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editorial

In his recent General Audience addresses, the Holy Father has been reflecting on the spirituality of priests. A constantly relevant topic, certainly, it is always worthwhile to join the Holy Father in these reflections. This issue of Boletín carries these addresses which we hope will serve as an inspiration to our priest readers. The practice of prayer and charity, the discipline of celibacy and the devotion to our Lord in the Holy Eucharist comprise the Holy Father's thoughts.

Twenty-five years ago, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical Humanae Vitae which elicits both positive and negative reactions from different sectors. The controversy on the teachings of the encyclical has not waned after twenty-five years. To commemorate the anniversary of the encyclical, the Boletín is publishing the reflections of a bishop, Most Rev. Teodoro Bacani, D.D., of a theologian, Fr. Julio Peñacoba, and of a doctor of medicine, Dr. Vicente Rosales, M.D. It is not our intention to join the controversy but to offer our readers another look at the encyclical from a different perspective.

With the forthcoming publication of the English translation of the Catechism for the Universal Church, we are presenting an idea of it through the article of Fr. Javier Gonzalez, O.P. which summarizes the content of the said catechism with the corresponding introductory comments. The importance and purpose of the Catechism is well-defined by Cardinal Ratzinger when he said: "In a world marked by subjectivism, by the fragmentation of different messages, in a world in which realities such as God, the Church, man... seem to be losing their meaning and relevance, on many sides and in many ways a message of Truth is sought which can save the human person and his world... The Catechism is meant to be a tool to help quench that thirst for Truth and Certitude which even today bursts forth widely and insistently from the human heart."

Anticipating the publication of Pope John Paul II's Encyclical "Splendor Veritatis" we have the article of Fr. Fausto Gomez, O.P. as an appropriate introduction. The encyclical itself will be published in the November-December issue of Boletín Eclesiástico.

HONORATO CASTIGADOR, O.P.

We Adore God Present Among Us*

John Paul II

*Eucharistic devotion outside of Mass
is both a preparation and a continuation
of the sacrifice*

Adoremus in aeternum Sanctissimum Sacramentum!

United with the angels and saints of the heavenly Church, let us adore the *Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*. Prostrate, we adore this great mystery that contains God's new and definitive covenant with humankind in Christ.

1. Dear Brother Bishops, Priests and Religious,

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It gives me great joy to kneel with you before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in an *act of humble and fervent adoration*, in praise of the merciful God, in thanksgiving to the giver of all good gifts and in prayer to the One who "lives forever to make intercession" for us (cf. *Heb 7:25*). We have just heard the words, "*remain in me as I remain in you*" (*Jn 15:4*), in the Gospel reading on the allegory of the

*A translation of the Holy Father's homily after the recitation of the Angelus in Seville (Spain) on Saturday, 12 June 1993. Published in *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 25, 23 June 1993.

vine and the branches. How well this passage can be understood from the mystery of the living and life-giving presence of Christ in the Eucharist!

Christ is the vine, planted in the chosen vineyard, which is the People of God, the Church. Through the mystery of the Eucharistic bread the Lord can say to each of us: "*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him*" (Jn 6:56). His life flows to us as the life-giving sap of the vine flows to its branches to make them live and bear fruit. *Without true union with Christ* — in whom we believe and who nourishes us — there can be neither supernatural life in us, nor fruit.

2. The continual adoration of Jesus in the Host was the *leitmotif* of all the work of this International Eucharistic Congress. Therefore I express my congratulations and thanks to those who, with great pastoral concern and apostolic commitment, assumed responsibility for the Congress. In fact, the *continual adoration* — which took place in many churches throughout the city, and in some even at night — was an enriching feature that distinguished this Congress. If only this form of adoration, which ends tonight in a solemn Eucharistic vigil, would continue in the future too, so that in all the parishes and Christian communities the custom of some form of adoration of the Eucharist might take root.

Here in Seville we must not fail to remember the man who was a priest of this Archdiocese, the Archpriest of Huelva, later Bishop of Malaga and subsequently of Palencia: Don Manuel Gonzalez, the Bishop of the abandoned tabernacles. He strove to remind everyone of Jesus' presence in the tabernacle, to which we sometimes respond so poorly. By his word and example, he never ceased to repeat that in the tabernacle of each church we possess a shining beacon, through contact with which our lives may be illuminated and transformed.

3. Yes, dear brothers and sisters, it is for us to live and teach others to live the total mystery of the Eucharist: the sacrament of *Sacrifice*, of the *Banquet* and of the abiding *Presence of Christ* the Savior. You know well the various forms of Eucharistic devotions are both an extension of the sacrifice and of Communion and a preparation for them. Is it necessary to stress once again the deep theological and spiritual motivations which underlie devotion to the Blessed Sacrament

outside the celebration of Mass? It is true that the reservation of the Sacrament was begun in order to take Communion to the sick and those absent from the celebration. However, as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "to deepen faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the Church is aware of the meaning of silent adoration of the Lord present under the Eucharistic species" (n. 1379).

4. "And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). These are the words of the risen Christ before his ascension into heaven. Jesus Christ is truly Emmanuel, God-with-us, from his incarnation to the end of time. And he is so in an especially intense and close way in the mystery of his abiding presence in the Eucharist. What strength what consolation, what staunch hope the contemplation of the Eucharistic mystery gives rise to! It is *God with us* who enables us to share his life and sends us into the world to evangelize it and make it holy!

Eucharist and evangelization was the theme of the 45th International Eucharistic Congress in Seville. You have reflected on it intensely over the past few days and during its long preparation. The Eucharist really is "the source and culmination of all evangelization" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 5). It is the horizon and the goal of the entire proclamation of Christ's Gospel. We are constantly journeying towards it through the word of Truth, the proclamation of the message of salvation. Thus every liturgical celebration of the Eucharist according to the spirit and the norms of the Church has great evangelizing force. Indeed, the celebration of the Eucharist develops an essential and effective teaching of the Christian mystery: the believing community is summoned and gathered as a family and the People of God, the Body of Christ; it is doubly nourished at the table of the Word and of the sacrificial Banquet of the Eucharist; it is sent as a means of salvation into the world. All this is in praise and thanksgiving to the Father.

Join me in asking Jesus Christ the Lord, who died for our sins and rose for our salvation, that as a result of this Eucharistic Congress the whole Church may be strengthened for the new evangelization which the whole world needs: new, also because of its explicit and deep reference to the Eucharist as the center and source

of Christian life, as the seed and requisite of fellowship, justice, and service to all humanity, starting with those who are most needy in body and in spirit. Evangelization *through* the Eucharist, *in* the Eucharist and *from* the Eucharist: these are three inseparable aspects of how the Church lives the mystery of Christ and fulfills her mission of communicating it to all people.

5. May God cause many vocations, of apostles, of missionaries, to spring from intimacy with Christ in the Eucharist, in order to bring this Gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth. While the celebrations of the fifth centenary of the evangelization of America are still fresh in our minds, I urge Spanish priests and religious — according to the needs and circumstances of the present time — to be ready, as in other eras, to offer their fraternal service to their sister Churches in Latin America in the urgent commitment of evangelization, along the lines of the spirit and the reflections of the Fourth General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops, held last October in Santo Domingo. Today the whole Church is demanding a new missionary outreach, a vibrant *spirit of evangelization* “new in its zeal, in its methods and in its expressions.”

6. “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth” (*Jn* 4:23), Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar. Adoration of the Eucharist “is the contemplation and recognition of the true Presence of Christ under the sacred species outside the celebration of the Mass.... It is a true encounter of dialogue, ... through which we become open to the experience of God... It is also a gesture of solidarity with the needs and the needy of the whole world” (Basic Document of the Congress, n. 25). And through its own spiritual dynamic, this Eucharistic adoration should lead to the service of love and justice for and with our brothers and sisters.

Before the real, mysterious presence of Christ in the Eucharist — a “veiled” presence, for he is invisible except to the eyes of faith — we understand with new light the words of the Apostle John, who knew so much about the love of Christ: “Who ever does not love a brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen” (*1 Jn* 4:20). This is why it was hoped that this Congress would have a clear impact of evangelization and witness on all the contexts of life

and society. I have the firm hope that the desire to evangelize will awaken in Christians a sincere consistency between faith and life and lead to greater commitment to justice and charity, to the promotion of more equitable relations between individuals and peoples. Especially for the Church in Spain, Congress should give *renewed strength to Christian life* on the basis of a fresh education in the faith. How important it is in today's social environment that is gradually being secularized, *to promote the renewal of the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist and respect for the Lord's Day!* The commemoration of the Lord's resurrection and the celebration of the Eucharist must fill our Sundays with religious content that is truly humanizing. The Sunday rest from work, attention to the family, the cultivation of spiritual values and sharing in the life of the Christian community will contribute to making a better world, one richer in moral values, with greater solidarity and less consumerism.

7. May the Lord, the Light of the nations — who during these days is generously sowing the seeds of Truth in so many hearts — multiply the fruits of this Congress with his divine fertility. And one of these, perhaps the most important, will be the resurgence of vocations. Let us ask the Lord of the harvest to send workers to gather in his harvest (cf. *Mt 9:38*): *there is a great dearth of vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life*. And each of us, by word and the example of generous self-giving, should become an "apostle of apostles," a promoter of vocations. From the Eucharist, Christ today is calling many young people insistently: "Come with me, I will make you fishers of men" (*Mt 4:19*). May you priests and religious be joyful and convincing heralds of this call from the Lord.

May the Virgin Mary, who in Seville and in this cathedral is honored by the name of *Nuestra Señora de los Reyes*, impel us and guide us to the encounter with her Son in the Eucharistic mystery. May she, who was the true Ark of the New Covenant, the living Tabernacle of God made man, teach us to act with pure intention, humility and fervent devotion to Jesus Christ her Son, present in the tabernacle. May she, the "Star of Evangelization," support us in our pilgrimage of faith to bring the light of Christ to all people, to all the nations.
Amen.

Priests Must Be Devoted to Prayer*

*Because the priest
is sacramentally configured to Christ,
he must be a man of prayer,
as one ordained to continue
the High Priest's mission*

1. Today we return to some ideas already mentioned in the preceding catechesis in order to underscore further the demands and repercussions stemming from the reality of being a *man consecrated to God*, as we have described them. In a word we can say that, consecrated in the image of Christ, the priest must be a *man of prayer* like Christ himself. This concise definition embraces the whole spiritual life that gives the presbyter a true Christian identity, defines him as a priest and is the motivating principle of his apostolate.

The Gospel shows Jesus in prayer at every important moment of his mission. His public life, inaugurated at his Baptism, began with prayer (*Lk 3:21*). Even in the more intense periods of teaching the

*The prayer life of priests was the subject of the Holy Father's weekly catechesis at the General Audience of Wednesday, 2 June 1993. Speaking in Italian to thousands of pilgrims from every continent, the Pope stressed the need that priests have to meditate, celebrate Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours, and frequently to receive the sacrament of Penance. Here is a translation of the Pope's address. *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 23, 9 June 1993.

crowds, he reserved long intervals for prayer (*Mk* 1:35; *Lk* 5:16). Before choosing the Twelve he spent a night in prayer (*Lk* 6:12). He prayed before asking his Apostles for a profession of faith (*Lk* 9:18); he prayed alone on the mountain after the miracle of the loaves (*Mt* 14:23; *Mk* 6:46); he prayed before teaching his disciples to pray (*Lk* 11:1); he prayed before the extraordinary revelation of the Transfiguration, having ascended the mountain precisely to pray (*Lk* 9:28); he prayed before performing some miracles (*Jn* 11:41-42); he prayed at the Last Supper to entrust his future and that of his Church to the Father (*Jn* 17). In Gethsemane he offered the Father the sorrowful prayer of his afflicted and almost horrified soul (*Mk* 15:35-39 and par.), and on the cross he made his last invocations, full of anguish (*Mt* 27:46), but also of trustful abandon (*Lk* 23:46). It could be said that Christ's whole mission was animated with prayer, from the beginning of his messianic ministry to the supreme priestly act: the sacrifice of the cross, which was made in prayer.

Let priests be diligent in personal prayer

2. Those called to share Christ's mission and sacrifice find in his example the incentive to give prayer its rightful place in their lives, as the foundation, root and guarantee of holiness in action. Indeed, we learn from Jesus that a fruitful exercise of the priesthood is impossible without prayer, which protects the presbyter from the danger of neglecting the interior for the sake of action and from the temptation of so throwing himself into work as to be lost in it.

After stating that "the norm of priestly life is found in Christ's consecration, the source of his Apostles' consecration, the 1971 Synod of Bishops also applied the *norm* to prayer in these words: "Following the example of Christ who was continually in prayer, and led by the Holy Spirit in whom we cry, 'Abba, Father,' priests should give themselves to the contemplation of the word of God and daily take the opportunity to examine the events of life in the light of the Gospel, so that having become faithful and attentive hearers of the Word they may become true ministers of the word. Let them be assiduous in personal prayer, in the Liturgy of the Hours, in frequent reception of the sacrament of Penance and especially in devotion to the mystery of the Eucharist" (cf. *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, IV, 1201).

3. For its part, the Second Vatican Council did not fail to remind priests of the need to be habitually united to Christ, and to this end it recommended diligence in prayer: "In various ways, in particular through the approved practice of mental prayer and the different forms of vocal prayer which they freely choose to practise, priests are to seek and perseveringly ask of God the true spirit of adoration which unites them with Christ, the Mediator of the covenant" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 18). As we see, among the possible forms of prayer the Council calls attention to *mental prayer*, which is a way to pray that is free from rigid formulas, does not require the recitation of words and responds to the Holy Spirit's lead in contemplating the divine mystery.

The Council recommended the Liturgy of the Hours

4. The 1971 Synod of Bishops insisted particularly on "contemplation of the word of God" (cf. *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, IV, 1201). One should not be frightened by the word "contemplation" and the spiritual commitment it entails. It could be said that, independently of forms and life-styles, among which the "contemplative life" remains the most splendid jewel of Christ's Bride, the Church, the call to hear and meditate on the word of God in a contemplative spirit is valid for everyone, so that hearts and minds may be nourished on it. This helps the priest to develop a way of thinking and of looking at the world with wisdom, in the perspective of its supreme purpose: God and his plan of salvation. The Synod says: "To examine the events of life in the light of the Gospel" (cf. *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, IV, 1201).

Herein lies supernatural wisdom, above all as a gift of the Holy Spirit, who makes it possible to exercise good judgment in the light of the "ultimate reasons," the "eternal things." Wisdom thus becomes the principal factor in identifying with Christ in thought, judgment, the evaluation of any matter however large or small, so that the priest (like every Christian, only more so) reflects the light, obedience to the Father, practical zeal, rhythm of prayer and action and, one could almost say, the spiritual breath of Christ. This goal can be reached by allowing oneself to be guided by the Holy Spirit in meditating on the Gospel, which fosters a deeper union with Christ, helps one to enter ever further into the Master's thought and strengthens the *personal* attachment to him. If the priest is diligent in this he remains

more easily in a state of conscious joy arising from his perception of the intimate, personal fulfilment of the word of God, which he must teach others. In fact, as the Council says of presbyters, "by seeking more effective ways of conveying to others what they have meditated on they will savor more profoundly the 'unsearchable riches of Christ' (Ep 3:8) and 'the manifold wisdom of God' (v. 10)" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13). Let us pray the Lord to grant us a great number of priests who in their prayer life discover, assimilate and taste the wisdom of God, and like the Apostle Paul (cf. *ibid.*), sense the supernatural inclination to proclaim and bestow it as the true reason for their apostolate (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 47).

5. In speaking of the priests' prayer, the Council also mentions and recommends the Liturgy of the Hours, which joins the priest's personal prayer to that of the Church. "In reciting the Divine Office," it says, "they lend their voice to the Church which perseveres in prayer in the name of the whole human race, in union with Christ who 'always lives to make intercession for them' (Heb 7:25)" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13).

By virtue of the mission of representation and intercession entrusted to him, the presbyter is formally obliged to this form of "official" prayer, delegated by the Church and made in the name not only of believers but of all mankind and, one could say, of the whole universe (cf. *CIC*, can. 1174, § 1). Sharing in Christ's priesthood, he makes intercession for the needs of the Church, the world and every human being, knowing that he represents and expresses the universal voice that sings the glory of God and seeks the salvation of mankind.

Priests must frequently use sacrament of Penance

6. It is good to recall that, in order to give greater assurance to their prayer life and to strengthen and renew it by drawing on its sources, priests are asked by the Council to devote (in addition to time for the daily practice of prayer) longer periods to intimacy with Christ: "They should be glad to take time for spiritual retreat and should have a high regard for spiritual direction" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 18). This will serve as a friendly and fatherly hand to help them on the way. As they experience the benefits of this guidance, they will be all the more ready to offer this help, in turn, to those who

are entrusted to their pastoral ministry. This will be a great resource for many people today, especially young people, and will play a decisive role in solving the problem of vocations, as the experience of so many generations of priests and religious show. In the preceding catechesis we already mentioned the importance of the sacrament of Penance. The Council urges the presbyter to make "frequent use" of it. Obviously whoever exercises the ministry of reconciling Christians with the Lord through the sacrament of forgiveness must himself have recourse to this sacrament. He will be the first to acknowledge that he is a sinner and to believe in the divine pardon expressed by sacramental absolution. In administering the sacrament of forgiveness, this awareness of being a sinner will help him better to understand sinners. Does not the Letter to the Hebrews say of the priest, taken from among men: "He is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness" (*Heb 5:2*)? In addition, the personal use of the sacrament of Penance motivates the priest to make himself more available to administering this sacrament to the faithful who request it. This too is an urgent pastoral need in our day.

7. The presbyters' prayer, however, reaches its apex in the Eucharistic celebration, "their principal function" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13). This is such an important point for the priest's prayer life that I want to devote the next catechesis to it.

Eucharist at Heart of Priest's Spirituality*

*In the Eucharist
priests are united with the Lord
in his thanksgiving to the Father,
grow in pastoral charity,
and learn to praise God
for his blessings*

The eyes of believers all over the world are turned these days to Seville where, as you know, the International Eucharistic Congress is being celebrated, and where I shall have the joy of going next Saturday and Sunday.

At the beginning of today's meeting, in which we shall reflect on the value of the Eucharist in the spiritual life of the presbyter, I paternally invite you to join in spirit in that great, important celebration, which calls everyone to a genuine renewal of faith and devotion towards the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

1. The catecheses which we are developing on the spiritual life of the priest especially concern presbyters, but they are addressed to

*During his General Audience on 9 June 1993, the Holy Father continued his series on the Church; on the Wednesday before the Feast of Corpus Christi and his visit to Spain for the International Eucharistic Congress, the Pope spoke about the Eucharist in the spiritual life of the priest. This catechesis was the 62nd in the current series.

all the faithful. It is indeed good that everyone should know the Church's doctrine on the priesthood and what she desires of those who, having received it, are conformed to the sublime image of Christ, the eternal Priest and most pure Victim of the salvific sacrifice. That image is developed in the *Letter to the Hebrews* and in other texts of the Apostles and Evangelists, and it has been handed on faithfully in the Church's tradition of thought and life. Today too it is necessary for the clergy to be faithful to that image, which mirrors the living truth of Christ the Priest and Victim.

Every priest should celebrate Mass daily

2. The reproduction of that image in priests is attained primarily through life-giving participation in the Eucharistic mystery, to which the Christian priesthood is essentially ordered and linked. The Council of Trent emphasized that the bond between the priesthood and sacrifice comes from the will of Christ, who conferred upon his ministers "the power to consecrate, to offer and to distribute his Body and his Blood" (cf. *D-S*, 1764). In this there is a mystery of communion with Christ in *being and doing*, which must be translated into a spiritual life imbued with faith in and love for the Eucharist.

The priest is quite aware that he cannot count on his own efforts to achieve the purposes of his ministry, but rather that he is called to serve as an instrument of the victorious action of Christ whose sacrifice, made present on the altars, obtains for humanity an abundance of divine gifts. However, he also knows that, in order worthily to pronounce the words of consecration in the name of Christ — "This is my Body," "This is the cup of my Blood" — he must be profoundly united to Christ and seek to reproduce Christ's countenance in himself. The more intensely he lives in Christ, the more authentically he can celebrate the Eucharist.

The Second Vatican Council recalled that "especially in the sacrifice of the Mass (priests) act in a special way in the person of Christ" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13) and that without a priest there can be no Eucharistic sacrifice; however, it emphasized that those who celebrate this sacrifice must fulfill their role in intimate spiritual union with Christ, with great humility, as his ministers in the service of the community. They must "imitate what they handle, so that as

they celebrate the mystery of the Lord's death they may take care to mortify their members from vice and concupiscence" (ibid., n. 13). In offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, presbyters must offer themselves personally with Christ, accepting all the renunciation and sacrifice required by their priestly life. Again and always, *with* Christ and *like* Christ, *Sacerdos et Hostia*.

3. If the priest "hears" this truth proposed to him and to all the faithful as the voice of the New Testament and Tradition, he will grasp the Council's earnest recommendation of the "daily celebration (of the Eucharist), which is an act of Christ and the Church even if it is impossible for the faithful to be present" (ibid., n. 13). The tendency to celebrate the Eucharist only when there was an assembly of the faithful emerged in those years. According to the Council, although everything possible should be done to gather the faithful for the celebration, it is also true that, even if the priest is alone, the Eucharistic offering which he performs in the name of Christ has the effectiveness that comes from Christ and always obtains new graces for the Church. Therefore I, too, recommend to priests and to all the Christian people that they ask the Lord for a stronger faith in this value of the Eucharist.

Visits to the Blessed Sacrament are earnestly recommended

4. The 1971 Synod of Bishops took up the conciliar doctrine, declaring: "Even if the Eucharist should be celebrated without participation of the faithful, it nevertheless remains the center of the life of the entire Church and the heart of priestly existence" (cf. *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, 4, 1201).

This is a wonderful expression: "The center of the life of the entire Church." *The Eucharist makes the Church, just as the Church makes the Eucharist*. The presbyter having been given the charge of building up the Church, performs this task essentially through the Eucharist. Even when the participation of the faithful is lacking, he cooperates in gathering people around Christ in the Church by offering the Eucharist.

The Synod speaks further of the Eucharist as the "heart of priestly existence." This means that the presbyter, desiring to be and

remain personally and profoundly attached to Christ, finds him first in the Eucharist, the sacrament which brings about this intimate union, open to a growth which can reach the heights of mystical identification.

5. At this level, too, which is that of so many holy priests, the priestly soul is not closed in on itself, because in a particular way in the Eucharist it draws on the "charity of him who gives himself as food to the faithful" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13). Thus he feels led to give himself to the faithful to whom he distributes the Body of Christ. It is precisely in being nourished by this Body that he is impelled to help the faithful to open themselves in turn to that same presence, drawing nourishment from his infinite charity, in order to draw ever richer fruit from the sacrament.

To this end the presbyter can and must provide the atmosphere necessary for a worthy Eucharistic celebration. It is the atmosphere of prayer: liturgical prayer, to which the people must be called and trained; the prayer of personal contemplation; the prayer of sound Christian popular tradition, which can prepare for, follow and to some extent also accompany the Mass; the prayer of holy places, of sacred art, of sacred song, of sacred music, (especially on the organ), which is incarnated as it were in the formulas and rites, and continually inspires and uplifts everything so that it can participate in giving praise to God and in the spiritual uplifting of the Christian people gathered in the Eucharistic assembly.

6. To priests the Council also recommends, in addition to the daily celebration of the Mass, "personal devotion" to the Holy Eucharist, and particularly that "daily talk with Christ the Lord in their visit to the Blessed Sacrament" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 18). Faith in and love for the Eucharist cannot allow Christ's presence in the tabernacle to remain alone (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1418). Already in the Old Testament we read that God dwelt in a "tent" (or "tabernacle"), which was called the "meeting tent" (*Ex* 33:7). The meeting was desired by God. It can be said that in the tabernacle of the Eucharist too Christ is present in view of a dialogue with his new people and with individual believers. The presbyter is the first one called to enter this meeting tent, to visit Christ in the tabernacle for a "daily talk."

Lastly, I want to recall that, more than any other, the presbyter is called to share the fundamental disposition of Christ in this sacrament, that is, the “thanksgiving” from which it takes its name. Uniting himself with Christ the Priest and Victim, the presbyter shares not only his offering, but also his feelings, his disposition of gratitude to the Father for the benefits he has given to humanity, to every soul, to the priest himself, to all those who in heaven and on earth have been allowed to share in the glory of God. *Gratias agimus tibi propter magnam gloriam tuam...* Thus, to counter the expressions of accusation and protest against God — which are often heard in the world — the priest offers the chorus of praise and blessing, which is raised up by those who are able to recognize in man and in the world the signs of an infinite goodness.

Priest Called to be a Man of Charity*

*Those to whom the Lord gives the mission
of being shepherds through priestly ordination
are called to embody
the heroic love of Jesus himself*

1. In the preceding catecheses devoted to presbyters we have already mentioned several times the importance of fraternal charity in their lives. Now we want to discuss this more explicitly, being with the very root of this charity in the priest's life. This root is found in his identity as a "man of God." The First Letter of John teaches us that "God is love" (4:8). Since he is a "man of God" the priest must be a man of charity. He would have no true love for God (nor even true piety or true apostolic zeal) without love for his neighbor.

Jesus himself showed the connection between love for God and love for neighbor, since "loving the Lord, your God, with all your heart" cannot be separated from "loving your neighbor" (cf. *Mt* 22:36-40). Consistently, therefore, the author of the Letter cited the above

*At the General Audience of Wednesday, 7 July 1993, the Holy Father continued his catechesis on priestly spirituality, this week discussing the priests as a man of charity who models himself on Christ, the Good Shepherd. The address is the 64th in the series on the mystery of the Church and was given in Italian. *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 28, 14 July 1993.

reasons: "This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother" (1 Jn 4:21).

2. Speaking of himself, Jesus describes this love as that of a "good shepherd" who does not seek his own interest, his own advantage, like a hired hand. He notes that the Good Shepherd loves his sheep to the point of giving his own life (cf. Jn 10:11, 15). Thus it is a love to the point of heroism.

We know to what extent this was realized in the life and death of Jesus. Those who, in virtue of priestly ordination, receive the mission of *shepherds* are called to present anew in their lives and witness to with their actions the heroic love of the *Good Shepherd*.

3. In Jesus' life one can clearly see the essential features of the "pastoral charity" that he had for his brothers and sisters, "men," and that he asks his brother "shepherds" to imitate. Above all, his love was humble: "I am meek and humble of heart" (Mt 11:29). Significantly, he urges his Apostles to renounce their personal ambitions and any spirit of domination so as to imitate the example of the "Son of Man" who "did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10:45; Mt 20:28; cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 21-22).

As a result the mission of shepherd cannot be carried out with a superior or authoritarian attitude (cf. 1 Pt 5:3), which would irritate the faithful and perhaps drive them from the fold. In the footsteps of Christ the Good Shepherd, we must be formed in a spirit of humble service (cf. CCC, n. 876).

Jesus also gives the example of a love filled with *compassion*, i.e., a sincere, active sharing in the sufferings and problems of the faithful. He feels compassion for the crowd without a shepherd (cf. Mt 9:36); for this reason he is concerned to guide them by his words of life and begins to "teach them many things" (Mk 6:34). With this same compassion he healed many of the sick (Mt 14:14), as a sign of his intention to give spiritual healing; he multiplies the loaves for the hungry (Mt 15:32; Mk 8:2), an eloquent symbol of the Eucharist; he is moved by the sight of human misery (Mt 20:34; Mk 1:41), and wants to bring healing; he shared the pain of those who mourn the loss of a

dear relative (*Lk* 7:13; *Jn* 11:33-35); he shows mercy even to sinners (cf. *Lk* 15:1-2), in union with the Father who is full of compassion for the prodigal son (cf. *Lk* 15:20) and prefers mercy to ritual sacrifice (cf. *Mt* 9:10-13); and there are cases in which he rebukes his adversaries for not understanding his mercy (*Mt* 12:7).

4. In this regard it is significant that the Letter to the Hebrews, in the light of Jesus' life and death, again sees an essential feature of the authentic priesthood in solidarity and compassion. Indeed, it reaffirms that the High Priest, "taken from among men and made their representative before God, ... is able to deal patiently with the ignorant and erring" (*Heb* 5:1-2). Therefore, the eternal Son of God too "had to become like his brothers in every way, that he might be a *merciful* and faithful *High Priest* before God to expiate the sins of the people" (*ibid.*, 2:17). As a result our great consolation as Christians is knowing that "we do not have a High Priest who is unable to *sympathize* with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin" (*ibid.*, 4:15).

The presbyter thus finds in Christ the model of a true love for the suffering, the poor, the afflicted and especially for sinners, because Jesus is close to human beings with a life like our own; he endured trials and tribulations like our own; therefore he is full of compassion for us and "is able to deal patiently with erring sinners" (*Heb* 5:2). Finally, he is able effectively to help those sorely tried: "Since he was himself tested through what he suffered, he is able to help those who are tempted" (*ibid.*, 2:18).

Priest reproduces in himself the Good Shepherd's love

5. Continuing in this light of divine love, the Second Vatican Council presents priestly consecration as a source of pastoral charity: "The priests of the New Testament are, it is true, by their vocation to ordination, set apart in some way in the midst of the People of God, but this is not in order that they should be separated from that people or from anyone, but that they should be completely consecrated to the task for which God chooses them. They could not be the servants of Christ unless they were witnesses and dispensers of a life other than that of this earth.

“On the other hand they would be powerless to serve men if they remained aloof from their life and circumstances” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 3). At issue are two demands on which the two aspects of priestly behavior are based: for presbyters, “their very ministry makes a special claim on them not to conform themselves to this world; still it requires at the same time that they should live among men in this world and that as good shepherds they should know their sheep and should also seek to lead back those who do not belong to this fold, so that they too may hear the voice of Christ and there may be one fold and one Shepherd” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 3). This explains Paul’s intense activity in collecting aid for the poorest communities (cf. *I Co* 16:1-4), and the recommendation made by the author of the Letter to the Hebrews to practice a sharing of possessions (*koinonia*) in supporting one another as true followers of Christ (cf. *Heb* 13:16).

6. According to the Council, the presbyter who wants to be conformed to the Good Shepherd and reproduce in himself his charity for his brothers and sisters will have to be committed to some very important tasks today, even more so than in other times: to know his own sheep (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 3), especially by contacts, visits, relations of friendship, planned or occasional meetings, etc., always for a reason and with the spirit of a good shepherd; to welcome, as Jesus did, the people who come to him, remaining ready and able to listen, wanting to understand, open and genuinely kind, engaging in deeds and activities to aid the poor and unfortunate; to cultivate and practice those “virtues which are rightly held in high esteem in human relations. Such qualities are goodness of heart, sincerity, strength and constancy of mind, careful attention to justice, courtesy, etc.” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 3), as well as patience, readiness to forgive quickly and generously, kindness, affability, the capacity to be obliging and helpful without playing the benefactor. There are a myriad of human and pastoral virtues which the fragrance of Christ’s charity can and must determine in the priest’s conduct (cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 23).

Grace of the altar must spread to the priest’s activities

7. Sustained by charity, the presbyter can, in the exercise of his ministry, follow the example of Christ, whose food was to do his

Father's will. In loving submission to this will the priest will find the principle and source of unity in his life. The Council states that priests can achieve this unity "by joining themselves with Christ in the recognition of the Father's will... In this way, by adopting the role of the Good Shepherd they will find in the practice of pastoral charity itself the bond of priestly perfection which will achieve unity in their life and activity" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 14). The source on which to draw this charity is always the Eucharist, which is "the center and root of the priest's whole life"; therefore, his soul must strive "to make his own what is enacted on the altar of sacrifice" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 14).

The grace and charity of the altar thus spreads to the pulpit, the confessional, the parish office, the school, recreational activities, homes and streets, hospitals, public transportation and the communication media, wherever the priest has the opportunity to carry out his task as a shepherd: in every case it is his Mass which is spread; it is his spiritual union with Christ the Priest and Victim that leads him to be, as St. Ignatius of Antioch said, "God's wheat in order to become pure bread" for the good of his brothers and sisters (cf. *Epist. ad Romanos*, iv, 1).

Church Committed to Priestly Celibacy*

*In the life of celibacy
the Church sees a sign
of the priest's special consecration
to Christ as one who has
left everything to follow him*

1. In the Gospels, when Jesus called his first Apostles to make them “fishers of men” (*Mt* 4:19; *Mk* 1:17; cf. *Lk* 5:10), they “*left everything* and followed him” (*Lk* 5:11; cf. *Mt* 4:20, 22; *Mk* 1:18, 20). One day it was Peter who remembered this aspect of the apostolic vocation and said to Jesus: “We have *given up everything* and followed you” (*Mt* 19:27; *Mk* 10:28; cf. *Lk* 18:28). Jesus then listed all the necessary detachments “for my sake,” he said, “and for the sake of the Gospel” (*Mk* 10:29). This did not only mean renouncing material possessions, such as “house” or “lands,” but also being separated from loved ones: “brothers or sisters or mother or father or children” — according to Matthew and Mark — “wife or brothers or parents or children” — according to Luke (18:29).

*The weekly General Audience was held on Saturday, 17 July, after the Holy Father returned from his vacation in the Dolomites of northeastern Italy. In his catechesis the Pope discussed the rationale behind priestly celibacy, seeing it as a sign of the presbyter's special consecration to Christ. The Holy Father's talk was the 65th in the series on the Church and was given in Italian. *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 29, 21 July 1993.

Here we note the difference in vocations. Jesus did not demand this radical renunciation of family life from all his disciples, although he did require the first place in their hearts, when he said: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (*Mt* 10:37). The demand for practical renunciation is proper to the apostolic life or the life of special consecration. Called by Jesus, "James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John" left not only the boat on which they were "mending their nets," but also their father who was with them (*Mt* 4:22; cf. *Mk* 1:20).

These observations help us understand the reason for the Church's legislation on *priestly celibacy*. In fact, the Church has considered and still considers that it belongs to the logic of priestly consecration and to the total belonging to Christ resulting from it, in order consciously to fulfill his mandate of evangelization and the spiritual life.

Priests must have undivided hearts

2. Indeed, in the Gospel according to Matthew, shortly before the *passage cited above about leaving loved ones*, Jesus expresses in strong Semitic language another renunciation required "for the sake of the Gospel," that is, the renunciation of marriage. "Some have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (*Mt* 19:12). They are committed to celibacy, that is, in order to put themselves entirely at the service of the "Gospel of the kingdom" (cf. *Mt* 4:23; 9:35; 24:34).

In his First Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul states that he had resolved to take this path and shows the coherence of his own decision, declaring: "An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided!" (*1 Co* 7:32-34). It is certainly inappropriate for someone to be "divided," someone who, like the priest, has been called to be concerned about the things of the Lord. As the Council says, the commitment of celibacy, stemming from a tradition linked to Christ, has "been highly esteemed as a feature of priestly life. For it is at once a sign of pastoral charity and an incentive to it, as well as being in a

special way a source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 16).

It is quite true that in the Eastern Churches many presbyters are legitimately married in accordance with their own canon law. Even in those Churches however, Bishops are celibate, as are a number of priests. The difference in discipline, related to conditions of time and place evaluated by the Church, is explained by the fact that perfect continence, as the Council says, "is not demanded of the priesthood by its nature" (*ibid.*). It does not belong to the essence of the priesthood as Holy Orders, and thus is not imposed in an absolute way in all the Churches. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about its *suitability* and indeed its *appropriateness* to the demands of *Sacred Orders*. As was said, it belongs to the *logic of consecration*.

3. Jesus is the concrete ideal of this form of consecrated life, an example for everyone, but especially for priests. He lived as a celibate, and for this reason he was able to devote all his energy to preaching the kingdom of God and to serving people, with a heart open to all humanity, as the founder of a new spiritual family. His choice was truly "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (cf. *Mt* 19:12).

By his example Jesus gave an orientation that was followed. According to the Gospels, it appears that the Twelve, destined to be the first to share in his priesthood, renounced family life in order to follow him. The Gospels never speak of wives or children in regard to the Twelve, although they tell us that Peter was a married man before he was called by Jesus (cf. *Mt* 8:14; *Mk* 1:30; *Lk* 4:38).

Celibacy recalls mystical marriage of Christ and Church

4. Jesus did not promulgate a law, but proposed the *ideal* of celibacy for the new priesthood he was instituting. This ideal was increasingly asserted in the Church. One can understand that in the first phase of Christianity's spread and development a large number of priests were married men, chosen and ordained in the wake of Jewish tradition. We know that in the Letters to Timothy (*1 Tm* 3:2-3) and to Titus (1:6), one of the qualities required of the men chosen as presbyters is that they be good fathers of families, married only once (i.e., faithful to their wives). This is a phase in the Church's

process of being organized, and, one could say, of testing which discipline of the states of life best corresponds to the ideal and the "counsels" taught by the Lord.

On the basis of experience and reflection the discipline of celibacy gradually spread to the point of becoming the general practice in the Western Church as a result of canonical legislation. It was not merely the consequence of a juridical and disciplinary fact: it was the growth of the Church's realization of the appropriateness of priestly celibacy not only for historical and practical reasons, but also for those arising from an ever better awareness of the congruence of celibacy and the demands of the priesthood.

5. The Second Vatican Council gave the reasons for this "inner consonance" of celibacy and the priesthood: "By preserving virginity or celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven priests are consecrated in a new and excellent way to Christ. They more readily cling to him with undivided heart and dedicate themselves more freely in him and through him to the service of God and men. They are less encumbered in their service of his kingdom and of the task of heavenly regeneration. In this way they become better fitted for a broader acceptance of fatherhood in Christ." They "recall that mystical marriage, established by God and destined to be fully revealed in the future, by which the Church holds Christ as her only Spouse. Moreover they are made a living sign of that world to come in which the children of the resurrection shall neither be married or take wives" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 16; cf. *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 29, 50; CCC, n. 1579).

These lofty, noble spiritual reasons can be summarized in the following essential points: a more complete adherence to Christ, loved and served with an undivided heart (cf. *1 Co* 7:32-33); greater availability to serve Christ's kingdom and to carry out their own tasks in the Church; the most exclusive choice of a spiritual fruitfulness (cf. *1 Co* 4:15); leading a life more like that definitive one in the world to come, and therefore, more exemplary for life here below. This is a valid reason for all times, including our own, and the supreme criterion of every judgment and every choice in harmony with the invitation to "leave everything" made by Jesus to the disciples and particularly to the Apostles. For this reason the 1971 Synod of Bishops confirmed: "The law of priestly celibacy existing in the Latin

Church is to be kept in its entirety" (*Enchiridion Vaticanum*, IV, 1219).

Church remains convinced of the value of celibacy

6. It is true that today the practice of celibacy faces obstacles, sometimes grave ones, in the subjective and objective conditions in which priests happen to live. The Synod of Bishops considered them, but held that even today's difficulties can be overcome, if "suitable conditions are fostered, namely: growth of the interior life through prayer, renunciation and fervent love for God and one's neighbor and by other aids to the spiritual life; human balance through well-ordered integration into the fabric of social relationships; fraternal association and companionship with other priests and with the Bishop, through pastoral structures better suited to this purpose and with the assistance also of the community of the faithful" (*ibid.*, IV, 1216).

This is a kind of challenge that the Church makes to the mentality, tendencies and charms of the world, with an ever new desire for consistency with and fidelity to the Gospel ideal. Therefore, although the Supreme Pontiff can consider and decide what is to be done in certain cases, the Synod reaffirmed that in the Latin Church "the priestly ordination of married men is not permitted, even in particular cases" (*ibid.*, IV, 1220). The Church holds that the awareness of total consecration, developed over centuries, continues to hold good and to be increasingly improved.

The Church also knows and she reminds presbyters and all the faithful with the Council that "the gift of celibacy, so appropriate to the priesthood of the New Testament, is liberally granted by the Father, provided that those who share Christ's priesthood through the sacrament of Orders, and indeed the whole Church, ask for that gift humbly and earnestly" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 16).

Perhaps, however, and even first, it is necessary to ask for the grace of understanding priestly celibacy, which doubtless includes a certain mystery: that of asking for boldness and trust in the absolute attachment to the person and redeeming work of Christ, with a radical renunciation that can seem confusing to human eyes. Jesus

himself, in suggesting it, observed that not everyone can understand it (cf. *Mt* 19:10-12). Blessed are they who receive the grace to understand it and remain faithful on this journey!

Humanae Vitae: Twenty Five Years Later

Most Rev. Teodoro C. Bacani, Jr., D.D.

Historical Review

Twenty-five years ago, on July 5, 1968, to be exact, Pope Paul VI signed his much awaited encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, on the Regulation of Birth. He had forebodings of forthcoming opposition to his stand against contraception. That is why he wrote, "It can be foreseen that this teaching (against contraception) will perhaps not be easily received by all" (HV, no. 14).

Opposition did come almost before the ink from the Pope's pen had dried. Dissent was massive. The time that followed was described by one writer as the Pope's moment of greatest isolation" (Andrea Torielli). Opposition to the encyclical has not diminished since. Not even the Pope could have imagined the turmoil that his encyclical was to provoke.

For after all, as one author has pointed out, "Among Christian Churches there was nearly undivided opposition to contraception until the early part of this century" (Janet Smith in *Humanae Vitae: A Generation Later*). John T. Noonan's monumental work, *Contraception*, ably documents this unbroken opposition to contraception in the Church. It was the Anglican Church which first broke ranks with the whole of traditional Christian opposition to contraception when the 1930 Lambeth Conference permitted the use

of contraception by married couples, for serious reasons. In answer, Pius XI's *Casti Connubii* reiterated the Catholic Church's condemnation of contraception. But after him Pius XII explicitly acknowledged the licit use of the infertile period to regulate births when needed.

Within the Church the controversy started with what is called "the Congo pill." The question was asked in 1961, during the war in the former Belgian Congo, whether it was legitimate for religious sisters to use anovulant pills as an anticipated protection against pregnancy in case of rape. In various ways, three outstanding Roman moralists — Pietro Palazzini, then secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Council and a cardinal today, Francesco Hurt, Professor of Moral Theology at the Gregorian University, and Ferdinando Lambruschini, professor of Moral Theology at the Lateran University, approved the use of the pill in this particular case.

Dr. John Rock, a Catholic physician from Boston, rocked the boat by his promotion of "the pill" and advocacy of change in Church teaching. In mid-1963, some theologians could already be found defending oral contraceptives. Pope Paul VI seemed to indicate the possibility of change when he said to the cardinals that there was "no adequate reason for considering the relevant norms of Pius XII to be superseded and therefore no longer obligatory; they should, therefore be regarded as valid *as long as we do not consider ourselves in conscience obliged to modify them*" (emphasis added).

Soon Paul VI assigned the "Papal Commission for the Study of Problems of the Family, Population, and Birth Rate" to advise him on the issue. The documents of this commission were leaked out to the public and it became known that the majority of the papal commission favored a change in Church teaching. Despite the majority opinion, Pope Paul VI reiterated the Church's rejection of contraception. He taught, in continuity with Church tradition, that every contraceptive act is intrinsically disordered (HV, no. 14). He explained:

That teaching, often set forth by the Magisterium is founded upon the inseparable connection, willed by God and unable to be broken by man on his own initiative, between the two meanings of the conjugal act: the unitive

meaning and the procreative meaning. Indeed, by its intimate structure, the conjugal act, while most closely uniting husband and wife, capacitates them for the generation of new lives, according to laws inscribed in the very being of man and woman. By safeguarding both these essential aspects, the unitive and the procreative, the conjugal act preserves in its fullness the sense of true mutual love and its ordination toward man's most high calling to parenthood (no. 12).

Immediately this teaching met with vigorous opposition from many Catholics. After twenty five years the opposition has not abated. In 1987 Pope John Paul II asserted that "The Church's teaching on contraception, does not belong to the category of matter open to free discussion among theologians. Teaching the contrary amounts to leading the moral consciences of spouses into error." Despite this, on January 25, 1989, 163 European theologians signed the "Cologne Declaration," which stated among other things: "Many people in the Church are convinced that the norms for birth control in the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1968) represent a moral position that does not replace the responsibility of the faithful to their own conscience."

Notwithstanding opposition from many theologians and nonacceptance by many Catholics of *Humanae Vitae's* teaching, both Pope John Paul II and the Synod Bishops on the Family (1980) have reaffirmed strongly the papal teaching. At present, many Catholics are confused, while many more perhaps either live in ignorance of their Church's teaching or else simply follow what they think is right.

So, twenty five years after its publication, *Humanae Vitae* remains controversial within the Catholic Church which the Pope sought to bring to a consensus by his Encyclical.

Reception of the Encyclical in the Philippines

Even here in the Philippines, we have not been spared differences of opinion regarding the encyclical and its application to the Philippine context.

There are those who dissent from the teaching of the encyclical against contraception, and would allow couples to conscientiously choose their own method of regulating birth, provided they do so from unselfish motives and not because of a contraceptive mentality.

Then there are the adherents to the encyclical's teaching. But even among them there are still differences in opinion.

For sure there are *areas of agreement*, which could be summed up thus:

1. Direct contraception is morally wrong. A contraceptive attitude even more so.

2. Direct contraception is intrinsically evil: it is wrong in itself prior to any Church prohibition.

3. The teaching against contraception is an official teaching of the Church and is binding on all Catholics.

4. The prohibition against contraception binds not only Catholics but all people, because we are dealing here with a natural law prohibition.

5. Only the parents have the duty and the right to decide on the number of their offspring. The government has no right to determine the number of a couple's offspring.

6. The freedom of conscience of couples and of government health workers should always be respected. No coercion should be imposed on them.

7. Natural family planning is the only morally legitimate method of birth regulation.

8. We should oppose the promotion of contraception by the government since it is our prophetic duty to preach and act against sin in all its forms.

9. The more serious causes of poverty in the Philippines and the

ones that need more urgent attention are: injustice in society, graft and corruption, government inefficiency and mismanagement of our resources.

10. Even when the government or its agencies propose to be non-coercive, there is often the temptation to be coercive, and often government promoters of birth control succumb to this temptation. Hence, the need for constant vigilance on the part of the Church and of the people as a whole.

But there are also *areas of disagreement*. Bishop Varela, head of the Episcopal Commission on Family Life, and others with him deny or at least doubt that a population problem exists in the Philippines.

On the other hand, the CBCP in its document, "Love is Life," has explicitly admitted "the seriousness and the complexity of the population problem, and the common obligation of all sectors of society to understand well and resolve this problem." We have thus the very disconcerting case of the head of an episcopal commission holding a position contrary to an official CBCP assessment.

There are Catholics who refuse any talk of deceleration of our population growth rate. They are afraid that deceleration will lead to an irreversible trend towards the depopulation of our country.

There are others, like myself, who advocate the deceleration of our population growth rate, say to 2% annually by the year 2000, or at least openly admit the legitimacy of advocating such a deceleration. They say that the trend towards deceleration can be reversed, when necessary, by education. This latter group notes that the CBCP has declared: "The Church does not forbid the advocacy of the acceleration or deceleration of our population growth, according to circumstances, provided this is achieved within the parameters of freedom of conscience, the responsible decision of couples, and the principles of sexual and family morality" (Guiding Principles on Population Control no. 9). They point out that in a speech to Philippine bishops on their *Ad Limina* visit (November 19, 1990), Pope John Paul II speaks of the acceleration or deceleration of population without any negative connotation.

It is my belief that despite differences of opinion in these and other related matters, those who uphold *Humanae Vitae* can still present a united front against the present contraceptive birth control program of the government.

Reasons for Opposing Contraception

We should base our opposition to contraception not on the nonexistence of a population problem in our country. The documents from the magisterium and especially *Humanae Vitae* and *Familiaris Consortio* have never argued against contraception on the basis of the non-existence of a population problem. Whether there are 300 couples or 3 billion couples in the world, the Church would still oppose contraception.

We oppose contraception not only because it is not needed but because it is wrong and also because it produces harmful results in our people.

Hence, it is our duty to prove convincingly to our people that contraception is indeed wrong in itself, and that its propagation will harm our people.

Admittedly, Church people and apostles of family life have not succeeded in convincing our people regarding the wrongness of contraception. This I believe is due to two factors: the inadequacy of our presentation of arguments in favor of the encyclical's teaching, and the lack of mental discipline and capacity in many of our people to evaluate the arguments against contraception.

Let me essay an attempt to show that contraception is wrong in itself.

The bottom line of the Pope's argument is this: human beings cannot alter the basic structure of the conjugal act precisely because the conjugal act has to do with the creation of human life. And while human beings are servants or collaborators in the creation of human life — and are thus procreators — they cannot be the final arbiters or deciders as to whether new life is to be created. In the matter of creating human life, human beings can only submit themselves to the

will of the creator and not act against that will.

Now, it is the will of God that the conjugal act should have two meanings: the procreative and the unitive. People of our times have no difficulty in seeing the wrongness of a conjugal act which is deliberately deprived of its unitive meaning. Thus, people can see right away that it is wrong for a man to force intercourse on his wife when she is indisposed, simply because he likes it, or even because he wants to have a child. In other words, it is easy to see that it is wrong to engage in the conjugal act lovelessly.

But if it is wrong to deprive the conjugal act of its unitive meaning, it should be also wrong to deprive it of its procreative meaning.

But is there a procreative meaning in every conjugal act? There is. But not in the sense that every conjugal act is capable of producing new human life. The simple fact is, the majority of conjugal acts do not and cannot result in the conception of a new human life.

What then is the procreative meaning of the conjugal act, which human beings cannot deliberately tamper with? It is simply the natural ordination of the conjugal act towards the creation of human life. Remember that the sex organs of human beings are called "reproductive organs" or "genitals." The etymology of these words shows an understanding of them and of the act in which they are engaged as ordered to the transmission of life.

There is nothing wrong about not actualizing or not bringing to realization of this ordering of the conjugal act to the transmission of life. There is nothing wrong for example, for a person to decide to live a celibate life temporarily or for a lifetime. Hence, it is not wrong either for a married person to refrain from the conjugal act during the fertile period of the woman, as happens in natural family planning.

But it is wrong for a person to engage in the conjugal act while at the same time taking positive action to frustrate the ordering of this act, to the transmission of life, just as it would be wrong for a person to engage in the conjugal act while at the same time taking positive action to make sure his act does not signify love.

It is essential to this argument to remember that the two-fold meaning of the conjugal act is God-given in the structure of the act itself, and hence natural. As I said, there is no difficulty in seeing and showing that unitive meaning is God-given, and hence natural (thus people are said to make love when they engage in the conjugal act). It is more difficult to see that the procreative meaning is God-given and natural because procreation does not always follow upon intercourse. But is it not true that the will is ordered to willing even when it is not actually engaged in the act of willing, and the mind is ordered to knowledge even when it is not actually engaged in the act of knowing? And so the conjugal act is still ordered to the transmission of life even when it is not actually transmitting new life.

I think you will agree that the argument itself is not easy to grasp and can be understood only by a disciplined and attentive mind. Unfortunately, qualities like these do not abound in people nowadays.

Hence, it is perhaps easier to show the wrongness of contraception by demonstrating its ill effects on the bodies and on the morals of people.

I will mention only some ill-effects here and leave it to others to elaborate on them. Studies have shown that those who use the pill are four to five times more likely to get strokes or heart attacks than those who do not use them. It is claimed that the more recent kinds of pills have had more benign results but it will have to be demonstrated still that they are less harmful. One contraceptive, for example, Lupron (leuprolide), has a long list of side effects including hot flashes, bone pains, thinning hair, and mood and cognitive changes. It was being used in research until it was discovered that women using it were losing bone mass at a rate of about 2% a year, compared with 2% annual gain in study participants not taking the same pill (Vogue, September 1993 p. 382). It is even reported now that two separate Kenyan studies have shown that pill users are three-times more susceptible to the HIV virus than non-pill users. Many pills, especially the low-dose contraceptive pills have also abortifacient effects. What is important to note in all of these is that so many women are taking pills whose effects and dangers not even the doctors fully know about.

Vasectomy exposes those who undergo the procedure to a greater risk of getting prostate cancer (59-89% more danger). The side effects of the IUD are all very well known, aside from the fact that they are at least probably abortifacient. Not even tubal ligation is perfectly safe as it still allows exceptional ectopic pregnancy.

But while the physical effects are very serious, the moral effects are even more devastating. We are now reaping the whirlwind from the permissiveness spawned by the general availability of contraceptive pills. A contraceptive mentality, unreceptive to new life and often leading to abortion, has taken hold of much of the developed world and many less developed countries. This contraceptive mentality has paved the way for abortion on a truly demonic scale, a veritable holocaust. And who can deny the general lowering of sexual morality among the people especially of the so-called "developed nations." It is of course difficult to blame only contraception for all these and more. But it is impossible to deny the influence of contraception on the downslide of sexual morality.

Need for a Prophetic Church

The Catholic Church in the Philippines has a tremendous opportunity to exercise a prophetic role in the Church and in the world.

It will exercise this role and do honor to *Humanae Vitae* if it proclaims this encyclical's teaching within the context of responsible parenthood and total human development. The Church, is called upon to make people aware that responsible parenthood entails a decision by the couple either to generously procreate many children, or for just reasons (medical, psychological, or social), to limit the number of their children either for the time being or for an indefinite period. It is sometimes the duty of parents to seek to limit the number of their children. I believe that the Church in the Philippines has not stated this often enough and clearly enough.

The Church is also called upon to cooperate in the work of total, human development, which entails working for economic upliftment and the promotion of social justice, both of which are more urgent than population control.

The Church's stress on responsible parenthood will result in the control of population growth not coming from government control but from self-control. Its orientation to total human development will make sure that population control does not become the focus of our development efforts.

To be prophetic, the Church does not need to close its eyes to the problems of contemporary Philippines, and thus risk losing its credibility. But it need not simply follow the government or the desires of the people and thus risk losing its moral authority.

A truly prophetic Church will be the guardian of truth. It will proclaim respect for human life and for the processes that lead to the generation of human life. It will denounce materialism, contraception and the anti-natalist mentality. It will unmask the demographic imperialism that manipulates our people and creates a contraceptive mentality. It will demand that the whole truth be told regarding the ill side-effects of contraceptive and sterilizing drugs and procedures.

A truly prophetic Church will safeguard the freedom of married couples and health workers so that they will not be misled, pressured or coerced into practicing or promoting contraception. A prophetic Church will denounce the lack of real alternatives to contraception and sterilization in the government program, and the misleading government propaganda.

A truly prophetic Church will direct the minds and hearts of our government officials and people towards the more urgent priorities — like a more equitable distribution of wealth, the elimination of graft and corruption, increased efficiency in the use of our resources, the avoidance of waste, and pollution.

And above all, a prophetic Church will preach by deeds and words the need for a spirit of sacrifice, self-discipline, chastity and fidelity, caring and sharing, and trust in the grace of God.

A prophetic Church will be willing to spend, to struggle and to suffer for its convictions, knowing that what is at stake here is human life and human dignity, for the spread and acceptance of contraception will surely pave the way for abortion.

Humanae Vitae has been repeatedly acclaimed a prophetic document by those who accept it. It needs a prophetic Church to explain its teaching to those who need it. You and I are called to be that prophetic Church.

An Introductory Approach to the New Catechism of the Catholic Church

Javier Gonzalez, O.P.

On December 8, 1992, the Holy Father solemnly promulgated the *Catechismus Ecclesiae Catholicae* (in English, "Catechism of the Catholic Church") in the presence of all the Roman *Dicasteria* and representatives of the Episcopal Commissions for Catechesis from all over the world.

It was a memorable event and history will list this work among the most significant accomplishments of John Paul II's pontificate. The following pages are an introduction to this Catechism, focusing on its origin (the making of the Catechism), purpose (why a universal Catechism), contents (framework) and some salient features.

Exploring the New Catechism

A year ago I had the privilege to see for the first time a copy of the new Catechism of the Catholic Church. Avid with a mixture of interest and curiosity, I literally devoured some pages of the bulky (700 pages!) volume. I have heard many things about it, particularly the circulating rumors about some controversial issues, that I really wanted to know the "latest" stand of the Church on them.

A catechism for or against death penalty? A strong or a compromising stand against abortion, contraception and divorce? An emphasis or an "amnesia" on sexual morality? More on social justice and less on

“theoretical” doctrines? Creation or evolution? A catechism with or without original sin? *Etc., etc.*

At last I had the opportunity to check the Catechism. I went quickly through the pages of the book. Its easy reading, plain language, and logical sequence caught me by surprise. It was beautiful indeed! Very soon, however, I realized that the book I had in my hands was not a sort of quick reference manual for easy answers or instant solutions. Not at all. Topics were developed in a lengthy, deep, systematic way.

Definitely, the Catechism was not just a seasonal “reading” book, but a lasting one that deserves to be studied, reflected upon, lived out. No wonder, I thought, its preparation took six long years, involved hundreds of people, and was the product of as many as ten compilations of suggestions and comments edited and re-edited before the definitive text was drawn. Indeed an enormous amount of work preceded the publication.

Note that 426 years had passed since the previous Tridentine Catechism. Could it be that this Catechism was intended to last for another 426 years? I guess this question was not in the mind of those who had worked on it. Or at least it had not been their immediate concern. Instead their main concern had most probably been whether the Catechism offered a valid compendium of doctrine, adapted to the historic present of the Church. In other words, whether the Catechism provided to the needs of the Church in the present times. John Paul II, on the date of its promulgation, June 25, 1992, answered in the affirmative: he considered the Catechism as a key answer to the present needs of the Church.

“In a world marked by ‘subjectivism,’ by the fragmentation of different messages; in a world in which realities such as God, the Church, man... seem to be losing their meaning and relevance, on many sides and in many ways a message of Truth is sought which can save the human person and his world... The Catechism is meant to be a tool to help quench that thirst for Truth and Certitude which even today bursts forth widely and insistently from the human heart” (Card. Ratzinger).

Why, then, a Catechism for the whole Church? The answer will come by itself once we delve a little into the origin and the making of the book. To do it we need to go back in time...

I. The Making of the Catechism (*Historical Background*)

1. Remembering Paul VI, the Catechist

Castelgandolfo is a beautiful little town in the outskirts of Rome. Its hilly, ever-green surroundings and its refreshing view over lake Albano have made of the place the traditional summer residence of the Popes or where they take a short rest after an exhausting trip abroad.

Summer of 1978. The then Pope Paul VI was in Castelgandolfo not only for a vacation; he was very sick. His weak condition, however, did not prevent him from making his appearance every Sunday at the balcony of his residence at noontime to pray the Angelus with the pilgrims who had reached the place seeking for the Pope's blessing and, who knows, thirsting for an encouraging word from him.

I happened to be there that last Sunday of July, 1978. The crowd of pilgrims, one eye on their watch and the other at the balcony, was anxiously waiting for the Pope to appear. Soon, he was there, a white-dressed, tired-looking figure, hardly able to walk by himself, vainly trying to produce a smile. He delivered a short address, prayed the Angelus and, after his blessing, dismissed the crowd with a request: "Please, pray for the Pope."

Nobody present there could imagine that they had had the rare privilege to have seen Pope Paul VI for the last time. As a matter of fact, that would be his last appearance in public. The following Sunday, August 6, he was lying dead on that very same place, while arrangements were being made for his burial in the Vatican. With Paul VI many dreams and projects were also buried. At least we know of a promise he had not been able to fulfill, namely, the publication of a document on Catechesis addressed to the Universal Church. The promise had taken place the previous year (October 1977). At the end of the Synod of Bishops being held in Rome, the

The idea of a new Catechism for the whole Church caught fire as the synodal session proceeded; the Synodal Fathers voted overwhelmingly in favor of the suggestion for a project in this regard. The *Relatio Finalis*, in fact, mentioned twice the need for a Catechism: "It is very generally wished that a catechism or a global expose of the whole Catholic doctrine both regarding faith and morals be composed." Something else was added regarding the framework of the catechism: "Its presentation of doctrine should be both biblical and liturgical. It is to embody a sound doctrine applied to the actual Christian life." At the close of the session, the Pope himself, in singling out the three most significant resolutions of the Synod, mentioned in the first place "the desire to prepare a compendium or catechism of the whole Catholic doctrine, to which catechisms or compendia of all the particular Churches should refer themselves to."

3. *The Road to the Final Text*

A Commission for the Preparation of the Universal Catechism was very soon created (July 1986). It was composed of 12 members from various continents, under the chairmanship of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith. The Commission had its first meeting in November 1986. Its main agenda was to plan this major work, identify the contributors, the audience, the features, etc. Three criteria were to govern the *Composition* of the Catechism, namely, it was to have an organic, systematic presentation; it shouldn't be addressed primarily to every single faithful but "to those who have the task of editing and approving the diocesan or national catechism" (bishops); and finally, it was to have a "tripartite" structure: Creed, Sacraments and Morals. The work gradually began to take shape though in an embryonic and tentative form. By December 1987, the Editorial Committee was able to produce the "Avant-Project," the first complete draft of the text of the Catechism. The text was then submitted to a group of forty international experts for their comments and suggestions. Plenty of work had to be re-made; even the structure was affected: the decision of inserting an excursus on the "Our Father" was taken. In February 1989, the revised first complete version was presented to the original Commission, which gave its approval "in principle," but which decided, following the desire of the Holy Father, to submit the text to all the Bishops in the world. Translated into the four major European

languages: English, French, Spanish and German, it was sent to all bishops and to a number of prestigious theological institutions, for remarks and suggestions. Attached there was a deadline for their answers: May 31, 1990.

More than a thousand bishops responded “personally”; twenty-eight Episcopal Conferences and various institutions also responded, together sending in more than 24,000 comments and suggestions. The arduous tasks of sifting, reflecting and re-editing followed. The work after the consultation was herculean, considering the fact that the “Revised Project” was only the fourth one in a series of nine compilations prepared, edited and re-edited before the definitive text was drawn.

This initial stage of revision ended in March 1991. Soon afterwards a pre-definitive text was readied. In October 1991, the Commission for the Preparation of the Catechism held its last session to give some “retouches” to the text before submitting it for the approval of the Holy Father. In that session the Commission already took into consideration questions related to its translation into the major languages (the catechism was composed originally in French), its publication and its dissemination.

Finally, on 14 February 1992, the Commission expressed its final approval and endorsed the text to the Holy Father.

On the 25th of June of 1992, 426 years after the Tridentine Catechism, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* was born, with the official approval of Pope John Paul II.

II. Why a “Universal” Catechism?

Nothing exists without a cause. Nothing exists without a purpose, either; otherwise, things would become irrelevant, useless. Indeed, the importance or grade of validity of something depends on whether it serves or not a plan, whether it offers or not an adequate answer to some specific needs.

The new Catechism could not be an exception. It had a purpose from the very beginning; it was born to serve a plan, to address some

specific needs in the Church. Its urgency was felt by many even some years before it came into being. John Paul II considered the new Catechism a key answer to the needs of the Church in the present world.

Which were those needs? Or, in other words, why a universal Catechism during an era of inculturation, contextualization, and "local churches coming of age"? I believe that a partial answer has been sketched already in the previous pages. In any case, a quick look at the document introducing the Catechism (*Fidei Depositum*), and a flash back to the historical background in which the Catechism was born will allow us to see clearly the urgent and important mission the new Catechism is called to fulfill. The new Catechism is called to be:

(a) *A Well-integrated Doctrinal Synthesis.* The Second Vatican Council (1963-1966) changed the Church in many ways, both through its official teaching on vital issues, and the "new spirit" it ushered in. Its work, however, was not exhaustive (nor was it intended to be). In many areas it just set new trends, sowed "seeds of renewal" which needed to be developed and applied to different situations and settings.

Since the conclusion of the Council, the Magisterium (the official teaching of the Church) has never stopped from developing these "seeds of renewal" through a very rich and diversified series of official documents: Encyclicals, Pastoral Letters, Instructions from Roman Congregations, the Code of Canon Law, etc., which deepened, expanded, clarified and applied basic insights of the Council documents. They were "topical pronouncements," all stemming from a basic vision, but still calling for a synthesis.

A text, then, which contained the essential and basic truths of Catholic faith and morals, formulated in the most complete, clear and concise way possible was urgent and necessary. Such is the new Catechism, through which the Church continues to fulfill the mission entrusted to her by the Lord: preserving intact the deposit of faith.

(b) *A Sure Guide in These Times of Confusion.* I do not find acceptable the statement that "any past epoch was better." Actually, each epoch has its pros and cons, lows and highs, miseries and glories.

So has ours. Nobody, however, can deny that the three last decades have been challenging: at the technical level the world has changed more during the last 30 years than in centuries before. Socially speaking, democracy has been the latest achievement the world feels proud of. Has this progress been accompanied by a proportionate (!) advancement at a personal, psychological, religious level? I don't think so. We notice that people are very vulnerable today (psychological weakness?); they are easy victims also of public indoctrination mainly through media; fear and confusion reign around.

In the field of theology, after the celebration of the Vatican II, there were numerous publications on almost any topic, by individual theologians and "schools of theology" which divulged their own insights and "interpretations" of the teaching and "spirit" of the Council. Serious difficulties arose from the fact that a considerable number of these views and interpretations were often miles apart from the teaching of the Magisterium which usually enjoys less media exposure. Particularly tendentious and harmful were "syntheses" published by dissenting theologians like Hans Kung in the late 70s, and in which several heterodox views were expanded in an attractive manner and in open defiance of the official teaching of the Church. As a consequence, not a few felt confused. Most bishops themselves must have been probably confused all along, not sure which doctrines were to be considered essential, confronted, as they are, with pressures from various groups with their proper agenda and tendencies. An alarming voice recently said that the theologians have taken the place of the bishops as teachers of the faith! A bit too much, I believe. But it is also true that not all the bishops have at all exercised their teaching authority, in opposition to that of the misleading theologians. Be it what may, the existence of mind-boggling alternatives and pressures was urgently demanding for a universal catechetical reference, that is, an updated, comprehensive and authoritative synthesis of the post-Vatican II teaching of the Church. The need was felt by both Church leaders and "ordinary faithful" alike.

Here now is the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, "a sure and authentic reference text for the teaching of the Catholic doctrine," John Paul II wrote. Not in vain "doctrinal soundness" was checked as one of the specific characteristics of the new Catechism from the very moment of its conception.

(c) *A Reference for Local Catechisms*. This role assigned to the new Catechism has been repeated many times. In 1985, at the conclusion of the Extraordinary Synod where the idea of the Catechism caught fire, the Pope mentioned the desire to prepare a compendium or catechism "to which catechisms or compendia of all the particular Churches should refer themselves." On another occasion John Paul II repeated that the new Catechism was to become "a reference point for the catechisms which are composed in different countries." Finally, in 1992, in promulgating the Catechism, the Pope wrote: "This Catechism is given to the Pastors of the Church and to the faithful so that it may serve... in a very particular manner for the elaboration of local catechisms" (*Fidei Depositum*, 1).

This explains why the Catechism was not to be addressed primarily to every single faithful, but "to those who have the task of editing and approving the diocesan or national catechisms."

The implication of the above statement is that the new Catechism is not intended to be a substitute for local catechisms. Cardinal Ratzinger said it clearly: "This Catechism is not aimed to substitute the local catechisms duly approved by the ecclesiastical authorities, the diocesan Bishops and the Episcopal Conferences... On the contrary, this is aimed to encourage and help the composition of new local catechisms, which would take into account the diverse situations and cultures, but which would keep with care the unity of the faith and the fidelity to the Catholic doctrine."

Neither, then, is the new Catechism intended to choke any private legitimate initiative by imposing a compulsory uniformity in language and contents. Elaborating on this point, Cardinal Ratzinger explained: "The texts contained therein are not obligatory for all local catechisms, but they only offer the pattern according to which local texts could be formulated." "Some of the texts," he added, "could be used in local catechisms as part of a language common to all Christians or at least to all Catholics, but naturally completed by appropriate adaptations dictated by the diversity of the situations."

The result intended is not *uniformity* (should the Church, as a good mother, oblige all her children to wear the same clothes and act in exactly the same way?) but *unity*, for "a book which gives a common

point of reference, born out of the common faith and of a very vast collaboration in the Universal Church, cannot be a point of separation." We may ask: Was this common 'point of reference' or guide for all local catechisms really necessary? Yes, it was, for two reasons: positively, to present and re-enforce the same doctrinal truths, most of them proposed by the Vatican II; and negatively, to put an end to partial, erroneous and even contradictory local catechisms. We said that in the post-Vatican II period, bishops in various parts of the world were worried about the verified negative effects of some misinterpretations and partial readings of the Vatican II teachings and, consequently, by the confusions and the doctrinal errors committed by many catechisms prepared in the various local Church. Any effective remedy for these doctrinal discordance and catechetical divergences? The present catechism was thought as the best antidote to the malaise.

(d) A Tool for Evangelization. Catechesis has been always considered as a primary means of evangelization. Even the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (1991) includes catechesis as a primary means to attain its envisioned "renewed evangelization" (cf. Part III).

Evangelization, needless to say, refers to the proclamation of the Good News. Such proclamation includes both a message of salvation and a message of liberation. Two different yet inseparable realities. Inculturation is an aspect that true evangelization cannot disregard. Evidently "catechesis" is a much wider reality than "catechism." The latter is simply one of the means to do the former. Indirectly, then, the new Catechism is called to become a valid means of evangelization and a tool to promote every legitimate and healthy inculturation. In recommending the new Catechism to the participants of the VIIIth Congress of the International Council for Catechesis (September 27, 1992), Pope John Paul II said: "And I am also certain that you, experts on catechesis, will know how to put in evidence the vast gamut of services that the Catechism of the Catholic Church is capable of offering also for purposes of inculturation, which, to be efficacious, could never cease to be true." And in another occasion: "The new catechism is a qualified and authorized instrument... of evangelization and human promotion."

The Catechism is concerned with proclaiming the one Christian truth to the various categories of those receiving catechesis (children on the primary and elementary levels, teenager, young people, adults and the elderly), in their own psychological and pedagogical context, and in their own socio-cultural, professional and ecclesial surroundings. An excellent tool, therefore, to carry out the most central text in scriptures regarding catechesis:

“Let these words of mine remain in your heart and in your soul; fasten them on your hand as a sign and on your forehead as a circlet. Teach them to your children and say them over to them, whether at rest in your house or walking abroad, at your lying down or at your rising. Write them on the doorpost of your house and on your gates, so that you and your children may live long in the land that Yahweh swore to your fathers he would give them for as long as there is a sky above the earth” (*Dt 17:18-21*).

(e) *A Book for Personal Study and Growth*. The enlightening pages of the Catechism make it worthy already of having a place in any home. Besides, the haunting quality of many passages makes of the book an excellent companion for personal study and reflection. Statistics alone can tell us of the riches of the book, which contains a well of references: from the Bible (a. 2,600), from Ecumenical Councils (a. 1,200), Pontifical Documents (more than 400), Codes of Canon Law (a. 200), Liturgical Sources (111), Fathers of the Church and Ecclesiastical Authors (a. 500)...

Bible and Tradition combined to offer a clear picture of what any Catholic believes. The Catechism, then, is a helpful book for those who wish to go deeper into the richness of their faith. (What the Faith Is, Gives, Demands, Prays: such is the structure of the New Catechism.) It is in this context that we take the words of John Paul II: “This Catechism is given also to those who wish to know better the riches of salvation... Likewise, it is offered to any person who calls upon to account for our hope (cf. *1 Pt 3:15*) and who wishes to know better what the Catholic Church believes” (*Fidei Depositum*, 4).

We often say that the contemporary mentality tends toward doctrinal subjectivism and “moral privatization.” We ourselves are victims of such a mentality. Does it not signal the necessity for all of

us to rally anew around the essential and universal doctrine of the Church? This new Catechism, “in spite of all its limitations and inadequacies,” as Cardinal Ratzinger put it, wants to be in itself an instrument to help us quench that thirst for Truth and Certainty, which insistently and diffusely bursts out from our heart.

III. The Contents of the New Catechism

The Catechism of the Catholic Church is divided into four parts and consists of 2,865 paragraphs. The framework that follows will give a bird’s eye view of its content.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK

Part I: The Profession of Faith (What the Faith is)

Section 1: I believe — We believe

Section 2: The Profession of the Christian Faith

Part II: The Celebration of the Christian Mystery (What the Faith gives)

Section 1: The Economy of the Sacraments

Section 2: The Seven Sacraments of the Church

Part III: Life in Christ (What the Faith demands)

Section 1: The Vocation of Man: Life in the Spirit

Section 2: The Ten Commandments

Part IV: Christian Prayer (What the Faith prays)

Section 1: Prayer in Christian Life

Section 2: The Prayer of the Lord — “Our Father”

DETAILED FRAMEWORK

Part I. THE PROFESSION OF FAITH (What the Faith Is)

Section I. I BELIEVE - WE BELIEVE

Chap. 1: Man is Capable of God (n.27-49)

Chap. 2: God reaching out to man (n.50-141)

Art. 1: God's Self Revelation

Art. 2: The Transmission of Divine Revelation

Art. 3: Sacred Scripture

Chap. 3: Man's response to God (n.142-184)

Art. 1: I believe

Art. 2: We believe

Section II. THE PROFESSION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Chap. 1: I believe in God the Father (n.198-421)

Art. 1: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of
heaven and earth

Chap. 2: I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God (n.422-682)

Art. 2: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord

Art. 3: Jesus Christ was conceived by the power of the
Holy Spirit, and was born of the Virgin Mary

Art. 4: Jesus Christ suffered under Pontius Pilate, was
crucified, died and was buried

Art. 5: Jesus Christ descended to the dead and rose from
death on the third day

Art. 6: Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, sits at the
right hand of God, the Father Almighty

Art. 7: Jesus Christ will come to judge the living and the
dead

Chap. 3: I believe in the Holy Spirit (n.683-1060)

Art. 8: I believe in the Holy Spirit

Art. 9: I believe the Holy Catholic Church

Art. 10: I believe the forgiveness of sins

Art. 11: I believe the resurrection of dead

Art. 12: I believe everlasting life

AMEN (n.1061-1065)

Part II. THE CELEBRATION OF THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY
(What the Faith Does)

Section I. THE ECONOMY OF THE SACRAMENTS

Chap. 1: The Paschal Mystery in the Time of the Church (1077-1134)

Art. 1: The Liturgy — Work of the Holy Trinity

Art. 2: The Paschal Mystery in the Sacraments of the Church

Chap. 2: The Sacramental Celebration of the Paschal Mystery
(n.1135-1209)

Art. 1: Celebrating the Liturgy of the Church

Art. 2: Liturgical Diversity and Unity of the Mystery

Section II. THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH

Chap. 1: The Sacraments of Christian Initiation (n.1212-1419)

Art. 1: The Sacrament of Baptism

Art. 2: The Sacrament of Confirmation

Art. 3: The Sacrament of the Eucharist

Chap. 2: The Sacraments of Healing (n.1420-1532)

Art. 4: The Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation

Art. 5: The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick

Chap. 3: The Sacraments of Service and Communion (n.1533-1666)

Art. 6: The Sacrament of Orders

Art. 7: The Sacrament of Matrimony

Chap. 4: The Other Liturgical Celebrations (n.1667-1690)

- Art. 8: The Sacramentals
- Art. 9: Christian Funeral Rites

Part III. LIFE IN CHRIST (What the Faith Demands)

Section I. THE VOCATION OF MAN: LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Chap. 1: The Dignity of the Human Person (n.1700-1876)

- Art. 1: Man, the Image of God
- Art. 2: Our Call to Blessedness
- Art. 3: Human Freedom
- Art. 4: The Morality of Human Acts
- Art. 5: The Morality of Passions
- Art. 6: The Moral Conscience
- Art. 7: The Virtues
- Art. 8: Sin

Chap. 2: The Human Community (n.1877-1948)

- Art. 1: The Human Person and Society
- Art. 2: Participation in Social Life
- Art. 3: Social Justice

Chap. 3: God's Salvation: Law and Grace (n.1949-2051)

- Art. 1: Moral Law
- Art. 2: Grace and Justification
- Art. 3: The Church, Mother and Teacher

Section II. THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Chap. 1: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul with all your strength." (n.2083-2195)

- Art. 1: The First Commandment
- Art. 2: The Second Commandment
- Art. 3: The Third Commandment

Chap. 2: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (n.2196-649)

- Art. 4: The Fourth Commandment
- Art. 5: The Fifth Commandment
- Art. 6: The Sixth Commandment
- Art. 7: The Seventh Commandment
- Art. 8: The Eighth Commandment
- Art. 9: The Ninth Commandment
- Art. 10: The Tenth Commandment

Part IV. CHRISTIAN PRAYER (What the Faith Prays)

Section I. PRAYER IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

Chap. 1: The Revelation of Prayer (n.2566-2649)

- Art. 1: In the Old Testament
- Art. 2: In the Fullness of Time
- Art. 3: In the Time of the Church

Chap. 2: The Tradition of Prayer (n.2650-2696)

- Art. 1: At the Sources of Prayer
- Art. 2: The Journey of Prayer
- Art. 3: Guides to Prayer

Chap. 3: The Life of Prayer (n.2697-2758)

- Art. 1: Expressions of Prayer
- Art. 2: The Combat of Prayer
- Art. 3: The Prayer of Jesus' Hour

SECTION II. THE PRAYER OF THE LORD: "OUR FATHER"

The "Our Father" (n.2759-2865)

- Art. 1: The Summary of the Whole Gospel
- Art. 2: Our Father Who Art in Heaven
- Art. 3: The Seven Requests

IV. Some Salient Features of the Catechism

Nothing is perfect in this world. The new Catechisms could not be an exception; it contains in fact "limitations and inadequacies," as Cardinal Ratzinger himself acknowledged. Yet the relevance of the book is evident. We can say that, together with the recently promulgated Code of Canon Law, the Catechism of the Catholic Church is one of the most significant and lasting fruits of Vatican II. In many ways, actually, the new Catechism is the most comprehensive work undertaken in this second half of the 20th century, at the level of the Church's Magisterium, for it embraces all aspects of the official teaching, and presents them in a clear and well-integrated synthesis. The Catechism is definitely an outstanding achievement, especially if we consider the great development that has taken place in all theological disciplines in the recent decades. "It is not easy to offer a comprehensive and clear presentation of the Catholic Faith today, with so many contrasting orientations in almost all fields. It is not easy to keep the balance between the extreme tendencies of Fundamentalism and Liberalism; between a romantic/overspiritualized faith, and a faith that puts so much emphasis on the attainment of social justice to the point of overlooking the transcendent destiny of man... The Catechism of the Catholic Church has attempted to offer this "balanced view" of the Catholic faith, and — in the perception of many authorities who have commented on it — has fulfilled this challenging task quite remarkably" (Putzu, S., *Life Today*, September, 1993, p. 23).

The Catechism contains some features, easily noticeable by the reader. Some of them were pointed out by Cardinal Ratzinger (cf. *Boletín Eclesiástico*, LXIX, 756-757 (1993) 42-43); others listed somewhere else (e.g. Putzu, S., *a.c.*). The most salient features worth to be mentioned are the following:

a) First of all, it is a *catechism*, i.e. a text which contains the essential and basic truths of Catholic faith and morals, formulated in the most complete, clear and concise way possible. More precisely it belongs to that literary genre of the so-called *catechismus major*, i.e., that tool used above all by those who have responsibility for giving catechesis in the name of the Church: Bishops, parish priests, catechist, editors of catechisms.

b) The *structure* of the Catechism follows the classical pattern of a division into the three major parts of the Catholic faith: DOCTRINE, (The Profession of Faith), SACRAMENTS (The Celebration of the Christian Mystery), and MORAL LIFE ("Life in Christ"), with a fourth, "minor part": CHRISTIAN PRAYER, which is much shorter than the other three. So the *contents* of the Catechism faithfully reflect what the Church believes (Part I), celebrates (part II), lives (Part III) and prays (Part IV).

c) Classic also (and actually "Scholastic") is the subdivision of each Part into "Sections," "Chapters," "Articles" and "Paragraphs." The new generation may find some of these terms like "Articles" and "Paragraphs" quite surprising in the context of a catechism, but with a little effort they can be accepted as helpful for a systematic division of so vast a subject matter.

d) The *style* of the presentation is expository and smooth, as it consciously avoids the Question-and-Answer form even in the short "synthesis" that we find at the end of each "Article."

e) The *language* is, likewise, generally simple and clear, though here and there we do find "technical terms" with which ordinary people may not be familiar. But this is perhaps inevitable since every discipline has its own "jargon."

f) The *terminology* is mainly "traditional" in the sense that it purposely seems to avoid certain terms and concepts which have originated in contemporary theological trends and have become common in modern theological and catechetical works, but are not yet part of the terminology used by the Magisterium. Thus, nowhere do we find the idea of sacraments as "Encounters with Christ," or the concept of Christ as the "primordial sacrament," or the "morals of attitudes."

Modern terminology, however, is used when, giving attention to certain contemporary situations and problems, the Catechism brings forth the challenges of today: social justice, the struggle for "liberation" in all its forms, the tragedy of arms race, ecology, the greater involvement of the laity, the "new attitude" toward other religions, ecumenism, etc.

g) Scripture is duly emphasized. The bulk of the content of the official teaching of the Church is constantly presented as rooted in divine Revelation. According to my own counting, the Catechism contains around 2,600 biblical quotations and references.

h) The living Tradition of the Church is likewise emphasized. References to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church — both Eastern and Latin Fathers — and to the liturgies of the different rites are abundant and relevant. In this regard, I bring here again some statistics of such references: from Ecumenical Councils, 1,200; from Pontifical Documents, more than 400; from both Codes of Canon Law (Latin and Oriental), 200; Liturgical Sources, 111; Fathers of the Church and Ecclesiastical Authors, 500; etc.

i) At the end of each “Article” the Catechism contains concise statements which summarize in a simple and succinct form the more important topics. These short “summaries” are *the Church’s memory*: by repeating the biblical, liturgical, patristic and magisterial text they try to present the doctrinal core of the faith, thus marking the memorization of its contents easier and encouraging an assured, common language of faith.

j) The Catechism has also a set of comprehensive *indexes of citations* from the Bible, the Fathers and documents of the Magisterium. It is followed by an extensive *Analytical Index* which will surely be helpful in retrieving individual topics. A more detailed list of sub-entries in this “Index”, however, and a *Glossary* of the so-called “technical terms” would be desirable and hopefully included in future editions.

Conclusion

The foregoing pages are not meant to be an exhaustive presentation and even less a thorough evaluation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. They simply intend to offer a general introduction to it, dealing with the origin and purpose as well as with the content and main features of this important document of the Magisterium. A great deal of work is to be done, particularly here in the Philippines. The nature and relevance of the Catechism deserves a detailed presentation of its content and characteristics — a work which will

hopefully be done by competent people as soon as copies of the English version are made available in the country. The University of Santo Tomas is planning some activities on this regard.

It is known that the Catechism gives due attention to certain contemporary situations and problems. But this reference to present-day situations is obviously general and limited to "macrophenomena" and universal trends. The Catechism makes no attempt at a detailed "contextualization," and even less at inculturating its contents. This task is left to the national, regional and diocesan catechisms. In this sense the Catechism needs to be "complemented." The preparation of the "local catechisms," therefore, is a subsequent task which awaits the particular Churches.

Not in vain it has been repeated that this *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is set up as a "point of reference" for national and diocesan catechisms, which are particularly concerned with proclaiming the one Christian truth to the various categories of those receiving catechesis in their own psychological and pedagogical context, and in their own socio-cultural, professional and ecclesial surroundings.

It clearly appears, then, that the new Catechism is meant to be a tool of evangelization. The book makes a clear effort to speak to the people of today, to offer a "vision" that enables them to relate to Christ their own lives and the life of the Church. This is why we have the obligation to study the text and to present it to the People of God. But before we have to allow ourselves to be evangelized by the Catechism. Ours is the task to proclaim the Christian message; a proclamation which, in presenting Christ who is "always the same" in every time and place, reveals to each person in a unique and original way, the mystery of God the Father's Love.

Fully Human Married Love

Julio Peñacoba

All too often, the term *Humanae Vitae* evokes the idea of a stern position of the Church against contraception and any form of artificial family planning. Indeed, this landmark encyclical of Pope Paul VI — already referred to by its very author as a “sign of contradiction” — dedicated eight sections (nos. 10-17) out of a total of thirty-one to a discussion of responsible parenthood and the related topics of birth regulation. But to concentrate on these sections alone would be to miss the imminently positive message of the encyclical, contained in the remaining sections and most especially in its deep analysis of married love (nos. 8-9).

Not surprisingly, the former has been the focus of much attention all these years; but to ignore the encyclical’s doctrine on married love would be more than just to miss a part of its message. It is precisely this lack of understanding of the authenticity of a fully human marital love that is behind so much controversy on the regulation of birth. In fact, the encyclical introduces its profound, albeit brief, analysis of married love by immediately situating it in the greater context of the totality of human life:

“The question of birth, like every other question regarding human life, should be considered beyond partial perspectives (...) in the light of an integral vision of man and of his vocation, not only his

natural and earthly, but also his supernatural and eternal vocation" (HV, no. 7).

In this article, therefore, I intend to explore briefly the meaning of marital sexual relation within the context of a luminous vision of married love that is conscious of its roots in God. Many of the ideas are borrowed from an extensive reflection of Pope John Paul II contained in a series of talks given over a period of six years (1979-84), in which he laid out an anthropology both philosophically and biblically based, that has provided the foundation for his defense of the doctrine of *Humanae Vitae*. (These talks have been published by the Daughters of St. Paul in four volumes entitled *The Original Unity of Man and Woman: Catechesis on the Book of Genesis*, Boston, Mass., St. Paul Editions, 1983).

Human Sexuality: A Reflection of God's Love

God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them (Gn 1:27).

These words of God reveal to us a reality of deep beauty, hardly accessible to the human mind by itself. Their light makes us discover that human sexuality — and therefore the coming together of man and woman in their sexuality (that is, marriage) — forms part of the image of God that man is. In other words, when Holy Scripture reveals man's being the image of God in the same breath as his being created male and female, we can understand this to mean that such conjugability — that is man being created as man and woman — is in itself a reflection of the Godhead. How can this be, since God is neither male nor female? We find the answer in the fullness of God's Revelation of himself in the New Testament, when St. John affirms that "God is Love" (1 Jn 4:8).

Thus, it is easy to see that married love should be an image of God's Love. As John Paul II affirms, "there is a deep connection between the mystery of creation, as a gift springing from love, and that beatifying beginning of the existence of man as male and female, in the whole truth of their body and their sex, which is the pure and simple truth of communion between persons" (John Paul II, *op. cit.*). In this way, man imitates God in his giving of himself as a gift, and

his very sexuality is foundational to his ability to give himself as such. Under this light, we can look at the lovemaking of husband and wife as a palpable way — a sacrament in a loose sense — of making God's love present to each other.

To better appreciate the deeper meaning of sexual relations in marriage, we can reflect on the different levels of meaning that people may see in them. Some people consider sex just for reproduction: this is the level of plants, that we may call vegetal sexuality. Other people look at sex as a way to enjoy physical and emotional pleasures, albeit open to life: that is the level of animal sexuality. Finally, some others consider sexual relations as an expression of their commitment to love one another for life, to express their married love: this is authentic human sexuality in its fullness.

All these three levels that we observe in nature — vegetal, animal and human — are open to life; they are all natural. Unfortunately, human beings can operate in an infra-natural level of having sex while frustrating Nature's process towards transmission of life: this is contraceptive sex. It is a kind of anti-natural sex, non-existent in nature but introduced to it by man through that mysterious human capacity to violate Nature's Author, which constitutes sin.

A Positive Affirmation of Conjugal Love

The analysis of married love in *Humanae Vitae* begins with a brief reference to its roots in God: "Conjugal love reveals its true nature and nobility when it is considered in its supreme origin, God, who is Love" (*HV*, no. 8). It then sets forth three traits that make up the uniqueness of married love (*HV*, no. 9); these characteristics — total, faithfully exclusive and creative of life — also serve as conditions for evaluating how fully human the mutual love of a couple is. In a sense, married people may also use them as criteria to improve all their mutual dealings.

Now let us draw some implications of the above texts of the Holy Scripture and the Magisterium, by way of criteria for husbands and wives to live up to their human dignity in their sexual relations. Before going any further, let us first face the fact that to speak of man's dignity without considering his being an image of God is

nothing but empty words. In other words, man's greatness lies precisely in his being an image of God. Such an image, as we saw above, includes his sexuality, in that it is a reflection of the love of God. As *Humanae Vitae* joyfully affirms, "marriage is not, then, the effect of chance or the wise institution of the Creator to realize in mankind his design of love. By means of the reciprocal personal gift of self, proper and exclusive to them, husband and wife tend towards the communion of their beings in view of mutual personal perfection, to collaborate with God in the generation and education of new lives" (*HV*, no. 8).

Thus if man were to reject the Creator's design of human sexuality — for example through contraception —, he would be cutting himself off from the source of his dignity, and casting himself to a level way below even that of plants. Again, if man were only to seek human reproduction through biotechnology, but without expressing love in the marital embrace, he would be standing at the level of dignity of plants. Furthermore, if a couple's only motivation during marital intercourse were to get the most pleasure out of it (through sodomy and other such sophisticated techniques), they would be at the level of animals. Should a man impose sex against the reasonable desires of his wife, he would be at the level of the domineering male animal. Finally, if a woman were to refuse her husband, just to retaliate or out of sheer laziness, she would be acting at the level of a moody female animal.

On the contrary, a couple reach their proper level of human dignity when they engage in lovemaking, really making love — that is, expressing and building their married love, their mutual and total gift of self, their selfless love, as a faithful image of God's creative love which brought about man's existence. Physically, they will use the natural expressions of human affection — such as kisses, caresses and embraces — while seeking the union of their bodies, as an expression of the union of intentions and work behind their mutual project of building a family. Emotionally, they will try to express the desire of consoling each other, with the deep joys that come with the raising of a family. Their lovemaking will make their love grow stronger as they renew in their wills the determination to support one another in the difficulties and challenges that come to all persons in this life.

But there is still the best news. Husband and wife are called by God to a supernatural level, to reflect God's Love to one another. Their lovemaking can make the Love of God present to one another. Blessed Josemaria Escriva would even say that for him, the marriage bed of a Christian couple is like an altar. I guess that through that expression he wanted to express forcefully the sacredness of sex for married people. Indeed, is it not something sacred to reflect and participate in the creative love of God? Is it not something sacred to reflect and seek the reconciliation of the forgiving love of God? Is it not something sacred to be an instrument of the comforting love of God? When Christian spouses love each other, they re-enact the Love of Christ for all of us in his Church. This is what we learn from the Word of God, in the fullness of Revelation in the New Testament:

Husbands should love their wives just as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed himself for her, to make her holy (Ep 5:25).

Thus, even if spouses may be simply lost in each other in the fervor of their lovemaking, they can have their intimate relations — at least virtually — in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. And were they to be fully aware that God is there with them, they can raise their hearts in gratitude to him for the pleasures and joys that their Father God gives them, they can ask Him to help them grow in their love for Him, for one another and for their children.

Conclusion

In the light of the foregoing discussion, we can understand that *Humanae Vitae's* condemnation of contraception does not constitute a denial that impedes man's full enjoyment of his sexual powers. On the contrary, following the mind of Pope John Paul II, we should understand that true enjoyment of sexuality arises from a sexual life that is governed by love for one's spouse and by respect for God's intentions for human sexuality. In short, we should see sexuality as a gift that to be used properly must be used as the Giver intended — that is, as a means by which spouses express their exclusive and committed love for one another.

A Biomedical Perspective of “*Humanae Vitae*”

Vicente J.A. Rosales, M.D.

It is interesting, twenty-five years after *Humanae Vitae* was lissued by Paul VI, to recall the excitement that attended its appearance. The build up was made bigger by speculation about what the Papal Commission of experts and Christian couples formed by John XXIII to study the issues, would say.

Both jubilation and disappointment met the document when it became clear the encyclical did not significantly alter the position of the Church regarding the regulation of births. In anticipation, the issue was hotly debated. On the one hand, there were those who felt that changes in the situation of modern man and the advances of science, and especially the development of a method of avoiding pregnancy that, in the form of a pill, seemed much detached both in time and in anatomy, from the generative organs, would lead to a new stance. And on the other hand, there were those who could not see how the Church could change its view of contraception to allow the pill while forbidding the condom, that old, and not totally reliable prophylactic cum contraceptive that continues to make headlines today. I remember how, in a session I shared with a theologian, the question was raised, and both the theologian and I were equally confident in our conflicting affirmations. He said that, as a theologian, he knew the Church would change its stand. And I said that, as a biologist, I knew that the Church would not, indeed, could not, do so. The disappointment, nay, disillusionment, among those who felt

strongly that change was inevitable, and particularly for those who expressed this anticipation publicly, was severely traumatic. Though many eventually reconciled themselves to the reaffirmation by the Pope of previously pronounced doctrine, some acknowledging publicly the recognition that was in it, after all, wisdom, papal if not divine, a few found reconciliation unbearable, and many years later, would declare it a waste of their time to discuss the encyclical again, there being, in their view, nothing more to be said. No doubt, the Lord, in his boundless understanding, will recognize this for the human foible that it is.

After twenty-five years of living with the pronouncements contained in the encyclical and striving to uphold its ethical standards, it may be useful to review the thoughts contained in *Humanae Vitae*. This is what I will attempt to do. This presentation will be, as it were, a series of reflections, necessarily partly personal, of one physician, faithful and devoted to the Church and her teaching, and at the same time, faithful and devoted to the tenets of his profession, confident that whatever conflict there may seem to be between these two alliances must be only apparent, and that it is my mission and obligation to seek its reconciliation.

The technology of and ethical concern over the regulation of births go back many centuries. They have become a special focus of attention, however, because of considerations of population. The drop in death rates, brought about by advances in science, has produced a rate of growth unprecedented in human history. This change in death rates and later in birth rates, occurred over a span of two centuries or so in the Western world and provoked no great controversy at the time, even if it might be noted, the means used to avoid births were not always praiseworthy. In the third world, the change came about rather precipitously, and only in death rate but not in birth rates. This naturally spawned problem which the encyclical acknowledges: "The changes which have taken place (in the world) are in fact noteworthy and of varied kinds. In the first place, there is the rapid demographic development... Moreover, working and lodging conditions as well as increased exigencies both in the economic field and in that of education, often make the proper education of an elevated number of children difficult today" (*HV*, sec. 2).

For someone who, almost daily, sees the rapidly increasing numbers of the sick, the malnourished, the jobless, the destitute and unsheltered, of the unschooled and uneducated, it is distressing to hear, every time the great debate on population surfaces, as it does from time to time, often at the instigation of media hungry for material to pass off as news, that there is no population problem, but rather only a maldistribution of wealth and resources, and an injustice in so few having so much, and so many having so little. The sad note is that this is the way it is, and no amount of bemoaning the situation will rectify it. Meanwhile, the body politic suffers the illness of deprivation and inadequacy, as a human body suffers from a physical ailment. It is senseless to tell a suffering patient to be unconcerned with the way he feels, there is only an illness that should not really be there, and do nothing beyond that.

It is not merely a question of numbers that results in problems, it is also a matter of how rapidly change is brought about. From the sixteen or seventeen million Filipinos of the time when I was in high school, to the over sixty million calculated today, is a major leap. It is difficult to adjust and to plan for such a mass increase, especially keeping in mind that it was originally a society of vacuum-tube radios, simple jobs, as many horse-driven calesas as jitneys, that has now become transformed into one of television, instant communication, electronics, computers and employment opportunities that did not exist except in dreams once upon a time. And bringing children up in this modern world and giving them an education is, in the words of the encyclical, "difficult today." Indeed, some would attribute most of the difficulties of our present world to the increase in numbers. That would be as simplistic a view as to deny that numbers pose any difficulties.

It is not difficult to understand the insistence the Church places on the individual and the family as the basis of society, and the objections it voices when the state concerns itself with population. Population should not take precedence over the individual and the family, even if the ultimate beneficiary of state action is meant to be the individual. However, reaction to the term "population" is much like a severe allergic response, with severe itching, light-headedness, confusion and shock. Yet there would seem to me to be legitimate reason for the state to concern itself with population, with numbers.

If it must govern for the individuals that make up the body politic, it must have some understanding of populations and how they behave and affect individuals. It must be able to make plans for increases of food production, of employment opportunities, of school rooms and teachers, of playgrounds and means of transportation. A government that does not concern itself with populations would be derelict in its duties, as guilty of neglect as one that does not protect the individual citizens of society.

There is fault of course, in identifying as the only or the major remedy for the problem of numbers, control of human reproduction. And this error is compounded by thinking that the solution lies principally in interference with the reproductive process. Governments have indeed fallen into this trap, and many continue to be lost within it. Restriction of procreation by compulsory sterilization and by penalties for exceeding the number the government prescribes are policies still imposed by some states.

But avoidance of procreation by means ethically legitimate, and for reasons recognized as sufficient causes, is acknowledged by the Church, which does indeed advocate responsible parenthood, by which it means just that: a considered exercise of procreative functions by husband and wife. *Humanae Vitae* says: "In relation to the biological processes, responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of their functions; in relation to the tendencies or passion, the necessary dominion which reason and will must exercise over them; in relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions .. exercised, either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth." (*HV*, sec 10).

Regrettably, this is not the kind of responsible parenthood perceived by simple people," advocated by individuals identified with the Church and by institutions and organizations affiliated with it. Instead, the impression is that responsible parenthood consists only of avoidance of contraceptive and other disallowed practices of conception control, and the use of the natural rhythms of the body when pregnancy is to be avoided. If emphasis is given, it tends to be to the need to justify the use of the natural rhythms to avoid

pregnancy. Indeed, emphasis is laid on the generosity of heart that leads couples to have numerous children, with little added in regard to the difficulties spoken of in *Humanae Vitae*.

It is important to recognize, in the efforts related to the Church, the various aspects of that "responsible parenthood so clearly enumerated by *Humanae Vitae*, so that those who avail themselves of these auxiliaries extended by Church related groups might recognize filial obedience to the prescriptions of the encyclical. Do we, for instance, exert enough efforts, the number of couples in need of these services considered, to teach them so that they might have "the knowledge and respect of their (biologic) functions?" Do we help them recognize their "tendencies and passions" and to develop "the necessary dominion which reason and will must exercise over them?" And do we train and assist the couple so that "in relation to physical, economic, psychological and social conditions" they might exercise their procreative capacities, "either by the deliberate and generous decision to raise a numerous family, or by the decision, made for grave motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being, or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth."

We should recall that in the pastoral directives of *Humanae Vitae*, in a portion labeled with the title of John XXIII's *Mater et Magistra*, because it so adequately characterizes the Church, Paul VI admonishes us: "Our words would not be an adequate expression of the thoughts and solicitude of the Church, Mother and Teacher of all people, if, having recalled man to the observance and respect of the divine law regarding matrimony, We did not strengthen them in the path of honest regulation of birth, even amid the difficult conditions which today afflict families and peoples. The Church in fact cannot have a different conduct towards men than that of the Redeemer: she knows their weaknesses, has compassion on the crowd, receives sinners..." (*HV*, Sec. 19).

The procreation of new life, envisioned by the encyclical, is a beautiful participation with the Creator. In reality, while the avoidance of a pregnancy must usually be deliberately planned and conscious, the production of one is a result of natural processes, with no second thought necessary to achieve it. It is pregnancy by chance, avoidance of pregnancy by choice. In its fully human exercise, it

should be a pregnancy or the avoidance of same always by choice and freely consented to, and never by mere chance. I believe this thought is included in *Humanae Vitae*, in the listing of the characteristic marks and demands of conjugal love" when it states that "it is first of all fully human, that is to say, of the senses and of the spirit at the same time ... not a simple transport of instinct and sentiment, but also, and principally, an act of the free will" (HV, Sec.9).

The practice of natural family planning, as the natural rhythms might properly be referred to, is no simple matter. It requires an educative process and a practice that can make of it an approach that the couple can dependably rely upon. The encyclical recognizes this when it emphasizes: "The honest practice of regulation of birth demands first of all that husband and wife acquire and possess solid convictions concerning the true values of life and of the family, and that they tend towards securing perfect self mastery." A natural family planning program does not, like a mushroom, bloom unattended in the night. Nor does the capacity to practice natural family planning, particularly of the sexual behavior modification involved, come by merely wishing it. It must be carefully planned, encouraged, nurtured and cared for to full development. It is only now that reasonably extensive NFP activities are being undertaken. But it took years of what seems to have been indifference to the brave pioneers before the seeds germinated.

Perhaps, in all fairness, we should acknowledge the hesitancy of the medical profession to involve itself in natural family planning programs. Few physicians took the trouble to study the method, and fewer still those who took the trouble to teach it — or should I transpose this statement from the past tense to the present tense? Organizations of Catholic physicians pay it lip service but most members would be at a loss as what to do if their very lives depended on their practicing natural family planning. It might be noted that NFP is something psychologically difficult for the physician to accept and that he is far from being the ideal teacher of the method. But this is hardly an excuse for not having looked into it more intensely and done something about it, especially since the encyclical states: "It is particularly desirable that ... medical science succeed in providing a sufficiently secure basis for a regulation of birth, founded on the observance of natural rhythms." (HV, Sec. 24). We should remember

this neglect when next we have occasion to examine our consciences. It has always bothered me that discussions of *Humanae Vitae* and the issues it raises have tended to be adversarial and polarized. This, naturally, may be a reflection of my own background in the medical sciences. I have little patience with technicalities and outright advocacy and must have been a disappointment to my father who wanted me to be a lawyer. I realized that if a man is sick, he is sick no matter if we could argue him well, and if he is dead all the more so. The spirit of truth is, in science, that of a search, of putting pieces together to discover a whole, not a debate to see who can argue best. And I think this attitude is of particular importance in these issues because there is so much to be done, and so little time to waste in fruitless controversy. The twenty-five years since *Humanae Vitae* was issued were only an introduction. There is so much more that awaits the future. But in projecting our perceptions of *Humanae Vitae*, we may have tended to emphasize those portions that most distinguish the Catholic position from that of the non-Catholic, and in that process, we may have missed or overlooked reading the fine print.

I pray that my efforts have not extended the darkness, but rather that they have helped a little to light the way.

Basic Moral Teaching for Christian Life

Fausto Gomez, O.P.

On October 5, 1993, *Veritatis Splendor* ("The Splendor of Truth"), the encyclical of Pope John Paul II *On Certain Fundamental Questions of the Church's Moral Teaching* was presented to the People of God and to the world.

Hotly discussed even before its official publication, *Veritatis Splendor* (VS) will surely be examined from all angles, in the months and years to come. I have just finished reading VS. Indeed, we have in our hands a most significant encyclical, the first from the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church regarding basic moral issues. On this occasion, I wish to answer the following question: *What are the main teachings of "The Splendor of Truth"?*

The Purpose of the Encyclical

The teaching (*Magisterium*) of the Church comprises the truths of faith and also the moral truths. Hence, "the unity of the Church is damaged not only by Christians who reject or distort the truths of faith but also by those who disregard the moral obligations to which they are called by the Gospel" (VS, 26).

The radical moral questions which challenge every human being are these: *What must I do? How do I distinguish good from evil?* "The most dangerous crisis which can afflict man (is) the confusion

between good and evil, which makes it impossible to build up and to preserve the moral order of individuals and communities" (VS, 93).

Pope John Paul II announced his decision to write an encyclical on basic moral questions on August 1, 1987. Its preparation has taken six long years (it was signed on August 6, 1993), partly by reason of its complexity and depth, and partly because the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* had to be published (December 1992) before the papal document on morals. While the new Catechism (unfortunately, not yet available in English) contains "a complete and systematic exposition of Christian moral teaching" (15), the encyclical focuses on some radical moral issues — those wrongly or imperfectly addressed by liberal moral theologians and ethicists.

These questions are concerned with the relationship between freedom and natural law, conscience and truth, commandments and subjective circumstances, faith and morality, theological pluralism and communion in the Church.

The Content of the Encyclical

Directly addressed to the Bishops of the Church, and indirectly to the whole People of God and to men and women of good will, VS is divided into three parts: the first deals with the moral teaching in the Sacred Scriptures; the second, with the fundamentals of the moral teaching; and the third, with the moral teaching in the new evangelization of the Church.

VS, therefore, presents the principles of the moral teaching based on Sacred Scriptures and the Living Apostolic Tradition, and evaluates current ethical and moral-theological dissent (cf. VS, 5). The main sources used by John Paul II to argue his statements are the Bible, the Fathers of the Church — especially St. Augustine — classical theologians — most of all St. Thomas Aquinas —, the documents of the Magisterium of the Church, including the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and above all, the Second Vatican Council's documents, which, with the Sacred Scriptures, permeate every page of the 183-page encyclical on fundamental moral theology.

Chapter One is basically biblical: a beautiful meditative explana-

tion of the dialogue between Jesus and the rich young man of the Gospel. The initial question of the young man is the title of the chapter: "Teacher, what good must I do...?" (Mt 19:16). Its subtitle: *Christ and the answer to the question about morality*. In that question, the rich young man senses the connection between moral goodness and human destiny: "Teacher, what must I do to possess eternal life?" To ask about the good, is to ask about the meaning of life, its ultimate end, and therefore, about perfect happiness and God: "It is precisely on the path of the moral life that the way of salvation is open to all" (3).

What good must I do, then? Keep the commandments! (Mt 19:17). To live a good moral life means to practice the commandments, expressions of the order of nature (of natural law), the "ten words" of the two tablets of the law inseparably united — the first tablet on the love of God, and the second on the love of neighbor. To obey the commandments is to begin the journey of freedom to perfection — to love. The journey continues with the Beatitudes of Jesus. These are basic attitudes and dispositions inviting to discipleship and communion of life with Christ: "Following Christ is the essential and primordial foundation of Christian morality" (19). Christ is followed in the Church along the path of love of God and love of neighbor, the "New Commandment." The journey to happiness, to God is not easy. It is possible with the grace of the Holy Spirit — grace that makes all things possible, including a faithful married life and the practice of celibacy; possible, with divine grace (God's gift) and free cooperation (human task).

Through the journey of life to perfection, the Church interprets the moral prescriptions for the followers of Christ. This interpretation, however, ought to follow the great Tradition of the Church as witnessed by its Fathers and Saints, the Church's liturgy and the Magisterium (cf. 27).

Ethical Theories and Fundamental Moral Questions

Chapter Two is entitled thus: "Do not be conformed to this world" (Rm 12:2). Its sub-head: *The Church and the discernment of certain tendencies in present-day moral theology*. It is truly the central chapter: the longest (81 pages) and the deepest and most complex —

the heart of the matter! Written by one who was and is a great professor, John Paul II.

After praising the positive work done by moral theologians towards the renewal of moral theology and encouraging them to continue in this line, John Paul II zeroes in on their negative work, that is, interpretations of Christian morality which are inconsistent with "sound teaching" (cf. 29), particularly regarding the issues of human freedom and law (I), conscience and truth (II), fundamental option and concrete moral acts (III-IV).

Freedom belongs to the essence and dignity of the human being. It is an outstanding manifestation of God's image in the human person; a condition of human moral life; in fact, "there can be no morality without freedom" (34). The human person, as well as the human community, is rightfully autonomous; and there is a genuine autonomy of earthly realities. However, human freedom, autonomy, cannot be absolute: the human person is a creature and, therefore, dependent on the Creator. Thus, "human freedom finds its authentic and complete fulfillment precisely in the acceptance of God's law" (35), that is, of natural law, an expression of eternal law.

The human person is the unity of body and soul. Those theologians who accuse the teaching of the Church of physicalism or biologism and affirm that, for instance, abortion, or autoeroticism, or lying, may be proportionately good, separate the biological and spiritual dimensions of the nature of the person, and do not give to the body its place in questions of *natural law*: "It is in the unity of body and soul that the person is the subject of his own moral acts" (48). Thus, the natural law, natural moral law, the law of being human, does not permit a separation between freedom and nature (cf. 50), and is universal (transcending cultures) and immutable (obliging always - cf. 51).

The intimate relationship between freedom and law is lived out in man's moral conscience (cf. 54). Let me add that, as the new Catechism says, "the human person has the right to act according to his/her conscience and in freedom" (no. 1782; cf. DH, 3). Humans, then, have the duty to respect the journey of conscience of others (cf. VS, 31). *Conscience* is a guide and a witness of moral life. It obliges.

It is a practical moral judgment which applies to a concrete situation the rational conviction that one must love and do good and avoid evil (this is the first principle of natural law). (Cf. 59). Conscience may err; in reality, the possibility of erroneous judgment "is always present" (62). The dignity of conscience is compromised when it is culpably erroneous (63).

Conscience is linked to truth and virtue. Freedom of conscience "is never freedom 'from' the truth, but always and only freedom 'in' the truth" (64). The formation of conscience is of vital importance for all; it is a process of continuing conversion to what is true and to what is good (cf. 64).

Another controversial point in fundamental moral theology today is the meaning of *fundamental option*, which is generally accepted, and the relationship between fundamental choice and concrete moral acts. In VS, John Paul II accepts the notion of fundamental choice or option as a radical orientation of life, symbolized by the biblical parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great value (cf. nos. 66-68). But the Pope, with many theologians, does not accept the separation of the fundamental option from concrete deliberate actual choices. While some theologians seem to affirm that mortal sin can only be committed in a bad fundamental option, and, therefore, concrete evil acts do not remove the basic option of faith, the Pope—following the Sacred Scriptures and Tradition—reaffirms that particular evil acts may constitute mortal sin (if the three classical conditions are present, namely, "grave matter," "full awareness," and "deliberate consent") and, consequently, "the fundamental orientation can be radically changed by particular acts (70).

John Paul II writes: "The relationship between man's freedom and God's law, lived in the moral conscience, is manifested and realized in human acts" (71). Through *good moral acts*, that is, acts which are in conformity with man's true good, the human being journeys towards perfection, towards happiness — towards God (cf. 72).

As taught by classical theology, the *sources of morality* are the object, the circumstances and the end. Some currents in contemporary

moral theology — proportionalism, consequentialism, relativism — unduly deemphasize the primacy of the object, and, therefore, of objective morality. Following tradition, the Pope underlines the primary and essential place of the object as a determinant of morality. Against the notion of “ontic” goods or “pre-moral objects,” the Holy Father repeats that morally objective evil cannot be made good by a good intention or other circumstances. This is the crux of the matter: there are moral absolutes; there are intrinsically good acts (like loving God and loving one’s parents); there are, likewise, intrinsically evil acts (like abortion and adultery); moreover, the negative precepts or commandments (those which prohibit behavior and actions incompatible with the human dignity of every person — 99) oblige always and without exception (cf. *Mt* 19:18-19). *Love or the commandments?* “Love of God and love of neighbor cannot be separated from the observance of the commandments of the Covenant renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit” (76).

Faith, Morality and the Social Order

Chapter Three is headed by the biblical quotation “Lest the Cross of Christ be emptied of its power” (*1 Co* 1:17) and subtitled *Moral good for the life of the Church and of the world*. In this section, the fundamental moral questions are considered from the pastoral perspective (in relation to the mission of the Church). It is centered on the relationship between freedom and truth, faith and morality, morality and the social order, moral teaching and theological dissent.

The human person is obligated by his nature — by reason and freedom — to seek the truth and adhere to it. Furthermore, “each individual has the right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth” (34). The freedom of the human person is rooted “in the truth about man.” In religious perspective, Christ reveals that the *truth* is the condition of authentic freedom: “The truth will set you free” (*Jn* 8:32). Moreover, our freedom, like our nature, is weak, “always threatened by slavery” (66). Therefore, “freedom itself needs to be set free” (86).

Freedom should be set free from individualism (32). It is ordered to communion, to love, to the gift of self: “Contemplation of Jesus Crucified is thus the highroad which the Church must tread every

day if she wishes to understand the full meaning of freedom: the gift of self in service to God and one's brethren" (87).

The separation of freedom from truth is a consequence of the dichotomy between *faith and morals*. This is one of the great pastoral concerns of the Church today. Hence, the need to witness faith in its moral content, that is, in the observance of the commandments (cf. 89), of the New Commandment of love. Following the martyrs, the saints, the men and women of good will from East and West, the Christians are asked by their faith to live good moral lives (cf. 94). Good moral social lives!

Facing social and economical injustice, and political corruption in the world, the Church reiterates the need for a radical personal and social renewal capable of ensuring justice, solidarity, honesty and openness, recalls the power of her *social doctrine*, and invites all to the practice of the commandments: "The commandments of the second tablet in particular constitute the indispensable rules of social life" (97).

To help solve *economic* problems, John Paul II demands respect for the human person and his/her dignity, manifested through the practice of the virtues of temperance, justice and solidarity. To achieve authentic *political* development, the Holy Father underlines the need of truthfulness between those governing and the governed, openness in public administration, impartiality in the service of the body politic, respect for the rights of political adversaries, the just and honest use of public funds.

Regarding *political* systems, John Paul II says that after the fall of historical socialism, there is "the risk of alliance between democracy and ethical relativism, which would remove any sure moral reference point from political and social life, and on a deeper level make the acknowledgement of truth impossible." He adds: "As history demonstrates, democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism" (101).

The last two sections of chapter three will surely become points of wide debate. These two points refer to theological dissent and the Church's measures to face it properly. The theologians, in particular,

are asked by the Pope to give “a loyal assent, both internal and external, to the Magisterium’s teaching in the areas of both dogma and morality” (110).

How about theological pluralism and dissent? Extreme dissent is forcefully condemned: “Dissent, in the form of carefully orchestrated protests and polemics carried on in the media, is opposed to ecclesial communion and to a correct understanding of the hierarchical constitution of the People of God. Opposition to the teaching of the Church’s Pastors cannot be seen as a legitimate expression either of Christian freedom or of the diversity of the Spirit’s gifts.” *Main reason against public theological dissent*: “The right of the faithful to receive Catholic doctrine in its purity and integrity must always be respected” (113).

For their part, the Bishops are asked by the Pope to be vigilant that the Word of God is faithfully taught. If it is not faithfully taught in universities, seminaries, faculties of theology, and other institutions named “Catholic,” the appropriate measures must be taken, including — in cases of serious failure — taking away the title “Catholic” from them (cf. 114-116).

The Bishops, our Pastors, are helped in their pastoral task by theologians. “Even so,” John Paul II says, “theological opinions constitute neither the rule nor the norm of our teaching. Its authority is derived, by the assistance of the Holy Spirit and in communion *cum Petro et sub Petro*, from our fidelity to the Catholic faith which comes from the apostles” (116).

John Paul II ends his encyclical on fundamental moral questions with a beautiful prayerful hymn to Our Lady, the Mother of Jesus, Mother of Mercy, “the radiant sign and inviting model” of the good moral life (120).

Veritatis Splendor, “Contra Contraception”?

Some years ago, an outstanding professor of social ethics gave me this advice: “When an encyclical is published, read first the encyclical; afterwards, its commentaries.” A sound counsel which I have not been able to follow this time — unfortunately! Sound? Yes!

You read different commentaries to the same document, but it appears that the commentators are talking of different documents.

Like many others, I have been eagerly awaiting for the issuance of this encyclical. And, like most of those others — I am sure —, I have read all the reports and commentaries that came my way: reports and commentaries on the imagined or “leaked out” text of *The Splendor of Truth*. The first article I read came out in a British weekly and expressed the hope that the encyclical would not declare infallible the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* by Paul VI on birth control. *Infallible?* Of course not: VS is an important document of the ordinary papal Magisterium, but it does not have the quality of “infallible.”

Another write-up before the publication of the encyclical said that John Paul II would restate the ban on contraception and his opposition to abortion. Still another reported that the Pope would reassert his opposition to abortion, divorce, contraception, homosexual relations and premarital sex. Certainly, the Pope is against all these (cf. VS 47); but also against business fraud, unjust wages, work badly done, tax fraud, excessive expenses, waste (100); and against slavery, arbitrary imprisonment, treating laborers as instruments of profit, theft, prostitution (80; GS, 27).

Main thrust and thread of the encyclical? The Pope proves convincingly that Catholic Tradition has defended unequivocally an objective moral order and, therefore, the existence of intrinsically evil and good acts, that is evil or good intrinsically, by their very nature. Following tradition, he adds that the evil of intrinsically evil acts may be diminished by a good intention and other circumstances, but not removed (81). Moreover, he restates the doctrine on the lesser evil — found in Catholic tradition, too — by quoting Paul VI: “It is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good” (80). But, he adds, it is never lawful to do evil that good may come of it (cf. *Rm* 3:8).

The Church teaches that *moral norms* “protect the dignity of every man, particularly when prohibiting intrinsically evil acts (against teleological, consequentialist and proportionalist ethical theories — cf. 90). For this teaching, some accuse the Church of “intolerable intransigence” and, therefore, of clear inconsistency:

How can the Church be so demanding and, at the same time, a mother to her children? The Pope answers: "The Church's motherhood can never be separated from her teaching mission." Why? "Genuine understanding and compassion must mean love for the person, for his true good, for his authentic freedom" (95). The Church presents its teaching clearly and forcefully, but with due respect, and patient and trusting love. In this way, she serves man's true freedom — man's and society's: "These norms in fact represent the unshakable foundation and solid guarantee of a just and peaceful human coexistence, and hence of genuine democracy, which can come into being and develop on the basis of the equality of all its members, who possess common rights and duties. When it is a matter of the moral norms prohibiting intrinsic evil, there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone." "Before the demands of morality we are all absolutely equal" (96).

Following Jesus Christ, the Church is compassionate and merciful. Indeed, it is not easy to fulfill the commandments: man is weak, a sinner, deeply divided within himself and constantly tempted to say no to God. Nevertheless, with Christ's grace, his Spirit, the Church's sacraments, prayer, man can — and should try to — be morally good. One does not help man, quite the contrary, by watering down morality and moral norms: man's weakness cannot be a valid reason to compromise or falsify the standards of good and evil to adapt to particular circumstances. This is an echo of the pharisaic attitude, "which would seek to eliminate awareness of one's own limits and one's own sin." Today "this attitude is expressed particularly in the attempt to adapt the moral norm to one's own capacities and personal interests, and even in the rejection of the very idea of a norm" (105). The Pope proclaims courageously: "No absolution offered by beguiling doctrines, even in the areas of philosophy and theology, can make man truly happy: only the Cross and the glory of the Risen Christ can grant peace to his conscience and salvation to his life" (12). Morality, good and evil, does not depend, therefore, on statistical studies of human behavior (cf. 46), or on the rule of the majority of persons. It is rooted in God, the unshakable foundation of morality (99); manifested in natural law, expression of human dignity and rights (51) and renewed by the New Law of grace, freedom and love.

After having read the encyclical, a reporter from an international weekly from the United States headlined his comments thus: "*Contra*

Conception: Back to the Battlements." Did the reporter really read *Veritatis Splendor*? *Contra Conception*? Yes, of course! But not only against contraception. And not even mainly against it.

VS is not a moral analysis of concrete problems like contraception or euthanasia or slavery. It is a major biblical, philosophical-theological and pastoral study of fundamental moral issues centered on the relationship between freedom and truth, and faith and morality. The encyclical develops the problems by focusing on the meaning and the end of life (love, happiness, God), and the means to reach that ultimate end: keeping the commandments; acquiring the Beatitudes; practicing the new commandment of love of God and neighbor; witnessing truth, freedom, law, solidarity; being faithful to a true and correct conscience; carrying the Cross after Christ, and being an obedient and free member of his Church. *Hard journey to life?* By our own powers not only hard, but impossible! With God's grace, the keeping of the positive and negative commandments is not a utopian ideal, but a possible reality: "God does not command the impossible, but in commanding he admonishes you to do what you can and to pray for what you cannot, and he gives his aid to enable you" (St. Augustine; VS, 102).

Following Christ, the Splendor of the Truth

"*Veritatis Splendor*" is out! A significant document of the Ordinary Magisterium of the Church. An outstanding encyclical by our Shepherd John Paul II. Although explicitly addressed to the Bishops only (and to moral theologians), it is, in fact, directed to all Catholics, to the People of God. Let us not be contented with summaries or commentaries; certainly, not with this brief and personal summary. Let us read it in full!

The Church is our Mother and Teacher. As Vatican II teaches, the Christians have to respect the authority of the Church and give sincere assent to its teaching (cf. GS, 25). We have to obey her: "He who listens to you, listens to me" (Lk 10:16). In their teaching, our Pastors have to be faithful to Sacred Scriptures and Tradition (VS, 116), and to the signs of the times (GS, 4). Above all, we all — pastors, priests, religious and lay faithful — have to try to live good

moral lives. It is the only way to happiness, to perfection, to God — to heaven.

What good must I do to possess eternal life? “In his journey towards God, the One who ‘alone is good’, the human person must freely do good and avoid evil” (VS, 42). To be able to do good and fight evil, we must know what is good and what is evil, for only the truth will make us free! VS warns us against current errors and dangers regarding some basic moral problems. More than that, VS invites us to respect one another (34), and to love one another, and to be happy; in a word, to follow Christ. As John Paul II tells his Brothers in the Episcopate, and, in a a sense, all his brothers and sisters in Christ:

We must not be content merely to warn the faithful about the errors and dangers of certain ethical theories. We must first of all show the inviting splendor of that truth which is Jesus Christ himself. In him, who is the Truth (cf. *Jn* 14:6), man can understand fully and live perfectly, through his good actions, his vocation to freedom in obedience to the divine law summarized in the commandment of love of God and neighbor. And this is what takes place through the gift of the Holy Spirit, the spirit of truth, of freedom and of love (VS, 83).

Cases and Inquiries

PARISH FOR THE CELEBRATION OF MARRIAGE

A member of the Legion of Mary has informed me that some of my parishioners have contracted marriage in a parish where they are unknown. I requested my assistant priest to verify whether it is really true or not. The information he has gathered confirms what the Legionary told me. Has there been any recent change of the law regarding the parish where marriage should be celebrated? The persons concerned were not only resident but baptized in this parish. Please point out the implications of not following the existing laws.

A Parish Priest

To the question of our consultant parish priest whether there has been lately any change concerning the parish where marriage should be celebrated, the answer is No. Canon 1115 reads as follows: "Marriages are to be celebrated in the parish in which either of the contracting parties has a domicile or a quasi-domicile or a month's residence... With the permission of the proper Ordinary or the proper parish priest, marriages may be celebrated elsewhere."

Hence, if there is no permission of the proper Ordinary or of the proper parish priest, marriage is to be celebrated in the parish where either of the contracting parties has a domicile or a quasi-domicile or

a month's residence. Note however that there are three different parishes, where marriage may be celebrated without the permission of the proper Ordinary of the proper parish priest. The three parishes are equally proper for the marriage celebration. The old law giving preference to the parish of the bride has been abolished.

During the preparation of the new Codex it was proposed that the contracting parties should be given the right to choose some other parish for the celebration of marriage than the three mentioned in canon 1115. The proposal was rejected because "What should be sustained canon 1115 establishes in view to the previous interview to be conducted for both parties. The celebration of marriage should take place within the proper parish community where the parties are well known" (Communications, 10 [1978], 91).

With regard to this matter the Episcopal Conference of the Philippines, following the norm of canon 1067, issued in 1985 the following directives to be observed in the whole Archipelago: "No parish priest will solemnize the marriage of persons who do not belong to his parish by reason of domicile, cues-domicile or residence of at least on month, without the written permission of the local Ordinary or the parish priest, as provided in cannon 1115". It is really surprising that our consultant has not been officially notified or informed as he is the proper parish priest of both the contracting parties.

The same Episcopal Conference has expressly established: "If the parties choose for the wedding a parish other than their own, the parish priest who has received permission from the local Ordinary or from the proper parish priest, may not assist at the marriage until he receives the results of the interview and of the banns conducted by the priest concerned, as provided in canons 1070 and 1114." Canon 1070 states: "If someone other than the parish priest whose function it is to assist at the marriage has made the investigation, he is by an authentic document to inform that parish priest of the outcome of the inquiries as soon as possible." And with regards to the banns to be published, the local Hierarchy has issued also 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 conducting the investigation."

Considering the foregoing directives of the Episcopal Conference concerning the pre-nuptial interview of the contracting parties, we can raise the following questions:

1. Was, in our case, the previous investigation of the contracting parties conducted in the parish where they were not known? How could the purpose of conducting the pre-nuptial interview (to discover possible impediments, to find out if the parties are free and if they are sufficiently instructed), in that case be achieved?

2. Were the banns announced publicly according to the law? Why was not the proper parish priest requested to announce the marriage to the congregation of the faithful who know the contracting parties well?

3. Why was not a notification of the celebration of marriage sent to the proper parish priest in order for him to make the necessary annotation in the book of baptisms, as required by the Church's law? If the basic law contained in the Church's Codex and the directives given by the local Hierarchy are not fulfilled, it is to be feared that anomalies of the type published in the press do really happened. It is true that the Episcopal Conference has issued the following sanction against the transgressors of the Church's laws on this matter: "The parish priest, who, without permission, has illicitly solemnized a wedding, is not entitled to the stole fees, which should be remitted to the diocesan curia." If the parish priest concerned does not in conscience respect and follow the ecclesiastical norms ordained to safeguard and protect the reverence due to the holy sacrament of marriage the sanction alone is not enough to correct this kind of anomalies.

ABSOLUTION OF EXCOMMUNICATION LATAE SENTENTIAE NOT YET DECLARED

Fred and Sylvia, a married couple, have three children, the number they had planned according to their means to bring them up properly. By error in computing the days of her safe period, Sylvia became pregnant again. Having discussed the problem posed for them by this fact, they decided to resort to abortion, which they did. Considering themselves as practical Catholics, they continued hearing

Mass on Sundays and other days of obligation without taking Holy Communion. They knew they were excommunicated by the Church Law. They approached a priest seeking his advise. He suggested that they could attend a big gathering of faithful taking place next Sunday where general absolution would be imparted, and after receiving general absolution they should confess their sin to any confessor who would absolve them in the usual way.

May I ask whether such advise given by the priest was correct? Does a priest imparting general absolution enjoy the faculty to absolve penitents from the censure of excommunication attached to the commission of abortion?

One of your students

The answer to the first question is: the priest's advise to the couple was not correct. The answer to the second question is: a priest who imparts general absolution does not enjoy the faculty of absolving from the excommunication incurred by the couple in our case.

1. *The priest's advise to the couple was not correct.* The commission of abortion is penalized by the Church law with excommunication *latae sententiae*. This excommunication is not reserved to the Holy See. Canon 1398 reads as follows: "A person who successfully procures an abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication". Being a *latae sententiae* penalty the excommunication was automatically incurred the moment abortion took place. In the case presented to us the excommunication *latae sententiae* incurred by Fred and Sylvia *had not been declared*.

The circumstance that the excommunication incurred by Fred and Sylvia *is not reserved to the Holy See* and that such excommunication *had not been declared* are worth being noted. The fact that the excommunication is *not reserved to the Holy See* does not mean that it can be remitted by any confessor or by any priest imparting general absolution. The Church law clearly determines who enjoy the faculty to absolve it. Thus canon 1355, § 2 states: "If it (the penalty) *is not reserved to the Apostolic See*, a *latae sententiae* penalty established by law but *not yet declared*, can be remitted by the ordinary with respect to his subjects and to those actually staying in his territory or to those

who committed the offense in his territory. Moreover, any Bishop can do this, but only in the course of sacramental confession." Besides the Prelates mentioned in the foregoing law, "the canon penitentiary or the priest appointed by the diocesan Bishop to fulfill this duty, can also remit in the sacramental forum only *all censures latae sententiae not yet declared and which are not reserved to the Holy See*" (can. 508).

All confessors belonging to the so called *Regular Orders* may remit an excommunication *latae sententiae not yet declared*, as the one in question, by virtue of an old privilege granted by the Holy See. Confessors belonging to the Congregation of the Mission may also do the same by virtue of another privilege granted by the Apostolic See, according to the information we have received from Fr. Cavanna, C.M. Likewise, any confessor can, in the internal sacramental forum, remit this kind of penalty, if it is difficult for the penitent to remain in the state of grave sin, according to the canon 1357, § 1.

2. *A priest imparting general absolution cannot absolve the excommunication latae sententiae not yet declared.* Note carefully that a priest who imparts general absolution is not included among those mentioned above. He merely grants, by concession of the law, general absolution to penitents without hearing their confessions *in case of grave necessity*, "that is, when given the number of penitents, there are not enough confessors available to properly hear the individual confessions within an appropriate time, so that *without fault of their own* the penitents would be deprived of sacramental grace or Holy Communion for a lengthy period of time" (can. 961, §1, n.2). Fred and Sylvia did not find themselves in *serious necessity*, as mentioned in the Church law. They could make an individual confession to any of the confessors mentioned in the preceding paragraph, so that they would not be deprived for a lengthy period of time of sacramental grace or Holy communion.

It is really surprising that the priest approached by Fred and Sylvia seeking his advise told them to receive general absolution and then make their individual confession to any confessor. He should have advised them only to make their integral individual confession and the confessor would see whether he could absolve them or not, as can. 1357, §1 says, *which the priest imparting general absolution could not do.*

The answer, therefore, to the question raised by the student is clear: the advise given by the priest to Fred and Sylvia was not correct at all. The priest imparting general absolution had no faculty to absolve the excommunication incurred by the couple for having resorted to commit abortion.

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.

OFFERINGS MADE IN A BARRIO CHAPEL (VISITAS)

May I ask for an answer to the following questions:

1. *How are the offerings in a barrio chapel administered?*

2. *How are the donations or contributions to the Block Rosary Association used?*

I hope you can include the answers to these questions in the "Cases and Inquiries" section of the Boletín Eclesiástico.

Thanks in advance.

A Parish Priest

Offerings made in barrio chapels

Under the law, a barrio chapel is a part of the parish in whose territory it is located. Indeed, a barrio chapel is a filial church which owes its existence to, and is managed from and by the mother church, the parish. Hence the offerings made in the barrio chapel accrue to a unit of the parish and as such must be deemed ecclesiastical property whose use and apportionment are to be regulated by canon and statutory laws (can. 1257, § 1).

1. *Disposal of the offerings.* Who is supposed to dispose of the offerings made at the barrio chapel?

The management of the parish assets are functions reserved by law to the parish priest (can. 1279, §1). Thus it should be the exclusive concern of the pastor to keep or dispose of the offerings collected in a

filial chapel located within his parish territorial boundaries much in the same manner as the pastor and, he alone, holds and disposes of the offerings made at the parish church itself.

The civic barrio council, the founder of the chapel or any lay leader may be called upon to aid the pastor in the running of the chapel as well as in the management of the offerings. Such arrangement, however, should not be construed as a surrender of, or as a restraint to the pastor's administrative powers, who, in no way, may wave the ultimate responsibility for the control and effective management of said funds.

2. *Allocation of the offerings.* The use and allocation of the funds offered at a barrio chapel ought to be determined in accordance with the donors' wishes. Which were the donors' wishes or intention in making the offerings can be easily determined by considering the place and the occasion in which the offerings were made. For instance, if the barrio chapel is a center of Marian pilgrimages, then *it stands to reason that the donors' intention was to foster the cult of the Blessed Mother.* Thus expenses incurred in on account of the cult given to the Blessed Virgin at the said chapel should be defrayed with the devotees' collections. Such would be, for instance, expenses related to the purchase of candles, flowers, sacred vestments; the cost of lighting, the honoraria due to the chapel caretaker, priests or ministers invited to perform or preside over the various ceremonies, etc. The cost of maintaining the barrio chapel or for its physical improvement could also be billed against the same fund.

3. *Use of the offerings for sundry parish needs.* Can the money collected at barrio chapels be used also to defray other expenses of the parish, such as support of the clergy, the teaching of catechism, etc.? As stated above, the offerings made at a filial church accrue to the mother church, the parish, and are to be administered by the pastor. So there should be no question as to the propriety of using a portion of the funds for other needs of the parish church as determined by the pastor himself. It is saying the obvious, however, that the amount used for the benefit of the parish should not eat up funds otherwise necessary for the maintenance of the barrio chapel and for the various acts of devotion held therein.

The Block Rosary Contributions

The practice of the Block Rosary is a beautiful devotion in honor of the Blessed Mother. The image of the Virgin Mary is passed from house to house where the Rosary is said by the entire family with the family head leading the prayer. At the end of the prayer, and before the image is carried to the neighbor's house, the members of the family make some free offerings which are dropped in the attached collection box. At times, the handling of the offerings by the Block Rosary leaders is open to question as to the proper use and allocation of the contributions.

1. *Management of the Block Rosary Contributions.* Who should keep and administer the Block Rosary contributions? The answer to the question devolves a more basic issue, namely, that of ownership. Are the contributions the property of the parish or that of the collectors or group leader?

Neither the parish, nor the collectors or group leaders have a valid claim to the offerings. The Block Rosary is a movement or organization operating within the parish with the pastor's approval and under his supervision, though it is not a part or unit of the parish. This being the case, the offerings are not ecclesiastical property and therefore their management should not be the concern of the parish, but of the Block Rosary organization itself, the true owner of the contributions. The officers of the organization are to handle the funds in the name of the Block Rosary movement in accordance with its by-laws and under the supervision of the pastor (can. 1257, § 2).

2. *Allocation of the Offerings.* The purposes or objectives to be attained through the contributions ought to be determined by the donors' wishes which are to be diligently carried out by the administrator of the fund (can. 1300).

In this context, there should be no doubt as to the allocation of the contributions when the donors made clear their minds either expressly or just by adopting the policies or common practices of the organization. Thus, if the Block Rosary contributions were solicited vgr., to assist the poor, the sick, the orphan of the parish etc., or that they have been traditionally used for the benefit of the parish school,

the burial of the needy, catechetical training, etc., then the funds should be used for those objectives.

To avoid the possible misallocation of the funds, the Block Rosary leaders, under the guidance of their pastor, should make manifest from the start the objectives the contributions are intended for. And the faithful must somehow be made aware of such objectives.

FLORENCIO TESTERA, O.P.

Festal Homilies for November and December 1993

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME November 7, 1993

Readings: *Ws 6:12-16*
 1 Th 4:13-14
 Mt 25:1-13

It is often said: *Opportunity knocks but once at every person's door*. That would be a tragic commentary on life were it so. But thanks God, opportunity never goes — it stays! It remains with us constantly, hammering away like the tapping of a machine gun. It is so close to most of us that we often fail to recognize it.

In today's Gospel, what distinguished the wise from the foolish virgins was the fact that the former took the opportunity when it came. They prepared for it, waited for it, even stacked enough provision for its coming. In a very real sense, the five virgins were wise because they were ready for what opportunity would demand from them. They made themselves ready by seeing to it that when the opportunity came, there would be no loose ends, no unattended item, no unmet requirement for bringing the opportunity to its successful conclusion. This certainly entailed hard work and patient attention to the smallest detail. As one famous architect said: "No matter how small the building I am designing, it always comes out majestic

because I want people to see that *God is in the details.*" To see the infinite as revealed even in the most trifle element of our work, requires a fully grown understanding, which is how Wisdom is described in the first reading.

"Whoever is on the watch for her will be free of anxiety. She goes in search of those who are worthy of her, graciously meets them on the way and is present in their every thought." Wisdom is a gift, but it has to be received and developed in a spirit of readiness and willingness to work hard.

Too many people want to succeed in life, but will not pay the price of success. They are perpetually looking for a wish-bone, instead of developing their backbones. They are not willing to subject themselves to hard labor. They can see easily enough how the law of cause and effect must work out for other people, but they expect to have it suspended for them. For us Filipinos, the padrino and other obnoxious manifestations of the medieval patronage system stand in the way of our potentials for national improvement. We think about pull, when we should be thinking about push. We believe in luck, not pluck.

How is success achieved? How are opportunities recognized? The gospel teaches us, through the example of the wise virgins, that we have to cultivate vision and foresight, above all, a faith in an all wise benevolent God who is so close to us that we seldom recognize him.

ROLANDO DELA ROSA, O.P.

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME November 14, 1993

Readings: *Pr 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31*
1 Th 5:1-6
Mt 25:14-30

The *parable of the silver pieces* is Jesus' way of telling His followers that they are expected to do good works for the realization and growth of God's Kingdom. The silver pieces represent the natural and supernatural gifts God has given each and every person. These

gifts are meant not to be kept but to be utilized to do something good and useful.

Doing good, of course, involves the taking of risks. It implies that one should question views, structures, traditions and practices which are not in accordance with Christian teaching. This inevitably leads to a clash with power structures that perpetrate the inhuman and un-Christian views and practices in our world.

It is possible to do good on a private and personal level like giving alms, comforting the sick, visiting those in prison but one should be honest enough to ask if the natural and supernatural gifts one has received should be confined and *buried* in these private affairs. Certainly, there are many who could do much more than the common works of mercy.

The fault of the third servant who received the one thousand silver pieces is that he refused to take risks. He buried the gifts he received in the pit of inaction and indifference, or at best in mediocrity. He hardly contributed in the work of transforming the world into God's Kingdom. The need of the world to grow in charity, justice, forgiveness and all the other virtues and acts of the kingdom had been taken by the third servant as purely God's work. That is why, the Gospel tells us that he also has no right to enjoy the fruits reaped from sowing, of working for the Kingdom.

As Christians put in a very particular situation, we are confronted with specific possibilities to do good works for the promotion of God's Kingdom. Socially, we are challenged by a big disparity between the rich and the poor in our society. Being brothers and sisters in one and the same Kingdom is incompatible with the enormous wealth of a few as against the sub-human poverty of others. Politically, we are faced with many government officials who are promoting their kingdom richer than God's. To be passive about this situation in spite of our capabilities to change is like burying silver pieces on the ground.

Indeed, there are enormous possibilities for us to make the natural and supernatural gifts we received fruitful. There is no reason why we can not use these gifts since occasions to use them are

always challenging us each day. The underprivileged who can hardly eat, much less go to school and improve their social status are begging us everyday to sow seeds of good works. The victims of large-scale criminality sometimes committed by law-enforcers themselves should provoke us to a corresponding action. The massive graft that weakens the economy of our country beckons us to do something about the government officials who are corrupt.

Certainly time will come when we will be called to give an accounting of the silver pieces we have received. With the unlimited possibilities that challenge us to bring these silver pieces to fruition, the only reason left for us is to say that we are neither involved nor committed in promoting the Kingdom since we consider it to be God's work alone and not ours. Of course, we know the consequence of this reasoning.

As to when is the time for this reckoning, the second letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians has an answer: it will come like a thief in the night.

To avoid being caught off-guard, there should be no night for us Christians since we belong "neither to darkness nor to night." We are children of the day by the light of our Christ which we can make even brighter by the splendor of our good works.

VIRGILIO OJOY, O.P.

SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING November 21, 1993

Readings: *Ezk 34:11-12, 15-17*
1 Co 15:20-26, 28
Mt 25:31-46

The hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the prisoner... What kind of people are these? Are they the powerful? Are they the influential ones? Are they kings? No! They are the least of our brothers and sisters. They are, in the scriptures, *the poor, the blind, the lame, the crippled, the lepers, the miserable (those who weep), the sinners, the prostitutes, the tax collectors, the demoniacs, the*

persecuted, the downtrodden, the captives, all who labor and are overburdened, the rabble who know nothing of the law, the crowds, the little ones, the least, the last and the babes or the lost sheep of Israel. They are the powerless and the voiceless. These people justify the existence of kings and thrones and powers who can liberate them from all kinds of bondage. Anyone who take up the case of the powerless to empower them, the voiceless to express them exercise a sense of kingship the purpose of which is to make these least people better. This is the essence of Christian kingship: *the Power to serve.*

Kingship, in its corrupted sense, means that the one in power just sits on his throne, served by a line of slaves, and freezes his subjects in endless ceremonies. But in the Christian perspective, kings are busy serving their people. Kings are people who do things for the sake of their brothers and sisters: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, and so on. Christian kingship or power means service. We have, as baptized Christians, our own power, influence, our own "kingship." The King of kings will judge us according to our participation in His Kingship — service to people in Charity.

A king serves.

One who serves the least of the brethren is a king.

DENNIS E. MAQUIRAYA, O.P.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT November 28, 1993

Readings: *Is 63:16-17, 19; 64:2-7*
1 Co 1:3-9
Mk 13:33-37

Today we begin the liturgical year which celebrates the mysteries of our Redemption centered on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. For the family of God, for Jesus' community of disciples, Sunday is the Day of the Lord, and every Sunday, a needed opportunity to receive communion at the Table of the Word and at the Table of the Eucharist.

Among the different seasons of the liturgical year, Advent and Lent are the most prominent, for they prepare us to celebrate properly the two greatest feasts of our Christian faith, namely, Christmas and Easter, respectively. *What is the meaning of Advent?*

Advent means "coming," "arrival." But, who is coming, who is arriving? Jesus Christ, who came, keeps coming and will come again at the end of time. Historically, he came the first time, "the fullness of time," twenty centuries ago, after a long Advent of hope and vigilance. With gratitude and praise, we shall recall the first Christmas at our Christmas this year, and, through Advent, prepare for the re-birth of Jesus in our lives.

In advent, we are also urged to hope in the Second Coming of Christ at the end of time and prepare for it by walking in the footsteps of our Way, the Lord. To hope in Christ's Second Coming means to be ready to receive him when he comes to our lives in various forms and ways. *What is the message of the First Sunday of Advent?*

Through the *Liturgy of the Word*, we begin our journey of hope, of preparation for the coming of the Lord, of conversion, of permanent vigilance. The prophet Isaiah reminds us powerfully that we are wounded creatures; that we are sinners and needy of God's grace and love. We are God's clay, the work of his hands. "God, our Father, you are our potter. We are your clay. Help us to be good clay!"

Saint Paul tells us to be grateful to God the Father: through his Son Jesus Christ we are redeemed and our sins forgiven; through him, God continues granting us all kinds of favors and graces. "Lord, for all that has been, thanks!"

By the hand of Saint Mark's gospel, Jesus proclaims to us his important message on vigilance: "I say to all: Be on guard." His repeated message on continuing vigilance: "Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come" (Mk 13:33). Therefore, be prepared: "We read, 'Awake, O sleeper, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.' Keep careful watch over your conduct. Do not act like fools, but like thoughtful men. Make the most of the present opportunity, for these

are evil days. Do not continue in ignorance, but try to discern the will of the Lord" (*Ep* 5:14-17).

Let us, then, be vigilant! Vigilance is an important eschatological virtue which directs us to the future of heaven by being committed to our present on earth, and helps us to discern the signs of the times. Connected with hope, it is a beautiful virtue that inclines us, in the first moment, to see our personal and social reality; in the second moment, to read this reality with the light of faith, and, in the third, to transform the negative elements of our personal and social lives by denouncing injustice, corruption and selfishness, announcing the Good News through words and deeds, and, above all, witnessing our faith in Jesus without fear and with courage and joy. To be hopeful, to be vigilant, requires, therefore, fidelity to the present as the best way to prepare for a better future. Fidelity to the present, to the now, to the moment, means to be faithful to our vocation, to our responsibilities, to our work. It truly means to love God and neighbor in every situation in our lives. Every moment (the only thing in our hands) is a *kairos*, a moment of grace: "Let us see each instant as if there were no other; an instant is a treasure" (*St. Therese of the Child Jesus*).

To anticipate a better future for us by being faithful to our present, we, sinners, need to pray — to pray humbly: "To prepare the way means to pray well; it means thinking humbly of oneself" (*St. Augustine*).

In a very special way, our Lord is coming to us this Christmas. The first time he came, there was no room for him in the inn. If we truly want to prepare for Christmas, let us begin making more room for him in the inn of our hearts. How? Let us be more converted to God and neighbor. Let us be sensitive to the needs of others, especially the poor, the sick, the abandoned. Let us defend human life always. Let us be prayerful — and humble!

Merciful Father, help us to be always ready and watchful and prepared and vigilant — to receive the visitation of your Son. Thank you for your countless blessings to us. We praise you, Lord, through Jesus, in the Spirit. Amen.

FAUSTO GOMEZ, O.P.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 5, 1993

Readings: *Is 40:1-5, 9-11*
2Pt 3:8-14
Mk 1:1-8

Advent is a short liturgical season, hence, today, the Second Sunday of Advent — the Church tells and admonishes us to further prepare for the coming of Christ. In the Mass we recall how John the Baptist prepared for the coming of the Lord.

Situation. The coming of an important visitor is greatly anticipated with preparation not so much to impress but to ensure that the guest is comfortable, happy and pleased. One important visitor who will come is no ordinary guest. He is the Lord, the God of Israel “who will come to save all nations...” (*Entrance Antiphon*). Clearly, today’s liturgy shows us that Jesus is coming not only for the elect, but also for the Gentiles, for all men. We, are therefore invited to “offer our hearts in welcome...” by removing “the things that hinder us from receiving Christ with joy...” (*Opening Prayer*).

Readings. Isaiah 40:1-5; 9-11, gives us in the first reading a prophecy of the future return, of the poor exile in Babylon. The Good Shepherd will lead his flock across the desert to glory because he is the Lord of consolation who “gives comfort to his people...,” who speaks tenderly to Jerusalem...” and who expiates her guilt.

The God of Israel is such a merciful and provident God that He does not only free the poor exile, but even builds the road across the desert for the exiles to pass. So he makes the wasteland straight, He fills in every valley, and every mountain and hill He makes low.

Clearly, the road to reconciliation and eventual salvation is by Jesus Christ the Lord who is the way, the truth and the life. Preparation for his coming should start with the recognition of His presence — in us, in our neighbors, and in everything around us. If we have been away from His company because of sin, indifference or pure neglect, now is the hour to reconsider and re-orient our priorities. “Let us immediately make peace with ourselves, showing the

preponderance of our spirit over the body, of our virtues over our vices, of generosity over selfishness, of altruism over egoism. The time has come for us to walk in the glory of the Lord, to speak for the mouth of the Lord, and in the top of our voices, herald the Good News of His coming.

St. Peter in his second letter, pictures to us a lesson for Advent by reminding us of the end of the world and thus prepare for its inevitable coming with holy, devout and serious conduct.

How have we behaved all these years? How did we keep our past promises “to come to repentance” made many Advents back? Have we shown generosity and patience in our dealings? Can we sincerely and confidently affirm to our Lord that our conduct and devotion have been holy? Or are we afraid and therefore, only compelled to be good because we were warned that the Judge “will come like a thief... the heavens will vanish with a roar...” and everything will be destroyed?

Let us rather be positive in our outlook and behavior as Christians are expected to be. So that even when we know that “the heavens will be destroyed in flames and the elements will melt away in a blaze,” we can be confident as we “await the new heavens and a new earth” because we know that we shall be part of “the justice of God,” to whom we have been faithful, since we make “every effort to be found without stain or defilement” and therefore, we are at peace in the sight of God.

St. Mark in the Gospel, gives us John the Baptist — his life and mission — as our model on how to prepare for the coming of the Lord. He was a “herald’s voice in the desert”... making “ready the way of the Lord.” He preached that “repentance will lead to the forgiveness of sins.”

Many a time we are conscious only of being forgiven without desiring to forgive. We are only good at beating breasts, looking up to heaven with remorse, even of sprinkling ashes on our heads, but when the need is to be considerate, accommodating and understanding, we fail miserably.

Repentance, likewise, denotes reconciliation — not only with ourselves or with our neighbors, but also, especially with our

environment. Are we guilty of pollution — aerial, noise or environmental? Are we conscious of the need to preserve our resources — trees, mines, coral reefs? Shall we contribute to the day when there will be no more mountains, valleys and fields because of environmental abuse?

When we greet our Lord during His second coming everyone shall be intact as was spoken of the Chosen People. When “all in the Judean countryside and the people of Jerusalem went out “to meet him.”

Conclusion. Advent as preparation is more than reviewing and re-integrating our good habits placed aside because of neglect and indifference. More than wearing camel's hair, having grasshoppers with honey for food, or wearing a leather belt around our waist, it means genuine reconciliation not only with ourselves or with our neighbor, but with the whole of God's creation.

We have the duty of preserve not only the integrity and purity of our bodies and souls, but also the integrity and purity of our environment, of our world — of earth.

JOSE MA. TINOKO, O.P.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF MARY

Decmeber 8, 1993

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

Friendship with Mary

Human Situation. It is difficult to find people without friends. Every one manages to have somebody to relate with. Friends need not be many. To have a few is enough. Even if he or she is only one is enough. Provided that he or she is a real friend.

One great tragedy is a betrayal by a bossom friend. When

friendship is broken, trust is broken too. Broken friendship is hard to regain.

Yes, broken friendship may be difficult to regain, but it can possibly be regained. Very often an intermediate or a go-between person is needed in the healing of friendship. And the effective intermediary must be totally fair, unbiased, and devoid of any prejudice.

Christian Message. When the first man sinned (*Gn 3:9 ff.*), he lost that friendship with God. God wanted that friendship to be regained, but thru an intermediary. The destined mediator would come only thru an instrumentality of a woman.

The woman chosen in history was Mary of Nazareth (*Lk 1:26*). She was not an ordinary woman. She was one who was immaculately conceived, i.e., without original sin. She was unprejudiced. There could be no better instrument between the Divine and the fallen humanity. Her's can be fittingly called Marian mediation.

Marian mediation, though, is not a final one. Because Mary is not the true mediator of man and God. Only Jesus is. But she has the role of a woman chosen to be the channel of God's Son's humanity. At most, we can say that Mary facilitated God's Son's mediatorship.

No wonder many believers choose Mary to be the channel of contact with Jesus Christ, as if to say that spiritual intimacy with Mary is a condition of an effective intimacy with God.

Faith-Response. Mary serves as a real friend to a multitude of followers of Jesus who is God. Devotees show this friendship with the Mother of Jesus in varied forms. Signs of this friendship with the Mary are innumerable shrines, home altars, countless beautiful pamphlets — all depicting the amiability of Mary as a friend.

The reasons for this devotions are as varied. There are objective reasons as well as there are personal ones. One objective reason is that a believer goes to Mary because she is the Mother of Jesus, an objective truth of faith. But the more convincing grounds of Marian devotion are the personal reasons. Many come to Mary as a friend,

a consoler, a healer, a miracle worker, a mother, or any other reason only the Marian lover could fully describe. To fully grasp this, a curious observer should ask why a young woman or man goes every Wednesday to Baclaran, why a family goes for a pilgrimage to Manaoag, while some others, to Fatima or to Lourdes, why a group of people from Cagayan would gather once a year in Manila to have Mass in honor of our Lady of Piat, etc.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception serves as an occasion to remind ourselves of God's friendship with the unstained woman of faith, Mary, and to remind ourselves of our friendship with Mary and with God. It is useful to recall that Mary, human as she is, but unfallen is an effective intermediary between us and God, though only second to his Son, Jesus of Nazareth. Our salvation is achieved only thru the merit of Jesus, but facilitated by the graciousness of a human mediatrix.

VICENTE CAJILIG, O.P.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT December 12, 1993

Readings: *Is 61:1-2. 10-11*
1Th 5:16-24
Jn 1:6-8. 19-28

Rejoice... The Lord Is Near

One of the things that has remained stamped in my mind since my High School years is that the third Sunday of Advent was called *Gaudete* Sunday. I do not know why this insignificant thing has remained in my memory while many others - much more important for sure - have gone with the wind long time ago. Most probably, this is because when I first heard the word "*Gaudete*" I did not know its meaning.

Today I still find this word in some introductions to this Third Sunday of Advent, with its translation ("*Rejoice*") and a short expla-

nation: "Rejoice" is the very first word of the Entrance Antiphon, and the refrain of this Sunday liturgy." Some Missals even add the queer remark that "the priest may wear rose vestments at this Mass."

Why? What is so special about this Sunday to be called the *Sunday of Joy*? Aren't we in the midst of Advent, a somehow "gloomy" liturgical season, as shown by the violet color of the vestments, the omission of the Gloria, etc.? On the other hand, "Why rejoice nowadays when the present world situation does not offer us many reasons to be optimists? One should just look around to see the lots of misery, financial constraint, suffering, violence, natural calamities and the like. And not only that. What about the great deal of people in our world living in a hardly bearable spiritual or personal poverty: unhappiness, sin, despair, fear, uncertainty, lack of faith...? Definitely, there doesn't seem to be much ground left for optimism.

And yet, the message is in our ears: "*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice! The Lord is near.*" Yes, there is an explanation for such rejoicing: The Lord is near. (Not just Christmas-time, which is something: lights, vacation, parties, gifts...; but the Lord, who is Someone: the Savior!). In case we were not yet sure of the initial invitation of the liturgy, St. Paul reiterates the same message in the Second Reading: "*Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks; such is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*"

In an attempt to justify such a message we come across a plain truth: that joy is a manifestation of hope. It is true that for many people happiness is synonymous of earthly pleasures and material comfort. However, we know that the reason of one's happiness and joy is one's hope. Therefore, the reason of Christian joy is Christian hope, that is, the expectancy with confidence of the coming of Christ and his kingdom.

No, this is not an evasion. Religion cannot in any way be the opium of the people, as communists claimed. We, Catholics, simply cannot disregard the present challenge of justice: the fact that a great part of humankind suffers situations of injustice, inequality, marginalization and violence proves that God does not fully reign in our midst and that his original plan and covenant have somehow failed. The number of poor, of orphans, of widows and of people in

general abandoned and abused is a clear sign that God indeed does not reign in our community. His plan of salvation and liberation must be rebuilt. Action for justice and peace is no longer an optional choice for Christians, followers of Christ. "To know God is to do justice," reads a central thesis of prophetic theology.

However, the recent Plenary Council of the Philippines, when describing the Spirituality of Social Transformation, says very beautifully that "It is a spirituality that shares Good News joy in the midst of deprivation, hope in situations of cynicism and pessimism, a faith that is fully aware of the enduring presence of God-with-us and of the ultimate victory of goodness over evil" (n.280).

Joy in the midst of deprivation, hope in situations of cynicism and pessimism, enduring presence of God-with-us and his ultimate victory over dead and evil! Such is the splendid content of Christmas we are about to celebrate in two weeks time, and for which we are preparing ourselves during this Advent season.

How do we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Lord in our lives? One of the teachers we have to guide us is John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord, who "made him known when at last he came." Today's Gospel describes this Prophet and the reasons why his message caused impact among his contemporaries: Firstly, because of his honesty: he was a man who lived out his own message, as we gather from the place he preached, the clothes he wore and the food he ate. Second, because he was a "preacher of grace," not of doom: he told the people what in their hearts they knew and brought them what in the depths of their souls they were waiting for. And finally, because he was humble: he considered himself unworthy to unfasten the strap of the Lord's sandals, as we read in today's Gospel. In a word, John the Baptist was aware, as St. Augustine put it, of being just the voice, not the Word.

John's honesty, witnessing and humility were the keys to his success. Three characteristics badly needed in our world today — which is saturated with words and is looking for signs — if we want to be God's heralds. A phrase quoted by Paul VI in his *Evangelii Nuntiandi* has been very often repeated: "Modern man listens more

willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

May this be a challenge for us all, as we celebrate this Eucharist. The same Lord born in Bethlehem two thousand years ago comes now on the altar to become God-with-us. May his presence with his victory over death and sin be able to transform us, remove our sadness, and encourage us to remove from our midst anything that is an obstacle for his reigning in our lives.

JAVIER GONZÁLEZ, O.P.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT **December 19, 1993**

Readings: 2 S 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16
Rm 16:25-27
Lk 1:26-38

Someone wrote a letter to the editor of a daily newspaper: "We will only listen to God's Word and not to man's word." Later on, several others followed it up and conveyed the same sentiment: "The Word of God is above the words of men." True to themselves, the writers did not realize that what they had written was self-destructive. Who would care reading them and listening to them? After all, what they had written were merely 'words of men.'

The sentiment is quite confusing. The writers have actually written them to attack the Church teachings on so many issues today: population growth control and death penalty among many others. According to them, Church teachings are mere 'words of men'; therefore, one must not listen to them. In their effort to discredit the Church, however, they self-destruct.

Why do we not listen to God alone? Why do we listen to man still? Because their words communicate with each other.

The Gospel is about the story of the Annunciation — or better still, of a Communication. It is the story of the Promised Word of God

being fulfilled with the compromising words of Mary. It tells of the story of God's Word giving credence to man's word. The Annunciation announces the beginning of the eternal history of God's Word in the temporal history of man's world. And so, with God's Word and Mary's word, the Word is made flesh and dwells among us.

The Church experienced her own Annunciation in similar pattern. Jesus once told his disciples, "He who hears you, hears me; he who rejects you, rejects me." And He admonished them, "Go, therefore, ... and teach them all the commands I give you." Jesus gives the Church his word — that the Church may give hers. With Jesus' word and the Church's word, the Word is once more made flesh and dwells among us.

Is this possible?

God's word once said, "I will be your God; and you will be my people" and man's word answered, "My Lord and my God." With that, the Israelites reached the Promised Land.

Man's word once said, "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed"; and God's word said, "Your faith has healed you." With that, there was healing.

Man's word once said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." And God's word said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing." With that, there was forgiveness.

Man's word once asked, "Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" and God's word answered, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself... Do this and life is yours." With that, love becomes the way of life.

There is no reason why we should not listen to man's word still. There is no reason why we should listen to God's word alone. God's Word gives force to man's word; man's word gives flesh to God's Word.

Have you ever communicated to God — using your own word?
Did God listen and understand you?

Mary did; He listened. Trust their word.

ROBERTO PINTO, O.P.

SOLEMNITY OF CHRISTMAS

December 25, 1993

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

December 25. The calendar says the year is almost coming to an *end*. In less than a week, the year is *complete*. It appears then that Christmas, our most joyous celebration throughout the year, is a celebration for the coming of an end. Even our *Aguinaldo* Masses seem to indicate the same: we have *finally arrived* at the end. The struggle to rise early for nine consecutive mornings to celebrate the Eucharist is over. With Christmas our daily schedule is again *back to normal*.

But it is not so. Christmas is not *the* end nor *an* end. It is not an indication that things should be back to normal. *Christmas is the beginning.* Our celebration of Jesus' birth is the *Alpha*, the *birth*, the *dawn*, the *spring*, the *start*. Christmas is all these and even more! With Christmas, nothing less than a *radical re-ordering* of lives begins.

John's opening verses in his Gospel capture all these. In a world where an infallible Rolex watch can not measure, the Word *begins*. In our world where the very first 'second' of the clock strikes, the Word *begins*.. All of creation — seen or unseen — begins in the same Word.

In the Word things, events, people are re-ordered. *Re-ordered from the very roots. Where darkness has so long reigned triumphantly, the light begins to shine, and even continues to shine unconquered.*

But did you notice something in John flight of thoughts? The beginning is too far from us, too distant. The beginning of time, of light. It seems untouchable! It seems irrelevant.

But wait! He speaks of John the Baptist. This John the Baptist we know. He is the voice, the precursor, the cousin, the wilderness man, the fighter, the martyr. John the Baptist, too, begins his mission. His mission, however, begins from God. God first named him and called him. And when was he first called and named? It was farther than when he sought refuge in the wilderness, farther than when Mary visited Elizabeth and John jumped for joy. the closest time was when his father was in the temple; when Zechariah his father was performing his task.

Once called and named by God, John begins his life and mission. Then the *re-ordering* of lives begins: his life, his parents' life, the life of Israel.

But. And a big "but." Still, isn't John the Baptist too far from us? Who among us have seen him in flesh and blood? Who among us has come too close to John the Baptist so as to see his wilderness clothes, or to touch his sun-stuck skin, or to listen to his thunderous voice? Unfortunately no one. No one among us.

Can not the beginning come a little bit closer to us?

Yes, the beginning can come closer to us. To those who are "begotten, not by blood, nor by carnal desire, nor by man's willing it, but by God," Jesus — the Word — empowers to become children of God. To those who believe, the beginning comes so close.

Within our reach is the fresh beginning. Welcoming the Child Jesus in faith and love, a new direction is open for us. Just imagine what happens when a new child comes into the life of a husband and wife. Things change, lives change — whether for the better or for worse. So it is when Jesus, the Child, comes to our life. We can either accept or reject this Child. But rejecting or accepting this Child will make *the difference* in our lives.

Christmas, indeed, is a celebration. We have reason to celebrate.

But not so much of the gifts we receive or give, nor the new clothes we wear. *We have reason to celebrate because a new beginning is open for us.* a new beginning in the birth of Jesus.

TERESO CAMPILLO, O.P.

HOLY FAMILY

December 26, 1993

Readings: *Si 3:2-6, 12-14*
Col 3:12-21
Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

When I was still a Student-Brother, my most cherished moments happened every summer time. A three week summer home vacation was always marked with pomp and jubilation. Why? first, because there is no place like home. Second, there is no home like my place. For me, all those homecomings were opportunities where I felt and experienced once again the love of my family which I begin to miss during those years when I was in the convent. To be at home even just for some time, and reminiscing those happy childhood memories gave me some streaks of relief, because it was in the heart of my family that I found a home. Yes, every happy child loves to be with his family. And even grown ups after having been separated from home for quite a time, would always find means and ways to go back home.

Today, we are celebrating the Feast of the Holy Family. This Holy Family is the family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. If we try to have a cursory look into the pertinent biblical passages, immediately we can conclude that the family on whose feast we are giving due honor today is a family where love and respect abound for each other. There could be no shadow of doubt that theirs is a family where we can find inspiration. The Family of Jesus should serve as a model to us who are gathered here today. This Feast we are commemorating, should spur us on to build the firm foundations of our own families into the very blueprints of family values on which the Holy Family had built its own...love, acceptance, and prayer.

In the first reading, Sirach capitalizes some of the basic attitudes that each family should have...that children should constantly honor

their parents, show reverence and obey them at all times. While giving his hearers these praiseworthy familial attitudes, Sirach in like manner assures them that whatever good deed done and rendered to parents will not be left unrewarded..."that sins will be forgiven, that later on their own children will be their blessings too, that prayers will be heard, and that they will have long life..."

In our second reading, St. Paul writing to the Colossians exhorts them to possess those virtues which would make them pleasing to God and to one another. "Clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. And above all, to put on love which binds the rest together and makes them perfect." Parents are admonished to avoid bitterness towards their children, and children should likewise reverence their parents.

If we try to go deeper into the realities of family life today, we can say with less hesitation that our own family has undergone a lot of changes. Parents always complain that their children have changed a lot. Now, children would openly answer back their parents and argue with them violently over simple matters. Children would shout at their parents even in public. Children do not fulfill their household chores. And that if they have problems, parents are the last persons to know about them. Children on the other hand, would equally point an accusing finger to their parents for all the misfortunes and troubles that happened to them. Many children believed that their parents are neglecting their responsibilities, that they do not really care about them, and have no time to be with them. Well, in an unhappy family atmosphere, both parents and children could go on and on accusing each others' failures. Will this kind of family ever find peace?

The shining example of the Holy Family should re-awaken our sensitivity to rebuild the foundational structure of our own family. We should remember that "in this age of rapidly deteriorating values, the family remains the last bulwark of defense for long-cherished family traditions and social stability. That it is within the family that individuals should first learn how to deal with others." Parents therefore have the primary responsibility in making their home the first school of love, of the knowledge of God, of respect for life.

Sometime ago, I was invited by a friend to her school on the occasion of its Foundation Day. One activity that caught my attention was the on the spot Drawing Competition for Third Graders. One kid made a portrait of his family. The drawing was not that eye-catching (as expected), but what surprised me were the words he had written on his masterpiece: "The family that eats together stays forever." The child expresses something which he experiences in his home. And I believe we can learn from the wisdom of this kid. There is a room for us still grown ups to re-learn those values we've learned when we were kids. Let us make our family a home where everyone finds joy and security. A family nourished with prayer and love will be a haven of peace for children.

Everytime we think of home, what do we remember? When our children remember home, what do you think will they cherish most?

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The Editorial Staff