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The Enigmatic Family

Roman Carter, O.P.

The Christian family is a fluid enigma hard both to determine and to legislate for and yet a reality. The Christian family, while far from being an "endangered species," gains more or less emphasis in theology in the course of time in accordance with the "verticality" or "horizontality" of whatever perspectives may be current. It can, by its nature, never cease to be a basic unit, perhaps the basic unit in human society. But both its limits and its acknowledged demands vary from culture to culture and from one theological emphasis to another. Our ways of looking at the family have developed in a haphazard manner because Christianity has been loath to impose rigid social standards on new converts. However, our ideals of chastity, marital stability and interpersonal responsibility have, due to the nature of the Gospel, always transcended mere vague sentiment or rigid legal norms. And this transcendence has never been to establish a happy mean but, rather, to discover what is consequential for eternal life.

Even when our ideals of chastity take on the fostering of vocations to perpetual virginity and when complete sexual abstinence is extolled as a way of life we need families to produce the vocations and nurture the ideals which will lead to a formalized "religious life" wherever the Church is found. Only if we see marriage as sacrament and, thus, a source of grace, can we envision special graces for special calls. Monasticism, while being at times fairly commonplace, can never be

normative in Christianity as it is in, say, Buddhism. The Church has always condemned any exaggerated exaltation of personal chastity which would denigrate the married state.

However, necessary as it is, the family can never be (and never truly has been) a be-all or end-all in the Christian community. Whatever its structures or supposed obligations the family (like every other temporal reality) is, at best, a very laudable means to, but never an end in, Christian perfection. It is true that in highly industrialized societies family structures tend to be weakened by the necessary "socialization" of children at an early age, especially for the purposes of education. But this has never led us to deny that parents are primary and principal educators of their children.

In the Philippines today we are faced with vastly complex problems of family disintegration, and no sentiments as such (however lofty they may be) can solve these problems. For members of the family are separated for fairly long periods of time because one member or another must be abroad to earn enough money for the others to subsist. The family can split up because of marital infidelity as well. Separated parents tend to rear neurotic children. Even education, if it is any way "higher," breaks up the family because the growing members must be away from the household most of the year to pursue their studies.

Religious and priestly vocations also take members away from their families. Often even the names we are called by are not those given in baptism or recognized and generally used by our relatives. And this separation is for the sake of the Kingdom. It has to be accepted by all believers with neither protest nor compromise. But it, frankly, shatters families and their sentimental ties. For, while grace builds upon nature, grace is infinitely superior to nature and the lead of grace pulls us far beyond anything nature can offer or aspire to, much less give.

At the end of the twentieth century we would, therefore, do well to re-examine the family and every other temporal reality. We would do well to discern the effects of mass media, civil legislation and new concepts of Gospel response on the family reality. Most of all, we would do well to ask how Christian, anti-Christian, secularist or truly religious (as under the divine will) our own families are.

words for today

Pastores Dabo Vobis

John Paul II

Chapter VI

I REMIND YOU TO REKINDLE THE GIFT OF GOD THAT IS WITHIN YOU

The Ongoing Formation of Priests

Theological reasons behind ongoing formation

70. "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you" (2 Tm 1:6).

The words of Saint Paul to Timothy can appropriately be applied to the ongoing formation to which all priests are called by virtue of the "gift of God" which they have received at their ordination. The passage helps us to grasp the full truth, the absolute uniqueness of the permanent formation of priests. Here we are also helped by another text of Saint Paul, who once more writes to Timothy: "Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you. Practice these duties, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1 Tm 4:14-16).

Paul asks Timothy to "rekindle," or stir into flame, the divine gift he has received, much as one might do with the embers of a fire, in the sense of welcoming it and living it out without ever losing or forgetting that "permanent novelty" which is characteristic of every gift from God who makes all thing new (cf. Rv 21:5), and thus living it out in its unfading freshness and original beauty.

But this "rekindling" is not only the outcome of a task entrusted to the personal responsibility of Timothy, nor only the result of his efforts to use his mind and will. It is also the effect of a dynamism of grace intrinsic to God's gift. God himself, in other words, rekindles his own gift, so as better to release all the extraordinary riches of grace and responsibility contained in it.

With the sacramental outpouring of the Holy Spirit who consecrates and sends forth, the priest is configured to the likeness of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, and is sent forth to carry out a pastoral ministry. In this way the priest is marked permanently and indelibly in his inner being as a minister of Jesus and of the Church. He comes to share in a permanent and irreversible way of life and is entrusted with a pastoral ministry which, because it is rooted in his being and involves his entire life, is itself permanent. The Sacrament of Holy Order confers upon the priest sacramental grace which gives him a share not only in Jesus' saving "power" and "ministry" but also in his pastoral "love." At the same time it ensure that the priest can count on all the actual graces he needs, whenever they are necessary and useful for the worthy and perfect exercise of the ministry he has received.

We thus see that the proper foundation and original motivation for ongoing formation is contained in the dynamism of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Certainly there are also *purely human reasons* which call for the priest to engage in ongoing formation. This formation is demanded by his own continuing personal growth. Every life is a constant path towards maturity, a maturity which cannot be attained except by constant formation. It is also demanded by the priestly ministry seen in a general way and taken in common with other professions, that is as a service directed to others. There is no profession, job or work which does not require constant updating, if it is to remain current and

effective. The need to "keep pace" with the path of history is another human reason justifying ongoing formation.

But these and other motivations are taken up and become even clearer by the theological motivations mentioned previously and which demand further reflection.

The Sacrament of Holy Orders, by its nature (common to all the sacraments) as a "sign," may be considered, and truly is, a word of God. It is a word of God which *calls and sends forth*. It is the strongest expression of the priest's vocation and mission. By the Sacrament of Holy Orders, *God calls the candidate "to" the priesthood "coram Ecclesia."* The "come, follow me" of Jesus is proclaimed fully and definitively in the sacramental celebration of his Church. It is made manifest and communicated by the Church's voice, which is heard in the words of the Bishop who prays and imposes his hands. The priest then gives his response, in faith, to Jesus's call: "I am coming, to follow you." From this moment there begins that response which, as a fundamental choice, must be expressed anew and reaffirmed through the years of his priesthood in countless other responses, all of them rooted in an enlivened by that "yes" of Holy Orders.

In this sense one can speak of a vocation "*within*" the priesthood. The fact is that God continues to call and send forth, revealing his saving plan in the historical development of the priest's life and the life of the Church and of society. It is in this perspective that the meaning of ongoing formation emerges. Permanent formation is necessary in order to discern and follow this constant call or will of God. Thus the Apostle Peter is called to follow Jesus even after the Risen Lord has entrusted his flock to him: "Jesus said to him, Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go." (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, 'follow me' (Jn 21:17-19). Consequently there is a "follow me" which accompanies the Apostle's whole life and mission. It is a "follow me" in line with the call and demand of *faithfulness unto death* (cf. Jn: 22), a "follow me" which can signify a *sequela Christi* to the point of total self-giving in martyrdom.

²¹⁴Cf. Saint Augustine, In. Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus 123, 5: loc. cit., 678-680.

The Synod Fathers explained the reason justifying the need for ongoing formation, while at the same time revealing its deep nature, as faithfulness to the priestly ministry and as a "process of continual conversion."²¹⁵ It is the Holy Spirit poured out in the Sacrament who sustains the priest in this faithfulness and accompanies him and encourages him along this path of unending conversion. The gift of the Spirit does not take away the freedom of the priest. It calls on the priest to make use of his freedom in order to cooperate responsibly and accept permanent formation as a task entrusted to him. Thus permanent formation is a requirement of the priest's own faithfulness to his ministry, to his very being. It is love for Jesus Christ and fidelity to oneself. But it is also an act of love for the People of God, at whose service the priest is placed. Indeed, an act of true and proper justice: the priest owes it to God's People, whose fundamental "right" to receive the word of God, the sacraments and the service of charity, the original and irreplaceable content of the priest's own pastoral ministry, he is called to acknowledge and foster. Ongoing formation is necessary to ensure that the priest can properly respond to this right of the People of God.

The heart and form of the the priest's ongoing formation is pastoral charity: the Holy Spirit, who infuses pastoral charity, introduces and accompanies the priest to an ever deeper knowledge of the mystery of Christ which is unfathomable in its richness (cf. *Ep* 3:14ff.) and, in turn, to a knowledge of the mystery of Christian priesthood. Pastoral charity itself impels the priest to an ever deeper knowledge of the hopes, the needs, the problems, the sensibilities of the people to whom he ministers, taken in their specific situations, as individuals, in their families, in society, and in history.

All this constitutes the object of ongoing formation, understood as a conscious and free decision to live out the dynamism of pastoral charity and of the Holy Spirit who is its first source and constant nourishment. In this sense, ongoing formation is an intrinsic requirement of the gift and sacramental ministry received; and it proves necessary in every age. It is particularly urgent today, not only because of rapid changes in the social and cultural conditions of individuals and peoples among whom priestly ministry is exercised, but also because

²¹⁵Cf. *Propositio* 31.

of that "new evangelization" which constitutes the essential and pressing task of the Church at the end of the Second Millennium.

Different dimensions of ongoing formation

71. The ongoing formation of priests, whether diocesan or religious, is the natural and absolutely necessary continuation of the process of building priestly personality which began and developed in the Seminary or the Religious House with the training program which aimed at ordination.

It is particularly important to be aware of and to respect the *intrinsic link between formation before ordination to the Priesthood and formation after ordination*. Should there be a break in continuity, or worse, a complete difference between these two phases of formation, there would be a serious and immediate repercussions on pastoral work and fraternal communion among priests, especially those in different age groups. Ongoing formation is not a repetition of the formation acquired in the Seminary, simply reviewed or expanded with new and practical suggestions. Ongoing formation involves relatively new content and especially methods; it develops as a harmonious and vital process which — rooted in the formation received in the Seminary — calls for adaptations, updating and modifications, but without sharp break of continuity.

On the other hand, long-term preparation for ongoing formation should take place in the Major Seminary, where encouragement needs to be given to future priest to look forward to it, seeing its necessity, its advantages and the spirit in which it should be undertaken, and appropriate conditions for its realization need to be ensured.

By the very fact that ongoing formation is a continuation of the formation received in the Seminary, its aim cannot be the inculcation of a purely "professional" approach, which could be acquired by learning a few new pastoral techniques. Instead its aim must be that of promoting a general and integral process of constant growth, deepening each of the aspect of formation — human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral — as well as ensuring their active and harmonious integration, based on pastoral charity and in reference to it.

71. Fuller development is first required in the *human aspect* of priestly formation. Through his daily contact with people, his sharing

in their daily lives, the priest needs to develop and sharpen his human sensitivity so as to understand more clearly their needs, respond to their demands, perceive their unvoiced questions, and share the hopes and expectations, the joys and burdens which are part of life: thus he will be able to meet and enter into dialogue with all people. In particular, through coming to know and share, through making his own, the human experience of suffering in its many different manifestation, from property to illness, from rejection to ignorance, loneliness, and material or moral poverty, the priest can cultivate his own humanity and make it all the more genuine and clearly apparent by his increasingly ardent love for his fellow man.

In this task of bringing his human formation to maturity, the priest receives special assistance from the grace of Jesus Christ. The charity of the Good Shepherd was revealed not only by his gift of salvation to mankind, but also by his desire to share our life: thus the Word who became "flesh" (cf. *Jn* 1:14) desired to know joy and suffering, to experience weariness, to share feelings, to console sadness. Living as a man among and with men, Jesus Christ offers the most complete, genuine and perfect expression of what it means to be human. We see him celebrating at wedding feast of Cana, a friend's family, moved by humble crowd who follow him, giving sick or even dead children back to their parents, weeping for the death of Lazarus, and so on.

The people of God should be able to say about the priest, who has increasingly matured in human sensitivity, something similar to what we read about Jesus in the Letter to the Hebrews: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (*Heb* 4:15).

The formation of the priest in its *spiritual dimension* is required by the new Gospel life to which he has been called in a specific way by the Holy Spirit, poured out in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Spirit, by consecrating the priest and configuring him to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, creates a bond which, located in the priest's very being, demands to be assimilated and lived out in a personal, free and conscious way through an ever richer communion of life and love and an ever broader and more radical sharing in the feelings and attitudes of Jesus Christ. In this bond between the Lord

Jesus and the priest, an ontological and psychological bond, a sacramental and moral bond, is the foundation and likewise the power for that "life according to the Spirit" and that "radicalism of the Gospel" to which every priest is called today and which is fostered by ongoing formation in its spiritual aspect. This formation proves necessary also for the priestly ministry to be genuine and spiritually fruitful. "Are you exercising the care of souls?", Saint Charles Borromeo once asked in a talk to priests. And he went on to say: "Do not thereby neglect yourself. Do not give yourself for yourself. You should certainly keep in mind the souls whose pastor you are, but without forgetting yourself. My brothers, do not forget that there is nothing so necessary to all churchmen than the meditation which precedes, accompanies and follows all our actions: I will sing, says the Prophet, and I will meditate (cf. *Ps* 100:1). If you administer the sacraments, my brother, meditate upon what you are doing. If you celebrate Mass, meditate on what you are offering. If you recite the Psalms in choir, meditate to whom and of what you are speaking. If you are guiding soul, meditate in whose blood they have been cleansed. And let all be done among you in charity (*I Co* 16:14). Thus we will be able to overcome the difficulties we meet, countless as they are, each day. In any event, this is what is demanded of us by the task entrusted to us. If we act thus, we will find the strength to give birth to Christ in ourselves and in others."²¹⁶

The priest's prayer life in particular needs to be continually "re-formed." Experience teaches that in prayer one cannot live off past gains. Every day, we need not only to renew our external fidelity to times of prayer, especially those devoted to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours and those left to personal choice and not reinforced by fixed times of liturgical service, but also to strive constantly for the experience of a genuine personal encounter with Jesus, a trusting dialogue with the Father, and a deep experience of the Spirit.

What the Apostle Paul says of all Christians, that they must attain "to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (*Ep* 4:13), can be applied specifically to priests, who are called to the perfection of charity and therefore to holiness, even more so because their pastoral ministry itself demands that they be living models for all the faithful.

²¹⁶ Saint Charles Borromeo, *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, Milan 1599, 1178.

The *intellectual dimension*, of formation likewise needs to be continually fostered through the priest's entire life, especially by a commitment to study and a serious and disciplined familiarity with modern culture. As one who shares in the prophetic mission of Jesus and is part of the mystery of the Church, the Teacher of truth, the priest is called to reveal to others, in Jesus Christ, the true face of God, and as a result the true face of man.²¹⁷ This demands that the priest himself seek God's face and contemplate it with loving veneration (cf. *Ps* 26:7; 41:2). Only thus will he be able to make others know him. In particular, continuing theological study is necessary if the priest is to faithfully carry out the ministry of the word, proclaiming it clearly and without ambiguity, distinguishing it from mere human opinions, no matter how renowned and widespread these might be. Thus he will be able to stand and the service of the People of God, helping them to give an account, to all who ask, of their Christian hope (cf. *1 Pt* 3:15). Furthermore, the priest "in applying himself conscientious and diligently to theological study, is in a position to assimilate the genuine richness of the Church in a sure and personal way. Therefore, he can faithfully discharge the mission which is incumbent on him when responding to difficulties about authentic Catholic doctrine, and overcome the inclination, both in himself and other, which leads to dissent and negative attitudes towards the Magisterium and Sacred Tradition."²¹⁸

The *pastoral aspect* of ongoing formation is well expressed by the words of the Apostle Peter: "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace" (*1 Pt* 4:10). If he is to live daily according to the graces he has received, the priest must be ever more open to accepting the pastoral charity of Jesus Christ granted him by Christ's Spirit in the sacrament he has received. Just as all the Lord's activity was the fruit and sign of pastoral charity, so should the priest's ministerial activity be. Pastoral charity is a gift, but it is likewise a task, a grace and responsibility of which we must be faithful. We have, therefore, to welcome it and live out its dynamism even to its most radical demands. This pastoral charity, as has been

²¹⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 6.

²¹⁸ Synod of Bishops, Ordinary General Assembly, "The Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day," *Instrumentum laboris*, n. 55.

said, impels the priest and stimulates him to become ever better acquainted with the real situation of the men and women to whom he is sent, to discern the call of the Spirit in the historical circumstances in which he finds himself, and to seek the most suitable methods, and the most useful forms for carrying out his ministry today. Thus pastoral charity encourages and sustains the priest's human efforts for pastoral activity that is relevant, credible and effective. But this demands some kind of permanent pastoral formation.

The path towards maturity does not simply demand that the priest deepen the different aspect of his formation. It also demands above all that he be able to combine ever more harmoniously all these aspects, gradually achieving their *inner unity*. This will be made possible by pastoral charity. Indeed, pastoral charity not only coordinates and unifies the diverse aspects, but it makes them more specific, marking them out as aspects of the formation of the priest as such, that is of the priest as a clear and living image, a minister of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Ongoing formation helps the priest to overcome the temptation to reduce his ministry to an activism which becomes an end in itself, to the provision of impersonal services, even if these are spiritual or sacred, or to a business-like function which he carries out for the Church. Only ongoing formation enable the priest to *safeguard with vigilant love the "mystery" which he bears within his heart for the good of the Church and of mankind*.

The profound meaning of ongoing formation

73. The different complementary dimension of ongoing formation help us to grasp its profound meaning. Ongoing formation helps the priest to be and act as a priest in the spirit and style of Jesus the Good Shepherd.

Truth needs to be put into practice! St. James tells us as much: "Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (*Jm* 1:22). Priests are called to "live the truth" of their being, that is to live "in love" (cf. *Ep* 4:15) their identity and ministry in the Church and for the Church. They are called to become ever more aware of the gift of God, and to live it out constantly. This is the invitation Paul makes to Timothy: "guard the truth that has been entrusted to you by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us" (2 *Tm* 1:14).

In the ecclesiological context which we have recalled more than once, we can consider the profound meaning of ongoing priestly formation in relation to the priest's presence and activity in the Church as *mysterium, communio et missio*.

Within the Church as "mystery" the priest is called by his ongoing formation to *safeguard and develop in faith his awareness of the total and marvelous truth of his being*: he is a minister of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God (cf. *1 Co 4:1*). Paul expressly asked Christians to consider him in this way. But even before that, he himself lives in the awareness of the sublime gift he has received from the Lord. This should be the case with every priest, if he wishes to remain true to his being. But this is possible only in faith, only by looking at things through the eyes of Christ.

In this sense it can be said that ongoing formation has as its aim that *the priest become a believer and ever more of one*: that he grow in understanding of who he truly is, seeing things with the eyes of Christ. The priest must safeguard this truth with grateful and joyful love. He must renew his faith when he exercises his priestly ministry; he must feel himself a minister of Christ, a sacrament of the love of God for mankind, every time that he is the means and the living instrument for conferring God's grace upon men. He must recognize this same truth in his fellow priests, for this is the basis of his respect and love for other priests.

74. Ongoing formation helps priests, *within the Church as "communion,"* to deepen their wariness that their ministry is ultimately aimed at gathering together the family of God as a brotherhood inspired by charity and to lead it to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit.²¹⁹

The priest should grow in *awareness of the deep communion uniting him to the People of God*: he is not only "in the forefront of" the Church, but above all "in" the Church. He is a brother among brothers. By Baptism, which marks him with the dignity and freedom of the children of God in the only-begotten Son, the priest is a member

²¹⁹Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 6.

of the one Body of Christ (cf. *Ep* 4:16). His consciousness of this communion leads to a need to awaken and deepen *co-responsibility* in the one common mission of salvation, with a prompt and heartfelt esteem for all the charisms and tasks which the Spirit gives believers for the building up of the Church. It is above all in the exercise of the pastoral ministry, directed by his very nature to the good of the People of God, that the priest must live and give witness to his profound communion with all. As Pope Paul VI wrote: "We must become brothers to all at the very same time as we wish to be their shepherds, fathers and teachers. The climate of dialogue is friendship. Indeed it is service."²²⁰

More specifically, the priest is called to deepen his awareness of being a member of the particular Church in which he is incardinated, joined by a bond that is juridical, spiritual and pastoral. This awareness presupposes a particular love for his own Church and it makes that love grow. This is truly the living and permanent goal of the pastoral charity which should accompany the life of the priest and lead him to share in the history of life-experience of this same particular Church, in its riches and in its weaknesses, in its difficulties and in its hopes, working in it for its growth. And thus to feel himself both enriched by the particular Church and actively involved in building it up, carrying on — as an individual and together with other priests — that pastoral involvement typical of his brothers priest who have gone before him. A necessary requirement of this pastoral charity towards one's own particular Church and its future ministry is the concern which the priest should have to find, so to speak, someone to replace him in the priesthood.

The priest must grow in his awareness of the *communion existing between the various particular Churches*, a communion rooted in their very being as Churches which make present in various places Christ's one universal Church. This awareness of the communion of the particular Churches will foster an "*exchange of gifts*," beginning with living and personal gifts, such as priests themselves. There should be a readiness, indeed a generous commitment, to provide for a fair distribution of clergy.²²¹ Among these particular Churches, those

²²⁰Paul VI Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam suam* (6 August 1964), III: AAS 56 (1964), 647.

²²¹Cf. Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, Directives for the promotion of mutual cooperation between particular Churches and especially for a more suitable distribution of the clergy *Postquam Apostoli* (25 March 1980): AAS 72 (1980), 343-364.

should be kept in mind which, because they are "deprived of freedom, cannot have their own vocations," as well as those "Churches which have emerged recently from persecution and poor Churches which have been given help already for many years and from many sources with great-hearted brotherliness, and still receive help."²²²

Within the ecclesial communion, the priest is called in particular to grow, thanks to his ongoing formation, *in and with his own presbyterate in union with his Bishop*. The presbyterate, in the fullness of its truth, is a *mysterium*: it is in fact a supernatural reality because it is rooted in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. This is its source and origin. This is its "place" of birth and of its growth. Indeed, "priests by means of the Sacrament of Orders are tied with a personal and indissoluble bond to Christ the one priest. The Sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred upon each of them as individuals, but they are inserted into the communion of the presbyterate united with the Bishop (*Lumen Gentium*, 28; *Presbyterorum ordinis*, nn. 7 and 8)."²²³

This sacramental origin is reflected and continued in the sphere of priestly ministry: from *mysterium* to *ministerium*. "Unity among the priests with the Bishop and among themselves is not something added from the outside to the nature of their service, but expresses its essence inasmuch as it is the care of Christ the priest for the People gathered in the unity of the Blessed Trinity."²²⁴ This unity among priests, lived in a spirit of pastoral charity, makes priests witnesses of Jesus Christ, who prayed to the Father "that they may all be one" (*Jn* 17:21).

The presbyterate thus appears as a *true family*, as a fraternity whose ties do not arise from flesh and blood but from the grace of Holy Orders. This grace takes up and elevates the human and psychological bonds of affection and friendship, as well as the spiritual bonds which exist between priests. It is a grace that grows ever greater and finds expression in the most varied forms of mutual assistance, spiritual and material as well. Priestly fraternity excludes no one. However it can and should have its preferences, those of the Gospel, reserved for those who have greater need of help and encouragement. This fraternity

²²² *Propositio* 39.

²²³ *Propositio* 34.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

"takes special care of the young priests, maintains a kind and fraternal dialogue with those of the middle and older age groups, and with those who for whatever reasons are facing difficulties; as for those priests who have given up this way of life or are not following it at this time, this brotherhood does not forget them but follows them all the more with fraternal solicitude."²²⁵

Religious clergy who live and work in a particular Church also belong to the one presbyterate, albeit under a different title. Their presence is a source of enrichment for all priests. The different particular charisms which they live, while challenging all priests to grow in the understanding of the priesthood itself, help to encourage and promote ongoing priestly formation. The gift of religious life, in the framework of the Diocese, when accompanied by genuine esteem and rightful respect for the particular features of each Institute and each spiritual tradition, broadens the horizon of Christian witness and contributes in various ways to an enrichment of priestly spirituality, above all with regard to the proper relationship and interplay between the values of the particular Church and those of the whole People of God. For their part, Religious will be concerned to ensure a spirit of true ecclesial communion, a genuine participation in the progress of the diocese and the pastoral decisions of the Bishop, generously putting their own charism at the service of building up everyone in charity.²²⁶

Finally, it is in the context of the Church as communion and in the context of the presbyterate that we can best discuss the problem of *priestly loneliness* treated by the Synod Fathers. There is a loneliness which all priests experience and which is completely normal. But there is another loneliness which is the product of various difficulties and which in turn creates further difficulties. With regard to the latter, "active participation in the diocesan presbyterate, regular contact with the Bishop and with the other priests, mutual cooperation, common life

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 38; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priest *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 1; Decree on Priestly Formation *Optatam totius*, n. 1; Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes and Sacred Congregation for Bishops, Directives for mutual relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church *Mutuae relationes* (14 May 1978), n. 2; n. 10: *loc. cit.*, 475:479-480.

or fraternal dealings between priests, as also friendship and good relations with the lay faithful who are active in parish life, are very useful means to overcome the negative effects of loneliness which the priest can sometimes experience."²²⁷

Loneliness does not however create only difficulties; it can also offer positive opportunities for the priestly life: "when it is accepted in a spirit of oblation and is seen as an opportunity for greater intimacy with Jesus Christ the Lord, solitude can be an opportunity for prayer and study, as also a help for sanctification and also for human growth."²²⁸

It should be added that a certain type of solitude is a necessary element in ongoing formation. Jesus often went off alone to pray (cf. Mt 14:23). The ability to handle a healthy solitude is indispensable for caring for one's interior life. Here we are speaking of a solitude filled with the presence of the Lord who puts us in contact with the Father, in the light of the Spirit. In this regard, concern for silence and looking for places and times of "desert" are necessary for the priest's permanent formation, whether in the intellectual, spiritual or pastoral areas. In this regard too, it can be said that those unable to have a positive experience of their own solitude are incapable of genuine and fraternal fellowship.

75. Ongoing formation aims at *increasing the priest's awareness of his share in the Church's saving mission*. In the Church's "mission," the priest's permanent formation appears not only as a necessary condition but also as an indispensable means for constantly refocusing on the *meaning* of his mission and for ensuring that he is carrying it out with fidelity and generosity. By this formation, the priest is helped to become aware of the seriousness and yet the splendid grace of an obligation which cannot let him rest, so that like Paul, he must be able to say: "If I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Co 9:16). At the same time, he also becomes aware of a demand, whether explicit or implicit, which insistently comes from all those whom God is unceasingly calling to salvation.

²²⁷ *Propositio* 35.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

Only a suitable ongoing formation will succeed in confirming the priest in the essential and decisive element in his ministry, namely his faithfulness. The Apostle Paul writes: "it is required of stewards (of the mysteries of God) that they be found trustworthy" (1 Co 4:2). The priest must be faithful no matter how many and varied the difficulties he meets, even in the most uncomfortable situations or when he is understandably tired, expending all his available energy until the end of his life. Paul's witness should be both an example and an incentive for every priest: "We put no obstacle — he writes to the Christians of Corinth — in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watching, hunger: by purity, knowledge, forbearance, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honour and dishonour, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything" (2 Co 6:3-16).

At every age and in all conditions of life

76. Permanent or ongoing formation, precisely because it is "permanent," should *always* be a part of the priest's life. In every phase and condition of his life, at every level of responsibility he has in the Church, he is undergoing formation. Clearly then, the possibilities for formation and the different kinds of formation are connected with the variety of ages, conditions of life and duties one finds among priests.

Ongoing formation is a duty, in the first instance, for *young priests*. They should have frequent and systematic meetings which, while they continue the sound and serious formation they have received in the Seminary, will gradually lead young priests to grasp and incarnate the unique wealth of God's gift which is the priesthood and to express their capabilities and ministerial attitude, also through an ever more convinced and responsible insertion in the presbyterate, and therefore in communion and co-responsibility with all their brethren.

With priests who have just come out of the Seminary, a certain sense of "having had enough" is quite understandable, when faced with new times of study and meeting. But the idea that priestly formation ends on the day one leaves the Seminary is false and dangerous, and needs to be totally rejected.

Young priests who take part in meetings for ongoing formation will be able to help one another by exchanging experiences and reflecting of how to put into practice the ideals of the priesthood and of ministry which they have imbibed during their Seminary years. At the same time, their active participation in an example and stimulus to other priest who are ahead of them in years. They can thus show their love for all those making up the presbyterate and how much they care for their particular Church, which needs well formed priests.

In order to accompany the young priests in this first delicate phase of their life and ministry, it is very opportune, and perhaps even absolutely necessary nowadays, to create a suitable support structure, with appropriate guides and teachers. Here priests can find, in an organized way that continues through their first years of ministry, the help they need to make a good start in their priestly service. Through frequent and regular meetings — of sufficient duration and held within a community setting, if possible — they will be assured of having times for rest, prayer, reflection and fraternal exchange. It will then be easier for them, right from the beginning, to give a balanced approach, based on the Gospel, to their priestly life. And in those cases where individual local Churches are not in a position to offer this service to their own young priests, it will be a good idea for neighboring Churches to pool resources and draw up suitable programmes.

77. Ongoing formation is a duty also for *priests of middle age*. They can face a number of risks, precisely because of their age, as for example, an exaggerated activism or a certain routine approach to the exercise of their ministry. As a result, the priest can be tempted to presume he can manage on his own, as if his own personal experience, which has seemed trustworthy to that point, needs no contact with anything or anyone else. Often enough, the older priest has a sort of interior fatigue which is dangerous. It can be a sign of resigned disillusionment in the face of difficulties and failures. Such situations find an answer in ongoing formation, in a continued and balanced checking of oneself and one's activity, constantly looking

for motivation and aids which will enable one to carry on one's mission. As a result the priest will maintain a vigilant spirit, ready to face the perennial yet ever new demands of salvation which people keep bringing to him as the "man of God."

Ongoing formation should also involve those *priests* who by their advanced years can be called *elderly* and who in some Churches make up the greater part of the presbyterate. The presbyterate should show them gratitude for the faithful service they have performed on behalf of Christ and his Church, and also practical solidarity to help them in their condition. Ongoing formation for these priests will not be a matter so much of study, updating and educational renewal, but rather a calm and reassuring confirmation of the part which they are still called upon to play in the presbyterate, not only inasmuch as they continue, perhaps in different ways, their pastoral ministry, but also because of the possibilities they themselves have, thanks to their experience of life and apostolate, of becoming effective teachers and trainers of other priests.

Also those priests who, because of the burden of work or illness, find themselves in a *condition of physical weakness or moral fatigue* can be helped by an ongoing formation which will encourage them to keep up their service to the Church in a calm and sustained fashion, and not to isolate themselves either from the community or from the presbyterate. However, they should reduce their external activities and dedicate themselves to those pastoral contacts and that personal spirituality which can help them keep up their motivation and priestly joy. Ongoing formation will help such priest to keep alive the conviction, which they themselves have inculcated in the faithful, that they continue to be active members for the building up of the Church, especially by virtue of their union with the suffering Christ and with so many other brothers and sisters in the Church who are sharing in the Lord's Passion, reliving Paul's spiritual experience when he said, "I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I complete what is lacking in Christ's affliction for the sake of his body, that is, the Church" (Col 1:24).²²⁹

²²⁹Cf. *Propositio* 36.

The agents of ongoing formation

78. The condition in which the ministry of priests often and in many places has to be carried out nowadays do not make it easy to undertake a serious commitment to formation. The multiplication of responsibilities and services, the complexity of human life in general and the life of the Christian communities in particular, the activism and anxiety that are features of vast areas of society today often deprive priests of the time and energies they need to "take heed of themselves" (cf. 1 Tm 4:16).

This should increase the responsibility of priests to overcome these difficulties and see them as a challenge to plan and carry out a permanent formation which will respond appropriately to the greatness of God's gift and to the urgency of the demands and requirements of our time.

Those responsible for the ongoing formation of priests are to be found in the Church as "communion." In this sense, the *entire particular Church* has the responsibility, under the guidance of the Bishop, to develop and look after the different aspects of her priests' permanent formation. Priests are not there to serve themselves but the People of God. So, ongoing formation, in ensuring the human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral ministry leads to a constant and fruitful mutual exchange between the priest's life of faith and that of the laity. Indeed the *very relationship and sharing of life between the priest and the community*, if it is wisely conducted and made use of, will be a fundamental contribution to permanent formation, which cannot be reduced to isolated episodes or initiatives, but covers the whole ministry and life of the priest.

The truth is that the Christian experience of persons who are simple and humble, the spiritual enthusiasm of people who truly love God, the courageous application of the faith to practical life by Christians involved in all kinds of social and civil tasks — all these things are embraced by the priest who, while illuminating them with his priestly service, at the same time draws from them a precious spiritual nourishment. Even the doubts, crises and hesitations in the face of all kinds of personal or social situations, the temptation to rejection or despair at times of pain, illness, death: all the difficult circumstances which people find in their path as Christians are fraternally lived and

sincerely suffered in the priest's heart. And he, in seeking answers for others, is constantly spurred on to find them first of all for himself.

And so the entire People of God, in each and every one of its members, can and should offer precious assistance to the ongoing formation of its priests. In this sense the people should see that priests are allowed time for study and prayer. They should ask of them that for which Christ has sent them and not requires anything else. They should offer to help in the various aspects of the pastoral mission, especially in those related to human development and works of charity. They should establish cordial and brotherly relations with them, helping priests to remember that they are not "to lord it over" the faithful, but rather "work with them for their joy" (cf. 2 Co 1:24).

The particular Church's responsibility for the formation of its priest is specific and depends on its different members, starting with the priest himself.

79. In a certain sense, it is the priest himself, *the individual priest, who is the person primarily responsible in the Church for ongoing formation*. Truly each priest has the duty, rooted in the Sacrament of Holy Order, to be faithful to the gift God has given him and to respond to the called for daily conversion which comes with the gift itself. The regulations and norms established by Church authority, as also the example given by other priests, are not enough to make permanent formation attractive unless the individual priest is personally convinced of its need and is determined to make use of the opportunities, times and forms in which it comes. Ongoing formation keeps up one's "youthfulness" of spirit, which is something that cannot be imposed from without. Each priest must continually find it within himself. Only those who keep ever alive their desire to learn and grow can be said to enjoy this "youthfulness."

The responsibility of the Bishop and, with him, of the *presbyterate*, is fundamental. The Bishop's responsibility is based on the fact that priests receive their priesthood from him and share his pastoral solicitude for the People of God. He is responsible for ongoing formation, the purpose of which is to ensure that all his priests are generously faithful to the gift and ministry received, that they are priests such as the People of God wishes to have and has a "right" to. This responsibility leads the Bishop, to outline a project and establish a

programme which can ensure that ongoing formation is not something haphazard but a systematic offering of subject, which unfold by stages and take on precise forms. The Bishop will live up to his responsibility, not only by seeing to it that his presbyterate has places and times for its ongoing formation, but also by being present in person and taking part in an interested and friendly way. Often it will be suitable, or indeed necessary, for Bishops of neighboring dioceses or of an ecclesiastical region to come together and join forces to be able to offer initiatives for permanent formation that are better organized and more interesting, such as in-service training courses in biblical, theological and pastoral studies, residential weeks, conference series, and times to reflect on and examine how, from the pastoral point of view, the affairs of the presbyterate and the ecclesial community are progressing.

To fulfil his responsibility in this field, the bishop will also ask for help from theological and pastoral faculties or institutes, seminaries, offices and federations that bring together people — priests, religious and lay faithful — who are involved in priestly formation.

In the context of the particular Churches, *families* have a significant role to play. The life of ecclesial communities, led and guided by priests, looks to families inasmuch as they are “domestic churches.” In particular the role of the family into which the priest is born needs to be stressed. By being one with their son in his aims, the family can offer him its own important contribution to his mission. The plan of Providence chose the priest’s family to be the place in which his vocation was planted and nourished, an indispensable help for the growth and development of his vocation. Now the family, with the greatest respect for their son who has chosen to give himself to God and neighbour, should always remain as a faithful and encouraging witness of his mission, supporting that mission and sharing in it with devotion and respect. In this way the family will help bring God’s providential plan to completion.

Times, forms and means for ongoing formation

80. While every moment can be an “acceptable time” (2 Co 6:2) for the Holy Spirit to lead the priest to a direct growth in prayer, study and an awareness of his own pastoral responsibilities, nevertheless there are certain “privileged” moments for this, even though they may be common and prearranged.

Let us recall, in the first place, the meetings of *the bishop with his presbyterate*, whether they be liturgical (in particular the celebration of the Chrism Mass on Holy Thursday), or pastoral and educational, related to pastoral activity or to the study of specific theological problems.

There are also *spiritual gatherings for priests*, such as spiritual exercises, days of recollection and spirituality, etc. These are opportunities for spiritual and pastoral growth, in which one can devote more time to pray in peace; opportunities to get back to the what it means deep down to be a priest, to find fresh motives for faithfulness and pastoral endeavor.

Study workshops and sessions for reflection in common are also important. They help to prevent cultural impoverishment or getting entrenched in one's ways, even in the pastoral field, as a result of mental laziness. They help to foster a greater synthesis between the various elements of the spiritual, intellectual and apostolic life. They open minds and hearts to the new challenges of history and to the new appeals which the Spirit addresses to the Church.

81. Many ways and means are at hand to make ongoing formation an ever more precious living experience for priests. Among them, let us recall the different *forms of common life* among priests, which have always existed, though they have appeared in different ways and with different degrees of intensity in the life of the Church: "today, it is impossible not to recommend them, especially among those who live together or are pastorally involved in the same place. Beside the advantage which comes to the apostolate and its activities, this common life of priests offers to all, to fellow priests and lay faithful alike, a shining example of charity and unity."²³⁰

Another help can be given by *priestly associations*, in particular by priestly secular institutes — which have as their characteristic feature their being diocesan — through which priests are more closely

²³⁰ Synod of Bishops, 8th Ordinary General Assembly, "The formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day," *Instrumentum laboris*, n. 60. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, n. 30; Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 8; C.I.C., can. 550 #2.

united to their Bishop, and which constitute "a state of consecration in which priests by means of vows or other sacred bond consecrate themselves to incarnate in their life the evangelical counsels."²³¹ All the forms of "priestly fraternity" approved by the Church are useful not only for the spiritual life but also for the apostolic and pastoral life.

Spiritual direction too contributes in no small way to the ongoing formation of the priests. It is a well-trying means and has lost none of its value. It ensures spiritual formation. It fosters and maintains faithfulness and generosity in the carrying out of the priestly ministry. As Pope Paul VI wrote before his election to the Pontificate: "Spiritual direction has a wonderful purpose. We could say it is indispensable for the moral and spiritual education of young people who want to find what their vocation in life is and follow it wherever it may lead, with utter loyalty. It retains its beneficial effect as all stages of life, when in the light and affection of a devout and prudent counsel one asks for a check on one's own right intention and for support in the generous fulfilment of one's own duties. It is a very delicate but immensely valuable psychological means. It is an educational and psychological art calling for deep responsibility in the one who practices it. Whereas for the one who receives it, it is a spiritual act of humility and trust."²³²

CONCLUSION

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

Today, this promise of God is still living and at work in the Church. At all times, she knows she is the fortunate receiver of these prophetic words. She sees them put into practice daily in so many parts of the world, or rather, in so many human hearts, young hearts in particular. On the threshold of the third millennium, and in the face of the serious and urgent needs which confront the Church and the world, she yearns to see this promise fulfilled in a new and richer way, more intensely and effectively: she hopes for an extraordinary outpouring of the Spirit of Pentecost.

²³¹Propositio 37.

²³²G.B. Montini, Pastoral Letter on the Moral Sense, 1961.

The Lord's promise calls forth from the heart of the Church a prayer, that is a confident and burning petition in the love of the Father, who, just as he has sent Jesus the Good Shepherd, the Apostles, their successors and a countless host of priests, will continue to show to the men of today his faithfulness, his goodness.

And the Church is ready to respond to this grace. She feels in her heart that God's gift begs for a united and generous reply: the entire People of God should pray and work tirelessly for priestly vocations. Candidates for the priesthood should prepare themselves very conscientiously to welcome God's gift and put it into practice, knowing that the Church and the world have an absolute need of them. They should deepen their love for Christ the Good Shepherd, pattern their hearts on his, be ready to go out as his image into the highways of the world to proclaim to all mankind Christ the Way, the Truth and the Life.

I appeal to families. May parents, mothers in particular, be generous in giving their sons to the Lord, when he calls them to the priesthood. May they cooperate joyfully in their vocational journey, realizing that in this way they will be increasing and deepening their Christian fruitfulness in the Church and that, in a sense, they will experience the blessedness of Mary, the Virgin Mother: "Blessed are you among women, blessed is the fruit of your womb!" (Lk 1:42).

Today's young people I say: be more docile to the voice of the Spirit, let the great expectations of the Church, of mankind, resound in the depths of your hearts. Do not be afraid to open your minds to Christ the Lord who is calling. Feel his living look upon you and respond enthusiastically to Jesus when he asks you to follow him without reserve.

The Church responds to grace through the commitment which priests make to receive that ongoing formation which is required by the dignity and responsibility conferred on them by the Sacrament of Holy Orders. All priests are called to become aware how especially urgent it is for them to receive formation at the present time: the new evangelization needs new evangelizers, and these are the priests who are serious about living their priesthood as a specific path towards holiness.

God promises the Church not just any sort of shepherds, but shepherds "after his own heart." And God's "heart" has revealed itself to us fully in the heart of Christ the Good Shepherd. Christ' heart continues today to have compassion for the multitudes and to give them the bread of truth, the bread of love, the bread of life (cf. *Mk* 6:30ff), and it pleads to be allowed to beat in other hearts — priests' hearts: "You give something to eat" (*Mt* 6:37). People need to come out of their anonymity and fear. They need to be known and called by name, to walk in safety along the path of life, to be found again if they have become lost, to be loved, to receive salvation as the supreme gift of God's love. All this is done by Jesus, the Good Shepherd — by himself and by his priests with him.

Now, as I bring this Exhortation to a close, I turn my thoughts to all aspirants to the priesthood, to seminarians and to priests who in all parts of the world — even in the most difficult and dramatic conditions, but always with the joyous struggle to be faithful to the Lord and to serve his flock unswervingly — are offering their lives daily in order that faith, hope and charity may grow in human hearts and in the history of the men and women of our day.

Dear brother priests, you do this because our Lord himself, with the strength of his Spirit, has called you to incarnate in the earthen vessels of your simple lives the priceless treasure of his Good Shepherd's love.

In communion with the Synod Fathers and in the name of all the Bishops of the world and of the entire community of the Church I wish to express all the gratitude which your faithfulness and service deserve. ²³³

And while I wish for all of you the grace to rekindle daily the gift of God you have received with the laying on of hands (cf. *2 Tm* 1:6), to feel the comfort of the deep friendship which binds you to Jesus and unites you with one another, the comfort of experiencing the joy of seeing the flock of God grow in an ever greater love for him and for the people, of cultivating the tranquil conviction that the one who began

²³³ Cf. *Propositio* 40.

in you the good work will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (cf. *Ph* 1:16); I turn with each and every one of you in *prayer to Mary, Mother and Teacher of our priesthood.*

Every aspect of priestly formation can be referred to Mary, the human being who has responded better than any other to God's call. Mary became both the servant and the disciple of the Word to the point of conceiving, in her heart and in her flesh, the Word made man, so as to give him to mankind. Mary was called to educate the one Eternal Priest, who became docile and subject to her motherly authority. With her example and intercession the Blessed Virgin keeps vigilant watch over the growth of vocations and priestly life in the Church.

And so we priests are called to have an ever firmer and more tender devotion to the Virgin Mary and to show it by imitating her virtues and praying to her often.

*O Mary,
Mother of Jesus Christ and Mother of priests,
accept this title which we bestow on you
to celebrate your motherhood
and to contemplate with you the Priesthood
of your Son and your sons,
O Holy Mother of God.*

*O Mother of Christ,
to the Messiah-Priest you gave a body of flesh
through the anointing of the Holy Spirit
for the salvation of the poor and the
contrite of heart;
guard priests in your heart and in the Church,
O Mother of the Savior.
O Mother of Faith,
you accompanied to the Temple the Son of Man,
the fulfilment of the promises given to the fathers;*

*give to the Father for his glory
the priests of your Son.
O Ark of the Covenant.*

*O Mother of the Church,
in the midst of the disciples in the Upper Room
you prayed to the Spirit
for the new People and their Shepherds;
obtain for the Order of Presbyters
a full measure of gifts,
O Queen of the Apostles.*

*O Mother of Jesus Christ,
you were with him at the beginning
of his life and mission,
you sought the Master among the crowd,
you stood beside him when he was lifted
up from the earth
consumed as the one eternal sacrifice,
and you had John, your son, near at hand;
accept from the beginning those
who have been called,
protect their growth,
in their life ministry accompany
your sons,
O Mother of Priests.*

Amen.

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 25 March, the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord, in the year 1992, the fourteenth of my Pontificate.

JOANNES PAULUS II

New Media can Serve the 'New Evangelization'*

THE HOLY FATHER'S MESSAGE FOR 27TH WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

More than a year after the publication of the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis novae* on the communications media, I once again invite all of you to reflect on the vision of the modern world which the Instruction presented and on the practical implications of the situations it described. The Church cannot ignore the many unprecedented changes brought about by progress in this important and ubiquitous aspect of modern living. Each of us should ask for the wisdom necessary to appreciate the opportunities which developments in modern communications technology offer for serving God and his people, while at the same time recognizing the challenges such progress inevitably poses.

**Producers and consumers of media have important moral responsibilities in their regard, the Holy Father reminds us in his annual Message for World Communications Day. The 27th World Communications Day will be celebrated on 23 May, but the Message was published on the Feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron of the Catholic press. The following is the English original of the message based on this year's theme "Videocassettes and audiocassettes in the formation of culture and conscience".*

As the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis novae* reminds us, "a vast expansion of human communications is profoundly influencing culture everywhere" (n. 1). Indeed we may speak of a "new culture" created by modern communications, which affects everyone, particularly the younger generation, and is itself largely the result of technological advances which have created "new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology" (cf. *Redemptoris missio*, n. 37). Today, as the Church strives to carry out her perennial mission of proclaiming the Word of God, she faces the immense challenge of evangelizing this new culture and expressing the unchanging truth of the Gospel in its language. Because all believers are affected by these developments, each of us is called to adapt to changing situations and to discover effective and responsible ways to use the communications media for God's glory and for the service of his creation. •

In my message for World Communications Day last year, I mentioned that among the realities we celebrate on this annual occasion are the God-given gifts of speech, of hearing and of sight which make communication possible between us. This year the theme of the Day focuses on two specific "new" media which serve these very senses in a remarkable way, namely, *audiocassettes and videocassettes*.

The audiocassette and the videocassette have made it possible for us to have at hand and easily transport unlimited numbers of programmes in voice and vision, whether for instruction or entertainment, for a more understanding of news and information or for the appreciation of beauty and artistry. These new resources should be recognized as instruments which God, by means of human intelligence and ingenuity, has put at our disposal. Like all of God's gifts, they are meant to be used for a good purpose and to assist individuals and communities to grow in knowledge and appreciation of the truth, as well as in sensitivity to the dignity and needs of others. Audiocassettes and videocassettes therefore have a powerful potential for helping individuals to develop culturally, socially, and in the religious sphere. They can be of great service in transmitting the faith, even though they can never replace the personal witness which is essential to the proclamation of the full truth and value of the Christian message.

It is my hope that those engaged professionally in the production of audio or video programmes in cassette or other forms, will reflect on the need for the Christian message to find expression, explicitly or implicitly, in the new culture created by modern communications (cf. *Aetatis novae*, n. 11). This should not only be expected to happen as a natural consequence of "the Church's active, sympathetic presence within the world of communications" (*ibid.*), but also as the result of a precise commitment on the part of communicators. The professionals who rate at their true value the impact and influence of the media productions they create will take particular care to make them of such high moral quality that their effect upon the formation of culture will invariably be a positive one. They will resist the ever-present lure of easy profit and will firmly refuse to take part in any production which will exploits human weakness, offends consciences, or affronts human dignity.

It is likewise important that those who make use of media such as the audiocassette or videocassette should not see themselves as mere consumers. Each individual, simply by making his or her reactions to media offerings known to those who produce and market them, can have a definite effect on the subject matter and moral tone of future offerings. The family in particular, as the basic unit of society, is deeply affected by the media environment in which it lives. Parents therefore have a grave duty to educate the family in a critical use of the means of social communication. The importance of this task needs to be explained especially to young married couples. Nor should catechetical programmes overlook the need to teach children and adolescents a proper and responsible use of the media.

On this World Communications Day, I extend my cordial best wishes to all the professional men and women striving to serve the human family through the communications media, to all the members of the international Catholic media organizations active throughout the world, and to the vast body of media consumers who are their audience and towards whom they bear a very weighty responsibility. May Almighty God pour forth his gifts upon you all.

From the Vatican, 24 January 1993, Feast of Saint Francis de Sales, Patron of the Press.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

From Death Springs Life*

THE HOLY FATHER'S "URBI ET ORBE" EASTER MESSAGE

1. "The Father loves me.

For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life"
(*Jn* 10:17).

"The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (*ibid.*, v. 11).

"No one takes it from me...

— the sons of men in fact have no power over the life of the Son of God —

but *I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again*" (*ibid.*, v. 18).

I have power to accept death from the hands of men and I have power to conquer death through love of the Father.

"This is the day which the Lord has made" (*Ps* 118:24).

On this day the Church professes the love of the Father,
the redemptive power of the risen Son;
she professes the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life.

*On Easter Sunday, 11 April 1993, the Holy Father celebrated morning Mass at an altar near the entrance to St. Peter's Basilica. After the Mass the Pope went to the central balcony of the basilica's facade where he read his Easter message and in 56 languages wished the people of the world a happy Easter and the peace and joy of the risen Christ. He then imparted his blessing "to the City and the World."

2. With the certainty of this faith I come before you,
beloved brothers and sisters,
on the day which the Lord has made,
and together with the whole Church I announce a great joy;

"The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" (Lk 24:34).

Christ has truly risen: *alleluia!*

3. Christ says: "The Father loves me."

Yes! *In You, Christ, the Father has loved the human race,
he has loved the world.*

God so loved the world that he has given you, his only begotten
Son,

the Son of one Being himself,
so that whoever accepts you through faith
may have eternal life (cf. *Jn 3:16*).
You have the power to give your life for the world
and to take it back again in the resurrection.
You have the power to communicate to the world
this divine life that is in you.

The world does not have this Life in itself.
In itself it has a life that is subject to death.

*You alone have the immortal Life
that comes from God.*

But God loves the world
and God loves you who have come into the world.

In you, the Father gives Life
to those who are in the world.

And you too want this, O Christ our Redeemer.

Your wish is that "they may have life, and have it abundantly"
(*Jn 10:10*).

4. *Father, Son, Holy Spirit,*

God, one and inexpressible,

may you be glorified for the world,

for this world which is "the theatre of man's history,
and carries the marks of his energies.

his tragedies and his triumphs" (*Gadium et Spes*, n. 2),

this world which has been set free by you,
 — by you, the crucified and risen Christ.
 In you, each person living in this world
 has become capable of breaking the power of the evil one,
 in order to be transformed
 according to God's plan
 and to reach perfection.
 God, who are one in the Trinity of Persons,
Father, Son, Holy spirit,
may you be glorified for the redemption of the world
brought about in Christ Jesus.

5. Professing this consoling Paschal truth
 in the words of the Second Vatican Council,
 the whole Church — in the City and in the World —
 is united with all men and women,
 the citizens of this world
 created by God out of love,
 and proclaims with joy that "Christ has risen,
 destroying death by his death,
 and has lavished life upon us so that, as sons in the Son,
 we can cry out in the Spirit: "Abba, Father!" (*Gaudium et Spes*,
 n. 22).

May the human family which today
 makes its journey along the paths of the world
 receive new hope from this inexhaustible fount.

6. May the Paschal announcement loudly resound especially
 wherever violence, anguish and despair
 still oppress individuals and families, peoples and nations.
 I am thinking especially of those countries of Africa,
 which feel frustrated in their aspirations to peace,
 such as Angola, Rwanda and Somalia,
 or which are moving, amid a thousand difficulties,
 towards the goals of democracy and harmony,
 such as Togo and Zaire.
 And how can we keep silent today — the day of peace —
 before the fratricidal struggles
 causing bloodshed in the region of the Caucasus,
 before the *atrocious drama*
 being relentlessly played out in Bosnia-Herzegovina?

Who will be able to say: I did not know?
No one can consider that this tragic situation is not their affair,
a situation which humiliates Europe
and seriously compromises the future of peace.
Leaders of Nations, men and women of good will,
with my heart overflowing with sorrow,
I appeal once more to each one of you;
stop this war!

Put an end, I beg you, to the unspeakable cruelties
whereby human dignity is being violated
and God, our just and merciful Father, is being offended!

7. Christ has risen!
from the now empty tomb, there springs forth the Life
which overcomes the forces of death
threatening our human existence. •
Believers cannot but act with courage and commitment
wherever there is poverty, hunger, injustice,
wherever life is threatened,
from its beginning to its natural end,
wherever life is despised and scorned. •
Christ's followers should feel obliged
to dedicate themselves without pause
to the demanding and urgent task of renewing society.
working with trust and in harmony.
to imprint on history's progress
the enlightening guidelines of the Gospel,
which are indispensable for making this world,
our world, on the eve of the Third Christian Millennium,
the hospitable homeland of every human being.

Brothers and sisters in the faith,
the Risen One calls upon all his disciples,
to bear joyful witness to justice and truth. •

8. You alone, O Christ, have the immortal life
which comes from the heavenly Father.
And today you offer it anew to each and everyone.
The Church, a pilgrim on earth,

knowing that she must show the world
the face of God's mercy,
cries out to you, in the name of all who are in distress.
In you, risen Lord, the Father has loved man,
You, Christ our hope, are truly risen.
Give us, we beg you, victorious King,
the life that is full and definitive.
Open before us the gate of hope,
hope and does not fail.

Amen.

Family should be Focus of Concern*

John Paul II

Your Eminences,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Executive Committee,

Dear Married Couples,

Members of the Pontifical Council for the Family,

1. It is a great joy for me to meet you at the conclusion of the plenary meeting with which you have chosen to begin this new year of activities. To all I address my respectful and cordial greetings, with an expression of particular gratitude to Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo, who has nobly conveyed your common sentiments, recounting in rapid summary the course of your work and underscoring the task of service to the family and to life, the purpose for which the Pontifical Council was established.

The theme upon which you decided to reflect, "The diocesan structures of the family apostolate," is one of special importance,

**On Saturday, 30 January, the Holy Father addressed the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family. In his address, given in Italian, the Pope mentioned the sacrifice of Carla Levaì Ardenghi, a 28-year-old woman from Italy's Bergamo area, who, with the support of her husband and 10-year-old son, refused treatment for her cancer and an abortion, either of which would have caused the death of her unborn child. She died on 26 January, eight hours after the premature birth of Stefano.*

particularly in view of the approaching International Year of the Family, which will be celebrated in 1994.

You know well how the apostolate of the *family* and of *life* plays a privileged role in the Church and in the ministry of the Vicar of Christ, especially in today's social context. Even today, in fact, both of these realities are subject to particularly insidious attacks which come at times from those very institutions from which one could rightly expect protection and support. However, individual signs of hope are not lacking, such as that afforded by the event which is receiving much attention in the media these days: a mother, a father, a son — *a family*, that is — who have made a moving agreement of love to ensure that *access to family* is not denied to a new human being.

Therefore, much insistence is rightly being placed today on the central position that should be given the family apostolate in planning the activities of Dioceses and Episcopal Conferences. *Evangelization in fact necessarily passes through the family* which is, in turn, the object and the subject of the Gospel proclamation. "To the extent in which the Christian family accepts the Gospel and matures in faith, it becomes an evangelizing community" (*Familiaris consortio*, n. 52). The strength and stability of the family fabric represent favourable conditions for the soundness of the Christian community and of all society.

Every local Church should promote the family

2. The same problems which marriage and the family encounter stimulate the creativity of those involved in the family apostolate, the heart of evangelization.

I had occasion to recall this in my meeting with the Bishops in charge of the Family Apostolate Commissions in Africa who met at the Pontifical Council for the Family from 28 September to 2 October 1992. While trusting in the action of the Spirit, the soul and guide of the Church, Dioceses, parishes, and apostolic movements *cannot fail to make it their concern that suitable structures be set up to ensure an adequate response* to the present challenges affecting the institution of the family.

"Every local Church," I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, "and, in more particular terms, every parochial community, must become more vividly aware of the grace and responsi-

bility that it receives from the Lord in order that it may promote the pastoral care of the family. No plan for organized pastoral work, at any level, must ever fail to take into consideration the pastoral care of the family" (n. 70).

It would be useful and opportune in the Episcopal Conferences for the Family Life Commissions to assume tasks similar to those which the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* indicated for your Pontifical Council (cf. nn. 139-141), with specific pastoral responsibility for serving the family, the sanctuary of life. This would make possible a more structured relationship within the Episcopal Conferences themselves and with the individual diocesan communities.

In the Dioceses, then, it would be important to establish, in accordance with circumstances and means — for in fact the needs of the urban apostolate are different from those of the rural apostolate — some efficient coordinating agencies, so as to strengthen the ecclesial body as a whole, under the active and supportive intervention of the Bishops, following the lines marked out by *Familiaris consortio* and taking due account of the prophetic richness of *Humanae vitae* and the directives of the Holy See's Charter on the Rights of the Family. The Gospel of hope would thus be able to reach the "domestic Churches" in great abundance and, through a renewed and courageous evangelization which sees the family actively involved in proclaiming the Gospel, to inject new life-blood into the whole social fabric.

3. The primary task, then, is to form the family so as to enable it to be a responsible and qualified subject of evangelization. A providential tool for such a work, which can help family members to grow in the knowledge of the faith (cf. *Catechesi tradendae*, n.68), is also represented by the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, on the basis of which it will be possible to complete the planned "Catechism for Families," a clear text, brief and easy to assimilate. Parents will be able to make use of this in their educational-ministry which, "in so far as it is rooted in and derives from the one mission of the Church and is ordained to the upbuilding of the one Body of Christ...must remain in intimate communion and collaborate responsibly with all the other evangelizing and catechetical activities present and at work in the ecclesial community at the diocesan and parochial levels" (*Familiaris consortio*, n. 53).

Marital spirituality is essential to evangelization

The family should also be helped *to take part in liturgical life*, whose highest and fullest manifestation is the Eucharist, and to *discover ever more the value and importance of family prayer*.

The spirituality of the married couple, without which it is impossible to live fully the evangelizing mission proper to the family, draws nourishment from the word of God, following the example of the Mother of Emmanuel who "treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart" (*Lk 2 :19*).

I would like here to mention some significant experiences of groups of families who meet together in order to mature in their faith, to pray together and, in the light of Gospel values, to evaluate effective ways and means to intervene responsibly in certain dangerous situations connected with the acceptance of human life. This would also be a good occasion to mention the centres for the support of human life that have been set up, initiatives to help the elderly and the sick, gestures of effective concern for the poorest of the poor and, especially, for families in need, so that they can feel the solidarity of those who are called to protect their rights and to promote their dignity (cf. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, n. 28).

4. The family should, therefore, be at the centre of the concerns of every diocesan community, of every parish and apostolic organization sensitive to the needs of our times. This involves actively strengthening the family nucleus in preparation for marriage, accompanying the young couples in their formative journey, being committed to an adequate apostolate for youth and for the elderly.

It is the job of Bishops, who are primarily responsible for the apostolic activity in the Diocese, to provide for the training of those more specifically engaged in the family apostolate. The Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family has been created at the Pontifical Lateran University with this intention and it is to be hoped that similar centres will be created in other parts of the world to offer priests, religious and lay persons concrete opportunities for a formation firmly anchored in Christian doctrine.

5. The year 1994, as I have mentioned will be the International Year of the Family, a very propitious occasion to bring to light the

identity of an institution firmly rooted in natural law and to underscore its duties and its irreplaceable mission.

Deepen the values of family life

The Church is preparing to celebrate this year with a spirit open to hope: it will be a providential opportunity to renew the *proclamation of the Gospel of the family*. Your Pontifical Council is already at work to ensure that an event of such world-wide import will be able to yield the hoped-for fruits of a great awareness and of a deepening of the values proper to the family institution.

Evangelizing the family is what we have at heart, and I am happy to note that in your plenary meeting, thanks to the collaboration of many important apostolic movements, you have sought the best way to bring this concern for the new evangelization to all believers. The Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, which reaps the fruits of the work of the Synod on the Family, is an invaluable source of inspiration for the recommendations and suggestions which you intend to address, as the occasion arises, to the Episcopal Conferences, to the individual local Churches and to all the members of the Catholic world.

Ten years after the publication of the Holy See's Charter on the Rights of the Family, the scheduled International Year will help to promote the awareness, the assimilation and the practical implementation of such fundamental principles. Conscious of their own rights, families will be able to make their voices heard with greater authority in the forums where laws and policies concerning the family are formulated.

6. Dear brothers and sisters, my hope is that the reflections of these days, in the perspective of the awaited International Year, can arouse renewed interest in the family, the basic cell of society and of the Church. Thanks to your efforts, I am certain that the initiatives of the family apostolate in Dioceses will intensify, as we look to the now imminent third millennium with missionary zeal.

May Mary, Virgin and Mother, accompany you in your difficult and exciting work. May she protect the Christian families so that they may truly be little "domestic Churches" and sanctuaries of life.

With these wishes, which I make my heartfelt prayer, I impart to all my affectionate Blessing.

The Exploitation of Children: A Perversion of God's Plan for Sexuality*

FINAL DECLARATION OF BANGKOK SUMMIT SPONSORED BY PONTIFICAL COUNCIL OF THE FAMILY

Final Declaration

We have come together to address a persistent and pervasive crime against humanity: the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography. This problem which is international in scope and requires community, national and international solutions, has resulted in the loss of human dignity, health and even life for millions of the world's children. It is our shared responsibility, in partnership with other concerned individuals, groups and religions, to speak out and take action on behalf of these victimized children.

We oppose the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography because:

**From 9-11 September the Pontifical Council of the Family sponsored an international summit in Bangkok, Thailand, on the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography. At the end of the summit the following English-language statement was issued.*

It is a contemporary form of slavery which exploits and degrades the human person for profit and preys on those who are least able to defend themselves.

It causes immense physical, emotional and spiritual harm to each child exploited, trapping them in a cycle of victimization, pain and life-threatening disease.

It perverts God's plan for human relations and intimacy, treating children and all human life as commodities to be sold rather than persons to be loved.

It reduces God's gift of sexuality to a level that lacks the personal dignity, human tenderness, genuine intimacy, mutual love, ethical commitment and responsible consent that are a part of the divine plan.

It contributes to, rather than honestly confronts, the evil and sickness of pedophiles and other callous consumers, who need to change their despicable behavior.

We are deeply thankful for the important work already begun by concerned individuals, groups and religious institutions. We recognized the valuable contribution of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which draws specific attention to the need to address the plight of sexually exploited children in prostitution in articles 34, 35, and 39. These statements should be recognized, endorsed and acted on by every country in the world.

The sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography is evidence of a profound distortion and breakdown of values. That such crimes are committed against children brings shame and sadness to the nations of the world.

Therefore:

We commit ourselves to do all in our power to promote the God-given human values which recognize every child as a sacred gift to be nurtured, protected and loved. We pledge to work with children, empowering them to understand and appropriate their God-given rights and dignity.

We commit ourselves to fostering family life, where the child can grow secure and loved, where the stability, fidelity and generosity of the parents' relationship will afford to the child a steady, safe and peaceful environment. Parents have a moral responsibility to foster and ensure the well-being of their children.

We commit ourselves to work cooperatively with every nation, religion and concerned group to pass and enforce laws which protect children from exploitation through prostitution and pornography. These offenses should be considered a crime against humanity in every nation of the world.

We commit ourselves to concerted efforts to minister morally, physically and emotionally to the victims of child prostitution and pornography. We call on people of faith and good will to give sacrificially for their healing and well-being.

We commit ourselves to helping foster an understanding among religious leaders, people of faith and those of good will concerning the dimensions of this problem. We pledge our continuing efforts to address the sexual exploitation of children in all forums, in both religious communities and the world. We will do all in our power to educate, mobilize and take action, until this crime against humanity is fully and permanently eliminated:

We call on all adults who demean themselves by participating in the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography to repent of their crime against humanity. Those who remain silent or deny the existence of this evil also contribute to the problem.

We call individuals, religious groups, government and international bodies to publicly acknowledge the scope and severity of the problem. All must take a stand. In the midst of their diversity, the peoples of the world can and must find a common voice and resolve on behalf of protecting children from prostitution and pornography.

We call on all tour operators and the tourism industry to repudiate "sex tourism" and to respect the human right of all people in all cultures.

We call on the world legal and law enforcement community to deepen their cooperation, level of commitment and determination to

bring justice to children exploited through prostitution and pornography.

We call on the world's children and youth to help strengthen their own moral values and those of their communities. Children have an important role in helping lead the way for change in the exploitive actions of adults.

We call on all men and women in the business community to refuse to profit from the sexual exploitation of a human person. Children are not commodities for sale as sex objects or pornography subjects. Economic gain at the expense of human dignity and life is wrong.

We call on the media to draw public attention to the problem of the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography. We ask those who are a part of the entertainment and media culture to reject the growing attempts to portray children as appropriate object of sexuality, whether in advertising or entertainment mediums. We pledge our cooperation for a worldwide media campaign to condemn the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and pornography.

We call on parents, school and educators to promote healthful, life affirming sexuality based on the values which will develop children's full capacities into persons rooted in self-esteem and respect for all other members of the community.

We call on Bishops' Conferences and their respective Dioceses to commitment and planning on a community level. We must address this problem on a community level and contribute to its elimination.

The sexual exploitation of children is a grave crime against the truth of the human person. Each person is the image of God, the child of God. Each life is a precious gift of God. In each face shines the great dignity of the human person.

Children, who are the most vulnerable members of society, must be guaranteed enjoyment of all the rights which appertain to human persons. They must be loved, protected and respected in a special way.

Every abuse against their dignity is a crime against humanity and against the future of the human family.

The children of the world wrapped in prostitution, pornography and sexual exploitation cry for help. The Lord calls his people to action. Deliberating, resolving and acting together, we pledge to respond.

Final Declaration of Meeting on Family Planning: Natural Methods Respect Divine Gift of Procreation*

Pontifical Council for the Family

Gathered to study the latest developments in the natural methods of regulating fertility, as 45 scientific experts, social workers and moralists, we wish to speak to the women and men of the world.

The regulation of human fertility is a delicate matter involving serious choices and decisions. Many problems have arisen in this important area of human experience. We confidently propose the *authentic* way for the true humanization of God's wonderful gift of procreation. It allows the achievement of "natural family planning."

We want to emphasize that the natural methods imply a specific life-style and ethical behaviour, which appeals to the responsibility of spouses, and which is based on unconditional respect for the dignity of the person, the true nature of marriage and the primary and fundamental value of life — and the appreciation of sexuality as a gift of God.

Over the past 60 years, the study of the symptoms which accompany the cycle of a woman's fertility has revolutionized

*This is the final declaration of the summit meeting on the natural methods of regulating fertility held in Rome 9-11 December 1992 under the auspices of the Pontifical Council for the family.

knowledge of them and has allowed people to decide responsibly about the natural spacing of childbirths. Having moved far beyond the calendar method, "rhythm," the modern methods are reliable and precise ways of trying to achieve or postpone pregnancy. *These natural methods rest on a sound scientific foundation.* Today, rapid advances in scientific research and technology are enhancing the use of these methods. But public opinion about natural methods is often deficient and sometimes erroneous.

Therefore, we affirm the value of the natural regulation of fertility.

— The natural methods are easy to teach and understand. They can be used in any social context and do not require literacy.

— The *health of mothers and infants* is furthered through spacing childbirth in a natural way which harms neither the mother nor her baby. Natural methods do not harm the *health of couples*.

— The freedom and rights of the wife and husband are respected through these methods which centre around the woman and are based on the integrity of her body.

— Because they indicate the time of fertility, the natural methods can help couples to *achieve pregnancy*. These methods have brought joy to couples facing problems of apparent infertility.

— The natural methods can develop *a deeper interpersonal relationship* between a wife and husband, based on communication, shared decisions and mutual respect. The use of these methods reinforces marriage and hence strengthens family life.

— The natural methods promote a positive attitude to the child and maintain reverence for human life at all stages of development.

— The natural methods are compatible with all cultures and all religions.

— *Development of sexual responsibility*, understood as chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage, is fostered by knowledge of our fertility. The teaching of natural family planning is therefore of

primary importance in preserving reproductive health, including the prevention of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

— These methods do not place a financial burden on families; hence they are welcomed by many women and men in developing countries.

Recommendations

In the light of the benefits of natural methods and firmly believing that every woman has the right to understand her fertility:

1. We recommend that the Church significantly increase efforts to teach the religious and human values contained in her tradition, specifically in *Humanae vitae* and *Familiaris consortio*, in the catechesis of Pope John Paul II "on human love in the divine plan" and in other magisterial documents.

2. We recommend that the natural methods should be available to all couples everywhere. We call on governments and private organizations to positively assist and support couples in this task.

3. We recommend that the natural methods should be taught in all medical faculties. We call on the medical profession to study and promote the scientific methods of natural family planning as responsible parenthood and to make them available to women and men.

4. We recommend that the natural methods be gradually taught to young women and men before they enter married life.

5. We support breast-feeding for the good of the family, the child and the mother and as a way of spacing childbirths and we encourage public policy which will enable mothers to breast-feed their children.

6. We recommend that there be more multidisciplinary research to assist couples to achieve responsible parenthood through natural means.

7. We recommend that the natural methods receive appropriate funds for research and promotion of the regulation of human fertility.

8. We recommend that national associations be established in all countries, so that promoters of the different natural methods can collaborate, support one another and exchange information.

We ask pastors to give effective attention to the pastoral directives formulated in *Humanae vitae* and *Familiaris consortio* and to give concrete support to initiatives for research and teaching the natural methods.

Coming together from different nations, cultures and religious traditions, we express our gratitude to the Catholic Church which has strongly encouraged responsible parenthood through the use of natural methods of regulating fertility. In 1993, the Church celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Encyclical *Humanae vitae*. As we remember the prophetic teaching of Pope Paul VI, we thank Pope John Paul II for his teaching in *Familiaris consortio* and for his continuing support and encouragement. We also thank Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo and the Pontifical Council for the Family for making this meeting in Rome possible.

As we look to the future in hope and confidence, we thank all those couples throughout the world who have chosen the natural methods as the authentic alternative and the dedicated teachers who help and inspire them.

State and Society Must Defend Family

FINAL STATEMENT OF PARTICIPANTS IN SEMINAR ON FAMILY AND SOCIETY

At the invitation of the Pontifical Council for the Family, in cooperation with the Italian Episcopal Conference, a symposium was held at Villa Cagnola in Gazzada, Italy; it was attended by scientists, politicians and various well-known people committed to serving life. They came from countries of both Eastern and Western Europe to reflect on the theme of "Family and Society," on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Charter of the Rights of the Family published by the Holy See in 1983, and with a view to the International Year of the Family.

The Conference took place from 8-10 March and was opened with an address by Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo on "the role of politicians and legislators for the family and for life." About 45 people participated; the meeting, which consisted of an exchange of reflections and experiences, examined the following reports:

— **The Rights of the Family and Constitutional Law** by Dr. Herbert Schambeck, Vice-President of the Federal Council of the Austrian Republic;

— **Family Law in Europe** by Prof. Roland Ganghofer, Professor of the University of Strasbourg; Director of the Research Center of the

History of Institutions of the University of Strasbourg III; author of the book Le droit de la famille en Europe;

— **Ethics and the Defense of Life** by *Archbishop Dionigi Tettamanzi, Secretary of the Italian Episcopal Conference;*

— **Ethics Committees and Legislation in Europe** by *Sen. Adriano Bompiani, Minister for Social Affairs for the Italian Government;*

— **Current Events in Bioethics: Attacks on Life and the Quality of Life** by *Bishop Elio Sgreccia, Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Family;*

— **When Does Human Life Begin?** by *Prof. Jerome Lejeune, Professor at the Centre de Recherches Genetiques Humaines et Maladies de l'Intelligence, Institut de Progenese, Paris, France;*

— **Recommendations for the International Year of the Family in the World of Politics and Legislation** by *Carlo Casini, member of the European Parliament and of the Italian Parliament; President of the Italian Pro-Life Movement.*

— *We publish here the final statement approved by the participants. The text was drafted by four study groups, drawn up in two parts and was discussed, modified and approved in the closing plenary assembly.*

The Holy Father sent a message signed Cardinal Angelo Sodano, the Secretary of State.

I. Family and Society

1. As we approach the Year of the Family, we are pleased to note the interest shown by the most prestigious international organizations for this institution. This interest is a very positive sign which encouraged us to reflect on the role and the importance of the family in society.

2. We are pleased to observe that millions of men and women throughout the world are living an authentic family life, in close understanding with one another and with their neighbors. But we also

realize that many of them are subject to legal systems that weigh upon them and complicate their efforts to live an authentic family life.

We hope that these difficulties, whether deliberate or accidental, may be overcome, so that family life will be encouraged and strengthened.

3. In this effort at reflection, we benefited from an important document: *The Charter of the Rights of the Family* which was presented by the Holy See on 22 October 1983.

This declaration affirms in particular: that "the family is based on marriage, that intimate union of life, in complementarity between a man and a woman which is constituted in the freely contracted and publicly expressed indissoluble bond of matrimony, and is open to the transmission of life" (Preamble).

4. The family institution is older than that of the State and every other community, and it enjoys its own inalienable rights. It is a universal reality which responds to the basic desire for happiness found in the heart of every man and woman.

5. There are duties which correspond to these inalienable rights of the family. This is why family life is not confined to the sphere of private life. Understood in this way, the family constitutes an inexhaustible resource for society; in it, and especially in it, equality and freedom are to be found.

6. The task of the family, the place appointed for the birth, education and maturation of the human person is complicated by an environment which can generally be described as individualistic. So, it is in the complementarity and the diversity of its members that the family contributes to the formation and development of the person in a continuous manner.

State must respect family's rightful autonomy.

The family is a natural community which the State must take into consideration as a cell of society. However, in virtue of the principle of subsidiarity, the State must respect the rightful autonomy of the family and refrain from regulating its internal life.

7. Being a natural community, the family also enters, for us Christians, into the plan of God: it is an *ecclesiola*, a "domestic Church" in which the parents build up one another in the sight of God, and in which the children are brought up in the faith. Thus, through the diversity of its members, the family expresses something of the wealth of this mystery of love which is the Trinity. In short, the family, a cell of society, is at the same time a cell of the Church.

8. The best way to allow families to exercise their responsibilities is to recognize their place in international conventions and declaration, as well as in basic documents of States, especially in constitutions.

The family is the area in which the rights of the individual become authentic rights and in which these same rights can be claimed. In consequence, the family must become the measure of all legislative and administrative policies. The legislator must always consider the positive or negative impact of legislation or administrative policies on the family.

9. The principles which inspire these documents must be expressed concretely through legislation. Concrete applications of the legislative policy must be guaranteed by the courts of justice.

We call attention to the laws that begin by stating basic, indisputable principles, but introduce successive clauses legalizing numerous exceptions that nullify the previously stated principles. This "technique of derogation" causes the legislator to make laws which say the opposite of what they seem to say. For example, this is the case with the unborn child, for whom the law solemnly guarantees the right to life, and then, immediately afterwards, introduces quickly generalized exceptions, which annul *de facto* the previously proclaimed right.

10. International and national texts more especially must guarantee the fundamental rights of children in the family: the right to life; the right to have a father and a mother, not only at the moment of conception; the right to grow up with other brothers and sisters; a name inspired by the culture which the child has inherited; the right to the respect that is due to the innocence of children; lastly, and the very simply, the right to be a child, that is, the right not to be involved in

the conflicts of adults, and to be fully respected in every way as human being.

11. Whenever their interests are involved, families have the right and the duty to participate, through appropriate associations, in planning agreements and laws, as well as in drawing up decisions concerning them, within the context of public or private organizations.

Families need worthy living conditions

12. Families must have access to all means of communication, considering that these contribute to education, information, culture, recreation and leisure.

13. Families need peace in order to carry out their responsibilities and guarantee their members those living conditions which are worthy of human life.

For this reason, families expect the State to resolve conflicts by recourse to just solutions and the use of peaceful means.

The preservation of a just and lasting peace is linked to the existence of active solidarity, in the economic, social, cultural and affective sense, between nations, families and peoples.

14. Family policy and the legislation in which these policies take shape respond to a duty of justice and must be inspired by the principle of solidarity between generations. By their very nature, such policies cannot be reduced to fiscal policies of redistribution of wealth nor to those of public assistance. They must assure a just recompense to those who currently have educational commitments.

This need for solidarity, which already inspires policies on unemployment, health and pensions, must be equally respected at the level of family policy.

15. To summarize, we can indicate three levels for reflection and action:

- a) the family contributes in a decisive way to the establishment of justice and the search for the common good. The family

is the place *par excellence* for imparting values that will benefit society;

- b) the respect for the values and rights of the family and the promotion of an effective family policy are indispensable conditions for overcoming the crisis which the modern world is experiencing and for establishing a democratic community at the service of all;
- c) we invite all those who share our vision of the family to join their efforts and energies to ours in order to promote together the good of the family, to create a better future and to work for the happiness of all individuals and of the whole human community.

II. Bioethical Aspects of the Family

1. At the moment of fertilization a new, unique and unrepeatable human being begins life. Thus, the child that is conceived is a member of the human family, a subject of natural rights and entitled to benefit fully from the protection of the law like every other human person.

Biological science today, even more than in the past, is able to affirm that, starting from this prodigious moment, it is not a question of an amorphous mass of cells; on the contrary, the physical constitution of the newly conceived individual, being distinct from that of his parents, cannot exist independently from the being that is determined by that constitution.

From a philosophical point of view the human person, formed by the essential union of body and soul, may not be considered as separate from his bodily form during the whole of his temporal life.

For this reason, from a legal point of view, from the moment of conception a human being must be recognized as having personal value, regardless of the values relative to his stage of development, which would otherwise be discriminatory; as such he must enjoy basic human rights and, first among these, the right to life.

From a theological point of view, every human being, from the moment of conception, possesses the dignity of a human creature bearing the image of the Father.

Whatever this stage of development, the human being's dignity derives from his condition as a creature endowed with the faculty of free will, that is, a person, and for this reason an image of God.

2. Because of this very dignity which is his alone, every individual has the right to be born to a couple united in a stable and indissoluble marriage, that is, in a community of life and love, and he has the right to originate from a free and responsible act of conjugal love (cf. *Donum Vitae*, II, 4).

However, even in those cases where conception occurs outside this loving context, the child who is conceived deserves the full respect due to every human being; he possesses the right to life and therefore must be accepted and sustained by the love of his mother, if possible within a family.

Abortion is not an acceptable answer

3. Starting with this "principle of the family," the family itself, the parents and the other members, must be recognized as having the competence, the right and the duty to take care of and to educate every child, who, in turn, is a precious gift and a valuable resource for all the members of the family.

4. Taking these essential considerations into account, faced with the difficulties which arise in different ways for the family and the couple, we state that:

- a) Abortion is neither valid nor acceptable answer, because it is a serious crime against the life of the child conceived and a grave offense to the life and the dignity of the woman, who, when faced with this sad eventuality, is left completely alone. The legalization of abortion is a result of the corruption of society and of the law, whose task it is to protect motherhood and the life of every human individual.

All those who facilitate, carry out or cooperate in the act are responsible for this serious crime as, in a proportionate way, are those who create conditions and circumstances which are favorable to it or those who do not do everything possible to remove them.

Nowadays especially we must realize that abortion is no longer just a problem of individual morality but it is also a problem of political morality, because there are policies which provide for its legalization, foster its promotion and seek, through the law, to justify it socially. In this negative spiral not only is respect for life lacking, but also the dignity of the law and the very concept of authentic democracy. We must realize that a democracy that does not defend the human life of everyone is not a democracy in essence, but merely in form, and in this context the law assumes only a procedural character.

Every effort must be made to pursue an alternative response to abortion through a policy that is in solidarity with the family and society and that grants everyone the right to life and to a quality of life that is consonant with the dignity of the person.

Through its moral support and spiritual help, the community must be close to the women who have suffered the negative and sorrowful experience of abortion.

- b) While acknowledging and being aware of the difficulties that society imposes at times on couples in accepting a new life, contraception, which impoverishes and corrupts conjugal intimacy by separating the unitive dimension from the procreative dimension of the conjugal act, is not a human or a valid answer to the problem of birth control. On the contrary, contraception, together with sterilization, is unfortunately one of the preferred methods of the birth-control policies often imposed on populations.

Neither does it correspond to what is required by revelation, i.e., that the man and the woman be one flesh, as is deduced from biblical anthropology (*"una caro"* cf. *Gn 2:24; Mt 19:6*).

The new pharmaceutical products and vaccines offered as contraceptives can cause an abortion before implantation or prevent the continuation of the pregnancy, encouraging an anti-life mentality and methods.

Develop natural methods of fertility regulation

Scientists, doctors and social workers are called on to cultivate and propose those methods which respect the dignity of life, of marriage

and of the family by improving and teaching methods for the natural regulation of fertility within the realm of an authentic concept of responsible parenthood. Social policies must recognize more seriously the right to have large families and also help young couples and unwed mothers to marry and accept life.

- c) The scourge of divorce, which disintegrates marriage and the family, as had already been mentioned, offends the true welfare of the married couple, creates difficult living conditions for the members of family itself and heightens the social hardships of children and young people. It is the task of the whole community to avoid this trauma, to prevent its legalization as a civil right and to lessen the damaging consequences of crisis situations and of more or less permanent separation.
- d) Artificial procreation, when it is such that it replaces the marriage act, as also occurs in the homologous form, involves a separation of the procreative act from its proper context, which is the marital union; it is an offense against the unity of the family in the forms of heterologous procreation and, in the case of procreation outside the body, exposes the newly conceived human being to external control with the possibility of manipulating, experimenting on, losing and even killing those human beings that are conceived.

The answer to problems of infertility must be sought through scientific improvement of both the preventive and therapeutic treatment of infertility, and through greater and more generous access to social parenthood through adoption into a real family, foster care and the various forms of commitment on behalf of lonely and abandoned children.

PCP-II Seminar Modules

PCP-II Secretariat

VISION-MISSION STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES (23 JULY 1992)

IMMERSED IN A SOCIETY
FRAGMENTED BY DIVISIVE CONFLICTS
AND AFFLICTED BY WIDESPREAD POVERTY
YET DEEPLY ASPIRING FOR FULLNESS OF LIFE IN GOD:

WE, AS CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES,
WITH TOTAL TRUST IN GOD'S LOVE,
ENVISION OURSELVES
AS THE COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES,
WHO FIRMLY BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS
AND JOYFULLY LIVE IN HARMONY AND SOLIDARITY
WITH ONE ANOTHER, WITH CREATION, AND WITH GOD.

FOLLOWING THE WAY OF OUR LORD,
WE OPT TO BE A CHURCH OF THE POOR,
WHICH DEMANDS EVANGELICAL POVERTY OF US ALL
AND HARNESSSES THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER
OF THE POOR AMONG US
TOWARD THE JUSTICE AND LOVE OF GOD IN THIS WORLD

TO ACHIEVE THIS VISION,
UNDER THE LEADING OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD
AND WITH MARY AS OUR GUIDE,

WE SHALL EMBARK ON A RENEWED INTEGRAL
EVANGELIZATION
AND WITNESS TO JESUS CHRIST'S GOSPEL
OF SALVATION AND LIBERATION
THROUGH OUR WORDS, DEEDS AND LIVES.

AS BISHOPS, PRIESTS, RELIGIOUS AND LAITY,
WE TOGETHER COMMIT OURSELVES
TO IMPLEMENT THE SPIRIT AND DECREES
OF THE SECOND PLENARY COUNCIL OF
THE PHILIPPINES
IN ORDER TO INCULTURATE GOSPEL VALUES IN OUR
MILIEU.
BY THIS SHALL *KAAYUSAN* (ORDER IN HARMONY) BE
ACHIEVED.
THROUGH PERSONS WHO ARE *MAKA-DIYOS, MAKATAO,*
MAKABAYAN AND *MAKA-BUHAY*.

"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." (Article I, 1, PCP-II)

The PCP-II Secretariat under the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines has prepared the following modules to help all Church workers in the task of making all the faithful know and practice the outcome of PCP-II.

Information and Formation are necessary ingredients that will contribute to the Transformation of our Church into a Church of Communion and Participation.

The structure of these modules is based on the Vision-Mission Statement of the Church in the Philippines formulated by the CBCP last 23 July 1992.

The first topic — Part I: Sources and Process of PCP-II — is an exposition of the PCP-II as an act of the Church. This is followed by *three key concepts* that arose from the conciliar discussions and decrees, and which are embodied in the first part of the Vision — Mission Statement — Part II: A Community of Disciples of Christ; Part III: A Church of the Poor; and Part IV: A Renewed Integral Evangeli-

zation. Finally, the persons and institutions who have carry out vision are specified in Part V: The Agents of Renewal and Communities of Renewal.

PART I SOURCES AND PROCESS OF PCP-II

*Immersed in a society
fragmented by divisive conflicts
and afflicted by widespread poverty
yet deeply aspiring for fullness of life in God
(Vision-Mission Statement)*

The direction of this first part is *to situate PCP-II in the Context of its Sources and Process*:

“Sources” —> refer to the Church perspective that has been present in the long line of Church councils and teaching.

“Process” —> refers to the “how” of PCP-II, the method of PCP-II.

A brief discussion of the “Sources” and “Process” of PCP-II is an indispensable element in the study of PCP-II. A study of the sources will enable the learner to appreciate that PCP-II did not come from “thin air.” Its teachings are part of a long line of councils that has given direction to the Church. Aside from the wealth of historical data and pastoral experiences brought to the council by the members, a run-down of these councils will prove to be helpful.

SOURCES OF PCP-II

The Ecumenical Councils

PCP-II is part of a trajectory of councils in the Church.

- * The Apostolic Assembly in the Upper Room in Jerusalem.
Agenda: Gentile Christians and practice of Jewish Christians and the emerging Gentile churches.

- * The 21 Ecumenical Councils: Nicea 325, Constantinople 381, Ephesus 431, Chalcedon 451 were the first 4 general councils that were Trinitarian and Christological in scope.
- * The Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) has four objectives (Opening Address, Paul VI, 1963):
 - the nature of the Church (a collective identity)
 - the renewal of Church (“*aggiornamento*”)
 - dialogue with separated brothers and sisters (ecumenism)
 - building bridges with the world
- * Since Vatican II, there has been further development in Church life as to a more collegial and participative Church. Following are the developments during the Vatican II era.

The Synod of Bishops

The World Synod of Bishops was instituted by Pope Paul VI in 1965. Bishops from all over the world meet to confer on matters relevant to the pastoral action of the Church. Below is a sampling of some of its meetings.

- * Third Ordinary General Assembly (27 September to 26 October 1974)
Topic: “Evangelization in the Modern World”
Recommendations: Synod recommendations, submitted to Pope Paul, were used in the writing of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.
- * Fifth Ordinary General Assembly (26 September to 25 October 1980)
Topic: “The Christian Family”
Recommendations:
 - A document was produced entitled “A Message to Christian Families in the Modern World.”
 - A proposed “Charter on the Rights of the Family” was issued; Pope John Paul II accepted the charter in 1983, and, in 1981, he published the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*.

- * Sixth Ordinary General Assembly (29 September to 29 October 1983)
Topic: "Penance and Reconciliation in the Mission of the Church."
Recommendations: A statement issued by the Synod called the world to reconciliation, proclaiming the Church to be the sacrament of reconciliation and a sign of God's mercy towards sinners; the Synod discussions helped shape Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* in 1984.
- * Seventh Ordinary General Assembly (1 to 30 October 1987)
Topic: "The Vocation and Ministry of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World"
Recommendations: The discussions and the 54 propositions were used by Pope John Paul II in the drafting of the Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* dated 30 December 1988.

The Promulgation of the New Code of Canon Law (1983)

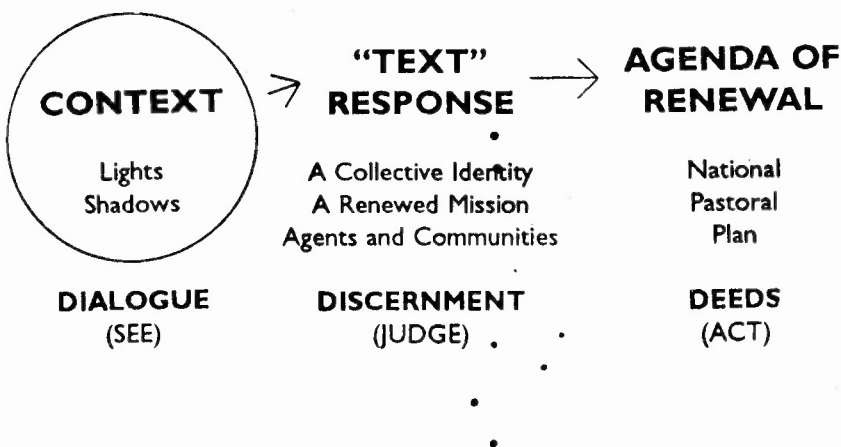
John XXIII announced the reform of the Code of 1917. The new code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1983 under the pontificate of John Paul II. The new Code of Canon Law follows the ecclesiology of Vatican II with the emphasis on understanding Church as People of God. It is from this code of canon law that the whole judicial and legislative tradition of the Church derives. It is noteworthy that PCP-II was convened to renew the church in the Philippines with direction from the 1983 Code of Canon Law.

The Leadership of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)

The CBCP took its full judicial status in 1968, although before it was known as the Catholic Welfare Organization. From 1968 to the present time, our bishops have exemplified leadership in the various letters and statements issued by them. These documents give us the flavor of magisterial teachings rooted in actual and realistic pastoral situations.

Thus, PCP-II did not come from "thin air." Its concern, objective, and vision are part of a continuing history of a pilgrim church discerning the "signs of the times."

PROCESS OF PCP-II



PCP-II followed a process in its historical phases of preparation and celebration. This process involves *dialoguing* with the realities from within, *discerning* the movement of God's Spirit, and translating the Spirit's impulse into *deeds* (cf. FABC, Fifth Plenary Assembly, Art. 7.1).

Dialogue. PCP-II viewed the panorama of events and experiences of Nation and Church in the Philippines. Seven actual data and situational analyses were presented from different angles: the religious context, the socio-cultural context, the economic and political context. It discovered "Lights and Shadows" with the aid of sociological surveys. "In the Spirit, we look back in wonder over our journeying as a Christian nation. There are lights, there are shadows, successes as well as failures, but through them all the Spirit breathes mightily, palpably, guiding and prodding and leading us on to where we are now." (PCP-II, Art.9)

Discernment. Discernment is not only a method of decision-making but a way of life. It is deeply rooted in a life of prayer, grounded in the movement of the Spirit of God calling us to directions and options in our times. It is our ability to read the panorama of human experiences in light of the "text" of faith: How do we respond to the context in the perspective of our faith? The Word of God in Tradition

and Scripture taught by the Church through its Magisterium is the GUIDE.

Deeds. (Pastoral Direction/Agenda of Renewal). Having discerned the way the Spirit of God is leading the Church in the Philippines, PCP-II responds to this through the formulation of a National Pastoral Plan that will concretize the fruits of discernment through proper collaboration and cooperation among the members and communities of the Church.

PART II A COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

*We as Church in the Philippines,
with total trust in God's love,
envision ourselves as the community of disciples,
who firmly believe in the Lord Jesus
and joyfully live in harmony and solidarity
with one another, with creation, and with God.
(Vision-Mission Statement)*

In view of the lights and shadows of the Philippine experience, PCP-II calls the Church in the Philippines as a Community of the Disciples of Christ.

Church as communion is a primary image of Church life ratified by the council. It does not exclude other models of Church life but is comprehensive enough to include all the rest. Communion alludes to the images of the Church as People of God, Body of Christ and Community of the Spirit. Church as communion mirrors the reality of one God in three Persons. It is therefore grounded on the basic belief in unity in the midst of diversity. Moreover, it points to the reality of love as the binding force among the people of goodwill. Therefore, especially significant in this image of communion is the role of the Holy Spirit as the love between the Father and the Son and as "the principal agent of evangelization."

Another characteristic of communion is its call to participation in all sectors of Church. Participation was expressed in giving preference to our laity in council deliberations. Participants were often heard saying during those four weeks of council celebration, "Let us give preference to our lay brothers and sisters."

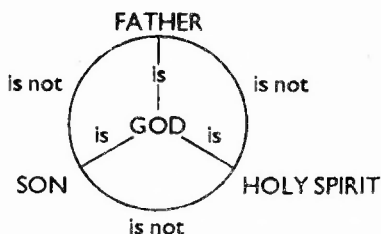
Scriptural Grounding

The author of the *Acts of the Apostles* describes the early Church in Jerusalem as a community, "one heart and one mind." These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers (*Ac* 2:42).

The Characteristics of the Community of Disciples

1. The Community should reflect the reality of and truth about our God:

- a. For God is TRINITY – *Diyos na 'sangtatlo*. The essence of this Trinitarian God is love. The reality of this Trinitarian God is Unity in Diversity.



- b. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. Equal in dignity, Equal in majesty, Equal in divinity. Nevertheless, the Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit is not the Father. This unity is not in uniformity but in the diversity of persons participating fully in the plan of salvation: Father is Creator, Son is Redeemer, Holy Spirit is Paraclete and Advocate.

How do we translate this Trinitarian Reality in our being Church?

— The call towards participation in love: Love cannot be contained — it is always overflowing — it seeks mutuality and belongingness. We are called to be in an active state of mission, according to our state of life, our vocation, the circumstances that we find ourselves in.

*"Mahalaga ang bawat isa,
Kailangan ang bawat isa,
Kailangan magkaisa."*

— The call towards active solidarity: John Paul II in his *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1988) defines Solidarity as a moral virtue of mutual interdependence where people work together for the common good of society — Solidarity is the moral imperative of the Trinitarian mystery. In a society marked by fragmentation and a "*kanya-kanya*" attitude, we are called to harness in our Trinitarian faith the challenge to work for Solidarity through loving acceptance of each other's diversity and differences,

2. The Call Towards Discipleship.

A disciple is one who follows the way of the master. A Christian is a disciple insofar as he/she listens, reflects, follows, tells and re-tells the story of Jesus. One is reminded of the encounter of Peter and John with the lame man at the steps of the temple: *I have neither silver nor gold* — but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, Walk! (*Ac* 3:6)

The only treasure of the Christian is Jesus the Christ. The climax of this story is in the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus (Paschal Mystery).

What are its implications in Church life?

a. Jesus in day-to-day life — The life of the Christian is marked with the presence of Jesus. He is an alter Christus by virtue of Baptism and Confirmation. The mission of every Christian is to be Christ to others, so that in turn others may be Christ to others.

b. The life of the Christian marked with learning — A Christian is never tired of knowing about Christ so that he loves him. Christ is not loved because he is not known. To learn more about Christ is an invitation to know him intimately. Thus, the Christian is called to a living Faith.

c. The life of the Christian marked with the Paschal Mystery — PCP-II calls this a “dangerous memory.” When we begin to appropriate in our life the essence of this memory, we ultimately become persons whose value systems run counter to the predominant values and “isms” of our society. We begin to question economism, consumerism, marxism, profitism and thus we become easy targets of people who see us as obstacles to “progress.” It is in this context that we become true martyrs (witnesses) of Christ crucified and risen.

3. The Community and its Missionary Enterprise.

If love cannot be contained, then love always reaches out to the other. The Church’s mission is precisely living and witnessing to *Love reaching out* or *Love seeking*. The agent of this Mission is the Holy Spirit. The model of this Mission is Mary, the sign of the evangelized and evangelizing Church.

PART III

CHURCH OF THE POOR

*Following the way of our Lord,
we opt to be a Church of the Poor,
which demands evangelical poverty of us all
and harnesses the transformative power of the poor among us
toward the justice and love of God in this world
(Vision-Mission Statement)*

Introductory Remarks

One of the most emphatic declarations of the Second Plenary Council is the challenge for the Church to become a Church of the

Poor. The nature of the Church of the Poor is rooted in the emerging image of Church as Community of the Disciples of Christ.

An off-shoot of communion and participation is a Spirit-inspired image of Church that got a standing ovation in the Council: the image of Church as Church of the Poor. Being church of the poor means that we must be "a Church that embraces and practices the evangelical spirit of poverty," that is a Church:

- * "whose members and leaders have a special love for the poor,"
- * "where, at the very least, the poor are not discriminated against,"
- * which "will be in solidarity with the poor,"
- * that " 'before today's forms of exploitation of the poor,... cannot remain silent,' " (John Paul II)
- * which not only evangelizes the poor but where the poor themselves become evangelizers,
- * where "pastors and leaders will learn to be with, work with and learn from the poor,"
- * whose leaders and better-off sectors will "orient and tilt the center of gravity of the entire community in favor of the needy,"
- * finally, which "is willing to follow Christ through poverty and oppression in order to carry out the work of salvation."

As one goes through the roots of the Church of the Poor, one cannot help but find direction in the Gospels. Jesus was born poor in a humble stable of Bethlehem; he opted to live poor as an itinerant preacher; he was executed as a poor man under the aegis of the Roman Empire; and he was buried poor in a "borrowed" grave. It is good to call to mind the words of St. Paul: "Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty." Moreover, many of the first members of the community who gathered around his name, and who called themselves

members of "The Way" were of humble origin, neither from the aristocracy nor from the wealthy.

Two Perspectives on Church of the Poor

1. It is a Church that embraces and practices the evangelical spirit of poverty, which combines detachment from possession with a profound trust in the Lord as the sole source of Salvation.

a. It does not mean that it includes only the materially poor

— Church of the Poor includes men and women of every economic class.

b. It highlights the following reality:

— that in the history of salvation, the economically poor have been the recipients of God's gracious intervention. In the context of Philippine situation, poverty has been a sinful social structure that has sown division, conflict and a great deal of demoralization among people. Nevertheless, this situation can be a challenge to struggle for liberation under God's grace.

— that all Filipino Catholics are called to be active agents in the building of a Church of the Poor. What is essential in the building of the Church of the Poor is *not dispossession* but *disposition*: an attitudinal change or a *metanoia* where we are slowly initiated into the *Beatitudes* of Jesus.

2. The Philippine Church opts to be a Church of the Poor in order to alleviate *all forms* of poverty in the country. The process of revitalizing Philippine society is through the instrumentality of this Church of the Poor. The Church, as a potent force in society, shall use its resources to help in the empowerment of the poor, the voiceless, the marginalized and the disenfranchised. This becomes a predominant theme of its social apostolate.

The empowerment of the poor will have to be done in two forms:

a. the poor are not to be discriminated against because of their poverty. Discriminatory practices and attitudes should be purified so

as to enable the poor to take part in social development and church mission.

b. the poor are to be active agents in the evangelizing mission of the Church. The formation of the poor will be done in the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). These small communities of faith highlight the integral evangelization where an integral faith is shaped among new evangelizers.

PART IV

A RENEWED INTEGRAL EVANGELIZATION

*To achieve this vision,
under the leading of the Spirit of God
And with Mary as our Guide,
we shall embark on a renewed integral evangelization
and witness of Jesus Christ's
Gospel of salvation and liberation
through our words, deeds and lives.
(Vision-Mission Statement)*

Renewal of the Mission of the Church

The Church is mission and mission is the Church. This mission is evangelization. Evangelization has three important components corresponding to the three offices that the Christian receives at the moment of baptism, namely,

catechesis	—	prophetic office
social apostolate	—	royal servanthood
worship	—	priestly office

Catechesis. Catechesis is not only doctrinal. Catechesis is the interplay of faith and life, the integration of faith into the very fabric of human life. In the Philippines, the number one priority is catechesis. Statics show that 88% of our people are "unchurched" and "unevangelized." Moreover, the Filipino Christian is "sacramentalized but not

evangelized." Catechesis calls the Church to a deeper commitment to proclaim and to live the Gospel.

Social Apostolate. The second element of evangelization is the social apostolate. It is the translation of the Gospel in the moral sphere of human endeavor. Filipino Catholics should be aware that Christian faith has a social and missionary dimension. They should be aware of the rich heritage of the social doctrine of the Church.

Two basic principles regarding the relationship between the Church and the political community must be kept in mind: (1) that the political authority must be exercised within the limits of the moral order. Thus the Church must act as conscience to society. Moreover, "the lay faithful," with the specifically secular character of their vocation and mission, "are never to relinquish their participation in 'public life'... to promote organically and institutionally the common good."

Worship. Liturgical renewal in the Philippines has been successful because of the innate religiosity of the Filipino. Nevertheless, this success has not had enough impact on the renewal of Filipino life and values. A number of areas ought to be renewed, in the mind of PCP-II:

- * pre-sacramental catechesis,
- * renewal of Sunday liturgies,
- * renewal of the sacrament of penance and reconciliation, and
- * catechesis and celebration of popular devotions.

Descriptions of Evangelization

1. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul Vi, 1975) - Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize... Evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new... The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change.

2. CBCP (1977) - the proclamation, above all, of Salvation from sin; the Liberation from everything oppressive to man; the Development of man in all his dimensions, personal and communitarian; and, ultimately, the Renewal of Society in all its strata through the interplay

of the Gospel Truths and man's concrete Total Life. This is Our Task. This is Our Mission.

3. Evangelization is Inculturation - the insertion of the Gospel of Jesus in culture (*Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II).

The Two-fold Message of the Mission

The Message of Salvation

The message of salvation has three interrelated, interdependent and interconnected elements. They are:

A renewed Catechesis

- * it must be Christ-centered
- * it must be rooted in the Scriptural Word of God with the Bible as the primary catechetical book
- * it must be authentically Filipino in its transmission and assimilation
- * it must be systematic in view of the Word of God in Tradition and Scripture interpreted by the Teaching Authority of the Church with the aim to invite people to authentic faith.

A renewed Social Apostolate

It is noteworthy that this second element is the subject matter of the message of liberation for it underlines the need for integral *human promotion* in Philippine society where people are "displaced" due to poverty and demoralization.

Echoing the words of *Justice in the World* (1971), PCP-II states: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of society fully appear to us as a constitutive element in the proclamation of the gospel." It is noteworthy that human promotion in Philippine evangelizing mission has been continuously stressed by PCP- II in its conciliar document.

A renewed worship

PCP-II underlines the renewal of the prayer life of the Filipino seeing all life as praise and reverence of the Almighty. Worship flows into life and life reaches its summit in worship. Echoing the fruits of the National Eucharistic Year – *Proper catechesis moves us to fruitful celebration* – PCP-II challenges the church to take critical view of sacramental catechesis and celebration, i.e., Sunday Eucharist, penance. It also looks into the role of popular religiosity in the faith life of the people.

The Message of Liberation

The message of liberation is not a separate agenda apart from the above but an *emphasis* drawn from the pastoral experience of the Philippine Church. It deals with the human liberation in the temporal order, a dimension of the integral Evangelization of PCP-II.

This is a further explication of the instrumentality of the Church of the Poor towards total human promotion. It has two important parts:

* The Spirituality of Social Transformation

- acknowledgment of sin as root cause of all our social ills.
- call to conversion as grace and moral imperative towards transformation.

- * The formation of a personal and social conscience through the Church's Social Teaching: a body of teaching which began in 1891 with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* to John Paul II's *Centesimus Annus* (1991). Catholic Social Teaching are principles of reflection, criteria of judgment, and directives of action.

PART V

THE AGENTS OF RENEWAL

*As Bishops, Priests; Religious and Laity,
we together commit ourselves
to implement the spirit and decrees
of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*

*in order to inculturate Gospel Values in our milieu.
By this shall Kaayusan (order of harmony) be achieved
through persons who are Maka-Diyos,
Maka-tao, Makabayan and Maka-buhay.*

*Ours will then be a civilization of life and love,
A sign of the in-breaking of the Father's Kingdom.*
(Vision-Mission Statement)

The first agents of renewal are the *laity*. They comprise 99% of the Church. They are called to a community of families. They are called to imbue Christian presence in the world. They are called to ministry, evangelization and social transformation.

The second agents of renewal are the *religious*. The term "religious" points to men and women who belong to institutes of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life, and secular institutes. The religious life is a special gift of God, a distinct form of discipleship whereby persons consecrate themselves to living Christ's life radically, publicly and in community. They are an effective means of evangelization through their religious vows, through their missionary and contemplative spirit.

The third agents of renewal are the *clergy*. One model of priestly ministry that would aptly describe the identity of priests in the Philippines is that of the Servant-Leader. As a servant-leader he is called to proclaim the word of God in a community that serves the word; he is called to preside at Eucharist in a community that centers its life in the liturgy; he is called to serve in a community that is called to be collegial and participative.

In addition to these agents, there are also communities of renewal, such as Christian families, parishes, catechists, Catholic educational institutes, lay ministers of the Word and of the Eucharist, Catholic action and traditional lay associations, movements of renewal (Cursillo, Catholic Charismatic), Catholic hospitals and community-based health care workers, centers for formation, youth, and practitioners of the media of social communications.

The Empowered Laity

The empowerment of the Laity is based on their sharing in the common priesthood of Christ by virtue of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. Lay people are called to participate in the mission of the Church because of their sacramental character. This empowerment is based on a spirituality that is uniquely lay.

The empowerment of the laity is one of the most emphatic (the other being Church of the Poor) declarations of PCP-II.

1. Lay people are empowered because of their sharing in the common priesthood of Christ. Living Christ's priesthood is to be seen in three (3) dimensions:
 - a. consecration of God
 - b. Mediation for transformation and salvation
 - c. Sacrifice of life
2. There are four (4) turning points in the laity's role and life:
 - a. Called to a Community of Families
 - b. Called to Christian Presence
 - c. Called to Ministry and Evangelization
 - d. Called to Social Transformation

A discussion of lay empowerment is to be supplemented with readings from the following:

1. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Vatican II)
2. Decree on the Lay Apostolate (Vatican II)
3. Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Family *Familiaris Consortio* (1983)
4. Post-Synodal Exhortation on the Lay Faithful *Christifideles Laici*

The Prophetic Religious

There are two significant contributions of PCP-II to religious life in the Philippines:

1. Religious life as *Prophecy* in the living of the evangelical vows in context of Philippine situation.

2. Religious life as *Ecclesial*: PCP-II emphasizes the role of the religious communities in the building of the local church — call to communion and solidarity.

Challenges

1. Challenge of *Authentic Prophecy* calls religious to re-vitalize their charisms in light of the “signs of the times” and to live their life as prophecy. This would entail the formation of men and women of discernment:

- a. a life rooted in prayer.
- b. a life in touch with the signs of the times.
- c. a life courageous to present alternatives to present issues and concerns.

2. Challenge of communion calls religious to promote *collaboration* and *cooperation* with all sectors of church moving towards a presence that is truly inculturated.

This would entail the formation of men and women of dialogue:

- a. attitudes and skills of dialogue
- b. equality of grace, yet respect for authority
- c. a spirituality of “disempowerment” whose task is to empower the laity.

3. Challenge of Solidarity calls religious to integral evangelization where “preferential option for the poor” becomes the hallmark of their evangelizing mission.

This would entail the formation of men and women of *quality effective presence*: a presence *with* and a presence *for* the poor.

- a. Houses of formation and seminaries are to be shaped along these lines.
- b. Catholic educational institutes are to be restructured so as to highlight the Church’s “preferential option for the poor.”

The Ordained Ministry as Servant-Leaders

Contributions of PCP-II to an understanding of ordained ministry in the Philippines are:

1. The application of an over-arching concept of servant leadership for the proclamatory, cultic, and pastoral tasks of the priest.
2. The call to a Spirituality of Ordained Ministry.

Challenges

The challenge of servant leadership. The identity-mission of the community corresponds with the identity-mission of the ordained minister. The identity-mission of the community are:

- a community formed by the Word of God;
- a community that is built up by the charisms that flow from the Spirit;
- a community that is Eucharistic;
- a community that is Prophetic;
- a community that is Ministerial.

The ordained minister is ordained (empowered) for the community. He is ordained to serve this Church. He receives a sacred power (essentially distinct from what the laity receive) so that he may exercise a leadership of service and a service of leadership. After all, authentic power is for service (Mk 10).

He is a servant leader insofar as he proclaims the word, presides at the Eucharist and other sacraments and shepherds the people entrusted to his care.

The call to a spirituality. The effectivity of the ordained ministry is greatly dependent on a life of holiness and constant conversion. PCP-II focuses its attention to form and to shape priests after the heart of Jesus.

Indeed priests are called to proclaim the word, to sanctify people through the sacraments and to lead people in service. The spirituality calls priests to learn the Word in discernment and prayer, to be

sanctified through a life rooted in the evangelical counsels and to be governed by the missionary enterprise of the Church.

Other Communities of Renewal and Grace

The Christian Family.

* First school of discipline and evangelization where father and mother are the first catechists of their children.

* Echoing *Familiaris Consortio*, PCP-II states the four (4) tasks of the family:

- form a community of persons where love is the binding force
- serve life through pro-creation and education of offspring,
- participate in the development of society,
- share in the mission of the Church.

* PCP-II stressed the *Pro-life (maka-buhay)* position of the Philippine Church calling people to responsible parenthood and respect of life in its processes and stages of development.

Parishes

* Places where people grow in holiness, participate in the mission of the Church and live out ecclesial communion.

* Effective ways of shepherding have to be devised, team ministry is to be encouraged, pastoral planning should be the normal feature of activities and lay leaders have to be formed.

Catechists. Catechists are among the most faithful servants of the Lord and of the Church in the Philippines. They are among the most hard-working despite the minimal monetary compensation that they receive. The new constitutional provision allowing the teaching of religion during the regular class hours, has opened greater opportunities for the catechesis of our elementary and high school youth. Unfortunately, we do not have the required number of trained catechists to take advantage of this new situation. It has been pointed out that we need about 24,000 professional catechists to teach public elementary and high school pupils for ninety minutes every week. We do not even include in this estimate the out-of-school youth and public schools.

teachers who also need to be catechized. At present we have only about three thousand professional catechists.

Catholic Educational Institutions. Catholic Schools are among the most necessary and potent means of evangelization. The document reiterates the three-fold commitment of these institutions: commitment to academic excellence, commitment to moral values and commitment to the Gospel of Jesus proclaimed by the Church.

The Council identified causes of the failure of Catholic schools in their evangelizing mission:

- a. unhealthy competition among schools;
- b. a cultural fixation that leads to elitisms;
- c. a prevailing consumerism;
- d. lack of a critical assimilation of culture and the lack of a thorough integration of faith and life in the schools;
- e. lack of a Catholic environment.

Recommendations of the Council.

- * On-going spiritual formation of school community members.
- * A review of school's vision-mission statement.
- * Religion is to be treated as a core course.
- * Religion teachers should be trained in theology and catechesis.
- * Proper coordination with parents.
- * Periodic exposure of all members of the school community to the context of the poor.
- * Support of community for schools in financial difficulties.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

"We live in the worst of times. We live in the best of times. But only if crisis is made to become Kairos. And we seize the grace of the

moment and respond to its challenge. As we should, always, in faith" (PCP-II).

It is said that the end is determined by its beginning. In this last module the challenge is placed on the agents and communities of renewal to make crisis into Kairos.

Scripture demonstrates that it is during times of crisis that beautiful and awesome stories of faith are born. One can cite the writing of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and the structuring of the synagogue as stories of faith that rose from the "tears" of the Babylonian Captivity. The slavery of Jews under Egypt and Rome gave way to heightened awareness of God's care in the Exodus and in the fulfillment of Israel's yearning for a Messiah in Jesus Christ.

Can we say with utmost confidence in God that critical periods in our nation's contemporary history are fertile ground where a renewed faith has been scattered and sown; where fruits are now being harvested a hundredfold? Indeed crisis moments are faithful moments where God is Emmanuel -- always with His people.

The success of the implementation of PCP-II is neither in the conciliar document nor in the national pastoral plan but in the mind and heart of every Catholic who loves the Church. Agents and Communities are tasked to bring these pages to reality.

PCP II: The Social Concerns of the Religious

Fausto Gomez, O.P.

What is the social reality of our country? The reply of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: there is massive poverty, injustice, violence, corruption - and some positive and hopeful signs. Facing a "dehumanizing economic structure," reinforced by the political and cultural structures, and "a weak social consciousness," *what are the Christians to do?* In particular, *what is the role of the religious men and women of the Philippine Church now?* (cf. PCP II, *Acts and Decrees*, Manila: CBCP, 1992, Appendix I).

Let us try to answer these questions from the writings of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines or "PCP II."

1. The Social Action Apostolate of the Religious

The Philippine Church, as People of God, envisions itself as a *Community of Disciples* and a *Church of the Poor*. This is our vision:

That all may have life, we shall have to create a free nation: 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 (PCP II, *Acts and Decrees, Conciliar Document*, no. 253. From now on, only the number/s will be given in parenthesis. Regarding the *Decrees*, the articles will be cited as "Art.").

The mission to reach this vision is a *Renewed Integral Evangelization*, including Word, Sacrament and Service, or, in the language of PCP II, a renewed catechesis, a renewed worship and a renewed social apostolate. The three tasks of mission are interconnected: one cannot fully exist without the other two.

Although the mission of the local Church is one — it is the mission of Christ! — *the agents of mission*, or renewal, are all the members of the community of disciples, namely, the bishops and priests, the religious and the lay faithful. The religious are asked by their vocation to be faithful religious, that is, consecrated to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels, in communion for mission. They are asked, then, to be witnesses by their consecrated lives — personal and communitarian witnesses (cf. 464); to be followers of Christ in an intimate manner. Thus, they are true evangelizers, included among evangelizers in the social action apostolate. PCP II speaks of the religious in its *Conciliar Document* Part IV (The Community of Disciples: workers for renewal) and in its *Decrees*, Title XI (The Religious), Articles 58-72. (Cf. Antonio M. Pernia, SVD, "The Religious According to PCP II," *Diwa*, Vol. XVII, No. 2, November 1992, 132-139.)

The religious belong to the People of God and, therefore, ought to cooperate with the bishops and priests and with the lay faithful in the work of mission, of liberation-salvation. PCP II stresses the need of this collaboration — and continuing dialogue — for mission, for the building of the local Church (cf 485 & 487).

Leaving aside the different modes of social commitment according to the various kinds of religious institutes; speaking in general, therefore, what is the mission of the religious with regard to the social action apostolate of our Church?

1.1 *The Social Apostolate or Liberating Evangelization*

Evangelization to be integral, therefore, must be made up not only of religious activities, but also of social commitment focused on temporal liberation, human promotion, integral development. Certainly, evangelization and salvation cannot be identified with, nor be reduced to, a task of temporal liberation; but evangelization is not complete without temporal liberation (242-243). Indeed, temporal

eration, or the promotion of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, is a constitutive element of evangelization — and, therefore, of New or Renewed Evangelization. Let us recall once more well-known words of the Synod of Bishops' *Justice in the World* (71): "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."

The social action apostolate, or liberating evangelization, is the most pervasive element of the texts issued by the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, including the *Message of the Council to the People of God in the Philippines*, the *Conciliar Document*, and the *Decrees*. In the *Conciliar Document*: III (A Renewed Integral Evangelization), B (Announcing a Message of Liberation) and C (Special Social Concerns). Also in the *Decrees*: Articles 20-27 (Social Action Apostolate) and Articles 28-33 (Special Social Concerns).

The doctrine on action for justice and solidarity is basically contained in *The Social Doctrine of the Church*. It acquired through study, social awareness and conscientization (cf. 283-289). It is slowly acquired — interiorized — through the formation of a *social conscience*, often terribly lacking in many of our Christians, concerned as they are by and large almost exclusively with personal piety and conversion, and little concerned with the struggle for justice, truth, freedom and love, which is also a constitutive element of our faith, our following of Jesus, our proclamation of God's Kingdom.

The social teaching of the Church is an essential part of the Christian message, and also of catechesis and the liturgy (cf. John Paul II, CA, 54 and 5). (It is interesting to note here that the *techism of the Catholic Church* (1992) explains social ethics not only in special moral theology, but also in fundamental moral theology as well.) The social doctrine of the Church is an important instrument of evangelization. In our Philippine context, certain truths from the Church's social message appear as urgent and necessary. The truths involved are the following:

Integral Development based on Human Dignity and Solidarity;
Universal Purpose of Earthly Goods and Private Property;
Social Justice and Love;
Peace and Active Non-violence;
Love of Preference for the Poor;
The Value of Human Work;
The Integrity of Creation;
The Empowerment of People (291).

The social doctrine of the Church speaks forcefully of *principles for reflection*, stressing the principle of love of neighbor, rooted in fraternity and practiced in solidarity (cf. 304-306), and extended to the principle of the integrity of creation (ib., 321-324); of *criteria for judgment*, which underline the preferential option for the poor (312-314). This is closely linked to the principles of justice-love and the universal destiny of the goods of the earth (297- 303), and it includes people empowerment (325-329); and it issues forth in *directives for action*, which center on nonviolent means (307- 311). (Cf. Paul VI, OA, 4; John Paul II, CT, 29; CDF, LC, 72-80).

As an essential part of the Christian message, as an instrument of evangelization, the social doctrine of the Church ought to be known by all the disciples of Christ who are charged with the one mission of preaching the Good News to all creatures (Mk 16: 15).

Hence, lay men and women have to take up the study of the social message of the Gospel as a significant chapter of catechesis and religious initial and permanent formation (cf. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 1988, no. 60).

Priests and religious for their part, have to study the social teachings of the Church as part of their philosophical and theological formation and of continuing formation (CCE, *Guidelines for the Study and Teaching of the Church's Social Doctrine in the Formation of Priests*, 1988, no. 47). PCP II decreed that "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 apostolates of religious" (Art. 68, #1). Moreover, PCP II states, religious must have "a passion for justice" (481).

PCP II speaks of concrete demands related to justice and the social apostolate. Let me point out three: Catholic schools, Catholic hospitals, and parishes. *Catholic schools* are asked to form their students as "agents of social transformation" (Art. 106, # 3) and "witnesses to Christ in the world" (Art. 107), and to have a campus ministry centered on forming small Christian communities (Art. 106, # 2).

Speaking of *parishes*, PCP II underlines often the building up of strong Basic Ecclesial Communities, which must be at the forefront of the pastoral efforts (Art. 66; cf Art. 115-117). Moreover, parish religious organizations, and movements "should be imbued with a deeper sense of evangelical service to the wider community of which they are part" (Art. 116, # 1).

Catholic hospitals and other health centers continue the healing ministry of our Lord and, therefore, take care of the sick, in particular — and as much as possible — of the sick who are poor. A Church of the poor is obliged to opt for them (cf RM, 59-60), especially for the poorest of the poor (RM, 43, 59-60; PCP II, 614-618). PCP II asks all dioceses and parishes to create commissions for the pastoral care of the sick, the aged and the disabled (Art. 33).

Evangelization to be integral, then, must be committed to the humanization of society and the liberation of the people. Religious men and women in particular, have to be socially involved, and, therefore, politically involved, too, but not in partisan politics (Art. 28, # 2). They have to avoid an escapist spirituality on the one hand, and a Partisan politicized involvement on the other.

In connection with the obligation of the religious to be involved — as much as all Christians if not more — in the struggle against injustice, violence and oppression, theologian Elizabeth McDonough, O.P., cautions us correctly:

Many religious who recognize action on behalf of justice as a *constitutive* element of the Gospel appear to have fallen into the error of thinking that action on behalf of justice is also *exhaustive* of it. There is ample indication that some religious erroneously assess the Church's mission as only or primarily one of unbridled activity in the marketplace of contemporary society. They frequently quote as source the document *Religious and Human*

Promotion, but one seldom hears any mention of the document *The Contemplative Dimension of Religious Life* (E. McDonough, O.P., "Beyond the Liberal Model: Quo Vadis?" *Review for Religious*, March-April 1991, p. 178).

On the other hand, we have to add, the opposite extreme is likewise — if not more — unfortunately real: many religious men and women do not seem to believe that action on behalf of justice is a constitutive element of evangelical witnessing. Moreover, for some of them, their mission in Christ's Church is, almost exclusively, "spiritual," with a spirituality which does not fully integrate — as it should — faith and social action, hope and temporal liberation, charity and justice, prayer and social commitment, the Eucharist and solidarity.

1.2 *A Spirituality of Social Transformation*

Religious in general are asked to develop a spirituality which cultivates prayer, responds to the word of God in Sacred Scriptures and is constantly nourished by the Holy Eucharist (Cf. PC, 6; CIC, 663).

PCP II speaks creatively of a *renewed spirituality* for a renewed evangelization (188). It is here, most particularly, where religious men and women must give example to other disciples: an example of socially fruitful contemplation. They are asked to witness a *holistic spirituality* which helps them — and all Christians — to live according to the Holy Spirit, to journey, as communities of disciples, to truth and justice, love and peace, to full life (263). It is an *incarnated spirituality*, that is, a situated spirituality; an *integrated spirituality*, which integrates transcendent and immanent elements (188), popular religious practices, and the works of justice and mercy (175).

A *renewed spirituality of social transformation* entails for religious as well as for priests and lay faithful "an enduring and intimate commitment to Jesus," an absorbing love for Him and, in Him, for all humans, but principally, preferentially for the poor. (Cf. 262-282.)

Catechesis, worship and social apostolate are the three interconnected elements of new or renewed evangelization. The social action apostolate needs catechesis lest it fall prey to the temptation of

unchristian ideologies, or become merely activism (183). It also needs worship as its source of strength (185). Therefore, "the social apostolate is to be constantly given solid 'religious grounding through catechesis and organic linking with worship" (Art. 20, # 3).

Renewed spirituality, then, goes beyond a traditional spirituality focused on the Spirit, on prayer and contemplation, to a spirituality of creation-incarnation, of contemplation-action, which sees God's presence also in working with others for the social transformation of the world. It likewise underlines in our context an ethics of work as an essential element of Christian spirituality (cf. Art. 37). By the way, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* considers work poorly done as a sin (no. 2409).

PCP II speaks eloquently of this spirituality of social transformation, a spirituality as "attentiveness to the Holy Spirit whose movements are also to be discerned in the events and situations of our day," (262) "a following of Jesus-in-mission" (278).

A spirituality of social transformation, a radical part of PCP II's message of liberation, that is also centered on sin as something to be renounced and on continuing conversion as something to achieve through personal and social change.

As Christians, we are asked by our faith to denounce evil, to announce the Good News by word and deed and to renounce our sins, as the basic obstacles to integral liberation. As spiritual persons and communities, we have to attune ourselves to the movements of the Holy Spirit (215), who is the principal agent of evangelization (EN, 75).

To be transformed by the Spirit, we have to acknowledge our personal sins as well as our share in the reality of social sins or structures of sin (cf. 81-82), structures "created by the accumulation of many sinful attitudes" (270).

By acknowledging our sinfulness "as the root cause of our social problems" (271), we begin a renewed spiritual journey, the journey towards God's Kingdom (272). Conversion, which is at the beginning of renewed evangelization (156), is conversion to God and to neighbor, principally, — again and always — to the poor neighbor, and also to creation.

A spirituality of social transformation is, ought to be, a *hopeful and joyful spirituality*:

It is a spirituality that listens to and heeds God's word, discerns and follows the Spirit in the Scriptures, in the Church and in history, in the voices of the voiceless and powerless and finds in the Eucharist not only its full nourishment but also its total prayerful communion with the Lord of salvation and liberation. It urges one to care for the earth as God's gift (281).

Finally, let us point out that the renewed spirituality of PCP II centers on prayer, too (cf. 503); in fact, according to Fr. Thomas Green, prayer is the heart and core of the integrated spirituality of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (cf. Thomas H. Green, S.J., "Spirituality in PCP II: Integrated, Scripturally-Based, Communitarian," Landas, 6, 1992, 133-144).

2. The Priority of Liberation: the Preferential Option for the Poor

For every Christian, Jesus Christ represents the fundamental option of life, that is, his or her basic choice, commitment and decision. Opting radically for Christ necessarily implies opting decidedly for human liberation, for justice and solidarity. These obligatory options of Christian faith have to be mediated and practiced through the preferential option or love of preference for the poor.

This common option of all Christians is painfully relevant in our society, where "the poverty and destitution of the great mass of our people are only too evident, contrasting sharply with the wealth and luxury of the relatively few families, the elite top of our social pyramid" (24 and 312). Indeed, "appalling mass poverty is undoubtedly the most tragic aspect of Filipino life; it is the social problem" (PCP II, *Acts and Decrees*, Appendix I, A).

PCP II envisions the Philippine Church as a *Church of the poor*, "one whose members and leaders have a special love for the poor" (126):

As we approach the year 2000, Christ bids this community - ourselves, the laity, religious and clergy of the Catholic Church in the Philippines - to be a Church of the Poor (PCP II, Message).

In her evangelization mission, the Church, the universal sacrament of salvation (LG, 1, 9) opts for the human person: for all men, women and children of the world. Like Jesus, it opts preferentially for "the little ones," the poor and marginalized of our societies. In the Church, religious have to witness their poverty today through the preferential option for the poor.

Through their total consecration to God, in communion with their own community brothers and sisters, living poverty in spirit and in fact, religious make a preferential option for the poor. The Second Forum for Justice and Peace of religious men and women of Asia (Hong Kong, November, 1986), stated: "At this turning point in history, if religious orders (Congregations and Institutes) do not respond to the cry of the poor for justice, peace and development on a global scale, they will be doomed to irrelevance" (In *Info on Human Development*, Vol. 13, Nos. 11-12).

Living in voluntary poverty, religious struggle with the poor against their imposed poverty: we have to love the poor, but not their poverty, we have to fight with them against their dehumanizing poverty. *What is the meaning and what are implications of the so called preferential option for the poor?*

In the Old as well as in the New Testament, the praxis of justice-love is directed principally towards the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. God is the liberator of the poor. Jesus, the Son of God and a Man-for-others, has also a sort of clear "bias" in favor of the "little ones" (cf. 314-482). Hence, "in fidelity to the spirit of the Beatitudes, the Church is called to be on the side of those who are poor and oppressed in any way" (RM, 60).

Following the prophetic tradition, the Fathers of the Church, and later on St Thomas Aquinas, speak strongly of the right of every person to a share in the goods of the earth (cf. II-II, 68,2), and of the grave obligation of the rich people to share with the poor, not only out of charity but also, and radically, out of justice: the goods of the world are created by God for all and, therefore, everyone has the right to the share needed to live a human life (cf. GS, 69; PCP II, 297-303).

For our personal reflection, let us quote here the rightly provocative words of St. Basil the Great:

He who takes the clothes from a man is a thief. He who does not clothe the indigent, when he can, does he deserve another name but thief? The bread that you keep belongs to the hungry; to the naked, the coat that you hide in your wardrobe; to the shoeless, the shoes that are dusty at your home; to the wretched, the silver that you hide. In brief, you offend all those who can be helped by you (cf. *Hom. II in famen*, I: PG 31, 325).

At the level of praxis, the preferential option for the poor has become the exemplary option of many Christians and communities. By and large, however, it still remains a great challenge for the majority of the People of God and, perhaps, for many religious communities. As the Asian Bishops said in 1982, every Christian, to be able to behave as a real Christian must make the preferential option for the poor the real pattern of his daily practice (cf. FABC, *The Church, a Community of Faith in Asia*, Bangkok, 1982). *What is the meaning of the preferential option for the poor?*

Option means decision and commitment in favor of the poor. It is not optional, but obligatory. It is a Christian option for all disciples of Jesus — not only for those who live in poor countries.

Preferential means the choice of the poor as a priority of Christian witnessing of justice and solidarity — a witnessing that is necessary for salvation. The preferential option for the poor does not — cannot — exclude the rich: it is not an exclusive and excluding option, but a preferential, priority option (cf. *Lk* 9:1-3; 10-38; *Jn* 3:1). It is not a “classist,” but a universal option (cf. PCP II, 127).

Poor means the economically poor and the socially poor — the powerless, the marginalized, the oppressed, the exploited. PCP II points out concrete faces of the poor among us: rural and urban poor; tribal Filipinos, street children, farmers, fisherman, women, the disabled... (377 & ff.; Art. 32-33). In the context of the local Church, “poor” also include the generally powerless lay faithful and, in a sense, religious women, who must be given greater participation and leadership in the evangelizing mission of the Church.

What are the implications of the option for the poor?

The implications of the option for the poor are many and varied according to the various ministries and charism of the Church of Christ. It may be witnessed in different ways and degrees of commitment to the point of living for the poor, with the poor and like the poor. It implies *for all Christians* to practice poverty in spirit, to live a simple lifestyle, and to be in solidarity with the poor.

Throughout Christian tradition, voluntary poverty has been considered a great Christian virtue and value: interior and exterior poverty, in spirit and in fact, often reaffirmed through a vow. Interior poverty, *poverty in spirit* is a basic Christian attitude (virtue), a condition for Christian discipleship, a true sign of Christian identity, which implies the power to recognize Jesus in the poor, the downtrodden, the "fallen" on the many roads of injustice, oppression and exploitation.

Religious men and women are asked by their charism to be not only poor in spirit, but also in fact, through the evangelical counsel of poverty.

In this context, it is appropriate to quote here the words of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991) regarding the significance of the vow of poverty:

Poverty witnesses against the exploitation of material resources, against a greed that leads to the impoverishment of millions; by demonstrating responsible stewardship in a finite universe, by its detachment from material possessions, and its call for simplicity, poverty urges the Church to trust entirely in God and to place all its resources in the service of the Kingdom.

Poverty expresses faith in a God who has a love of preference for the poor and listens to their cry. It leads us to create communities of sharing. It brings us into a deep relationship with the poor, a relationship that must shape the life and witness of religious, both as regards life-style and apostolate (461 and 468).

Poverty in spirit, and, more so, poverty in fact, to be authentic must be expressed in a certain external poverty, that is, on a *simple style of life*. True poverty in spirit is shown really be a lifestyle that is

simple, sober and austere (cf. *Lk* 12:22-34; *Jn* 5:1-5; 1 *Tm* 6:8). The preferential option for the poor at the level of message is often denied at the level of practice by a luxurious, superfluous, consumeristic, wasteful lifestyle. Indeed, "we need to turn to a more austere way of life" (RM, 59). The new *Catechism* says that excessive spending, and squandering are sins (no. 2409).

PCP II asks pastors and leaders of the Church — all ministers — to create in the community of disciples "a greater sensitivity to the plight of the poor, leading to live simple and austere life styles" (*Decrees*, Art. 26). By evangelizing the poor, religious are also evangelized by them: they are challenged to be faithful to their faith and their charisms (cf. 132).

A simple style of life leads necessarily to a real *solidarity with the poor* (cf. *Ez* 16:49; *Ga* 2:10; RM, 60); a solidarity which is empathy and sharing with the poor; a theological solidarity which is, as the French Bishops said in 1983, one of the forms of saying "God" today; a Christian solidarity which sees Christ in the poor.

Moreover, solidarity with the poor demands today commitment to changing unjust and oppressive social structures through dialogue and active non-violence.

To be in solidarity with the poor means "to collaborate with the poor themselves and with others to lift up the poor from their poverty" (130). Moreover, "pastors and leaders of the Church will courageously defend and vindicate the rights of the poor and the oppressed, even when doing so will mean alienation or persecution from the rich and powerful" (131).

Solidarity with the poor, according to the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, requires sharing resources with the poor and giving them "preferential attention and time" (129). In the administration of the sacraments, in particular, the poor cannot be deprived of them by reason of their inability to pay the corresponding stipends. In this context, *PCP II* frowns at a ranked celebration of the sacraments according to stipends (cf. 128).

The practice of solidarity with the poor extends also to the establishment in all dioceses and parishes of a fund for the poor and

needy (Art. 35, #3). Religious in particular are asked by PCP II to evaluate their work from the perspective of the preferential option for the poor and to show this love in the schools they administer (Art. 68, #3). Furthermore, in dialogue with the bishops, religious are asked by PCP II to work towards a more equitable distribution of their numbers in the country, and thus give "particular attention to the needs of the poorer dioceses and rural areas" (Art. 61).

Let us add here that witnessing poverty and being committed to eradicate poverty — as individuals and as communities — calls for an appropriate celebration of worship especially of the Eucharist as source of grace and sign of love.

The preferential option — or love — for the poor is an option of justice and charity. It is mainly an option of charity. For religious, their vows are also mediations of their love. As evangelizers, religious are men and women of charity (KM, 89). In charity, the Christian realize more profoundly that "our way to God passes through the poor." The revolutionary character of the love of Jesus is found "in his boundless love, and the love of his Father, for the little ones whom that world scorns and condemns" (Y. Congar, O.P.).

At the end of our journey of life, we will be examined in love (St. John of the Cross), above all, in love of our poor neighbors — the abandoned, the dispossessed, the wretched of this earth. In his great social encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, John Paul II tells us that, facing the situation of injustice, peacelessness and un-love in our world, it is the Lord Jesus who comes to question us: *What are you doing for poor persons and countries?* And to tell us: *What you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do to me* (cf. Mt 25:31-46). "Eternal salvation depends on the living out of a love of preference for the poor because the poor and needy bear the privileged presence of Christ" (no. 312).

3. Witnessing Christ

PCP II continues to be a journey of the community of disciples, trying to become more the Church of the poor, towards a civilization of life and love. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines praises the consecrated men and women of the local Church for their "indispensable role" in evangelization (448). It challenges them to imple-

ment its rich teachings, including its message of liberation, permeated by a spirituality of social transformation.

To be truly committed, I have to be *convinced* — convinced that action for justice and solidarity with the poor belong to the essence of my faith, to the integrality of evangelization, to the following of Christ.

I may be totally convinced, but not all that committed! Why? Because I am not all that converted, especially to my neighbor and my poor neighbor. We have to realize that the best evangelizer is the saint, as John Paul II repeats in *Redemptoris Missio*. We do not have to be saints yet (we have to try even now) to be committed to justice. There has to be a basic coherence between our words and our actions, our teaching and our lives: "When our voice is not sustained by our deeds, we lose authority" (St Gregory the Great).

We have to be witnesses, not only — not even mainly — of justice, but, more radically by our consecrated life. Witnessing is "the first form of evangelization" (RM, 42; cf. EN, 21).

Above all, we have to be witnesses of Christ, the center of evangelization (cf. EN, 7227). We have to be, and become more, other Christs, "*alteri Christi*," Christ for each other — in the religious community, in the Church and to the world.

Vatican II put it engagingly:

Religious should carefully consider that through them... the Church truly wishes to give an increasingly clear revelation of Christ. Through them Christ should be shown contemplating on the mountain, announcing God's kingdom to the multitudes, healing the sick and the maimed, turning sinners to wholesome fruit, blessing children, doing good to all, and always obeying the will of the Father who sent Him (LG, 46).

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and of the Church, model and help of consecrated souls (LG, 46) and star of evangelization continue to be "a paradigm for those who have consecrated their lives to God especially as the voice of the poor and lowly and as one who welcomed the word of God into her heart and put it into practice" (457).

Cases and Inquiries

Excelso Garcia, O.P.

Marriage Solemnized in a Cursillo

A young man and a young woman entered the Cursillo single. They got married during the Cursillo itself. On the very first day they approached the priest in charge and declared to him their desire to marry each other during the cursillo. The priest accepted willingly their proposal. Being quite busy, however, he passed the responsibility to do the previous investigation to the staff of the cursillo class. As a result the priest could not be sure that the female was validly baptized, since she could not produce any certificate of her baptism. This notwithstanding, the priest solemnized their marriage during the Cursillo. Some years later the woman became sick with terminal cancer and requested the Chaplain of the Hospital that she be baptized. She attested at that date that she had never been baptized.

May I ask the following questions:

- 1. Was the priest in charge of the Cursillo right or wrong to solemnize the marriage?*
- 2. What do you think of the celebration of marriage during a Cursillo?*
- 3. Was the marriage valid or invalid?*

4. *If invalid, what would you suggest could have been done while the woman lived?*

A Priest

Let us try to answer the four questions raised by the Hospital Chaplain.

1. *Was the priest in charge of the Cursillo right or wrong in solemnizing the marriage?* Unfortunately we have to say that the priest in charge of the cursillo was wrong in solemnizing the marriage for the following reasons:

a. the Church's law clearly states: "Only those marriages are valid which are contracted in the presence of the local Ordinary or parish priest, or the priest or deacon delegated by either of them, who in the presence of two witnesses, assist..." (can.. 1108). The priest in charge of the Cursillo, if he was not the parish priest, had no faculty to solemnize marriages. He would have needed delegation, as stated in the law. This is not even mentioned by the consultant priest. We, therefore, presume it did not exist.

b. The Episcopal Conference of the Philippines has issued the following norm: "Those who intend to marry should inform their proper parish priest at least one month before the date of their wedding, in order to enable him to help them prepare its celebration according to the law of the Church." This norm was obviously not followed in our case.

c. "The priest, being quite busy, however, passed the responsibility to the previous investigation to the staff of the Cursillo." Even assuming that the priest enjoyed the faculty to solemnize the marriage, he himself should have done the previous investigation. He should not have passed the responsibility to do it to the Cursillo staff. He had to be morally sure that there was nothing hindering the validity or lawfulness of the marriage (can., 1066). Logically, "he could not be sure that the female was validly baptized." Had he personally conducted the previous investigation, he might, when the woman could not produce the baptismal certificate, resort to other means to know that baptism had not been conferred on her at all, as canon 876 provides. Rather he took for granted the validity of her baptism. In fact her

baptism itself had never taken place, and this fact gave origin to the diriment impediment of disparity of cult.

d. No mention whatsoever of the banns, required by law, is made in the case. The Episcopal Conference has issued the following norm: "The banns shall be announced in the proper parish of each of the contracting parties, where they are better known according to the judgment of the priest who is conducting the investigation. Publication of the banns shall also be done in other parishes where there exists a reasonable suspicion that either or both parties have incurred a matrimonial diriment impediment."

e. Canon 1115 states: "Marriages are to be celebrated in the parish in which either of the contracting parties has a domicile or a quasi-domicile or a months residence.... With the permission of the proper Ordinary or the proper parish priest, marriage can be celebrated elsewhere." The place where the Cursillo was held was most probably different from the places mentioned in the foregoing canon. If so, permission of the proper Ordinary or of the proper parish priest was necessary.

f. There is no mention either in the case as to whether the contracting parties had a marriage license, as required by the Family Code of the Philippines. It is a formal requisite for the validity of the marriage before the State (Art. 3 & 4). Canon 1071 states that "except in the case of necessity, no one is to assist without the permission of the local Ordinary at:....2. a marriage which cannot be recognized by the Civil law or celebrate in accordance with it." We presume, of course, that the priest who solemnized the marriage has authorization, as required by Art. 7 of the Family Code.

2. "*What do you think of the celebration of marriage during the Cursillo?*" I simply do not think it is proper to have the celebration of a marriage during the Cursillo. The aim of the Cursillo is to refresh in a few days the knowledge the participants have about their duties and obligations as Christians in an atmosphere of deep reflection and prayer and bring them closer to God. Although Christian marriage is a holy sacrament, its celebration is alien to the Cursillo. Christian marriage by nature as well as by its essential properties and ends, the obligations it entails, etc., can undoubtedly be an excellent topic for '*rollos*' or discussions if the persons participating in the cursillo need to be

enlightened; but to celebrate a marriage during the Cursillo is improper and out of place. It diverts the attention of the participants from the very purpose of their gathering.

3. "Was the marriage valid or invalid?" The marriage in question was obviously invalid, not for having been celebrated during the Cursillo, but due to the existing diriment impediment of disparity of cult. "Some years later... the woman attested that she had never been baptized." The fact of her not being baptized at the time of the celebration of marriage hindered the Catholic man from marrying her validly, unless a dispensation of the diriment impediment had been obtained. Our consultant does not mention that such dispensation was granted. On the contrary, he says that not being sure that the female's baptism was valid, the priest proceeded to solemnize the marriage during the Cursillo. Note that the doubt or uncertainty of the priest was on the *validity* of baptism, not on the *fact* of her not being baptized. The marriage in question being invalid, it may have been a putative marriage, either or both parties were in good faith when it was celebrated, i.e. if they believed there was no diriment impediment.

4. "*If invalid, what would you suggest could have been done?*" We can apply the norms stated by law for its possible simple convalidation or its validation *in radice*. These norms are the following:

Can. 1156 reads as follows: "To convalidate a marriage which is invalid because of diriment impediment, it is required that the *impediment cease or be dispensed*, and that at least the party aware of the impediment renews his consent. This renewal is required by ecclesiastical law for the validity of the convalidation, even if at the beginning both parties have been given consent and had not afterwards withdrawn it." In our case the woman requested baptism from the Chaplain of the Hospital, because she attested that she had never been baptized. There existed, therefore, the diriment impediment of disparity of cult when the marriage was celebrated, rendering said marriage null and void.

Canon 1158 states that "if the impediment is public, consent is to be renewed by both parties in the canonical form. However if the impediment cannot be proved (occult), it is sufficient that consent be renewed privately and in secret, specifically by the party who is aware of the impediment, provided the other party persists in the consent given, or by both if the impediment is known to both." The consultant

priest does not say whether the woman, not baptized yet at the time of the celebration of marriage, kept this fact to herself alone or whether she told the man she married, or whether it was known to other persons or not. In short, we do not know whether the impediment is really public or occult, in order to apply the norm of canon 1158 properly.

With regard to the *validation in radice* canon 1163 says: "A marriage which is invalid because of an impediment...can be convalidated retroactively, provided the consent of both parties persists."

The forgoing norms declare the possibility simply to convalidate or validate in radice the invalid marriage solemnized by the priest in charge of the Cursillo. Many more unknown details of the case need to be known in order to give the proper solution. We have made some assumptions in order to point out what might have been done once the woman was baptized, and the existing impediment of disparity of cult removed. For such an impediment certainly seem to have existed in this case.

Washing of Hand in the Mass

Certain priests seem to omit the lavabo or washing hands after the offertory. I have asked some of them the reason for such omission. They say that they have washed their hands already before Mass and there is no need to wash them again during Mass. Is the rubric on washing the hands after the offertory still in force; has it perhaps been abolished, or is it optional?

A Parish Priest

This is not the first time that I have been informed that some priests do not wash their hands after offering the bread and wine during Mass. The reason given by some of them to our consultant is not a valid reason. The washing of the hands after the offertory is an ancient practice, commanded by the Church. The Church has prescribed the rubric of washing the hands not precisely to cleanse the priest's hands physically. The act has a symbolism which should be preserved at all cost. *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* in its chapter II, subtitle III *Individual Parts of the Mass*, n. 52 reads: "The priest washes his hands as an expression of his desire for inward purification."

The old ritual of this ceremony said: "*et lavat extremitates digitorum pollicis et indicis.*" The reason for this washing is twofold, namely:

a) to clean them physically of any possible dirt, in reverence to the Blessed Sacrament, since it will be touched during and after the consecration. Note that before the liturgical reform, in private Masses the priest was required to wash only the tip of his thumb and forefinger ("*lavat extremitates digitorum pollicis et indicis*"), while in Solemn Masses the priest was told to wash his hands ("*lavat manus*"), because his hands could have gotten dirty using the thurible to cense the offering. In the new Rite we read in the rubric 24 of the *Ordo Missae cum Populo*: "*Deinde sacerdos, stans a latius altaris lavat manus...*" and in the *Ordo Missae sine Populo* in rubric 18: "*Deinde stans ad latus altaris, lavat manus...*" (*Missale Romanum*, editio typica, Romae, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1971, pp. 391 and 482).

b) to signify the interior cleanliness necessary in the priest, minister of the Holy Sacrifice, representing Christ the Immaculate Lamb to be immolated anew in the consecration and be consumed in Holy Communion. Verses based on Psalm 25, which are recited by the priest while washing his hands, declare beautifully the internal purity needed in the priest to offer the Holy Sacrifice, which follows after the washing of the hands.

It is worth noting that the present rubric read: "The priest washes his hands," not "...the tip of his thumb and forefinger," as before. The washing of the hands is not new. It has been in force from ancient times, as can be seen in the *Ordo Missae* of the Missal of St. Pius V. Moreover, this norm was seriously discussed by the Commission of the liturgical reform and the opinion of the Commission was in favor of retaining this ceremony considering its symbolism strongly stressed since the Church's early times.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem said: "You see that the deacon brings some water in order that the priest and other ministers who are around God's altar can wash their hands. This is certainly done not to take away their bodily stains, since when we enter the church we all are already clean. Rather this ablution of the hands symbolizes the cleansing of our hearts and souls." Likewise Theodore of Mopsuestia said: "Since the priest

offers the Holy Sacrifice for all, he washes his hands reminding us that we must join in offering this Holy Sacrifice with a clean conscience."

This symbolism should not disappear in our days. In answer, then, to our consultant Parish Priest we state: the rubric on washing the hands after the offertory has not been abolished, nor is it optional. It is still in force.

God's word for tomorrow

Festal Homilies for July and August 1993

Roman Carter, O.P.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME July 4, 1993

Readings: *Zc 9:9-10*
Rm 8:9 & 11-13
Mt 11:25-30

Humility as the basis of true strength and the Holy Spirit as source of life are the cogent themes of today's readings. They lead us into realms of paradox and exaltation and we walk a tight rope strung over an abyss of nonsense and fanatical zeal if we dare to examine and try to "live" such passages. The effort is worth it, however, for the "name of the game" is true Christianity. This true faith is founded on salient and select features of Judaism and vitalized by its own new-found (and ever fresh) Trinitarian vision. In it power is squarely based on self-abasement, the disinherited are preferred and the innermost spirit of man is both challenged and affirmed.

Our first reading dates not from the period around 520 B.C. when the first exiles were returning to Jerusalem, the critical time of Proto-Zechariah in which past roles were of little practical use and then archaic elements of Israelite religion while venerable and venerated were no longer normative. What a priest, a prophet or a king might be was constantly challenged. Priests (or would-be priests) abounded,

prophets were rare but vocal and kings, in fact were to be no more. Zechariah is both hopeful and cautious to start with but in the end opts for radical reform based (as in most prophetic teaching) on a crucial interiority. Was Proto-Zechariah really a priest? No doubt. Did he, indeed, crown Zerubbabel as shadowy "king"? Unfortunately, yes. Is he a prophet? More than anything else, he is. This writing is contained in the fourth century of Deutero-Zechariah who is able in thought, coherent in content, extensive in length and convincing in tone. This second part of the prophecy becomes both universal and enduring. It comes down to us the definitive "word of the Lord" which it is.

Today's gospel has faint echoes of the prophetic stance of the first reading but Jesus goes far beyond post exilic problematic both in the exclusive scope and the profound theologizing of his teaching. Only humility can open the door of revelation, as of much else. As in philosophy only the man who does not know and admits his ignorance can become wise, so in the messianic reign only "children" (the pretentionless admitters of lack of learning) can enter. To them both revelation and "rest" are promised for they alone are qualified to receive such divine gifts.

St. Paul in Romans 8 is concerned with underlying Christian vitality. This liveliness can only find its source in the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is subject to no man's programme or caprice. We need the spirit to belong to God, and (belonging to God thanks to the saving work of Christ) we need to come alive in the Spirit. Otherwise our unredeemed qualities (mortal corporality included and typical) will so weigh us down that we can never rise to life. The "carnal" in us is to be neither regarded nor experimented with lest we be doomed to a second death. Rather, we should let the Spirit veer our lives away from the thickets of sin and onto the path of Christ.

What Zechariah actually has to say is messianic to an extreme and forms part of a well-thought out and deftly described pattern of burden and reward. While Alexander the Great was conquering the world ca. 332 Deutero-Zechariah was taking up the task outlined nearly two centuries before. The King to come in Zion will be not only victorious and triumphant (as was the passing Alexander) but "just and saved" (as Alexander never was). He will cast aside regal pomp and ride not the horse of war but the humble donkey of peace. This makes his entry both friendly and solemn and is a sign of peace extensive beyond

compare. For this King will reign from "sea to sea," and his realm will extend from "the River to the ends of the earth." In other words it is a universal Kingdom. Of course it is the reign, realm and Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ to which this second Zechariah refers.

For the hint of a tradition of the importance of lowliness for an extensive reign Jesus himself develops explicit thoughts of dependence as the foundation of godliness. Thanksgiving, resignation, willingness to obey not only characterize Jesus as related to the Father but also the open and dependent "child-followers" of Jesus as related to himself. They attain a wisdom of deep insight which surpasses the mere knowledge of rote-learned lore. They come into the inclusive possessions of the Son as given by the Father. The repose given them is rest from Old Testament labors of speculation, especially regarding the nimutiae of the Law. Their yoke is merely that of the Kingdom. It sits lightly and is borne with ease. Thus it contrasts with what the scribes and pharisees impose. It leads to life in its lightness. Their yoke leads to death through its unbearable burden.

Life and death, however, cannot be reduced to the results of following one covenant or another, to being a Christian or a Jew. St. Paul maintains that for us to persevere in the new life Christ has given us we must so live in the Spirit as to "spiritualize" our beings. His vocabulary is technical and hardly facile. But what he seems to mean is that we should find a certain "reality" or "actuality" in God which derives personally from his being and becomes a new dynamic principle for us. We cannot "appropriate" things spiritual and things "carnal" (transitory, death-bound and basically evil) at once without precipitating a sort of "spiritual schizophrenia" through their mutual competition. Therefore, the spiritual principle must dominate and subdue the carnal and this can only be the work of God. But if the Holy Spirit is present within us it will be accomplished.

Many today are looking for some sort of political wonder worker who will put to an end all our troubles. They want someone who will both serve with humility and extend his influence in peace. Only Jesus can fulfill such hopes. He not only will do what others cannot. He will reach down to us in our own debased state and raise us up. But, having been raised, we must walk in the Spirit. It is true that "to serve God is to reign," but for that holy rule to triumph the grace of

perseverance is called for and it will only come from God the Holy Spirit alive and working in us.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 11, 1993

Readings: *Is 55:10-11*
Rm 8:18-23
Mt 13:1-23

In this age of "ecological awareness" it should be heartening to know that Scripture is filled not only with metaphors and allusions to nature but with a deep sense of appreciation for the earth as God's creation and for the plants and animals that grow from and on it. All three readings make reference to these things, not obviously as ends in themselves, but to lift us higher to real and sincere consideration of God's will not just for us alone but for all things brought into being by his hands.

The first reading is taken from the "new invitation" passage of Deutero-Isaiah. In these brief verses a whole theological psychology is framed. Man in history is as much recipient of the word of God as the earth is of snow or rain as agents of a harvest both eventual and inevitable. But the word must "soak in" for effect. Its presence is deep and powerful but, unfortunately, not all who hear it respond. The idea of word as bread is novel but will be taken up by John in the New Testament and has been worked out in several Reformation and Post-Reformation theologies of which Catholics are becoming more and more aware. The idea that the word of God is broken, offered and even "eaten" in the liturgy of the word may be new to many, but it is hardly startling. For God comes to us with gentle assurance through the proclaimed revelation once written and now read out to us at Mass.

Our Gospel this Sunday is a long and seemingly intricate parables the first nine verse of which are most important. The Greek penchant for explaining parables (for finding a "moral" to every story) is rather deplorable but has been retained in scripture as inevitable for a first century milieu. There is no reason to believe (and there are many reasons to disbelieve) that Jesus ever "explained" his parables, for

explanation rob these simple stories of their "punch" and reduce them to moralizing confabulations unlike any probable rabbinic teaching. With this in mind, today we shall limit our thoughts to the "shorter form" of the Gospel. What graphic images these verses offer and how they lead to a single point we shall try to show below.

First, however, let us turn for a moment to St. Paul. In Romans 8 he has set himself a gigantic task. What a pity that his accomplishment has been so neglected by preachers down through time. For it is neglected at the peril of an incomplete presentation of true Trinitarianism. Indeed, such neglect could undermine the very roots of our faith.

What Deutero-Isaiah wants more than anything else to get across to his readers is that actions and reactions involving divine realities cannot be lesser or less consequential than the natural realities prophetically used to illustrate them. If rain and snow affect the earth and give an increase (however delayed) in crops, God's word must do something analogous. It cannot be conceived of as a pointless projection into some sort of spiritual void. Rather, through human ears the word comes to human hearts and, in some at least, there is a reaction which amounts in effect to spiritual growth. And this growth is both normal and inevitable given the powerful and, indeed, supernatural character of the word. But it is not a magic growth much less an automatic response. The hearer must inwardly turn to the Lord and acknowledge the word as truly his. Deutero-Isaiah acting as an agent of the word risks a possible rejection on the part of some hearers because he knows through inspiration that an overwhelming majority of hearers will rightly react. Considering that two and a half millennia have gone by since he wrote we must be impressed by his correct appraisal of religious psychology as we, in turn, submit to the power of the word.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 18, 1993

Readings: *Wis 12:13 & 16-19*
Rm 8:26-27
Mt 13:24-43

All three readings today deal (each in its own way) with the mystery and problem of evil. Curiously this problem has only been

stated in its present and most usual form since the eighteenth century. Therefore, neither the scriptural positing of the problem nor any limit at its solution (by the way, there is none) can be found directly and in so many words either in today's readings or anywhere else in the Bible. Our contemporaries somewhat snugly ask: "If there is a God why is there evil in the world? If God is almighty why doesn't he stop it?" Most persons who try to answer these questions either fall flat on their faces or inadvertently put their feet in their mouths. The mystery and problem are present in scripture but arise from more practical considerations than those of our abstraction ridden world. Wisdom asks: "why is a strong God lenient?" Matthew asks: "What is to be done with weeds?" Paul asks: "How can we pray when our limitations deprive us of words?" Answers are given, of course, but they neither exhaust the mystery or solve the problem. They merely point out that God's ways are not ours, and that he need not accommodate himself to us but that we would do well to accommodate ourselves to him.

Sulpician Father Addison Wright in the Jerome Biblical Commentary divides the Book of Wisdom from Chapters 11 to 19 into five "diptychs," two sided pictures one side of each being an evil, from Exodus the other good from the same book. Our passage is a digression in the second diptych (which treats of the contrast between the quail of Exodus 16 and the "little animal of plagues" of Exodus 8) but the digression is not utterly detached from the context. What the author wants to resolve is the supposed conflict of God's power and his mercy. Being a Greek-speaking Alexandrian Jew of barely a century before Christ it is not surprising that the author makes use of Greek philosophy. He says in effect (though not in these words) that the same God who allows plagues gives food. But he delights more in giving for. For he is in a word (and a very Aristotelian word at that) "magnanimous," just too rich to be stingy, too grand to be petty. Now if that is how God is, we to be righteous in his sight must be kindly in a grand way too. For after sin can come repentance.

In Matthew's Gospel (as last Sunday) we have a parable and an explanation. The parable comes from Jesus speaking as the Jew he was. The explanation comes from the author, redactor or translator (it is hard to tell which) speaking graphically to pagan Greeks who have their own rich mythology but poor allegorical sense. We must try to recapture the Semitic flavor of the first six verses to see what Jesus really means and remove it from too exact (and detailed) an eschato-

logical explanation. The whole philosophy of religion (if we dare call it that) behind not only our "shorter form" but behind the added parables of the mustard seed and the leaven found in the "longer form" as well is simply "let it be" or at least, "leave things alone." We are tempted to protest: "But they are evil!" and Christ patiently replies "I know, but if you try to rid yourself of everything evil you'll lose out on much that is good." This is strange doctrine, and self-styled "Christians" do not believe the Lord and engage in witch-hunts, stir up hornet's nests and leave whole communities in ruins because of their inane "crusades."

St. Paul has a rather different manifestation of our problem. Anyone who have ever prayed much and often knows what he means. In prayer both our minds and our vocabularies tend to collapse after a while. Of course, we could get so discouraged as to stop praying. And that really would be evil! But here is where the Holy Spirit is of great use. Pleas that might seem meaningless to men (even the supplicants themselves) are made meaningful if they originate in, are buoyed up by and brought to completion by the Spirit. For his mind is divine and all he says is consonant with his own mind even if he says it out of the depths of our confused hearts and by means of our faltering lips. I think anyone who has ever heard and been transported heavenward by the beautiful and harmonious "singing in the Spirit" (i.e. in unknown tongues) of a prayer group large or small will know what I mean.

We in our daily lives are often aggrieved to the breaking point by personal sin, our own or that of others. The way of our grievance is neither through "white washing" nor demolishing the persons involved. Rather, it is through a godly attitude that admits there are some things (and some very bad ones) we cannot understand, but that to be kindly and loving even if it does not solve all our problems keeps from aggravating them. We like the Psalmist of all can be puzzled by how the wicked prosper. But there is precious little most of us can do about it even if we would. How much better to allow slow growth and to leave swift harvesting in God's hands. Sometimes our prayer seems like so much babble, and it probably is. But if we rely on the spirit as power of God coming from deep within us we are less and less concerned about what our lips say and more and more concerned about what our hearts believe.

May the Lord give us the grace to mind our own business. May he teach us how to let things be. Most of all may he give us a prayer guided by his mind and dear to his heart.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

July 25, 1993

Readings: *1 K 3:5-7 & 12*
Rm 8:28-30
Mt 13:44-52

The wisdom of Solomon, some short parables and their implications and the restored image of God in man effected by Christ are the themes of today's readings. What holds them together is an underlying sense of the plan of God pervading all things. This plan of God, however, by no means excludes roles for men and something of human endeavor marks each of the three readings. Solomon in his dream makes a real request for wisdom. The people in the parables perform real actions as does the extolled scribe-turned-disciple at the end of the Gospel passage. And those whom God calls, justifies and gives glory have loved the Lord in exquisite co-operative love. So while God's plan prevails man takes his place within it.

The author of 1 Kings writing some four hundred years after the event has an obvious and unashamed preference for the house of David. Solomon, as first scion of that house is given preferential treatment based on his renowned intelligence despite his later bad end. Even in the context of a dream Solomon wants to be a good ruler more than to be a great one. What he desires the Lord grants. Soon the author will show Solomon's practical use of the wisdom received by varied examples. But the point remains that wisdom itself is a gift from the Lord. It is not acquired by a cumulative use of intelligence. It is bestowed in reverie and prayer.

The last verses of Matthew 13 round off and complete the so-called "Parables of the Kingdom" contained in this chapter. The long parable of the sower with comments on parable use, faith and interpretation takes up nearly half of the chapter. The parables of the darnel, the mustard seed, the leaven and further comments and interpretation bring us to the end of verse 43. Our Gospel starts with the parables of the treasure and the pearl of great price and recounts that of the dragnet

before ending in the commendation of the converted scribe who evidently understands parables. Some say this is the true "Matthew" here questioned by our Lord and praised for his reply. If this is his "signature" what a different person the author must be from the rough and tumble tax-collector whose name he has assumed.

In all the Bible it is hard to find verses more beautiful and in all of literature lines more gracefully strong than those of today's second reading. Controversial they have been, but the controversies have passed on the way and the luster of God's word from Paul's pen remains refulgent. For the very content of the passage makes us gape in wonder. What can be more sublime than love shared with God and the saving word of our vocation, our justification and our glorification?

God has, indeed, planned good things for us and fulfilled his plan in Christ. Christ has sent us the treasure, the pearl, the good fish. he will give us the grace to pass his closest scrutiny. Best of all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has applied the saving merits of his Son to us so that (through and by the Holy Spirit) we can hear his voice, we can be counted righteous in his sight, and we can be his in love, glorified forever.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME August 1, 1993

Readings: *Is 55:1-3*
Rm 8:35-37 & 39
Mt 14:13-21

Food in one form or another, but definitely "real" and not merely "symbolic" (in the popular sense) is the topic of all three of today's readings. Yet while this food is real it is also in all three cases (though differently in each case) food unexpected and even miraculous. Furthermore, as we examine text and context it becomes increasingly apparent that, however God wants to feed us, the food involved is as surprising as it is transcendental. For the food in the first reading is free. That in the Gospel is multiplied. And that in the second reading is supplied by love after hunger has been undergone.

The context of the first reading is intensely messianic. Coming as it does from the "New Invitation" passage of Deutero-Isaiah this snippet of three verses portrays a whole scenario of divine bounty. Images and metaphors, mixed as they are, all tell how lack is fulfilled and how plentifully God supplies human wants on the Last Day. But he not only supplies our wants. He keeps us from spending what we have saved by supplying them gratuitously nor does he limit or qualify upon whom he shall endow his largess. Such an unheard of generosity can only ascribed to the goodness of God.

All four Gospels attest to multiplication of scanty quantities of food into a grand supply as a miraculous feat of Christ. Each Evangelist stresses what this means for him. For Matthew it is associated with the death of the Baptist and Christ's withdrawal from Galilee. This is the beginning for Matthew of the messianic reign for the sake of which Christ must die in Jerusalem and appear again as risen Lord in Galilee. Matthew is willing to stretch his knowledge of Palestinian geography enough to put a "desert" in his "Exodus." There are no deserts in Galilee. His deeper message is one of Christ's death. For the "broken" and "poured out" Lord whose grace is distributed to all is the King on Calvary. Jesus, the "rich poor man" is contrast with the "poor rich men" of all times and places who from their abundance hold back the little which is the share of the deserving poor. For they are misers but the Lord is compassion itself. The least thing once placed in his hands becomes the source of untold abundance. But Jesus must touch the little food offered. He must bless and break the bread and filling. And he must speak off the distribution. Otherwise there is no miracle. To give food insufficient for five to five thousand the Lord must intervene strongly and with sanctity.

St. Paul seems to be involved with quite another theme in Romans. But he is not. It is the same theme of human lack and divine Providence but now put in terms of neither a Messianic future nor a singular fulfillment of promise but rather in terms of on going, day-to-day Christian reality. There the love of God is made visible in Christ not so much as wondrous generosity, unexpected multiplication as sustenance so oft repeated as to be looked for in hope.

Where are we in all this. It is true that our perspective is all too often an Old Testament one: "someday, somewhere, somehow" the Lord will (in the future, of course) supply our needs. It is likewise

true that we need to be astounded by Jesus. He must come to each of us quite unexpectedly and turn our desert ground of hardship into his own banquet hall. But what we need most is undoubtedly a day to day sustenance-dependence on him. Here at Mass not only bread that is broken, not only nourishment that is free is given to us. Christ gives himself. In doing so he supplies our every want. In doing so he shows us nothing can separate us from him. In doing so he so identifies himself with us and us with him that we become his forever.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

August 8, 1993

Readings: *1 K 19:9 & 11-13*
Rm 9:1-6
Mt 14:22-33'

To stand before God and know him as present, to walk upon water and sink through fear and to bewail the lot of perfidious brethren are the themes of today's readings. God (as pure spirit) has no real appearance and if we are to see him he must assume one in this life or give us the light of his glory in the next. Theophanies are many and varied with a range of drama going from unquenchable and unquenching fire to a gentle breeze or "still, small voice," none of them is God. They are mere signs. Water, wind and waves can be signs, too. A Lord who is lord of all will no doubt dominate them by will. His followers can do so in faith but with far less ease. Men of the Old Covenant may not embrace the new, and this is worrisome for a man as sensitive and as eager as Paul.

The text of our first reading, coming as it does from the Elijah cycle of Kings, depicts the prophet at a low (if not the lowest) point of his career. Elijah's flight to Moret is occasioned by the jealousy of Ahab after end of the great drought. Jezebel (one of the most unsavory characters in salvation history) wants vengeance for the slain prophets of her Phoenician god. After mighty displays of power God manifests himself in virtual silence which is at the same time the voice of destruction. For the enemies of God will be slain by two kings and another prophet. It is the coarsest misinterpretation of scripture to look on such a voice and its commands as "comforting" in any but the widest sense. Indeed, the divine whisper is as menacing as any earthly *coup d'etat*.

What is comforting is the Good News of Christ. For his dominance is not one of human destruction but of channeling the forces of nature into the way of peace. Here nearly all is symbolic. The barque of Peter is the Church. The wind is persecution. Darkness is Satanic tribulation. The fourth watch is a time of trouble. Peter's request is coupled with obedience, and he needs the experience that will come from risk. If the water is Satan's realm (and so thought most devout Jews), walking on it is trampling a foe under foot. The weak faith of Peter requires the Lord's supporting grace, but letting in the thin end of the wedge of doubt must lead to rebuke. Nonetheless, the Church, awed by the mysteries and grandeur of Christ worships her Lord in gladness when all is said and done.

The deep and heartfelt concern of Paul for his Jewish brethren is that of any convert for those left behind. The concern, however, takes the form of truly inspired Word of God. In other words, God desires the reconciliation of Jews and Christians as much as Paul does. But Paul's view of the matter is both global and corporate. It is not a question of individual conversions but of an *en bloc* transfer of allegiance. In the course of history both sides have aggravated the quarrel. But there are signs of hope for mutual knowledge and respect that may lead to greater things if we have patience and perseverance like Paul's.

In the hurly-burly of our lives we are assailed with noise and signs of defeat. Depression is endemic. But if we can withdraw a bit towards near silence perhaps the Lord will speak to us as he did to Elijah. Then we shall be uplifted and become an "Easter People" after his own heart. No longer need we be anxious regarding our foes; for the Lord is victorious.

The risks Jesus calls us to in his love are no mere human adventures. Rather he wants to exert his victory through us in a veritable water-walking trampling of sin, disease and death. But it is not enough for us to be willing to do his will. Our good will must be bolstered by faith, and we must hold on to him "come hell or high water" as we step out of the boat into the windswept darkness. He will inevitably bring us to greater safety than we knew before. Then we can join the whole Church in adoring him and giving him thanks.

Life involves enemies and enmities and none seem worse to us than those of what were once our own ranks. Yet, in the midst of difficulties, the Lord always holds out the ray of hope of reconciliation, however future, as certain and inevitable. For his care extends to all who call upon him, mistaken as may be their stance. God wills unity. And he will have it in time. But he wants us to so long for it that we work for it, too.

Our ever-living and victorious Lord often gives us, as he did the prophets of old, cryptic commands. But he gives us the grace of a listening ear. He gives us faith to take great risks and to do supposedly impossible things. All this he does not just for his own glory and our own good but for the constant extension of the unlimited bounty of his love. He gives us role in his drama. We become prophets and miracle workers in due time. Better still, he makes us agents and means, instruments and accomplishers, of true reconciliation, the shedding abroad of his abiding and uniting love.

SOLEMNITY OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY August 15, 1993

Readings: *Rv 11:19 - 12:1-6 & 10*
1 Co 15:20-26
Lk 1:39:56

Since medieval times the seasons of the northern year have been graced with "Lady Days" special feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The spring has the Annunciation on March 25, the summer today, September 8 marks the autumnal feast of Mary's Nativity and winter is ushered in with December 8, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. There are, of course, other feasts of Mary on the calendar such as the Visitation on May 31, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel on July 16, Our Lady of Sorrows on September 15 and Our Lady of Victories (or of the Most Holy Rosary) on October 7, to mention but a few of fairly wide import. A myriad of local feasts and appellations appear on local calendars of course. But all these celebrations, while commemorating many mysteries of Jesus and Mary, center on a person and say something specific about her.

What the Assumption says is that Mary is in heaven in a way no one else is, but this cannot easily be said in purely scriptural terms. As time has told it requires poetry, tradition, immemorable liturgical usages and, finally, infallible dogmatic definition to say what the Assumption means with clarity and force. Nonetheless, today, as always, we have a liturgy of the word and to it we must turn for our basic texts, whatever may be the liturgical and doctrinal context we require for commenting on these texts and elucidating the Church's position.

At first sight we may find what meets our eye bewildering in its inexactitude. A closer perusal of the three readings does give us, however real glimpses of glory, gracious humanity and a theology of life and death into which the mystery of the Assumption can fit. The glory is found in Revelation, the humanity in Luke and the in-depth theology in First Corinthians. It is hard to imagine three more diverse New Testament writers than the author of Revelation, with his confused and multi-layered imagery, the wild evangelist with his soft-spoken story-telling of people and places almost as remote from him as they are from us and the fiery theologian, Paul, ablaze with polemical acumen and fearless before life or death themselves. On the basis of these diverse insights let us attempt an exposition contextual enough to bear upon what we are celebrating.

The great difficulty for today of the text from Revelation is that it may not apply very directly to Mary herself. It is likely to be an "icon" of the Church or even of Israel utilized for an overall Christological purpose to stress an obscure messianism which escapes us. None of the details is important. What counts is the overall impression of struggle and victory in which the woman's offspring will ultimately win despite intermediate hardships for him and her. Satanic enmity and divine triumph are clear enough. But is heaven a "desert"? Is Mary in hiding? Is Christ's work "escape"? Hardly! But such image can make graphic both Mary's place and ours in the scheme of the Father-sent Son.

When we turn to the Gospel, humble hospitality and shared blessings take up our thoughts. Mary and Elizabeth can greet and treat each other as they do because of a greatness that requires no fanfare, no trumpet blast. Caught up in the mystery of natural (and miraculous) reproduction they are elevated to the mystery of the sanctifying

presence of God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit neglects neither woman. But he treats with each in a way as unique as it is exact. Thus things always occur in the history of salvation. At the right time, in the right place, the right persons appear on the scene. All are "raised up" by God but each for a distinct purpose. Elizabeth will be the aged mother of John. Mary will be the ever-virgin Mother of God. Each acknowledges the other's place, but, in doing so, both glorify the Lord.

St. Paul's orderly account of God triumphing in Christ in such a way as to apply his acts and merits to us puts Christ first. The implication is not, "first Christ, then all men collectively" but "first Christ and then every man and woman in due order." For, while Christ is "first fruit" each and all are fruits in God's bountiful harvest. What we say of the Blessed Virgin Mary must, of course, be inferred as there is no explicit reference to her in the text. But we can state quite boldly and with dogmatic accuracy (as well as a certain forgivable aplomb, we being her children) "Christ first, Mary next"!

Are our own lives with all their conflicts really headed towards the triumph of glory? With Mary as model and guide they can be. Is our own treatment of one another filled with simple dignity and profound insight into each one's place in God's plan? It should be. Can we see that living and dying are made something new by the truth that Christ has lived in our midst and died? If we can see that we can begin to grasp the meaning and the application to ourselves of the Lord's Resurrection. May the Solemnity of the Assumption be a day of great and real spiritual growth. May, Mary, present to God glorified in both body and soul, intercede for this cause. And may we live out our earthly lives, not as a toil hurled towards death, but as victory after victory in Christ's grace impelling us to glory.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

August 22, 1993

Readings: *Is 22:19-33*
Rm 11:33-36
Mt 16:13-20

The image of "keys" and the power therein implied is the theme of this Sunday's readings. The first reading refers to a misuse of keys

in the double downfall of Shebna, royal steward, and of Eliakim who succeeds him. It shows that in the Holy City at least all power derives from God. The Gospel makes explicit the source of authority in the Church, Jesus who designates Peter as key-bearer. In Romans eleven Paul rounds off a section on the temporary failure of Israel to correspond with God's will by extolling the very power of God. Thus in the first reading we have a rather remote delegation of authority, in the Gospel a direct deputation; and in the second reading a contemplation of God in his greatness as transcendent source of all.

The historic context of the first reading is multifaceted to say the least. We are, it seems, in the year 705 when Hezekiah, King of Judah, was temporarily victorious over the Assyrians. The times are perilous for the tables will turn. The need for trustworthy civil servants is great. But because of undue jubilation on the one hand and undue concern for self and family on the other, all is to end in woe. Meanwhile what is given is really given even if holding unto it can but be temporary.

While Mathew in writing chapter 16 may have had the verses of Isaiah 22 which constitute the first reading in mind, his intention is both more optimistic and more permanent. For here reward is not given to mere managerial talent but to faith expressed, even proclaimed. Peter and his successors are no mere temporary assistants commissioned to bide the time. Rather they are permanent lieutenants all down through the ages with an unshakeable and unquestionable role given by Christ. In other words, they are more than key-bearers. They are key-users. Nor do they use their keys to open or close material doors to store houses. Their keys and their use are spiritual. For they deal in the awe-inspiring realms of sin and grace.

When we turn with Paul to consider the greatness of God we know that our sights have to be raised to something beyond mere natural capability. For to speak of glory in truth is to enter the realms of glory, and this cannot be achieved by our merely wishing it. Rather, we must put ourselves into the very hands of God. There we will find mercy and condescension, but there, too, will we find all true authority. The source of every good and perfect gift will endow us with keys if such we need for his service and our neighbor's good.

No one can deny the obvious. Much of our life is very transitory, indeed. Positions and honors come and go. But God abides. If our faith is as true and explicit as Peter's we shall like him merit great even if unexpected trust. But this trust is neither in us nor of us. Rather it flows from God. And God is heavenly in his utter transcendence. He it is who will ever bring us out of darkness into light, out of the temporary into what is permanent, out of earthliness into his divine glory. Amen.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

August 29, 1993

Readings: Jr 20:7-9
Rm 12:1-2
Mt 16:21-27

Relationship between man and God

Today's liturgy of the word deals with the relationship between God and man. In the first reading Jeremiah expresses his apprehensions and sufferings because he followed the call of God. St. Paul tells us what are the dispositions man must have in order to enter into a true relationship with God. And Jesus Christ spells out the requirements to become his disciple.

In the first reading Jeremiah shows the road men must follow to become witnesses and proclaimers of the Word of God. The first reading reveals the prophet's state of mind: a state of distress, anguish, and discouragement. This state of mind represents the process and stages in the development of the relationship between God and man.

In the first stage, the prophet presents the encounter of God with man in a very vivid and human way. He uses the similarities of a lover who wants to seduce the beloved by becoming sweet and tender: "You have seduced me, Yahveh and I have let myself be seduced"; and of the struggle between two friends in which the stronger one wins: "You have overpowered me; you were the strongest." Thus the calling of God, in this first stage of the relations of man and God is like the romantic love between a girl and his lover. The call of God whether it is to live the Christian faith or to become his minister always begins

with a bright, and appealing encounter. It is like the lover who wants to seduce the beloved by becoming loving and tender; on the other hand, the man who answers the call of God behaves like the beloved who falls into the arms of the lover because of his goodness and his graces. To complement this picture the prophet offers the second similarity: "You have overpowered me, you were the strongest." It is the struggle between two persons: God and man. But, who can resist God? Thus man overpowered by the goodness, majesty and holiness of God surrenders to His calling. Between God and man God of course is stronger. Nothing can be compared to the strength of God. Man himself, with all the material goods that the world can offer to him, even Satan, cannot match the strength of God.

But the prophet presents it as a complaint. Looking back to the contradictions he is undergoing, he feels cheated. He feels like a girl who was seduced by his lover and later on abandoned by him; like a weak man who must surrender to the strong one and is compelled to do things he does not like. This brings us to the second stage.

The second stage represents the consequences to those who answer the call of God, especially those who were called to become his ministers. A witness to the Word of God, a witness to God is always in confrontation with the ways of man, the ways of the world, the ways of Satan. He has to denounce the injustices of the world, the corruption of public officials, the immorality of the people. He becomes a sign of contradiction and "the word of Yahweh has meant for me," says the prophet, "insult, derision, all day long." Because of his witnessing he is insulted, ridiculed, and becomes the laughing-stock of everybody. How often does one hear the scorn of people against those who struggle to be true to their faith: "You go to Mass every day and yet you are no better than the rest..." "And you belong to this or that association! How come you are no better than that," etc... and to priests or those in the consecrated life: "How could he do or say such things to me when he is a priest, a sister..." Lay people as well as priests become the object of scorn and ridicule. In a way, they become ashamed of their commitment to God.

The third stage is the crisis of vocation, whether Christian or ministerial. Man, confronted with the human misunderstandings of his mission, enters into a crisis. Why will I follow the Lord? Is that the reward God gives me for my efforts, for my commitment? Like the

prophet he or she cries: "I will not think about him, I will not speak in his name any more." The prophet finds himself desolated, defeated, and all these because of his commitment to the Lord.

But God is stronger than man. The Word of God cannot be hidden in his heart. Man is compelled by the mysterious compulsion to keep going. The experience of God is deeply rooted in his soul "like a burning fire in my heart." This fire empowers the prophet to continue his mission no matter how difficult it may be. To remain faithful, because God, the Mighty God, is at his side. This is the great lesson that Jeremiah gives us in this fourth stage. Man who trusts in God reaffirms his positive answer to the call of God because God is at his side.

This image that the Prophet Jeremiah puts in front of us is supplemented by the words of St. Paul who calls us to offer our bodies as a holocaust. To be purified by the offering of oneself to God by consecrating our bodies to God. Consecration means to redirect the use of the thing offered from its natural use to the service of God. Thus our bodies are no longer to be used merely for their natural purpose. Even though they perform their natural functions they are now redirected to God's service.

When man has accomplished this he then becomes wise, knowing how to choose that which is good, and avoid that which is bad in the Christian perspective. It means that we have accepted the cross of Christ in order to become his disciples.

In today's gospel the human perspective is represented by St. Peter. He could not understand that the Messiah has to suffer, to ascend to the cross, to die. In his Jewish mentality the image of the suffering Messiah is incomprehensible; while the perspective of God is presented by Jesus Christ.

He who is called to serve God, either as a Christian or a minister, is also confronted by the opposition of his family, friends who mean well but look at things from the human point of view and therefore cannot understand why a man would give up so promising a career, life, and everything to follow Christ, a crucified Christ. They do not understand that to be a true disciple of Christ, one must renounce everything, even oneself, take up his cross and follow Christ.

The temptation is great, insinuating, and at times devastating. But there is the example of Christ. He rebukes Peter and calls him Satan, not because Peter who is good, loving and impulsive does not love Jesus. It is because Peter, like Satan became a tempter. He was rebuked as Satan because he did not know how to look at things from the point of view of God. Peter looked at things from his human consideration and this is sometimes opposed to the design of God. Thus Peter becomes an obstacle, a temptation to Christ. Naturally, he rejects Peter, "...because the way you think is not God's way, but man's."

The whole process of Christian fellowship and Christian vocation to be a minister culminates in the challenge that Jesus gives in the second part of today's gospel: "If anyone wants to be my follower let him renounce himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

Thus the first condition to become a true Christian, or a true minister of Christ is to renounce himself, to abandon himself into the immensity of God, to leave behind the human perspective for the perspective of God. To see things from the angle of God and not from man's point of view. In doing so man puts himself in front of the rest of men who will scorn him.

The second condition is for the Christian to take up his cross, that is, to assume the responsibility of becoming a Christian and minister of Christ according to his calling. It is his cross, not the cross of Christ, nor the cross of somebody else, but his own cross. This means to accept oneself as he really is and the role he has to play in the world disregarding whether this role is great or small. To accept one's cross means to accept his life and live it to the fullest in the perspective of God no matter what.

The last condition is to follow Christ. To follow Christ is to be with him in Galilee preaching the word of God, curing the sick, expelling the demons, and in Jerusalem confronting the ruling class and being challenged by the learned. To follow Christ is to be with him when he gave himself for the sake of others in the Last Supper and at Calvary. To follow Christ means to die to oneself, "to lose our souls" in order to rise again to the life in God, "to save our soul" for the everlasting life. For the Son of Man "will come in the glory of the Father with his angels, and when he does, he will reward each one according to his behavior." (*M. Rebollo, O.P.*)

CHANGES IN EPISCOPATE

The Holy Father accepted the resignation of Bishop Salvador L. Lazo of San Fernando de la Union, the Philippines. It was presented in conformity with canon 401, §1 of the Code of Canon Law (28 May).

The Holy Father appointed as Bishop of San Fernando de la Union, the Philippines, Bishop Antonio R. Tobias, until now Bishop of Pagadian (28 May).

Bishop Tobias, 51, was ordained for the Archdiocese of Manila in 1965. He held several parish assignments until being assigned to teach at the minor seminary, where he was later named Rector. He was appointed Auxiliary of the Archdiocese of Zamboanga in 1982 and was transferred to the residential See of Pagadian in 1984.