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In this Issue

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The Ninth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, held in October 1994 has for its topic "The Consecrated Life and Its Role in the Church and in the World." In the *Instrumentum Laboris* it earlier issued, the Synod in its opening lines using the ideas of Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* states: "The consecrated life is a gift which the Father has given to the Church by means of the Spirit so that in faithfulness to the Gospel, the most characteristic traits of the life of his Son Jesus, the Chaste, Poor and Obedient (cf. *Mt* 8:20; *Ph* 2:8), and the unfathomable riches of his mystery (cf. *Ep* 3:8) might be present in the world and might draw everyone towards the Kingdom of God."

The Church recognizes that consecrated life is a gift of the Father and a manifestation of the "infinite might of the Holy Spirit which works so marvelously in the Church" (*LG* 44). In grateful response to this loving action of the Father in the Church through the Spirit, the Synod puts its attention on consecrated life that this may more clearly manifest the Church's life and holiness to which consecrated life undeniably belongs (cf. *LG* 44).

Before we publish the results of the Synod's Ninth Assembly in one of the future issues of the *Boletín*, we are offering our readers the thoughts of Pope John Paul II on consecrated life. We believe, this will serve as a fitting preparation for the outcome of the Synod. This would be of interest not only to the members of the Institutes of Consecrated Life but to the whole Church. After all, as the *Instrumentum Laboris* itself indicated, the Ninth General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is "a grace-filled moment for the entire People of God."

Religious live baptismal vows intensely

John Paul II

1. In the ecclesiological catecheses we have been giving for some time, we have often presented the Church as a “priestly” people, *i.e.*, comprising persons who share in Christ’s priesthood as a state of consecration to God and of offering the perfect, definitive worship he gives to the Father in the name of all humanity. This is a result of Baptism, which inserts the believer into Christ’s Mystical Body and appoints him - almost *ex officio* and, one could say, in an institutional way - to reproduce in himself the condition of Priest and Victim (*Sacerdos et Hostia*) of the Head (cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.*, III, q. 63, a. 3 in c. and *ad 2*; a. 6).

Every other sacrament - especially Confirmation - completes this spiritual state of the believer, and the sacrament of Orders also confers the power to act ministerially as Christ’s instrument in proclaiming the word, renewing the sacrifice of the Cross and forgiving sin.

2. To explain better this consecration of God’s People, we now would like to discuss another basic chapter of ecclesiology, which in our day has become increasingly important from the theological and spiritual standpoint. We are speaking of *the consecrated life*, which

*At the General Audience of Wednesday, 28 September 1994, having finished his discussion of the role of lay people in the Church, the Holy Father turned his attention to religious life. Those who profess the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, the Pope said, have an important role in fostering the Christian community’s growth in holiness. Here is a translation of his catechesis, which was the 103rd in the series on the mystery of the Church and was given in Italian. *L’Osservatore Romano*, N. 40 - 5 October 1994.

many of Christ's followers embrace as a particularly elevated, intense and demanding way of living out the consequences of Baptism with a lofty charity leading to perfection and holiness.

Church gives recognition to religious families

The Second Vatican Council, heir to the theological and spiritual tradition of two millennia of Christianity, has highlighted the value of the consecrated life, which (according to what the Gospel indicates) "is expressed in the practice of *chastity* consecrated to God, *poverty* and *obedience*," which are called precisely the "evangelical counsels" (cf. Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 43). The Council speaks of them as a spontaneous manifestation of the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit, who from the beginning has produced an abundance of generous souls moved by the desire for perfection and self-giving for the good of all Christ's body (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 43).

3. We are speaking of individual experiences, which have never been lacking and even today continue to blossom in the Church. However, since the first centuries a tendency has been noted to move from the personal and - one could almost say - "private" practice of the evangelical counsels to a state of *public recognition by the Church*, both in the solitary life of *hermits* and - ever increasingly - in the formation of *monastic communities or religious families*, which are meant to assist in attaining the objectives of the *consecrated life*: stability, better doctrinal formation, obedience, mutual help and progress in charity.

Thus, from the first centuries down to our day, "a wondrous variety of religious communities" has emerged, in which the " manifold wisdom of God" is displayed (cf. Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 1) and the Church's extraordinary vitality is expressed, but in the unity of Christ's Body, according to the words of St. Paul: "There are different gifts but the same Spirit" (1 Co 12:4). The Spirit pours out his gifts in a great variety of forms to enrich the one Church, which in her multicolored beauty reveals in time "the unfathomable aches of Christ" (Ep 3:8), as all creation manifests "in many forms and in each individual part" (*multipliciter et divisim*), as St. Thomas says (*Summa Theol.*, 1, q. 47, a. 1), what in God is absolute unity.

4. In every case, it is a question of one basic "divine gift," although in the multiplicity and variety of spiritual gifts or charisms

bestowed on individuals and communities (cf. *Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 103, a. 2). Charisms in fact can be individual or collective. The individual ones are widespread in the Church and vary so much from person to person that they are difficult to categorize and in each case require the Church's discernment. Collective charisms are generally bestowed on men and women who are destined to establish ecclesial works, especially religious institutes, which receive their distinctive mark from their founders' charisms, live and work under their influence and, to the extent of their fidelity, receive new gifts and charisms for each individual member and for the community as a whole. The latter can thus discover new forms of activity in accordance with the needs of time and place, without breaking the line of continuity and development going back to the founder, or by easily recovering its identity and vigor.

Religious state belongs to Church's life and holiness

The Council observes that "the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved" religious families (*Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 1). This was in harmony with her own responsibility for charisms, because it is her "office not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. *1 Th* 5:12 and 19-21; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12). This explains why - with regard to the evangelical counsels - "the authority of the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has taken on the task of interpreting these counsels and regulating their practice as well as establishing stable forms of living according to them" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 43).

5. It should always be kept in mind, however, that the state of consecrated life does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church. The Council notes this: "If one considers the divine and hierarchical constitution of the Church, the religious state is not an intermediate condition between the clerical and lay. But some faithful, from each of these two conditions (clerical and lay), are called by God to enjoy a particular gift in the life of the Church and, each in their own way, to help the Church in her mission of salvation" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 43).

The Council immediately adds, however, that the religious state, "which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, although it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, does, however, belong *unquestionably* to her life and

holiness" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 44). This adverb "unquestionably" - means that all the blows that can disturb the Church's life will never be able to eliminate the consecrated life characterized by the profession of the evangelical counsels. This state of life will endure as an essential element of the Church's holiness. According to the Council, this is an "unshakable" truth.

That having been said, it must still be stated clearly that no particular form of consecrated life is sure to last forever. Individual religious communities can die out. History shows that some have in fact disappeared, just as certain "Particular" Churches have also come to an end. Institutes that are no longer suited to their age, or which have no more vocations, can be forced to close or to be consolidated with others. The guarantee of lasting until the end of the world, which was given to the Church as a whole, has not necessarily been granted to individual religious institutes. History teaches that the charism of the consecrated life is always on the move, showing that it can discover and "invent," so to speak, new forms that more directly answer the needs and aspirations of the time, while remaining faithful to the founder's charism. However, communities that have existed for centuries are also called to adapt to these needs and aspirations so as not to condemn themselves to disappearing.

6. Nevertheless, the practice of the evangelical counsels - whatever forms it may take - is guaranteed to last throughout history, because Jesus Christ himself desired and established it as a definitive feature of the Church's economy of holiness. The idea of a Church consisting only of lay people involved in marriage and secular professions does not correspond to Christ's intentions as we find them in the Gospel. All this shows us - from also looking at history and even current events - that there will always be men and women (and boys and girls) who will want to give themselves totally to Christ and his kingdom by the way of celibacy, poverty and submission to a rule of life. Those who take this way will continue, in the future as in the past, to play an important role for the Christian community's growth in holiness and for its evangelizing mission. Indeed, today more than ever, the way of the evangelical counsels offers great hope for the future of the Church.

Spirit continues giving new charisms

John Paul II

1. Consecrated life, which has marked the Church's development over the centuries, has experienced and still experiences different expressions. This variety must be kept in mind while reading the chapter of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* dedicated to the profession of the evangelical counsels. Its bears the title "Religious," but the range of its doctrinal considerations and pastoral intentions covers the much wider and diversified area of consecrated life as it has developed in recent years.

2. Many people today also choose the way of consecrated life in religious institutes and congregations that have long been active in the Church, which continues to find new enrichment in the spiritual life from their living, fruitful presence.

In the Church today, however, there are also new visible associations of consecrated persons, recognized and regulated from the canonical standpoint. First of all, there are the *secular institutes*, in which, according to the *Code of Canon Law*, "the Christian faithful living in the world strive for the perfection of charity and work for the sanctification of the world especially from within" (can. 710). The members of these institutes are obliged to follow the evangelical counsels, but they harmonize them with a life of involvement in the

The rich variety of forms that consecrated life continues to take in the Church's history was the subject of the Holy Father's catechesis at the General Audience of Wednesday, 5 October 1994. Worthy of particular mention are secular institutes, whose members seek to practice the evangelical counsels while living and working in the world, as well as the new lay movements and associations that have recently sprung up in the Church. The Holy Father's talk was the 104th in the series on the mystery of the Church and was given in Italian. *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 41 - 12 October 1994.

world of secular activity and institutions. For many years, even before the Council, there were some gifted pioneers in this form of consecrated life, which - externally - is more like that of "seculars" than of "religious." For some this choice was perhaps based on necessity, in that they were not able to enter a religious community because of certain family obligations or certain obstacles. But for many it was the commitment to an ideal: to combine an authentic consecration to God with a life lived amid the affairs of the world, and this too as a vocation. It is to Pope Pius XII's credit to have recognized the legitimacy of this form of consecration in the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* (1947).

In addition to secular institutes, the *Code of Canon Law* recognizes societies of apostolic life, "whose members without religious vows pursue the particular apostolic purpose of the society, and leading a life as brothers or sisters in common according to a particular manner of life, strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions" (can. 731, §1). Among these societies, which are "assimilated" to the institutes of consecrated life, there are some whose members are committed to practicing the evangelical counsels by a bond defined in the constitutions. This too is a form of consecration.

3. In more recent times, a certain number of "movements" or "ecclesial associations" have appeared. I spoke of them appreciatively on the occasion of a convention sponsored by the Italian Episcopal Conference on *The Christian Community and Associations of the Laity*: "The phenomenon of ecclesial associations," I said, "is a fact characterizing the present historical moment of the Church. And it must also be noted, with true consolation, that the range of these associations covers the entire span of the forms of the Christian's presence in current society" (*Insegnamenti*, VII, 2, 1984, 290; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 17 September 1984, p. 8). Now as then, I hope that, in order to avoid the risk of a certain self-satisfaction on the part of those who tend to absolutize their own experience, and of an isolation from the community life of the local Churches and their Pastors, these lay associations will live "in full ecclesial communion with the Bishop" (*ibid.*, p. 292).

These "movements" or "associations," although consisting of lay people, often steer their members - or some of their members - towards practicing the evangelical counsels. Consequently, even if

they are defined as lay people, groups or communities of consecrated life arise among them. What is more, this form of consecrated life can be accompanied by an openness to the priestly ministry, when some communities accept priests or guide young men to priestly ordination. As a result, some of these movements reflect the image of the Church according to the three directions that the development of her historical composition can take: those of *lay people*, of *priests* and of *consecrated souls* within the context of the evangelical counsels.

4. One need only refer to this new situation without having to describe the various movements in detail, in order to emphasize the significance of their presence in the Church today.

Charismatic life is finding new expressions in the Church

It is important to see them as a sign of the charisms given to the Church by the Holy Spirit in ever new and at times unforeseeable ways. The experience of recent years allows us to state that, in harmony with the foundations of the faith, the charismatic life is far from being spent, but is finding new expressions in the Church, especially in the forms of consecrated life.

A very particular - and in a certain sense, new - aspect of this experience is the importance that the lay character generally has in it. It is true that there can be some misunderstandings about the word "lay," even in the religious sphere. When lay people are committed to the way of the evangelical counsels, doubtless they belong to a certain extent to a state of consecrated life that is very different from what is more commonly that of other believers who choose marriage and secular professions. "Consecrated" lay people, however, intend to maintain and strengthen their attachment to the title "lay," since they wish to be and to be known as members of the People of the God, in accordance with the origin of the word "lay" (from *lass* = people), and to give witness to the fact that they belong to this people, without distancing themselves from their brothers and sisters even in civil life.

Also of considerable importance and interest is the ecclesial vision of movements which show a firm intention to live the life of the whole Church, as a community of Christ's followers, and to reflect it in deep union and cooperation between "lay people," religious and priests in their personal decisions and in the apostolate.

It is true that these three characteristics, *i.e.*, charismatic vitality, the desire to give witness to one's membership in the People of God and the requirement of communion for consecrated persons with lay people and priests, are features common to all forms of consecrated religious life; but we must acknowledge that they are expressed more intensely in contemporary movements, which are generally distinguished by a deep commitment of dedication to the mystery of the Church and of skilled service to her mission.

5. In addition to movements and communities of a "lay-ecclesial" orientation, we must now mention other types of recent communities, which put greater stress on the traditional elements of religious life. Some of these new communities have a strictly monastic orientation, with a notable development of liturgical prayer; others follow in the "canon" tradition, which along with the more strictly "monastic" tradition, was so active in the Middle Ages, having particular care for parishes and, later, for a more extensive apostolate. Even more radical today is the new "eremitical" tendency, with the foundation or rebirth of both old- and new-style hermitages.

Church needs consecrated witnesses in every age

On a superficial glance, some of these forms of consecrated life could seem out of step with the current direction of ecclesial life. In fact, however, the Church - which certainly needs consecrated persons who turn more directly to the world in order to evangelize it - also needs, and perhaps even more so, those who seek, cultivate and give witness to God's presence and intimacy, with the intention of working for the sanctification of the world. These are the two aspects of consecrated life seen in Jesus Christ, who reached out to men to bring them light and life, but also sought solitude to devote himself to prayer and contemplation. Neither of these two requirements can be neglected in the Church's life today. We must be grateful to the Holy Spirit who enables us to understand this continually through the charisms he abundantly distributes and the often surprising initiatives he inspires.

Jesus' will is origin of consecrated life

John Paul II

1. What counts the most in the old and new forms of "consecrated life" is that one perceives in them a basic conformity with the will of Christ who instituted the evangelical counsels and is, in this sense, the founder of religious life and of every similar state of consecration. As the Second Vatican Council said, the evangelical counsels are "based on the teaching and example of Christ" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 43).

Some have doubted this basis by considering the consecrated life as a purely human institution that arose from the initiative of Christians who wanted to live the Gospel ideal more deeply. Now, it is true that Jesus did not directly found any of the religious communities that gradually grew up in the Church, nor did he determine the particular forms of consecrated life. However, what he wanted and established is the state of consecrated life in its overall value and essential elements. There is no historical evidence that can explain this state as a later human initiative, nor can one readily conceive that consecrated life - which has played so large a role in the growth of the Church's holiness and mission - did not stem from the founding will of Christ. If we carefully explore the Gospel testimonies, we will discover that this will can be seen very clearly.

Consecrated life as the answer to Jesus' call to abandon everything and follow him was the subject of the Holy Father's catechesis at the General Audience of Wednesday, 12 October 1994. Here is a translation of his talk, which was the 105th in the series on the mystery of the Church and was given in Italian. *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 42 - 19 October 1994.

2. The Gospel shows that from the beginning of his public life Jesus called men to follow him. This call was not necessarily expressed in words: it could result merely from the attraction Jesus' personality held for those he met, as in the case of the first two disciples according to the account of John's Gospel. Formerly disciples of John the Baptist, Andrew and his companion (who seems to have been the Evangelist himself) were fascinated and almost carried away by the one presented to them as "the lamb of God"; they immediately began to follow Jesus, even before he had said a word to them. When Jesus asked: "What are you looking for?" they answered with another question: "Teacher, where do you stay?" Then they received the invitation that would change their lives: "Come and see" (cf. *Jn* 1:38-39).

"It was I who chose you"

In general, however, the most characteristic expression of the call are the words: "Follow me" (*Mt* 8:22; 9:9; 19:21; *Mk* 2:14; 10:21; *Lk* 9:59; 18:22; *Jn* 1:43; 21:19). It shows Jesus' initiative. Before that time, those who wanted to embrace a master's teaching chose the person whose pupils they wished to become. With the words: "Follow me," however, Jesus shows that he is the one who chooses the companions and disciples he wishes to have. In fact, he will say to the Apostles: "It was not you who chose me, it was I who chose you" (*Jn* 15:16).

In Jesus' initiative a sovereign will appears, but also intense love. The account of the call addressed to the rich young man reveals this love. There we read that, when the rich young man stated that he had observed the commandments of the law since his childhood, Jesus "looked at him with love" (*Mk* 10:21). This penetrating, loving gaze accompanied the invitation: "Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me" (*ibid.*). Jesus' divine and human love, so burning as to be recalled by a witness to the scene, is repeated in every call to total self-giving in the consecrated life. As I wrote in the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptionis Donum*: "This love reflects the eternal love of the Father, who 'so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life' (*Jn* 3:16)" (n. 3).

3. The Gospel also attests that the call to follow Jesus makes many broad demands: the account of the invitation to the rich young man stresses the renunciation of material possessions; in other cases the renunciation of one's family is more expressly emphasized (cf. for example, *Lk* 9:59-60). In general, following Jesus means renouncing everything in order to be united with him and to accompany him on the paths of his mission. This is the renunciation to which the Apostles agreed, when Peter declared: "Here we have put everything aside to follow you" (*Mt* 19:27). Precisely in his response to Peter, Jesus indicates the renunciation of human possessions as the basic component in following him (cf. *Mt* 19:29). The Old Testament shows that God asked his people to follow him by observing the commandments, but without ever making such radical demands. Jesus reveals his divine sovereignty, on the other hand, by requiring absolute devotion to himself, to the point of total detachment from earthly possessions and affections.

4. It should be noted, however, that although he made new demands in the call to follow him, Jesus offers them for the free choice of those he calls. They are not precepts, but invitations or "counsels." The love with which Jesus addressed the call did not take away the rich young man's power to decide freely, as shown by his refusal to follow Jesus because he preferred his possessions. The Evangelist Mark notes that he "went away sad, for he had many possessions" (*Mk* 10:22). Jesus did not condemn him for this. But he remarked in turn, and not without some sadness, that it is difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven and that only God can bring about certain detachments, a certain interior freedom that makes it possible to answer the call (cf. *Mk* 10:23-27).

5. On the other hand, Jesus promises that the renunciations required by the call to follow him will receive their recompense, "treasure in heaven," that is, an abundance of spiritual goods. He even promises eternal life in the world to come and a hundredfold in this present age (cf. *Mt* 19:29). This hundredfold refers to a higher quality of life, a superior happiness. Experience teaches that consecrated life, according to Jesus' plan, is a deeply happy life. This happiness is measured according to fidelity to Jesus' plan. This is true even though, as the reference to persecution recorded by Mark in the same episode (10:30) suggests, the "hundredfold" does not spare one from sharing in Christ's Cross.

6. Jesus also called women to follow him. A Gospel witness says that a group of women accompanied Jesus and these women were many (cf. *Lk* 8:1-3; *Mt* 27:55; *Mk* 15:40-41). This was a great novelty with respect to Jewish custom: only Jesus' innovative will, which included the advancement and, in a certain way, the liberation of women, can explain this fact. No Gospel account of the call of any woman has come down to us. However, the presence of many women with the Twelve around Jesus presupposes a call on his part, a choice whether silent or expressed.

Consecrated life developed in many forms

Jesus in fact shows that the state of consecrated life which consists in following him is not necessarily connected with the goal of priestly ministry and that this state includes both women and men, each in his or her own area and with the role determined by the divine call. In the group of women following Jesus we can see a sign and even the initial nucleus of the enormous number of women who will be dedicated to religious life or other forms of consecrated life over the Church's centuries down to our day. This applies to "consecrated" women but also to so many other sisters of ours who in new ways follow the authentic example of Jesus' collaborators: for example, as lay "volunteers" in many apostolic tasks and in many offices and ministries of the Church.

7. We conclude this catechesis by recognizing that, in calling men and women to abandon everything in order to follow him, Jesus inaugurated a state of life which would gradually develop in the Church in the various forms of consecrated life expressed in religious life, or also - for those chosen by God - in the priesthood. From Gospel times to our own day, Christ's founding will has continued to be at work, the will expressed in that very beautiful and holy invitation addressed to so many souls: "Follow me!"

Prayer is answer to vocation shortage

John Paul II

1. In discussing the foundation of consecrated life on the part of Jesus Christ, we mentioned the calls he extended from the beginning of his public life, generally expressed in the words: "Follow me." Jesus' care in making these appeals shows the importance he attributed to Gospel discipleship for the life of the Church. He linked that discipleship with the "counsels" of consecrated life, which he desired for his disciples as that conformation to himself which is the heart of Gospel holiness (cf. *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 21). In fact, history confirms that consecrated persons - priests, men and women religious, members of other institutes and similar movements - have played an essential role in the Church's expansion, as they have in her growth in holiness and love.

Jesus asked disciples to pray for vocations

In the Church today, vocations to religious life have no less importance than in centuries past. Unfortunately, in many places we see that their number is insufficient for meeting the needs of communities and their apostolate. It is no exaggeration to say that for some institutes this problem has become critical, to the point of

"Once again I invite Christian parents to pray that Christ will call one of their children to the consecrated life," the Holy Father said during his weekly catechesis at the General Audience of Wednesday, 19 October 1994. He stated that the Christian family is the environment in which vocations can develop and grow, and the task of parents is to train their children in authentic Gospel values. The Holy Father's catechesis was the 106th in the series on the mystery of the Church and was given in Italian. *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 43 - 26 October 1994.

threatening their survival. Even without wishing to share the dire predictions for the not-too-distant future, it is already apparent today that, for lack of members, some communities are forced to give up works usually destined to produce abundant spiritual fruit and that, more generally, fewer vocations lead to a decline in the Church's active presence in society, with considerable losses in every field.

The present vocations shortage in some parts of the world is a challenge to be met with determination and courage, in the certainty that Jesus Christ, who during his earthly life called many to consecrated life, is still doing so in today's world and often receives a generous, positive response, as daily experience proves. Knowing the Church's needs, he continues to extend the invitation, "Follow me," particularly to young people, whom his grace makes responsive to the ideal of a life of total dedication.

2. In addition, the lack of workers for God's harvest was already a challenge in Gospel times for Jesus himself. His example teaches us that the shortage of consecrated persons is a situation inherent in the world's condition and not only an accidental fact due to contemporary circumstances. The Gospel tells us that as he roamed through towns and villages, Jesus was moved with pity for the crowds which "were lying prostrate from exhaustion, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36). He tried to remedy that situation by teaching them at great length (cf. Mk 6:34), but he wanted the disciples to join him in solving the problem and so he invited them, first of all, to pray: "Beg the harvest master to send out laborers to gather his harvest" (Mt 9:38). According to the context, this prayer was intended to provide people with a greater number of *Pastors*. However, the expression "laborers for the harvest" can have a wider application and indicate everyone who works for the Church's growth. The prayer, then, also seeks to obtain a greater number of *consecrated persons*.

3. The stress put on prayer is surprising. Given God's sovereign initiative in calling, we might think that only the Harvest Master, independently of any other intervention or cooperation, should provide a sufficient number of workers. On the contrary, Jesus insists on the cooperation and responsibility of his followers. He also teaches us today that with prayer we can and must influence the number of vocations. The Father welcomes this prayer because he wants it and expects it, and he himself makes it effective. Whenever and wherever the vocations crisis is more serious, this prayer is all the

more necessary. But it must rise to heaven in every time and place. In this area the whole Church and every Christian always have a responsibility.

This prayer must be joined to efforts to encourage an increase in the responses to the divine call. Here too we find the prime example in the Gospel. After his first contact with Jesus, Andrew brings his brother Simon to him (cf. *Jn* 1:42). Certainly, Jesus shows himself sovereign in his call to Simon, but on his own initiative Andrew played a decisive role in Simon's meeting with the Master. "In a way, this is the heart of all the Church's pastoral work on behalf of vocations" (*Pastores Dabo vobis*, n. 38).

4. Encouraging vocations can come from personal initiative, like Andrew's, or from collective efforts, as is done in many dioceses that have developed a vocations apostolate. This promotion of vocations does not at all aim at restricting the individual's freedom of choice regarding the direction of his own life. This promotion, therefore, avoids putting any kind of constraint or pressure on each person's decision. But it seeks to shed light on every one's choice and to show each individual, in particular, the way opened in his or her life by the Gospel's "Follow me." Young people especially need and have a right to receive this light. On the other hand, the seeds of a vocation, particularly in young people, must certainly be cultivated and strengthened. Vocations must develop and grow, which usually does not occur unless conditions favorable to this development and growth are guaranteed. This is the purpose of institutions for vocations and the various programmes, meetings, retreats, prayer groups, etc. that promote the work of vocations. One can never do enough in the vocations apostolate, even though every human initiative must always be based on the conviction that, in the end, each person's vocation depends on God's sovereign decision.

5. A basic form of cooperation is the witness of consecrated persons themselves, which exercises a healthy, effective attraction. Experience shows that often the example of a man or woman religious has a decisive impact on the direction of a young personality which has been able to discover in their fidelity, integrity and joy the concrete example of an ideal way to live. In particular, religious communities can only attract young people by a collective witness of authentic consecration, lived in the joy of self-giving to Christ and to their brothers and sisters.

Vocations develop in a Christian family

6. Lastly, the importance of the family should be stressed as the Christian environment in which vocations can develop and grow. Once again I invite Christian parents to pray that Christ will call one of their children to the consecrated life. The task of Christian parents is to form a family in which Gospel values are honored, cultivated and lived, and where an authentic Christian life can elevate the aspirations of the young. It is because of these families that the Church will continue to produce vocations. Therefore, she asks families to collaborate in answering the "Harvest Master," who wants us all to be committed to sending new "laborers into the harvest."

Consecrated life is rooted in Baptism

John Paul II

1. Several times in the preceding catecheses I have spoken of the “evangelical counsels,” which in consecrated life are expressed as the “vows” - or at least commitments - of chastity, poverty and obedience. They find their full meaning in the context of a life *totally* dedicated to God in communion with Christ. The adverb “totally,” used by St. Thomas Aquinas to indicate the essential value of religious life, is most expressive! “Religion is a virtue whereby a man offers something to the service and worship of God. Therefore, those are called *religious* by antonomasia, who *consecrate themselves totally* to the divine service, as offering a *holocaust* to God” (*Summa Theol.*, II-II, q. 186, a. 1). It is an idea drawn from the tradition of the Fathers, particularly from St. Jerome (cf. *Epist. 125, ad Rusticum*), and from St. Gregory the Great (cf. *Super Ezech.*, Hom. 20). The Second Vatican Council, which quotes St. Thomas Aquinas, made his teaching its own and speaks of a complete, interior “consecration to God” that, as a development of the baptismal consecration, takes place in the religious state through the bonds of the evangelical counsels (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 44).

2. It should be noted that in this consecration human endeavor does not have priority. The initiative comes from Christ, who asks for

At the General Audience of Wednesday, 26 October 1994, the Holy Father continued his discussion of consecrated life in the Church. In today's talk, he focused on the sacrament of Baptism as the basis of the special consecration that is brought about by the profession of the evangelical counsels. The Holy Father's catechesis was the 107th in the series on the mystery of the Church and was given in Italian. *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 44 - 2 November 1994.

a freely accepted covenant in following him. It is he who, by taking possession of a human person, "consecrates" him.

Grace is essential element of Gospel law

According to the Old Testament, God himself consecrated persons or objects by imparting his holiness in some way to them. This should not be understood in the sense that God inwardly sanctified people, much less objects, but in the sense that he took possession of them and set them apart for his direct service. The "sacred" objects were intended for the worship of the Lord, and thus could only be used in the temple and during worship, and not for what was *profane*. This *sacredness* was attributed to things that could not be touched by *profane* hands (for example, the Ark of the Covenant, the cups of the temple in Jerusalem which were profaned - as we read in *1 M* 1:22 - by Antiochus Epiphanes). In turn, the people of Israel were "holy" as the "Lord's possession" (*segullah* = the sovereign's personal treasury), and thus had a *sacred* character (cf. *Ex* 19:5; *Dt* 7:6; *Ps* 134 [135]:4; etc.). To communicate with this "*segullah*" God chose "spokesmen," "men of God," "prophets", who were to speak in his name. He sanctified them (morally) through the relationship of trust and special friendship he reserved for them, so much so that some of these persons were called "God's friends" (cf. *Ws* 7:27; *Is* 41:8; *Jm* 2:23).

However, there was no individual, means or institution that by its inner force could communicate God's holiness to men, however well-disposed. This would be the great newness of Christian Baptism, by which believers have their "hearts sprinkled clean" (*Heb* 10:22), and are inwardly "washed, consecrated, justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God" (*1 Co* 6:11).

3. The essential element of the Gospel law is grace, which is a power of life that justifies and saves, as St. Thomas explains (cf. *Summa Theol.*, I-II, q. 106, a. 2), following St. Augustine (cf. *De Spiritu et Littera*, ch. 7). Christ already takes possession of the person from within through Baptism, in which he begins his sanctifying action, "consecrating him" and instilling in him the need for a response that he himself makes possible by his grace, to the extent of the subject's physical, psychological, spiritual and moral capacity. The sovereign power exercised by the grace of Christ in consecration does not at all diminish the freedom of the response to the call, nor the value and importance of human effort. This is made particularly

clear in the call to practice the evangelical counsels. Christ's call is accompanied by a grace that elevates the human person and gives him abilities of a higher order to follow these counsels. This means that in consecrated life there is a development of the human personality itself, which is not frustrated but elevated and enhanced by the divine gift.

4. The person who accepts the call and follows the evangelical counsels performs a basic act of love for God, as we read in the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* (n. 44) of the Second Vatican Council. The purpose of religious vows is to scale the heights of love: a complete love, dedicated to Christ under the impulse of the Holy Spirit and, through Christ, offered to the Father: hence the value of the oblation and consecration of religious profession, which in Eastern and Western Christian tradition is considered as a *baptismus flaminis*, inasmuch as "a person's heart is moved by the Holy Spirit to believe in and love God, and to repent of his sins" (*Summa Theol.*, III, q. 66, a. 11).

I explained this idea of an almost new Baptism in the Letter *Redemptionis Donum*: "Religious profession," I wrote, "is a new 'burial in the death of Christ': new because it is made of love and vocation; new, by reason of unceasing 'conversion'. This 'burial in death' causes the person 'buried together with Christ' to 'walk like Christ in newness of life.' In Christ crucified is to be found the ultimate foundation both of baptismal consecration and of the profession of the evangelical counsels, which - in the words of the Second Vatican Council - 'constitutes a special consecration.' It is at one and the same time both *death and liberation*. Saint Paul writes: 'Consider yourselves dead to sin.' At the same time he calls this death 'freedom from the slavery of sin.' Above all, though, religious consecration, through its sacramental foundation in holy Baptism, constitutes a new life 'for God in Jesus Christ'" (*Redemptionis Donum*, n. 7).

5. This life is all the more perfect and produces more abundant fruits of baptismal grace (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 44), inasmuch as the intimate union with Christ received in Baptism develops into a more complete union. Indeed, the commandment to love God with all one's heart, which is enjoined on the baptized, is observed to the full by the love vowed to God through the evangelical counsels. It is a "special consecration" (*Perfectae Caritatis*, n. 5); a closer consecration to the divine service "by a new and special title" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 44); a

new consecration, which cannot be considered an implication or logical consequence of Baptism. Baptism does not necessarily imply an orientation towards celibacy and the renunciation of material possessions in the form of the evangelical counsels. Religious consecration, instead, means the call to a new life that implies the gift of an original charism not granted to everyone, as Jesus states when he speaks of voluntary celibacy (cf. *Mt* 19:10-12). Hence, it is a sovereign act of God, who freely chooses, calls, opens a way that is certainly connected with the baptismal consecration, but is distinct from it.

6. In a similar way, it can be said that the profession of the evangelical counsels further develops the consecration received in the sacrament of Confirmation. It is a new gift of the Holy Spirit, conferred for the sake of an active Christian life in a closer bond of collaboration and service to the Church in order to produce, through the evangelical counsels, new fruits of holiness and apostleship in addition to the demands of the consecration received in Confirmation. The sacrament of Confirmation - and the character of Christian soldiering and Christian apostleship that it entails - is also at the root of consecrated life.

Consecrated life has value for Church's growth in holiness

In this regard it is correct to see effects of *Baptism* and *Confirmation* in the consecration implied by accepting the evangelical counsels and to situate religious life, which by its nature is charismatic, in the sacramental economy. Along these lines, we can also note that, for religious priests, the sacrament of *Orders* also bears fruit in the practice of the evangelical counsels, requiring a closer attachment to the Lord. The vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience aim at the concrete realization of this attachment.

7. The connection between the evangelical counsels and the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders helps to show the essential value that consecrated life represents for the growth of the Church's holiness. And for this reason I wish to close by inviting you to pray - to pray a great deal - that the Lord will increasingly bestow the gift of consecrated life on the Church that he himself willed and established as "holy."

Message for the Celebration of the World Day of Peace*

John Paul II

WOMEN: TEACHERS OF PEACE

1. At the beginning of 1995, with my gaze fixed on the new millennium now fast approaching, I once again address to you, men and women of good will, a pressing appeal for peace in the world.

The violence which so many individuals and peoples continue to experience, the wars which still cause bloodshed in many areas of the world, and the injustice which burdens the life of whole continents can no longer be tolerated.

The time has come to move from words to deeds: may individual citizens and families, believers and Churches, States and International Organizations all recognize that they are called to renew their commitment to work for peace!

Everyone is aware of the difficulty of this task. If it is to be effective and long-lasting, work for peace cannot be concerned merely with the external conditions of coexistence; rather, it must affect people's hearts and appeal to a new awareness of human dignity. It must be forcefully repeated: authentic peace is only possible if the dignity of the human person is promoted at every level of society, and every individual is given the chance to live in accordance with this dignity. "Any human society, if it is to be well-ordered and productive, must lay down as a foundation this principle, namely, that *every*

*1 January 1995.

human being is a person, that is, his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. Indeed, precisely because he is a person he has rights and obligations which flow directly and immediately from his very nature. And these rights and obligations are universal, inviolable and inalienable.”¹

The truth about man is the keystone in the resolution of all the problems involved in promoting peace. To teach people this truth is one of the most fruitful and lasting ways to affirm the value of peace.

Women and the Teaching of Peace

2. To educate in the ways of peace means to open minds and hearts to embrace the values which Pope John XXIII indicated in the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* as essential to a peaceful society: truth, justice, love and freedom.² This is an educational programme which involves every aspect of life and is lifelong. It trains individuals to be responsible for themselves and for others, capable of promoting, with boldness and wisdom, the welfare of the whole person and of all people, as Pope Paul VI emphasized in the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*.³ The effectiveness of this education for peace will depend on the extent to which it involves the cooperation of those who, in different ways, are responsible for education and for the life of society. Time dedicated to education is time truly well spent, because it determines a person's future, and therefore the future of the family and of the whole of society.

In this context, I wish to direct my Message for this year's World Day of Peace especially to women, and to invite them to become *teachers of peace with their whole being and in all their actions*. May they be witnesses, messengers and teachers of peace in relations between individuals and between generations, in the family, in the cultural, social and political life of nations, and particularly in situations of conflict and war. May they continue to follow the path which leads to peace, a path which many courageous and far-sighted women have walked before them!

¹John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963), I: AAS 55 (1963), 259.

²Cf. *loc. cit.*, 259-264.

³Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), 14: AAS 59 (1967), 264.

In Communion of Love

3. This invitation to become teachers of peace, directed particularly to women, is based on a realization that to them God “*entrusts the human being in a special way*.”⁴ This is not however to be understood in an exclusive sense, but rather according to the logic of the complementary roles present in the common vocation to love, which calls men and women to seek peace with one accord and to work together in building it. Indeed, from the very first pages of the Bible God’s plan is marvelously expressed: he willed that there should be a relationship of profound communion between man and woman, in a perfect reciprocity of knowledge and of the giving of self.⁵ In woman, man finds a partner with whom he can dialogue in complete equality. This desire for dialogue, which was not satisfied by any other living creature, explains the man’s spontaneous cry of wonder when the woman, according to the evocative symbolism of the Bible, was created from one of his ribs: “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” (*Gn 2:23*). This was the first cry of love to resound on the earth!

Even though man and woman are made for each other, this does not mean that God created them incomplete. God “created them to be a communion of persons, in which each can be a ‘helpmate’ to the other, for they are equal as persons (‘bone of my bones...’) and complementary as masculine and feminine.”⁶ Reciprocity and complementarity are the two fundamental characteristics of the human couple.

4. Sadly, a long history of sin has disturbed and continues to disturb God’s original plan for the couple, for the male and the female, thus standing in the way of its complete fulfillment. We need to return to this plan, to proclaim it forcefully, so that women in particular - who have suffered more from its failure to be fulfilled can finally give full expression to their womanhood and their dignity.

In our day women have made great strides in this direction, attaining a remarkable degree of self-expression in cultural, social,

⁴John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988), 30: AAS 80 (1988), 1725.

⁵Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 371.

⁶*Ibid.*, No. 372.

economic and political life, as well as, of course, in family life. The journey has been a difficult and complicated one and, at times, not without its share of mistakes. But it has been substantially a positive one, even if it is still unfinished, due to the many obstacles which, in various parts of the world, still prevent women from being acknowledged, respected, and appreciated in their own special dignity.⁷ The work of building peace can hardly overlook the need to acknowledge and promote the dignity of women as persons, called to play a unique role in educating for peace. I urge everyone to reflect on the critical importance of the role of women in the family and in society, and to heed the yearning for peace which they express in words and deeds and, at times of greatest tragedy, by the silent eloquence of their grief.

Women of Peace

5. In order to be a teacher of peace, a woman must first of all nurture peace within herself. Inner peace comes from knowing that one is loved by God and from the desire to respond to his love. History is filled with marvelous examples of women who, sustained by this knowledge, have been able successfully to deal with difficult situations of exploitation, discrimination, violence and war.

Nevertheless, many women, especially as a result of social and cultural conditioning, do not become fully aware of their dignity. Others are victims of a materialistic and hedonistic outlook which views them as mere objects of pleasure, and does not hesitate to organize the exploitation of women, even of young girls, into a despicable trade. Special concern needs to be shown for these women, particularly by other women who, thanks to their own upbringing and sensitivity, are able to help them discover their own inner worth and resources. *Women need to help women*, and to find support in the valuable and effective contributions which associations, movements and groups, many of them of a religious character, have proved capable of making in this regard.

6. In rearing children, mothers have a singularly important role. Through the special relationship uniting a mother and her child, particularly in its earliest years of life, she gives the child that sense

⁷Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* (15 August 1988), 29: AAS 80 (1988), 1723.

of security and trust without which the child would find it difficult to develop properly its own personal identity and, subsequently, to establish positive and fruitful relationships with others. This primary relationship between mother and child also has a very particular educational significance in the religious sphere, for it can direct the mind and heart of the child to God long before any formal religious education begins.

In this decisive and sensitive task, no mother should be left alone. *Children need the presence and care of both parents*, who carry out their duty as educators above all through the influence of the way they live. The quality of the relationship between the spouses has profound psychological effects on children and greatly conditions both the way they relate to their surroundings and the other relationships which they will develop throughout life.

This primary education is extremely important. If relationships with parents and other family members are marked by affectionate and positive interaction, children come to learn from their own experience the values which promote peace: love of truth and justice, a sense of responsible freedom, esteem and respect for others. At the same time, as they grow up in a warm and accepting environment, they are able to perceive, reflected in their own family relationships, the love of God himself; this will enable them to mature in a spiritual atmosphere which can foster openness to others and to the gift of self to their neighbor. Education in the ways of peace naturally continues throughout every period of development; it needs particularly to be encouraged during the difficult time of adolescence, when the passage from childhood to adulthood is not without some risks for young people, who are called to make choices which will be decisive for life.

7. Faced with the challenge of education, the family becomes "the first and fundamental school of social living,"⁸ the first and fundamental *school of peace*. And so it is not difficult to imagine the tragic consequences which occur when the family experiences profound crises which undermine or even destroy its inner equilibrium. Often, in these circumstances, women are left alone. It is then, however, that they most need to be assisted, not only by the practical

⁸John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 37: AAS 74 (1982), 127.

solidarity of other families, of communities of a religious nature and of volunteer groups, but also by the State and by International Organizations through appropriate structures of human, social and economic support which will enable them to meet the needs of their children without being forced to deprive them unduly of their own indispensable presence.

8. Another serious problem is found in places where the intolerable custom still exists of discriminating, from the earliest years, between boys and girls. If, from the very beginning, girls are looked down upon or regarded as inferior, their sense of dignity will be gravely impaired and their healthy development inevitably compromised. Discrimination in childhood will have lifelong effects and will prevent women from fully taking part in the life of society.

In this regard, how can we fail to acknowledge and encourage the invaluable efforts of so many women, including so many Congregations of women religious, who on different continents and in every cultural context make the education of girls and women the principal goal of their activity? Similarly, how can we fail to acknowledge with gratitude all those women who have worked and continue to work in providing health services, often in very precarious circumstances, and who are frequently responsible for the very survival of great numbers of female children?

Women, Teachers of Peace in Society

9. When women are able fully to share their gifts with the whole community, the very way in which society understands and organizes itself is improved, and comes to reflect in a better way the substantial unity of the human family. Here we see the most important condition for the consolidation of authentic peace. The growing presence of women in social, economic and political life at the local, national and international levels is thus a very positive development. Women have a full right to become actively involved in all areas of public life, and this right must be affirmed and guaranteed, also, where necessary, through appropriate legislation.

This acknowledgment of the public role of women should not however detract from their unique role within the family. Here their contribution to the welfare and progress of society, even if its importance is not sufficiently appreciated, is truly incalculable. In

this regard I will continue to ask that more decisive steps be taken in order to recognize and promote this very important reality.

10. With astonishment and concern we are witnessing today a dramatic increase in all kinds of violence. Not just individuals but whole groups seem to have lost any sense of respect for human life. Women and even children are unfortunately among the most frequent victims of this blind violence. We are speaking of outrageous and barbaric behavior which is deeply abhorrent to the human conscience.

We are all called upon to do everything possible to banish from society not only the tragedy of war but also every violation of human rights, beginning with the indisputable right to life, which every person enjoys from the very moment of conception. The violation of the individual human being's right to life contains the seeds of the extreme violence of war. For this reason, I appeal to all women ever to take their place on the side of life. At the same time I urge everyone to help women who are suffering, and particularly children, in a special way those scarred by the painful trauma of having lived through war. Only loving and compassionate concern will enable them once again to look to the future with confidence and hope.

11. When my beloved predecessor Pope John XXIII indicated the participation of women in public life as one of the signs of our times, he also stated that, being aware of their dignity, they would no longer tolerate being exploited.⁹

Women have the right to insist that their dignity be respected. At the same time, they have the duty to work for the promotion of the dignity of all persons, men as well as women.

In view of this, I express the hope that the many international initiatives planned for 1995 - of which some will be devoted specifically to women, such as the Conference sponsored by the United Nations in Beijing on work for equality, development and peace - will provide a significant opportunity for making interpersonal and social relationships ever more human, under the banner of peace.

⁹Cf. John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963), I: AAS 55 (1963), 267-268.

Mary, Model of Peace

12. Mary, Queen of Peace, is close to the women of our day because of her motherhood, her example of openness to others' needs and her witness of suffering. Mary lived with a deep sense of responsibility the plan which God willed to carry out in her for the salvation of all humanity. When she was made aware of the miracle which God had worked in her by making her the Mother of his Incarnate Son, her first thought was to visit her elderly kinswoman Elizabeth in order to help her. That meeting gave Mary the chance to express, in the marvelous canticle of the Magnificat (*Lk* 1:46-55), her gratitude to God who, with her and through her, had begun a new creation, a new history.

I implore the Most Holy Virgin Mary to sustain those men and women who, in the service of life, have committed themselves to building peace. With her help, may they bear witness before all people, especially those who live in darkness and suffering and who hunger and thirst for justice, to the loving presence of the God of peace!

From the Vatican, 8 December 1994.

Message for World Migration Day*

John Paul II

MAY YOU REACH THE GOALS YOU HAVE CHOSEN

Dear Brothers

1. The International Year of the Woman, proclaimed by the United Nations for 1995 - an initiative which the Church cordially welcomes - has persuaded me to assume as the theme of the Message for next World Migration Day that of the woman involved in the migrant phenomenon. The increasing ground she is gaining in the world of work has resulted ever greater involvement in problems associated with migration. The extent of this involvement varies considerably within the different countries, but the overall number of migrating women tends to equal that of men.

This has echoes of great relevance on the female world. One thinks first and foremost of the women who are experiencing the heartbreak of having left their own family behind in their native country. This is often the immediate consequence of laws that delay or even refuse to recognize the right to family reunion. While one can understand a temporary delay in the reunion of families in order to

*Every year the individual Churches are asked to observe World Migration Day. This is a special day in honor of migrants on a date chosen by the Episcopal Conferences. To commemorate this occasion, the Holy Father has issued a Message drawing attention to the plight of migrants. This year, influenced by the United Nations' Proclamation of the International Year of Women to be celebrated in 1995, the Pope has focused in particular on emigrant women, and the additional burdens they must bear. Here is a translation of the Message given in Italian.

favor their subsequent, better acceptance, one must reject the attitude of those who refuse it almost as though it were a claim with no juridical basis. On this subject the teaching of the Second Vatican Council is explicit: "that in emigration regulations family life [should be] perfectly safeguarded" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 11).

Then how can we possibly overlook that, in the case of emigration, a large part of the burden of the family often falls on the woman? For their own members the most sophisticated societies, which mostly attract the flows of migrants, have already created an atmosphere where both spouses often feel obliged to work. Those who come among them as migrants are even more subject to this fate. They have to submit to a great pressure of work in order to provide for the family's daily sustenance so as to achieve the goals for which they left their native country. Such a situation generally imposes the heaviest tasks on the woman who, in fact, is forced to do a double and an even more demanding job when there are children to care for.

2. Particular pastoral attention must be given to unmarried women, who are increasingly more numerous within the migratory phenomenon. Their condition demands from those in charge not only solidarity and acceptance, but also protection and defense from abuse and exploitation.

The Church recognizes that everyone has "the right to leave [their] native land for various motives... in order to seek better conditions of life in another country" (*Laborem Exercens*, n. 23). Nevertheless, while she declares that "the more prosperous nations are obliged, to the extent they are able, to welcome the foreigner in search of the security and the means of livelihood which he cannot find in his country of origin" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2241), she does not deny public authorities the right to control and limit the flow of migrants when for the common good serious and objective reasons exist which affect the migrants' own interests.

Public authorities cannot forget the many and often grave reasons that force so many women to leave their native land. Their decision is not only based on the need for greater opportunities; they are frequently driven by the need to flee cultural, social or religious conflicts, inveterate traditions of exploitation, unjust or discriminatory laws, to give only a few examples.

3. As is well known it is unfortunate that regular migration has always been accompanied, like an umbra, by that which is irregular. A growing phenomenon, with negative aspects which conspicuously affect women in particular. Not infrequently elements of degeneration, such as the drug trade and the scourge of prostitution, filter in through the streams of clandestine immigration.

In this respect, proper vigilance should also be exercised in the countries of origin, since, profiting from the limited lawful emigration channels, unreliable organizations force young women onto the ways of clandestine emigration, enticing them with the prospects of success not without previously despoiling them of their hard-earned savings. The fate many of them face is well-known and sad: turned back at the frontier they are often dragged into the dishonor of prostitution, despite themselves.

The concerted action of the Governments concerned to identify and penalize those responsible for such offenses to human dignity of this kind is essential.

Message of the Synod on Consecrated Life

Synod of Bishops

1. Hymn of Gratitude and Joy

At the end of the Synod, we Synodal Fathers together with participants representing the consecrated life, one with the Successor of Peter, joyfully turn to God's People and all of goodwill in order to bear witness to the good news of the life consecrated by the profession of the evangelical counsels. We rejoice in the presence at the Synod of representatives of consecrated life from other Churches and Christian faith communities. In a special way we turn to over a million women and men who make up this grand family of consecrated persons and members of societies of apostolic life. For a month we have asked the Holy Spirit to give us light. We have prayed, reflected and dialogued about God's plan for the consecrated life and its role in the Church and in the world today. We take to ourselves its joys and hopes along with its concerns and needs, even while we search for ways we can be of help. We have offered some of these as proposals to the Holy Father.

Before all else, we are grateful to almighty God for the gift of consecrated life in the Church. We are grateful to all who are part of consecrated life. We thank you for witnessing with your lives to the evangelical counsels. We send particularly heartfelt greetings to you who follow the Lord in the contemplative life, which we especially value. Our greetings also go to you who have shaped your following of the Lord in the various forms of active life.

During the Twenty-fourth General Congregation on the morning of Thursday, 27 October, the Synod Fathers approved the Message of the Synod of Bishops. Here is the English text.

We especially thank consecrated women. Their total giving of themselves to Christ, their life of adoration and of intercession for the world, bear witness to the Church's holiness. Their service to God's people and to society in various fields of evangelizing - pastoral activity, education, care of the sick, the poor and the abandoned - make visible the motherly face of the Church. Consecrated women should participate more in the Church's consultations and decision-making, as situations require. Their active participation in the Synod has enriched our reflection on consecrated life and, in particular, on the dignity of consecrated women and their collaboration in the mission of the Church.

We direct a word of special affection to older and infirm members of institutes of consecrated life. You have spent your energies generously for decades. Now that you experience the weight of age and suffering, you exercise from your very weakness an apostolate full of strength.

We thank those who work in the full force of their years. Many of you must cope with fewer means than before. May you not let yourselves be absorbed by work, nor forget that human activity finds its source in prayer and intimate union with the Lord.

We direct another word of thanks to young people who have met Jesus Christ and in him have found sufficient courage, even in the midst of today's insecurities, to decide to follow the path of the evangelical counsels. We wish you zeal and perseverance also in moments of discouragement and doubt.

We particularly thank those brothers and sisters of the consecrated life who have remained faithful to their vocation during years of persecution for the faith, both yesterday and today. With grateful hearts, we remember the sisters and brothers who have spilled their blood for the Kingdom of God.

II. Multiple Forms of Consecrated Life

During the Synod, we were able to consider the consecrated life as a very precious expression of the Church's spiritual vitality, fashioned from a prodigious and attractive variety, generously fit for all kinds of good works, endowed with supernatural beauty, fully enriched by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. With these gifts, the Church

appears as a bride adorned for her husband and manifests in herself the multiform wisdom of God.

An important distinction appeared in the discussions: that between consecrated life as such, in its theological dimension, and the institutional forms it has assumed across the centuries. Consecrated life as such is permanent; it will always grace the Church. Institutional forms can be transitory, without guarantees of lasting indefinitely.

For centuries and still today a multiplicity of orders, congregations, institutes, and groups has existed and there are always new forms of consecrated life, each with a different face. Many thousands of women and men have filled their ranks.

Each form of consecrated life has its proper style of life and specific apostolic commitments, from the desert to the city, from the cloistered retreat to contemplation on apostolic frontiers, from fleeing the world to embracing its cultures, from an attentive silence to creative social communication, from monastic stability to mobile mission.

Since the Church is the sacrament of salvation, the various forms of consecrated life make visible in concrete ways the inexhaustible richness of this sacramentality, revealing to the faithful and to the world how close is Christ's heart to all human necessities. Each form of consecrated life is a visible sign showing people the mystery of salvation.

We learn to look at the various forms of consecrated life in order to perceive in each of them the Church's sacramentality: each one, in effect, expresses more clearly than the others a particular aspect of the love which saves.

III. Consecrated Life is Indispensable to the Church

The Church is a sign of hope and new communion with God in this world. Everyone baptized is called to follow Christ, risen from the dead, and to form, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the family of God's children which is the Church. In this Church which is communion, the gifts and charisms of the Spirit flourish for all.

Jesus called some to follow him more closely so that the Church would be an eloquent sign of victorious grace. Those he calls desire to experience more deeply the Redeemer's mysteries and to make themselves ever more like the Master. Their constant conversion makes them a stimulus and a help to their brothers and sisters striving to follow Christ crucified.

Those who embrace the consecrated life endeavor to respond to a personal call from the eternal Father. They are attracted by Jesus and want to be bound to him more intimately through vows or other sacred bonds. By consecrated celibacy and virginity, lived in the spirit of disinterested love, they reveal that Christ, who is loved above all else, is the eternal Spouse of the Church, the goal and meaning of all true affection and love. By freely chosen poverty, they not only witness to their love for the poor and disinherited but also proclaim to all the absolute primacy of God, who is their only wealth. By obedience, they show that they are given to Jesus Christ, that their existence is wholly dedicated to building up the reign of God and that, through their service and love, they are dedicated to their brothers and sisters' sharing in that freedom which the risen Lord has won.

With their very lives, consecrated persons testify, first for their fellow believers and then for the world, that a new order of grace has been instituted by the Cross and Resurrection of Christ. By their lives of total surrender to God and, through him, to others, they render more secure the confidence of future beatitude for the Church. At the same time, for the world, enslaved by so many false promises, they are a sign of the reign of Christ, which is love and peace, pardon and joy. The path for living this joy, in peace and in hope of the Resurrection, is the way of the Cross.

One expression of the profound affection and universal love which consecrated persons should have for the Church is the desire to be an authentic and practical realization of the *sentire cum Ecclesia*, in close unity with the Vicar of Christ and the successors of the Apostolic College who, one with the Pope, preside in charity over the many particular Churches.

IV. Consecration and Mission

Jesus Christ is the first to be consecrated and sent out. Every Christian is consecrated by God in Baptism and Confirmation and

thus becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. With the profession of the evangelical counsels, this consecration from Baptism and Confirmation is strengthened in a particular manner. It leads to a more powerful participation in Christ's paschal mystery, in his passion, death and saving Resurrection.

A consecrated person receives the grace of unifying mission and consecration. These are not two moments of one's life, side by side without relationship. They are joined in deep reciprocity. The consecrated person receives consecration for mission in the Church according to the specific nature of each institute.

A living synthesis of consecration and mission is fed and protected by attentively listening to God's word and by an intense sacramental life. The God of compassion is encountered in the Church through frequently receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation. Unity culminates in the Eucharist, but it is constantly strengthened in the worthy celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, in personal prayer, Marian devotion and the various forms of popular piety.

The witness of the consecrated life itself is the first and most important apostolate, engaging all consecrated sisters and brothers.

V. Charism and Belonging to a Particular Church

The charism to found an Institute of consecrated life is a grace given by God to founders and foundresses for the sake of fostering holiness in the Church and of responding, through their mission, to the challenges of the times. A particular way of following Christ with total generosity becomes visible in each institute. The diversity of charisms among consecrated persons and groups in the Church is therefore a sign of God's infinite love and a cause of joy for the Church.

Each institute's renewal begins with God's grace and with a review of its life and works now in the light of its proper charism. The charism should not be a source of tension between the hierarchy and consecrated persons.

Among several difficulties to which we have given our fraternal attention is the need for communities of consecrated life and their members to integrate themselves into their particular Churches.

The ecclesiology of Vatican II has emphasized the importance of particular Churches, in which the universal Church exists and becomes incarnate locally. All consecrated persons live in a particular Church. The Synodal Fathers have seen clearly that an effort must be made so that all the members of a particular Church recognize and value what is signified by the presence among them of consecrated persons, gathered around the Bishop.

VI. The Prophetic Quality of Consecrated Persons

In contemporary culture, together with marvelous developments in science and technology as well as the more important victories that have been won regarding the rights and dignity of persons and their exercise of liberty, equality and rightful independence, deplorable excesses have also occurred which seem to reveal a painful regress to barbarism.

Those men and women who have decided to follow more closely the poor, chaste and obedient Christ make, with and in the Church, a prophetic response to the rest of humanity, their brothers and sisters, as regards those excesses. They are witnesses to evangelical values unknown to or rejected by the world.

The prophetic response incarnate in your lives, dear sisters and brothers, makes your consecration a privileged means for inculturating the Gospel, because it is not only a credible foundation for a message authenticated by life but is also a demonstration of the Gospel's unsurpassed appeal and of its potential to assume a privileged and central place in all of human life.

Your example gives greater confidence to your contemporaries about the present relevance of the values proclaimed by Christ and made real in the daily life of consecrated persons.

The richness and diversity of cultures which you bring to consecrated life makes you all the more able to proclaim the Gospel to those who do not know Christ. The Gospel leads them, in turn, to discover the seeds of the Word in their own cultures. Christian values, unknown or unincorporated in those cultures, will supply what is lacking to them, correcting and bringing to perfection ordinary ways of thinking and behaving which are not compatible with revealed faith. This will make dialogue and understanding of

the Gospel message rich with language and symbols that are intelligible to contemporary men and women, even while expressing the challenges presented by divine Revelation to human reason as well as to human life, both individual and collective.

The living out of the evangelical counsels questions the crisis connected with the end of modern times and it offers to today's people, suffering in their disillusionment, models fully capable of transforming their lives. This witness invites all to restore in their souls the image of God, obscured by sin.

During the Synodal deliberations, there surfaced a concern about poverty. Often repeated was a strong evangelical desire for a preferential option for the poor.

Consecrated life itself is a fundamental and radical option for the poor Christ. Consecrated persons bind themselves lovingly, in Christ, to all those dispossessed and those who suffer. Poverty's prophecy is not exhausted in denouncing deprivation and injustice; consecrated poverty proclaims the inexhaustible wealth of Christ.

Detachment from wealth, power and family ties invites those in consecrated life, from the depth of their being, to give themselves to the mission which strengthens God's kingdom and extends its borders.

Those in consecrated life have no choice but to be missionary. It is an imperative, rooted in their configuration to Christ. Obedience to the Father leads consecrated men and women to unite themselves with Christ's own mission to save the world and to make themselves one with the Church, giving a witness of love to all. Sometimes the charism of their institute will take those living the consecrated life beyond the borders of homeland and the confines of race; but no matter where their assignment, their very being will always move them to accompany the apostolic work of their brothers and sisters with prayer and sacrifice.

VII. An Appeal to Religious of Oriental Churches

To you, venerable and dear religious of the Oriental Churches, we send our thanks. For us, you represent the continuity of religious life. Your monastic traditions have inestimable value for Christ's

Church. The common patrimony of religious life, preserved still in all the Eastern Churches, is itself witness to a once complete unity.

The desert Fathers and the Eastern monks developed the monastic spirituality which then spread to the West. It is nourished by *lectio divina*, liturgy and unceasing prayer; and it is lived in the charity of common life, in conversion of heart, flight from the world, silence, fasts and long vigils. Eremitical life still flourishes around monasteries. This spiritual treasury has forged the culture of nearby peoples and, at the same time, has been inspired by it.

To religious of Catholic Eastern Churches, we send our thanks for the history of your often heroic witness in the heart of the Catholic Church; we ask that you re-enforce your monastic roots, drawing from the sources of the Gospel and sacred Tradition. We hope that the Oriental Catholic Churches take up again their monastic experience, welcoming and valuing those movements which, welling up from within, lead them toward monasticism.

Attentive to the needs of your people, you have shown, in many ways and to all those who have turned to you in moments of difficulty and conflict, how you love the Church. This service will continue, rooting itself more and more in the quest for the One who is necessary, who is monastic life's reason for being.

Solidify and intensify a sincere dialogue of personal acquaintance and exchange with the monks and nuns of the Orthodox Churches, to who you are closely united in the same following of Christ.

VIII. Special Ardor in the New Evangelization

As the Church approaches the threshold of the year 2000, she is called to a new evangelization. The women and men of our time, especially the younger generation, need to know Jesus Christ, who is the good news of salvation.

The Bishops and those at the Synod have clearly seen that consecrated persons are uniquely apt for playing a leading role in this providential task of the new evangelization.

The Synod fervently desires that interest in both ecumenical and interreligious dialogue grow. We ask consecrated persons in their different countries to develop this interest.

By your way of life, you give witness to the closeness and goodness of God, to the truth of our hope in everlasting life, to the power and efficacy of that love which God places in your hearts in order to overcome the evil and suffering that afflict so many.

Without your contemplative spirit, your poverty and virginity, without the witness of your joyful and liberating obedience, without the radiance of your disinterested and efficacious love for the neediest, the Church would lose a great part of her ability to evangelize and of her capacity to reveal the fruits of salvation, helping men and women receive in their hearts the God of this great hope.

IX. With Hope

Looking toward the third millennium, we turn with special affection to young people, hoping that they will be firmly united to Jesus Christ with conviction and enthusiasm, especially in consecrated life. May they be able to bring the treasure of the Gospel courageously to tomorrow's world. To you, dear young people, who love to dream, we propose our own hope as the best of your dreams.

The Holy Spirit never ceases to lead his Church along new and old paths to inexhaustible holiness. Throughout the Church's history, consecrated life has been a living presence of the Spirit's action, like a privileged space for absolute love of God and of neighbor, for witness to the divine plan to gather all of humanity into the civilization of love, the great family of the children of God.

In this International Year of the Family, we place our hope in the Blessed Virgin Mary, first of the disciples and Mother of all disciples, model of strength and perseverance in following Christ to the Cross. The Virgin Mary is the prototype of consecrated life because she is the Mother who welcomes, listens to, beseeches and contemplates her Lord in heartfelt praise. We pray to her for all consecrated men and women so that she, as our Mother, may protect, comfort and renew all the families of consecrated life in the Church.

Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Reception of Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Your Excellency

1. The International Year of the Family is a particularly important occasion to discover anew the many signs of the Church's love and concern for the family¹ and to present once more the priceless riches of Christian marriage which is the basis of the family.

2. In this context the difficulties and sufferings of those faithful in irregular marriage situations merit special attention.² Pastors are called to help them experience the charity of Christ and the maternal closeness of the Church, receiving them with love, exhorting them to trust in God's mercy and suggesting, with prudence and respect, concrete ways of conversion and participation in the life of the community of the Church.³

3. Aware however that authentic understanding and genuine mercy are never separated from the truth,⁴ pastors have the duty to

¹Cf. John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (2 February 1994), n. 3.

²Cf. John Paul II, Apost. Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), nn. 79-84: AAS 74 (1982) 180-186.

³Cf. *ibid.*, n. 84: AAS 74 (1982) 185; *Letter to Families*, n. 5; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1651.

⁴Cf. Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, n. 29: AAS 60 (1968) 501; John Paul II, Apost. Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 34: AAS 77 (1985) 272; Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 95: AAS 85 (1993) 120.

remind these faithful of the Church's doctrine concerning the celebration of the sacraments, in particular, the reception of the Holy Eucharist. In recent years, in various regions, different pastoral solutions in this area have been suggested according to which, to be sure, a general admission of the divorced and remarried to Eucharistic communion would not be possible but divorced and remarried members of the faithful could approach Holy Communion in specific cases when they consider themselves authorized according to a judgment of conscience to do so. This would be the case, for example, when they had been abandoned completely unjustly, although they sincerely tried to save the previous marriage, or when they are convinced of the nullity of their previous marriage, although unable to demonstrate it in the international forum or when they have gone through a long period of reflection and penance, or also when for morally valid reasons they cannot satisfy the obligation to separate.

In some places, it has also been proposed that in order objectively to examine their actual situation, the divorced and remarried would have to consult a prudent and expert priest. The priest, however, would have to respect their eventual decision in conscience to approach Holy Communion, without this implying an official authorization.

In these similar cases it would be a matter of a tolerant and benevolent pastoral solution in order to do justice to the different situations of the divorced and remarried.

4. Even if analogous pastoral solutions have been proposed by a few Fathers of the Church and in some measure were practiced, nevertheless these never attained the consensus of the Fathers and in no way came to constitute the common doctrine of the Church nor to determine her discipline. It falls to the universal Magisterium, in fidelity to Sacred Scripture and Tradition, to teach and to interpret authentically the *depositum fidei*.

With respect to the aforementioned new pastoral proposals, this Congregation deems itself obliged therefore to recall the doctrine and discipline of the Church in this matter. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ,⁵ the Church affirms that a new union cannot be

⁵Mk 10:11-12: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

recognised as valid if the preceding marriage was valid. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive Holy Communion as long as this situation persists.⁶

This norm is not at all a punishment or a discrimination against the divorced and remarried, but rather expresses an objective situation that of itself renders impossible the reception of Holy Communion: "They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and his Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage."⁷

The faithful who persist in such a situation may receive Holy Communion only after obtaining sacramental absolution, which may be given only "to those who, repenting of having broken the sign of the Covenant and of fidelity to Christ, are sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage. This means, in practice, that when for serious reasons, for example, for the children's upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they 'take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples.'"⁸ In such a case they may receive Holy Communion as long as they respect the obligation to avoid giving scandal.

The doctrine and discipline of the Church in this matter, are amply presented in the post-conciliar period in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*. The Exhortation, among other things, reminds pastors that out of love for the truth they are obliged to discern carefully the different situations and exhorts them to encourage the participation of the divorced and remarried in the various events in the life of the Church. At the same time it confirms and

⁶Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1650; cf. also n. 1640 and the *Council of Trent*, sess. XXIV: DS 1797-1812.

⁷Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 84: AAS 74 (1982) 185-186.

⁸*Ibid.*, n. 84: AAS 74 (1982) 186; cf. John Paul II, *Homily on the Occasion of the Closure of the Sixth Synod of Bishops*, n. 7: AAS 72 (1980) 1082.

indicates the reasons for the constant and universal practice, "founded on Sacred Scripture, of not admitting the divorced and remarried to Holy Communion."⁹ The structure of the Exhortation and the tenor of its words give clearly to understand that this practice, which is presented as binding, cannot be modified because of different situations.

6. Members of the faithful who live together as husband and wife with persons other than their legitimate spouses may not receive Holy Communion. Should they judge it possible to do so, pastors and confessors, given the gravity of the matter and the spiritual good of these persons,¹⁰ as well as the common good of the Church, have the serious duty to admonish them that such a judgment of conscience openly contradicts the Church's teaching.¹¹ Pastors in their teaching must also remind the faithful entrusted to their care of this doctrine.

This does not mean that the Church does not take to heart the situation of these faithful, who moreover are not excluded from ecclesial communion. She is concerned to accompany them personally and invite them to share in the life of the Church in the measure that is compatible with the dispositions of divine law, from which the Church has no power to dispense.¹² On the other hand, it is necessary to instruct these faithful so that they do not think their participation in the life of the Church is reduced exclusively to the question of the reception of the Eucharist. The faithful are to be helped to deepen their understanding of the value of sharing in the sacrifice of Christ in the Mass, of spiritual communion,¹³ of prayer, of meditation on the Word of God, and of works of charity and justice.¹⁴

7. The mistaken conviction of a divorced and remarried person that he may receive Holy Communion normally presupposes that personal conscience is considered in the final analysis to be able, on

⁹Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 84; AAS 74 (1982) 185.

¹⁰Cf. 1 Co 11: 27-29.

¹¹Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 978 §2.

¹²Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1640.

¹³Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Certain Questions concerning the Minister of the Eucharist*, III/4, AAS 75 (1983) 1007; St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, 35, I; St. Alphonsus M. de' Liguori, *Visite al SS. Sacramento e a Maria Santissima*.

¹⁴Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 84; AAS 74 (1982) 185.

the basis of one's own convictions,¹⁵ to come to a decision about the existence or absence of a previous marriage and the value of the new union. However, such a position is inadmissible.¹⁶ Marriage, in fact, both because it is the image of the spousal relationship between Christ and his Church as well as the fundamental core and an important factor in the life of civil society, is essentially a public reality.

8. It is certainly true that a judgment about one's own dispositions for the reception of Holy Communion must be made by a properly formed moral conscience. But it is equally true that the consent that is the foundation of marriage is not simply a private decision since it creates a specifically ecclesial and social situation for the spouses, both individually and as a couple. Thus the judgment of conscience of one's own marital situation does not regard only the immediate relationship between man and God, as if one could prescind from the Church's mediation that also includes canonical laws binding in conscience. Not to recognize this essential aspect would mean in fact to deny that marriage is a reality of the Church, that is to say, a sacrament.

9. In inviting pastors to distinguish carefully the various situations of the divorced and remarried, the Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* recalls the case of those who are subjectively certain in conscience that their previous marriage, irreparably broken, had never been valid.¹⁷ It must be discerned with certainty by means of the external forum established by the Church whether there is objectively such a nullity of marriage. The discipline of the Church, while it confirms the exclusive competence of ecclesiastical tribunals with respect to the examination of the validity of the marriage of Catholics, also offers new ways to demonstrate the nullity of a previous marriage, in order to exclude as far as possible every divergence between the truth verifiable in the judicial process and the objective truth known by a correct conscience.¹⁸

¹⁵Cf. Encyclical Letter *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 55: AAS 85 (1993) 1178.

¹⁶Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 1085 § 2.

¹⁷Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 84; AAS 74 (1982) 185.

¹⁸Cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 1536 § 2 and 1679 and Code of the Canons of the Eastern Churches, 1217 § 2 and 1365 concerning the probative force of the depositions of the parties in such processes.

Adherence to the Church's judgment and observance of the existing discipline concerning the obligation of canonical form necessary for the validity of the marriage of Catholics are what truly contribute to the spiritual welfare of the faithful concerned. The Church is in fact the Body of Christ and to live in ecclesial communion is to live in the Body of Christ and to nourish oneself with the Body of Christ. With the reception of the sacrament of the Eucharist, communion with Christ the Head can never be separated from communion with his members, that is, with his Church. For this reason, the sacrament of our union with Christ is also the sacrament of the unity of the Church. Receiving the Eucharistic Communion contrary to the norms of ecclesial communion is therefore in itself a contradiction. Sacramental communion with Christ includes and presupposes the observance, even if at times difficult, of the order of ecclesial communion, and it cannot be right and fruitful if a member of the faithful, wishing to approach Christ directly, does not respect this order.

10. In keeping with that has been said above, the desire expressed by the Synod of Bishops, adopted by the Holy Father John Paul II as his own and put into practice with dedication and with praiseworthy initiatives by bishops, priests, religious and lay faithful is yet to be fully realized, namely, with solicitous charity to do everything that can be done to strengthen in the love of Christ and the Church those faithful in irregular marriage situations. Only thus will it be possible for them fully to receive the message of Christian marriage and endure in faith the distress of their situation. In pastoral action one must do everything possible to ensure that this is understood not to be a matter of discrimination but only of absolute fidelity to the will of Christ who has restored and entrusted to us anew the indissolubility of marriage as a gift of the Creator. It will be necessary for pastors and the community of the faithful to suffer and to love in solidarity with the persons concerned so that they may recognize in their burden the sweet yoke and the light burden of Jesus.¹⁹ Their burden is not sweet and light in the sense of being small or insignificant, but becomes light because the Lord — and with him the whole Church — shares it. It is the task of pastoral action, which has to be carried out with total dedication, to offer this help, founded in truth and in love together.

¹⁹Cf. *Mt* 11:30.

Proclamation of the Commencement of the Quadricentennial Celebration and the Convocation of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Assembly

*Diosdado Talamayan, D.D.**

Philip II, King of Spain and Royal Patron of the Church in the Philippines, ordered his ambassador in Rome, on June 17, 1595, to beg the Holy Father to create the diocese of Nueva Segovia together with those of Nueva Caceres in Camarines and Santisimo Nombre de Jesus in Cebu. We must read the King's very words:

"Therefore I order you, on receipt of this dispatch, to propose to His Holiness, and beg him in my name, that he may be pleased to erect as a metropolitan see the aforementioned cathedral church of Manila, and the three bishoprics — one in the church of the city of Nueva Segovia (Lallo) in the province of Cagayan in the island of Luzon, under the patronage of the Conception of Our Lady; another in the city of Caceres (Naga) in the territory of Camarines in the same island, under the patronage of St. John the Evangelist; and another in the aforementioned city of Santisimo Nombre de Jesus in the island of Cebu of that archipelago, under the protection of the Guardian Angel. In this way each bishop in his diocese may exercise the pastoral office, and attend to the conversion and instruction of the said natives with jurisdiction, authority and power." (Letter of Philip II to his ambassador in Rome, 17 June 1595 in Coleccion de documentos ineditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y organizacion de las antiguas posesiones espanoles de America y Oceania, Madrid, 1880, 34:86-90)

*Archbishop of Tuguegarao

The Holy Father, Clement VIII, acceded to the Royal Patron's entreaty. On August 26, 1595, by the Apostolic Mandate *Super specula militantis ecclesiae*, the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, under the Patronage of the Conception of Our Lady, as the King requested, came into existence.

Four centuries later, the sons and daughters of the Church of Nueva Segovia are gathered in this Cathedral Church of the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao, a true heir to the venerable see of Lallo, to thank God for the heroic lives and ministry of missionaries who first preached the Gospel, for the humility and docility to the Spirit with which our forefathers received the glad tidings and passed the Good News on to our fathers and to us, for the privilege and the mandate that is ours of handing the message of Christianity to our children and to their own children.

In our days, the challenges of secularism and religious indifference, the complacency of those who have been baptized for whom, however, the demands of Christianity are not a lived reality, the subtle but sustained attacks of unbelief and of unbelievers bring us to the realization that a quadricentennial celebration must be an occasion for prayer, for renewal of commitment and for a revival of the missionary zeal that must at all times characterize the Church. While the Lord of the Harvest gives us the consolation of rejoicing in the bounty with which the labors of our ancestors and the faith of our fathers have been blessed, the voice of the Lord of History rings loud and clear: *Euntes, ergo, docete omnes gentes* (Mt 28:19). In entreating the Holy Father to create the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, it was Philip II's pious desire that the Gospel be more effectively preached and that the welfare of God's people in this part of the Lord's vineyard be more lovingly and effectively attended to. It would indeed be tragic and a travesty of such nobility of motive were the harvest to be lost to the elements of destruction because the ardor of the faith that moved Blessed Francisco de Capillas and all the holy men and women who labored in this beautiful Valley should be lost in lukewarm hearts and timid spirits.

The faithful and their priests in this Archdiocese have set themselves to the difficult task of building small, praying and caring communities that endeavor to reflect on God's Word and to live by it, that strive to proclaim by the love brethren have for each other what a joyful thing it is to be a Christian. Basic Ecclesial Communities then

call for the prayers, the devotion and the dedication of all the sons and daughters of Cagayan. The time is far from ripe for us to proclaim successes. We can only humbly raise our voices in supplication that God may bring to completion the work he has begun through our hands. We must commend, at the same time, the organizations and movements of the laity, including the youth. Our lay persons have been inspired by the Spirit to recognize that the task of evangelization is also rightfully theirs, and that the command to preach the Gospel to their families, in the work place and in the spheres of their concerns is addressed to them as surely as it is addressed to priests and bishops. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* very clearly instructs us.

2045 Because they are members of the Body whose Head is Christ, Christians contribute to building up the Church by the constancy of their convictions and their moral lives. The Church increases, grows and develops through the holiness of her faithful, until "we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

We have put in considerable resources for the construction of churches and rectories, seminaries and formation centers. We thank our people who always helped us in these endeavors. As we commence our celebration of the Quadricentennial of Nueva Segovia, we realize that far more important than buildings of wood and stone are communities of faith and prayer, love and reconciliation that reflect the values of the Gospel and respond to the universal call to holiness. *In aedificationem Corporis Christi* — this has been by motto as your Archbishop; I now propose it to you for this Quadricentennial celebration that we may put strength and talent, wisdom and grace towards building what is truly Christ's Body — the table-fellowship of the brothers and sisters of the Lord.

To make the celebration of this Quadricentennial more than a passing event, a happy memory, I hereby convoke a PASTORAL ASSEMBLY for the Archdiocese of Tuguegarao. To this Assembly I summon our lay leaders, our religious and our priests. The *Catholic Faith Catechism* which is the Philippine adaptation of the universal catechism suggests the priorities to which the Assembly must address itself. There must, first of all, be a focus on the *essentials of the faith* especially considering problems and challenges of the faith in this Archdiocese. "Second, believing in Christ must be related directly

The Holy Father, Clement VIII, acceded to our entreaty. On August 26, 1595, by the bull *specula militantis ecclesiae*, the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, the Patronage of the Conception of Our Lady, came into existence.

Four centuries later, the sons of Nueva Segovia are gathered in the diocese of Tuguegarao, a true testament to thank God for the heroic lives of those who preached the Gospel, for the work which our forefathers received from the Holy News on to our fathers, that is ours of handing on to their own children.

In our day, however, the subtle but effective reduction of the mission to the local level is a fact.

time and the dedication of all the sons and daughters of the same work he has begun through our youth. Our lay persons have taken on the task of evangelization and clearly instructs us. The Church by the knowledge of her faithful, the stature of whose Head is the Church, clearly instructs us.

his disciple." Does it mean that, four centuries in this people and the and th

to the with his prayer as she spirit came upon the our endeavors. We commend our celebration. We commend to her *in praesidium confugimus, Sancta ecclesiae matris, ad tuas precationes ne despicias in necessitatibus!*

Philippine Episcopology: Addenda-Corrigenda, 1994

Charles Bransom, et al.

The following list updates entries in the *PHILIPPINE EPISCOPOLOGY* previously published in the *Boletín* and continues the "Episcopology" with the details of the episcopal ordinations of those bishops consecrated subsequent to the final installment and the previous lists of *Addenda-Corrigenda*.

- N. 12 *Luis de Cañizares* - born at Madrid.
- N. 125 *Antonio Jose Frondosa* - died 19 September 1993.
- N. 149 *Joseph William Regan, M.M.* - died at Davao City, 24 October 1994.
- N. 177 *Salvador Lazo y Lazo* - resigned as Bishop of San Fernando de la Union 28 May 1993.
- N. 198 *Fernando R. Capalla* - named Coadjutor Archbishop of Davao 28 June 1994.
- N. 203 *Sincero Lucero y Barcenilla* - died 3 September 1993.
- N. 234 *Antonio Tobias y Realubin* - named Bishop of San Fernando de la Union 28 May 1993.
- N. 264 *Osvaldo Padilla* - named Apostolic Nuncio to Sri Lanka 20 August 1994.
- N. 268 1993, 28 August, at Bangued, Cathedral of Saint James the Elder.
Msgr. Gian Vincenzo Moreni, Titular Archbishop of Turrís in Mauritania, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philip-

pines, assisted by Msgr. Orlando Quevedo, Archbishop of Nueva Segovia and Msgr. Cesar Raval, Bishop emeritus of Bangued,

consecrated Msgr. **Artemio Rillera, S.V.D.**, Bishop of Bangued, born at Naguilian (San Fernando de la Union) 1 May 1942; S.V.D. 29 June 1966, professed perpetually 28 June 1970; priest 28 November 1970; named 28 June 1993.

- N. 269 1994, 6 January, at Rome, St. Peter's Basilica
Pope John Paul II, assisted by Msgr. Giovanni Battista Re, Titular Archbishop of Vescovio and Msgr. Josip Uhač, Titular Archbishop of Tharros,

consecrated Msgr. **Ramon C. Arguelles**, Titular Bishop of Ros Cre, Auxiliary of Manila, born at Batangas (Lipa) 12 November 1944; priest 21 December 1969; named 27 November 1993.

- N. 270 1994, 24 March, at Malaybalay, Cathedral of Saint Isidore the Farmer

Msgr. Gian Vincenzo Moreni, Titular Archbishop of Turrus in Mauritania, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Jesus Tuquib, Archbishop of Cagayan de Oro and Msgr. Gaudencio Rosales, Archbishop of Lipa,

consecrated Msgr. **Honesto Chaves Pacana, S.J.**, Bishop of Malaybalay born at Cagayan de Oro 22 January 1933; Jesuit in 1951; solemnly professed 22 April 1958; priest 10 June 1965; named 12 January 1994.

- N. 271 1994, 31 May, at Manila, Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception Cardinal Jaime Sin y Lachica, Archbishop of Manila, assisted by Msgr. Oscar V. Cruz, Archbishop of Lingayen-Dagupan and Msgr. Paciano B. Anacieta, Archbishop of San Fernando

consecrated Msgr. **Crisostomo A. Yalung**, Titular Bishop of Ficus, Auxiliary of Manila, born at Angeles (san Fernando) 3 December 1953; priest 23 June 1979; named 25 March 1994.

Cases and Inquiries

Excelso Garcia, O.P.

GREGORIAN MASSES

As a religious brother I am in charge of receiving offerings and donations for the celebration of Masses in our Parish. Something is bothering me, with regard to the so called "Gregorian Masses." I doubt whether all conditions required for the proper celebration of said Masses are fulfilled. I can see the priests, assigned to apply Gregorian Masses, receive offerings and celebrate Masses for other intentions, for instance on the occasion of exams, birthdays, etc. I do not know exactly what are the conditions to be fulfilled for Gregorian Masses; but I have learned that they should not be interrupted. Please write something on this matter. Thank you.

A Religious Brother

Notion and Origin. Gregorian Masses can be defined as the series of thirty Masses celebrated within thirty consecutive days without interruption for the suffrage of only one dead person.

This practice began at the time of St. Gregory the Great, Abbot of the Abbey in Mount Caelio, Rome. There was a monk named Justo, who had broken his vow of poverty in a serious manner, but finally died in the grace of the Lord. St. Gregory ordered that as a suffrage for Justo's soul the Holy Mass should be offered for him for a period of thirty consecutive days without interruption. Having been celebrated the Holy Sacrifice on the thirtieth day, Justo appeared to a

monk telling him that his soul had already been delivered from the pains in Purgatory. This event is recalled by St. Gregory himself in his *Dialogues*, book VI, c. 55.

Altar of the celebration. Since then, the custom of offering of the Holy Mass for a particular dead within thirty consecutive days without interruption became very popular. This custom was approved by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on October 16, 1628. The devotion of the faithful in offering Gregorian Masses grew to such extent that the people believed that the soul for whom the Gregorian Masses were celebrated could be freed from the pains in Purgatory as soon as all the thirty Masses were said. In the beginning Gregorian Masses were celebrated in an ordinary altar. Besides, the faithful moved by the same belief began later on to offer the Holy Mass (not the Gregorian Masses) in the altar dedicated to St. Gregory at the church of Mount Caelio, in Rome.

Efficacy of the Gregorian Masses. It should be noted here, that in order to avoid simony and superstition, this belief of the faithful must be properly guided and explained. The efficacy of the Gregorian Masses, as well as the Mass said in the altar of St. Gregory, to deliver the soul should not be looked upon as something unfailing. Undoubtedly the efficacy of the thirty Gregorian Masses is enough to free the soul from the pains in Purgatory. The Holy Mass, being the same sacrifice of the Cross offered by Jesus Christ, can effect infinite graces due to the infinite dignity of the One who offered Himself for the redemption of the world and of the Victim which is the Lord Himself. However, the effects produced by the Mass are subject to the limitations of the soul, recipient of the Mass fruits, and dependent upon the will of God who applies such effects. In other words, it is not guaranteed that the deliverance of the soul for whom the Gregorian Masses are offered is actually obtained.

A question may be asked: Where does the special efficacy attributed to the Gregorian Masses come from? Does it proceed from the intercession of St. Gregory who initiated this devout practice among the faithful? Or from any indulgence attached to the Gregorian Masses? On one hand it is improbable that St. Gregory, being Abbot of Mount Caelio, could have obtained from the Roman Pontiff any kind of indulgence, since the granting of indulgences started later on. On the other hand, the Sacred Congregation for Indulgences declared in 1888 that there was no record whatsoever about any papal

concession of an indulgence attached to the celebration of Gregorian Masses. Hence, the efficacy of Gregorian Masses cannot be attributed to any particular indulgence.

Solans-Vendrell give us in their *Manual Litúrgico* the following explanation about the origin of the special efficacy of Gregorian Masses. They hold that most probably St. Gregory, seeing the efficacy produced by the celebration of the thirty Masses for the soul of the monk Justo, requested the Lord that the mercy shown to Justo's soul be also granted to other souls for whom the thirty Gregorian Masses are applied.

"Ad instar" Altars. Due to the great devotion of the faithful in offering Masses for their beloved ones, some Roman Pontiffs, specially Gregory XIII granted the privilege that other altars be erected in Rome and elsewhere, called *ad instar* altars, i.e. similar to the altar of St. Gregory in Mount Caelio. Masses celebrated in *ad instar* altars were attributed the same efficacy of the thirty Gregorian Masses. However in 1842 and 1852 the question was raised to the Holy See, whether there was any difference between the *ad instar* altars and the so-called "privileged altars," and, if there was any, what was it? As there was no existing consensus on the issue among the Consultors and Judges of the Sacred Congregation on the right solution, the answer given by the Sacred Congregation was: "*Dilata et ad mentem*," which means: no definite answer can be given until further study of the matter is carried out. As a result Pius IX suspended temporarily on March 15, 1852 the granting of any concession to *ad instar* altars.

On March 13, 1884, the Sacred Congregation for Indulgences issued a Decree where some questions related to the *ad instar* altars with the corresponding answers appeared. They were the following:

"I. Whether the confidence of the faithful in offering the so-called Gregorian Masses can be considered as pious and reasonable as well as approved by the Church?

"II. Whether the confidence of the faithful in offering Masses to be celebrated in the altar dedicated to St. Gregory in the church of Mount Caelio as having special efficacy to free the dead from the pains in Purgatory can be considered as pious and be approved by the Church.

"III. Whether the same can be applied to Masses celebrated in the *ad instar* Gregorian altars approved in the past?

IV. Whether it would be advisable to revoke the suspension of new concessions that *ad instar* altars be erected, as imposed by papal precept of March 15, 1852?"

The answer given by the General Congregation of Cardinals reads as follows:

"To questions I, II and III: *Affirmative*.

"To question IV: It should be advised that the Holy Father revoke the suspension of new concessions for the erection of *ad instar* Gregorian altars."

On March 15, 1884, Pope Leo XIII confirmed the answers given by the Cardinals and revoked the suspension of new concessions for erection of *ad instar* Gregorian altars.

Later on two more questions were raised to the Holy See concerning Gregorian Masses, namely:

"I. Whether the so-called Gregorian Masses celebrated for the dead, as done according to the original custom instituted by St. Gregory approved by the Church, may be applied also for the living?"

"II. Whether any papal indulgence has been attached to the Gregorian Masses?"

On August 24, 1888, the Sacred Congregation answered as follows:

"To question I: *Negative*;

"To question II: There is no record that any papal indulgence has been attached to the Gregorian Masses. However, the Decree given by the Sacred Congregation on March 13, 1884 shows that the pious custom of the faithful to offer thirty Masses for the dead has been recognized and approved by the Church, as well as their special confidence in the efficacy of the Gregorian Masses by the will and acceptance of the divine Mercy for the deliverance of the soul concerned from the pains in Purgatory" (See *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, 1888, vol. XXI, p. 251).

Likewise, the Director of a pious cause for the souls in Purgatory established in the diocese of Dijon, asked the Sacred Congregation for Indulgences:

"Whether it is necessary that the thirty Gregorian Masses be celebrated:

1. in memory of St. Gregory without doing any memory of him;
2. by the same priest;
3. for only one soul without any special intention;
4. for a period of thirty continuous days without interruption;
5. in the same altar?"

The answer to these questions given by the Sacred Congregation on January 14, 1889 was:

"To the first and second questions: *Negative*;

"to the third question: The Masses are to be applied for the soul whose deliverance from the pains in Purgatory is implored to the Divine Mercy;

"to the fourth question: *Affirmative*;

"to the fifth question: *Negative*.

With regard to the fourth question, it should be noted that if the thirty Masses are said in less than thirty days or there is an interruption (except in the Holy Triduum), the value of the thirty Masses is present; but the efficacy peculiar to the Gregorian Masses without interruption is greater" (Cf. J. Solans, *Manual Litúrgico*, I, p. 230).

The new concession of *ad instar* altars granted by Leo XIII was again suspended by a Decree of the Holy Office, confirmed by Pope Pius X on December 12, 1912. In this new Decree two necessary conditions were particularly stressed for the efficacy of the Gregorian Masses, namely: "that the Masses to be celebrated are thirty, and that the thirty Masses can be celebrated in any altar without interruption, except during the Holy Triduum."

Finally, on February 24, 1967 by order of Pope Paul VI, the Sacred Congregation of the Council published a Declaration saying that:

"When the celebration of Gregorian Masses is interrupted due to an unforeseen impediment (*i.e.* by illness) or for a reasonable cause (*i.e.* due to the celebration of a funeral or wedding Mass), by dispositive action of the Church the celebration of the Gregorian Masses continues to have the effects of suffrage for the deceased which the practice and piety of the faithful have hitherto attributed to it, with the obligation of the celebrating priest, however, to complete the celebration of thirty Masses, as soon as possible. The Ordinary is to take

opportune safeguards that no abuses creep into a matter of such great importance" (cf. AAS, 59, 1967, p. 229; cf. also Bouscaren, *Canon Law Digest*, 6, p. 559).

Summing up what has been said on the Gregorian Masses, we say:

1. The pious universal custom of the faithful to offer the so-called "Gregorian Masses" for a dead person has been approved by the Church as highly efficacious to the dead for whom they are applied, and should be maintained.

2. The number of Gregorian Masses is thirty, to be said on thirty consecutive days without interruption, except in the Holy Triduum. An interruption due to an unforeseen impediment (illness) or for a reasonable cause (celebration of funeral or wedding Mass) does not hinder the efficacy of Gregorian Masses. The priest concerned should, if possible, look for another priest when he is impeded, to say the Gregorian Mass or Masses on the day or days he cannot offer them. Two or three Gregorian Masses cannot be applied by the same or different priests on the same day. The celebration of Gregorian Masses is not fulfilled by distributing them among various priests and offering them in a few days. They are to be said in thirty consecutive days.

3. The Gregorian Masses can be celebrated in an ordinary altar.

4. They can be said by one or different priests.

5. The thirty Gregorian Masses should be applied for the suffrage of only one soul.

6. To say *de requiem* Mass is not a compelling requirement. It is, however, more proper to say the Mass *de requiem*.

We hope that this information will be found enlightening as to the implications of accepting the celebration of Gregorian Masses. All priests know or should know such conditions and when they accept the obligation to say this kind of Masses, it is assumed that they fulfill it properly, either by themselves or by somebody else.

IMPEDIMENT OF LEGAL ADOPTION

I am using your Manual for Parish Priests to solve the doubts which arise during my ministry. Last month, however, I had a case which does not seem to be covered by what you say on the matter. The problem was a marriage of an adopted boy and an illegitimate daughter of the adopting father. Somebody told me that this marriage is prohibited by the Family Code of the Philippines. Thus, I did not solemnize that marriage. Was I correct in doing so?

A Parish Priest

Our consultant seem to believe that, since the *Manual for Parish Priests* does not mention the norm introduced by the *Family Code*, the principle established by the *Church's Code* mentioned in the *Manual*, is not enough to solve the case. It is true that our *Manual* was published in 1985 while the *Family Code* came out in 1988. But the new code of the Church came out in 1983 and the canonical norm by which the present case is to be solved is mentioned already in the *Manual for Parish Priests*.

To study the case of our consultant Parish Priest, we should consider both the Church's Code of 1983 and the Family Code of 1987.

The Church's Code has the following two canons:

"*Canon 1094*. Those who are legally related by reason of adoption cannot validly marry each other if their relationship is in the direct line or in the second degree of the collateral line." And *canon 110* reads: "Children who have been adopted according to the norm of the civil law, are considered as being the children of the person or persons who have adopted them." Both canons 1094 and 110 appear in the *Manual for Parish Priests*, 1985, p. 310, n. 651.

The *Family Code of the Philippines* deals with this matter in Article 38, which reads as follows:

"The following marriages shall be void from the very beginning for reason of public policy:

4. Between the adopting parent and the adopted child;
5. Between the surviving spouse of the adopting parent and the adopted child;

6. Between the surviving spouse of the adopted child and the adopter;

7. Between the adopted child and a legitimate child of the adopter;

8. Between adopted children of the same adopter."

It is obvious, therefore, that legal adoption is considered now by the Church's Code as diriment impediment only. The 1917 Code canonized whatever was established by civil legislation: in countries where adoption was an impedient impediment, it was an impedient impediment too for the Church. All impedient impediments having been abolished by the new Code of 1983, adoption is always considered now as a diriment impediment, basing naturally the existence of adoption on the civil legislation, independently on how it is qualified by the Civil Code: impedient or diriment impediment. Canon 110 is a basic canon on this matter: "Children who have been adopted according to the civil law, are considered as being the children of the person or persons who have adopted them."

Considering carefully both ecclesiastical and civil legislation, we see that cases mentioned in numbers 5 and 6 of Article 38 of the *Family Code* are not contemplated by the *Church's Code*. Therefore, the marriage of the adopting parent and the surviving spouse of the adopted child, as well as the marriage of the adopted person and the surviving spouse of the adopting parent are not considered in the Church as impediments, although they are considered by the *Family Code* as invalid from the very beginning. Said marriages, however, are included among the cases mentioned in canon 1070, number 2 of the Church's Code, which reads as follows: "Except in case of necessity, no one is to assist without the permission of the local Ordinary at a marriage which cannot be recognized by the civil law or celebrated in accordance with it."

Coming, therefore, to the case of our consultant Parish Priest, we have to say that the *Family Code* does not consider the marriage of this case invalid. The marriage mentioned and considered as invalid by the *Family Code* is the one contracted by an adopted child and a *legitimate* child of the adopting parent. In our case the daughter to be married to the adopted son is an *illegitimate* child of the adopting parent. It is only the Church's Code which considers the marriage of our case null and void, because of the relationship of adoption existing

between the two contracting parties is in the second degree of collateral line, as established in the *Code of Canon Law* in its canon 1094.

Thus, the consultant Parish Priest was correct in not solemnizing the marriage, though the reason which moved him not to assist at the marriage was not the right one. He could perfectly solve the problem by following the two canonical norms contained in the *Manual for Parish Priests*.

Festal Homilies for January and February 1995

Regino Cortes, O.P.

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD January 1, 1995

Today's liturgy commemorates the truth of faith proclaimed solemnly at Ephesus in 431 A.D. that Mary is the Mother of God, *Theotokos*. This Council condemns the doctrine of Nestorius who taught that Mary was only the mother of Christ, *Christotokos*, maintaining that there were two persons in Christ: a divine person and a human person. According to him Mary was the mother only of the man, Christ with a human person and a human nature. The faith of the Church is that in Christ there is only one person, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, with two natures divine and human, the so-called mystery of the hypostatic union. Mary cannot be called the mother of the divine nature or the divinity anymore than a woman can be called the mother of the "presidency." But the mother of any president can be truly called the Mother of the President. Since the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of Christ-God she also earned the title Mother of God. The Church has made this solemnity the inaugural feast of the new civil year.

FIRST READING: *Nb* 6:22-27

These verses in Numbers contain the 15 Hebrew words used by the Jewish priests in blessing the people. This is called the *birkath kohanim* or the priestly blessing. In this blessing the word *Yahweh* is found three times which, however, cannot be pronounced by anyone except by the high priest during the feast of *Yom Kippur* or Atone-

ment celebrated during the 10th day of Tishri (September/October), the seventh month in the Hebrew calendar. This is called *Ethanim* in *1 K* 8:2 which for the agricultural people in Mesopotamia and Israel was considered the beginning of the year. It was during this month that Solomon inaugurated the temple in Jerusalem (*1 K* 8). Outside of this instance, instead of pronouncing "Yahweh," the priest says "Adonay."

A description of the feast of Atonement, aside from that of Leviticus 16, is found in Sirach 50 on the occasion of the authors laudatory words for Simon II, son of Onias II (220-195 B.C.). At the conclusion of this ceremony the high priest "would come down and raise his hands over the whole concourse of the sons of Israel, to give them the Lord's blessing from his lips, being privileged to pronounce his name." It is only during this feast of *Yom Kippur* that the high priest pronounces the name YAHWEH. In no other time and by no other person can this sublime name be pronounced. That is why everytime the tetragrammaton or the four consonants YHWH is found in a text, biblical or non-biblical, it is always read and pronounced 'Adonay (Lord). Many biblical translations, except the Jerusalem Bible, retain this reading, so that the word "Yahweh" is given in these translations as "Lord," influenced by the Greek or Septuagint translation "*Kyrios*," which is also followed by our liturgical text.

It seems, then, that when the high priest uses this formula during the feast of the Atonement as described in Sirach 50, it is only then that he pronounces this holiest of names: YAHWEH. This is reflected in the verse: "This is how they are to call down my name on the sons of Israel" (*Nb* 6:27 or in the Greek *LXX* 6:23). When this blessing is pronounced as the conclusion of the Sabbath rites the name of God "Yahweh" is never pronounced but substituted by 'Adonay or Lord.

The blessing is short, only 15 words in Hebrew (30 in the liturgical text translation), but it contains all that we can hope and wish for in this world and the world to come.

SECOND READING: *Ga* 4:4-7

This text in Galatians is the oldest canonical text in the New Testament speaking about the human birth of Christ: "born of a

woman," written by St. Paul about 56/57 A.D. It antedates for some years even the canonical gospels. Some scholars with a few following date the writing of Galatians even before the Council of Jerusalem in the year 49 A.D. Here the virgin birth and the pre-existence of the Son of God are certainly implied. Because of the universal tenor of the letter, St. Paul did not mention the name Mary but this does not certainly mean that he did not know the name of the mother of Jesus.

Although the mention of the human birth of Jesus is seemingly incidental in the text since the main focus is on the adoption of men as children of God, still the phrase "born of a woman," followed by "born subject of the Law," is the divinely designed process by which men are redeemed and adopted.

Verse 6 is variously translated in the English biblical versions depending on the understanding of the Greek word *hoti*. The Kings James Version (KJV) translates it as "because" making the phrase causal. This is also the translation in the Vulgate with *quoniam*. It then means that the sending of the Holy Spirit was made "because we are sons." But other translations like the Jerusalem Bible and our liturgical text depending on the New American Bible (NAB) makes the sending of the Holy Spirit an essential element in our adoptive sonship. Hence the translation: "the proof that you are sons is the fact that God has sent forth into our hearts the spirit of his Son..."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk 2:16-21*

Mary treasured all these things and reflected (sympallousa) on them in her heart. The interpretation is becoming current that this sentence of Luke does not actually imply that our Blessed Mother was a mere collector of memories who became later on the eye-witness source of the Lucan infancy stories. The intention of Luke here may be much deeper.

The meaning of "to treasure all things" (*synterein to rema*) may be drawn from *Gn 37:10-11* when the young Joseph told his father and brothers of his dream that the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to him. It is said in the conclusion that "his father pondered the matter" (NAB) or "his father kept the thing in mind" (JB). *Rema* like the Hebrew *dabar* can mean "words," and "events." So that our Blessed Mother, having experienced the events and heard the words, like the accounts of the shepherd and the words of Jesus in the finding in the temple (2:51), "pondered all these in her heart,"

grasping their significance. She is the model of the one who heard the word in the parable of the sower and "kept," it, let it grow to produce manifold fruits. She is, in the phrase of PCP-II, the "model of discipleship." She is doubly the mother of the Lord who, not only begot him in the flesh, but one "who hears the word of God and put it into practice" (Lk 8:21).

HOMILY

The world of the poor should not only be an area of evangelization, the poor themselves should become evangelizers as envisioned by the PCP-II. The shepherds, the poor of the land, received first the "good news," the *evangelion* from heavenly heralds. They acted at once, hurried and found Christ lying in a manger. They announced what they had seen to others and they were filled with joy "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen."

To be poor it is not necessary that a person lacks material things although there are many persons who lack material things not of their own fault and are really materially poor. A person is poor if he is lowly, humble, meek, and depends for his needs on God. These are the *'anawim*.

First and foremost of these *'anawim* is Mary, the mother of the Lord. "She was poor in fact and in spirit" (PCP-II, no. 149). Let us, then, focus our attention on our Blessed Mother who carried the creator and savior of the world in her womb, but gave birth in a stable because "there was no room for them in the inn."

Nevertheless, the world of the stable, the world of the poor has become the center of the Good News. It radiates to all and sundry the message that the greatest of all spiritual riches can be had in the lowest human conditions.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

January 8, 1995

This feast is more popularly known as "Three Kings" although St. Matthew never spoke of kings but of magi or wise men; neither were they three in the gospel but only an implication drawn from the number of gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. To call it the "Epiphany of the Lord" or "manifestation" of the Lord to the Gentiles is more

appropriate and more theological. The three readings in the Mass proclaim this manifestation of the Lord to the nations.

FIRST READING: *Is* 60:1-6

The liturgical text is part of a poem which includes Isaiah 62 speaking about the glorious resurrection of Jerusalem. Many textual analysts of the Bible consider the chapters 56 - 66 of the present book of Isaiah to have been written after the exile and hence of an author or authors belonging to the circle of the disciples of Isaiah. However the poetic text of chapters 60 and 62 has many resemblances with the Book of Consolation of Isaiah 40 - 55 that some critics have conceded this to have come from the hand of the Second-Isaiah or probably from an immediate disciple of this exilic prophet. Some ideas of this poem has also served as inspiration for Apocalypse 21 and 22.

The opening words of this poem has a dual imperative: *qumi* (arise) and *'uri* (light up), which unfortunately is not expressed in the translation of the liturgical text. JB has: "Arise, shine out..." It is clear from the text that Jerusalem is now restored after the years of exile. The glory of the Lord has again shone upon her and all nations of the earth by sea and by land are coming with their treasures at her gates. The representative nations mentioned here were the children of Abraham by Keturah (*Gn* 25:3-4). St. Matthew 2:1-12 could have been influenced by this text and that of Psalm 72.

SECOND READING: *Ep* 3:2-3,5-6

"In Christ Jesus the Gentiles (pagans) are now co-heirs with the Jews, members of the same body and sharers of the promise..." This is, in fact, the meaning of today's feast of the Epiphany of the Lord or manifestation of the Lord to the Gentiles represented by the magi or wise men. The equality of Gentiles and Jews with regards to salvation is expressed by St. Paul with three substantives prefixed by *syn* (co-): *syngkleronoma* (co-heirs), *sys soma* (co-bodies), and *symmetocha* (co-partners).

According to St. Paul this was according to God's design which he calls here the "economy of his graces," revealed to him by God. The gospel story in St. Matthew narrating the coming of the magi to worship Christ the Lord was, in the New Testament account, only one of the "epiphanies" or manifestations of the Lord. Other epiphanies and theophanies were the baptism of Jesus when the voice of the

Father was heard and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove appeared; another was the transfiguration when the Father spoke to the three apostles: "This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him" (*Mt 17:5*).

GOSPEL READING: *Mt 2:1-12*

This narrative of the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem according to St. Matthew may be considered as meta-history or beyond any historical account. It does not mean that the evangelist falsified history or wrote a non-historical story but rather he looked at the birth of Christ in Bethlehem according to the light of the Old Testament events and prophecies. The pertinent Old Testament texts here are Numbers 24:17, about the star; Isaiah 60:5, the nations bearing gifts; Micah 5:1 as cited in the gospel; Psalm 72:10-15 of kings doing homage to the Messiah; Exodus 2 of Pharaoh commanding the death of the Israelite babies, in the same way Herod commanded the death of the innocents to include Christ; Hosea 11:1 of the flight to Egypt; Jeremiah 31:15 of the death of the innocents.

St. Matthew's principal message was the epiphany of Christ to the pagan nations. The Jews were not so much interested in looking for him as the scribes were just satisfied in pointing to them the Old Testament prophecy about his birth in Bethlehem without any desire of following the lead of the Magi. Christ even from infancy was persecuted by the purported Jewish king who was not even an Israelite but an Edomite. Herod's father was Antipater, an Edomite.

HOMILY

The wise men saw only a heavenly sign, a star, but it led them to the author of wisdom and the king of kings. The feast of Epiphany is the feast of the manifestation of the Lord. The focus in today's feast should not be on the three Magi (who may not have been kings nor even three) but on the Lord's manifestation to all the nations. Only sincere souls who see heavenly signs of his coming, not darkened by error and cultural biases, and eagerly seek the reality behind those signs, will find fulfilment in the realization of their dreams and discovery of what they seek.

The wise men have been confronted with many signs in their search for the Lord. They saw the star and patiently traversed unknown lands to find the king of kings, the Lord of lords and the

wisest among the wise. When they arrived in Jerusalem the scribes read to them the scriptural sign where the Messiah would be born.

But there was one, king Herod, who was not interested in signs. He was interested only in saving his skin and his kingship. Another sign to the Magi in form of a dream thwarted Herod's evil scheme to destroy the reality which the Magi doggedly sought and found.

To which of these sign-recipients do we belong? Are we the modern herods who seek to destroy the reality behind the signs because they are threats to our earthly tyranny? Or are we like the scribes who know the signs but reject the reality? Or are we the modern magi who receive the divine sign and patiently follow its path until the divine reality?

FEAST OF THE SANTO NIÑO

January 15, 1995

The feast of the Santo Niño is a proper feast celebrated in the Philippines instead of the Second Sunday in Ordinary Time after the Sunday of the Baptism of the Lord (which is omitted this year since the second Sunday fell on Epiphany). The devotion to the Holy Child is very popular in the Philippines, closely connected with the celebration of *Ati-atihan* in some towns in Aklan. PCP-II, in one of its provisions (Art.18 #2), has decreed that "special attention should be given to a study of the theological and pastoral implications of *sinulog*, *ati-atihan*, and other religious festivities that affect the life of our people."

FIRST READING: *Is* 9:1-6

The Isaian text, still being a part of the Book of the Immanuel, speaks of the birth of a child with a mysterious name: Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace. The rationalists cannot accept this child to be divine and so interpret the phrase "Mighty-God" as "divine hero." This child is, of course, the same Immanuel in *Is* 7:14. This was very disconcerting to the Jewish Rabbis since the phrase "Mighty-God" is also applied to Yahweh as in *Is* 10:21; *Dt* 10:17; *Jr* 32:18 where the verse says: "Great and mighty God, whose name is Yahweh Sabaoth."

It seems very probable that this oracle was proffered by the Prophet Isaiah during the time when Tiglath-Pileser III invaded the

Northern Kingdom in 732 B.C. and led the people to exile. This is then an oracle of consolation for the exiles and their succeeding generations that someday they would see a great light with the birth of a child who would have divine qualities. This was fulfilled with the coming of Jesus to Nazareth in Galilee especially cited by St. Matthew 4:13-16.

A correction has been made in verse 3 (JB; v. 2 in NAB) because the Masoretic or Hebrew text is illogical which is literally followed by the Vulgate: *multiplicasti gentem, et non magnificasti laetitiam* ("you have made the nation greater; and you have *not* increased their joy"). This is followed by the New International Version but omitting *not*: "You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy." In fact the tone of the text is general joy. Hence the JB translates: "You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase." This was made with the simple joining of *haggoy* ("the nation") and *lo'* ("not") of the Masoretic text to read *haggilah* (joy).

SECOND READING: *Ep* 1:3-6;15-18

The text of the second reading forms the first four verses of a baptismal hymn in Ephesians and part of the prayer of the Apostles for its understanding and application. The hymn speaks of the many heavenly blessings given "to the saints, who are faithful to Christ Jesus" (1:1). The Trinitarian overtones of the hymn are very clear: The Father chose us and predestined us as adopted sons through Jesus Christ... and stamped us with the seal of the Holy Spirit (v. 13).

The word "predestined" (*proorisas*) in verse 5 does not mean individual predestination but the divine plan of forming a community of the baptized children of God, but always through Christ and in Christ.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 2:41-52

This episode of the finding of Jesus in the temple, the fifth joyful mystery, is the only passage in the whole of Scripture which speaks of the childhood of Jesus. It does not form part then of any infancy tradition but related to the genre of stories of Christ's childhood which abound in apocryphal writings like in the *Proto-evangelium of St. James* and the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*. The introduction to the latter work is as follows: "I, Thomas the Israelite, tell and make known to you, my Gentile brethren, all the works of the childhood of

our Lord Jesus Christ, and his mighty deeds which he did when he was born in the land" (*New Testament Apocrypha*, tr. by E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher, 2 vols., Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963-65, p. 392.). It tells stories of what Jesus did at the age of 5 to 12, the last episode is the same as the narrative in the gospel of St. Luke 2:41-52.

Historical allusions in the story seem to be very incidental and should not be stressed in reflecting on the message. It is, for instance, very wrong to say as some non-Catholic commentators do that Jesus was lost in the temple because Mary and Joseph were busy taking care of their younger children (see e.g. J. R. Gray, *Expository Times* 71, 1959-60, p. 53).

In verse 43 Jesus is now called "a boy" (*pais*) by St. Luke at the age of twelve (v. 42) where formerly the evangelist employed *paidion* ("child": 2:17.27). The general thinking among the Jews is that a child becomes a man at the age of thirteen. This is expressed in the later practice of the *Bar Mitzvah* (the ceremony of being the "son of the Law").

Verse 49 is variously translated since the Greek phrase: *en tois tou patros mou* (lit. "in those of my Father") is vague. The NAB and our liturgical text has: "Did you know I had to be in my Father's house?"; the JB translates: "Did you know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?" Another possible translation is: "Did you know that I must be among the household (relatives) of my (heavenly) Father." An ancient text, that of Theodoret (MG, 75,1461: *en tois oikois tou patros mou*) is adduced in support of this translation. Yet there are only few who favor this version. The first one seems to be most plausible.

HOMILY

The feast of the Santo Niño in the Philippines has been associated with the *Ati-atihan* festival especially in some towns of Aklan: Batan, Kalibo, Ibajay, Altavas. It is because the image of the Santo Niño has been linked with the early years of Christianization of the Philippines from Cebu to Panay. When the Augustinians established parishes in Panay they also brought the devotion of the Santo Niño to win the hearts of the natives. Primitive tribes, primitive sounds, primitive dances, characterize the celebration. However, nowadays, all kinds of outlandish costumes can be seen in the Santo Niño festival from the primitive to even extra-terrestrial beings.

Still a spiritual reflection may be gathered from all of these diverse groupings. It may be observed that one of the important elements in the image of the Santo Niño is the globe. It is the symbol of unity. It rests on the hand of the child Jesus. "To unite all things in Christ" was the motto of PCP-II. The Philippines with all its different ethnic groups from the mountain peoples of the Cordilleras, the low-landers of Luzon, Visayas, and the Christians of Mindanao, the Muslims and small tribal communities also of Mindanao, and indeed the peoples of the whole world, may all be united in the palm of the Santo Niño.

The Philippines has been singularly honored this January with the holding of the World Youth Day and the second visit to the Philippines of His Holiness Pope John Paul II. It also marks the 400th anniversary of the foundation of the dioceses of Cebu (where devotion to the Santo Niño is one of its strongest features), Nueva Caceres (Naga), and Nueva Segovia (Vigan), and the elevation of Manila to an Archdiocese. Since the history of the Philippines is forcefully linked with the child Jesus we are strongly convinced that our youth would abundantly receive blessings from the Lord and his Blessed Mother.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME January 22, 1995

FIRST READING: *Ne* 8:2-4,5-6,8-10

The book of Nehemiah is called in the Septuagint (LXX) II Esdras which is followed by the Vulgate and the English versions based on these two ancient versions like the Douay-Rheims (1578-1610) and the Confraternity Version (1939-1945). Most modern English versions of the Bible now follow the Hebrew title, "Nehemiah," while I Esdras is simply called "Ezra."

Nehemiah is the last section of a four-part work starting from 1 Chronicles (1 Paralipomenon in the LXX and Vulgate) which is another presentation of Israelite history focusing on David and his dynasty and the Levites. The books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, as a matter of fact, continue the historical narrative of 2 Kings of the deuteronomic tradition but now in the perspective of levitical traditions. It starts with the return of the exiles from Babylon after the edict of Cyrus the Great in 538 B.C. allowing them to go back to Israel led by Zerubbabel of Davidic lineage (*Ez* 2:2 ff.).

Until chapter 6 of the book of Ezra the historical narrative deals with the first phase of the return considered as the new exodus by the prophets until the rebuilding of the temple, however modest, in 515 B.C., inspired by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

From chapter 7, however, until the book of Nehemiah, a chronological problem has been discerned concerning the order of return of Nehemiah and Ezra. According to *Ezr* 7:7 Ezra returned to Jerusalem "in the seventh year of the reign of King Artaxerxes," while Nehemiah, in *Ne* 1:1 ff. and 2:1 ff., is reported to have returned during the 20th year of King Artaxerxes. It is nevertheless difficult to know whether it speaks of the same Artaxerxes since there were three of them. Artaxerxes III (358-338) is excluded since his reign only lasted for about twenty years while in *Ne* 13:6 it is said that Nehemiah returned still to Jerusalem on the 32nd year of the same Artaxerxes.

There are those who favor that Ezra returned to Jerusalem before Nehemiah during the 7th year of Artaxerxes I Longimanus (465-423), hence in 458 B.C. However the social background of Ezra's reform differed from that of Nehemiah, the walls seemingly finished which was the preoccupation of Nehemiah's days, that many scholars place the return of this scribe-priest in the 7th year of Artaxerxes II Mnemon (404-358), hence in 398 B.C. Others, led by Albright, change the 7th year of *Ezr* 7:7 to "37th year" putting his return during the reign of Artaxerxes I but after Nehemiah, hence in 428 B.C. The question is still debated.

The problem has a bearing on the completion of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, since it is believed that the "Book of the Law of Moses" mentioned here and read by Ezra to the assembly is precisely our present Pentateuch. The time range then of its completion could be placed as the *terminus a quo* in 458 B.C. to its *terminus ad quem* in 398 B.C.

SECOND READING: *1 Co* 12:12-30

A clear enunciation of the Church as a body and, in fact, "the body of Christ" (v. 27) is presented in our liturgical passage. We can confidently affirm that this idea is authentically Paulinian which is also found in *Rm* 12:4-5 and later on in *Col* 3:11.15 and *Ep* 4:4-6. There have been speculations to trace the origin of this idea in St. Paul whether it was influenced by the idea of the body politic in hellenistic circles in particular from Stoic philosophy or it was an original idea

of St. Paul reflecting, for instance, on votive offerings of parts of the human body at the shrine of Asclepius at Corinth. Whatever it may be, there is definitely a strong link between this idea and the words of Christ to St. Paul during his conversion: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Ac 9:4). The Christians are Christ himself.

"All of us have been given to drink (*epotisthemen*) of the one Spirit" (v. 13). There is a tendency to associate this sentence with the Holy Eucharist as the compliment of baptism (*ebaptisthemen*) in the preceding phrase. But since both verbs are in the aorist which designates a definite terminated action, the "drinking" of the one Spirit seems to be an exact parallel of baptism. This image of baptism as "drinking of the Spirit" would be quite special.

Unity of purpose for the well-being of the whole body in the diversity of corporate roles expressed by the variety of gifts characterizes this ecclesial body which is different from a merely moral body but less classified as a physical body since the members still retain their identities. Hence theologians have called it a "mystical body."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Our liturgical reading is the continuation of St. Luke's narrative of the inaugural ministry of Jesus in Galilee after his baptism by John and his temptations. Differently, however, from Matthew and Mark who seem to suggest that Jesus' return to his home-province was occasioned by the arrest of John the Baptist by Herod Antipas (*Mt* 4:12; *Mk* 1:14) Luke gives a more profound theological reason: "Jesus returned to Galilee *en te dynamei tou pneumatos* (NAB: "in the power of the Spirit"; JB: "with the power of the Spirit"). Again, in contrast to the two previous evangelists, St. Luke locates this initial ministry in Nazareth which he calls with the variant form "Nazara." St. Matthew and St. Mark put this inaugural ministry in Capernaum. This seems to be chronologically correct since it is suggested in Luke 4:23.

The scene was at the synagogue of Nazareth. It is customary during the Sabbath services for the head of the synagogue (Heb.: *rosh hakkeneseth*) to invite somebody from the congregation or admit any volunteer to read a section of the Torah and a portion of the Prophets and also address the people. "Jesus stood up to read and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah" (v. 17). He read Isaiah 61:1-2.

HOMILY

The highlights of the Pope's visit to Manila last January 12-16 were his addresses especially to the youth at the Rizal Park celebrating the 10th World Youth Day. After more than a year of intense preparation the day finally arrived when the Holy Father was seen and heard by more than a million young people who came from different parts of the world. The electrifying atmosphere was simply indescribable. The majority of the crowd were hungering for his words. Many wanted to touch him, kiss his ring, even hug him. Others, teary eyed, just watched him in awe.

What a startling contrast to the behavior of those who heard Jesus at the synagogue of Nazareth when he inaugurated his public ministry as related in the gospel! Jesus' fame was growing having performed miracles in Cana (*Jn* 2:1-2) and in Capernaum (*Mk* 1:21-34 and parallels). "He was teaching in their synagogues, and all were loud in his praise" (*Lk* 4:15). Yet many of his own town-folks could not believe in him.

Centuries of preparation had passed since God promised to our first parents that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head (*Gn* 3:15). It became intense with the call of Abraham (*Gn* 12:1 ff.) from whose line through David (cf. *Mt* 1:2,6) the Messiah would be born. The prophets of old foretold it without ceasing, especially Isaiah. Then came the day when Jesus, after reading a prophetic passage from Isaiah proclaimed: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."

Many of us were not at the Rizal Park to have seen and heard the Holy Father. Much less were we at the synagogue of Nazareth to have heard Jesus proclaim the fulfilment of the Scriptures. But we have other means at our disposal to know these events. It is up for us now to give credence to these words and events with the eyes and ears of our faith which should lead us to confess that "in truth this man was a son of God" (*Mk* 15:39).

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME January 29, 1995

FIRST READING: *Jr* 1:4-5.17-19

This passage relates the call of the prophet Jeremiah, the seer-

priest from Anathoth, about six and a half kilometers north-east of Jerusalem. He started his prophetic ministry during the days of King Josiah, on the thirteenth year of the reign of this king which would roughly correspond to the year 627 B.C. He was a witness of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 B.C. which he predicted in his oracles.

We may compare this narration of Jeremiah's call with that of Isaiah (6:1-13) and Ezekiel (2:1 - 3:15). The election and predestination to the prophetic office is clearly expressed in verse 5: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you." The term "to know" in Hebrew does not only mean intellectual speculative knowledge but also affective. We have in the sentence a clear expression of divine predestination for a mission. The term *qadash* which is translated in our liturgical text as "dedicated" but which the Vulgate translated "to sanctify" does not at all mean a cleansing from original sin. It rather means "to separate," "to put somebody apart."

Jeremiah was chosen, loved and set apart by God as a "prophet to the nations," and not only for the Israelite people. To the trepidation of Jeremiah that he was just a child and do not know how to speak God assured him of divine help. We read in the book of Jeremiah how he suffered fulfilling his prophetic mission. He was misunderstood, hated, imprisoned, tortured for speaking and writing God's oracles. But God promised to make him "a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass."

SECOND READING: 1 Co 12:31 - 13:13

Chapter 13 of First Corinthians is one of the most sublime and inspiring treatises on *agape* ever written in the Bible. It is translated here as "love" but in the Douay-Rheims, the oldest, complete version of the Bible in English (1578-1610), it is rendered as "charity," from the Latin *caritas*. There are however dissenting voices as to its Paulinian authenticity. Some suspect its Stoic origin but recent researches are clearly pointing to its Jewish roots.

The link of this chapter with the preceding one lends support to its authenticity. In chapter 12 St. Paul was considering the charismatic gifts three of which are the gifts of tongues, prophecy and faith which are also mentioned in this passage and contrasted with *agape* as inferior gifts.

The text is heavily rhetorical but which does not in any way lessen its doctrinal richness. Unlike *eros* (love for pleasure identified by some as "sexual love") and *philia* (human love which seeks self satisfaction), *agape* is unselfish and only seeks the satisfaction of the other. It is hence a very appropriate term to express God's love for us as in John 3:16: "Yes, God loved (*egapesen*) the world so much that he gave his only Son,..."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 4:21-30

We continue in today's reading the narrative of last Sunday's gospel when Jesus inaugurated his public ministry in Nazareth according to St. Luke.

When Jesus spoke everyone was astonished even more so when he said that the words of Isaiah were fulfilled in him. There were different reactions. They *emartyroun* (lit. "gave testimony") of him. This verb from *martyrein* connotes mainly a favorable testimony sustained by manuscripts in the Greek *koine* that is why our liturgical text, supported by the readings of NAB, JB, NJBC, translates it as: "spoke favorably." The phrase *logoi tes charitos* fares differently with the NJBC which renders it "words of salvation." Still the context seems to favor more the translation of the JB: "gracious words," or our liturgical text: "appealing discourse." Definitely this is a semitism making the genitive "of grace" an adjective, hence, the translation "gracious" of the Jerusalem Bible.

But the astonishment of the people turned to anger when this "son of Joseph," who was already becoming popular because of his miracles in Capernaum would not perform any miracle in his hometown quoting a proverb. They wanted to throw him down the cliff (the traditional Jebel el-Kafze) but he evaded them because his time had not yet come.

HOMILY

Christ our Lord has always been a sign of contradiction. His body the Church could not be less. It should not be a cause for surprise that the Church in the Philippines would be viewed in the same vein. The controversy on family planning is a very obvious example of how the Church is judged by worldly standards blatantly against the norms of heavenly wisdom.

Because the Church is against artificial contraception she is accused of promoting uncontrolled population growth; because she condemns condoms she abets AIDS; because she censures homosexual activities, though definitely not the homosexuals, she is against personal happiness; because she considers abortion immoral she is against the freedom of choice.

How many times have we to insist that the Church is not against family planning? She is simply against the narrow interpretation and constricted practice of family planning which is only equated to artificial birth control. In fact she advocates responsible parenthood which includes the finest performances of family planning and ensures the highest quality of life for the family, the nation and the world.

For speaking the truth which would guarantee true happiness Christ was nearly thrown down a cliff by his own townspeople. He just escaped because his time had not yet come. Later on it did come. He suffered and died. But it meant victory of his teachings. Little do the enemies of the Church know that every lash they bestow on the Mystical Body of Christ a spark of truth is emitted which will eventually enlighten the whole world.

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 5, 1995

FIRST READING: *Is* 6:1-2a. 3-8

The following verses form part of the Prologue of the so-called Book of Immanuel (*Is* 7:1-12:6). It is the inaugural vision of the Prophet Isaiah which happened in the year of the King Uzziah's death, 740 B.C. The reign of King Uzziah was characterized with prosperity and agricultural development. His death was a loss to the kingdom and reaffirms man's mortality. On the other side of the picture Yahweh's transcendence was manifested to Isaiah in this vision. Israel's prosperity was not exactly due to the king who was a mere mortal but to God. The threefold repetition of the word "holy" indicates the superlative degree. Yahweh is holy in a supereminent degree. The sign of the divine presence is shown by the smoke as the cloud which enveloped the Ark of Covenant in the desert (*Ex* 40:34). "What a wretched state I am in! I am lost,..." Isaiah was filled with awe: "could a man see God and live?" (*Ex* 33:20). "With this (live coal)

he touched my mouth" (v. 7) symbolizing the prophet's purification through God's initiative.

SECOND READING: 1 Co 15:1-11 (or 15:3-8.11)

Paul's doctrine in this text is about the fact of the resurrection, occasioned probably by some Corinthians who deny the resurrection of the body. But there is resurrection of the body proven by Christ's resurrection. The death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord is proven by the Scriptures, citing in this respect Isaiah 53 on the Suffering Servant and Psalm 16:8-11; then by witnesses: first Christ appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve (stereotyped expression for the apostolic college), then to more than 500, to James, again to the Apostles, and finally to Paul, who was an "*ektroma*," one untimely born. Paul omits the apparition to the women mentioned in the gospels perhaps because under Jewish law only men are considered responsible witnesses.

GOSPEL READING: Lk 5:1-11

The story of the call of Peter is paralleled in Mark 1:16-20 but without the miraculous catch of fishes. It is quite improbable that Mark could have forgotten this miraculous catch previous to the call of Peter as his gospel was influenced by Peter himself. The last part, nevertheless, is parallel to the story of John 21:1-11 after the resurrection. It seems probable that Luke here combines different events to emphasize symbolically the fuller significance of Simon Peter's call. The center of the story is Peter. Andrew is not even mentioned.

Unlike the other Evangelists who speak of the Sea of Galilee, Luke calls it properly as Lake of Gennesaret, for it is really a lake. It is an oblong shaped body of fresh water, about 21 kilometers long and 12 kilometers wide, and abounding with fish even today. Gennesaret is a place north-west of the Lake. St. Luke prefers the Greek title "*Epistata*" (v.5) meaning "Master," rather than the Hebrew *Rabbi* probably because of his Greek readers. In verse 3 there was a change from "Master" to "Lord" a term reserved to a divinity. In verse 10 Luke presents Jesus speaking only to Simon whereas in Mark 1:17 he addressed first Simon and Andrew and afterwards James and John. Then "they left everything," a phrase proper to Luke as the Evangelist of total renunciation showing the apostolic response a heroic one.

HOMILY

In one midwestern town in the United States with a population of about 15,000 one can surprisingly find thirty-two non-Catholic churches. In each of these churches one can read the year when that particular church or chapel was built. The year itself when each particular Non-Catholic denomination was founded and their founder may be traced back further.

We enter one of the Lutheran churches as there are three different Lutheran churches in this town. This church was founded by Martin Luther in 1517. Then we pass on to the Episcopalian church. This was founded by King Henry VIII of England in 1534. Just a little further we will reach the Presbyterian church founded in 1560 by John Knox. One block away is the Congregational church founded in 1583 by Robert Browne. Next is the Baptist church with John Smith as founder in 1660. Then the Methodist church started by John Wesley in 1729. The other denominations are less than 300 years old.

All of these sects separated from the Mother Church founded by our Lord Jesus Christ, visibly governed by the Apostolic College with the Holy Father, the successor of St. Peter as head. The present Apostolic College is composed by the bishops all over the world, successors of the Apostles.

Sufficient evidence are found in the New Testament to show that Peter was the head of the apostolic group even during the earthly life of Jesus, and even after Christ's ascension into heaven.

In the list of the Apostles the name of Peter is always mentioned first (*Mt* 10:1-4; *Mk* 3:13-19; *Lk* 6:12-16); he was always a constant companion of Jesus wherever he went and witnessed all of his miracles. He was privileged to witness both the glory and humiliation of Jesus together with John and James: the resurrection of Jairus' daughter; the transfiguration, and the agony in the garden. He was given more coverage and limelight in the gospels. He acted as spokesman of the Apostles at Pentecost and preached the sermon converting 3,000 people. He was the first one who baptized a pagan to Christianity in the person of the Centurion Cornelius and his household. Peter was the one who gave the decision at the Council of Jerusalem. Our list is not exhaustive and some more could be added, but this is enough to prove Peter's privileged position in the Church.

The successor of Peter, the Holy Father in Rome, is presently the head of the Apostolic College, composed of the bishops who are successors of the Apostles. As Peter occupied a privileged position in the early Church, so today his successor, the Pope, continues that function. He was ordained to confirm the faith of the other Apostles and disciples which underwent a crisis during the passion. He himself sealed that faith with his blood.

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 12, 1995

FIRST READING: *Jr* 17:5-8

These wisdom sayings in Jeremiah are observed to be closely parallel to Psalm 1. However this idea of the just man compared to a fertile tree is found in many sapiential texts, like Proverbs 3:18; 11:13; Psalm 52:10; Sirach 24:13. The literary form of these verses is of "blessings" and "curses" frequent in biblical literature. Some scholars think that Psalm 1 is dependent on this text from Jeremiah since in that Psalm the "trust in Yahweh" (v. 7) is substituted by "trust in the Law of Yahweh" (v. 2) which is characteristic of the post-exilic period. The message of the text is clear: the man who puts his trust in God has no worry in time of distress, will always remain strong and never ceases to bear fruit.

SECOND READING: *I Co* 15:12.16-20

After Paul has proven from many witnesses that Christ has truly risen he adds an argument *ex-absurdo*. If Christ had not risen from the dead his preaching would have been a waste of time and our faith would have been utterly useless. In fact Christ's resurrection is the culminating event of the history of salvation. With Christ, man conquered sin, Satan, and death. All Christians share in this risen life by their incorporation in Christ through baptism. Christ is the "first fruit of all those who have fallen asleep." As the offering of the first fruit symbolizes the offering of the entire fruits or harvest to God, so also the resurrection of Christ as the first includes the resurrection of all who are united with him.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 6:17.20-26

Counting the introduction "blessed" or "happy" in the parallel

passage of Matthew 5:3-12 we can say that Matthew has 9 beatitudes. St. Luke on the other hand has 4 beatitudes and woes and curses. Each beatitude in Luke has its corresponding woes. It can also be observed that Luke uses more direct speech, preferring the second person to the third person of Matthew: "you who are poor," "you who are hungry now," "you who are rich," "you who have your fill now." The underlying Hebrew word for "happy" is 'asre as in Psalm 1:1; 32:1; Isaiah 56:2, and not *baruk*, which is a liturgical expression of blessing. 'Asre is translated *makarioi* in Greek that is why this literary style is also called a *makarism*.

The "poor," in Greek *ptochoi* corresponds to the Hebrew 'anawim, the humble, who, being aware of their own insufficiency looks for their sustenance from God alone. This is not, therefore, a social concept but a religious one.

The "curses" or "woes" (vv. 24-26) are only found in Luke which serve as the antithesis of the "blessings."

HOMILY

About the year 100, St. Ignatius of Antioch, a direct disciple of St. John the Evangelist, was sentenced to die to be thrown into the amphitheater in the midst of wild beasts to be mangled by them. His friends in Rome wanted to ask for his release because of his age but he pleaded with them in a letter not to do such a thing. He in fact welcomed his martyrdom. He wrote to the Christians in Rome this moving letter:

"I am writing to all the Churches and state emphatically to all that I die willingly for God, providing you do not interfere. I beg you, do not show me unreasonable kindness. Suffer me to be the food of wild beasts, which are the means of my making my way to God. God's wheat I am, and by the teeth of wild beasts I am to be grounded that I may be proven to be Christ's pure bread. Better still, coax the wild beasts to become by tome and to leave no part of my person behind: once I have fallen asleep. I do not wish to be a burden to anyone. Then only shall I be a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ when the world will not even see my body. Petition Christ in my behalf that through these instruments I may prove God's sacrifice... Oh, may the beasts prepared for me be my joy! And I pray that they may be found ready for me. I will even coax them to make short work of me, not as has happened to some whom they were too timid to touch. And should they be unwilling to attack me

who am willing, I will myself compel them... fire, cross, struggles with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, mangling of limbs, crunching of the whole body, cruel tortures inflicted by the devil — let them come upon me, provided only I make my way to Jesus Christ."

Christian teaching considers a man happy in the midst of persecutions, hatred, abuses, false accusations, if such a man suffers all these things for the sake of Christ. Happiness, then, does not depend on any external contraptions like riches, affluence, bodily comforts. Nevertheless, Christian teaching does not propagate that pain, suffering, persecution and the like are good in themselves and are to be endured for their own sake. This will be a kind of masochism. They become meritorious only if suffered "on account of the Son of Man," that is for the sake of Christ or of God.

One time or another we will have to endure persecution, whether intentional or otherwise, whether falsely done or due to misinterpretations of facts or simply because our actions do not conform with what the world, against the spirit of Christ, expects us to do. If this happens we are given the best opportunities to suffer for Christ's sake. If we endure these persecutions with this kind of attitude, then, we will be happy. Otherwise, if we suffer persecution for other motives, we will only become more miserable.

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME February 19, 1995

FIRST READING: *1 S* 26:2.7-9. 12-13. 22-23

This passage is another narrative of how David spared the life of Saul in spite of the fact that Saul had been wanting to kill him. A similar story is given in chapter 24. Joab and Abishai were nephews of David, son of his sister Zeruah according to 1 Chronicles 2:16. Here David proved his loyalty to Saul as God's anointed at the cost of being banished from his homeland.

SECOND READING: *1 Co* 15:45-49

After enumerating in the preceding verses some characteristics of a resurrected body: incorruptibility, clarity, agility, and spirituality, St. Paul explains more the last characteristic (vv. 45-49). He distinguishes the *animal-body* which is vivified by the "soul" (*psyche*) and the *spiritual body*, that which is vivified by the "spirit" (*pneuma*).

It does not mean that Paul teaches two different principles of life in man. It is the same principle of life which he calls "soul" in so far as it informs the body according to its natural state, while it is called "spirit" when it acts under the influence and motion of the Holy Spirit. Adam was the source of this natural *psychic* life, while the Risen Christ, sending the Holy Spirit and making men sharers of his glorified life is the source of that *spiritual* life. Those who are baptized participate in the life of the Risen Christ. By the action of the Holy Spirit whom he has sent, the baptized are being transformed more and more into Christ's image (cf. 2 Co 3:18), until at his second coming for Parousia, their bodies will become like his risen body : incorruptible, glorious, powerful, spiritual.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 6:27-38

A parallel passage of this pericope of loving one's enemies of found in Matthew 5:38-48. Similar verses are also found in Romans 12:14; 1 Corinthians 4:12; and 1 John. Animosity is shown in three ways: in thoughts (hate); in words (curse); and in deeds (bad treatment). To show your love: do good to those who hate, bless those who curse, pray for those who maltreat you. In verse 31 we have the golden rule expressed by our Lord in a positive manner: "Treat others as you would like them to treat you." This is found expressed in a negative form in Tobias 4:15, Philo, Confucius, and in the Talmud (Shabbath, 31a). While in Matthew the evildoers were identified as "publicans and Gentiles," St. Luke used the general term of sinners. Finally in verse 36, where St. Matthew uses "be perfect" he has "be compassionate" or "be merciful." In Old Testament usage, compassion or mercy is usually attributed to God. Luke makes this attribute also a goal to be achieved by Christ's disciples.

HOMILY

This incident happened on the night of April 25, 1958 in Philadelphia. A gang of eleven young hoodlums mauled to death a young Korean student named In Ho Oh. The accosted him first asking for money so they could pay their way to a dance. As the Korean could not give them any they ganged up on him and beat him without mercy until he died.

This cruel murder angered the citizens of Philadelphia, more so because the victim was an innocent foreigner. They were expecting

that the parents of the boy and the Korean authorities would demand the full prosecution of the killers and ask for an official apology or reparation for the crime committed. But instead the parents of In Ho Oh wrote to the Red Cross in Philadelphia the following letter:

"We deeply appreciate the expressions of sympathy you have extended to us at this time... We are sad, not only because of In Ho's unachieved future but also because of the unsaved souls and the paralyzed human nature of the murderers... Our family has met together and we have decided to petition that the most generous treatment possible within the laws of your Government be given to those who committed this criminal action without knowing what it would mean to him who has been sacrificed, to his family, to his friends, and to his country... Our whole family has decided to save money to start a fund for the religious, educational, vocational, and social guidance of the boys when they are released."

Contrary to worldly expectations and the seemingly natural attitude of men, Christ tells us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us. He himself gave a supreme example of this love when he forgive his enemies from the cross. This attitude demands heroism in the eyes of the world but presented in the Gospel as the normal attitude of a Christian. Loving one's enemies does not mean condoning the evil which dominates in the in the personality of the enemy but looking at the person of the enemy made to the image and likeness of God and redeemed by the blood of Christ.

If you love your enemy you destroy the enemy in him as the evil enveloping him which was the cause why you considered him an enemy in the first place gradually dissolves in the presence of the heat rays of love. Love let the good blossom in your enemy until finally his inimical character will just shed off or melt away and you will see again the redeemed image of God emerge.

EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 26, 1995

FIRST READING: *Si (Ecclesiasticus) 27:4-7*

The book of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus, although not accepted as canonical by the earlier rabbis and non-Catholics, is nonetheless part of Scripture and inspired by the Holy Spirit as taught by the Council of Trent. Our canonical text however is in Greek, first translated by the grandson (anonymous) of the author, Jesus Ben Sirach. But

Hebrew fragments have been discovered in many places that now about 70% of the Hebrew text have been recovered.

Our liturgical text is found in the second part of the book (ch. 24-50) which contains many wise sayings. This particular section deals about prudence in speech. A man is known through the way he talks. 27:6 of Sirach is cited by Jesus in Matthew 7:16 which could give greater support to the canonical status of this book.

SECOND READING: 1 Co 15:54-58

These verses form the conclusion of St. Paul's discourse on the resurrection. The biblical quotations were taken from two Old Testament texts: Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14 but the variants are quite remarkable. The Hebrew text of Isaiah is translated by the JB: "he will destroy death for ever" (*billa` hammaweth lanetsach*), but Syriac and Theodotion took the verb in the passive sense (Gr.: *katepothe*; Heb. *bulla`*) which is reflected in the text of St. Paul: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

The text of Hosea 13:14 as translated by the JB states: "Where (*'ayyeh*) is your plague, Death? Where are your scourges, Sheol." However the Hebrew instead of *'ayyeh* ("where") has *'ehi* ("I will be") and, hence, may be translated as: "I will be your plagues (pl.), Death? I will be our pestilence (sing.), Sheol." The sense, then, of this verse in Hosea is understood in two ways: either a menacing question which seems to be supported by the context or an affirmation of God's power over death and Sheol as in Hebrew which St. Paul expressed as a victorious acclamation against death personified.

GOSPEL READING: Lk 6:39-45

As a conclusion to St. Luke's "sermon on the plain" which is the parallel of St. Matthew's "sermon on the mount" (Mt 5 - 7) we find some sayings and some similitudes (*parabolai*). Some of them are found in St. Matthew but in different contexts. The first parable, for instance, about the blind leading the blind in verse 39 is used in St. Matthew (15:14) to rebuke the Pharisees. But here in St. Luke it is meant to be a lesson to the disciples. We have here an example of the same biblical saying used differently in different contexts.

Verses 41-42 in St. Luke is paralleled by Matthew 7:4-5. Again there is a difference in the context. This saying in St. Matthew is

connected with the censure on rash judgment while in St. Luke it refers more to self-examination.

HOMILY

"Each man speaks from his heart's abundance." If so, then let us fill our hearts with good things so that good things would overflow from our hearts.

There are two notable water-bodies in the Holy Land: Lake Tiberias which is also known as the Sea of Galilee (actually a fresh water lake) and the Dead Sea. Lake Tiberias (cf. *Jn* 6:1; 21:1), a name taken since the first century A.D. from the town on its south-western shore built by Herod Antipas in adulation of Emperor Tiberius (in Hebrew it is called Kinnereth meaning "harp," hence Gennesaret in *Mt* 14:34 and *Lk* 5:1), is a fresh body of water whose principal source is Mt. Hermon north of Galilee. It receives water from its many tributaries but also gives a-plenty to the southern portion of the Jordan river meandering until the Dead Sea. It has an abundant supply of fish. But the other sea is dead as its name implies. Since it is an enclosed sea it receives water but does not give. The only outlet is by evaporation. That is why it is very salty. Its salt content is about six times than that of the ocean that no fish can survive in it.

These two bodies of water are images of two souls. A soul who is generous in giving remains ever fresh while the one who is closed stays putrid and stinking.

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