of *kaayusan* in the country, we of the PCP II have amassed a wealth of insights that we have articulated in the Plenary Council's Acts and Resolutions. It is time for all our Church organizations, be they at the level of the Episcopal Commission or at the grassroots level of parish associations to carry out these Decrees through concrete programs.

Recently, I was told of a Japanese working among a T'boli community in Mindanao. He was planting trees in a denuded mountain side. He was asked what his goal was. He replied: "I am helping them return to their lost paradise." Perhaps, analogously, what we participants of the PCP II are trying to do in the Implementation Stage, is to return the Filipino to his and her paradise. For we likewise are working in a social landscape denuded of peace and justice. But our goal is not the recovery of a lost paradise, because for the Christian it is not the past that holds fulfillment, but the future. Properly speaking then, what we are endeavoring to accomplish, is to join our puny efforts with that of the Spirit, to bring the Filipino to the promised Kingdom of God.

We often reflected in the course of our PCP II discussions, that we needed a Filipino ecclesiology to provide a framework for our Acts and Resolutions. I would like to add that we also need a spirituality fitted to the Implementation Stage. Since the line of our argument has been to start our activities at the basic levels where we live out our day-to-day social transactions, then a fitting spirituality is one that joins us to God in these humble spheres in our life.

In actuality, we have tried during our PCP II reflections, to delineate such a spirituality. It will be recalled that we have formulated a section on a spirituality for Social Transformation, as well as other sections dealing with the Spirituality of the Laity and of Priests. What is common to them is their focus on Christ. And because He embraced the human condition even to His death on the Cross, our spirituality endeavors to reflect His way of Life and His Ministry of service, especially to the sick, the needy and the dispossessed. It is noteworthy that Christ did not directly confront the mega-structures of His time; He showed little concern for the politics of imperial Rome. He was far from being a social activist. Instead, His Ministry of service and consolation was given at an ordinary level which we can understand, the level of the sick, the grieving, and the hungry. His conversations were addressed to small and ordinary people: a woman getting water from a well, an impatient sister in a kitchen, a fisherman washing his nets, a distraught father of a sick daughter.

Thus our ecclesiology is linked to a servant Christology described with great beauty and paths by the prophet Isaiah.

*He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;
He will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smoldering wick. . ."* (Mt 12:15-20).

We therefore can see a congruence between our ecclesiology and our spirituality in so far as they relate to the implementation of PCP II. In the case of our ecclesiology, we consider the Basic Ecclesial Community as a significant expression of our ecclesial renewal. In the case of our spirituality, we have given emphasis to the insertion of Gospel values in our ordinary, day-to-day life and

activities. This is implied in Article 1.3 of the Decrees, which states: "Christian witness and proclamation of the Word in the *daily circumstances of one's life* must be recognized and fostered as a main means of evangelization called for by the Plenary Council." Thus, we are building our PCP II ecclesiology and spirituality from the ground up, from among the small people of our nation and from the perspective of daily circumstances of their lives.

The moment is now upon us to issue the Decree of Promulgation. By this act, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines comes to a close. It is but fitting that this be likewise an occasion for gratitude, above all to the Blessed Trinity whose Spirit guided our every step through the initial critical stages. I renew with greater fervor and sincerity my thankfulness to my brother Bishops, to the clergy, religious and laity who accompanied us, step by step, through the exciting and fruitful journey that was PCP II. This is also an opportune occasion to thank the Sacred Congregation for Bishops under Cardinal Bernardin Gantin for introducing references to the New Code of Canon Law and to Papal documents to our original resolutions. Since the New Code of Canon Law represented, in the words of Pope John Paul II: "a great effort to translate the ecclesiological teaching of the Second Vatican Council into canonical terms," then, its references within the framework of our Resolutions were appropriate since both the Second Vatican Council and our Plenary Council were eminently pastoral in orientation. Thus, the congregation's action has greatly enriched the final decrees of PCP II by situating them more explicitly within the pastoral and ecclesiastical context of the universal Church.

As we prepare to set forth anew on our journey dedicated to the Implementation Stage of PCP II, we harbor in our hearts a measure of doubt, fearful as we are of the challenges ahead and mistrusting our perseverance and courage to surmount them. But she who journeyed to her cousin Elizabeth to announce her Magnificat will be with us throughout our remaining journey. For why should we fear the proud of heart, since in Mary's testimony, God has routed them. Why should we submit to the power of princes, when she has described how God has pulled them from their thrones. Let us then join our lowliness to that of this lowly handmaid of God that together with her we might be privileged to proclaim, the greatness of the Lord in the days of our implementing apostolate.

Decree of Promulgation of the Decrees enacted by the PCP II

After the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines has been legitimately convoked, duly celebrated and felicitously concluded in accordance with the law of the Church as expressed in Canon 446 *CIC*, I, as President of the Council, transmitted to the Congregation for Bishops the Acts and Resolutions of the council for the latter's review.

The Congregation of Bishops that has competence over the celebration of Plenary Councils, with the help of other Roman Dicasteries accomplished the task. The review or "*recognitio*" by the Apostolic See applies only to the Decrees of the Council. The Acts and the doctrinal-pastoral Part remain the sole responsibility of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

The Decree of "recognition" was issued by the Apostolic See on 25th April 1992. Signed by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Bishops, the official document was sent to me in order to proceed with their formal promulgation.

I, wherefore, in my capacity as President of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, in accordance with the provision of Canon 446 *CIC* and pursuant to the advice of the said Congregation for Bishops, wish to promulgate and do hereby solemnly promulgate the Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines.

In accordance with Canons 8 par. 2 and 202 par. 2 *CIC*, the Decrees become effective and acquire their binding force for the

Catholic Church all over the Philippines one month after the date of this promulgation, this July 22, 1992.

I pray the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patroness of the Philippines, that she deign intercede with her Son Jesus Christ, "the one Mediator between God and humankind" (1 *Tm* 2:5), that the vision of the Council of "uniting all things under Christ" (cf. *Ep* 1:10) be realized through the profound conversion and renewal of the People of God in the Philippines; and that the resolve for a new evangelization so fervently emphasized by the Council will strengthen the bonds of communion in such a way that the Church in the Philippines will give a splendid example of unity in holiness and in truth as Our Lord himself prayed: "Consecrate them in the truth" (*Jn* 17:17)

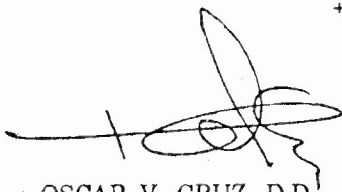
Given in Manila, Philippines, this twenty second day of July in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety two.



+ LEONARDO Z. LEGASPI, O.P., D.D.

Archbishop of Caceres

President, Second Plenary Council
of the Philippines



+ OSCAR V. CRUZ, D.D.

Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan

Secretary General, Second Plenary Council
of the Philippines



CONGREGATIO PRO EPISCOPIIS

INSULARUM PHILIPPINARUM
de Concilio Plenario Secundo

DECRETUM

Concilio Plenario Secundo Insularum Philippinarum apud collegium Sanctorum Apostolorum in "Makati, Metro-Manila" rite convocato, feliciter celebrato et sollemniter absoluto, Insularum Philippinarum Archiepiscopis atque Episcopis adstantibus, qui una simul diligentem ac alacrem operam dederunt gravibus rei religiosae in Insulis Philippinis negotiis pertractandis atque Concilii decretis conficiendis, Exc.mus P.D. Leonardus Legaspi, Archiepiscopus Cacerensis, eiusdem Concilii ad normam Canonis 441, 3^o Codicis Iuris Canonici Praeses electus atque litteris Congregationis pro Episcopis die 7 mensis Augusti anno 1989 datis approbatus, decreta omnia, ad normam Canonis 446 Codicis Iuris Canonici, ad hanc Congregationem expendenda ac recognoscenda transmisit.

Quae decreta ab hac Congregatione, auditis rationibus Pontifici Consilii de Legum Textibus Interpretandis ceterorumque competentium Romanae Curiae Dicasteriorum, diligenti ac maturo examine perpensa, debitis emendationibus inductis, prout in adnexo exemplari continentur, iuxta disposita a vigente Codice Iuris Canonici recognita sunt.

In Audientia autem diei 11 mensis Aprilis anno 1992 Summus Pontifex IOANNES PAULUS, Divina Providentia PP. II, eandem recognitionem approbare ac confirmare dignatus est.

Reliquum tandem est ut praefata decreta publici iuris fiant, atque Exc.mus P.D. Leonardus Legaspi, Archiepiscopus Cacerensis, tamquam Praeses Concilii Plenarii Secundi Antistitem Insularum Philippinarum, eadem ad normam Canonis 446 Codicis Iuris Canonici promulganda curet, adeo ut ab hoc Concilio promulgato in omnibus Insularum Philippinarum Dioecesibus vim obligandi, iuxta Canonem 8 § 2 eiusdem Codicis Iuris Canonici, habere incipiant.

Datum Romae, ex Aedibus Congregationis pro Episcopis, die 25 mensis Aprilis anno 1992.

+ B. Car. Genti

Tranf.

+ Justinus Rigali
a secretis

Nota Explicativa Praevia to the Decrees of PCP II

Congregatio Pro Episcopis

Pro. N. 875/88

The following observations are made in relation to the decrees/resolutions of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines:

1. The Plenary Council exercises proper legislative power within the competence ascribed to particular councils by the general laws of the Church (cf. especially Canons 439-446), through the deliberative vote of those mentioned in Canon 443 §1 and §2.
2. The provisions of the Plenary Council are enacted subject to the norms of the Code of Canon Law and all other laws of the Holy See.
3. The "*recognitio*" mentioned in Canon 446 is granted to the decrees/resolutions of the Plenary Council.
4. The term "Community of Disciples" is understood in harmony with Canons 204-207.

Second Plenary Council of the Philippines Decrees

In the light of our faith, we have surveyed our pastoral situation in the Philippines, envisioned what we have to be as Church, and how we need to renew ourselves and our ways of evangelizing. The Lord is calling us to announce His Gospel more powerfully, to be more effectively a leaven of society, and more authentically point to the Kingdom of God.

The Spirit of the Lord has guided us, surely, in our journey of discernment, bringing us into the heart of our world to see in it what has to be renewed, what has to be confirmed and strengthened in the light of the Gospel. He has led us into the heart of our disciple-community, into our own individual hearts to discern there what leads to death and what leads to life in Christ so that He may cut and heal, uproot and build up.

The discerning continues and so must the doing continue. The vision of ourselves as a Community of Disciples, centering our lives in Jesus, and following Him in His mission of salvation and liberation beckons us to urgent renewal. In and through His Spirit we have dared to dream dreams, and towards their realization have set up an agenda, the formulating of which has been exacting. The doing, we have no doubt, will be even more so. It will require from us, individually and collectively, all our faith, our strength and perseverance, – our love, our openness to God's transforming grace. A formidable task.

But we offer our agenda towards renewal to the Lord, for we know that it is He who builds His own house, and we but His servants who labor in vain unless He Himself builds (*Ps 127:1*).

In this spirit, we declare our resolve.

Title I. General Pastoral Orientation/Principles

Article 1. §1. After the promulgation by publication of the decrees of the Plenary Council, the Church in the Philippines, through the Catholic Bishops' Conference shall put itself in a more active state of mission to inculcate the spirit of this Plenary Council in all the faithful. This will be done by forging and implementing a five-to-ten-year National Pastoral Plan. The Plan itself will be a process of new evangelization and conversion according to the image of Christian life and Church model (as Community of Disciples) sanctioned by the Council.

§2. This new evangelization is aimed (a) at fostering an integrated Christian spirituality among the faithful and (b) at building a truly local Church in communion with the Apostolic See.

§3. Christian witness and proclamation of the Word in the daily circumstances of one's life must be recognized and fostered as a main means of evangelization called for by the Plenary Council. These efforts are to be undertaken by the Church from the national down to the regional, diocesan, vicarial, parochial, and small community levels.

§4. The National Pastoral Plan, though based on the Church model of Community of Disciples, must be flexible enough to suit the different authentic models of the Church currently operating in different localities in response to the needs of the people.

§5. For the implementation of the National Pastoral Plan, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines will propose to the individual bishops of the Philippines, for implementation in their dioceses, a pastoral management and administration system that can be made operative at all levels – from the national level all the way down to the small community.

Article 2. §1. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines should encourage the various dioceses to study the models

of the Church under which they operate in such a way that the parish becomes a center of Church renewal and a community of Christian communities and families.

§2. With due regard for the rights and duties of Bishops and Pastors as set forth in the Code of Canon Law, dioceses and parishes shall be run as consultative bodies on the model of Community of Disciples with all members playing their proper role in shared decision-making as the normal mode of operation, so that the diocese and parish become centers of Church renewal towards building Christian communities, all working together as active partners in the work of God.

Article 3. To guide updating and renewal in the Church, subject to the diocesan bishop, diocesan and parochial programs based on emerging and prioritized needs shall be adopted for a period of five to ten years. A mechanism for evaluating them shall also be set up.

Article 4. The 1986 experience of solidarity in prayer and mass action preventing violence at a time of national crisis, popularly known as "the EDSA experience," is to be honored as an historical event with a religious dimension, that continues to call us to be a people of who work for conversion, reconciliation and peace in the way of peace.

Title II. Worship

Article 5. Ordained and lay ministers shall be trained from a theological, spiritual and pastoral point of view in the art of communication and the use of symbols to make liturgical celebrations more meaningful for the people.

Article 6. A commission, dependent upon the Episcopal Conference, should be entrusted with the task of adapting, according to the mind of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 37-40, a Liturgy that truly takes into account the culture and linguistic character of Filipinos, as well as the norms of the Church on the matter and her universal communion.

Article 7. Since the majority of our people are young, great effort should be exerted to make liturgical celebrations meaningful

and instructive while at the same time adhering to liturgical norms and the provisions of Canon 838.

Article 8. The centrality of the Eucharist in Catholic piety shall be given greater emphasis and, since the Church partakes of the bread of life and offers it to the faithful from the "one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ" (*Dei Verbum*, 211), efforts shall be made to show the close relationship that exists between the Eucharist and the Bible.

Article 9. §1. The importance of the sacrament of penance must be strongly emphasized in the life of the Church, with general absolution being reserved to those circumstances for which provision is made in Canon 961.

§2. In accordance with the prescriptions of Canon 890 a diocesan program for the sacrament of confirmation should be drawn up, preferably as a part of the regular syllabus in Catholic schools, public schools, and in catechetical instructions for adolescents.

Article 10. All parishes must maximize not only sacramental and liturgical catechesis but also pre-sacramental instructions, such as pre-Cana seminars, to emphasize the family as an evangelizing agent. Parents, godparents and sponsors should attend pre-baptism and pre-confirmation catechesis; parents should likewise participate actively in their children's first communion instruction.

Title III. Formation

Article 11. All Catholics of the Philippines should be given systematic and progressive instruction on the doctrines of the Catholic faith through a National Catechism to be drawn up by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, based on the Second Vatican Council, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, the National Catechetical Directory, and in accord with the text of the Catechism for the universal Church and the prescriptions of Canon 775.

Article 12. A uniform syllabus of biblical catechesis, adapted to Filipino culture and taking into account the real needs of the people, shall be prepared and proposed to the bishops in accordance with the prescriptions of Canons 775 §§1-3 and 827 §§1-3.

Article 13. Catechetical re-evangelization should be given the first priority in renewal, a priority which should be reflected in the allocation of personnel and resources.

Article 14. A catechesis, with a doctrinal and biblical basis, on the social character of spending and on tithing as apart of Church life should be developed and implemented.

Article 15. Catholic moral formation must be considered as an essential component of Catholic formation with emphasis given to the values of justice and charity, love of preference for the poor, and dialogue as a way of resolving conflicts.

Article 16. The Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education should exert efforts to have catechesis included in the curriculum in public schools, with public school teachers themselves participating, where possible, in the evangelization of students.

Title IV. Special Religious Concerns

Article 17. §1. There should be more formation on inculturation and the integration of Filipino values with Gospel values, especially in the devotion to Mary and the saints.

§2. There should be continuing research and study on a spirituality attuned to Filipino culture and directed towards evangelization.

§3. In the corporate task of developing a truly incarnate spirituality, more attention should be given to the synthesizing that is initially even if imperfectly found in our popular religiosity.

§4. Preaching should serve the Word of God and should be made in the context of Filipino values, focusing adequately on Filipino social and moral values such as *pagsasarili* (self-reliance), *pagkakaisa* (working together), and *pagkamakabayan* (patriotism, nationalism).

Article 18. §1. The Commission on Liturgy should study the potential of popular religiosity, purified and enriched by the Word of God and transformed into a vehicle for effectively proclaiming the Good News and incarnating it in the lives of our people.

§2. Special attention should be given to a study of the theological and pastoral implications of *sinulog*, *ati-atihan* and other religious festivities that affect the life of our people.

§3. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints should be Christ-oriented. Catechism programs must ensure that popular religious practices be true expressions of our faith, and that novenas have the Word of God as an integral part.

Article 19. The aid of the Church in the Philippines to the Church in foreign countries in dire need of personnel should be stepped up through a more concerted effort to strengthen the missionary thrust of religious orders, lay mission groups, dioceses, and in particular the Philippine Mission Society.¹

Title V. Social Action Apostolate

Section 1. Pastoral Orientation

Article 20. §1. The Church must exert efforts to reduce the gap between faith and practice in the area of social justice by working for greater justice and equality in Philippine society.

§2. Action in behalf of justice is to be pursued as a sign of Christian witnessing to Christ and His teachings.

§3. The social apostolate is to be constantly given solid religious grounding through catechesis and organic linking with worship.

Article 21. §1. To be prepared to effectively assume their respective roles in the social action apostolate of the Church vis-a-vis the burning issues of the day, priests, religious and lay people should participate — sometimes together — in ongoing formation, especially through appropriate educational and leadership processes.

§2. Seminarians, religious in formation, and lay people should be educated in the social teaching of the Church, and where appropriate especially through a process of exposure-immersion-re-

¹Cf. Canons 783, 790-792.

flection, in order for them to realize the social implications of the Word of God.²

§3. A syllabus of biblical catechesis for social involvement must be undertaken by the Episcopal Commission for Social Action, Justice and Peace and proposed to the bishops.

§4. This biblical catechesis should be promoted under the direction of the bishops and given prominence in evangelization work and in the Church's programs of formation and action for greater social awareness:

1. in all areas of the nation (cities and countryside) and in all sectors of the Church and society;
2. according to the best expressions of authentic inculturation;
3. with emphasis on witnessing;
4. with active formation of catechists; and
5. all aimed at the attainment of an integrated spirituality and the transformation of Philippine society.

Article 22. §1. A thorough social analysis, structural and cultural, is to be promoted more intensely in the process of building up discerning communities of faith, precisely to the end that their efforts at social transformation take into account hard social realities and carried through from a genuine perspective of faith.

§2. The social action apostolate, since it is the Church work that is specifically focused on the task of Christian social transformation, must become a vital involvement of the Church at all levels, its thrust towards justice and peace and the integrity of creation being related to all other apostolates.

Section 2. Programs and Organizations

Article 23. §1. The social action apostolate of the Church must set up special programs to address such crucial issues as peace and economy, agrarian and industrialization concerns, the exploitation of women and minors, migrant and overseas workers,

²Cf. 222 §2, 256 §2, 258, 528, §1 and 747 §2.

children and youth, and intensify the organization of the grass-roots people or empowerment and self-reliance through cooperatives and livelihood programs and projects.

§2. A special task force under NASSA should be formed to attend to problems of labor and education in accordance with the whole social teaching of the Church.

§3. All sectors of the Church must actively work for an end to the production and manufacture of the technology of death and the arms trade as part of its vision of peace.

Article 24. §1. The 10-point agenda for peace of the Bishops' January 1990 Pastoral Letter should be concretized into programs and projects by the diocesan social action centers and other appropriate Church agencies.

§2. Programs, projects and the conscientization processes conducted by the social action apostolate of the church are to be periodically evaluated in the light of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church, and revised when necessary in the judgment of the bishops.

Section 3. Structures

Article 25. In order to strengthen the social action apostolate of the Church, the following actions must be taken under the direction of the diocesan bishop:

1. There must be an organizational restructuring of the social action apostolate by setting up a steering committee consisting of members of the hierarchy, the clergy and the laity;
2. Every diocese must set up a truly functioning and effective social action apostolate that would respond to the socio-economic needs of the poor in ways ranging from relief and rehabilitation to confrontation with the root causes of those needs with a view to applying remedies;
3. As an urgent solution to the problem of poverty in the country, and following the example of the early Church (Ac 2:42 ff.), all dioceses and parishes must set aside a

collection or fund specifically for the poor and needy to be disposed of without red tape;

4. Inter-sectoral and inter-faith linkages among grassroots organizations must be established to address socio-economic and political problems in ways that are in accord with the Church's social teachings.

Article 26. The Church's ministry with the different sectors of society should be such as to create among them a greater sensitivity to the plight of the poor, leading them to live simple and austere life styles and to act in solidarity with the poor for the attainment of justice.

Article 27. The CBCP, in line with the Church's teachings, should be pastorally concerned in solidarity with appropriate sister Churches abroad and with whole Church, for moral issues related to international relationships, such as our foreign debt, international trade, transnational business activities, Filipino migrants, overseas workers, refugees and inordinate foreign influence on our national sovereignty.

Title VI. Special Social Concerns

Section 1. Politics

Article 28. §1. Lay men and women in responsible positions in our society must help form the civic conscience of the voting population and work to explicitly promote the election to public office of leaders of true integrity.

§2. Bishops, priests and religious must refrain from partisan politics, avoiding especially the use of the pulpit for partisan purposes, so as to avoid division among the flock. In this regard special attention is to be given to canons 287 §2 and 672.

Section 2. Responsible Christian Parenthood

Article 29. The Church, faithful to her teachings, should call on the responsibility of all concerned to help present the notion of responsible Christian parenthood as contained in *Gaudium et Spes*,

Humanae Vitae and *Familiaris Consortio*. In this sense, "a broader, more decisive and more systematic effort should be undertaken to make the natural methods of regulating fertility known, respected and applied."³

Section 3. Industrialization

Article 30. The Catholic Church in the Philippines should seriously take responsibility through the laity to help promote an accelerated process of industrialization in order to address directly the roots of poverty while taking due consideration of the need or balance with agricultural production, agrarian reform and the protection of our ecological system.

Section 4. Ecology

Article 31. §1. The Church, through the initiatives of the CBCP, should develop a comprehensive theology of stewardship and, in the light of this theology, should make ecology a special concern of the social action apostolate down to the parochial level, with the end in view of making everyone a true steward of God's creation.

§2. An ecology desk must be set up in social action centers.

Section 5. Rural Poor

Article 32. The Church should organize service apostolates in favor of farmers, fishermen and Tribal Filipinos, and thus make herself present to the majority of our people in the rural areas.

Section 6. The Sick and the Handicapped

Article 33. Diocesan and parochial commissions for the pastoral care of the sick, aged, and disabled must be created, and these commissions should be functional and effective.

³*Familiaris Consortio*, 35.

Title VII. Inter-religious Concerns

Article 34. In the area of faith, justice, peace and development, lay faithful, clergy and religious should be made ever more aware of the true value of ecumenism.⁴

Article 35. The pastoral practice of the Church in relation to Freemasons shall be in accord with the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued on 26 November 1983 entitled *Quaesitum est*.

Title VIII. Spirituality

Article 36. The integration of prayer and action should be a paramount concern in the formation program of seminarians and lay faithful.⁵

Article 37. §1. Formation in a work ethic characterized by commitment, diligence, rigorous honesty and Christian love should be recognized as an essential element of an integrated Christian spirituality.

§2. A more thorough-going dimension of social responsibility should be part of all Church movements.

Article 38. §1. Those involved in every form of the apostolate should complement their involvement with continuing growth in the spiritual life and adherence to the laws and guidelines of the Church in their activities.

§2. Service should complement worship in sanctifying Sunday as the Lord's day.

Title IX. A Community of Disciples

Section 1. Pastoral Orientation

Article 39. A climate of ecclesial communion should be created around the bishop, enabling clergy, religious and laity to live

⁴Cf. Canons 256 §2, 383 §3 and 755 §1.

⁵Cf. Canons 246 §3, 275 §1, 276 §2 no. 5, 528 §2, 839 §§1-2, 909, 938 §2 and 1173.

out their specific forms of membership in the diocesan family in a spirit of collaboration and fellowship, thus engendering a sense of co-responsibility for the work of Christ.⁶

Article 40. §1. The guiding principle of those in authority should be service in the name of Christ, and that of the members responsibility, obedience and respect.⁷

§2. The presiding officers of parish and/or diocesan organizations should operate in such a way as to ensure, as much as possible, the full participation of members.

Title X. Laity

Section 1. Pastoral Orientation

Article 41. §1. The proper role of the laity in the Church and the world should be continually promoted on the basis of the Church's teachings, particularly as found in the Second Vatican Council, canons 224-231 of the Code of Canon Law and the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*.

§2. CBCP will take steps to foster a more active role of the laity in the Church and to provide, where appropriate, full time, professionally trained pastoral workers to foster the growth of the Church.

Article 42. §1. Efforts should be exerted, particularly by the clergy, to help the lay faithful to foster their awareness that the theater of their apostolate is the world in which they properly belong, so that they may actively and responsibly participate precisely as lay faithful in the common concerns and projects of their communities.

§2. The lay faithful should also be encouraged and helped to assume their duty and responsibility to participate in public life and reform it according to Gospel values.⁸

⁶Cf. Canons 209 §1, 369 and 383-387.

⁷Cf. Canons 212 §§1-3, 213.

⁸Cf. Canon 225 §2.

§3. To this effect, a special injunction should be issued for them to assume leading roles and responsibilities in temporal works.⁹

§4. Catholics in non-sectarian organizations like civic groups, NGOs, and POs, should proclaim their faith in Christ, as his witnesses. Such organizations are fertile grounds for such a witnessing evangelization.

Article 43. Dialogue – one that is open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit – should be encouraged between clergy and laity.

Article 44. §1. Education for effective lay participation should be ongoing. It should be integrated, related to one's life situation and based on the teachings of the Church.

§2. Special efforts are to be made at sanctifying people in their places of work (offices, schools, factories, etc.). Direct pastoral care of employees in their work places can be made along the lines of BECs.

§3. Lay faithful and particularly lay leaders should require the knowledge and skills necessary to defend and explain the faith to others.¹⁰

Article 45. There should be a system of registration in every parish for all Church members to increase the involvement of the laity in the community and heighten their sense of belonging.

Section 2. Family

Article 46. §1. A continuing education for Filipino families in accordance with *Catechesi Tradendae* and *Familiaris Consortio*, should be undertaken and Family Life seminars like Pre-Cana, Pro-Life, Marriage Encounters should be made part of diocesan/parish pastoral programs.¹¹

§2. Diocesan family centers must be established; in these Filipino elements of spirituality are to be developed in the context of a general spirituality of Christian marriage.

⁹Cf. Canons 227, 228 and 537.

¹⁰Cf. Canons 225 §1, 226 §2, 229 §1, 231 §1.

¹¹Cf. Canons 528 §2, 529 §1, 768 §2, 851 no. 2, and 1063 nos. 1-4.

§3. Under the direction of the local Ordinary, there should be available in dioceses and parishes a competent team, including priests and Catholic couples to help promote effective pastoral care of the family and provide family counseling.

§4. Christian families should be a countersign to the manipulative anti-life culture, through a strengthened family spirituality which is pro-life.

Article 47. The Church should formulate pastoral programs for those in broken homes and families, adhering to the norms outlined in *Familiaris Consortio*, 83 and 84.

Article 48. The family is to be regarded as the basic unit of Christian life. Hence it must be viewed as both subject and object of evangelization; for evangelization begins in the family and family catechesis must be part of the fostering of BECs.¹²

Article 49. §1. Great cooperation for formation in Christian values should be fostered between schools and families.

§2. Programs for the prevention of exploitation of women and children based on a Christian concept of love and family life¹⁴ should address primarily the formation of Filipino family in Christian values and the strengthening of those values; it should also include pastoral care after marriage as outlined in *Christifideles Laici*, 69.

§3. Problems affecting homosexual individuals and behavior should be given due attention in accord with the pastoral norms of *Homosexualitatis Problema* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued on 1 October 1986.

Section 3. Youth

Article 50. §1. The strength, vitality and relevance of the Church as sacrament of the Kingdom implies a laity fully come of age, that is, a laity who, imbued with and animated by the Gospel

¹²Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

¹³Cf. Canon 796 §2.

¹⁴Cf. *Charter of the Rights of the Family of the Holy See*.

of Christ, shall have assumed consciously, actively, and fully their role and responsibility in Church and society.

§2. Since youth constitutes a large and dynamic portion of the laity, the youth ministry should be assured of the fullest attention and highest priority in every way by all in the Church.¹⁵

Article 51. §1. Every diocese should form, organize and mobilize the young in such a way that they get creatively involved in the life of the diocese/parish as evangelizers of their fellow youth. A systematic and comprehensive program must be designed for this purpose.

§2. Every diocese is strongly urged to establish an office for the Episcopal Vicar for Youth, a Youth Center, and a diocesan campus ministry program with competent personnel and sufficient logistical support.¹⁶

§3. Under the direction of the bishop, the diocesan youth center will be tasked with:

1. creating and elaborating a diocesan pastoral youth program,
2. ensuring that the young in the parishes grow in authentic Christian spirituality, and
3. helping the young become involved in socio-economic and political action for social transformation in line with the social teaching of the Church.

Article 52. §1. The CBCP resolutions on Youth Ministry must be immediately implemented and mechanisms be set up to evaluate their effectiveness.

§2. A national program of catechesis of out-of-school youth must be given high priority.

§3. Parish youth programs must give special attention to those in difficult situations, e.g., street children, migrants, those in crisis.

¹⁵Cf. Canons 528 §1, 776, 795, 799 and 1063 no. 1.

¹⁶Cf. Canon 813.

Section 4. Women

Article 53. §1. Leadership training for women is to be promoted with emphasis on the dignity and role of women in the Church, especially outlined in *Christifideles Laici* and *Mulieris Dignitatem*. Special attention should be given to the domestic helpers.

§2. Family centers should conduct a study, especially in the light of *Mulieris Dignitatem* and *Christifideles Laici*, on the various aspects of women's participation in the mission of the Church.

§3. On all levels of Church life, from parish organizations to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, efforts are to be made to constantly include women in community discernment and the implementation of pastoral responses to local and national concerns, particularly those that closely affect the lives of women.

Article 54. §1. Church's institutions in collaboration with other institutions must oppose, through programs geared to authentic liberation, all forms of discrimination, abuse and exploitation of women.

§2. People in the entertainment world should be among the sectors of society to be addressed by a pastoral program.

§3. Special pastoral concern should be shown to women who engage in the flesh trade.

Section 5. Catechists

Article 55. §1. Priority should be given to the calling, training and formation of professional and volunteer catechists for children and youth in public and non-sectarian schools and out-of-school children and youth.

§2. Catechists should be professionally trained and adequately compensated, ideally with financial support from parishioners.¹⁷

¹⁷Cf. Canons 776, 780, 785 §§1-2.

§3. Catechists should be provided pastoral exposure and in-service training, especially those working with BECs.

Section 6. Migrant Workers

Article 56. §1. Special attention should be given to migrant workers not only to help protect them but also to make them more aware of and prepare them for their missionary role of witnessing to the Gospel in their employment overseas.

§2. The CBCP Episcopal Commission on Migration and Tourism shall promote a special apostolate to assist workers defend and promote their fundamental rights and to help them live up to their Christian vocation.¹⁸

§3. Bishops and major religious superiors should provide an adequate number of priests, religious and lay pastoral personnel for the apostolate to overseas Filipino workers and their families.¹⁹

Section 7. Lay Evangelizers

Article 57. As part of their formation married lay evangelizers are to be invited to participate in family life seminars which include a treatment of *Familiaris Consortio*.

Title XI. Religious

Article 58. (Pastoral Orientation). Religious women and men consecrated to God by baptism and by profession of evangelical counsels, shall exercise their duty of building up God's Kingdom on earth in close union with the rest of the Church, in accordance with the charisms of their 83 respective institutes and the law of the Church.²⁰

Section 1. "Ad Extra" Concerns

(1) Areas of Collaboration with Bishops / Diocese / Parish

Article 59. §1. Each diocese should encourage and, where possible, financially support the ongoing education of women and men religious belonging to diocesan congregations.

¹⁸Cf. Canons 529 §1 and 568.

¹⁹Cf. Canons 508 and 887.

²⁰Cf. Canons 574, §§1-2, 576, 578, 586, §§1-2, 590 §§1-2, 592 §§1-2, 602, 618, 675 §3, 677 §1, 678 §§1-3 and 680-683.

§2. Religious congregations, to the extent possible and in accordance with their particular charisms, must collaborate with dioceses and schools of theology in order to develop solid programs of formation for the benefit of the diocese. Programs of continuing education and renewal shall be developed in the same manner and perspective.²¹

Article 60. §1. In discerning and deciding on the organization of the works of the apostolate of religious, bishops and major religious superiors will proceed after consultation with each other.²²

§2. In accordance with their pastoral priorities dioceses should support religious congregations in their evangelical commitment to works of social justice and the empowerment of the poor.

§3. Religious in their apostolic work, while remaining faithful to their specific charism, must work together with the clergy and laity as a team and in close communion with the bishop.²³

Article 61. Bishops and major religious superiors are to work together to achieve a more equitable distribution of religious personnel in the country, giving particular attention to the needs of the poorer dioceses and rural areas.

(2) *Structures for Collaboration*

Article 62. §1. The Mixed Commission on Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious must be made functional. Mechanism on the national and the diocesan levels should be set up to promote regular dialogue between religious and planners of pastoral programs in order to promote more fruitful collaboration.

§2. The office of Episcopal Vicar for Religious, with clearly determined responsibilities and competencies, must be established in each diocese with an aim to promote and assist religious life and to further collaboration between religious institutes and bishops.²⁴

²¹Cf. *Christus Dominus*, 33.

²²Cf. Canon 678 §3.

²³Cf. Canon 678.

²⁴Cf. *Mutuae Relationes*, 54 and Canons 391 §2, 478 §§1-2, and 479.

(3) *Policies Regarding Collaboration*

Article 63. §1. Both diocesan clergy and religious must exert efforts to keep each other informed regarding their respective apostolic situation and programs for better pastoral collaboration.

§2. Policies and guidelines must be made regarding the relationship between bishops or parishioners and religious working in the diocese or parish, particularly in regard to:

1. the scope and nature of the diocesan or parish apostolate of religious institutes;
2. the process of evaluating the apostolate of religious regarding its relevance to and place in the pastoral program of the diocese or parish;
3. the mechanisms for introducing, terminating or continuing the presence and work of religious in the diocese; and
4. the tenure of religious who are given pastoral care of parishes, so that the eventual turnover of parishes to the diocesan clergy will be acceptable both to parishioners and incoming pastors.

These policies and guidelines must be formulated so as to observe the respective competencies of bishops and religious superiors in entering those written agreements required by Church law.²⁵

(4) *Charisms and the Local Church*

Article 64. §1. Religious shall collaborate with the bishop, clergy and laity in the local Church but with the right and obligation to live their proper charism in the way legitimately prescribed by their institutes.²⁶

§2. Dioceses are to understand properly and utilize the particular charisms of religious, including contemplatives, as God's gift to them.²⁷

²⁵Cf. Canons 520 §2 and 681.

²⁶Cf. Canons 576-578.

²⁷Cf. Canon 674.

Article 65. Religious with their community experience within their own institutes, are to be at the forefront of pastoral efforts to build strong Basic Ecclesial Communities.

Article 66. Religious institutes of women in the Philippines are especially called to use their resources for the authentic advancement of the status of women.

Article 67. §1. The celebration of the liturgy, particularly by religious both active and contemplative, should be expressed in words and melodies that are worthy of the divine praise and that adequately reflect the soul of our people. In this, everything should be done in accord with the norms of the Church.²⁸

§2. Religious institutes of foreign origin must make a continuous effort to adapt to the culture of the Filipinos, as much as possible adopting their lifestyles, languages and customs.

Article 68. §1. Commitment to the promotion of justice and peace and the love of preference for the poor shall be fostered and integrated as essential elements in the formation programs and apostolate of religious.²⁹

§2. Religious are to prayerfully study and reflect upon their participation in mass actions and other public activities, so as to render their involvement in such actions consistent not only with the Church teaching but also with their vocation and charism, and thereby make themselves more effective in the service of God and people.

§3. Religious must evaluate their work in terms of the Church's love of preference for the poor and show this love also in the schools which they operate.

§4. Religious are reminded of the obligation to observe faithfully and completely the evangelical counsels and to live their lives in accordance with the proper rule of their institutes, so as to pursue the perfection of their state.³⁰

²⁸Cf. Canons 663 §§1-5 and 664.

²⁹Cf. Canon 222 §2.

³⁰Cf. Canons 598-601.

Article 69. §1. Religious shall contribute effectively to evangelization through the media.³¹

§2. The study of media is strongly recommended for inclusion in the formation of religious as part of their preparation for their evangelizing task.

Section 2. "Ad Intra" Concerns

Article 70. As a means of achieving a unified and coordinated recruitment program by the dioceses and religious institutes, a registration card from the National Office of the Directors/Directresses of Vocations in the Philippines (DVP) shall be secured by all religious in the country.

Article 71. New congregations coming to the Philippines shall spend at least five years learning the language and culture of the place before initiating active recruiting of candidates for their congregations. Candidates as a rule should receive their initial formation in the Philippines.

Article 72. §1. Vocations to the religious brotherhood and the contribution of religious Brothers in the field of teaching, hospital work, and the like are to be esteemed and encouraged.

§2. A conscious effort is to be made, especially among orders with clerics and brothers, to distinguish clearly aspects of their common life which are proper to them as religious and which must be distinguished clearly from the ministerial aspects of ordination.³²

Title XII. Clergy

Section 1. Numbers

Article 73. §1. A vocation committee should be created in every parish to promote priestly vocations, serve as a link between God's people and the seminary, show interest in the seminarians' progress and help them persevere in their vocation.³³

³¹Cf. Canons 747 §1, 761, 804 §1 and 822-823.

³²Cf. Canons 655 §1 and 740.

³³Cf. Canons 233 §1.

§2. The Episcopal Commission on Seminaries, with the assistance of the directors of vocations, shall propose for approval by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines a common national vocation program covering recruitment, formation, and follow-up evaluation.

§3. Vocational awareness should be a regular part of teaching and preaching and of instruction of all Catholics, especially in Catholic schools.

Article 74. The problem of migrating priests, especially those going abroad and to Manila, must be more effectively addressed.

Section 2. Formation

(1) Seminary Formation

Article 75. The Episcopal Commission for Seminaries shall propose for the approval of the Bishops' Conference an updated Philippine Program for Priestly Formation based on the *Ratio Fundamentalis*, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and emphasizing a deep and sound spiritual formation.³⁴

Article 76. The CBCP shall study the possibility of restructuring high school seminaries and strengthening pre-college ones.

Article 77. §1. Seminary formation should aim at an integral presentation of the teachings of Vatican II, especially its understanding of church and ministry and its emphasis on the ministerial dimension of the priesthood. In all this, the needs of the people must be kept in mind.

§2. Without detriment to spiritual, theological and pastoral formation, practical and experiential pastoral training must be part of the seminary curriculum. Hence opportunities must be provided for seminarians to work and live in depressed areas and to experience the life and activities of different movements in the Church, especially of basic ecclesial communities. Such formation should be based on a solid knowledge of the social teachings of the Church.³⁵

³⁴Cf. Canons 242 §§1-2.

³⁵Cf. Canons 256 §2.

Article 78. There shall be diocesan structures for the participation of priests and laity in the bishop's evaluation of candidates for the priesthood as well as for their future assignments.

Article 79. National Seminaries should develop diverse areas of specialization for the benefit of local Churches by creating a national pool of seminary professors who can handle specialized subjects and be invited by the respective bishops to teach in other seminaries.

(2) Continuing Formation

Article 80. §1. Continuing education for renewal and updating is a necessity for all priests.

§2. Each diocese must hence set up specific programs (including short courses by invited experts) for this purpose. They should be mandatory for priests after a specific time in the ministry.

1. Depending on their needs, the needs of the people and the exigencies of the local Church, priests should be given the option of having a sabbatical leave of one semester after five years or so of active ministry, for the purpose of rest and further formation. Subsequent requests for sabbatical leave will also be judged by the local Ordinary.
2. The expenses of renewal programs should be funded by the diocese with a view to overcoming the reluctance of some individuals to avail themselves of these opportunities.
3. Priests should receive periodic on-going formation and training in communication skills and public speaking to enhance their ability to preach the Word of God.
4. Regular spiritual renewal for all priests in the diocese is mandatory.
5. The CBCP will submit to the bishops programs at the national and regional levels for continued updating and renewal of priests.

§2. The bishops intend to take the leadership in calling a nationwide renewal experience for all priests in the Philippines, so that, over a three to five year period, all will be able, if possible to have this updating.

§3. Through the Commission on the Clergy of the CBCP, the bishops intend to spearhead the center or institute for renewal recommended and staffed mainly by diocesan priests and give highest priority to a spirituality of diocesan priests, providing on a regular basis opportunities for needed studies and renewal experience. A pool of resource persons will be necessary for its proper functioning.

Article 86. The Presbyteral Assembly must be involved in facing and helping to solve problems in the clergy's practical living of the evangelical counsels.

Article 87. Personality problems of priests should be dealt with more seriously. To this end, the establishment of houses of affirmation under the auspices of the Episcopal Commission on the Clergy should be given careful consideration.

Section 4. Relationships with Religious/Laity

Article 88. Every diocese should initiate programs aimed at developing and promoting fraternal relationships between the bishop and his priests, among priests themselves, and between priests and seminarians. Structures should be built up that will greatly enhance presbyteral solidarity leading to a more fraternal community among them and promoting a sense of belonging to the diocese.

Article 89. §1. The Commissions on the Clergy and on Religious, together with the Commission on Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious, should suggest ways of achieving better and more meaningful relationships between diocesan clergy and religious. There should be regular channels of communication between diocesan clergy, religious and laity, to maximize the collaboration of all for the growth of the Church.

§2. Religious as well as diocesan priests in non-parochial ministry should integrate themselves as effectively as possible into the pastoral plan and efforts of the diocese.

Article 90. The CBCP should set up various exchange programs between dioceses whereby diocesan priests with the agreement of the bishops concerned could have an experience of grass-roots ministry in other settings.

Article 91. Priests should welcome into their respective jurisdictions lay movements that conform with diocesan or parish programs and thrusts and that have the approval of the local Ordinary.

Article 92. In updating seminars on theology and other ecclesiastical disciplines (e.g. social doctrine, current moral problems), priests and lay people should study and reflect together.

Article 93. Seminarians are to be helped to develop healthy attitudes regarding authority, the nature of the relationship between priests and bishops, and obedience due their superiors, all in the spirit of evangelical discipleship.

Section 5. Temporalities

Article 94. §1. Respecting canons 1274 and 281, every diocese should undertake a realistic and systematic system of support for diocesan priests by setting up a clergy fund derived from contributions of the clergy and the laity for the benefit of needy, disabled and retired priests (i.e., for insurance, hospitalization, housing, etc.). Special programs to prepare priests for retirement should be part of the support system.

§2. The CBCP should undertake a serious study of the possibilities of equalization and/or standardization of priests' honest sustenance for all the dioceses.

Article 95. The CBCP should set up and finance both a national house for transient priests in Metro Manila and regional centers in other areas, subject to the local Ordinaries, which can help priests in crisis and those in canonically irregular situations.³⁹

³⁹Cf. Article 86.

Section 6. Bishops

Article 96. Dioceses should be managed justly in accordance with the laws of the Church and in a spirit of corresponsibility and openness, accountability at all levels and financial transparency being the norm.⁴⁰

Article 97. Dioceses should have regular brainstorming sessions between the clergy and the laity to promote greater involvement of the people of God in Christ's work for the transformation of society, making it possible to hear the views and opinions of all.

Article 98. In accordance with the prescriptions of canon 384, bishops should affirm their priests by recognizing their individual gifts and talents and providing them with opportunities for service of Church and country; by visiting them regularly and treating them equally, seeing them as collaborators in building up the reign of God.

Article 99. A system of periodic audit/evaluation is recommended whereby those priests who are doing well may be encouraged and those who have difficulties may be helped.

Article 100. No diocese shall accept, even temporarily, priests from another diocese except in accordance with the provisions of canon 271.

Article 101. §1. Without prejudice to the pastoral role of individual diocesan bishops,⁴¹ the CBCP should do what it can to help to rectify the bad image of the priesthood given by some uncelibate priests.

§2. The problem of priests in irregular canonical situations shall be addressed by their respective diocesan bishops.

Title XIII. Institutions

Section 1. Media and Communication

Article 102. In accordance with its possibilities, every diocese must give high priority to means of social communication like TV,

⁴⁰Cf. Canons 1254-1310.

⁴¹Cf. Canons 1395, 1740-1742.

broadcast and print media, by allocating, where possible, more resources – human and material – in order to attain a more organized thrust on evangelization, conscientization and formation of public opinion according to Gospel values.⁴²

Article 103. Media education shall be included in the curricula of elementary and secondary schools. Social communications skills shall likewise be taught in seminaries.

Article 104. Media in all its forms should be made available to respond to the following concerns:

1. the poor and marginalized so that their options and aspirations may find channels of expression;
2. a massive campaign on public policy to prohibit the glorification of guns and violence, lust and sex in movies, billboards, TV, radio and print media;
3. the sick, the elderly, and invalid, that programs be aired for their benefit.

Article 105. The CBCP Commission on Social Communications shall manifest its concern for people in media through a special program of formation that will them to be imbued with Gospel values.

Section 2. Catholic Schools

Article 106. Catholic education institutions must actively participate in and support the evangelization and other pastoral programs of dioceses and parishes:

1. Especially in rural areas, they must include adult catechesis in their outreach programs, starting with families of their students.
2. Through their campus ministry offices or university pastoral councils, these institutions must actively foster the formation of small Christian communities among their students, teachers and staff as a means of Christian renewal.

⁴²Cf. Canons 822-823.

3. As centers for the primary task of fostering critical and dynamic social consciences, they shall strive to develop both educators and students to become agents for Christian social transformation.

Article 107. Catholic universities "through reflection in the light of the Catholic faith,"⁴³ in their social, scientific and technological research activities, as well as in their general educative task of preparing witnesses to Christ in the world by imparting an integral formation in the values of the Gospel, shall serve society by helping to seek and discover the root causes of contemporary problems having to do with the dignity of human life, the promotion of justice for all, protection of nature, a more just sharing of world resources, etc., special concern being shown for their ethical and religious implications.⁴⁴

Article 108. Catholic education institutions should be encouraged to enlarge their scholarship programs for financially poor and deserving students.

Section 3. Basic Ecclesial Communities

Article 109. Basic Ecclesial Communities under various names and forms – BCCs, small Christian communities, small faith communities, covenant communities – must be vigorously promoted for the full living of the Christian vocation in both urban and rural areas. Active non-violence will be a guiding principle in their approach to social change.

Article 110. §1. The CBCP shall issue an official statement on BECs, on their nature and function as recognized by the Church, making it clear that they are not simply another organization.

§2. This official statement of the CBCP shall be, among other things, for the proper orienting of priests and seminarians. Training for work with BECs shall be made part of seminary formation.

Article 111. §1. In the formation of BECs, re-evangelization shall be given the highest priority.

⁴³*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 13.

⁴⁴Cf. Canons 807-821.

§2. A formation program for BEC workers and missionaries, including a common manual, shall be developed and made available to the dioceses through the CBCP.

Article 112. §1. The laity should be mobilized to participate in the task of evangelization and look upon BECs as a means of evangelization.

§2. Truly discerning communities shall be formed to prevent the faith from being instrumentalized by political and other groups and to ensure that the principles and activities of various groups shall always be guided by Gospel values.

Section 4. Formation, Research, Theological Centers/Institutes

Article 113. Lay formation centers must be established in every diocese or region under the authority of the local Ordinary.

Article 114. A Bible institute for the Military Ordinariate shall be established under the authority of the Military Ordinary for the benefit of all major service commands of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. The institute will also be open to the Philippine National Police.

Section 5. Religious Organizations, Councils, Movements

Article 115. §1. Catholic associations and movements, as potent means of renewal in the Church, should be guided according to the demands of the new evangelization.

§2. To this effect, recognized organizations, councils, movements, especially those related to national groupings, must see to it that

1. their constitutions and by-laws are not contrary to the laws of the Church;
2. their work is in harmony with diocesan/parish plans;
3. they work within the context of the parish and its structure, and coordinate with one another; and
4. they utilize such leadership training, retreats and seminars as are necessary for the new thrust of re-evangelization.

Article 116. §1. With respect for Canons 298, 299 and 321, the members of all Church organizations, both lay and clerical, should be imbued with a deeper sense of evangelical service to the wider community of which they are part.

§2. The participatory process of BECs shall be integrated into parish associations and movements, as well as into both diocesan and parochial pastoral councils.

Article 117. Professional and sectoral organizations shall be formed in Gospel values and the Church's social teachings the better to contribute to the achieving of the common good.

Section 6. Temporalities

Article 118. Tithing, after a good pastoral catechesis, shall be introduced with the end in view of the gradual abolition of the Arancel System.

Article 119. The rules of transparency should be strictly observed by priests, religious and lay Church related organizations in regard to Church assets and liabilities.

Article 120. The finance committees mentioned in the new Code of Canon Law (Canons 492 and 537) should be made operational to maximize parish and diocesan material resources.

Article 121. Particular Churches, Church agencies, clergy, religious and lay organizations shall give witness in the faithful observance of agrarian, labor and social legislations.

Article 122. The Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education shall spearhead the creation of a diocesan funding program for the catechetical ministry, the funds to be generated from local resources so that the training and services of full-time and/or professional catechists can be assured.

Section 7. Structures / Programs (Parish, Diocesan, National)

a. Parish and Diocesan Levels

Article 123. A study, facilitated by the CBCP, should be initiated to determine (a) whether the present structuring of parishes,

in big cities especially, is adequate and (b) what form of restructuring, if indicated, will take.

Article 124. A baseline study of parishes including a situational analysis of where they are must be made.

Article 125. Diocesan pastoral councils are to be established and are to function in dioceses in accordance with Canons 511 and 512. Parish pastoral councils are to be governed according to Canon 536.

Article 126. §1. Membership in Parish Pastoral Councils should include, where possible, representatives of various local groups.

§2. Ways of relating the WEST commissions or similar commissions on the barangay level to the Parish Pastoral Council should be explored.

Article 127. Guidelines, which are in accord with the prescriptions of Canons 528-529, 532, 536 §§1-2 and 537, authorized by the local Ordinary, on the relationship between the Parish Pastoral Council, the Parish Finance Council and the Parish Priest shall be formulated and disseminated.

Article 128. §1. Guidelines for Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils should be prepared by the Episcopal Commission on Lay Apostolate and proposed to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

§2. Subject to the prescriptions of Canon 511, provision should be made for ongoing dialogue and feedback in Diocesan Pastoral Councils. Similar provision should be made in Parish Pastoral Councils subject to the prescriptions of Canon 536.

§3. Diocesan and Parish Pastoral Councils shall be supported, developed and renewed according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law and the appropriate diocesan norms.

Article 129. Coordination based on a common pastoral vision among the various ministries or apostolates shall be set up to address socio-economic problems.

b. National Level

Article 130. Each Episcopal Commission should call upon researchers, writers, translators and other experts for certain problems, needs and recommendations.

Title XIV. Implementation

Article 131. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines will draw up a National Pastoral Plan in accordance with Article 1 §1 and §5. A temporary committee, consisting of members drawn from the various sectors of the Church and chosen for their exemplary Christian life and their expertise, will be set up to assist the Bishops in a consultative capacity in drawing up the National Pastoral Plan.

Article 132. In every diocese and/or parish an implementing committee must be created and tasked to oversee, under the authority of the local Ordinary, the implementation of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines.

General Absolution in the New Codex

Excelso Garcia, O.P.

In Danger of Death and in Grave Necessity

20. Canon 961, reaffirming that individual sacramental confession is the normal and ordinary way of reconciliation with God and with the Church, declares that there are, however, two occasions when it is lawful to impart general absolution namely:

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

20. When 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 feast day or pilgrimage.”

10. *Danger of Death.* Number 10. of the first paragraph mentions *danger of death* as a justifying reason to impart collective general absolution. The welfare of souls is the supreme law in the Church to which every other law is subordinated. This was in fact the motivating reason why Pius XII granted all priests, even those without jurisdiction to hear confessions, the faculty to impart

general absolution when there was a threat of military attack or pursuance of battle during World War II, as we have seen in chapter II. The existence of danger of death is presumed when there is a positive and probable possibility that death may occur soon. This principle was also followed by the Sacred Penitentiary when asked what to do when it was morally impossible or very difficult to impart general absolution to the military personnel together by groups (turmatin), when attack was immitent and during actual fighting or battle. The Congregation answered that it was licit to impart general absolution at the moment a real necessity for souls existed in view of the probability of such a threat being imminent (see number 11).

The priest should first, if there is time, exhort the penitents very briefly to make an act of contrition.

21. 20. *Grave Necessity.* This number two of paragraph one is most important. It deals with a situation different from danger of death. It is not new in the Church discipline. The Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary formulated this norm on March 25, 1944 in the following terms: "Outside of danger of death, it is not licit to impart sacramental absolution to a group of persons collectively by reason of a big gathering of penitents alone, as it happens on a day of great festivity or indulgence; it is licit, however, if there is a *serious and urgent necessity*, proportionate to the gravity of making an integral and individual confession imposed by divine law, as when penitents, without their personal fault, would otherwise be deprived for a long time of sacramental grace or Holy Communion" (see n. 13, II). Likewise, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith declared on June 16, 1972: "Outside of danger of death, sacramental absolution may licitly be imparted collectively to a gather of faithful, who have made a general confession and have been exhorted to make an act of contrition, as long as there exists a *serious necessity*, namely: when considering the number of penitents, there are not enough confessors to confess them properly within a reasonable period of time, so that the penitents would be deprived otherwise of sacramental grace or Sacred Communion for a long time, without their own fault. However, this cannot be done by reason of a numerous gathering of faithful alone, if there are confessors available, as for instance

on occasion of a solemn feastday or a pilgrimage" (see number 15, III).

Obviously the two norms issued by the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary and by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith are substantially the same as the norm contained in canon 961, § 1, n. 2o. of the new Code of Canon Law. Outside the danger of death there is, therefore, another situation when general absolution can be imparted licitly. Such a situation is when there exist a *grave necessity*. How can this grave necessity be described?

Considering all the elements creating this grave necessity according to canon 961, § 1, n. 2 and taking into account the two sources mentioned above, we dare to define the *grave necessity* as an unexpected or unforeseen situation which is created when a great number of Christian faithful gathered together for a religious purpose, culminating with the Eucharistic Sacrifice, it is found out that the confessors available are not enough to hear the individual confessions of each penitent properly within a limited period of time, and as a consequence the penitents, without fault of their own, would be deprived of sacramental grace or Holy Communion for a long time, were general absolution not imparted collectively.

We qualify this situation as *unexpected* or *unforeseen*. One thing is to have a big gathering of faithful for a religious purpose with the aim in mind to impart general absolution collectively to them, and it is something else to find oneself in a situation where a great number of faithful are already gathered together and to seek their spiritual growth especially their reconciliation to God and to His Church even though the Confessors available are not enough to confess them individually. The *grave necessity* required in canon 962, § 1, n. 2 in order to impart general absolution is the latter; the former is, in fact, created by the organizers of the gathering and it falls in the second portion of n. 2.

22. *Five essential elements* are to be found in the situation creating *grave necessity* justifying the imparting of general absolution, namely:

- a. a large number of penitents;

- b. an insufficient number of confessors to hear their individual confessions;
- c. reasonable period of time, insufficient for individual confessions;
- d. lack of fault on the part of the penitents;
- e. lengthy deprivation of the sacramental grace or Holy Communion which would otherwise be suffered by the penitents.

If all these five elements are not present in the concrete situation, there is no *grave necessity*; hence general absolution cannot be imparted licitly. This is the reason why the second portion of this number 20. deals with an *insufficient necessity* to impart general absolution: "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." Therefore, a great number of penitents and lack of enough available confessors only do not create the *grave necessity* which justifies the imparting of general absolution.

In the examples mentioned in the last portion of canon 961, § 1, n. 20., namely the celebration of a major feastday and a pilgrimage, the lengthy deprivation of the sacramental grace or the Holy Communion obviously does not exist, especially if the celebration takes place in a city or town proper. We all know that the celebration of a major feastday and of a pilgrimage requires a lengthy previous preparation. It is enough to go over a printed program of this kind of celebration to see how carefully all possible needs are provided for and covered under the care of different committees. The priest or priests in charge of the whole celebration are supposed not to forget the spiritual preparation of their parishioners. All means should be undertaken to give the opportunity to the penitents to make their individual confession. Otherwise, the *grave necessity* justifying the general absolution does not exist. The "necessity" is created only by the negligence of those who fail to provide the opportunity to the faithful to confess properly. A well planned schedule for individual sacramental confessions even before the celebration of the feastday should not be lacking. Likewise, those of the faithful who come from other parishes and wish to take Holy Communion at the celebration of

feastday cannot expect that it will be easy for them to make their individual confession on the very feastday, even if there will be some confessors available. It is more convenient for them to confess in their own parish before the feastday. All this applies also to those who participate in pilgrimages.

On the other hand, those who are not prepared spiritually by not having confessed beforehand should know that they have no obligation to receive Holy Communion on the feastday. They can make their individual confession and take Holy Communion after the feastday in their respective parishes if they so desire. In short, they should never be considered as *being deprived of sacramental grace or Holy Communion for a lengthy period of time*, which is a factor necessary for the existence of the *grave necessity*, should the imparting of general absolution not take place. The Church's law is clear.

23. In 1985 the Bishops' Conference of the Philippines issued the following guidelines on the matter:

1. "General absolution can be given outside of danger of death, whenever there exists *grave necessity*, that is given the number of penitents, there are not enough confessors available to properly hear individual confessions at a given time, so that, without fault of their own the penitents are deprived of the sacramental grace of Holy Communion for a lengthy period of time.

These conditions may be verified in the cases that follow, according to the judgment of the diocesan Bishop:

a) When priests go once a year or very seldom during the year, to remote barrios or islets, or to the places where there is serious difficulty in access to the sacrament of confession on the part of the faithful on account of distance or for geographical or climatological reasons;

b) Christmas, Paschal Triduum, local religious fiestas, popular missions and school graduations, whenever the conditions set above exist.¹

¹Note that the CBCP says that "these conditions may be verified"; there is no assurance that they are verified. Besides, we presume the conditions referred to in b), are the ones mentioned in a), not those mentioned in the preceding paragraph, which is the first portion of canon 961 § 1, n. 2.

2. On these conditions, the priest may be allowed to give general absolution, only after having undertaken all means to give opportunity to the penitents to make their individual confession. For example, making schedule for individual confessions during some fixed hours before Mass in such a way that the priests who are available can help one another in hearing individual confessions. However, should the time for Mass come and still many penitents have not yet made their individual confessions and so about to be deprived of the sacramental grace of Holy Communion, general absolution can be given.

“The priests, before giving general absolution, shall help the penitents to be properly disposed to receive it, by making a sincere act of contrition. The priest shall remind the penitents of their obligation to confess each of their grave sins which cannot for the moment be thus confessed, as soon as possible, at the next opportunity, before receiving another general absolution, unless a just reason intervenes, as prescribed by canon 962 and 963” (cfr. *Manual for Parish Priests*, pp. 243-244).

It is worth noting that the quotation of canon 961, § 1, n. 2 made by the local Hierarchy referring to the deprivation to be suffered by the penitents, if the general absolution would not be given, has omitted the conjunction *or*. Canon 961, § 1, n. 2 as well as the sources wherefrom it has been taken read: “. . . so that without fault of their own the penitents are deprived of the sacramental grace OR of the Holy Communion for a lengthy period of time.” The text of the local Hierarchy, however, reads: “. . . so that without fault of their own, the penitents are deprived of the sacramental grace of Holy Communion for a lengthy period of time.” It is clear that in the text of the Codex two deprivations are implied, namely that of the sacramental grace (absolution) and that of Holy Communion. The former one (sacramental grace) affects both those who are in state of grace and those who are in state of mortal sin, while the latter (Holy Communion) affects only those who are in mortal sin. Those who are in state of grace can receive Holy Communion even if general absolution is not imparted.

24. **Canon 961 § 2.** - “It is for the diocesan Bishop to judge whether the conditions required in § 1, number 2o. are present;

mindful of the criteria agreed with the other members of the Episcopal Conference, he can determine the cases of such necessity."

This paragraph 2 has its origin in a similar norm established by the Sacred Penitentiary on March 25, 1944. The norm reads as follows: "It belongs to the local Ordinaries to judge whether the great number of soldiers, prisoners or civilians are in such a need; priests must have recourse to the local Ordinary, whenever is possible, in order to give this kind of absolution" (see number 13, II). The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith also declared the following: "It belongs to the local Ordinary to judge whether the conditions mentioned in number III (i.e. previous general confession, lack of confessors, limited time to hear confessions, lengthy deprivation of sacramental grace or Holy Communion of the penitents) are present and to decide when it is licit to impart sacramental absolution collectively, after conferring with the other members of the Bishops' Conference. If besides the cases determined by the local Ordinary, another grave necessity to impart collectively general absolution arises, the priest must have recourse to the local Ordinary first, if possible, in order to impart the absolution licitly; if it is not possible, he has to inform the Ordinary about the necessity and absolution given, as soon as possible" (see number 15, V).

The foregoing two quotations taken from the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith are obviously the sources of § 2 of canon 961. Pope John Paul II says also concerning the same matter: "the Bishop, who is the only one competent in his own diocese to assess whether the conditions actually exist which Canon Law lays down for use of the third form, will give this judgment *with a grave obligation on his own conscience*, with full respect for the law and practice of the Church, and also taking into account the criteria and guidelines agreed upon – on the basis of the doctrinal and pastoral considerations explained above – with the other members of the Episcopal Conference" (*Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 33: *Boletín Ecclesiástico*, 1985, p. 662).

It is evident that the emphasis of this norm of canon 961, § 2 is centered on the responsibility given to the diocesan Bishop to judge and determine whether the real necessity to impart general

absolution in concrete situations exists or not. Note that said responsibility does not rest on the Coadjutor or Auxiliary Bishop nor on the Vicar General, but on the Diocesan Bishop only, as the new Codex states. He has to consult or exchange views on the matter with the other members of the Episcopal Conference. In this way, uniformity in the whole region will be ensured. However, only the diocesan Bishop has the last say in the matter.

No mention is made of the obligation the priests have to accept and follow the diocesan Bishop's judgment as well as to adjust their ministry of imparting general absolution to the list of situations or cases where said absolution can be imparted. Though express mention is not made in the Codex of this, it is obvious that priests have to obey their Prelate on this matter. The norms established by the Sacred Penitentiary and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith are clear. It is worth noting how both Sacred Dicasteries qualified disobedience on this matter. The Sacred Penitentiary stated: "To impart collectively sacramental absolution arbitrarily outside of danger of death as explained in number I or without the license of the local Ordinary, when a recourse to him is possible, is to be considered as an abuse" (see number 13, III). And the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith declared: "Sacramental absolutions collectively imparted, which do not conform to the foregoing norms are to be considered as serious abuses which all pastors should prevent happening out of awareness of the moral duty enjoined upon them for the welfare of souls and for the protection of the dignity of the Sacrament of Penance (see number 15, XIII).

Festal Homilies for November and December 1992

Roman Carter, O.P.

Solemnity of All Saints November 1, 1992

Readings: *Rv* 7:2-4 & 9-14

1 Jn 3:1-3

Mt 5:1-12

This year we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints on Sunday. Although this is a popular feast because of the day dedicated to All Souls and the month of November which follow it, the day's origins and liturgical place tend to elude us. Probably the ceding of the Pantheon to Pope Boniface IV by the evil Emperor Phocas in 609 is the origin of the concept. The Pantheon in Rome was the Temple of All the Pagan Gods. As a Church it became *Sancta Maria ad Martyres*, thus dedicated to our Lady and all holy martyrs. The feast of dedication was May 13, the very day of the *Lamuria* feast meant to placate the old gods. One hundred and twenty years later St. Egbert, Archbishop of York in England who had earlier been ordained deacon in Rome by Pope Gregory II, celebrated All Saints on November 1. By 799 this was the custom in Austria, and by the second quarter of the ninth century Pope Gregory IV was celebrating this day in Rome. By the end of the eleventh century St. Gregory VII had commanded its universal celebration. All Soul's Day on November 2 was instituted by St. Odilo, the fifth abbot of Cluny, who died in 1048.

The meaning of the Solemnity may be less patent than it seems and conjecture about it has given rise to some fairly bizarre theologi-

cal considerations. Probably the most blatant of these is that which at least tacitly considers sanctity some sort of "secret" quality and argues that many holy people have lived and died unknown and unacclaimed but still deserving of a liturgical feast. The proponents of such an argument neglect that sanctity, to be of use to sinners, must be heard of, seen and touched. It is no mere "secret between the soul and God" but rather a quality which motivates whole persons and all their resources to the service of charity. And if we are treated charitably we know it! Others have the milder view that we may have forgotten, overlooked or otherwise neglected holy men and women of the past and this feast makes up for the oversight. Still another view holds more soberly that there are many persons enjoying the vision of God who are not yet canonized and whose names are not known to us, though they were known once on earth and are, of course, known to God.

None of the above notions gives a very convincing rationale for this Solemnity. A much better one can be found along lines of a theology of the Communion of Saints as community. Many saints have solemnities, feasts or memories on the calendar as individuals. But they do not now stand before God one by one as autonomous, isolated units of sanctity. Rather, they form a Church Triumphant, holy as a group. And that is worthy of celebration. For when man is taken out of frustrated isolation into the Body of Christ he begins the journey towards final and celestial sanctification. Each one loses sight of self and, Christ-like, presses forward by grace into the lists of Trinitarian life and its crown.

Here is the contrast between All Saints and All Souls. The saints have "made it" into God's presence. The souls are still on their way. The saints deserve our jubilation in their glory. The souls deserve and need our prayers that they may be elevated to the fullness which is our common goal. Indeed, at every Mass we commemorate all the saints, as at every mass we pray for the dead. But on these early days of November we "set the tone" as it were, for a whole special month of prayer. It is a month of reciprocal cognizance by the Church Militant toward the Church Triumph and of mutual concern involving both for the Church Suffering, expectant of God's will being done.

The first reading is sheer apocalyptic, being taken from the seventh chapter of Revelation. What we are dealing with here is a graphic interplay between the Church as earthly remnant divinely

protected and the Church as heavenly reality glorified by and before God. The scene is lit by an angelic advent and its light brightens the one hundred and forty-four thousand, a number symbolic of both the vastness and the twelve by twelve completion of the company of the redeemed. This comes from earth. What is found in heaven is greater still. Indeed, the company is now beyond numbering as are the children of Abraham in various parallel passages. All sing a hymn and are joined by the "natives of heaven," the angelic host. All who have remained faithful in the crises and tribulations of temptation and the pseudo-dominance of evil are there. This is truly an exact portrait of the saints. They come from earth. They are gathered to God. They reign with him but their former troubles are never forgotten. Rather, they become an ingredient, as it were, of glory.

In the Gospel Christ gives us the sonorous, perplexing and deeply wise words of the eight Beatitudes as recorded by Matthew in his priceless Sermon on the Mount. The whole range of human possibilities and divine blessings is recorded in this one short passage. It is hardly surprising to learn that this compendium of Christian practice was solemnly sung every Sunday morning for hundreds of years in the great Church of Constantinople whose rite now covers the earth and perpetuates the song. The great message of the Beatitudes is to let go and accept a certain degree of negativity so that God, in turn, can fill us with his love. The saints are blessed. That is, they are happy. Their happiness consists radically in self-forgetfulness, an empty state into which God can come with glory and fullness of life. A saint is a person who lets God do that.

Of the three readings the second is undoubtedly the most intimate and in many ways the most timely. St. John gives us a divine view of things both as regards the here and now and as regards the eternal hereafter. The Father is the protagonist, Christ is the model and we are those called to rise through Christlikeness to what God wills for us. This is, in itself, quite beyond our telling. The closest John or we can come to its truth is to say that it must involve our being God-like when God finally reveals himself to us, his children. Sanctity is dependence. Sanctity is hope. In the expectance of sanctity more is ever awaited.

On this All Saints' Day we may feel all too earthbound. Heaven may seem to be on the other side of an illusive rainbow. But we are encouraged that men and women who once shared all our earthly

limitations now stand blissfully before God. We take strength from the echo of their victory hymns. We know we can make the Beatitudes our program for life. And we believe that what God has begun in us by the grace of adoption will be crowned someday for us, as for them, with glory unceasing.

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time November 8, 1992

Readings: 2 M 7:1-2 & 9-14
2 Th 2:16 - 3:5
Lk 20:27-38

It is not utterly uncanny that this second Sunday of November should bring with it reflections on life and death since the last Sundays of Ordinary Time must fall inevitably within this month. This is the one month of the year during which our thoughts and prayers turn constantly to the dead and especially to the probably purgatorial status of most people we have known and loved who no longer share our earthly mortality. The first reading is an account of late Old Testament martyrdom, death for the sake of resurrection and new life to which the Maccabees are admitted and from which their Hellenist persecutors are debarred. The Gospel calls God, "God of the Living." For Jesus all men and women who have ever lived are somehow alive in the Father's sight. The second reading admonishes against the deadly qualities of error and sin and shows how light and full of life is true Christian faith.

The Second Book of Maccabees is poorly put together resumé of historic exploits of heroic dimension that worked to free Judaism of Seleucid domination. It seems to have been written by Jason of Cyrene about 124 B.C. in Egypt. It has been highly redacted and clumsily revised by a writer we call the Epitomist. Its Greek is good in the genre of rhetorical narration. The factuality of its content wobbles under the weight of its attempted pathos, but much of what it says is verifiable from external sources. As in the Gospels, the author's intent is to write theology not history. And his report is colorful to say the least. He wants us to know that men (and young men encouraged by their mother) were once willing to die for the faith and morality of their ancestors. Just before our passage begins, the elder Eleazar has gone to his death, aged ninety, for refusing to eat pagan sacrificed pork. Here in the seventh chapter, excruciating

death by mutilation and burning are ordered by an unnamed "King." In the full telling all seven sons and their mother are tortured and killed. Here only four appear. But each is resolute. They contrast earth and heaven, earthly rulers and God as King, mortal life and immortality.

In the Gospel the problem of resurrection is taken up. It is not, we should note, a question of "life after death," which would be unthought of by Sadducees or Pharisees, but of what is to happen on the Last Day. To the absurd, materialistic challenge of the Sadducees, Jesus (who in this matter agrees with the Pharisees) gives a reply not about "heaven" but about resurrection after which those worthy of other-worldliness (that of the age to come) are made angel-like (i.e. effectively sexless) and have no problem about earthly contracts of marriage. If God is the God of the Patriarchs, since he is a living God, they must be (even before the resurrection) somehow alive. Just what is Luke getting at? Here in the Jerusalem ministry of Jesus he has the Lord use the legalistic quibbles of the Sadducees to illustrate Christian liberation. Resurrection means freedom from the bonds of legality and mortality. This is a freedom to live for God and to live candidly and unfettered before him. So it is not mere asexuality. It is transformation and elevation to angelic status while its subjects retain human nature (by then glorified).

Our second reading is on another theme. What St. Paul wants the Thessalonians addressed in this Second Letter to do is to persevere. Their resilience is tested by the bad mouths of the enemies of the cross. But God who has called them to victory will give them the grace-filled means to attain it. Invocation leads to completed glory. Evil has but a nuisance value. God can and will preserve the faithful. But faith is a gift like grace. Once gifted, we are armed and sustained in the day of battle. Obedience qualifies us for love and strength, for it involves being Christ-like in utter dependence on God.

So all three readings should fill us with hope. What we believe and how we should act are good things worth dying for. Those who have believed and lived according to their standards can be included in our hope for God's final blessing. What is important in life is to be freed by God to be free for and before God. Such freedom breaks the shackles of time and opens us to eternity. But in our pilgrimage below we must come to persevere by overcoming unrighteous annoyances and entering into the promise of glory, the vast space of real hope.

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time November 15, 1992

Readings: *Ml* 3:9-20
2 Th 3:7-12
Lk 21:5-19

The eschatological themes of the final Sundays of the year are firmly sounded in three definitely different ways in today's liturgy of the Word. The first reading from the otherwise unknown Malachi tells how the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord will be brightened for the righteous with rays of healing. The Gospel not only predicts the fall of Jerusalem (a fact of history) but the shattering of time (a dogma of faith). Tucked between these two intimations of doom for the wicked and blessing for the just is the reading from Second Thessalonians in which Paul says, in effect, only work can pay for food. So, while two readings deal with the end of time, a third deals with how to live in time both justly and happily. Outside of an explicit Christian context imbued with traditional teaching none of the readings gives a more than superficial sense.

We have, of course, no idea who Prophet Malachi is. The internal evidence of the book which bears his name shows him to have written well after 515 B.C., probably in the mid-400's. His complaints are those of Nehemiah and Ezra and are asserted of an area of a twenty-five mile radius around Jerusalem according to Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller, the Passionist commentator in the *Jerome*. The content of Malachi is redolent of Deuteronomy and Ezekiel but the writing is "gray," with poverty of Hebrew vocabulary and a singular lack of imaginative originality. Still, the book is precious for it foretells the Messiah preceded by a reappearing Elijah and has a wealth of eschatological reference both in direct statement and through innuendo. Our passage is from the end of the sixth oracle employed in the work: within chapter three in the Masoretic text and part of chapter four in the Septuagint and the Vulgate. In it we see the shadows of evil dispersed through the Lord's calamitous dealings with wicked men and bright illumination which restores through healing love the good fortune of God-fearers.

The Gospel is no mere tale of woe. It is a word of warning. Too many people in the time of Christ (as now) thought their safety would be procured by their cursory and all too off-hand observance of holy precepts rather than by true holiness of life. How mistaken they were

Christ makes clear. He teaches a doctrine of "signs of the times." And he warns all his hearers (both then and now) to heed them. The Lucan style falls down badly in this passage and the content is obscure to the point of ahistoricity. Our passage is but a snippet and yet both its intent and its thrust are clear. However bad things get we must trust the Lord Jesus who alone will hold us up and give us the grace and strength to endure. Trials will occur and plenty will be the disorders, but he will sustain his own through whatever befalls them.

It may seem overly prosaic to consider St. Paul's advice to the overwrought and fearful Thessalonians after our considerations of Malachi and Luke. But what we should have in mind is that some people not only in the first century but in the twentieth have shown ready aptitude in turning crisis situations into excuses for idleness. Such persons, if they know not what to do, do nothing. St. Paul protests that such inaction is clean contrary to both his teaching and his example. He would vouch instead for a realistic sense of causality. "No work, no food" is the outcome of his cogent argument. He himself is no "free loader" but a man who has worked "night and day" not that he could not claim support on basis of his apostolate but that his delicate conscience (formed under the harsh demands of his Pharisaical upbringing) will not let him. His example is one of toil and his demand is for quiet work, day to day striving to earn life's necessities, on the part of all.

Scare tactics can be confused with a healthy sense of reverential fear for what God may work to bring about the end of time. Christians reject ungodly fright. Jumping to wrongful conclusions is a far cry from real reading of the Signs of the Times. Our discernment, learned of Christ, is patient and painstaking. Whatever happens or is going to happen, we all have our daily tasks, our daily needs and our daily joys. Even if our sorrows seem overwhelming, they are relatively momentary. What abides is the sheer goodness of the Lord, the promise of his bliss and life unending in the brilliance his light alone can give.

Solemnity of Christ King of the Universe **November 22, 1992**

Readings: 2 S 5:1-13
Col 1:12-20
Lk 23:35-42

One of the kindly ecumenical gestures in the wake of the Second Vatican Council was to remove the Catholic Feast of Christ the King, instituted by Pius XI, from the last Sunday of October which Protestants keep as Reformation Sunday. The present place of the solemnity is both more appropriate in that it rounds off and concludes the year's liturgy and less apt to be interpreted as some sort of triumphalist "oneupmanship." Both our King and his Reign are unique and boundless. He as God-made-man reigns forever, and his Kingdom, which is not of this world, transcends every time and every place. In a glorious manner, possible only to what can be attributed to a divine Person, he as King and his endless reign also compenetrates every time and every place. And so we can commemorate Jesus Christ and his redeemed reality wherever and whenever we like with no qualms about inappropriate celebration. However, it is good and willed by the Church as good to give a special day, a Sunday at the very end of each year, over to the glorification of Jesus Christ as King of the Universe. For here we see the glorious triumph of the Sacred Heart in all the splendor of the divinity and the deepest compassion and care of the humanity of Jesus.

The first reading appropriately shows us David, both ancestor and "type" of Christ, being anointed and proclaimed King of All Israel at Hebron. This anointing and proclamation is, of course, performed by the northern tribes who now confederate with Judah over which David is already King. The resultant union is personal to David and will fall apart after the reign of his son, Solomon. The analogy with Christ is curious. He was, of course, King of heaven in his divine nature before coming into time. But he is acknowledged as King by men only after his resurrection. However, we do not anoint him to reign over us. Rather, his human nature and ours are anointed by the Holy Spirit for the saving purposes of the reign. But he can only reign supreme when we proclaim him in our hearts to be what by right in fact he is as Risen Lord, namely, King of All.

On this Solemnity in two years the Gospel shows Christ as reigning through some sort of graphic humility whether his or ours. In the first year of the cycle, when Matthew's Gospel is employed, judgment on basis of service to the least of our brothers is the text. Year two makes use of the appearance before Pilate in John. This year Luke gives the most striking account of kingship in Christian terms. Christ "rules and governs from a tree," that is, he reigns as crucified

Lord, welcoming the penitent thief, the wrongdoer who represents the whole race of Adam, into his realm of paradise.

Colossians offers us a succinct doctrinal approach clothed in the sumptuousness of Greek poetry. Here is a hymn to the eternal and all extensive pre-eminence of Christ. He is extolled as the very one in whom and for whom the Father created all things whether in the sphere of angels or that of men. But he is also extolled as human, risen from the dead, reconciling all things in heaven and on earth by the peace he has made in the saving mystery of the Cross. Here the universal kingship of Christ is truly summed up by reference to a gloriously powerful Person both of whose natures are employed in redemptive work that brings us as his subjects, forgiven and set free, out of darkness into light.

Is Christ, through the mystery of his pierced Heart, truly King of our hearts? Have we acknowledged his anointed status and proclaimed his dynamic rule in our lives? Do we opt for the one who is crucified as the only possible bestower of heavenly gifts and heavenly place? Is Christ before all, through all, over all, not just in some wide, cosmic sense but in the depth of our being? These are the questions that require a "yes" on this Sunday of Christ the King. But this answer (or its fatal and excluding alternative) can only be given by each one of us. That is why we are here at Mass. We are here to affirm Christ and to proclaim him Lord of all. We are here to "stand up for Jesus" and let him make our standing option the cause of our joy forever.

First Sunday of Advent

Readings from Year A

for Gospels: "The Year of Matthew"

November 29, 1992

Readings: Is 2:1-5

Rm 13:11-14

Mt 24:37-?

This year we begin Advent (with the Sunday nearest to St. Andrew's Day) in November. Some of the big stores have been featuring Christmas carols since September, and our gravest concern should be that when the day comes to commemorate Christ's birth we have not long since been bored to tears by all too superficial preparations. To prepare for Christmas well is to swim against the tide in the

world today. Shopping has become an exaggeratedly important priority. We need special foods. We need to buy presents. We need to send cards. We need to worry about where and when we'll find ourselves among loved ones. We are so busy hanging up decorations that we can easily forget what and whom we are meant to be celebrating. So the Church gives us Advent, not "to put Christ back into Christmas" (as the silly slogan says), for he has never been taken away from our liturgy or our hearts, but to prepare for his triple coming.

Triple? Yes. He comes in his birth as man in Bethlehem when he, the Son of God, is manifest in humble obscurity as Son of Mary. He comes to each one of us most intimately at any time or place when or where we are willing to receive him. He will come in glory at the end of time. All three advents are the theme, thus made triple, of Advent as a liturgical time. This season is also a fresh start. We begin a new liturgical year, a new cycle of readings and, hopefully, a new and better spiritual life.

The grand project of Advent can be very much aided and sustained by the readings we hear each Sunday and weekday from now until Christmas. The "fare" of today's Mass starts off with something as delicately sweet and strongly filling as the best Chinese ham our television commercials present us with as an essential dish in our Christmas celebration. We refer, of course, to Isaiah, chapter 2, verses 1 to 5. This is a clarion call: strong, hopeful and consoling, which has rung down the centuries since perhaps before 750 B.C. The call is God-centered, universal and orientated towards Zion as towards the navel of the earth. It is a call homeward, not just for Israelites, but for all men and women everywhere and at all times.

Matthew's Gospel (which will be with us till next November) is more like a delicately prepared *pancit*, redolent of favorite ingredients and familiar but tantalizing spices, with just that dash of astringency a few drops of calamansi can give. The passage for today is a sizable helping from near the bottom of the pot. The theme is eschatological. Thus at the beginning we are brought to the end. Just as the first reading has a futuristic thrust, so the Gospel has an ultimate one. As long ago in Noah's day, so then at the end of time there is to be a "sorting out" of the human race and a divine decision as to which elements to keep and which to abandon.

If we may resume our culinary imagery, the second reading from Romans is like a slice of grand *lapu-lapu* wrapped in foil and baked to almost flaky succulence. It requires little in way of trimmings, for it is exquisite to the taste through the dominance of its own inherent flavor. St. Paul makes salvation so near we can practically taste it. It is a salvation of spirit and of light as contrasted with the damnable states of gross materialistic license and darkness that can sham prevalence in our world of time and space. The Romans are called to return to steadfast simplicity.

How can all this good scriptural food prepare us for Christmas? First by whetting our appetites, setting our goals as future, seeing in Isaiah that God is a God of promise and his major promise is victory for all who trust him enough to go pilgrim-like toward him. Secondly, we should let our real delight be in the final resolution God will give at the end to us and to all who are really on his side in the conflicts and contests of life. Finally, we should be open to a plan of sober conduct, "walking in the light," from now until Christmas, on this First Sunday of Advent and for the rest of our lives. May God bless our earnest preparations. May we grow in his love. And, through the mystery of the Incarnation, may we be made one with God forever.

Second Sunday of Advent

December 6, 1992

Readings: *Is* 11:1-10
Rm 15:4-9
Mt 3:1-2

Today two elements vie for central consideration in the readings and overall theme of the Mass. They are late Jewish Messianism and the role of St. John the Baptist. They are interrelated, not altogether clear and, nonetheless, necessarily preliminary to any historically precise "setting" of the earthly life and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. What baffles us first is how a nation that had sunk so low through Roman colonialism and the cruel wickedness of its puppet rulers and priests as had the once great Kingdom of Judah could be so full of hope. Its hope was for a person, a king, a liberator and a direct agent of God. Such would be the Messiah, the anointed one of the Last Days, which early in our first century of what would become "the Christian era" were thought to have dawned. Even more baffling is how after an interval four and a half centuries from the time of the anonymous

Malachi (messenger by inference of Yahweh) there could arise a popularly acknowledged prophet in the remnant of Israel. All scriptural explanations point to the "fullness of time." From the point of view of purely secular history the most feasible surmise seems to be one of "hope against hope" in a defeated land.

In helping us towards a clearer vision of God's own will in this scramble of ideas seen from a perspective dimmed by two thousand years of slanting, our first reading is a great (and refreshing) aid. Coming as it does from the eleventh chapter of the great roll called Isaiah, it is one of the earliest "pictures" (perhaps dating from the mid-eighth century before Christ) of the Messiah. He is portrayed as a Davidic King on whom the Spirit rests. He is sustained and upheld, rather than burdened and brought low, by this holy weight of utterly interior gifts. And so he is able to be a just, faithful, kindly but severe man of integrity and peace. As such, he ushers in an era, an era in which even wild beasts are tame, and all mankind is brought to brotherhood.

In the Gospel we see Matthew's John. He looks like a wild man, and he talks in the best tradition of an Amos or a Hosea. He is not unlike even earlier prophets such as Elijah and Elisha or even Nathan and Samuel. In his condemnation of smug, organized Jewry and his lavish use of water (hence his title) he sounds very much like a Qumran sectarian, or at least some sort of desert Essene who has broken both with the Jerusalem establishment and with the more ordinary manifestations of piety as encouraged by the Pharisees. Like all true prophets, he lives not for himself but for his message. He points beyond himself to a rather terrible and terrifying Messiah, a God-fired avenger who will quell every evil in Israel.

St. Paul in Romans 15:4-9, writing in the tradition of Isaiah and with full knowledge of recent events, is not concerned with some future Messiah, much less with "a voice crying in the wilderness." For St. Paul, like the Roman Christians, has already found the Lord. He knows that Christ has fulfilled all scripture and that every true prophecy has pointed to Jesus as both Lord and Christ. What concerns him is that pagans, too, can come to believe this. This concern is Paul's whole apostolate, Paul's whole converted life long. And, as he prepares to conclude his longest and in some ways most masterly letter, he uses this concern to show how Christ had to be a

Jew so that the Gentiles might be converted, how the Old Testament must close for the new to begin.

Christ alone, then, is our Messiah. Whatever was foretold we find accomplished in him. The Messianism of his contemporaries and of subsequent forms and phases of Judaism was and is just wishful thinking about someone and something that will never happen. For Christ in his reality both compenetrates and shatters history, lifting religion to a higher plane. He is at once Son of David and literally Son of God. John the Baptist then becomes Christ's prophet and no-one else's. Whatever tradition he comes out of, however inaccurate his foretelling, there is but one Person he points to: Jesus as Christ. But we need Paul in Romans to show us that Christ's Lordship is for us. That its very transcendence is for the sake of a new and even deeper immanence. That Jesus of Nazareth is not just a Jewish Messiah, not just an ancient prophecy fulfilled. He is the living and true Lord of all!

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception December 8, 1992

Readings: *Gn 3:9-15 & 20*
Ep 1:3-6 & 11-12
Lk 1:26-38

The readings designated for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is principal patron of the Philippines, take us back to the beginnings of the human race, up to the time of its turning point (when by her fiat Mary allows the Word to begin his redemptive work) and forward into glory transcending time. In Genesis we hear of a promise. In Luke will behold the inauguration of its fulfillment. In Ephesians we find proclaimed the sureness of its finality. The promise is given to Eve. It finds fulfillment in Mary, and it is rounded off in us and all who are called to salvation. For the divine intention is unwaveringly directed towards the good of all God's creatures and stands behind his saving help for all mankind. But God who is eternal works things out for us in time and space and makes use of certain special human persons to accomplish his will. The greatest and most grace-filled of these souls is Mary who is at once Mother of Christ and Mother of His Church.

Let us examine God's first promise to human beings, to Adam and to Eve, after their fall. The Yahwist author having shown how, trapped by the power of evil, Adam has blamed Eve and Eve in turn the serpent; God shows them how any compromise with evil will involve long range tension, a struggle between the children of Eve and the serpent's own. But there is optimism for the head of the serpent will at last be crushed by the heel of the woman's son. It is a mysterious but cheering little story. In verse twenty it is rounded off with even greater optimism for ongoing life is shown to be stronger than seemingly definitive death. Mary, "the Mother of Fair Hope," is, of course, the anti-type or fulfillment of the typical Eve to whom the promise is given. The foot of her son will crush the head of our satanic foe. The curse of death will be overcome by his conquest of lasting, indeed unending, life. And in this drama where Resurrection in all its splendor conquers sin and all its effects Mary has no minor role. She does not hover in the wings. Rather she takes up center stage and remains, during and throughout his earthly life and the whole denouement of Salvation History, female protagonist and Queen Mother.

In the Gospel we find her in the moment of decision on which her external fame must ever rest. She says "yes" to Gabriel and the earth quakes not in terror but in joy. But what is the background of her decision? Who is she by heritage and environment? As Luke paints her she seems to be an ordinary young girl of pious Jewish parentage and self-effacing devotional stance. Everything seems to surprise her. But deep within her being there is a secret almost as awesome as the message of the angel. She is sinless! Like most innocent people she does not flaunt about the world crying, "I am sin free. Look at me!" She neither has to nor wants to. Instead she modestly, almost shamefully, admits her unsullied virginity. What power is there in the modesty of Mary. And what an unquestionable sign it is that she is "the real thing." For authenticity never needs to boast.

When we turn from the first reading and Gospel with their obvious parallelisms and promise-fulfillment themes to the second reading we are, as it were, entering another world. Here we see things according to the plan and mind of God. Mary, it is true, is not mentioned explicitly but Christ her Son as both pre-existent and temporal, both divine and incarnate, both God and man, is the evident and obvious protagonist of the carrying out in the Spirit of the

Father's will on and for the earth. Only on the basis of such a glimpse of glory can the true image of Mary in her role and destiny be rounded off and made complete.

Today we honor Mary the stainless Mother of God as our own singularly privileged Mother. Preserved from sin from the instant of her Conception she remains Immaculate Queen, at the apex of creation second only in nature to her son, for time and for eternity. We are freed from sin by the effect of her willing cooperation in the divine plan, the Saving Work of Christ. All that once was promised is fulfilled. All to which we look forward in hope is glorified beyond compare.

Third Sunday of Advent **December 13, 1992**

Readings: *Is 35: 1-6, 10*
Jas 5:7-10
Mt 22:2-11

In this first year of the cycle of liturgical readings nearly every trace (save in the first lines of the first reading) of the former *Gaudete* themes of this Sunday has been effaced. Instead we are given a typical Advent theme to ponder anew, that of patient expectation. This expectation is lively hope for the coming of the Lord, it is true, but what coming and exactly how he is to come remain unclear. This is an integral part, of course, of the Advent mystery: the need to identify the long-expected with the frankly unexpected. What we are touching on is a facet of all religion worthy of the name. Although there are scholars among us who could write (or even have already written) volumes on comparative religion, history of dogma, liturgy and moral theory and technique, who (except for a few obscure savants of spirituality who are the first to admit the inadequacy of their descriptive skills) can tell us how God will approach our unique being or exactly how we ought to respond discerningly?

Scripture, needless to say, is our greatest help. For in the sacred writings God the Holy Spirit not only utilizes the human authors, he makes them say things beyond their own powers of analysis or even comprehension. A sure sign of a prophet is that he does not know the meaning of what he himself says. For the meaning (being divine) transcends mere words and leads over the centuries of their repeti-

tion to ever fresh possibilities. So with our three readings today. In the first we jump from the early Proto-Isaiah of the last two Sundays to a passage which, though still reckoned to fall with the first great section of the scroll, has much of the imagery and even content of the second section (chapters 40-59) which will be rounded off in the third (from chapter sixty to the end of the roll). Exile is presupposed, for return is the strongest theme. But the return is not merely geographical. It is not just the repossession, as it were, of a territory somewhere on earth, however central or holy. No. The return is restorative, curative, interiorly awakening. In it real human beings (not just *like* ourselves but *including* ourselves), are touched by God. The result is a definitive, unending joy.

The Gospel gives us our Lord's own appraisal of the person and work of John the Baptist as recalled, probably some decades later, by the Matthaean community. Jesus values John highly but finds something missing in his preaching and his followers. John is definitely the Lord's messenger but his message cannot, like that of Jesus, be translated into miraculously restorative action. All John can do is point forward. Jesus can (and does) realize the future in the present.

St. James tells us in the second reading that we must have the spirit of Isaiah and of the Baptist if we are so to follow Christ that our following is expectant. For this letter-writer, patience is the sign both of prophetic joy and of prophetic hope. Our patience should be quasi-agricultural. It should be like waiting for rain. It should reject all air of discouragement. It should be notably charitable and long-suffering as we relate with our brethren. It should steer clear of all judgment based on tale-bearing and malicious complaints or even on true weakness in others. God alone is judge. But patience gives prophetic strength to every utterance in God's name.

How sad is the life of a person or a group who can only look forward to a relatively Merry Christmas! How glad is the life of a man, a woman, a parish, diocese or nation healed and restored! If all we can do is point vaguely beyond the here and now we are not Christians. For in Christ unexpected realizations of God's promises come to our lives to heal us and raise us up whenever and wherever he wills. There is no need to wait for Christmas or for the End of Time. Christ through his Resurrection power will come to us when we open ourselves truly to his Spirit. But we must not expect his coming to us

will immediately change others. There is much in life that must be put up with for a while. If, however, God's joy sustains us no waiting will be too wearisome. For the realized Presence of God buoys us up as it eggs us on.

Fourth Sunday of Advent December 20, 1992

Readings: *Is* 7:10-14
Rm 1:1-7
Mt 1:18-24

As we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Advent Christ is very near. The "shopping days" can be numbered on one hand, and the white array of our Aguinaldo Masses has made its appearance several days ago. Our liturgical readings no longer spell expectancy in some general sense. They speak of conception, birth, a line of descent. Our Advent preparations are no longer for some undetermined Coming of the Lord, come when it may. They are for his birth according to the flesh, for something that really happened two millennia ago on this earth, a happening subject to chronology, a happening in time and space. That is what we are proximately preparing for, but the remote preparation of the previous three weeks will still have its function and add its dimension of divine timelessness and something beyond space when our proper Christmas celebration occurs.

The first reading at today's Mass, taken as it is from the seventh chapter of Isaiah and familiar as the text may be, cannot fail to strike us as the foretelling of something extraordinary. Without entering into quibbles about whether the Hebrew *halma* merely means "maiden" and its Greek translation *pathenos* undoubtedly means "virgin," whoever is going to conceive is someone special and whoever is conceived will be even more special. The context of the prophecy is, of course, a rebuke to King Ahaz, but the real content is the very reconciliation of God with man that only an abiding and human presence of the Lord can give.

Today's Gospel tells us how in time the strangely extraordinary royal promise of Isaiah was completely fulfilled in the birth of Christ. Joseph, though ostensibly his descendant, is a very different man from Ahaz. Joseph believes prophecy and angelic vision even if the phenomenon conveying them is a dream. And so what was

foretold in a time of doubt over seven hundred years before is accomplished in an atmosphere of trust, the trust of Mary who was talked about by Isaiah and the trust of Joseph who knows the prophetic oracle by heart and longs for its fulfillment. And so Presence becomes Salvation in the Person of Christ.

The preamble to Romans, which is our second reading, gives us the whole "Pauline gospel" in a few succinct expressions. It is a gospel of fulfillment, too. The descendent of David is the Son of God. He is our Risen Lord. He empowers us by grace and faith to proclaim him to all who are called from every nation under the sun to be his possession. Whereas the first reading and the Gospel of today's Mass have a certain static quality of a *fait accompli*, Paul's verses are a dynamic appeal to the reality of Christ here and now. Whereas the other readings can be seen as telling of sign-posts in the history of salvation, St. Paul is giving no history of the Roman Church. Rather he is (in the power of the Spirit who inspires him) challenging us as community in a way that has been repeated down the years but has never lost its fresh verve. He challenges us in a way that demands an obedience from each of our hearts as great as Joseph's.

Christmas is very near. Do we believe in the birth of Christ as foretold and carried out in the divine plan? Do we believe in the role of Mary as Virgin Mother? Do we believe that God present as man can save us and bring us to the Father? If we do, our hearts are flooded with grace and our faith is made firm in love. The power, not only of the Incarnation but of the Saving Work of Christ, in all its aspects is made ours. We become not just hearers but witnesses, not just witnesses but proclaimers, for the truth of the Lord lives at the center of our lives and radiates glory through us to all whom we meet and greet.

Solemnity of the Lord's Birth
(Christmas - Mass on the Day)
December 25, 1992

Readings: *Is 52:7-10*
Heb 1:1-6
Jn 1:1-18

In the previous Masses at Midnight and at Dawn the mystery of Christ's birth and manifestation to the shepherds of Bethlehem

were proclaimed in words of St. Luke's Gospel, reinforced by Isaian and Pauline texts telling of the antecedents and effects of this great mystery in the life of Israel, of the Church and of the human race. At this mass the emphasis is somewhat different and the doctrinal scope more profound. For salvation which comes from, of and with Christ is universal. The grace of the Incarnation is such that God speaks plainly through a man. And this Man is both God from all eternity and God incarnate. In brief, what our readings say is that the world has become a different place now that Mary has given birth to Jesus Christ our Lord.

The fifty-second chapter of Isaiah begins with an enthronement hymn which resounds to the glory of God as King and the special role of the holy city of Jerusalem as seat of benediction. The resonance of this hymn is repeated from watchman to watchman and is meant to sound through all the earth. The text is well selected for it treats of what Christmas is all about. God has come to us in person and unmasked. He comes as King. He comes as restorer. And there is no doubt as to who he is or as to what he is doing. Nor can the overwhelming effects of his saving action be diverted or diminished by the sins of man or the wiles of Satan.

The great Prologue to St. John's Gospel is an explicit and indisputable statement of Christ as we believe him to be and as he is. He is Word. He is God. He is creative and creating Word of God. He is Light. He gives us hope and a new identity before the Father. He shows us glory. For he becomes man and, in doing so, becomes the source of a Life and a Grace which are at once both his and ours. Thus, Christmas, which commemorates his birth, lifts us from being "old rags" tossed into the corner when our use seemed accomplished into being once again persons, truly human persons, restored to God's friendship by his Son made flesh, lifted to glory in a new life of "amazing grace" almost beyond description, certainly beyond compare.

The second reading from Hebrews shows that this manifestation of God in Christ is part of an unfolding process ordered and blessed by the Father. It once (and many times) involved prophecy. Now it involves more – the word of the Word. God can speak to man with an intelligible human voice. The brilliance of divine light and glory can be seen on a human face and through human acts. And both sin and death will be destroyed. Human nature is exalted far above

the heavens and angels fall before the incarnate Lord in humble adoration of God's first born and only son.

What wonders are given to us if we really believe in Christ! A treasure is ours beyond human expectation in its arrival and beyond any limit in its vast, universal supply. What a glorious day is Christmas. For the Word is made flesh. He pitches his tent and stays with us. How wondrous beyond telling are his words and his works. They bring us to the truth and goodness of God. Our eyes are opened. Our ears tingle with joy. Our hearts are expanded and our minds lit up by the abiding presence of such a Lord. We keep his birth today. May we treasure its implications all our days. Forever!

Solemnity of the Holy Family
Jesus, Mary and Joseph
December 27, 1992

Readings: *Si 3:2-6 & 12-14 (Greek)*
Col 3:12-21
Mt 2:13-15 & 19-23

The Feast of the Holy Family, which normally is kept on the Sunday within the Octave of Christmas, as it is this year, is one of recent origin and questionable import. This is not because three persons, one theandric (of two natures: divine and human) and two human but of unique role and character are not worthy of celebration. Nor is it because their interrelationship is unworthy of a real place in the consideration made liturgically of the mysteries of the Church. Rather, the difficulty is twofold. Our concept of "Holy Family" relies on scarcity of information and it lends itself to sentimental anachronisms about family life that certainly cannot be applied with realism to the socio-religious place of the family in late Judaism. People then lived in closeknit clans, not unitary groups of father, mother and child. A household was filled with grandparents and other elders, parents, uncles, aunts, children who were cousins and dozens of in-laws and vaguely related retainers. All of these people were governed by the Law of God and Roman law, too. But they made up nothing like what pious estampitas often portray and imply.

This feast came to be when certain dioceses in Belgium and elsewhere asked Leo XIII to allow it in 1893. Later, after the First World War, Pope Benedict XV extended it to the Universal Church in

1921. This Pope was concerned about incipient problems of broken homes and, indeed, the breakdown of social structures in general which had begun in Western Europe. These have never been and still are not worldwide problems. But the Pope's deeper intent, that "the blessings flowing from meditation on the virtues of the Holy Family" might be secured, has, of course, universal and laudable implications.

The first reading from Sirach (or Ecclesiasticus) shows how godly it is to honor one's father and mother. Sirach is a rather dull writer and his quaint moralisms fall rather heavily on our ears. There is nothing untrue in what he says, yet there is nothing very stimulating either. But he does introduce (almost willy-willy) one new idea. Caring for aged parents can make reparation for personal sin. We have no idea if Jesus, Mary and Joseph were ever exposed to Sirach's fastidious legalism or to his curious concept of cause and effect. It is improbable. The Pharisaic circles in which they found themselves regarded the book as uncanonical. About all we can gather from this passage is that kindness to our parents is both a duty and the cause of a reward. As we do not know how old Joseph or Mary were, we do not know if these rather superficial sentiments go hand and hand with the "virtues" they found in relationship to Christ.

The Gospel gives us the eerie story of the Flight into Egypt. When it took place, how long the exile lasted and how soon into the brief reign of Archelaus it ended Matthew does not tell us. Like all Infancy narratives this one has elusive qualities. Unlike others both in Matthew and Luke it has very little charm. In fact, terror seems to be the point. Terror is not common in most family life. But hardship is. Matthew seems to be using this story to do two things. He wants to show that early in his earthly life Jesus was no stranger to political displacement and the hardship it involves. And he wants to get the Holy Family to Nazareth, a place of which he is not fond and the name of which he purposely confounds in Aramaic with the word for "branch." Here we have some virtues: patience, perseverance, mutual protection and love. We have far more to go on than the first reading gave us, but we still know very little about the Holy Family.

As so often happens we can thank God for the second reading. Here in Colossians there are virtues galore and profound reflections on interpersonal problems and relations. Perhaps the strongest words in today's Liturgy of the Word are those commanding us "never to do anything but in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God

the Father through him." This puts us in the realm of the Spirit. It transports us from earth to Trinitarian heaven, the true "Holy Family" of God himself.

In our world, where sentimentality all too often replaces caring and concern, in our world where people use one another (including their closest relatives) for bolstering pride and hypocrisy, the true love of Jesus, Mary and Joseph for one another seems far off. But they were three members of a greater human family who more than any three persons in history submitted themselves to God's will. This caused them untold suffering, no doubt. But it was the source of their joy. It led them to glory. And so can the grace of their relationship, if we prayerfully think it through, lead us.

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