

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

*Vol. LXXI, Nos. 783-784*

*March-April 1995*

**THE PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH  
IN THE UNIVERSITY AND  
IN UNIVERSITY CULTURE**

*Congr. for Cath. Education*

*Pont. Council for the Laity*

*Pont. Council for Culture*

**MESSAGE FOR THE THIRD  
WORLD DAY OF THE SICK**

*John Paul II*

**MAfA**

**MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION  
OF D) AL-FITR AT THE END  
OF RAMADAN**

*Pont. Consilium pro Dialogo*

*Inter Religiones*

**MESSAGE OF THE 6TH FABC  
PLENARY ASSEMBLY**

*Federation of Asian Bishops'  
Conference*

## ***EDITORIAL***

### **In this Issue**

**HONORATO CASTIGADOR, O.P.**

This issue carries some messages from different ecclesiastical authorities for different important events. Such events have already passed but the ideas embodied in the messages are always relevant. Our publication then of these messages are not only for the sake of documentation but also to serve as sources of constant reflection and application in the other areas of our daily life. The "Message for the Third World Day of the Sick," and the "Message on the Occasion of 'Id Al-Fitr at the End of Ramadan" are two specific examples of this relevance. We always have to have that concern for the sick and an open dialogue with our Muslim brethren.

We also publish the document "The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture" jointly issued by the Congregation for Catholic Education, Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for Culture. We are made to be aware of the present university culture in which the Church has an urgent and important role to play. We may not be directly involved in a university work but there may be such educational institutions in the diocese. And besides, we have parishioners who are products of such a culture. This is a ministry which the Church cannot ignore. Indeed, reading the document itself brings new insights into another area of our present apostolic situation.

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

## The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

<b>EDITOR</b>	<b>HONORATO CASTIGADOR, O.P.</b>
<b>ASSOCIATE EDITORS</b>	<b>VIRGILIO OJOY, O.P. RODEL ALIGAN, O.P.</b>
<b>EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS</b>	<b>ROLANDO DE LA ROSA, O.P. FAUSTO GOMEZ, O.P. JOSE MA. TINOKO, O.P.</b>
<b>BUSINESS MANAGER</b>	<b>MAXIMILIANO REBOLLO, O.P.</b>
<b>ASST. BUSINESS MANAGER</b>	<b>ROBERTO PINTO, O.P.</b>
<b>PUBLICATION ASSISTANT</b>	<b>CHRISTINE P. BERMUDEZ</b>
<b>COVER DESIGN</b>	<b>RODOLFO ATIENZA, O.P.</b>

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, the Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published bi-monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and is printed at UST Press, Manila, Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned. They will, however, be given courteous and scholarly attention. Writers are reminded that the scope of this review is ecclesiastical and broadly archival. While we wish to inform the whole Church, our readership is largely clerical and this should be borne in mind by prospective contributors. Articles herein published do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editorial Staff. Communications of an editorial nature concerning articles, cases and reviews should be addressed to the Editor.

Advertising and subscription inquiries should be addressed to the Business Manager.

Subscription Rates (Effective January 1995):

	<b>One Year</b>	<b>Per copy</b>
<b>Philippines:</b>	<b>P/ 160.00</b>	<b>P 35.00</b>
<b>Foreign: (Via Sea Mail)</b>	<b>US\$ 30.00</b>	<b>\$ 6.00</b>
<b>(Via Air Mail)</b>	<b>US\$ 40.00</b>	<b>\$ 8.00</b>

Subscriptions are paid in advance. In the Philippines, payments should be made by postal money order, telegraphic transfer or check with *regional bank clearing only*. Orders for renewal or change of address should include both old and new addresses, and go into effect fifteen days after notification.

Address all communications to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS  
University of Santo Tomas  
EspaAa, Manila, Philippines  
Tel. No. 731-31-01 local 251

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### EDITORIAL

116 IN THIS ISSUE

### WORDS FOR TODAY

*Congr. for Cath. Education*  
*Pont Council for the Laity*  
*Pont Council for Culture*

117 THE PRESENCE OF THE  
CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY  
AND IN UNIVERSITY CULTURE

### MEDITATIVE WORDS

*Pedro G. Tejero, O.P.*

135 HUMILITY AND OBEDIENCE  
IN PRIESTLY MINISTRY

### STORAL WORDS

*John Paul II*

138 MESSAGE FOR LENT 1995

142 MESSAGE FOR THE THIRD  
WORLD DAY OF THE SICK

*Pont Consilium pro*  
*Dialogo Inter Religiones*

146 MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION  
OF 'ID AL-FITR AT THE END OF  
RAMADAN

*FABC*

149 MESSAGE OF THE 6TH FABC  
PLENARY ASSEMBLY

*CBCP*

152 ELECTIONS 1995 -  
A CHALLENGE TO THE YOUNG

155 A CALL TO CHRISTIAN PARTICI-  
PATION IN THE ELECTIONS

*Leonardo Z. Legaspi, D.D*  
*Religious Alliance*  
*Against Pornography*

160 INTHEAUTHORITYOFSERVICE

167 THE MANILA DECLARATION  
ONPORNOGRAPHY

### CONSULTATIVE WORDS

*Excelso Garcia, O.P.*

174 CASES AND INQUIRIES

### GODS WORD FOR TOMORROW

*Regino Cortes, O.P.*

182 FESTAL HOMILIES FOR MARCH-  
JUNE 1995

**WORDS FOR TODAY**

# **The Presence of the Church in the University and in University Culture**

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION  
PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE LAITY  
PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

## **FOREWORD**

*Nature, **aim and intended** readers of **the** document*

The University and, more widely, university culture, constitute a **reality** of decisive importance. In this field, vital questions are at stake and **profound cultural** changes present new challenges. The Church owes it to **herself** to advert to them in her mission of proclaiming the Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

In **the** course of the *ad limina* visits, many bishops have expressed **their** desire to find help in meeting new and serious problems that are **rapidly** emerging and for which those responsible are at times unprepared. The usual pastoral methods often prove ineffective and even the most

<sup>1</sup>This pastoral concern is evidenced in the Church's Magisterium, for example, in **the addresses** to university people of Pope John Paul II. (Cf. GIOVANNI PAOLO II: *Discorsi aik University* Camerino 1991). Of particular significance was the Pope's address of **8 March** 1982 for a "work session on university apostolate" with the clergy of Rome. (Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, 3 May 1982, pp. 6-7).

zealous are discouraged. Various dioceses and Bishops' **Conferences have** undertaken pastoral reflection and action that already provide **elements of** response. Religious communities and apostolic movements are **also** approaching with fresh generosity the new challenges of university **pastoral** action.

For a sharing of these initiatives and a global assessment of the situation, the Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and the Pontifical Council for Culture undertook a new consultation of the Bishops' Conferences, of Religious Institutes, and of various ecclesial bodies and movements. A first synthesis of the replies was presented on 28 October 1987 to the Synod of Bishops on the vocation and mission of the laity in the Church and in the world.<sup>2</sup> This documentation has been enriched in many meetings, and also by the reactions of the institutions concerned to the published text and by the publication of studies and research on the action of Christians in the university world.

It has been possible in this way to ascertain a number of facts, to formulate questions in precise terms and to indicate certain guidelines on the basis of the apostolic experience of people involved in the university world.

The present document, drawing attention to the more significant questions and initiatives, is intended as an instrument for study and action at the service of the particular Churches. It is addressed in the first place to the Episcopal Conference and, in a special way, to Bishops who are directly concerned due to the presence in their dioceses of Universities or Institutes of Higher Studies. But the facts and the orientations presented here are intended, at the same time, for all those who take part in university pastoral action under the guidance of the bishops: priests, lay people, religious institutes, ecclesial movements. The suggestions made for the new evangelization are meant to inspire deeper reflection on the part of all those concerned and a renewal of pastoral action.

<sup>2</sup>This synthesis, presented by Cardinal Paul Poupard on behalf of the three dicasteries, was published on 25 March 1988 and reproduced in several languages. (Cf. *Origins*, vol. 18, n. 7, 30 June 1988, 109-112; *La Documentation Catholique*, n. 1964, 19 June 1988, 623-628; *Ecclesia*, n. 2381, 23 July 1988, 1105-1110; *La Civiltà Cattolica*, an. 139, 21 May 1988, n. 3310, 364-374).

## *An Urgent Need*

The University was, in its earliest stages, one of the most significant expressions of the Church's pastoral concern. Its birth was linked to the development of the schools set up in the Middle Ages by the bishops of the great episcopal sees. If the vicissitudes of history have led *the Universitas magistrorum et scholarium* to become more and more autonomous, the Church nevertheless continues to nourish the same concern that gave rise to this institution.<sup>3</sup> The Church's presence in the University is not, in fact, a task that would remain, as it were, external to the mission of proclaiming faith. *"The synthesis between culture and faith is a necessity not only for culture, but also for faith... A faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully received, not entirely thought through and faithfully lived"*\* The faith that the Church proclaims is a *"fides quaerens intellectum"* that must penetrate the human intellect and heart, that must be thought out in order to be lived. The Church's presence cannot, therefore, be limited to a cultural and scientific contribution: it must offer a real opportunity for encountering Christ.

Concretely, the Church's presence and mission in university culture take varied and complementary forms. In the first place, there is the task of giving support to the Catholics engaged in the life of the University as professors, students, researchers or non-academic staff. The Church is concerned with proclaiming the gospel to all those, within the University, to whom it is still unknown and who are ready to receive it in freedom. Her action also takes the form of sincere dialogue and loyal cooperation with all members of the University community who are concerned for the cultural development of the human person and of all the people involved.

This approach requires pastoral workers to see the University as a specific environment with its own problems. The success of their commitment depends, indeed, to a great extent on the relations they establish with this milieu, and which at times are still only embryonic. University pastoral

\*Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution *Er Corde Ecclesiae*, 15 August 1990, n. 1.

JOHN PAUL II, *Autograph Letter instituting the Pontifical Council for Culture*, 20 May 1982, in AAS 74 (1983), 683-688.

action often remains, in fact, on the fringe of ordinary pastoral action. The whole Christian community must therefore become aware of its pastoral and missionary responsibility in relation to the university milieu.

## I, SITUATION OF THE UNIVERSITY

In the space of half a century, the University as institution has undergone a notable transformation. One cannot generalize, however, about the features of this transformation in all countries. Such changes do not apply equally to all the academic centers of single region. Each University is marked by its historical, cultural, social, economic and political context. This great variety calls for careful adaptation in the forms that the Church's presence will take.

1. *In many countries, especially in certain developed countries,* after the confrontation of the years '68~'70 and the institutional crisis that threw the University into a certain confusion, several trends, both positive and negative, emerged. Clashes and crises, and in particular, the collapse of ideologies and Utopias that were once dominant, have left deep marks. The University, that was formerly reserved for the privileged, has become wide open for a vast public, both in its initial teaching and through continuing education. This is a significant feature of the democratization of social and cultural life. In many cases, students have come in such numbers that the infrastructures, the services and even traditional teaching methods can prove inadequate. In certain cultural contexts, moreover, various factors have brought about crucial changes in the position of the teaching staff. Between isolation and collegiality, diverse professional commitments and family life, they see a decline in their academic and social status, their authority and their security. The concrete situation of the students is also a cause for anxiety. Structures are often lacking for welcoming and supporting them and for community life. Many of them, transplanted far from their family to a strange town, suffer from loneliness. In addition, contact with the professors is often limited, and the students find themselves without guidance in face of problems of adjustment which they are unable to solve. At times, they have to enter an environment marked by the influence of attitudes of a socio-political kind and by the claim to unlimited freedom in all fields of research and scientific experi-



mentation. Finally, in some cases, the young university students are confronted with the prevalence of a relativistic liberalism, a scientific positivism and a certain pessimism caused by the insecurity of professional prospects in the current economic crisis.

*2 Elsewhere, the University has lost part of its prestige.* The proliferation of Universities and their specialization have created a situation of great disparity. Some enjoy unquestioned prestige, while others are barely able to offer a mediocre standard of teaching. The University no longer has a monopoly of research in fields where specialized Institutes and Research Centers, both private and public, achieve excellence. These Institutes and Centers are part, in any case, of a specific cultural context, of the *university culture*, that generates a characteristic "*forma mentis*" or mindset: the importance attached to the force of reasoned argument, the development of a critical spirit, a high level of compartmentalized information and little capacity for synthesis, even within specific sectors.

*3. Living in this changing culture with a desire for truth and an attitude of service in conformity with the Christian ideal,* has, at times, become difficult. In the past, becoming a student, and even more so a professor, was everywhere an unquestionable social promotion. Today, the context of university studies is often marked by new difficulties, of a material or moral order, that rapidly become human and spiritual problems with unforeseeable consequences.

*4. In many countries, the University meets with great difficulties in the effort for renewal* that is constantly required by the evolution of society, the development of new sectors of knowledge, the demands of economies in crisis. Society aspires to a University that will meet its specific needs, starting from employment for all. In this way, the industrial world is having a notable impact on the University, with its specific demands for rapid and reliable technical services. This "professionalization" with its undeniable benefits, does not always go together with a "university" formation in a sense of values, in professional ethics and in an approach to other disciplines, as a complement to the necessary specialization.

*5. In contrast to the \*pro)essionalization" of 'some Institutes,* many Faculties, especially of Arts, Philosophy, Political Science and Law, often

limit themselves to providing a generic formation in their own discipline, without reference to possible professional outlets for their students. In many countries of medium development, government authorities use the Universities as "parking areas" to reduce the tensions caused by unemployment among the youth.

6. *Another inescapable fact emerges:* whereas the University, by vocation, has a primary role to play in the development of culture, it is exposed, in many countries, to two opposing risks: either passively to submit to the dominant cultural influences, or to become marginal in relation to them. It is difficult to face these situations, because the University often ceases to be a "*community of students and teachers in search of truth*," becoming a mere "instrument" in the hands of the State and of the dominant economic forces. The only aim is then to assure the technical and professional training of specialists, without giving to education of the person the central place it has by right. Moreover — and this is not without grave consequence — many students attend the University without finding there a human formation that would help them towards the necessary discernment about the meaning of life, and about the bases and development of values and ideals; they live in a state of uncertainty, with the added burden of anxiety for their future.

7. *In countries which were or still are subjected to a materialistic and atheistic ideology*, research and teaching have been permeated by this ideology, especially in the fields of the human sciences, of philosophy and history. As a result, even in some countries that have passed through radical changes on the political level, there is not yet sufficient freedom of thought to discern, where necessary, the dominant trends, and to perceive the relativistic liberalism that is often concealed within them. A certain skepticism begins to arise concerning the very idea of truth.

& *Everywhere one notices great diversification in the fields of knowledge.* The different disciplines have succeeded in defining their specific field of investigation and truth claims, and in recognizing the legitimate complexity and the diversity of their methods. There is a danger, becoming more and more evident, that research workers, teachers and students will close themselves within their specific field of knowledge, seeing only a fragment of reality.

9. *In some disciplines, there is emerging a new positivism, with no ethical preference:* science for the sake of science. "Utilitarian" formation takes precedence over integral humanism, tending to neglect the needs and expectations of persons, to censure or stifle the most basic questions of personal and social existence. The development of scientific techniques in the fields of biology, communication and automation, raises new and crucial ethical questions. The more human beings become capable of mastering nature, the more they depend on technology, the more they need to protect their own freedom. This raises new questions about the approaches and the epistemological criteria of the different disciplines.

10. *The skepticism and indifference* engendered by the prevailing secularism exist together with a new and ill-defined searching of a religious kind. In the climate of uncertainty that characterizes the intellectual horizon of teachers and students, the University at times provides a context for the development of aggressive nationalistic behavior. But, in some situations, the climate of confrontation gives way to conformism.

11. *The development of university education "at a distance" or "tele-education"* (correspondence, audio-visual techniques, etc.) makes information more widely accessible; but the personal contact between teacher and student is in danger of disappearing, together with the human formation bound up with this indispensable relationship. Some mixed forms are a judicious combination of "tele-education" and occasional contacts between teacher and student; this could be a good way of developing university formation.

12. *Inter-university and international cooperation* shows real progress. The more developed academic centers can help the less advanced; this is at times, but not always, to the advantage of the latter. The major universities can, indeed, exercise a certain technical, and even ideological "domination" beyond their national frontiers, to the detriment of the less favored countries.

13. *The place women are taking in the University*, and the general widening of access to university studies already constitute an established tradition in some countries. Elsewhere, they come as new development, offering opportunity for renewal, and enrichment of university life.

**14. *The central role of Universities*** in development programs brings with it a tension between the pursuit of the new culture engendered by modernity and the safeguard and promotion of traditional cultures. In responding to its vocation, however, the University lacks a "guiding idea," an anchor for its multiple activities. This is at the root of the present crisis of identity and purpose in an institution that, of its nature, is directed towards the search for truth. The chaos of thought and the poverty of basic criteria sterilize the process that should produce educational proposals capable of meeting the new problems. In spite of its imperfections, by vocation, the University, with the other Institutions of higher education, remains a privileged place for the development of knowledge and formation, and plays a fundamental role in preparing leaders for the society of the 21st century.

**15. *A renewed pastoral effort.*** The presence of Catholics in the University is, in itself, a question and a hope for the Church. In many countries, *this presence* is, indeed, at one and at the same time, numerically impressive and relatively modest in its effect. Too many teachers and students consider their faith a strictly private affair, or do not perceive the impact their university life has on their Christian existence. Their presence in the University seems like a parenthesis in their life of faith. Some, among them even priests or religious, in the name of university autonomy, go so far as to refrain from any explicit witness to their faith. Others use this autonomy to spread doctrines contrary to the Church's teaching. This situation is aggravated by the lack of theologians with competence in the scientific and technical fields, and of professors specialized in the sciences who have a good theological formation. Obviously, this calls for a renewed awareness, leading to a new pastoral effort. Moreover, while appreciating the praiseworthy initiatives undertaken in various places, one cannot fail to see that the Christian presence often seems limited to isolated groups, sporadic initiatives, the occasional witness of well known personalities and the action of one or another movement.

## **H. PRESENCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY CULTURE**

### **1. Presence in the structures of the University**

Sent by Christ to all human beings of every culture, the Church tries to share with them the good news of salvation. Having received through Christ the revealed Truth about God and humankind, she has the mission to provide, through her message of truth, an opening for authentic freedom. Founded on the mandate received from Christ, she seeks to cast light on cultural values and expressions, to correct and purify them, where necessary, in the light of faith, in order to bring them to their fullness of meaning.<sup>5</sup>

Within the University, the Church's pastoral action, in its rich complexity, has in the first place a subjective aspect: the evangelization of people. From this point of view, the Church enters into dialogue with real people: men and women, professors, students, staff, and, through them, with the cultural trends that characterize this milieu. But one cannot forget the objective aspect: the dialogue between faith and the different disciplines of knowledge. In the context of the University, the appearance of new cultural trends is, indeed, closely linked to the great questions concerning humanity: the value of the human person, the meaning of human existence and action, and especially conscience and freedom. At this level, Catholic intellectuals should give priority to promoting a renewed and vital synthesis between faith and culture.

The Church must not forget that her action is carried out in the particular situation of each university Center and that her presence in the University is a service rendered to the people concerned in their two-fold dimension: personal and social. The type of presence is therefore different in each country, which bears the marks of its historical, cultural, religious and legislative tradition. In particular, where the legislation permits, the Church cannot forsake her institutional action within the University. She seeks to support and foster the teaching of theology wherever possible. At the institutional level, the university Chaplaincy has a special importance

<sup>5</sup>Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, nn. 30\*31.

on the campus. By offering a wide range of both doctrinal and spiritual formation, it constitutes, in fact, an important source for the proclamation of the Gospel. Through the stimulus and awareness given through the Chaplaincy, university pastoral action can hope to achieve its aim, that is, to create within the university environment a Christian community and a missionary faith commitment.

Religious Orders and Congregations bring a specific presence to the Universities. By the wealth and diversity of their charism — especially their educational charism—they contribute to the Christian formation of teachers and students. In their pastoral options, these religious communities, that are much in demand for primary and secondary education, should take into consideration what is at stake in their presence within higher education; they should be careful not to draw back in any way, under pretext of entrusting to others the mission corresponding to their vocation.

To be accepted and influential, the Church's institutional presence in university culture must be of good quality. Often there is a lack of personnel, or at times of the necessary financial resources. This situation calls for creativity and an adequate pastoral effort.

## 2. **The Catholic University**

Among the different institutional forms of the Church's presence in the university world, emphasis must be placed on the Catholic University, itself an institution of the Church.

The existence of a large number of Catholic Universities—differing greatly according to regions and countries, from a large number to a total absence — is in itself a richness and an essential factor of the Church's presence within university culture. However, this investment does not always produce the fruit for which one might legitimately hope.

Important indications for the specific role of the Catholic University were given in the Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, published on 15 August 1990. The Constitution points out that the institutional identity of the Catholic University depends on its realizing together its characteristics as "University" and as "Catholic." It only achieves its full identity

when, at one and the same time, it gives proof of being rigorously serious as a member of the international community of knowledge and expresses its Catholic identity through an explicit link with the Church, at both local and universal levels; an identity which marks concretely the life, the services and the programs of the university community. By its very existence, the Catholic University achieves its aim of guaranteeing, in an institutional form, a Christian presence in the university world. From this stems its specific mission, characterized by several inseparable features.

In order to carry out its function in relation to the Church and to society, the Catholic University must study the grave problems of the day and propose solutions that express the religious and ethical values proper to a Christian vision of the human person.

Next comes university pastoral action in the strict sense. In this respect, the challenges the Catholic University has to meet are not substantially different from those confronting other academic centers. However, we should stress that an academic institution which defines itself as "Catholic" is committed to university pastoral action at the same depth as the goals it sets for itself: the integral formation of the people, men and women who, in the academic context, are called to active participation in the life of society and of the Church.

A further aspect of the mission of the Catholic University is, finally, a commitment to dialogue between faith and culture, and the development of a culture rooted in faith. Even in this regard, if there must be concern for the development of a culture in harmony with faith wherever baptized persons are involved in the life of the University, this is still more urgent in the context of the Catholic University, called to become, in a special way, a significant interlocutor of the academic, cultural and scientific world.

Clearly, the Church's concern for the University — in the direct service of people and the evangelization of culture — necessarily has a point of reference in the Catholic University. The growing demand for a qualified presence of baptized people in university culture becomes, in this way, a call to the whole Church to become more and more aware of the specific vocation of the Catholic University and to facilitate its development as an effective instrument of the Church's evangelizing mission.

### 3. Fruitful initiatives already implemented

In response to the demands of university culture, many local Churches have taken appropriate action in various ways:

1. Appointment by the Bishops' Conference of university Chaplains with an *ad hoc* formation, a specific status and adequate support.

2. Creation, for university pastoral action, of diversified diocesan teams that show the specific responsibility of the laity and the diocesan character of these apostolic units.

3. First steps in a pastoral approach to University Rectors/Presidents and Faculty Professors, whose milieu is often dominated by technical and professional concerns.

4. Action taken for the setting up of "*Departments of Religious Sciences*," capable of opening up new horizons for teachers and students, and compatible with the mission of the Church. In these Departments, Catholics should play a prominent role, especially when Faculties of Theology are lacking in the university structures.

5. Institution of regular courses on morals and professional ethics in specialized Institutes and Centers of higher education.

6. Support for dynamic ecclesial movements. University pastoral action achieves better results when it is based on groups or movements and associations — at times, few in numbers but of high quality — that have the support of the dioceses and Bishops' Conferences.

7. Stimulus for a university pastoral action that is not limited to a general and *undiluted pastoral action for youth*, but which takes as its starting-point the fact that many young people are deeply influenced by the "university environment." It is there, to a great extent, that they have their encounter with Christ and bear their witness as Christians. The aim is therefore to educate and accompany the young people, enabling them to live in faith and concrete reality of their milieu and their own activities and commitments.

8. Facilitating dialogue between theologians, philosophers and scientists, for a profound renewal of attitudes and to create new and fruitful relations between Christian Faith, theology, philosophy and the sciences



in their concrete search for truth. Experience shows that university people, priests and especially lay people, are in the forefront in maintaining and promoting cultural debate on the great questions regarding humanity, science, society and the new challenges for the human spirit. It is for Catholic teachers and their associations, in particular, to promote interdisciplinary initiatives, and cultural encounters, inside and outside the University, combining critical method and confidence in reason, in order to bring face to face, in the language of the different cultures, metaphysical and scientific positions and the affirmations of faith.

### **III. PASTORAL SUGGESTIONS AND GUIDELINES**

#### **1. Pastoral suggestions from local Churches**

1. A consultation conducted by the *ad hoc* Episcopal Commissions would make it possible to have a better idea of the different initiatives for university pastoral action and for the presence of Christians in the University, and to prepare guidelines to support fruitful apostolic undertakings and to promote those seen to be necessary.

2. The setting up of a National Commission for questions related to the University and to culture would help the local Churches to share their experiences and their capabilities. It would be for the Commission to sponsor a program of activities, reflection and meetings on "Evangelization and Cultures," intended for the seminaries and the formation centers for religious and laity; one section would be devoted explicitly to university culture.

3. At diocesan level, in university towns, it would be good to encourage the setting up of a specialized commission, composed of priests and Catholic university people, teachers and students. The aim would be to provide useful indications for university pastoral action and for the activity of Christians in the fields of education and research. The commission would be a help to the bishop in the exercise of his specific mission of promoting and confirming the various initiatives in the diocese and facilitating contact with national or international initiatives. By virtue of his pastoral task at the service of his Church, the diocesan bishop bears the

first responsibility for the presence and pastoral action of the Church in the State Universities, as well as in the Catholic Universities and other private institutions.

4. At parish level, it would be desirable for the Christian communities—priests, religious and lay faithful—to pay greater attention to students and teachers, and also to the apostolate of the university Chaplaincies. The parish is of its nature a community, within which fruitful relationships can be established for a more effective service of the Gospel. It plays a considerable role through its capacity to welcome people, especially when it facilitates the setting up and functioning of "Student Hostels" and "University Residences." The success of the evangelization of the University and of university culture depends to a great extent on the commitment of the whole local Church.

5. The university parish is, in some places, an institution more necessary than ever. It supposes the presence of one or more priests, with a good preparation for this specific apostolate. The parish is unique as a milieu for communication with all the variety of the academic world. It makes possible relations with people from the fields of culture, art and science; at the same time, it allows the Church to penetrate into this complex milieu. As a place of meeting and of Christian reflection and formation, it opens to young people the doors of a Church hitherto unknown or misunderstood, and opens the Church up to the students, their questions and their apostolic dynamism. As a privileged place for the liturgical celebration of the sacraments, it is, above all, the place of the Eucharist, heart of every Christian community, source and summit of every apostolate.

6. Wherever possible, university pastoral action should create or intensify relations between Catholic Universities or Faculties and all other university milieus, in varied forms of collaboration.

7. The present situation is an urgent call to organize the formation of qualified pastoral workers within parishes and Catholic movements and associations. It urgently demands the implementation of a long-term strategy, for cultural and theological formation requires appropriate preparation. Concretely, many dioceses are not in a position to set up and

carry out a formation of this kind at university level. This demand can be met by sharing the resources of dioceses, specialized religious institutes and lay groups.

8. In every situation, the presence of the Church must be seen as a "*plantatio*" (planting) of the Christian community in the university milieu, through witness, proclamation of the gospel and the service of charity. This presence will mean growth for the "*Christifideles*" (Faithful) and a help in approaching those who are far from Jesus Christ. In this perspective, it seems important to develop and promote:

— a catechetical pedagogy characterized by a *sense of community*, offering a variety of proposals, the possibility of differentiated itineraries and responses to the real needs of concrete persons;

— a pedagogy of personal guidance: welcome, availability and friendship, interpersonal relationships, discernment of the circumstances in which students are living and concrete means for their improvement.

— a pedagogy for the deepening of faith and spiritual life, rooted in the Word of God, shared in depth through sacramental and liturgical life.

9. Finally, the presence of the Church in the University calls for a common witness of Christians. This ecumenical witness, inseparable from the missionary dimension, is an important contribution to Christian unity. Without prejudice to the pastoral care of the Catholic faithful, ecumenical collaboration will take the forms and respect the limits established by the Church. It supposes an adequate formation and will be particularly fruitful in the study of social questions and, in general, of all questions related to humankind, to the meaning of human existence and activity.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Developing the apostolate of the laity, especially teachers

*"The Christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate."*<sup>7</sup> This statement of the Second Vatican Council, when applied

† f. PONT. COUNCIL FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN UNITY, *Directory for the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism*, Vatican City, 1993, nn. 211-216.

<sup>7</sup>SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n. 2.

**to university pastoral action**, is a **resounding challenge to responsibility for Catholic teachers, intellectuals** and students. The **apostolic commitment of the faithful** is a sign of vitality and spiritual progress for the whole Church. Developing **in** university people this consciousness of the duty of a postdate **is consistent with the** pastoral orientations of Vatican II. At the heart of the **university** community, faith becomes in this way a radiating source of new life, **and** of genuinely Christian culture. The lay faithful enjoy a legitimate **autonomy in the** exercise of their specific apostolic vocation. Pastors are invited, **not** only to recognize this specificity, but to give it warm support. This apostolate starts and develops from professional relationships, common cultural interests and the sharing of daily life in the different sectors of university activity. The individual apostolate of Catholic lay people is "the starting-point and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even in its organized expression, and admits of no substitute."<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, it remains necessary and urgent for the Catholics present in the University to give a witness of communion and unity. In this respect, the ecclesial movements are particularly valuable.

Catholic teachers play a fundamental role for the Church's presence in university culture. In certain cases, their quality and generosity can even make up for imperfection in the structures. The apostolic commitment of the Catholic teacher who gives priority to respect and service for individuals — colleagues and students — offers the witness of the "new Man, always ready to render an account to anyone who asks for the hope that is in him, and to do it with courtesy and respect" (cf. *1 Pt*3:15-16). The University is certainly a limited sector of society, but qualitatively, its influence is in greater proportion to its quantitative dimension. By contrast, however, even the figure of the Catholic intellectual seems to have almost disappeared from certain university contexts, where the students feel painfully the lack of genuine mentors whose constant presence and availability would provide a "companionship" of high quality.

This witness of the Catholic teacher certainly does not consist in filling disciplines that are being taught with religious subject matter. Rather, it means opening up the horizon to the ultimate and fundamental questions, with the stimulating generosity of an active presence for the

*Hbid.*, n. 16.

**often inarticulate demands of young minds in search of points of reference and certainties, of guidance and purpose. Their life tomorrow in society depends on this. Even more do the Church and the University expect from priests teaching in the University a high standard of competence and a sincere ecclesial communion.**

Unity grows in diversity, resisting the temptation to unify and formalize activities. The variety of apostolic initiatives and resources, far from opposing ecclesial unity, requires and enriches it. Pastors will take into account the legitimate characteristics of the university spirit: diversity and spontaneity, respect for personal freedom and responsibility, resistance to any attempt at imposing uniformity.

Catholic movements or groups should be encouraged to multiply and to grow; but it is important also to recognize and to vitalize associations of the Catholic laity that boast a long and fruitful tradition of university apostolate. The apostolate, exercised by lay people, is fruitful to the extent that it is ecclesial. The criteria for evaluation of the different commitments include doctrinal consistency with Catholic identity, together with an exemplary moral and professional standard, ensuring the radiating authenticity of the lay apostolate, of which spiritual life is the guarantee.

## CONCLUSION

Among the immense fields of apostolate and action for which the Church is responsible, university culture is one of the most promising, but also one of the most difficult. This particular milieu has so great an influence on the social and cultural life of nations, and on it depends to a great extent the future of the Church and that of society. Within it the Church maintains an apostolic presence and action at both the institutional and the personal levels, with the specific cooperation of priests and lay people, administrative staff, teachers and students.

Consultation and meetings with many bishops and university people have shown the importance of cooperation between the different ecclesial bodies concerned. The Congregation for Catholic Education, the Pontifi-

cal Council for the Laity, and the Pontifical Council for Culture express again their readiness to facilitate exchanges, and to promote meetings at the level of Bishops' Conferences, Catholic International Organizations, and of Commissions for Teaching, Education and Culture acting in this particular field.

Service of the individuals involved in the University, and through them, service of society, the presence of the Church in the university milieu enters into the process of inculturation of the faith, as a requirement of evangelization. On the threshold of a new millennium, of which university culture will be a major component, the duty of proclaiming the Gospel becomes more urgent. It calls for faith communities able to transmit the Good News of Christ to all those who are formed, who teach and who exercise their activity in the context of university culture. The urgency of this apostolic commitment is great, for the University is one of the most fruitful centers for the creation of culture.

*"Fully aware of a pastoral urgency that calls for an absolutely special concern for culture (...) the Church calls upon the lay faithful to be present, as signs of courage and intellectual creativity, in the privileged places of culture that is, the world of education —school and University—in places of scientific and technological research, the areas of artistic creativity and work in the humanities. Such a presence is destined not only for the recognition and possible purification of the elements that critically burden existing culture, but also for the elevation of these cultures through the riches which have their source in the Gospel and the Christian faith."*<sup>19</sup>

Vatican City, Pentecost, 22 May 1994.

PIO CARD. LAGHI

*Prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education*

EDUARDO CARD. PIRONIO

*President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity*

PAUL CARD. POUPARD

*President of the Pontifical Council for Culture*

•JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, on the Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World, 30 December 1988, n. 44.

## **Humility and Obedience in Priestly Ministry**

PEDRO G. TEJERO, O.P.

Among the virtues most necessary in priestly ministry, humility and obedience rank first. Should these two virtues be absent in the spiritual life of the priest, no one should wonder if his life has become infected with the diseases of naturalism, spiritual sterility and daily routine in the performance of the sacraments.

Humility begins in the life of a priest with a deep consciousness of his own weakness and limitations. The priest is not an angel but a human being deeply inclined to what is forbidden and sinful. Temptation lurks constantly along his way, and sad to say, at times, he yields to it and falls. For this, he is in need of forgiveness and God's mercy. John Paul II during his Apostolic Visit to Spain, reminded priests that they should taste the sweetness and consolation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son whenever they go to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Humility in priestly life implies a disposition of mind and heart by which the priest is always ready to search not his own will but the will of the One who has sent him. Chosen for a special vocation he should strive to accomplish it with the utmost fidelity. The priest should always have in mind that he is a

minister of Christ, an instrument in the hands of Christ to bring His salvific power upon the people of God. It is for this reason that his actions as a priest are endowed with such a power that transcends all human frontiers.

Christ is the source and fountain of all graces, while the priest is the dispenser of these graces. Christ is the only Mediator between God and man while the priest shares, through a special privilege, in the priesthood of Christ.

To reflect and ponder on these profound truths should lead to the conclusion that the life of the priest has its meaning in his configuration with the life of Christ. In him the priest should always rest and rely. It is not Paul or Apollos who really counts but Christ who has chosen Paul and Apollos to carry out the magnificent work of God's salvation.

Humility and obedience are so inextricably connected in priestly ministry that one cannot be thought of without the other. By virtue of his ordination the priest has become a minister of the Church. He is then acting "in the person of the whole Church," especially when he celebrates the Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of the Universal Church. No one can think of this type of ministry when the hierarchical communion with the whole body would be lacking. "Therefore pastoral love demands that acting in this communion, priests dedicate their own wills through obedience to the service of God and their brothers. This love requires that they accept and carry out in a spirit of faith whatever is commanded or recommended by the Sovereign Pontiff, their own bishop, other superior" (*PO*, n. 15). In a spirit of obedience the priest should gladly spend himself and be spent in any task assigned to him, even the more lowly and poor ones. This is the kind of obedience that strengthens the unity of the whole Church especially among those whose task is to rule and guide the people of God.

Obedience in this perspective should always be "responsible and voluntary." We are not considering here the obedience of persons who limit themselves to the mere execution of tasks assigned, but of those who, mature in freedom, cooperate with the episcopal order in proposing with simplicity and confidence the plans and projects as well as the needs of the people entrusted to their care and guidance. And if at any time problems and serious difficulties arise, recourse to dialogue is to be recommended



and practiced. If the problem of dissent ever arises, then the priest should never forget that the cross of Christ is waiting for him and at its foot he may find the right answer for the right moment.

Humility and obedience thus considered make the priest like Christ, who "emptied himself taking the nature of a slave... becoming obedient to death" (P/i 2:7-9). St. Thomas Aquinas, commenting on the obedience of Christ says: "In Christ obedience is commended above all" (II-II, 186,5).

## Message for Lent 1995

JOHN PAUL II

*"The Spirit of the Lord... has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim... recovery of sight to the blind..." (Lk 4:18).*

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

1. During the season of Lent, I would like to reflect with all of you on a hidden evil which deprives a great number of poor people of many possibilities for progress. It likewise deprives them of victory over marginalization and hinders them from attaining true freedom. I am speaking of illiteracy. Pope Paul VI reminded us that "lack of education is as serious as lack of food; the illiterate person is a starved spirit" (*Populorum Progressio*, 35).

This terrible affliction helps to keep vast multitudes of people in a state of underdevelopment, with all the scandalous misery which that brings. Abundant testimonies from different continents, as well as the meetings which I have had in the course of my apostolic travels, confirm my conviction that where there is illiteracy there is more hunger, disease and infant mortality, as well as humiliation, exploitation and all kinds of suffering, than there is elsewhere.

A person who can neither read nor write finds great difficulties in making use of modern work methods; he is as it were condemned to be ignorant of his rights and duties; he is truly poor. We must realize that hundreds of millions of adults are illiterate, that tens of millions of children cannot go to school, either because there is no school nearby or because poverty prevents them from attending. They are stunted precisely when their lives should be blossoming and are prevented from exercising their fundamental rights. This is the human throng which reaches out to us, asking for a gesture of brotherhood.

2. We know that when individuals, families and communities have access to education and to different levels of training, they can make better progress on all fronts. Literacy allows the person to develop his possibilities, to broaden his talents, to enrich his relationships. The Second Vatican Council affirmed: "It is one of the properties of the human person that he can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 53). Intellectual formation is a decisive element for developing that human culture which helps make people more self-sufficient and free. It also makes possible a better formation of conscience and a better perception of moral and spiritual responsibilities.

Among the situations which cause concern in our time, we often hear of the increasing world population. In this area, it is preferable that families should themselves take responsibility. In the Consistory of June 1994, the Cardinals unanimously declared that "education and development are much more effective responses to the growing world population than are any coercion and all artificial forms of population control."<sup>1</sup> The family itself as an institution is supported when its members can make use of written communication; they are no longer passive subjects of programmes imposed on them to the detriment of their freedom and the responsible control of their fertility; they are the active subjects of their own development.

3. Faced with the seriousness of the living condition of our brothers and sisters who are kept at a distance from modern culture, we have a duty to show them our complete solidarity. Actions undertaken to favor access

**'Call of the Cardinals for the protection of the family, 14 June 1994.**

*Message (or Lent.. 139*

to reading and writing are the first condition for helping the impoverished to mature intellectually and to lead their lives more independently. Literacy and education are an essential duty and investment for humanity's future, for "the fulfillment of the whole man and of every man," as Paul VI said (*Populorum Progressio*, 42).

In the midst of the peoples, the greater the number of those enjoying a sufficient education, the better will the people be able to take their destiny into their own hands. In this, the literacy training helps cooperation between nations and peace in the world. The equal dignity of individuals and peoples requires the international community to take steps to overcome the damaging inequalities which the illiteracy of millions of human beings still causes.

4. My gratitude goes to all the individuals and organizations engaged in the work of solidarity which is the education of the illiterate. I speak particularly to social and religious organizations, to teachers, schoolchildren and students, to all people of good will, and I invite them to share still more generously their material and cultural goods: I hope they will do so in their own localities, and support the work of organizations specifically involved in promoting literacy in other parts of the world.

5. Progress in educating the illiterate will also make further evangelization possible, this to the extent that literacy will enable each of our brothers and sisters to grasp the Christian message in a more personal manner and to reinforce listening to the Word of God by reading it themselves. Making direct access to the Holy Scriptures possible for the greatest possible number of people, and in their own language, can only enrich the reflection and meditation of those seeking the meaning and direction of their lives.

I strongly urge the pastors of the Church to take to heart and encourage this great service to humanity. For it is a matter of linking to the proclamation of the Good News the transmission of a knowledge which enables our brothers and sisters to assimilate for themselves the meaning of this message, to experience all its richness and to make it an integral part of their culture. In our time, can we not say that to work for literacy is to contribute to the building up of communion in real and active brotherly love?

**6. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus and our own Mother, I pray that God will hear our voices and touch our hearts, that this Lent of 1995 will mark a new stage in the conversion which Lord Jesus Christ preached, from the very beginning of his Messianic mission, for the sake of all nations (cf. *Mt* 4:12-17).**

**In this hope, I cordially impart to you my Apostolic Blessing.**

**From the Vatican, 7 September 1994.**

# Message for the Third World Day of the Sick\*

JOHN PAUL II

1. Jesus' gestures of salvation towards "all those who were the prisoners of evil" (*Roman Missal*, Com. Pref. VII) have always been significantly perpetuated in the Church's concern for the sick. She manifests her attention to those suffering in many ways, among which the establishment of the *World Day of the Sick* is of great importance in the present circumstances. This initiative, which has met with broad acceptance among those who take to heart the conditions of the suffering, seeks to give a new impetus to the Christian community's pastoral and charitable action in such a way as to ensure that this presence will be increasingly effective and incisive in society.

This need is especially felt in our time, which sees whole populations tried by enormous hardships as a result of bloody conflicts whose highest price is often paid by the weak. How can we fail to acknowledge that our civilization "should realize that, from different standpoints, it is a *sick* civilization generating deep alterations in man" (*Letter to Families*, n. 20)?

•February 11, 1995

It is *sick* because of its raging egoism, because of the individualistic utilitarianism often proposed as a model for life, because of the negation or indifference which is quite often displayed in regard to man's transcendent destiny, because of the crisis in moral and spiritual values, which so deeply troubles mankind. The "pathology" of the spirit is no less dangerous than physical "pathology," and they influence each other.

2. In my message for last year's World Day of the Sick I wanted to recall the tenth anniversary of the publication of the Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, which deals with the Christian meaning of human suffering. On this occasion I would like to call attention to the approaching tenth anniversary of another highly significant ecclesial event involving the pastoral care of the sick. With the Motu Proprio *Dolentium Hominum* of February 11, 1985,<sup>1</sup> I instituted the Pontifical Commission — which later became the Pontifical Council — for Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers, which, through multiple initiatives, "manifests the Church's concern for the ill by helping those engaged in serving the sick and the suffering so that the apostolate of mercy to which they are devoted will meet the new demands with increasing effectiveness" (Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, Art. 152).

The leading event associated with the next World Day of the Sick, which we shall celebrate on February 11, 1995, will take place on African soil, at the Yamoussoukro Sanctuary of Mary, Queen of Peace, in the Ivory Coast. It will be an ecclesial gathering spiritually linked to the Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops; at the same time, it will be an occasion for sharing in the joy of the Ivory Coast Church, which is marking the centennial of the arrival of the first missionaries.

Coming together for an anniversary which is charged with such emotion on the African continent, and particularly at the Marian Shrine of Yamoussoukro, invites us to reflect on *the relationship between pain and peace*. This is a very profound relationship: when there is no peace, suffering spreads and death expands its power among men. In the social, as well as in the familial, community, the decline of peaceful understanding translates into a proliferation of attacks on life, whereas serving, advancing, and defending life, even at the cost of personal sacrifice constitute the indispensable premise for authentically building individual and social peace.

3. On the threshold of the third millennium, peace is, unfortunately, still distant, and there are abundant signs of a possible further retreat. The identification of the causes and the search for solutions quite often appear laborious. Even among Christians bloody fratricidal struggles are sometimes seen to take place. But those who set about listening to the Gospel in an open spirit cannot grow weary of recalling for themselves and others the necessity of forgiveness and reconciliation. They are called to the altar of daily, ardent prayer, together with the sick all over the world, to present the offering of suffering which Christ has accepted as a means to redeem mankind and save it.

The source of peace is the Cross of Christ, in which we are all saved. Called to union with Christ (cf. *Col* 1:24) and to suffer like Christ (*ci.Lk* 9:23; 21:12-19; in 15:18-21), the Christian, with the acceptance and the offering of suffering, announces the constructive power of the Cross. Indeed, if war and division are the fruit of violence and sin, peace is the fruit of justice and love, whose summit is the generous offering of one's own suffering, spurred — if necessary — to the point of giving one's life in union with Christ. "The more man is threatened by sin, the more burdensome the structures of sin which today's world bears in itself are, the greater the eloquence is, which human suffering in itself possesses. And the more the Church feels the need to have recourse to the value of human sufferings for the salvation of the world" (Apostolic Letter *Salvifici Doloris*, n. 27).

4. To use suffering to advantage and offer it for the salvation of the world are, indeed, themselves an action and mission of peace, for from the courageous witness of the weak, the sick, and the suffering the loftiest contribution to peace can flow forth. Suffering, in fact stimulates deeper spiritual communion, fostering the recovery of a better quality of life, and promoting a convinced commitment to peace among men.

Believers know that, in associating themselves with the sufferings of Christ, they become authentic workers of peace. This is an unfathomable mystery, whose fruits are, nevertheless, plainly detectable in the history of the Church and particularly in the lives of the saints. If there is a suffering which provokes death, there is also, however, according to God's plan, a suffering leading to conversion and the transformation of man's heart (cf. *2 Co* 7:10): it is the suffering which, as a completion in one's own flesh of



"what is lacking" to Christ's passion (cf. *Col 1:24*), becomes a reason for and source of joy, for it generates life and peace.

5. Dear Brothers and Sisters who suffer in body and in spirit, it is my wish that all of you will be able to recognize and accept *God's call for you to be workers of peace through the offering of your pain*. It is not easy to respond to such a demanding call. Always look trustingly towards Jesus, the "Suffering Servant," asking him for the strength to transform the trial afflicting you into a gift. Listen with faith to his voice repeating to each of you: "Come to me, all who are weary and oppressed, and I will give you rest" (*Mt 11:28*).

May the Virgin Mary, Mother of Sorrows and Queen of Peace, obtain for every believer the gift of steadfast faith, which the world greatly needs. Thanks to it, indeed, the forces of evil, hatred and discord will be disarmed by the sacrifice of the weak and the infirm, joined to the Paschal mystery of Christ the Redeemer.

6.1 now address you, doctors, nurses, members of associations, and volunteer groups that serve the sick. Your work will be authentic witness and concrete action for peace if you are willing to offer true love to those with whom you come into contact and if, as believers, you are able to honor in them the presence of Christ himself. This invitation is addressed in a very special way to the priests and men and women religious who, through the charism of their Institutes or a particular form of apostolate, are directly engaged in pastoral care in health.

While expressing my deep appreciation for all you do with abnegation and generous dedication, I hope that everyone taking up the medical and paramedical professions will do so with enthusiasm and unselfish good will, and I ask the Lord of the harvest to send numerous and holy workers to labor in the vast field of health, which is so important for announcing and witnessing to the Gospel.

May Mary, the Mother of the Suffering, be at the side of those undergoing trials and sustain the efforts of those who devote their lives to serving the sick.

With these sentiments, I wholeheartedly bestow a special Apostolic Blessing upon you, dear people who are ill, and upon all who, in whatever manner, are close to you in your manifold material and spiritual needs.

# **Message on the Occasion of *'Id Al-Fitr* at the end of Ramadan**

poNnnao CONSILIUM  
PRO DIALOGO INTER RELIGIONES

1415/1995

Dear Muslim friends,

Peace and blessings to you all!

1. I am happy to greet you on behalf of the members of the Catholic Church as the month of Ramadan draws to a close. A time of fasting, prayer and sharing, this practice allows persons to develop their relationship with God, the Creator of humanity, and with their fellow humans, his creatures.

2. Indeed, the person who fasts is making his effort for God. By this gesture, the believer proclaims the nobility of the Most High, humiliates himself before Him and asks forgiveness for his sins. It is a task of purification that brings man closer to God, who alone is the Holy One.

3. By striving in this way to be closer to God, man also brings himself closer to his brothers and sisters and becomes more compassionate towards them. Indeed, the person who grows closer to God, by this very fact becomes more attentive to human beings, privileged creatures of the

merciful and compassionate God. Because they feel they are the object of God's divine mercy, men and women are invited to behave in the same way to their neighbor. Speaking about initiatives in favor of the needy, Christ said in the Gospel: "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (*Aft* 25:40).

4. We thank God together with you for these blessed days and, in the joy of what it has been granted you to accomplish, we sincerely wish you a "Happy Feast Day, *'IdFitr Sa'id.*"

5. Fasting also teaches us the proper use of material goods. This is a topic which concerns us all, firstly as inhabitants of the same planet, and above all as believers in "one God, Maker of all things visible and invisible," to whom all that exists "in heaven and on earth" belongs, who has made man his "representative" in his creation and who has desired to make him play a responsible part in his creative action in the world.

6. We observe that unfortunately we do not always faithfully fulfill the role to which the Creator has appointed us. It happens that we do not use the earth's resources according to God's plan, with due measure and wisdom. Hence certain disastrous consequences: the gradual destruction of the ozone layer, air and water pollution, the poisoning of the earth, excessive deforestation, the disappearance of plant and animal species. Our world runs the risk of seeing some of its natural resources depleted. The danger caused by industrial and nuclear waste should also be mentioned. It would not be an exaggeration to speak of an ecological crisis and of an environmental insecurity, which gives rise to a sense of precariousness. In addition, the ecological crisis is a problem of a moral kind.

7. In the face of such a situation, one cannot remain passive. There is a threat to humanity, as well as a lack of respect for the Creator: he must think and act accordingly. Indeed, in some countries, hedonism and the excessive urge to consume have negative effects on the way of life. Far from remaining indifferent, it would be appropriate to resort more frequently to the practice of austerity, moderation, discipline and the spirit of sacrifice. Fasting can help one cultivate these virtues.

8. The safeguard of the environment and natural resources concerns the entire human community: individuals, associations, states, international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental. Could we not work together for the good of future generations, so as to keep the earth clean, the air pure, the water drinkable, and to save the riches of the earth? Would it not be appropriate or even necessary to arouse the awareness of the public and especially of political leaders? An education in ecological responsibility and in the respect for life in the family, at school, by the media, would be a precious aid to the youth of all religions, by bringing them matter for thought and motives for action at the same time as developing their ecological awareness. A new solidarity would likewise foster peace between nations, for many ethical values linked to respect for the environment are extremely important for the development of a peaceful society.

9. Dear Muslim friends, these are the thoughts which I would like to share with you. With my warmest greetings for the end of Ramadan, I wish you joy and prosperity.

(Sgd.) Cardinal FRANCIS ARINZE  
*President*

# Message of the 6th FABC Plenary Assembly

FEDERATION OF ASIAN BISHOPS' CONFERENCES

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord:

Greetings of Peace and Life! We gather in Manila for the 6th Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Twenty-five years ago, in this same city, and with the inspiration provided by the visit of Pope Paul VI, the idea of establishing a sign and instrument of communion of Asian Churches was born. This idea became the FABC. And now, together with priests, Religious and lay people, we are likewise blessed by the inspiration of Pope John Paul's visit, on the occasion of the 10th World Youth Day. His words encourage us to be disciples in Asia at the service of life.

We commit ourselves to accompany and serve, with peoples of other faiths, the nations of Asia in the journey to fuller life.

Our unique contribution to this journey is our own sacred belief that Jesus the Christ is our Life (Co/3:4). For us, he is the fountain of the living water (*Jn* 7:38), the bread of Life (*Jn* 6:41), even Life itself (*Jn* 11:25;

14:6). He lives the unending life of the Father and continually sends the Spirit of Life to renew the face of the earth.

We are his disciples. We are to communicate in ever new, creative and credible ways, in compassion and love, this message about Jesus who, in our faith, will quench all thirst and satisfy all hunger for full life. We therefore commit ourselves to act with zeal and courage against realities that deal death in our Asian situation. We affirm and promote those that enhance life.

It is to promote life that we shall focus our pastoral care in a special way on five major concerns:

1. *The Asian Family* is now under siege. Anti-life and anti-family attitudes and values, policies and practices are being brought to bear, with tremendous pressure on the Asian family. Materialistic and consumeristic ways of living are destroying truly human values in the family. Euthanasia and abortion, sterilization and contraception, sex determination and genetic manipulation are being promoted. Together we must follow the divine law as taught by the Church to protect and promote the family as the sanctuary of life.

2. *Women and children* are often subjected to discrimination, abuse and exploitation. The plight of the girl child is particularly frightful in many countries. Boys are also victims in the labor field and in the tourist trade. Children everywhere must be treated as God's own. At the same time, we must work to change mentalities and practices that keep women inferior. We need to give practical recognition to the dignity of women equal to that of men and foster the exercise of their co-responsibility in Church and in society.

3. *The Youth* form the majority in our vast continent. Pope John Paul II has repeatedly affirmed that they are the hope of the Church and of society. They have the enthusiasm, idealism and the energy to be active evangelizers and agents of social transformation. We commit ourselves to provide pastoral preferential attention to the young men and women in Asia who in situations of competing values and ideologies are struggling for full life.

i 4. *Ecology* can no longer be ignored as a pastoral concern in Asia.

It is of the utmost importance. We witness continuing and unabated destruction of our environment. People, especially the poor, and the ecosystem that support life are being destroyed... sacrificed at the altar of economic gains. We must choose life for our world and its peoples by acting against policies and practices that cause the further degradation of our environment and by caring for the earth and all that live in it.

5. *Displaced Persons* constitute a relatively new group of the poor of Asia. They are the internal and external refugees seeking and struggling towards life. They are the migrant workers from the poor countries of Asia searching for livelihood and security in other countries. Separated from their own families, they are often subject to abuse and exploitation. We have to address the causes of their situation. For the defense and promotion of their lives, we commit our pastoral attention and care.

In all these concerns, the laity must play a leading role, by witnessing to the Gospel and to the social teaching of the Church at home or in their places of work, they serve powerfully as workers of change and promoters of life.

As we close our 6th Plenary Assembly, we thank our loving God for bringing us together from many countries in Asia. In diversity of our cultures, we have found communion through our faith and our celebration of the Bread of Life in the Eucharist. We most deeply regret that other brothers and sisters from countries in difficult situations could not join us and share with us their own experience of the living God. We express our solidarity with them and commend them in our prayers to the loving Lord.

We pray that Mary, our Mother and the model of all disciples, be our companion in our journey to life.

May Jesus, the Fountain of Life (*Ps 36:10*) give to us in Asia His Spirit, the living water (*Jn 7:38*) that quenches our thirst for full life.

The Participants of FABC VI  
Manila, Philippines

18 January 1995

# **Pastoral Letter: Elections 1995 - A Challenge to the Young**

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
OF THE PHILIPPINES

*The Church and the world look to the young people for new light, new love, a new commitment to meeting the great needs of humanity"* (Pope John Paul II, Arrival Speech, January 12, 1995).

And to the youth of our country the Holy Father expressly addressed: *"Young people in the Philippines, the modern world needs a new kind of young person: it needs men and women who are capable of self discipline, capable of committing themselves to the highest levels, ready to change radically the false values which have enslaved so many young people and adults"* (UST Address, January 13, 1995).

To this challenge of the Holy Father the young people generously and publicly responded towards a new Christian way of nation building. And we, your Pastors in the faith, cannot afford to be challenged less. We must support our young people live their new found vision and inspiration for a better Philippines. We cannot let them down.



We see in this challenge a special relevance to our conduct in the coming elections.

We also recognize and appreciate the words of the Holy Father: *"The Church and the political community work on different levels and are mutually independent, but they serve the same human beings (ci. Gaudium et Spes, 16). In that service there is ample room for dialogue, cooperation and mutual support"* (Arrival Speech).

We take cognizance of the positive steps already taken hitherto by agencies like the COMELEC whose present credibility deserves our recognition and respect. Accordingly, we your Bishops, call on members of Congress to act decisively to make the dreams of our youth and of all the Filipino people come true through honest and credible elections this year.

We therefore urge the following:

1. the urgent and immediate passage by Congress of the bill on electoral reforms;
2. the urgent and early appointment by the President of a COMELEC Chairman and other members of the Commission who are equally credible.

Similarly, allow us to remind you, our beloved Faithful, of our previous appeals, namely:

1. that in your exercise of suffrage you be guided by Christian principles by voting for candidates who are specifically PRO-GOD, PRO-LIFE and PRO-FAMILY;
2. that as in our joint efforts at clean and honest elections in the past, we organize ourselves anew and support an effective coordination among the citizens arm of COMELEC, like PPCRV, VOTE CARE, NAMFREL and others.

In this regard we highly commend the efforts particularly of the young people who in the past volunteered to protect and safeguard the sanctity of the ballot. We exhort them to continue doing so.

**As a manifestation of our firm resolve to respond to the Holy Father's expectations of us as a "*phenomenon* " and of our Filipino Youth to whom the future has been entrusted, we commit ourselves to make this electoral process clean, honest and credible.**

**May the Holy Spirit guide us and may the blessed Mother protect our country!**

**For the Catholic Bishops'  
Conference of the Philippines**

**(Sgd.) +CARMELO D.F. MORELOS, D.D.  
*Archbishop-Elect of Zamboanga*  
*CBCP President***

**January 16, 1995**

# Pastoral Letter: A Call to Christian Participation in the Elections

CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE  
OF THE PHILIPPINES

*"Do Everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus" {Col 3:17}.*

Dear People of God in the Philippines,

*"... Politics, like all human activities, must be exercised always in the light of the faith of the gospel... " (PCPII, Conciliar Document, 344).*

*"Lay men and women in responsible positions in our society must help form the civic conscience of the voting population and work to explicitly promote the election to public office of leaders of true integrity " (PCP II, Decrees, Art. 28, #1).*

As election day draws nearer we, your Bishops, call upon you once more to prevent the many evils attendant upon every election in our country, and to help bring about a truly meaningful choice of candidates. What we say now is in addition to what we have stated in past statements about elections.

We want to make it clear that we, as a body, do not endorse any particular party or candidate. We do not want to dictate to you whom you should vote for. We respect your freedom in voting. This freedom is part of the exercise of your freedom of conscience which we, your pastors, are obliged to respect.

We do have an obligation to help you form your conscience. And we *do want* to exhort you to act as Christians in the whole conduct of the elections, according to the injunction of St. Paul: "...whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, the Father through him" (*Col 3:17*).

We urge you, candidates and your followers, to act in a manner befitting Christian men and women, and believers in the one true God.

We ask you, voters, to exercise and not to set aside your Christian faith when you cast your votes. Let not this coming election be a blemish to our Christianity but a credit to our Christian name.

Hence, in the name of God, we ask the CANDIDATES, THEIR PARTIES AND FOLLOWERS:

1) *Stop violence*. "You shall not kill" (*Ex 20:13*). Those who want to serve the people should not grab power by hurting or killing the people they profess to serve. Killings and other acts of violence have regularly marred our elections. This is a national disgrace especially for a country where the majority are Christians and practically all inhabitants believe in God.

2) *Do not cheat*. To cheat is to steal public office. "You shall not steal" (*Ex 20:15*). A person who wins by cheating has no moral right to occupy a position stolen from another. Such a person will have to answer before God for depriving the people of the services of the rightful winner.

3) *Do not buy votes*. This is a particularly degrading form of cheating. You do not start serving the people by corrupting them and degrading their dignity.

4) *Do not trivialize the campaign period*. Educate the people during the campaign by explaining to them your platform and the issues involved.

**Do not be satisfied to be reduced to singing, dancing, and clowning before the people.**

**5) *Do not tell lies to destroy the good name of another person*, "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor" (Ex 20:16). This commandment remains in effect and is not suspended during the campaign period. A person who destroys the good name of another will probably not mind doing evil to others. If the campaign remains on the level of issues, much black propaganda and mudslinging will be avoided.**

**Likewise, we ask the VOTERS:**

**1) *Vote intelligently*. Do not be fooled by appearances, words and promises. Study the issues involved, the platform of the candidates and their past records.**

**Vote for persons who *act* in a manner consistent with Christian principles. Do not vote for opportunists.**

**Do not give those who have grievously hurt our country another chance to hurt us again. Christian forgiveness does not demand forgetfulness of evil deeds against our people. Christian prudence demands that we remember such deeds.**

**Vote for persons who can serve you best and not for those who can only entertain you. You are not voting for entertainers but for public servants.**

**2) *Do not sell your votes*. "Your vote, your honor." When you sell your vote, you sell your honor. You become nothing in the eyes of those who buy you. You harm your future and that of your countrymen.**

**3) *Beware of those who overspend during elections*. They will surely seek to recover their expenses — with profit, at our expense.**

**4) *Do not allow yourself to be cowed*. Band together with your fellow citizens and seek the protection of law enforcers, the COMELEC and its deputies. There are no tyrants where there are no cowards.**

**Election time is one of those rare times in our democracy when people directly exercise political power, which is meant to serve the common good. Do not squander or barter away the exercise of this power. Use it to give our country and people a better life.**

**And to the COMELEC AND THEIR DEPUTIES, we say:**

**1) *Do your work with impartiality.*** You are not the hirelings of the persons who appointed you. You are the servants of the people. It is to the people you owe loyalty and not to the appointing powers. Let God, the laws of our land and your conscience be your only guide.

**2) *Do your work with competence.*** Election officers are expected to be capable of reading the candidates' names and tallying their votes correctly. You are empowered and therefore are expected to be able to keep the polls honest and peaceful.

**3) *Do your work with honesty.*** When you cheat or help in cheating you sin in a double way: you rob rightful winners of their office and you betray the public trust which you assumed on oath.

**4) *Do your work credibly.*** You must not only be impartial, competent and honest. You must not even give any appearance of partiality, incompetence and dishonesty. We live at a time when the COMELEC and the electoral process have regained their credibility somewhat. You can lose that credibility again. Or you can enhance it by your performance.

**5) *Expose and neutralize all private armed groups.*** Unless you do so, the elections cannot be honest and peaceful. They certainly will not be credible. Your credibility and competence are at stake here.

**Dear fellow Filipinos, the elections are the key to good government. Credible elections will make for a credible government. Meaningful elections will make for good government. These May elections will show what kind of people we are, and will determine the kind of government we shall have. Let us all together make these elections truly honest, peaceful and meaningful.**

**We wish to encourage persons, organizations and movements that have been working to assure for us this kind of elections. We commend the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), VOTECARE, NAMFREL and similar groups. They are rendering selfless and oftentimes heroic service to God and country.**

**Do not be afraid! Let us face the future with hope, and take every necessary step.**

While neglecting no effort, let us believe that even now Christ is at work in the hearts of our people by the power of His Spirit to bring about the transformation of Philippine society (cf. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, n. 38). Let us pray to God, the Lord of history, to guide our endeavors, and crown them with success.

May the same Lord thwart the evil designs of evil men. And may Mary, our Mother and Protectress of the Filipino people, obtain our victory.

For the Catholic Bishops'  
Conference of the Philippines:

(Sgd.) +CARMELO D.F. MORELOS, D.D.  
*Archbishop of Zamboanga*  
*CBCP President*

April 9, 1995

# In the Authority of Service

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

*To the Christian **Faithful** of the Church in Caceres*

This Holy Thursday brings us half-way nearer to the celebration of the Diocesan Quadricentennial of the Church in Caceres in September 1995.

Certain events are foremost in our minds —

... at the recent visit of the Holy Father, John Paul II, on the 10th World Youth Day in Manila, he urged us — the Filipino nation and the youth of the World — to persevere with the vigor of faith and to "tell of the world of His love;"

... this May 1995, we are set to exercise our right and duty to bring upon our land and people that just and peaceful progress toward the common good by our election into public office only of upright and competent candidates;

**'Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of Caceres on the Diocesan Quadricentennial Celebration of Caceres, on Holy Thursday, 13 April 1995.**



... and, just quite recently, the outpourings of sentiments of our people, from all walks of life — of joyous relief at the conviction of a notorious public official for heinous crimes and, so, too, of rage for a perceived miscarriage of justice by foreign government upon a simple wife and mother working overseas.

These events recall and urge us to have a wider view of the concerns we have committed ourselves to in the "authority of service,"<sup>1</sup> when in 1991 we convoked the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council of Caceres (APCQ for the renewal of the Church as a fitting celebration of the Diocesan Quadricentennial of the Church in Caceres. Our action then was "... not simply a promise but a commitment,"<sup>2</sup> as "inheritors of the past, protagonists of the present and fashioners of the future."<sup>3</sup>

*Authority of Service.* By the dignity of our baptism, we all share in a common priesthood which confirms us — whether as members of the apostolic laity, consecrated religious or ordained clergy — to work in a communion to "renew all things in Christ."<sup>4</sup>

## Inheritors of the Past

Some four years ago then, we took stock of the lights and shadows falling upon the nation and the Archdiocese of Caceres. We saw that amid the deep religiosity and generosity of our people, our young, elders, professionals and public servants were with a kind of faith often at an elementary stage; that the quality of basic services was severely hampered if not neglected; and, togetherwith severe unemployment, the despoliation of nature and erosion of culture, we found our families and communities fragmented through some public policy or sheer poverty.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Decree of Convocation of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council of Caceres*, 28 March 1991; cf. *Lk* 4:16; *Heb* 5:11.

<sup>2</sup>*Towards a Renewed Church in the Archdiocese of Caceres*, Message of APCC Participants to the People of God, 31 August 1991.

<sup>3</sup>*Envisioning the Church in Caceres: The Challenge of APCC*, Homily of His Grace, Most Rev. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D., 25 August 1991. *Vn* 10:10; *Ep* 1:10.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, *Decree of Convocation*; cf. *Our Communal Situation*, Acts and Decrees of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Council of Caceres.

Given this condition crying for pastoral attention, sound understanding and new ways of lived charity and solidarity,<sup>6</sup> our celebration of the APCCbore fruit in a renewed vision and mission: that the Archdiocese of Caceres walk in a spiritual journey toward the Kingdom of God, in a socio-pastoral care for personal and social transformation through empowerment in governance for the laity, the religious and the clergy.<sup>7</sup> We began our common journey, heartened by the words of the Lord: "Go... I am with you always... Make disciples of all nations."<sup>8</sup>

## **Protagonists of the Present**

For almost two years now, since 1993, with the implementation of the Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan toward the celebration of the Diocesan Quadricentennial of Caceres as a Renewed Church, our vision has made us realize that —

a) *We are sent as a Church.*

Over 400 years ago, the first Augustinian and Franciscan missionaries founded the Church of Caceres upon the openness of our forebears to the Gospel; defended our rights as Bicolanos and Filipinos against abuses being committed in the name of colonization and Christianization; and, furthermore, raised up diocesan pastors, that by sharing in the needs and condition of our people, they might lead our communities to the Kingdom of God.<sup>9</sup>

We are no longer simply a receiving Church. We are a Church sent to Bicolanos:<sup>10</sup> to build up values rooted in Christ, celebrated in the liturgy and the sacraments—a spirituality alive in individual persons and active

•*Ibid.*, c£.IPt 5:10; LG 13; SRS 41; RM 58.

<sup>1</sup>*Giboha sindang tnga disipulos Ko!* The Archdiocesan Pastoral Plan of Caceres, 10 January 1993.

\*M 28:19.

'*An puso ko nag-oomaw!* Homily of His Grace Most Rev. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D. on the Formal Opening Ceremonies of the Diocesan Quadricentennial Celebration of Caceres, 14 August 1993.

\**Sent in the Power of the Lard*, Homily by His Grace Most Rev. Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D., on Formal Closing Ceremonies for the APCC, 30 August 1991.

in communities, witnessing for all society.<sup>11</sup> Our parishes, and the Archdiocese, are asked to be missionary.

Our Holy Week observance — which is at the central rite of our Catholic faith—in our parishes and communities, ought to mean just this. We strive to grow in faithfulness to our Christian mission from within the religious values of our Bicolano culture.<sup>12</sup>

And, how will we live up to our Christian mission? (For, even our religious culture is not without negative traces nor inordinate expressions).

**b) *On-Going Formation for Christian Mission.***

Concerns identified in our parishes indicate two significant ways:

1) RAISE UP CHRISTIANS TO FAITHFULNESS. Christians are made not born. Our attention is called to the careful and determined process of Formation following the steps of evangelization, catechesis and public witness in the social apostolate.<sup>13</sup>

The efforts that have gone into the making of pastoral plans in our parishes emphasize this sense of purpose. As formation enables the discernment, nurture and manifestation of diverse gifts in a community, certainly, the plans, therefore, are not merely guides to having new or more activities or expressions of belief, social consciousness or service. They seek to cultivate and sustain the learning and the practice of common life and shared ministry among all members and leaders in the church-community of the parish and the diocese.

2) RAISE UP FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE. It is never enough to have received formation. We have been formed to receive a gift— the gift of broadening the Church's scope of work through existing conditions and still emerging circumstances of the times.<sup>14</sup>

*"Ibid., Giboha, 11; cf. APCC nn. 23, 26, 84, 5, 14, 176.*

*<sup>a</sup>Ibid., cf. Sent in the Power of the Lord.*

*<sup>a</sup>Giboha, 23; cf. Initial Formative Evaluation Report, 28 February 1995.*

*"Ibid., 2; cf. Guide to Pastoral Planning, August 1993.*

Thus, on one hand, we have set our pastoral priorities of action for the entire Archdiocese, namely: formation, which is to include evangelization, catechesis and social apostolate; and, then on, the needed leadership skills to sustain these efforts.<sup>15</sup> On the other, we have worked for a unified WESTY structure from the barangay and parish level, the religious associations and the various commissions, ministries and offices on the Archdiocesan level.<sup>16</sup> This is not simply for the facility in delivery of services or the performance merely of roles but, much more so, to enable the participation and responsibility for the life of the Church in Caceres, by all and for all.

True service can only proceed from one's Christian vocation. It can only be truly made effective with the will as "stewards of God's many graces."

*c) Confidence in the Lord Who Builds His Church.*

Believing, therefore, that it is the Lord who builds His Church by His graces, we can only earnestly encourage our Christian faithful to participate in the coming special events marking our diocesan Quadricentennial celebration of the Renewed Church in Caceres:

- THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL FOR RESPONSIBLE VOTING FOR ELECTION 1995. Our mission as a Renewed Church is not only to preach about felt and known gaps in basic human services. Our mission is to transform society into God's own people according to rights and duties they deserve; our task begins by electing into office only those with proven faithfulness to their duties to God, to the nation and to their fellowmen.

- QUADRICENTENNIAL SUMMER MISSIONS. Our mission as a Renewed Church is not simply to fulfill often privatistic religious needs for individual experience and growth. Our mission is to call and serve all people as the People of God. The Mission Teams we have been—and, shall be sending—to far away barangays of Lagonoy and Presentation represent the beginning of this resolve.

<sup>a</sup>APPC Status Report, October 1993.

<sup>16</sup>\*/ will build my Church: Norms of Organization and Directory of Services, August 1994.

- THE QUADRICENTENNIAL REYNA ELENA FESTIVAL ON 14 MAY 1995. Our mission as a Renewed Church does not merely mean legitimizing existing cultural values or virtues. Our mission is to enroot and embolden our positive traditions — such as the Reyna Elena Festival and other practices of this kind—with Christ's vision and hope; thus further enlivening our expression of faith.

- SYMPOSIA ON THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN CACERES. Our mission as a Renewed Church is not only to preach and speak of a Christian way of life. Our mission is to witness to our specifically Catholic faith, learned from missionaries and lived by most. The series of symposia will allow us to re-learn and renew our Church in Caceres in a wider perspective.

- PASTORAL FORMATIVE SUPPORT ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES. Our mission as a Renewed Church does not regard our resources and practices — scripture, tradition, doctrine, program of ministries or ecclesiastical structures — merely as functions. Our mission is to employ these resources and practices—such as the workshops being organized for worship, education, services and temporalities and the youth — for our people to publicly and visibly manifest fruits of the Holy Spirit.

- ARCHDIOCESAN YOUTH DAY. Our mission as a Renewed Church is not to leave the development and delivery of religious services — such as teaching pastoral care and administration — to the clergy alone; and by which our laity simply become passive recipients. Our mission is for all — and, no less the laity — to discern, nurture and share our diverse gifts — such as Underlined by the Archdiocesan Youth Day — in obedience and faithfulness to God's creative and redemptive purpose.

In this connection, I am happy to announce the opening of the John Paul II Youth Center early next month. It represents unwavering commitment to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on the occasion of the X World Youth Day. I wish to underline this morning our Priestly and pastoral commitment regarding youth. I hope in the near future to develop this theme in subsequent dialogue with you.

- CLOSING CEREMONIES. And, finally, on 15 September 1995, in the present of His Eminence, Jose Cardinal Sanchez as Papal Legate

of His Holiness Pope John **Paul II**, together with all the bishops of the Philippines, we shall formally close our diocesan Quadricentennial Celebrations, seeking yet once again, on the Feast of our "*Ina*," Our Lady of Penafrancia, the blessings of her Son who sent us to "Go... make disciples of all nations."

## **Fashioners of the Future**

As we have before, some four years ago, commended our first steps to the loving will of the Father and the guidance of the Spirit of His Son, we now again call upon our faithful: Let us —

*Pray*, that we might be worthy of our celebration of the diocesan Quadricentennial as a Renewed Church in Caceres;

*Study*, that we might be constantly "enlightened in our inmost vision"<sup>17</sup> to be a Church of the Poor doing Integral Evangelization to become a Community of Disciples of the Lord, by which we go on a spiritual journey of sons and daughters to the Kingdom of God;<sup>18</sup> transform persons and society in an ethic of socio-pastoral care that "whatsoever done to the least.\*"<sup>19</sup> is done unto the Lord; and, strive to empowerment each one in the Church with a conduct worthy of the "righteousness of the Kingdom of God."<sup>20</sup>

And, *make Sacrifices*, that our "trusting faith, of seeking understanding and our joy in believing"<sup>21</sup> fulfill the authority of service, by which we began it all, to "renew all things in Christ."

*"Ep 1:18.*

*'Aft 13:38.*

*"Aft 25:31-46; also, 22:10,13:36-43; 18:7.*

*"Mt 7:21-23; 25:31-46.*

*<sup>2</sup>Sent in the Power of the Lord.*

# **The Manila Declaration on Pornography\***

Recognizing a tragedy occurring on a global basis, we have gathered together to confront the problem of pornography. We join together out of a broad diversity of faith traditions, believing that unity in action is imperative if we are to protect our children's future — action that offers an increased measure of protection for those harmed by the evil of pornography throughout the world. We invite all persons of faith and of good will to join us in this great and good effort — that all persons, especially children, may live the lives for which they were created. Therefore, as religious leaders, together with all persons of faith and good will representing a broad cross-section of the world's faith communities:

**More than 160 religious leaders from 37 countries and over 40 faith groups have just ended a three-day conference on the problem of pornography, "Protecting Our Children's Future," held in Manila, Philippines. Organized by the broadly based Religious Alliance Against Pornography, it was attended by worldwide participants from the Roman Catholic Church, The Salvation Army, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as well as from Churches in membership in the World Council of Churches, the World Evangelical Fellowship, the World Pentecostal Conference, and**

## **I. We believe:**

1. Sexuality is a gift from God, to be enjoyed as a positive and fulfilling part of human experience within the boundaries designed by God. It is unique among God's gifts, enabling spouses to give themselves totally to one another in self-transcending love.

2. Pornography tragically distorts that gift. Although pornography is defined differently in different cultures and faith traditions, participants are unanimous in conviction that sexually explicit material which abuses, degrades or exploits another has destructive consequences for those who consume it or are implicated in its production and distribution. It destroys relationships and communities through sexual violence against women and men, child victimization, child prostitution, sexually-transmitted diseases, addiction among men, and the harmful attitudes and the negative values it teaches toward women and children.

3. Pornography is born of attitudes of greed, selfishness, commercialism and exploitation. These attitudes are reflections of the broken human spirit, which calls for a spiritual response.

4. No longer strictly an issue of private morality, pornography has become a major economic force with vast communal ethical implications.

5. The important values of freedom of speech and increased international communication are not compromised by ensuring that children, women and men are protected from sexual exploitation.

6. Individual cultures have the right to protection from international commercial enterprises which erode culture through the distribution of degrading, violent and destructive pornography.

7. We have too long been silent toward the scourge of pornography, offering little in preventive measures and counseling, reluctant to acknowledge the problem within our own communities of faith.

from many other organizations and faith groups concerned about pornography's growing number of victims — men, women and children. Experts from Christian, Sikh and the Muslim communities addressed the delegates. "The Manila Declaration on Pornography" was issued by the conferees at the meeting's conclusion.



## II. We acknowledge:

1. Today the availability of pornography grows at an unprecedented pace. Pornography has become a multi-billion dollar, international enterprise, with outlets in the broadcast and print media; in video, film, telephone, computers and television. Through advanced technology such as interactive CD-ROMs the formerly passive viewer of exploitation and abuse now becomes an active participant in the abuse of another. Exposure and involvement of children, in particular, has taken on unprecedented global dimensions; sex-related crime is now a global problem.

2. The content of pornographic material available throughout the world is increasingly explicit and abusive. Large quantities of pornographic material graphically depict domination, exploitation, and sex and violence as appropriate accompaniments to human intimacy. Child pornography, itself the pictorial record of child abuse, portrays children as appropriate partners for sex, leaving lasting physical and emotional damage.

3. Government regulation is often inadequate, antiquated and seldom enforced in many countries. Differences in legislation mean that no global and few national strategies for change have been coherently developed. Too often, prosecution is a low governmental priority and pornography offenses are falsely perceived as "victimless crimes." Consequently, punishment is often minimal.

4. International computer networks are increasingly becoming unlimited outlets for the worst and most dangerous forms of pornography. These networks are used as a marketplace by pedophiles to contact children for abuse and to quickly trade for pictures of those already abused.

5. Sex tourism is a new growth industry, with a subsequent increase in the spread of pornography which records the painful encounters for future use.

6. Increasingly, pornography export and distribution economically exploit people, especially the poor in developing nations.

7. Pornography distribution is often enmeshed in a larger web of

criminal activity. Organized criminal networks in many parts of the world play a significant role in the creation and dissemination of this material, making the problem more pervasive in its reach and more difficult to eliminate.

### **III. We pledge action through:**

1. Pleading with those who actively participate in the pornography industry by production, distribution or consumption of its products to acknowledge the degradation of pornography and its offensive consequences for individuals, as well as human communities.

2. Prayer for both those who exploit and those who are exploited through pornography.

- Redoubling our efforts to improve the quality of intervention and care initiatives for pornography victims and addicts.

3. Sober reflection and reform within each faith community to:

- rigorously apply due process of law when dealing with offenders within the religious community;
- develop appropriate religious and ethical education;
- educate for change by increasing awareness of pornography's effects;
- empower women, men and children to resist pornography's impact;
- continue researching the effects of pornography and its links with violent crime and the exploitation of women and children.

4. A concerted approach to the existing national and international bodies of which we are respectively a part to enlist their:

- spiritual, human and financial resources;
- moral authority within our diverse cultures;
- vast infrastructures;
- capacity to educate and their multi-million member constituencies for action.

5. Charging this vast and diverse inter-religious coalition to make common cause, both nationally and internationally with other organizations devoted to the well being of the world's people and communities, including:

- law enforcement authorities
- child welfare organizations
- other coalitions active in the campaign against pornography and sexual exploitation
- women's organizations
- governmental departments responsible for welfare of children  
(internationally such organizations include, for example, UNICEF, ECPAT, World Health Organization, Interpol, International Catholic Child Bureau, European Union, etc.)

#### **IV. We urgently need:**

1. A new religious initiative.

- We call upon the governing body of each faith group to make the protection of children and adults from sexual abuse and exploitation linked to pornography a priority — in their educational and social concerns efforts.

- We advocate the establishment of national religious coalitions to combat pornography in every nation.

2. New and stronger legislation.

- We call for every nation to prohibit all aspects of child pornography, including criminalizing its production, distribution and possession.

- We call for every nation to outlaw abusive adult pornography, for instance, those materials depicting prurient sexual violence.

- We call for every nation to criminalize child sex tourism and to hold its nationals responsible for sexual conduct abroad involving children.

3. Coordinated international action against the use of new technologies for pornography distribution and consumption.

- We call for international regulation and increased law enforcement against those who would use new channels of communication to exploit and abuse children, women and men through pornography.

- We call on the creators and suppliers of these technologies to address the use of their products and services to market pornography, violence and sexual exploitation.

#### 4. Recognition by governments of the seriousness of this problem.

- We call for those countries that export pornography to devote special resources and attention to the destructiveness of their trade and attempts to stop it.

- We call on governments to devote a ministry, department, secretariat or unit to conduct research to measure the problem, and secure the rights of children to a safe environment, by enforcement of laws and regulation of pornographic media within each nation.

- We call on judiciary branches of government to examine the adequacy of their policies and practices of sentencing and rehabilitating of those who commit sex offenses, especially against minors.

#### 5. Increased cooperative international law enforcement efforts.

- We call on law enforcement agencies to reallocate human and financial resources to units assigned to child exploitation and pornography offenses so that adequate finances and experienced personnel might address enforcement concerns.

Many, we know, will doubt the viability and feasibility of our ambitious plans, and question the capacity and energy of faith communities to pursue them. Yet, we recall that it has been just such efforts that have prevailed on a world scale in the past. The abolition of child labor, while not universal, has been globally embraced, in large measure with leadership from faith communities. Many other such examples might be cited.

Others will scoff that such matters, while distasteful to some, have little serious or widespread consequence. So too did cynics once disparage environmental, drunk driving and anti-smoking campaigns. Despite disdain, each of these has proven its case, asserted its moral claim, captured

public opinion and resulted in concrete change to the betterment of all. So too will the battle against pornography and sexual exploitation be won.

To sustain and expand this effort we will look toward a "world congress to end pornography" that will usher in an era of change. With faith groups and others, this congress will provide a venue and resource to bring to resolution a campaign now undertaken.

Our confidence derives not from ourselves, but our faith conviction in the power of moral right and the persuasiveness of enlightened self interest. So, too, is it founded in our traditions of faith that have brought us to this day.

Manila, 20 January 1995.

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

## Cases and Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.

*What Does the Term Laity Mean ?*

*Last month a symposium was organized in our diocese to discuss the topic: Duty of all Christians to build up the Body of Christ and carry out the Church's mission. Since not all the members-ofthe Church can fulfill this duty in the same way, but according to their state of life, personal conditions and capabilities, there was a long discussion during the open forum on pointing out the various groups existing within the Church in order to specify the obligations of each Christian in building up the Body of Christ, and carry out the Church's mission. There was no consensus, for instance, on which persons belong to the laity. There were some religious who openly said that they do not belong to the laity. There were others who, having been appointed as extraordinary ministers to Holy Communion, expressed their desire that they also should not be included as members of the laity. What does the Church's law say about it? Who are included under the term LAITY?*

*A Young Priest*

In order to give an accurate answer to the question of the consultant priest we have to consider what has been stated in the threefold source where this topic has evolved, namely: the 1917 Code, the documents issued by the Vatican II and the 1983 Code.

## **I. Incorporation to the Church**

1. Canon 87 of the 1917 Code reads as follows: "By baptism a human being becomes a person in the Church of Christ, with all the rights and duties of a Christian, unless as far as rights are concerned there is some obstacle impeding the bond of communion with the Church or a censure inflicted by the Church."

2. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium* of the Vatican II deals at length with the incorporation to the Church and effects of such incorporation. Number 11 of the said Constitution reads: "Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are consecrated by the baptismal character to the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church... Fortified by so many and such powerful means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to the perfect holiness, whereby the Father Himself is perfect."

Number 14 of the same Constitution says: "They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ, accept her entire structure and all the means of salvation established in her, **and** are united with her as part of her visible body and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the Bishops. The bonds which bind men to the Church are the profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical government and communion. He is not saved, however, who, though incorporated in the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed within the bosom of the Church, but as it were, only in a 'bodily' manner and not 'in his heart.' "

Still in number 31, dealing in particular with lay people *Lumen Gentium* says: "These faithful are by baptism made one body with Christ and are constituted among the People of God; they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly functions of Christ;

and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."

In number 32, unity and equality of all incorporated to the Church are firmly stated: "Therefore, the chosen People of God is one: 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' (*Ep* 4:5); sharing a common dignity as members from their regeneration in Christ, having the same filial grace and the same vocation to perfection; possessing in common one salvation, one hope and one undivided charity. There is, therefore, in Christ and in the Church no inequality on the basis of race or nationality, social condition or sex, because 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus' (*Ga* 3:8; cf. *Col* 3:11)... All share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ."

3. The 1983 Code states anew in its canon 96 what the 1917 Code, canon 87, established on the incorporation to the Church: "By baptism one is incorporated into the Church of Christ and is constituted a person in it, with duties and rights which, in accordance with each one's status, are proper to Christians, to the extent that they are in ecclesiastical communion and unless a legitimately issued sanction stands in the way." And canon 205 describes what ecclesiastical communion is: "Those baptized are in full communion with the Catholic Church here on earth who are joined with Christ in His visible Body, through the bonds of profession of faith, the sacraments and ecclesiastical governance."

Moreover, the 1983 Code devotes in Book II the whole Title I to enumerate the duties and rights that are common to all members of the Church whatever states of life they belong to.

The foregoing quotations taken from the 1917 Code, the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* and the new Church's Code of 1983, dealing with incorporation to the Church of Christ through the valid reception of the sacrament of baptism, lead us to formulate the following conclusions:

- a) All persons validly baptized are members of the true Church of Christ, constituting the People of God.
- b) All members of the Church are bound by the same basic fundamen-



tal obligations and enjoy the same basic rights of a Christian, unless an obstacle or a censure hinders such rights.

c) All Christians are consecrated to worship God through the common priesthood of Christ granted in baptism.

d) All Christians must bear witness to the faith they have received through baptism in their respective state of life.

e) All Christ's faithful are called to perfection and holiness.

f) All faithful are equal in dignity and should participate, according to their condition, in building up the Body of Christ and in carrying out the Church's mission on earth.

g) All faithful must be in full communion with the Church by professing the same faith, accepting the Church's structure and governance and using the same means of salvation entrusted to the Church.

## II. Variety of ranks in the Church

1. Canon 107 of the 1917 Code established: "By divine institution there are in the Church clergy distinct from laity... Both clerics and laity may be religious." And canon 948 stated: "By the institution of Christ, the sacred order distinguishes clerics from laity in the Church for governing the faithful and for the ministry of divine worship."

2. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, number 10 says: "Christ the Lord, High Priest taken from among men (cf. *Heb* 5:1-5), made the new people 'a kingdom and priests to God the Father' (*Rv* 1:6; 5:9-10). The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood, in order that through all those works which are works of a Christian man may offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light (cf. *2 Pt* 2:4-10)... Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated; each one of them in its own proper way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ,

he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist. They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity."

This difference in essence and not only in degree existing between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood is stressed again in number 20: "Bishops, therefore, with their helpers, the priests and deacons, have taken up the service of the community, presiding in the place of God over the flock, whose shepherds they are, as teachers for doctrine, priests for sacred worship and ministers for governing."

Considering the case proposed to us and the question of our consultant priest, we deem it proper to quote two more paragraphs from the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*. Its number 13 reads as follows: "Not only is the People of God made up of different peoples, but in its inner structure also it is composed of various ranks. This diversity among its members arises either by reason of their duties, as in the case with those who exercise the sacred ministry for the good of their brethren, or by reason of their condition and state of life, as in the case with those who enter the religious state and, tending toward holiness by a narrower path, stimulate their brethren by their example." And number 31 reads: "The term laity is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those in the state of religious life especially approved by the Church... What specifically characterizes the laity is their secular character. It is true that those in holy orders can at times be engaged in secular activities, and even have a secular profession. But they are by reason of their particular vocation especially and professedly ordained to the sacred ministry. Similarly, by their state in life, religious give splendid and striking testimony that the world cannot be transformed and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes. But the laity, by their very vocation, seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all the secular professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven."

3. The new Church's Code of 1983 states: "By divine institution, among Christ's faithful there are in the Church sacred ministers, who in law are called clerics, the others are called lay people. Drawn from both groups are those Christ's faithful who, professing the evangelical counsels through vows or other sacred bonds recognized and approved by the Church, are consecrated to God in their own special way and promote the salvific mission of the Church. Their state, although it does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, does pertain to its life and holiness."

The foregoing quotations both from the two Church's Codes of 1917 and 1983, and from the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* give us a complete view of the structure of the Church, her goal to sanctify all her members and her mission to gain the world for God. Both Codes, as legal norm to rule her social life, give us the two hierarchical ranks established by the Lord Himself in order to carry out faithfully her divine mission. The constitution *Lumen Gentium* evolves and expands the Church's internal life as well as her apostolic activity and her missionary aspiration to sanctify and save mankind. The notion of the Church given by the Codes and the Constitution might seem to differ from one another, but their views are really the same. They present the Church as a divine institution founded and established by the Lord and entirely devoted to serve all men to achieve their eternal salvation.

It is worth noting that *Lumen Gentium* gives us in the last two foregoing quotations three different ranks or groups making up the Church, namely clerics, religious and laity. It does not mean, however, that the Constitution disregards the hierarchical division of the Church given by the 1917 Code which is reaffirmed by the new Code of 1983 in two ranks only, namely, clergy and laity. Far from it. The Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, number 43 says: "From the point of view of the divine and hierarchical structure of the Church, the religious state is not an intermediate rank between the ranks of the clergy and the laity. Rather, the faithful of Christ are called by God from both these ranks so that they may make use of this particular grace in the life of the Church and that thus each in his own way may serve the salvific mission of the Church." And in number 44 it says again: "Thus, the state which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, though it does not belong to the

hierarchical structure of the Church, nonetheless undeniably belongs to the life and holiness of the Church."

The concept of laity given by the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, number 31, which we quoted above is worth noting: "The term laity is here understood to mean all faithful except those in Holy Orders and those in the state of religious life especially approved by the Church." Obviously, the Constitution gives us in this paragraph a restricted definition of what usually is to be understood by the term laity: "The term *laity is here* to be understood... ". Logically the term *laity not here* is to be understood to mean all faithful except those in Holy Orders only, as defined by both Church's Codes.

It is clear, therefore, that by divine institution all faithful belong either to the clergy or to the laity. Religious priests and deacons belong to the clergy, other religious who have not received the sacred orders belong to the laity. This distinction of divine institution does not imply or mean that the faithful belonging to the clergy are first class Christians and the faithful belonging to the laity are second class members of the Church. This distinction is only a hierarchical distinction, as it fits to a well organized society. All the members of the Church enjoy the same dignity of being Christians with the same goal, i.e., their sanctification and eternal salvation. The means to attain this goal are the same for all, namely the profession of the same faith, prayer and the reception of the sacraments. Members of the clergy should bear in mind that they have received the sacred orders not for their own convenience, but to serve the People of God, following the footsteps of Christ, the High Priest, who came to serve not to be served. Hence, "the sacred ministers must feed the faithful from the spiritual riches of the Church especially by the word of God" and "they may not deny the sacraments to the faithful who opportunely ask for them, are properly disposed and are not prohibited by law from receiving them" (cc. 213 and 843).

Considering, therefore, the above quotations from both Church's Codes and the Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, we may formulate the following conclusions:

a) By divine institution there are only two different hierarchical ranks in the Church, namely, *clerics*, who have received the sacrament of order,  
180 *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Vol. LXXI, Nos.782-783 (Mar-Apr 1995)

and *laity*, made up of all other faithful.

b) Religious state is not a hierarchical rank of divine institution: religious who have received the sacrament of order belong to the clergy; religious who have not received the sacred orders belong to the laity.

c) Considering Christian perfection and the Church's apostolic activities, there are three groups or ranks of ecclesiastical origin, namely: secular clergy, religious with or without sacred orders, and laity.

d) All persons validly baptized constitute the People of God and share the common priesthood of Christ through the regeneration effected by the sacrament of baptism.

e) The common priesthood of all baptized and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood received in the sacrament of order differ from one another in essence, not only in degree; both are nonetheless correlated.

f) It belongs to those endowed with the ministerial priesthood to teach and rule God's people; acting in the name of Christ, they make present the Eucharistic sacrifice, offering it to God in the name of the People of God, forgive sins through the sacramental absolution, and administer other sacraments. The faithful in virtue of their royal priesthood join and participate in the offering of the Eucharist and receive other sacraments.

g) The non-hierarchical diversity of ranks among the members of the People of God arises "either by reason of their duties, as in the case of clerics who exercise the sacred ministry for the good of others, or by reason of their condition and state of life as in the case of religious who tend toward holiness by a narrower way, stimulating their brethren by their example," or "by reason of their vocation as the lay faithful who seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs, ordering them according to the plan of God."

Bearing in mind what we have just quoted, our answer to the question raised by the consultant priest is clear. Speaking of ranks established by our Lord Jesus Christ, the term *laity* comprises all Christ's faithful who have not received the sacrament of order. Speaking, however, of ranks distinguished by the Church as striving for holiness and evangelizing the world for God, the term *laity* includes all Christ's faithful, except clerics and religious.

## **GOD'S WORD FOR TOMORROW**

# **Festal Homilies for March-June 1995**

REGINO CORTES, O.P.

### **FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT March 5,1995**

FIRST READING: *Dt 26:4-10*

This passage in Deuteronomy has been called by commentators as the "short historical credo" recited by the Israelite during the offering of the first-fruits. Gerhard von Rad (*The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, Edinburgh, 1966, pp. 1-78) even believes that this passage is very ancient and the core of the development of the Pentateuchal traditions (or even Hexateuchal traditions from Genesis to Joshua).

There is a remarkable datum which is expressed in verse 5: "My father was a wandering Aramean who went down to Egypt..." This is a rare allusion linking the patriarchs ethnically to the Arameans rather than to the Hebrews or Israelites. The Hebrews (whether they are identified with the Habirus of ancient documents is still debated) and Arameans are ethnically distinguished by the middle of the second millennium before Christ onwards. But it seems that they came from the same geographical area in

the desert west of Mesopotamia, hence known generally as the Amorites ("Westerners"). They constituted the different tribes of nomads or semi-nomads of the Syrian steppe encroaching upon urban civilization by the end of the third millennium before Christ. Laban the brother of Rebekah and wife of Isaac was identified as an Aramean while Abraham had been known as a Hebrew, a descendant of Heber.

Recent studies of this passage however tend to show that it is a late composition of the deuteronomic tradition but with an ancient base.

#### SECOND READING: *Rm* 10:8-13

In this short reading from Romans, St. Paul made use of three Old Testament texts to show to the Israelites how faith which leads to justification is so close to us: *Dt* 30:14, *Is* 28:16 and // 3:5.

The passage in Deuteronomy is in fact a very important stage in the development of the theology of the Word (*Dabar*) which is personified in this verse. However St. Paul saw in this "word" not any more the "law" which precisely in his theology was insufficient for righteousness and salvation. This is rather the "word of faith" which consists in the confession that "Jesus is Lord" and the inner belief that he rose from the dead. The "righteousness" (*dikaio syne*), which is the result of confession, and "salvation" (*soteria*), which results from the belief of the heart, are not distinct concepts but different aspects of man's total union with God. Salvation is a dynamic concept with its initial stage (expressed by righteousness) and the fulfilment stage (the *pleroma* or "plenitude").

Although the saying in Isaiah 28:16 is in the singular (*hamma 'amin lo'yebush*, "the believer shall not be confounded"; see *also Rm* 9:33), St. Paul, in this verse *adds pas*, ("all"). This is literally translated: "all those who believe in him will not be put to shame." This includes all Jews and Gentiles and in fact open to all men who become believers.

The verse in Joel (3:5) definitely refers to Yahweh as the Lord. But here the Lord is Jesus. This is one text in St. Paul, with many others, clearly identifying Yahweh and Jesus.

## GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 4:1-13

The temptations of Christ in the desert are mentioned by the three synoptics, Matthew, Mark and Luke but only in general terms by Mark. Literary analysis tends to show the dependence of Luke's account on Matthew and Mark. While Mark says that "the Spirit drove him out (*ekballei*) into the wilderness," Luke attenuates the action of the Spirit. Yet he used the imperfect tense to describe this action: "He was led (*egeto*, lit: "he was being led") by the Spirit into the desert." Matthew further adds the objective why Christ was led (*anecthe*: "he led up") into the desert and that is "to be tempted by the devil" (4:1).

Mark and Luke give the impression that Jesus was being tempted (*peiradzomenos*) during the forty days that he was in the wilderness. Matthew clearly states that the temptations happened after forty days of fasting.

The order, of temptations in Luke does not exactly follow the one of Matthew. Luke puts the second temptation of Matthew as his third with the intention perhaps of ending the episodes in Jerusalem. Instead of "a high mountain" in the third Matthaean temptation, Luke just says "to a high place." Because of these changes of locale some commentators argue that the second and third temptations were more imaginary than physical.

The temptations touch the messianic character of Jesus. The tempter knew he was a holy man which is one of the meanings of the phrase "son of God." There was clear intent on the part of the devil to derail the messianic mission of Christ but he was not successful.

In verse 13, Luke says that the devil "left him to await another opportunity." This came at the hour of the passion during the agony in Gethsemane. According to Luke the temptation was so intense that Jesus sweated blood (22:44) and exclaimed: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me: Nevertheless, let your will be done, not mine" (22:42).

## HOMILY

There are two kinds of temptations. One is to test the just as Abraham, Jeremiah, Tobit, Paul were tested. The other is a seduction to



sin. The first may come from God but the second most often come from the devil. It can also come from the flesh or from worldly attractions. When we pray the "Our Father" as taught by our Lord himself, we petition the Father "to lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one." In the Mass this is followed by the prayer of the priest: "Deliver us Lord from every evil..."

If we follow St. Matthew's gospel, the Holy Spirit's intent in conducting Jesus into the wilderness was precisely to let himself be tempted by the devil. The temptations were severe and were meant to seduce him to deviate from his messianic mission. The Epistle to the Hebrews has afterwards drawn a lesson from this occurrence: "because he has himself been through temptation, he is able to help others who are tempted" (2:18).

St. Benedict who first became a hermit in Subiaco, Italy and later on founded the Benedictine Monastery of Monte Cassino was said to have been tempted severely in the flesh, having been a courtier, that he hurled himself into thorny growth until the temptations subsided. From that time on he conquered all temptations of this sort. When St. Thomas Aquinas insisted in joining the Dominican Order his mother who was a countess vehemently objected. She had him arrested on his way to Paris and imprisoned at the tower of Roccasecca. There, his brothers in the military introduced a woman of loose morals to seduce him but he grabbed a poker from the fire-place and chased the woman out. With the same poker he traced a cross on the wall and intensely prayed. Angels came and girded his loins. According to his biographers he never experienced any temptations of the flesh from that time on. This is the inspiration of a confraternity in the Dominican Order called the "*Militia Angelica*" or "Angelic Warfare" where the members wear a cord or a medal of St. Thomas as protection against the temptations of the flesh.

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

**March 12,1995**

FIRST READING: *Gn* 15:5-12, 17-18

Quoting this same text (v. 6) St. Paul in Romans 4:3 shows, that Abraham's "righteousness" was due to his faith and not on the "works of

the Law." But this faith is alive and intimately connected with love and the works of love. This is the living and not the "dead" faith which St. James mentions in 2:23 citing this same text in Genesis. Although faith is a gift from God, it is the source of all supernatural good works.

Verse 10 mentions an old covenant ritual consisting of the cutting of an animal in two while the parties contracting the covenant pass between the halves. This practice was found among the Akkadians of Mari, also mentioned by Jeremiah 34:18. God in the form of a flaming torch passed between the halves of the animals. What is said actually in Jeremiah is the punishment of those who transgressed the covenant: "and then men who have infringed my covenant, who have not observed the terms of the covenant made in my presence, I will treat these men like the calf they cut in two to pass between the parts of it."

The extent of the land promised to Abraham "from the wadi of Egypt (the present El Arish south of Gaza) to the Great River, the Euphrates" were the limits of David's kingdom which however started to become smaller even during the reign of Solomon. This can give us a hint of the provenance of the tradition of this chapter which is during the greatest expansion of the Davidic kingdom at the beginning of the 10th century B.C.

SECOND READING: *Ph.* 3:17 - 4:1

St. Paul warns the Judaizers in this passage who impose Jewish practices on Gentile converts to Christianity.

"Be imitators of me, my brothers." This is not a conceited expression but a sign of remarkable faith and conviction. St. Paul was utterly sure about his fidelity to the gospel that he could present himself to the Christians of Philippi as the authentic guide towards the true way and not the Judaizers who still adhered to the imperfect ways of the Mosaic law.

In contrast to these false teachers who are also "enemies of the cross of Christ," because in their insistence on circumcision (cf. Ac 15) as necessary for salvation they diminish the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, St. Paul presents his doctrine of salvation to be the authentic one, heavenly revealed and guaranteed by Christ himself.

A condemnation of secularistic or worldly tendencies (tragically present in our times in various forms) is hinted in verse 19, the result of clinging to circumcision (glorying in their "shame" which could refer to the circumcised member) and dietary laws (still considered by them as imperative). Hence the apostle mentions the true status of the Christian: a citizen of heaven, whose body would be transfigured according to the "glorified body of Christ."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 9:28-36

All the three evangelists are in agreement that the transfiguration of Jesus happened after the first prediction of the passion. Matthew and Mark however, whose accounts have more similarities than that of Luke, specify that this happened "six days later," perhaps after Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. St. Luke, on the other hand, says (9:28a, omitted in the liturgical reading) it occurred "about 8 days after" (*hosei hemerai okto*).

Another difference between Luke and the two other evangelists, which some find significant, is the use of the particle "the" (to *oros*) in describing the mountain. Matthew and Mark simply affirm "up a high mountain." This is not however clearly expressed in our liturgical text which has "ontoa mountain," following the New American Bible. The JB translates: "went up *the* mountain" as also the KJV. The traditional mountain is Mt. Tabor although some commentators prefer Mt. Hermon which is nearer Caesarea Philippi, scene of St Peter's proclamation.

St. Luke emphasizes in his account the glory of Jesus and the glory of Moses and Elijah. This aspect, not found in Matthew and Mark, has been observed to be Johannine which favors the view that St. Luke follows in the transfiguration episode the tradition of John.

It is very remarkable in the Lucan narration how the relationship between the Old and the New Testaments is presented. Moses and Elijah represent the "Law and the Prophets," the usual title of the Hebrew scripture. These two were speaking to Christ about his *exodus* in Jerusalem. Qearly the idea of "exodus," (translated as "passage"), is linked with a very important event in the history of God's people. It is taken here as the "passion" of Christ, his act of liberating man from sin.

Instead *oi agapetos* ("beloved") as in Matthew and Mark, Luke has *eklelegmenos* ("chosen"), which is a Messianic title. This is found, for instance, in the "First Song of the Servant," (*Is* 42; *Lk* 23:35; *I Heno*ch 39:6). Luke, furthermore, says that they "went up onto the mountain to pray (cf. 23:44 with *Mk* 15:33).

### **HOMLY**

Peter **and** the apostles were sad when Jesus told them that he would be crucified in Jerusalem. The last assertion of the Lord seemed not to have registered much in their minds that on the third day he would rise again. What could that rising mean? What kind of body would he have? Perhaps it was to give the apostles a glimpse of his glorified body that the Lord was transfigured before them.

There were two Old Testament figures who appeared conversing with Jesus: Moses representing the Law and Elijah representing the prophets. These two symbolize the whole Old Testament scriptures, the Law and the Prophets. According to St. Luke the subject of their conversation was the imminent "exodus" of Christ in Jerusalem which could only mean his passion and death. Just as the exodus meant the liberation of the people of God from the slavery in Egypt, the passion and death of Jesus freed all people from the bondage of sin.

The transfiguration of the Lord, anticipating his glorified state was a sure Sign of his overcoming the corruption of the flesh. During the time of **the** passion his body would be torn by lashes from the scourging, his head pierced by thorns, his hands and feet by nails, his heart by a lance. But all of these would be transformed at the moment of the resurrection.

The way of the world is totally the opposite. Multi-billion dollar industries in our times are linked with physical beauty and transformation of the flesh. So many kinds of paraphernalia for women are peddled for the beauty treatment of the body from the top of the head to the soles of the feet. All kinds of shampoos, soaps, lip-sticks, perfumes, nail-polishers; different ways of skin-restorers, eye-shadows, plastic-surgeries, nose-lifts, skin-stretching etc. are availed of. Beauty treatment for men are not far behind. Yet all these are only meant to preserve and beautify the flesh for

a number of years. Then the aging process will take its toll and then later the whole body will turn back to dust from where it came from.

But the Christian is consoled by the fact that there will be resurrection of the body.

### **THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**

#### **March 19, 1995**

FIRST READING: *EX* 3:1-8,13-15

This, is the passage of Moses' calling and his commissioning to liberate the Chosen People from Egypt. The chapter is considered to be a composite of two traditions: Yahwist (J) and Elohist (E). Verses 13-15 are most important as the Elohist account of the revelation of the name of God. The priestly version of God's revelation of his name is given in *Ex* 6:2-3: "God spoke to Moses and said to him, <sup>V</sup>I am Yahweh. To Abraham and Isaac and Jacob I appeared as El Shaddai; I did not make myself known to them by my name Yahweh."

It is quite clear in this text that Moses is receiving the new name of God: "This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations (v. 15). His name is "I AM," in Hebrew " *Ehyeh*." Then the text continues putting the name in the third person: "The Lord (*yahweh* in JB), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." The first person *Ehyeh* ("I am") is now expressed in the third person *Yahweh* which therefore simply means "He is." Some understand it in the causative form: "He causes to be."

It may be noticed, however, that our liturgical texts and other biblical translations do not employ the word "Yahweh" but instead use "Lord." This is in conformity with the Jewish usage which so reveres this sacred name that even today they do not pronounce it but change it to *'Adonay* (Lord) or pronounce it incompletely as "Yah" as *mHallelu-Yah* ("Praise Yahweh or the Lord"). This is also found in many theophoric names: Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hilkiah, etc. or "Yaho," ("Yeho," or "Jeho") as in Yehohanan, Yehoshua, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram etc.

When vowels were invented (6th to 10th cent A.D.), instead of putting the real vowels of Yahweh (a and e) into the four consonants YHWH (hence called the Tetragrammaton), the vowels of 'Adonay (a, o, and a) are substituted or sometimes that of 'Elohim (God: e, o, i). It is a historical misfortune, which should not be perpetuated, that this combination started a hybrid name for God taking the consonants YHWH and the vowels of 'Adonay resulting in YaHoWaH. This reading only appeared in manuscripts of the 13th century A.D. It became popularized as JEHOVAH in the King James Version appearing in Exodus 6:3. Jewish circles do not have this reading. This is an unhappy development which is like reading the name Peter as "Patora."

SECOND READING: *1 Co 10:1-6,10-12*

This is a parenetic warning or an exhortatory admonition coming from St Paul: "let anyone who thinks he is standing upright watch out lest he fall!" He gave as proof what happened to the Israelites in the desert. In spite of having received so many favors from Yahweh, having witnessed his miracles in the sea, baptized into Moses, and even drank from the spiritual rock which he interpreted as referring to Christ and taking it as a type of the Eucharist, still many Israelites fell from God's grace. St. Paul discerns in the "wanderings in the desert" the types of baptism and the Eucharist: "baptized into Moses" as the type of "baptism into Christ"; "drinking from the spiritual rock that was following them, and the "rock was Christ."

St. Paul here follows a different tradition concerning the "rock" during the exodus period. But his message is clear: God selects or chooses but he can also reject whom he had chosen. The case of King Saul immediately comes to mind.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk 13:1-9*

Jesus continues his exhortation to repentance in this passage of St. Luke: first citing two historical events, and another using a parable. We have here side by side two literary forms which Christ himself employed to give his message. The two historical events which he mentioned were the killing of some Galileans in the temple perpetrated by Pilate while they

were offering sacrifices, and the other the killing of 18 people when the tower of Siloam fell. The parable is that of the unfruitful fig tree.

Aside issue which is gleaned from the text is the relationship between sin and suffering. A prevalent idea among the Rabbis even during the time of Jesus was that suffering is directly proportional to a person's guilt or sin (*cf Jn 9:1-3*). This idea is corrected by Jesus in this gospel pericope. Those Galileans were not the greatest sinners since they were killed when they were precisely doing their religious duties. Neither were those who perished when the tower of Siloam fell had more "guilt than anyone else."

These events, during the time when Jesus was recounting them, were recent in the people's memory. It is an important lesson of doing a reflection on current events.

The parable of the fig tree is not the same as the lesson on the withered fig tree *Mt 21:19-20* and *Mk 11:20-25*. It is possible that the Lucan idea could have come from this episode in Mark. But the seemingly harsh attitude of Jesus in Matthew and Mark is attenuated here by St. Luke with his patience. The three years could be connected with the length of his ministry patiently waiting for the Jews to accept his teachings and bear fruit.

## *HOMILY*

His body is so emaciated that he resembles more the dead than the living. He stares blankly into space not uttering a word. Yet a few years back he was at the top of his class, most active in school activities, a young man of many talents, coming from a prominent family, until the day he got hooked into drugs. It just started as a curiosity with the barkada. One stick was followed by another until his body craved for more than just marijuana. He sniffed shabu, he took syrup, he injected himself with cocaine. He stole some of his mother's jewelries, then their appliances, even held up some people to be able to buy the forbidden drugs. Many times he had wanted to quit. He tried it for a time but the craving became more intense than the previous ones. One day he was just found unconscious on one of the benches of the Rizal Park.

This is the story of a promising young man, child of a wealthy family,

whose body and will were weakened and finally ruined because of drugs. He could have stopped while the habit was still not deeply seated but unfortunately did not. The inconveniences of a cure in the beginning deterred him. Later the pain of drug rejection became unbearable. Opportunities to return to a normal life were lost, parental and elderly guidance, love and support, were lacking.

Habits are like plants which become difficult to uproot when they are already well entrenched on the ground. It would require great suffering and pain to remove them. It could be done but with a greater dose of ascetic practices. In order to bear fruit the tree has to be pruned, saturated with manure, be taken cared of as the gardener in the gospel has promised.

#### **FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**

**March 26,1995**

**FIRST READING: *JOS* 5:9.10-12**

To complete the exodus-eisodus (exit-entrance) cycle chapter 5 of Joshua mentions three episodes which precisely happened inside the Promised Land after the crossing of the Jordan: circumcision, Passover, the ceasing of the manna as the Israelites started to eat the produce of the land. The desert wandering was over and they have reached the Land of Promise.

The "reproach (or "shame": JB) of Egypt" was the uncircumcised status of the Egyptians. Since circumcision was given a religious meaning in Israel as the sign of the covenant with Abraham (*Gn* 17) this practice was thought to have been practiced since patriarchal times. Yet it is quite surprising that this was not done during their 40 years of wandering in the desert. "Now all the people who came out had been circumcised; but those who had been born in the wilderness, none of these had been circumcised (*Jos* 5:5), Some biblical historians have posited the hypothesis that this practice could have originated here at Gilgal. It is here where the Hill of Foreskins was located (5:3).

Another indication that a new era had started was the celebration of the first Passover inside the Promised Land on the 14th day of Nisan. The exodus occurred after the celebration of the Passover in Egypt.

192 BoietiKEdaumticviieFtiipiHm, Vd.UCX3,Nas."K2-7C(Mar.A)>r1995)



SECOND READING: 2 Co 5:17-21

One of the key ideas in the theology of St. Paul is the status of the Christian as a "new creation" (*kaine ktisis*). The choice of the *term* *kainos* instead of *neos* which are both translated in English as "new" is significant indicating that this "creation" is not only new in the temporal sense but also implies excellence, or perfection as in the phrase "new commandment" (*entole kaine*) given by the Lord (*Jn* 13:34).

This new and excellent Christian status is also related to another key Paulinian concept, that of "reconciliation" (*katallege*). Among Greek writers (for example Sophocles, *Ajax*, 744) the term is used to indicate reconciliation between gods and humans. In St. Paul, the act of reconciling men, sinners or enemies is attributed to God's initiative or through Christ. "All this has been done by God who has reconciled us to himself through Christ..." But man is also employed by God as instruments of reconciliation. Hence, St. Paul can say "God has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (*diakonia tes katallages*).

The agents of reconciliation are ranked in this passage: from God through Christ through the instrumentality of human ministers. "He has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us." In fact the ministers of reconciliation are legates or ambassadors of Christ. They are not just mere dumb instruments. As ambassadors they act and speak in the name of God and Christ.

GOSPEL READING: lit 15:1-3,12-32

The usual title of this parable which is peculiar to St. Luke is "The Prodigal Son." But since it is the third of the "lost and found" stories of God's love and mercy, the two preceding being entitled "the lost sheep" and "the lost drachma," a better title would be "the lost son" as in the Jerusalem Bible. The usual title was definitely influenced by verse 13 where it is said that "he squandered his money on dissolute living."

The psychological trimmings in the story are intentional although on the verge perhaps of the improbable like the reaction of the older son which actually led some commentators to think that it was a later addition. But the mention of the older brother at the start of the parable and the intent of

giving the scribes and pharisees, who were criticizing Jesus as he welcomed sinners, something to think about, favors the unity of the parable.

Probably in the mind of St. Luke the younger son represents not only Israelite sinners like tax-collectors but gentiles or pagans who would later be Christianized. Going to a far country (gentile land) the younger brother was "gentilized" or paganized. The pharisees could have easily seen themselves in the role of the older brother who did not want to receive the wanton but repentant brother.

The parable is profused in presenting the love and mercy of the father.

### *HOMILY*

No person in the world is so great a sinner that cannot repent. There is no son who has left his father's house who cannot return and be received by his father. This is especially true of the heavenly Father who only wills all men to be saved. The story of the "prodigal son" has been repeated day after day in the many confessionals of the world.

There are many individuals who are now venerated in our altars who were once "lost sons." There is St. Augustine whose profligate youthful life caused so many tears to his mother, St. Monica but, according to a bishop, became one of the ingredients of his conversion. St. Benedict was a courtier until he left city life and settled in the desert and later founded monasteries. St. Francis of Assisi led a happy-go-lucky existence as a son of a wealthy merchant until he renounced all his possessions. St. Ignatius of Loyola was a soldier, strapped with the vices of a military man, until he got wounded and read the lives of the saints in the hospital where he was recuperating.

In this parable of the rather "lost son," the love and mercy of the father, who is really our heavenly Father, are very prominent. Our Father in heaven never abandons us. We are the ones who abandon the Father. But he is there waiting for us to return. No recriminations, no questions asked. It is enough that we were once lost but are now found.

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

April 2, 1995

FIRST READING: *Is* 43:16-21

This passage from Second-Isaiah speaks of the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile (538 B.C.) which is considered a new exodus, in fact even more wonderful than the miracle of the crossing of the sea (*Ex* 14) and the drowning of the Egyptians with their chariots and horses.

"Remember not the events of the past," is not an exhortation to forget God's wonderful deeds during the exodus but to focus on His new marvels to be accomplished during the return of the exiles. The *Jerusalem Bible* rightly translates it as: "no need to recall the past," and explains that this refers to "the miracles of the first exodus, which will be surpassed by those of the second" (footnote to *Is* 43:18).

The desert in which rivers would flow is the Syrian desert west of Mesopotamia which was regarded as a wasteland since patriarchal times. It is normally very difficult to traverse this desert coming from Mesopotamia going westward, that is towards the Holy Land.

A variant appears in verse 19 which our liturgical text translates: "in the wasteland, *rivers*." The JB, following a Qumran fragment (Dead Sea Scrolls) reads, "paths in the wilds." This does not change the general tenor of the message which tells of God's novel wonders in the new exodus.

Israel was God '*sbachir* ("chosen"). This is here clearly enunciated by the Second-Isaiah. They were a people whom Yahweh formed for himself since patriarchal times. Verses 20-21 of this passage are important for the biblical theology of election.

SECOND READING: *Ph* 3:8-14

There is a strong internal evidence that St. Paul wrote more than one letter to the Ephesians. *theNewJeromeBiblicalCommentary* has isolated at least three and our liturgical text is taken to be part of a third letter (*Ph* 3:1b-4:1). The tone of this passage is polemical but it is in this context where St. Paul has expressed, as in Galatians and Romans, his favorite

theme of justification (righteousness) by faith. This faith is a gift from Christ or from God and not from doing the mandates of the Mosaic Law (*cf. Rm 3:28*). "I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth and I may be in him, not having any justice of my own based on observance of the law. The justice I possess is that which comes through faith in Christ. It has its origin in God and is based on faith."

It is also important to note in this passage that St. Paul takes justification or salvation as a dynamic process: "It is not that I have reached it yet, or have already finished my course;..." Inspired perhaps by the many athletic games especially races which were standard amusements in the Greek world, the apostle compares the process of salvation to a race with life in Christ as the prize. "My entire attention is on the finish line as I run toward the prize to which God calls me: to live on high in Christ Jesus" (v. 14).

This is one of the best answers to those who mistakenly think that justification or salvation is a static gift. It is true that nobody can merit the grace of faith. But the moment a person has received the initial faith he develops by means of good works which is the "living faith" of St. James (2:17). He runs the race like St. Paul and at the end gains the heavenly prize.

GOSPEL READING : *Jn 8:1-11*

The Johannine authenticity of this gospel pericope of the "woman caught in adultery," is still debated although its canonicity according to the Council of Trent is well established. The debate is centered on whether this passage came from the hand of St. John the Evangelist or not.

Textual criticism tends to show that it was not originally part of the gospel of St. John. It is absent in ancient Greek manuscripts with the exception of Codex D (Cambridge of the 5th-6th cent.). It is not also found in the ancient Syriac version called the Peshitta and in the Coptic versions. It is nevertheless found in the Old Latin Versions (*Vetus Latina*), in the Vulgate, in the Syro-Palestinian lectionaries and in the Ethiopic versions. The style seems to correspond more to that of the Synoptics especially with regard to Jesus' rapport with sinners. Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis (about 135 A.D.), is reported by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *History of the Church* (MG 20,300), to have known this pericope.

It is suspected that manuscripts of this text had been in circulation but was not inserted in any canonical gospel until relatively late times because of the rigid discipline in the Church against the sin of adultery. It could have entered the gospel of St. John because of the words in 8:15: "I judge no one." In some manuscripts it is found after J/i 7:36 or 21:24; in Luke after 21:38 and after 12:17 in Mark.

The writing of Jesus on the ground is explained by St. Jerome (*Adv. Pel.* 2,17; ML 23,553) that he was writing the names of the accusers. Many exegetes now think that he was just showing an attitude of disinterestedness in contrast to their hypocritical insistence.

### HOMILY

Sometimes a delicate balance has to be made between the exercise of justice and the dispensation of mercy. Justice without mercy easily leads to cruelty while mercy without justice becomes easy prey to abuse against authority. Jesus, the incarnate Justice and Mercy, showed in today's gospel how to temper justice with mercy and how to prop up mercy with justice. To the scribes and Pharisees who wanted justice to be done without mercy Jesus said: "Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone at her," while to the woman to whom mercy was dispensed he said: "Nor do I condemn you. You may go. But from now on, avoid this sin." This is justice which is forgiving but not weak so as to tolerate abuse of authority. After her experience it is safe to assume that the adulterous woman followed the Lord's warning never to sin again.

Man is so prone to judge his fellowman that this merited a solemn injunction from the Lord: "Do not judge, and you will not be judged" (*Aft* 7:1). They see the splinter in their brother's eye but not the plank in their own eye (v. 3). The supposedly common experience that wisdom grows with old age seems to be the reverse as far as growth in innocence, or freedom from sin is concerned. When Jesus told the crowd that the self-imposed judge who has no sin be the first one to cast a stone, they left one by one *"beginning with the elders."*

In confrontation with Truth the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees just wilted. The woman was left alone with the Divine Mercy. Human judgment has been suspended. She was guilty perhaps because of

human frailty. But now she hears the most consoling and most beautiful affirmation that could ever reach the ears of many a sinner: "Nor do I condemn you." But a condition was added because a relapse is always possible: "You may go. But from now on, avoid sin."

## **PALM SUNDAY**

### **April 9,1995**

FIRST READING: *Is* 50:4-7

The following passages from the Deutero-Isaiah comprise the first verses of the "Third Song of the Servant of Yahweh." The first song starts from chapter 42 while the second one from chapter 49. In comparison with the first song, this third one is more somber and the persecution of the Servant of Yahweh becoming more violent. The servant affirms that the Word of Yahweh is source of salvation and he has been appointed as spokesman, "given a disciple's tongue." He speaks of what he has heard and listened to like a disciple although he suffered insults and humiliation. It is not however clear whether the prophet himself was the one persecuted or Israel as a collectivity.

Verses 4 and 5 have variant readings. The JB reads: "The Lord Yahweh has given me a disciple's tongue. So that I may know how to reply to (Hebrew has "sustain, "; while the Targum has "feed") the wearied he provides me with speech. Our liturgical text connects the second sentence with the preceding: "The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them." The *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* translates: "The Lord Yahweh has given me a disciple's tongue, that I may know how to sustain the weary. The word rouses me in the morning, in the morning he rouses my ear to hear like a disciple."

SECOND READING: *Ph* 2:6-11

As part of his exhortation to the Philippians Paul inserted this sublime hymn to Christ representing a very early kerygmatic confession of Christ's divine pre-existence and his condescension through his incarnation and his humiliation to death on the cross. He suffered death in

obedience to his father and because of this he received that heavenly exaltation and therefore all creation in the universe should adore him. Jesus by his death and resurrection was constituted the Lord (*Kyrios*), an allusion to Isaiah 40:23 now transferred to the new Kyrios, Christ, the adoration given to Yahweh, or better Christ is that esteemed equal to Yahweh and given equal adoration.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk 22:14 - 23:56*

The gospel reading in today's Mass is taken from the narration of the passion of the Lord according to St. Luke. This is the longest section in the gospel. One of the factors in the development of the passion narrative could have been the liturgy in which, according to St. Paul, the Christians "proclaimed the death of the Lord till he comes" (*1 Co 11:26*). This is quite pronounced in St. Matthew whose account of the story of the passion is solemn, adding details and biographical anecdotes like that of Judas, of Pilate and his wife. St. Luke on the other hand invites us to look at the passion as part witness, part experience. He wants us to take a place next to Jesus, even carrying his cross like Simon of Cyrene. He wants us to see ourselves in the weakness of Peter as well as in the plea for forgiveness of the good thief.

### *HOMILY*

The euphoria of Pope John Paul II's visit in Manila on the occasion of the World Youth Day is still being savored by millions of Filipinos. Although the comparison with the entrance of Jesus to Jerusalem may be a bit forced, yet there are some resemblances as the one who was welcomed was the Vicar of Christ on earth himself. Nevertheless times have greatly changed. Our Lord rode on a donkey while the Pope, understandably because of distance and security reasons rode on a plane and on a bullet-proof pope's mobile. The throng which attended the concluding Mass of the visit at the Rizal Park broke all records of Mass attendance in any place at any time in the history of the world. In the words of one cardinal: "it was the biggest crowd ever since the institution of the Holy Eucharist."

Yet in the historical life of the Lord the euphoric acclamation of Palm Sunday was reversed by the tragic denunciation of Good Friday when

**perhaps** some of these same people who shouted "hosanna to the Son of David!" a few days before now roar on top of their voices, "crucify him!" The apostles feared for their lives. One betrayed him and committed suicide afterwards. The indifferent populace could not care less.

The apostles themselves thought of Christ's entry into Jerusalem as a political move. They were also obsessed, as the popular expectation during their time, of the restoration of the Davidic kingdom but of earthly dimensions. Here is the "son of David" coming into the City of David riding on a donkey as foretold in Zechariah 9:9. They were witnesses of his many miracles, how he cured so many sick, expelled demons, multiplied bread to feed thousands, raise to life the dead Lazarus. With one flick of his finger he could demolish an entire Roman army.

But political motives were far from the mind and intent of Christ. Palm Sunday was just a prelude to Good Friday. He came to Jerusalem as he foretold three times to be crucified. But on the third day he would rise again. He came as a Davidic king, but his is an eternal, spiritual kingdom. He was not sent to demolish the Roman empire which had become a symbol at that time of political evil, but to uproot the sources of all evil — sin.

## **EASTER SUNDAY**

**April 16, 1995**

FIRST READING: AC 10:34.37-43

An important episode in the Acts was the baptism of Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and his household. They were the first gentiles or pagans to be baptized without passing through the Jewish ritual of circumcision. It was during this occasion that St. Luke presented to us through the sermon of St. Peter the substantial apostolic kerygma which is actually the gospel in miniature beginning with the mention of John's baptism, the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit and power, his miracles, crucifixion and resurrection.

The apostle says that he was one of the witnesses (*martyres*) of all these events and he was one of those commissioned to preach. No doubt the personality of St. Peter is clearly seen in these affirmations.



Still a Lucan perspective may also be discerned. The concluding part of the sermon is not emphasis on repentance but more on the Paulinian theme of forgiveness of sins for those who believe. For the first time also the affirmation of Jesus as judge of the living and the dead appears which will be part as an article of faith in the Creed.

SECOND READING: *Col 3:1-4*

The epistle to the Colossians is now considered even by Catholic exegetes as deuterio-Pauline, that is, not personally written by St. Paul but by a disciple or disciples closely following the Pauline tradition. Some think that St. Timothy who became bishop of Ephesus had a great influence in the writing of this letter.

Verse 1 of chapter 3 is presented as non-Pauline since it is in seeming contrast to the doctrine of the future resurrection. Here the resurrection is already realized. "We have been raised up in the company of Christ." Still *the Jerusalem Bible* translates it differently removing any interpretation in this text of a future glorious resurrection: "Since you have been brought back to true life in Christ..." This is different from the text of *Ph 3:21*: "He will transfigure those wretched bodies of ours into copies of his glorious body."

There is actually no contradiction between realized eschatology and future eschatology. Both seem to be expressed in our liturgical text.

*Alternative* SECOND READING: *1 Co 5:6-8*

These three verses which are taken as our alternative liturgical reading are contextually reflective comments but are presented as principles of action for all Christians. This passage was written on the occasion of St. Paul's vehement censure of that incestuous Christian having an affair with his step-mother prohibited by Leviticus (18:8). That man is compared to a corrupting yeast. Because of its fomenting qualities the yeast has been compared to a corrupt agent or wicked influence, that is why the Israelites during the seven-day feast of "Azymer" which starts during the Passover only eat unleavened bread ("*matsoth*") and throw all leavened bread away. This is also the reason why during the Passover meal unleavened bread are eaten which was followed by our Lord during the

\*

Last Supper. This is perpetuated by the Latin Rite which only uses unleavened bread in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

The unleavened bread without the yeast is being presented as the image of "sincerity and truth." In celebrating the resurrection or Passover of Christ the Christians are reminded to throw away all corrupting influences, even cutting off from the community those members who would be agents of corruption lest the whole body be ruined.

GOSPEL READING: *Jn 20:1-9*

Analysis of post-resurrection scenes has shown a number of inconsistencies which have caused various reactions among biblical commentators depending on whether they are of the close-minded types or open-minded ones. The former do not want to hear of any inconsistency while the latter easily fall into thinking that the resurrection is not a historical reality. However the earliest written account of the resurrection which has survived is dated in the year 51-52 A.D., only about 20 years after the event, found in *1 Co 15:3-8*. St. Paul testifies that Jesus "appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive."

There is no mention in this Paulinian text of Christ's appearance to the women mentioned by the Synoptics especially to Mary Magdalene in this account of St. John but this does not argue against the historical verity of the Johannine testimony.

Some inconsistencies are in fact found in this Johannine passage. Mary Magdalene saw that the tomb was open but immediately concluded that the body was taken away; she is presented going to the sepulcher alone but she said "we" when she reported to the apostles; in the Greek text the verb in verse 3 is in the singular and only refers to Peter (*ekselthen oun ho Petros* - "Peter started out") which makes suspect the mention of the Beloved Disciple which seems to be a later addition. In fact in Luke 24:5 it was St. Peter alone who went to the tomb.

These difficulties are explained as products of editorial reworkings and the influence of the Johannine community from where the gospel has originated and developed.

The faith of the Beloved Disciple is presented as more pronounced than of Peter but Peter's primacy is clearly stressed in the narrative.

GOSPEL READING (*Mass in the afternoon or evening*): Lk 24:13-35

It is recommended that this account of St. Luke be read in the afternoon or evening Masses of this day. The episode happened on the very Sunday afternoon of the resurrection.

This narrative is peculiar to St. Luke although mentioned in passing by St. Mark (16:12) which is probably dependent on Luke. There is controversy concerning the site of Emmaus depending on the original reading of verse 13, whether 60 or 160 stadia. One *stadion* is equivalent to 202 yards or 185 meters. Our liturgical text opted for 60 stadia, hence the translation "7 miles" or about 11 kilometers from Jerusalem. This is the opinion of many commentators which is very plausible because the distance of 160 stadia or about 30 kms. cannot be negotiated normally that same evening which the two disciples did after recognizing Jesus.

Due however to the great influence of Fr. L. Hugues Vincent, O.P., Emmaus has been located in Nicopolis (Amwas) precisely 30 kms. from Jerusalem. Many are now abandoning this identification and following Fr. Bellarmine Bagatti, O.F.M., they opine that it is the present Qubeibeh about 11 kms. from Jerusalem. Another candidate is Abu Gosh.

St. Luke mentions that one of the men was named Cleopas. This is an interesting datum since precisely one of the women mentioned at the foot of the cross was Mary the wife of Cleopas. Is this Cleopas to be identified with the husband of this other Mary who was also the mother of James and Joset, brothers of the Lord?

## *HOMILY*

After almost two-thousand years after the greatest event of all time when a crucified rose from the dead as he had promised there are still many who are skeptical about this historical reality. The first propaganda of misinformation and deception is mentioned in the gospel of St. Matthew (28:11-15) when the Jewish authorities "handed a considerable sum of money to the soldiers with these instructions, This is what you must say,

**"His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep"..'.' The soldiers took the money and carried out their instructions, and to this day that is the story among the Jews."**

**Others invent stories more fictitious than fiction and peddle it in the name of historical truth that the resurrection could not have happened. One writer went to the extent of writing a novel which he entitled "The Lost Scroll" purporting that Christ did not really die on the cross but just fainted, contrary to the testimony of the Roman soldiers one of whom even pierced his side with a lance, and when he regained consciousness inside the tomb he just casually rolled the big stone covering (what superhuman strength for him who is denied divine power!) and hid for a while from the Jewish and Roman authorities. When this irreverent author was asked where he got his information, he answered that he read it all from a lost scroll.**

**Another attempt was recently made by a Jewish archaeologist to deny the resurrection claiming that he discovered the remains of Jesus while digging at the wall of the Fortress Antonia in Jerusalem inside a jar. This, according to him, is in agreement with a text of the Jewish historian Ravi us Josephus, but only in the Slavonic version, that Pilate had the body stolen, placed inside a jar and secretly interred inside the fortress wall. How come Pilate suddenly became interested in stealing Jesus' body when, after washing his hand of the whole affair, he became the paragon of indifference? Did he not suspect that by doing so he would be the cause of the greatest agitation in Jerusalem which he wanted in the first place to avoid that since the tomb was empty on the third day of Christ's death his disciples would have the basis to claim that he resurrected?**

**But what about the apparitions of Jesus on the very third day after his burial? The gospels may not be harmonious in narrating these apparitions but they do not contradict each other. The earliest written account of these appearances, surprisingly, is not in the gospels but in the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (15:4-8) composed about 51/52 A.D., only about 20 years after the resurrection: "He appeared first to Cephas and secondly to the Twelve. Next he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died; then he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles; and last of all he appeared to me too; it was as though I was born**

when no one expected it." There were hundreds of witnesses of Christ's post-resurrection appearances. But what is most remarkable is the fact that these witnesses sealed their testimony with their blood.

This is actually hell's greatest fury — to think that it had won by crucifying until death the awaited Messiah, the son of God thought to be mere human and not divine and to be snatched of this victory when he resurrected by his own power and proved that he is divine.

## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

**April 23,1995**

FIRST READING: AC 5:12-26

Our liturgical reading is the third editorial summary in the Acts of the Apostles portraying the life of the first Christian community in Jerusalem led by the apostles. The other two are 2:42-47 and 4:32-35. This passage stresses the miracles and signs "through the hands of the apostles" with explicit mention of St. Peter. The "portico of Solomon" is a covered corridor on the eastern portion of the Jerusalem temple built by Herod the Great overlooking the Cedron valley. This is open to the public where people used to congregate. It was here where Jesus *in* 10:30 proclaimed that "he and the Father are one." It was also here where St. Peter addressed the crowd after curing the lame beggar some time after Pentecost (*Ac* 3:11 ff.). This became the meeting place of the first Christian community in Jerusalem.

The fame of St. Peter has grown not only after the miraculous cure of the lame man but also after his judgment on Ananias and Sapphira having discerned their deception (*Ac* 5:1-11) both of whom fell instantly dead. Peter's miraculous powers were being experienced by people that even his shadow was believed to have caused healings of the sick.

SECOND READING: RV 1:9-11,12-13,17-19

In line with the inaugural vision of the prophets of Old, John (who by tradition is no other than John the Evangelist, one of the apostles of the Lord) receive this vision in the island of Patmos where he was exiled.

According to Pliny (*NaturalHistory*), Patmos was used by the Romans as a place of exile for special prisoners. As testified by Victorinus, Bishop of Pettau, who was martyred during the reign of Diocletian, in his book *Comm. inApocalypsin* (PL, 5, 317), St. John was exiled by Domitian in about 95 A.D. to work in the metal mines: "*in metallum damnatus.*" Patmos is now called Patino, one of the Hesperides islands in the Aegean Sea just facing Miletus and Ephesus. The island has an area of about 55 square kms.

This inaugural vision of John is reminiscent of Daniel 7:28 and 8:1 but it may also be compared with the visions of Isaiah (6:1 ff.), Jeremiah (1:4ff.) and Ezekiel (1-2).

The vision happened on the "Lord's day" [*te kyriake hemera*], which is our Sunday. According to *1 Co* 16:2; *Ac* 20:7-8; *theDidache* (14:1), it was on this day that the Christians used to gather for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Definitely this was influenced by the fact that our Lord resurrected on this day. John heard a voice mandating him to write and turning around he saw a *menorah* (a seven branch lampstand of gold) and "One like a Son of Man wearing an ankle-length robe, with a sash of gold about his breast" (v. 13). The epithet "son of Man" is a messianic title taken from Daniel (cf. 7:13). The figure whom Daniel saw introduced himself as "the First and Last and the One who lives." Clearly this was Jesus "who once was dead but lives — forever and ever." The expression "First and Last" is a divine title which is also given to Yahweh in Isaiah 44:6. It is similar to the expression "Alpha and the Omega" (*Rv* 1:8; 22:13). This is a very clear proof that St. John equates Christ with Yahweh.

GOSPEL READING: *Jn* 20:19-31

"On the evening of the first day of the week," that is the very Sunday of Christ's resurrection, he appeared to his disciples. This appearance may be compared to that of St. Luke (24:36-49). Since in that Lucan episode the two disciples who were privileged to see the Lord on their way to Emma us were present, this narrative in John has also to include their presence and perhaps some other disciples other than the apostles whose group is still called "the Twelve" even when two were missing: St. Thomas and Judas. In fact St. John makes a distinction here between the "disciples"

and "the Twelve." The presence not only of the apostles but also of the disciples who were not apostles in this group will have a bearing in the discussion of the given power to forgive sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

"Jesus came and stood before them" even though the doors were locked. Many theologians believe that it was due to Jesus' glorified body which is now freed from the laws of physics that he was able to penetrate locked doors and travel through space in the twinkling of an eye. But his body was not illusory and precisely to prove this he asked for something to eat as given in St. Luke 24:42.

"Then he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit'..." This action of the Lord in giving the Holy Spirit immediately after his resurrection has led some commentators to contrast St. John's sending of the Holy Spirit to that of St. Luke in the Acts which happened during the Jewish feast of Pentecost. It seems that in St. John the resurrection-event and the sending-of-the-Holy Spirit-event are co-temporal. Yet it can still be argued in the Johannine context that the reception of the Holy Spirit in this episode is for a specific purpose: the forgiveness or retention of sins, while in the Acts it is the beginning of the Church's mission to the world. In fact the Council of Trent has narrowed the words of Jesus down to the sacrament of penance or reconciliation. This is repeated by the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Only God forgives sins. Since he is the Son of God, Jesus says of himself, 'The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, and exercises this divine power: 'Your sins are forgiven'.' Further, by virtue of his divine authority he gives this power to men to exercise in his name (cf.7/i 20:21-23)" (no. 1441).

## HOMILY

The words of the Lord to the apostle Thomas "blest are they who have not seen and have believed" are, in fact, addressed, to all generations of Christians who have not seen and heard Jesus in the flesh but nevertheless believe in his divinity. Thomas saw and he believed. This is not in support of an inaccurate dictum: "to see is to believe." To see is not to believe but to know. Belief is in fact of the unseen. Thomas only saw Christ's resurrected humanity pierced by nails and a lance, but he believed in his

divinity which still remained invisible for him. Then he blurted out those famous words which believers of all generations have repeated in the exercise of their faith: "My Lord and my God!"

They have not seen Christ in the flesh but all the same they believe in his divinity. They were not witnesses of his miracles, they were not listeners as he proclaimed the new laws of the kingdom at the foot of the mount, they were not partakers of the bread multiplied by his prodigious hands, nor spectators when he was condemned to death, tortured, made up to carry a cross and crucified until he died. They have not seen but they believe and blessed are they.

Still many in our times want to see in order to believe. They premise their act of believing in their act of seeing and not in their act of willing. They may just be well frustrated. Their eyes may be transfixed to a prodigious event but their will may still hold them back and refuse to believe that it is divine.

Thousands have witnessed the miracle of the "dancing sun" at Fa ti ma but few have the courage to believe. Thousands of cures have been witnessed at Lourdes but many still found it hard to believe after witnessing them. This led Franz Werfel, a converted Jew who wrote the novel "The Song of Bernadette" to conclude: "For those who believe, no explanation is needed; but for those who do not believe, no explanation is possible."

### **THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER**

#### **April 30,1995**

FIRST READING: AC 5:27-32, 40-41

It was during the first appearance of Peter and John before **the** Sanhedrin (Ac 4:1-22) on the occasion of the cure of a lame man that the authorities warned the apostles "on no account to make statements or to teach in the name of Jesus" (v. 18). Because they repeated the offense, the apostles were imprisoned (5:18) with St. Peter as leader and spokesman. "We gave you strict orders not to teach about that name..." (5:28). As the leader of the group Peter answered the Jewish authorities: "Better for us to obey God than men!" There was no more fear in the hearts of **the**



apostles. They were convinced of the presence of the Holy Spirit in them. "We testify to this. So too the Holy Spirit..."

It was during this occasion that Gamaliel (teacher of Paul, Ac 22:3), a great rabbi of the Pharisee party, made a memorable intervention declaring: "What I suggest, therefore, is that you leave these men alone and let them go. If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of its own accord; but if it does in fact come from God you will not only be unable to destroy them, but you might find yourselves fighting against God" (5:38-39).

Although it is omitted in the liturgical reading St. Luke testified that the apostles were ordered by the Sanhedrin to be flogged and told them "not to speak again about the name of Jesus." This became a source of joy for the apostles convinced that they had now been found worthy to suffer for the sake of the Name. The joy of suffering for Christ is frequent in the New Testament: *Ph* 1:20; *Col* 1:24; *Heb* 10:34 and *1 P* 4:13.

#### SECOND READING: *RV* 5:11-14

The context of chapter 5 of Revelation is a continuation of St. John's vision of heaven which began in chapter 4. While in the previous chapter the visionary was describing his vision of God sitting on a throne in heaven surrounded by heavenly personalities, in chapter 5 the focus is on the Lamb "who seemed to have been sacrificed" and who was the only one worthy to open the scroll with seven seals which was held by the "right hand of the One sitting on the throne" (5:1). This is the scroll containing a most secret revelation, hence the seven seals, the opening of which will be the topic until 8:1.

The taking of the scroll by the Lamb was an occasion of great rejoicing in heaven by thousands and thousands of angels, the four "living creatures" described in 4:7 and the twenty four elders mentioned in 4:4. All the creatures in the universe also gave glory "to the One seated on the throne, and to the Lamb,..." (v. 13). The divinity and the equality of the Lamb with God is here clearly proclaimed.

#### GOSPEL READING: *Jn* 21:1-19

The authenticity of this chapter is questioned even by Catholic

exegetes (for ex. E. Boismard, O.P., *he chap. 21 de St. Jean. Essai de critique littiraire*: RB 47 [1947] 473-501). Its cahonicity, on the other hand, is well established. The arguments against its authenticity are principally based on an internal analysis of the text. It is observed, for instance, that there is already an ending in 20:30-31. *TheJerusalem Bible* in a footnote is undecided. It says: "added either by the evangelist or by one of his disciples."

This episode which is considered as the official conferment of Peter's primacy is now traditionally situated in Tabgha (a corruption of the Greek *heptapygon* which means "seven springs" because of the seven hot springs nearby). This is on the bank of Lake Tiberias a little to the west of Capharnaum and not very far going southwards from the Benedictine church of the multiplication of the bread and the Mount of Beatitudes. In ancient pilgrims' itinerary this was called *Mensa Domini* ("Table of the Lord"). The Franciscans in 1943 built a church in this place called "St. Peter's Church" or the "Chapel of the Primacy."

The narrative focuses heavily on Peter who, although not the first to recognize Jesus, was the first one to meet him by jumping into the water even before the boat was ashore. It was he, in fact, who invited the other disciples to go fishing and when the boat came he took it upon himself to go aboard and drag "the net to shore, full of big fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them" (v. 11). This action of Peter hauling the net full of fish towards the shore is interpreted with many symbolisms. The net is taken to symbolize the Church and the fish, 153 of them, the faithful. Why 153? Some commentators do not see any significance at all in this number. St. Jerome, however, basing his interpretation on ancient zoology which during his time taught that there were 153 species offish, observed that this number could symbolize all races of men now called to be members of the Church. Others, linking this number to numerology or geametria, interpret it as a perfect number being the sum of the series 1 to 17. Indeed if we add  $1 + 2 + 3 \dots$  until 17 we get 153. 17 is the sum of 10 and 7 both perfect numbers in Jewish tradition. This could symbolize then perfection in the membership of the Church. Whether, however, this was in the mind of the author of this narrative is still open to question.

Before Peter was conferred the mission of "feeding the sheep," the

**Lord elicited from him the threefold love definitely o(setting the threefold denial during the passion. The concluding portion of our gospel pericope is a prophecy of the manner of death of Peter which happened probably in the year 64 A.D., one of the victims of Nero's persecution. He was crucified upside down on the very area where the Basilica of St. Peter now stands, at the Vatican Hill.**

## **HOMILY**

Throughout history the primacy of St. **Peter** among the apostles which extended to all his successors in the papacy or as bishop of Rome has been vehemently assailed, attacked and denied by the enemies of the Church. But it has also been strongly defended and affirmed by her faithful children. Our gospel pericope is one of the strongest texts speaking of this primacy. It was to Peter and to his successors that Christ entrusted his sheep.

Amost recent affirmation of this truth was proclaimed by the present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, page 8: "Even after the Resurrection, Christ confirmed Peter's mission. He said meaningfully: 'Feed my lambs... Tend my sheep' (*Jn* 21:15-16). But first Christ asked if Peter loved him. Peter, who had denied Christ but had not stopped loving him, was able to respond: 'You know that I love you' (*Jn* 21:15)."

Still during the first century of Christianity, even after Peter's death, the primacy **of** the Popes of Rome has been universally recognized. It was, for instance, St. Clement of Rome (+101), the third successor of St. Peter by tradition, who by his authority compelled the obedience of the Corinthians to be united as St. Paul had done about forty years before. This was during the time when St. John was still alive and residing at Ephesus, a city much nearer to Corinth than Rome. Some years later, about 110 A.D., St. Ignatius of Antioch, wrote to Rome from Smyrna being on his way there having been condemned to death during the reign of the Emperor Trajan. In the salutation of this letter one can clearly discern the highest regard this saintly martyr has for the Church of Rome. In the words of one author: "it is the earliest avowal of the Primacy of Rome that we possess from the pen of a non-Roman ecclesiastic."

That there were some popes in the history of the Church who were unworthy of their office cannot be denied. But this is no argument against the fact and the constant conviction that since the time of St. Peter the Roman Church has exercised primacy and jurisdiction over the whole flock of Christ. This flock has now grown to a billion, one-fifth of the world's population. We hope for the day that those outside this flock would hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and be nourished in the true fold led and guided by the only one designated by the supreme shepherd to feed his sheep.

#### FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER **May 7, 1995**

FIRST READING: Ac 13:14, 43-52

Our liturgical reading is a continuation of the narrative of St. Paul's first missionary postdate with St. Barnabas as companion starting from Antioch of Seleucia until South Galatia. The group together with St. Mark had just come from Cyprus by boat and disembarked at Perga in Pamphylia, actually at the port of Attalia (cLAc 14:26). It was at this point when John Mark left the party and returned to Jerusalem (13:13). This was not well taken by St. Paul which caused the separation between him and St. Barnabas during the second missionary journey (Ac 15:39-40). The group reached another Antioch situated between the regions of Phrygia and Pisidia. It is rather popularly known as Antioch of Pisidia to distinguish it from Antioch of Seleucia, the more famous of the two being then the capital of Syria.

It was the custom of St. Paul whenever he arrives at a certain place to preach first to the Jews which he did on the sabbath (Ac 13:14-41). They were asked to preach again on the following sabbath and "almost the entire city gathered to hear the word of God" (v. 44). This aroused the jealousy of the Jewish leaders and their followers even countering the affirmations of Paul and Barnabas with abusive language. Because of the rejection of the Jews of the Christian message Paul and Barnabas now turned to the Gentiles which proved to be very fruitful for many of them were converted to the faith.

This apostolic activity of St. Paul and St. Barnabas in South Galatia would have a bearing on the present discussion of the recipients of his letter to the Galatians. Some commentators maintain that he wrote this letter to the Christians of Pisidia, Pamphylia and Lycaonia even before the assembly of Jerusalem in the year 49 A.D. narrated in Ac 15. However the inhabitants of South Galatia were not ethnically Galatians. In fact the Lycaonians spoke their own language (Ac 14:11). According to Ac 16:6 St. Paul passed through the "Galatian country" during his second missionary journey and must have founded the local Church there. Thus there is greater weight in the argument that he wrote the letter to the Galatians of North Galatia during his stay at Ephesus (Ac 19) in about the year 57 A.D.

SECOND READING: RV 7:9,14-17 ,

This passage in chapter 7 of Revelation gives us the clue why St. John wrote this book or, according to him, why he was mandated to write it. It was written as a book of consolation and not of consternation because of calamities and catastrophic events. This was to console the Christians of the first century who were being persecuted, many of whom were martyred because of their faith. Now they enjoy eternal happiness in heaven. They were "the ones who have survived the great period of trial; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (v. 14).

"The great period of trial" most probably refers to the persecution of the Roman emperors, first by Nero (54-68 AD.) and then by Domitian (81-96). It was during the reign of the latter emperor that St. John was exiled to Patmos.

However some commentators also see in the "huge crowd which no one can count from every nation and race, people and tongue" of verse 9 not only the martyrs but also baptized Christians who have persevered in the faith taking the washing of their robes making them white in the blood of the Lamb as a symbol of baptism which is the symbolism in Rv 1:5. They now enjoy forever the celestial bliss described as a continuous liturgy, ministering to God in his temple. God in turn will give them "shelter" (lit. "will put his tent"; Greek: *skensei*; Latin: *habitabit*; JB: "spread his tent"). This is the same verb used in Jn 1:14: "The Word was made flesh, he lived (*eskenosen* - "he put his tent") among us." As God protected his

people in the desert with his *shekina* ("tent") so he protects his elect in heaven living in the midst of them.

GOSPEL READING: *Jn 10:27-30*

In the gospel of St. John our pericope was pronounced by Jesus to the Jews during the feast of Dedication (Greek: *Engkainia*), a relatively new feast among the Jews, introduced by Judas Maccabaeus on the occasion of the dedication of the temple on Dec. 164 B.C. (*1M 4:59; 2M 10:1-8*) after it was profaned by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. It is celebrated yearly on the 25th of Chislew which corresponds to Nov./Dec. It is also called the *Hanukka* or the "feast of lights" since during eight days of celebration the temple area is bathed in lights and also private homes.

The parable of the Good Shepherd is continued in this pericope. The Jews who do not believe in him are not his sheep (v. 26). The Christians are his sheep and listen to his voice. "To listen" means to obey. "No one shall snatch (*harpasei*) them out of my hand." The same verb (*harpadso*) is found in verse 12 where it speaks of wolves snatching the sheep from hirelings. In contrast no one can steal from the Good Shepherd.

There is a variant reading of verse 29 depending on whether the text has *meidson* (neuter) or *meidswon* (masculine). Our liturgical reading and the JB take it as masculine which refers to the Father hence the translation: "My Father is greater than all." But the Vulgate relates it to "that which was given" taking it in its neuter form: "As for my Father, that which he has given me is greater than all." The masculine reading has more defenders.

"The Father and I are one." The Fathers of the Church have seen in this verse the distinction of divine persons: "The Father and I," but unity of essence: "are one."

*HOMILY*

Are we the sheep of the Good Shepherd? If we are his sheep, do we listen to his voice? Let us not deceive ourselves in this, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, to say that we are the sheep of Christ and yet do not heed his voice.

But which *is* the voice of Christ? Read St. John, chapter 21, which was the gospel last Sunday and he will tell us that it is the voice of Peter, the Vicar of Christ on earth, to whom Christ gave the charge to feed his sheep. To listen to the voice of Peter, then, is to listen to the voice of Christ. Sometimes we may not understand where he leads us, but one thing is sure, he always leads us to verdant pastures where we will be well nourished and contented. Still to that unknown verdant meadow we begin to waver, we fumble and fall. Then we try to go astray as if we know a better way to go to that verdant pasture. But instead we lose our way. We become lost sheep.

Then the Good Shepherd starts looking for us even leaving the ninety-nine to find the stray sheep. If we keep on hiding, not uttering a cry, he would not know where to find us although he would keep calling us. And so we should cry, we should groan and lament and he will hear us.

## **FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**May 14, 1995**

The liturgy of the 5th Sunday after Easter speaks of the spread of the Church through the apostolic work of Paul and Barnabas (first reading); John's vision of the new heavens and the new earth in the book of Revelation (second reading); and the parting words of Jesus during the last supper (Gospel reading). This Sunday, like the other Sundays after Easter, prepares for the feast of the Ascension.

### **FIRST READING: AC 14:21-27**

The ending of the first apostolic travel of Paul and Barnabas is recounted in this passage of the Acts. We find them this time at Derbe, leaving Lystra after Paul was stoned there at the instigation of some Jews. Derbe is about 65 kilometers southeast of Lystra which during the time of St. Paul belonged to the Roman Province of Galatia. As we have already mentioned in last Sunday's commentary of the first reading there is in fact some commentators who think that St. Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians to these communities of Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe and not the native Galatians of the north.

There was no mention at Derbe of the hardships which the apostles encountered while they were at Iconium and Lystra. The response of the people to their preaching there of the Good News was very encouraging. After their stay at Derbe they went back through the same route from which they came to strengthen these newly founded Churches of Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia, noting that the hardships they experienced were necessary for the spread of the kingdom of God.

Afterwards they appointed elders (*presbyteroi*), perhaps in imitation of the Church in Jerusalem (Ac 11:30) to administer these Churches. This was done in a liturgical service "with prayer and fasting." There was no mention of imposition of hands but based on previous practices like Ac 6:6, 13:3; 1 Tm 4:14, 5:22; 2 Tm 1:6; Heb 6:2, we may infer that this was done. These elders or presbyters, also known as overseers (*episkopoi*) in Ac 20:28; Ph 1:1; 1 Tm 3:2; Tt 1:7, were the predecessors of our priests and bishops which, during the time of St. Paul, were not yet clearly distinguished. It was only about fifty years later in the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch (Ep 6:1; Magnesians 2, 6:1; Trallians 1:1; Philadelphians 4), that clear distinctions were made between *episkopos* (presiding elder, our present bishop) and *presbyteroi* (elders under the *episkopos*, our present priests).

#### SECOND READING: RV 21:1-5

The Apocalypse or the book of Revelation has often been considered as a book of disasters, cataclysms, catastrophic events and other horrifying experiences. That is why in many languages "apocalyptic" became synonymous with "disasters," "cataclysms," or "calamities." This, however, is a popular misconception. *Apokalypsis* in Greek simply means "revelation" and this book does indeed contain both tragic and happy revelations. It is, in fact, a prophetic book and many expressions in the Apocalypse can only be understood by studying the prophets. In our present text alone, the second reading in today's Mass, already 5 passages from the prophetic books are cited: Isaiah 65:17, 66:2; Ezekiel 37:27; Isaiah 8:8, 25:8. As most prophetic books end with a consoling note, so also the Apocalypse has a happy ending.

Chapter 21 portrays to us the new heavens and the new earth at the



end of time. The disappearance of the sea indicates the peace and tranquility of the new order. The sea or the ocean had been linked by the ancients to the chaotic state because it is never calm and oftentimes violently disturbed because of its big waves. The sea was thought of to be the abode of a monster named Rahab or Leviathan in Sacred Scripture, or Tiamat in Babylonian myth. God killed these monsters to bring order to creation (*Is* 51:9; *Ps* 74:13).

John saw the holy city coming down from heaven. It has then a divine origin. The letter to the Hebrew (11:10) "looks forward to a city founded, designed and built by God."

In a figurative sense Zion is said in the Bible to be the bride of Yahweh (*Is* 62:4), adorned in her bridal gown for the wedding (*Is* 49:18,61:10;/r 2:32). In the New Testament, the Church is the Bride and Christ is the Bridegroom (*Jn* 3:29; *Rv* 22:17, aside from the present text).

Verse 5 is the only passage in the whole book of Revelation where God himself speaks. The time will come when all creation will become new.

GOSPEL READING: *Jn* 13:31-35

After the departure of Judas, the lengthy discourse of the Last Supper which will end in 17:26 begins. The first sentences of the discourse reminisce the two previous episodes: the departure of Judas in which Jesus will speak of his glorification and the washing of the feet after which the Lord will speak of the new commandment of love.

Unwittingly, Judas would be realizing the plan of God leading Christ to his death which would be the prelude to his glory. The tense used of the verb "to glorify" is very noticeable. *ἔδοξας* is in the aorist passive and rightly translated as "has been glorified." This may be considered a "prophetic anticipation" by which a future fact or event which is certain and proximate is expressed. When Judas left to betray him his passion in fact started whose fulfillment until the resurrection is already seen here.

"God will in turn glorify him in himself." The aorist of verse 31 is now in the future, *δοxasei*. Some manuscripts have *en auto*, "in him," which could mean that God will glorify the Son in his humanity. "In

himself (*en eauto*), another reading, means, according to the Jerusalem Bible, that the Father will take the Son of Man to himself in glory seated at his right hand. "Very soon," that is to say, in his resurrection and ascension to heaven.

Jesus calls his disciples "little children" (*teknia*, a term which is only found in this v. 33 of St. John's Gospel, but found 7 times in his letter. It is an endearing and affectionate term. He would be leaving them and as he told the Jews (7:33-34; 8:21) where he was going they cannot come. But later in verse 36 he told Peter: "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; you will follow me later." This means that the separation will only be temporary.

Then Jesus gave them *a* new commandment. The absence of the article means that there was no precedent commandment like this before. In 15:12 it has already the article referring to this new commandment. In Greek there are two terms for new: *neos* which expresses what is recent, and *kainos* which could also have the meaning of "excellent," "sublime," "perfect." This commandment is new since the model and motivation is new: "as I have loved you." The love of Christ, then, for us is the standard of this new commandment of love. The former standard is to love one another as oneself.

In *Un* 3:14, our love for our brothers is the sign that "we have passed out of death and into life," and the sign of being true disciples of Christ. Tertullian testifies (*Apologia*, 39) that pagans took notice and admired this fraternal love among Christians: "*Vide, inquiunt, ut invicem se diligant*," ("observe, they [pagans] say, how they love one another").

### HOMILY

The test for true discipleship of Christ is the love Christians have for each other motivated by the love of Christ for us. This is, indeed, a new commandment. New in the sense that the standard and the motive are new. New in the sense that it is the most excellent kind of love, taking the Greek *koine* with this specific meaning. The old measure of love was the love of oneself. It states: "love your neighbor *as yourself*." The new commandment affirms: "love one another as I have loved you."

This new measure of love is the love Christ has for us. "A love than this no man has than to give his life for his friends." The measure of Christian love is to love without measure. It is a sacrificial love, to give one's life for the beloved. If we cannot give life in one offering as the martyrs did, we can give it piece by piece even in the daily hum-drum of our earthly existence.

A mother gives it to her child offering precious sleepless nights; a wife gives it to her husband understanding his moods; a husband gives it to his wife spending his time in the office and not in beer-houses; children give it to their parents by their obedience; parents give it to their children by spending more time with them. These daily offerings of one's life is Christian love. It does not anymore say: "I love you as I love myself," but "I love you as Christ loves you."

If I love you as I love myself, I risk of having a selfish love, a one-way love, a jealous love. Many times I don't even know what this love means. Does loving myself means to pamper myself with everything I desire and, therefore, to love according to this measure would be to pamper you with everything you desire? Or do I love myself when I assure for myself eternal happiness in God's kingdom whatever be the cost and, therefore to love according to this measure would be to guide and lead you towards eternal happiness whatever be the price?

But if I love you as Christ loves me, my standard of love becomes very clear. He died on the cross because of this love, he forgave his executioners because of this love, he has prepared for us a place in his kingdom because of this love.

The standard has is set. It is up for us now to meet the standard.

## **SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

### **May 21,1995**

The sixth Sunday of Easter is the Sunday preceding the feast of the Ascension celebrated on the Thursday after this Sunday as the 40th day after the Resurrection. In some countries, however, like the Philippines, the feast of the Ascension is forwarded to the following Sunday to lessen the holidays of obligations on weekdays.

The promises made by our Lord to the apostles during the Last Supper (Gospel Reading) concerning the Holy Spirit, Advocate of the Church, is now being realized as the apostles and elders of the Church met in Jerusalem to settle a most fundamental issue: the break with Judaism (First Reading). The Second Reading speaks to us about the heavenly city to which all of us are tending.

FIRST READING: AC 15:1-29

This episode of the council of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem is one of the turning points in the Acts of the Apostles. This has been presented by some authors as the first ecumenical council of the Church. Although the nucleus of future ecumenical councils is certainly present, this gathering is usually not included in the list of ecumenical councils which historically starts with the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.).

The point of issue was whether pagans or gentiles converted to Christianity were obliged to keep the Mosaic Law and thus be circumcised as some Pharisees converted to Christianity were teaching: "unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved." There were here two groups of opinions since this was not clear in the doctrine of Christ. This is an example then of resolving a doctrine not clearly stated by the Lord and now presented for clarification to the Church authorities composed of the apostles and elders, the predecessors of our College of Bishops.

There is no mention in the Acts of any presiding officer. But it does mention that it was through the intervention of St. Peter that the issue was resolved "after a long discussion" (v. 7). Peter recounted the conversion and baptism of Cornelius, how he considered this event as an act of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit. He said: "in fact, God who can read everyone's heart showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us."

With this event, the nascent Church officially separated from the Jewish synagogue.

SECOND READING: RV 21:10-23

In contrast to chapter 17:3 where John was brought to the desert to see the harlot (symbolizing the unholy city), here he is brought to a high mountain to see the bride (the heavenly Jerusalem, the holy city) descending from heaven. Then follows a description of the Holy City. This heavenly city is shining with the glory of God (cf. /s 60:1-2). In 2 Co 4:6, God's glory shines in the face of Christ.

John looked for an earthly comparison of this radiant city and found it in a jewel called *iaspis* in Greek, translated by some as "jasper" a kind of jade, while the Jerusalem Bible, which I think is more accurate, as "crystal-clear diamond."

Taking its cue from Ezekiel 48:30-35, John mentions the twelve gates of the city named after the twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve foundation stones named after the twelve apostles thus expressing the continuity between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The measurement of the heavenly city defies human imagination, thus indicating its supra-terrestrial character. It is a perfect cube like the Debir or Holy of Holies of the temple containing the ark of the covenant (1 K 6:19). The heavenly city has 12,000 stadia each in length, width and height. Since 1 stadium is about 185 meters the dimension of the holy city would be 2,220,000 meters or 2,220 kms. in length, width and height. Yet the height of the wall is only 144 cubits high, or about 70 meters.

The mention of precious stones at the gates and foundations of the city enhances the grandeur of the heavenly Jerusalem. There is no more temple since God himself and the Lamb are the temple. Note the equality between God and the Lamb. Neither will there be light since it will come from God and the Lamb.

GOSPEL READING: *Jn* 14:23-29

The following discourse, part of the Last Supper sermon, was a response to the question of Judas (Thaddaeus), specifically indicated "not the Iscariot." He is identified in Luke 6:16 as the "son of James" which some commentators think should read "brother of James." The question betrays the current Jewish expectation about the Messiah that he would manifest himself to the whole world like a triumphant conqueror of Jewish

enemies. The response of Jesus to the question was rather indirect. The manifestation will be to those who love him and keep his word. Jesus cannot manifest himself to all because not all could fulfill the conditions of love and obedience to his word which he requires so that he and the Father would come.

Many things would be made clear to the Apostles and their disciples with the coming of the Advocate (*Parakletos*) or the Holy Spirit. He would *teach* them everything which pertains to salvation and *remind* them of those things already said by our Lord Jesus.

To console furthermore the apostles, Jesus gave them his *own peace*, totally different from the peace of the world (2 Th 3:16): "May the Lord of peace himself give you peace all the time." This peace is internal to the person and does not preclude external oppressions and persecutions. But precisely because they possess the peace of Christ, the apostles and the Christians remain tranquil and calm in the face of persecutions.

The return of Christ as man to the Father should be a cause for rejoicing since it would mean Christ's glorification. Although as God (*Jn* 1:1) he and the Father are one (10:30), as man, the Father is greater than he (14:28).

### **HOMILY**

*"If anyone loves me he will keep my word."*

The standard for loving Christ is to keep his word, to obey his commandments. Tyrants force their subjects to obey their commands out of fear. Some do it for reward. Christ tells us to keep his word for love of him. The reward is secondary.

What are his words? What are his commandments? What are his counsels? They are all embodied in the gospels, in his sermons, his parables, his sayings. They are expounded by the magisterium of the Church, his Mystical Body of whom he is the head with the Holy Spirit as the soul.

*"The Holy Spirit will teach and remind you everything."*

Not everything, then, was taught by Christ. He has sent the Holy Spirit, his own Spirit to be with us until the end of time: "to teach us everything and remind us of all he has said to us." The Holy Spirit is alive in the Church. Christ planted the seed of God's reign on earth, the Holy Spirit makes it grow territorially, doctrinally, numerically, in maturity of faith, in strength of hope, in depth of love, in holiness of life.

It was the Holy Spirit who sent the apostles to spread the Good News of salvation to different parts of the world starting from Jerusalem. So they spread to Samaria, to Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, India, Egypt, reaching until Spain which was then known as the limit of the ancient world. It was the Spirit who impelled Peter to baptize the first pagan (gentile) by the name of Cornelius including his household into Christianity without passing through the Jewish rituals. He was criticized for this by Jewish Christians but he answered that it was through the urgings of the Holy Spirit that he did it: "I had scarcely begun to speak when the Holy Spirit came down on them in the same way as it came on us at the beginning, but I remembered that the Lord had said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.' I realized then that God was giving them the identical thing he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; and who was I to stand in God's way?" (*Ac 11:15-17*).

It was the Holy Spirit who inspired the apostles and elders of the Church to gather at Jerusalem to resolve the question whether pagans or gentiles baptized to Christianity "should be circumcized and instructed to keep the law of Moses" (*Ac 15:5*). After so much discussion "Peter stood up and addressed them" (v. 7) "My brothers," he said, "you know perfectly well that in early days God made his choice among you: the pagans were to learn the Good News from me and so become believers. In fact, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as he had to us... Remember, we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (*15:7-11*). This was the model of future Ecumenical or General Councils presided by the successors of Peter, the Popes of Rome.

It is the same Spirit who reminds the Church of every thing which God and Christ have revealed. This is what we mean by divine tradition which is a rule of faith for the Church. This does not conflict in any way with

Sacred Scripture since the very Spirit who inspired the writing of Sacred Scripture is the same Spirit who safeguards the authenticity and integrity of divine apostolic tradition.

*"My peace I give you."*

The sharing of Christ's peace has become a part of the Mass. Christ's peace is different from the peace of the world. It is an inner tranquility in the midst of the world's conflicts. It is the calm in the deeper part of the ocean although turbulent and violent waves are raging on the surface. The peace of Christ can weather any storm, can face any problem, can brighten any sorrow with a smile. In the end the peace of Christ will flower into heavenly glory that will always remain forever and ever.

## ASCENSION OF THE LORD

May 28, 1995

Instead of celebrating Ascension on the Thursday after the Sixth Sunday of Easter which is the fortieth day, it is celebrated this Sunday due to the lessening of the holidays of obligation on weekdays in the Philippines. The first reading from the first verses of the Acts of the Apostles, continuing the Gospel of St. Luke, which was more or less summarized in the last verses, narrates the ascension with additional details. The second reading is from the Letter to the Ephesians which is a prayer of St. Paul that the Ephesians would understand more the mysteries of God to strengthen their hope. The gospel reading is St. Luke's version of the ascension.

### FIRST READING: AC 1:1-11

The first verses of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles are believed to be the sequel of the Gospel of St. Luke. The contents of the gospel, according to the evangelist, are the deeds and teachings of Jesus. Among his "deeds" are his miracles and his passion, death and resurrection. There is no need to understand literally the word "everything" as if St. Luke gave a complete biography of our Lord which is impossible to do and could readily be seen if we compare his gospel with that of St. John. Yet, it can be said that he narrated in a substantially complete form what he knew (from his sources and from St. Paul).



The gospel narrates various apparitions of the Risen Lord. The Acts completes these narrations in some essential points, the most significant of which is the note that the Risen Lord appeared repeatedly to the apostles during the 40 days preceding his ascension. This is not clear in the gospel. In fact just by reading the gospel it could give the impression that the ascension happened that very day of Easter. The gospel passage of the appearance of the Lord to the Eleven (*Lk* 24:36-49) and the trip to the place of the ascension (24:50) are closely linked to each other. Perhaps between the appearance narrative in *Lk* 24:36-43 and the ascension narrative in 44-49 a historical discontinuity may be discerned.

The Acts has it recorded then that for "forty days Jesus continued to appear to the apostles and tell them about the kingdom of God."

Luke did not mean to say that Jesus gave the apostles exhaustive instructions about the organization of the Church. He leaves this to the Holy Spirit whom he would send after his ascension and would be in the Church as her soul until the end of time. Jesus, most probably, told them about the reason for his passion and death and the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Scriptures as well as their obligations and the mission to which he was sending them: the spread of the Gospel. To fulfill this mission, the Holy Spirit would descend upon them.

The apostles, even at the moment of Christ's ascension but before the coming of the Holy Spirit, thought that with the coming of the "Promise of the Father" (the Holy Spirit) the reign of God as a glorious renewal of the ancient kingdom of David, with the Messiah as king, for the benefit of the Jewish people, would come. Jesus had to correct or more precisely make this idea exact. The coming of the Holy Spirit would realize a part of this expectation, not however confined only to the Jews but to the whole of mankind. Nevertheless, the final establishment of the kingdom in the *parousia* is known only to the Father and not revealed to any man (*Mk* 13:32; *Mt* 24:36; / *Th* 5:1-3). What is greatly important however is that the coming of the Holy Spirit would be linked not to the final establishment of the kingdom (much less to the kingdom according to Jewish expectations) but to assist the apostles as "witnesses of the Risen Lord."

SECOND READING: *Ep* 1:17-23

The passage is rich in doctrinal content about God and Christ in the context of Paul's prayer that the Ephesians would understand more the mysteries of God and thus would be strengthened in their hope. The flow of ideas may be plotted in the following manner:

A. May God give you a spirit of wisdom (*sophia*) and perception (*apokalypsis*) of what is revealed: to bring you to full knowledge of him.

B. May he enlighten your mind so that you can see:

1. what hope he call holds for you;
2. what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit;
3. how infinitely great is the *power* that he has exercised for us believers. Seen from his power at work in Christ when he used to
  - a. raise him from the dead,
  - b. make him sit at the right hand in heaven far above the choirs of angels,
  - c. make him, as the ruler of everything, head of the Church.

God is presented by Paul not in his abstract essence but in his concrete actions towards us. The expression "Father of glory" *hhapaxot* only found once in the New Testament which is in verse 17 of this text. A parallel expression "God of glory" is found in *Ac* 7:2 and "Lord of glory" referring to Christ in *1 Co* 2:8. As "Father of glory" he has in him the fulness of glory which he diffuses to us. This glory is the object of praise in verses 6, 12 and 14 of this chapter.

The two genitivessop/iia(wisdom) *nndapokalypsis* (lit. "revelation; JB: "perception of what is revealed") mutually compliment each other and signify an intimate and profound knowledge of God and his plan of salvation to which man by his own powers cannot attain.

To show the magnitude of Christian hope, St. Paul adds that all these great riches of goods are reserved to the Christian anchored on the "power of God" whose extraordinary efficacy can easily be seen in what was realized in Christ (w. 23-27).

The manifestation of God's power in Christ is given by Paul in 3 ways: (1) Christ's resurrection; (2) making Christ sit at his right hand above the angels. Here four choirs of angels are mentioned: Sovereignty, Authority, Powers or Virtues, Dominations. In *Co* 1:16 we have "Thrones"; *Rm* 8:38 and *1 Th* 4:16, "Angels and Archangels"; *Heb* 9:5 and *Is* 6:2, "Cherubim and Seraphim." These constitute the nine choirs of angels mentioned in our catechism books; (3) constituting Christ head of the Church.

Christ as the head of his body, the Church, is a pet idea in St. Paul (*Rm* 12:4-5; *1 Co* 12:2). But what does it mean when he says that the Church is the *pleroma* of Christ?

*Pleroma* can have an active sense: that which completes or fills up a thing. Does the Church complete Christ? Some Fathers especially in the Greek Church and some modern exegetes, accepting this sense, think that the Church completes Christ as members complete the head to form the whole body (*Col* 1:24). But *pleroma* can also be taken in the passive sense: that which is completed and *pleroumenou* is taken as a deponent or middle voice. The passage is then understood to mean that Christ fills or completes the Church (cf. *Ep* 1:10; *Col* 1:19). Christ who fills all creation is the fullness of the Church.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 24:46-53

Our gospel pericope is the conclusion of the Gospel of St. Luke before passing on to his second book — the Acts of the Apostles. The connecting link is the ascension narrative.

On this supposedly last appearance of the Risen Lord (in St. Luke's account), Jesus opened the minds of the apostles as he did to the two disciples of Emmaus (v. 27) so that they would understand the Scriptures concerning his life, especially his passion, death and resurrection which the apostles should preach in his name for the repentance and forgiveness of sins. The apostles were witnesses of the fulfilment of the prophecies and they are now sent to give testimony of this fact to the whole world beginning from Jerusalem.

The apostles were commissioned to be witnesses (v. 48), thus given a charge and a mission, of the salvation brought by Christ. They would be witnesses of the fulfilment of the prophecies, and they were destined to render testimony of this fact to the whole world, transmitting this mission to their successors and to their successors' successors until the end of time. This verse is of great importance for the right understanding of what is "Good News," or "Gospel." It is not a myth or a product of human invention. It is based on a concrete historical fact. The apostles saw these facts personally. They are, therefore, competent witnesses, to announce to the whole world as "apostles" (those who are sent) the reality of redemption. Their preaching, then, becomes a message, *zkerygma* and not just a simple affirmation of opinions. These words of Jesus correspond to the command in Matthew 28:19.

The Acts of the Apostles has shown how the apostles fulfilled their mission of witnessing (1:8.22; 2:32; 3:15; 4:33; 5:32; 10:39-41; 13:31).

To assist them in their task of witnessing Jesus promised that he would send "the promise of the Father" (the Holy Spirit), also mentioned in the old Testament (7/3:14). Thus they should not leave Jerusalem until the day when they would be invested from on high. This happened at Pentecost. St. Luke has shortened his narrative here, not mentioning the apparitions in Galilee.

Jesus completed his work with this mission of the apostles and the promise of the Holy Spirit. Now the work of the disciples begins. Their mission in the world was inaugurated.

### *HOMILY*

*"You are witnesses to this."*

The apostles were witnesses of Christ's life, his suffering, death and resurrection and his ascension to heaven. By his mandate and in his name "repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem" (v. 47). This the apostles and their successors did. From Jerusalem the faith spread to Samaria, Antioch in Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Rome, Gaul or France, India, Egypt, North Africa, the Americas, the Far East, Australia and the rest of the world.

They were the witnesses of God's revelation in the Scriptures and through the Holy Spirit this witnessing is transmitted to the whole Church. Our faith then is ultimately based on the faith of the apostles and since the apostles transmitted this faith to the Church, the Church presently safeguards this faith free from any addition or subtraction or from any false interpretation of any man or any malicious spirit.

The apostles and their successors sealed this witnessing with their own blood. St. Peter, the first Vicar of Christ on earth, was crucified upside down and on the very place where he was buried, at the Vatican Hill, rose a magnificent church, the greatest church of Christendom called the Basilica of St. Peter. St. Paul was beheaded and a basilica outside the walls of Rome also stands on the place where he was martyred. St. John did not die a martyr's death but he also suffered persecution: thrown, according to tradition, into a cauldron of boiling oil and exiled to an island called Patmos to work in the metal mines. St. Andrew, the brother of St. Peter, was also crucified; St. James, the brother of St. John, was ordered to be beheaded by Herod Agrippa (Ac 12:2); St. Bartholomew was skinned alive. A host of others, already during the first years of Christianity, gave their lives for the faith.

*"Jesus withdrew from them and was carried up to heaven."*

The physical presence of Christ on earth ended with his ascension into heaven but his sacramental presence which is no less a real presence continues on earth until the end of time. Thus, we profess in our Catholic faith that Jesus as God is everywhere but as man he is in heaven according to his glorified body and in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in the form of bread and wine.

Today's feast of the ascension confirms our hope that someday we will also be with the Lord. There is no need to ask in this space-age mentality whether heaven is above the earth or below the earth, whether it is inside our universe or outside our universe. Heaven is where God is, the object of our beatific vision, where we will see our Risen Lord in his glorified body, the Blessed Virgin also in her glorified body, with all the angels and the saints.

**What must it be like to be in heaven? What must it be like to be liberated from the limitations of our present body, from sickness and pain, from boredom and weariness, from anxiety and emotional stress? What must it be like to experience immortality and the beatific vision?**

## **PENTECOST SUNDAY**

**June 4, 1995**

The coming of the Holy Spirit promised by the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ finally happened during the Jewish feast of Pentecost (first reading). Since his coming, the Spirit has filled the Church and her members with graces and charisms (second reading). There was a giving of the Holy Spirit by our Lord to the apostles before the Pentecost event for their function as ministers to forgive and retain sins (gospel reading).

FIRST READING: AC 2:1-11

The coming of the promised Paraclete or the Holy Spirit which the Risen Lord announced to his apostles (*Lk* 24:49; *Ac* 1:4-5; *Jn* 15:20) took place during the solemn Jewish feast of Pentecost celebrated on the seventh week or on the 50th day after the Pasch, hence the *name* *hePentekoste*, "the fiftieth (day)." This name is found in *2M* 12:32 *mdTb* 2:1. It is also called the "feast of Weeks," in Hebrew *Shavu'oth*. In *Ex* 23:16 it is called "the feast of the grain harvest"; in *Mt* 28:26, "the day of first fruits, the feast of weeks." In the Holy Land the grain is sown during autumn around the month of September or October and ripens in Spring (March/April). Barley ripens first which is the one offered during the feast of Unleavened Bread or Azymes. The first wheat is offered on Pentecost. In the Old Testament, Pentecost was one of the three "feasts of pilgrimage" during which the Israelites go up to Jerusalem (*Dt* 16:16). This accounts for the numerous pilgrims in Jerusalem during this time.

This feast in later Judaism was linked to an event in Israelite history, that is, the giving of the Law to Moses at Mt. Sinai. This is not, however, realistic because according to *Ex* 19 the Israelites only reached Sinai two months and half after their departure from Egypt where they celebrated the first Passover: about 65 days later.

There is a problem whether the Holy Spirit came down on the 120 persons present during the election of Matthias, the successor of Judas (Ac 1:15ff.), since this was the immediate narrative preceding the passage of the descent of the Holy Spirit. Literary analysis, however, can show a chronological discontinuity between 1:15-26 and 2:1 ff. that most probably the link of the narrative of the coming of the Holy Spirit should be with 1:14. The ones, therefore, upon whom the Holy Spirit descended were the apostles (including Matthias), several women including Mary the mother of Jesus and those who were called the brothers of Jesus who were most probably his cousins.

The coming of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by sensible signs. A loud noise similar to a strong wind filled the house. Then tongues of fire which came to rest on the heads of each one of them. All these wonderful happenings were sensible signs of the communication of the Holy Spirit to the disciples. The word *Aosei* ("as if," "similar to") is often used in relation to visions indicating the disproportion between the signs and the realities they signify.

Another phenomenon which until now has been the subject of different interpretations is the phenomenon of *speaking in tongues* by the apostles (v. 4). *Heteros* could mean "different," "strange," "peculiar"; but it could also mean "foreign." Hence the Jerusalem Bible translates the phrase: "to speak foreign languages." *Glossa*, of course, usually means "tongue" or "language." Thus, some authors consider this phenomenon among the apostles different from the charismatic speaking in tongues mentioned in *1 Co* 12:10, 14:2-19; *Ac* 10:46, 19:6. Some exegetes think though that in this pentecostal gift of "foreign tongues" a miracle happened whereby the apostles were enabled to speak foreign languages so that they were understood by the Jews from the Diaspora speaking different languages. In this way a great multitude of people of various origins, culture, character and tastes understood the apostles who spoke in their mother tongue proclaiming the magnificence of God, that is to say, the salvation which God has accomplished in Jesus.

SECOND READING: *1 Co* 12:3-13

In these verses St. Paul speaks of the different *charisms* (*charismata*)

tracing their origin from the Holy Spirit. Although he attributes "ministries" to Christ (v. 5) and "operations" to the Father (v. 6), we note in verse 7 that he calls all the charisms indistinctly *asphanerosis toupneumatos*, "manifestations of the Spirit," and in verse 11: "all are work of one and the same Spirit." Clearly, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit constitute one God with one principle of action which is the divine nature. The charisms then in reality proceed from the three divine Persons which Paul says in verses 4-6. However, in some particular way they can be attributed to the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of love and holiness.

Calling them "gifts," they are attributed by appropriation to the Holy Spirit; under the aspect of "ministries" or "services," they are attributed more to Christ; under the aspect of "operations," (Greek: *energemata*) to the Father who is the origin of being and of power.

In verses 8-10 St. Paul has listed 9 charisms which can be grouped into three:

/.

1. discourse of wisdom: gift to penetrate the divine mysteries and explain them to the faithful;

2. discourse of knowledge: gift to know how to expose the elementary truths of Christianity (cf. *Heb* 6:1);

3. charism of faith: this is different from the general salvific faith which makes a man righteous in the eyes of God. The faith here means full and living confidence in God.

//.

1. healing;

2. miracles;

3. prophecy;

Healing is distinguished from miracles although it could be considered as a sort of miracle in as much as the latter has a wider field of application. Prophecy does not only mean "prediction of the future" but also "to speak in the name of God."

1. discernment of spirits: corresponds to a gift in order to determine whether the charismatic phenomenon proceeds from good or evil spirits;



2. gift of tongues: this is different from "speaking in foreign tongues." This can appear as speaking or singing in unintelligible speech **which** would need the last gift;

3. gift of interpretation of tongues: complements the above gift.

Aside from being the origin of the charisms, the Holy Spirit distributes them to each individual according to his wishes for the usefulness (*sympheron*) of all. To illustrate this better St. Paul makes use of the image of the body.

GOSPEL READING: *Jn* 20:19-23

St. John narrates the apparition of the Risen Lord to the apostles in the evening of that same day of his resurrection, in the absence of Thomas (the name means "twin" in Greek). The doors were closed since the apostles were still afraid as a result of the preceding events. This was a very normal reaction. It also heightens the power of Jesus' resurrected body being able to penetrate matter. He appeared to them communicating his peace.

Jesus realized that this manner of appearing to them could make them believe that they were seeing a ghost. *Lk* 24:37 says: "they thought of having seen a spirit"; also in *Mi* 6:49. To dispel their doubts he showed to them the wounds of his crucifixion which proved the identity of the person who was nailed to the cross and the person whom they were now seeing (*Lk* 24:39). Seeing the Lord, of whose resurrection they already heard from Mary Magdalene, the apostles were filled with great joy. They experienced the fulfilment of the promise made to them by Jesus during the Last Supper that their anguish would be changed into joy. Repeating the greeting of the peace Jesus entrusted to them their mission using the same words which he used in the prayer of farewell during the Last Supper (*Jn* 17:18; 4:38). As he was sent by the Father now he sends the apostles to continue the work given him by the Father: to proclaim divine truth and revelation to all men (18:37) and communicate the reality of salvation.

Then Jesus gave to the apostles the Holy Spirit for the special office which they are going to perform: the forgiveness or retention of sins. Thomas, although absent during this commission of power, must have also receive the same faculty since it was not given to the apostles as individuals

**but** as the apostolic college to be communicated likewise to their successors. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit would come upon them as the Church for later on the same phenomenon would be repeated in Acts 2:38 and 10:44.

The Church enlightened by the Holy Spirit has considered these words of Jesus to his apostles as institutive of the sacrament of reconciliation.

### *HOMILY*

Since the time the Holy Spirit came down upon the apostles at Pentecost the world has never been the same. The promises made by our Lord to the apostles were fulfilled that he would send the Holy Spirit to be our Advocate (Paraclete), our Counselor, the Spirit of Truth who would teach us every thing about God's kingdom and remind us of all things which Christ taught us. He is with us until the end of time. He is the soul of the Church. He effects the continuous renewal of the face of the earth.

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit the divine life in the world was inert; the quest for happiness was utterly impossible; the knowledge of truth was limited to what man could know by his natural powers; the will of man was slanted towards evil; love was stressed on the passion rather than on volition; peace was a passive state, fruit of inaction rather than an active state fruit of divine love. The Holy Spirit has changed and is changing all these.

Many are not aware of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the world but it is here. Many take for granted or are not even aware of the activity of the soul but it is impossible to live without this life-giving principle.

Our quest for knowledge of divine things will not be complete without knowing the innermost realities, though necessarily imperfect, of the activities of the Holy Spirit. Physicists are on the constant search for the forces and energies that make up beyond the physical sphere; but over and beyond the scope of the physical scientists and the reach of parapsychologists are supernatural realities which have been accessible to us only through the workings of the Holy Spirit.

## TRINITY SUNDAY

### June 11,1995

Easter Season comes to an end with the cetera tion of Trinity Sunday. The Sundays of Ordinary Time resume after the feast of Corpus Christi which, in the Philippines, is celebrated on the Sunday after Trinity Sunday instead of Thursday of that week. The first reading from the Book of Proverbs speaks of Wisdom, an attribute of God, which is here personified, being present with God during creation. The second reading is a passage from the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans which either concludes the section on the fact of justification or starts the next section on the process of sanctification. The gospel reading is taken from the discourse of Jesus during the Last Supper, a passage where he mentions the Persons in the Trinity and hints of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son.

FIRST READING: *Pr* 8:22-31

The following verses form part of the second discourse of personified Wisdom (8:1-36). The first discourse is in 1:20-33.

Since Wisdom in Hebrew is in the feminine gender (*hochmah*), it is personified as a woman. She stands in prominent places, "on the hill-top, on the road, on the crossway" exhorting people to listen to her words.

The message of verses 22-31 is the origin of Wisdom and its part in creation. Its origin is from Yahweh. The Jerusalem Bible translates the Hebrew *Yahweh qanani* as "Yahweh created me." *Qanah* could, in fact, mean "he created." But it has also the meaning of "he acquired," "he possessed," hence the Vulgate *possedit me*. The translation "The Lord created me" was taken up by the Arians who interpreted this passage as referring to the *Logos* to argue for his created nature. Other authors translate the phrase "the Lord begot me" saving thus the eternal generation of Wisdom in the Godhead.

Wisdom is *re 'shit dareko*, "the firstborn of his way." Some correct the last word into *derachaw* to make it "his ways" instead of "his way" which is in consonance with the grammar. *Re'shit* connotes not only priority in time but also in excellence. Could it be that *theprototokospases*

*ktiseos* ("firstborn of all creation") of Colossians 1:15, applied by St. Paul to Christ, was influenced by this passage on Wisdom in Proverbs?

Wisdom was before the created universe and was present at creation. Verse 30 says he was by the side of God during creation, His '*amon*' (reading of the Massoretic text) translated by the Jerusalem Bible as "master craftsman." By a slight change of vowel, Aquila, a proselyte Jew who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek different from the Septuagint (about 150 A.D.) read it as '*atnun*' which means "pupil" (*tethenoumene*), thus a "child" playing in the presence of God and delighting him day after day. This translation seems to favor the context of this passage.

SECOND READING: *Rm* 5:1-5

Different opinions have to be recognized here on the literary structure of the first eight chapters of the Letter to the Romans. These chapters are usually divided into two sections: the first part treats about "justification" and the second on "sanctification." The point of division, however, is differently given: (1) The first section ends in 5:21; (2) The second section begins from 5:1 to end in 8:39; (3) 5:1-11 is the conclusion of the first section; (4) The whole of chapter 5 is an entirely different unit. I follow the division of those who start a new section in chapter 5. The first verses of this chapter 1-11 seem to introduce what St. Paul would develop in detail in 5:12 - 8:39.

In the previous chapters, St. Paul's intent was to present the fact of justification or righteousness with God, which is a gratuitous gift of God offered to all men without exception through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ which he merited for us by his redemptive death on the cross. This is what St. Paul says in verses 1 and 2 of this chapter which we can consider as the transition verses.

Being "made righteous by faith" we achieve peace with God, the first fruit of this justification while before we were "children of wrath" (*Ep*2:7; *Col* 1:21). This righteousness we owe from our Lord Jesus Christ who was the one who made us to be accepted by God and has accomplished for us the access to this "grace" of justification in the hope of the "glory" of God.,

In fact, in the beginning of his letter, St Paul declared that he proposes

to expound how the Gospel "is power of God for the salvation of those who believe" (1:16). This "salvation" is already initiated with the "justification" by which he has accomplished in us that peace or good relation with God. However, this justification is not yet complete and definitive. In the following four chapters (5:1 - 8:39) the apostle will establish the union between these two: "justification" and final "salvation" (which is the same as "sanctifying grace" and "eternal glory"), giving us a precious summary of Christian life.

GOSPEL READING: *Jn* 16:12-15

These verses are found in the context of the discourses during the Last Supper in the manner of farewell and future promises. Our Lord has been telling the apostles about the coming of the Paraclete or Advocate who would also have the role of Teacher (w. 12-15). Jesus has still many things to say to his apostles but these would be too much for them. At the moment, in their particular situation, they are not yet capable of receiving everything. It may be asked here whether Jesus was referring to new truths not yet proclaimed or rather to an ulterior development of those which he had already communicated. The last position seems to be more probable recalling what was said in 15:15: "I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father."

The Holy Spirit will, indeed, have the task of guiding the apostles and their successors to the acquisition of the words and actions of Jesus, the whole sense of which was still beyond their grasp. The action of the Holy Spirit would result in a deeper penetration of the totality of the work of redemption of Christ and its universal scope. The words of Jesus continue to live and operate in the preaching of the Church which grows and develops under the action of the Holy Spirit.

Definitely Jesus says that what the Holy Spirit would tell the apostles "will be taken from what is his" (v. 14). He would not be required to give a new revelation that would supersede what was already given by Jesus. Neither could he give or add anything contrary to Christian revelation. The word of Jesus will continue and remain alive in the preaching of the Church. As the work of Jesus realized the glorification of the Father, so in the same manner the work of the Holy Spirit would realize the glorification of Jesus.

**Authors have noted that** verses 14 and 15 of this passage give **the** clearest testimony in the New Testament concerning the unity of nature **and the** distinction of Persons in the Trinity and also the procession of the **Holy Spirit from the Father** and the Son.

### **HOMILY**

The most sublime reality which lies beyond the reach of any physical, para-psychological or even psychical sciences is the reality of the Holy Trinity: three Persons in one God. Here human knowledge totally fails. Our intellect simply has to squint at the awesome brightness of this mystery. The intellect says: "I do not understand." But the will impels the intellect: "Assent, it is God himself, the first Truth, who says so. God cannot deceive us."

The intellect reflects: "This is not the first time that this has happened to me. When I was in school many formulas in physics were unintelligible to me. Some still are. But I did not question their validity for the simple reason that they were told to me by men whom I believe to be competent in their field. What more if the one who revealed this was God himself who knows all things and can never deceive nor be deceived."

There are three Persons in one God: the most Holy Trinity. Let the intellect try to grasp what it could which as a matter of fact could be too much, like our eyes looking straight at the sun. In this case the will has a greater advantage. It reaches out to the divine reality impelling the intellect to assent and activating itself to love.

As many other good things in life, many still do not realize or just take for granted the presence and operations of the Holy Trinity in the world and in our self. "If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him" (*Jn* 14:23). Those who realize the workings of the Trinity in us have no reasons anymore of being fascinated with fictitious personalities like supermen, wonderwomen, or superheroes of comic strips. The divinity is in us. We do not only acquire superpowers which still remain limited powers. We are given divine powers which are powers unlimited.

Everyday we have hundreds of opportunities to praise the Most Holy

Trinity: saying the "Doxology," or the "Glory Be"; making the sign of the cross and invoking the name of the Trinity; in the Mass when, from the start to the finish, we praise the Trinity. If we can just deepen our faith in the Trinity in these actions we will not worry at all about our spiritual life because it will always be filled with the fresh air of grace from the source of life itself.

SOLEMNITY OF THE BODY AND BLOOD  
OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: CORPUS CHRISTI  
**June 18, 1995**

Trinity Sunday is followed by the feast of Corpus Christi or the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. After going up to the heights of the divinity we have to realize that we are still on earth. The mystery of the Trinity is balanced by the mystery of the Holy Eucharist. The first reading recalls the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek, a mysterious figure in the Old Testament, who became the symbol of Christ's eternal priesthood different from the Levitical priesthood. The second reading is appropriately taken from the account of St. Paul of the institution of the Holy Eucharist and its continuous celebration until the second coming of Christ. The gospel reading come from St. Luke's version of the first multiplication of bread, an episode which can be found in all four evangelists.

FIRST READING: *Gn* 14:18-20

The meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek, priest-king of Salem (understood by many commentators as Jerusalem, though not certain) happened, according to the account *in Gn* 14, after Abraham rescued Lot from the four kings who destroyed the five cities south of the Dead Sea. The origin and literary unity of the chapter is much disputed. Some authors maintain that it is a very old narrative. Others, analyzing vocabulary, found a mixture of archaic words and post-exilic terminologies. Some names were real like the names of the four kings. But others seem to have been invented like *Beta'* (only found here in *Gn* 14:2) which means "devoured," or "swallowed.")\* 29:22 mentions only four cities in pairs: Sodom and Gomorrah, Adma and Zeboiim, destroyed by Yahweh's anger while Zoar (former Beta' according *XoGn* 14:2). Wisdom 10:6 mentions

five, perhaps adding Zoar (Bela'). This can give us a clue on the formation of tradition behind this narrative. This could be in between *Dt* 29:22 (exilic) and *Ws* 10:6 (first cent. B.C.).

The Melchizedek story has the indication of having been inserted in this narration of Abraham and the four kings especially since it breaks the continuity between verse 16 and verse 21. The justification of the insertion can be found in the blessing of Melchizedek: "Blessed be God most High for handing over your enemies to you."

The figure of Melchizedek whose name occurs only twice in the Old Testament: *Gn* 14:18 and *Ps* 110:4, became the symbol of the eternal priesthood of Christ, priest and king, different from the levitical priesthood (*Heb* 5:6; 7:21). The bread and wine he brought, although not exactly a sacrificial offering but a covenant meal, were taken to be images of the Holy Eucharist.

#### SECOND READING: *1 Co* 11:23-26

Aside from the synoptics who narrated the institution of the Eucharist, (*A/f* 26:26-28; *M\** 14:22-24; *!\*22:19-20*), St. Paul also mentions this event on the occasion of his instructions to the Corinthians whom he heard were not conducting themselves properly in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Some bring food but do not share them with their fellows (v. 21). Others get drunk during the celebration.

This account of St. Paul concerning the institution of the Eucharist is of great historical value since this was written even before any written account from the synoptics. This letter was composed, with great probability, in the spring of 57 A.D. He says that he "has received this from the Lord" and is transmitting it to the Corinthians. It is to be noted that St. Paul's account is more in agreement with the account of St. Luke among the synoptics repeating the phrase "do this in memorial of me" twice and a very important doctrinal addition in verse 25: "Everytime you eat this bread and drink from the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."



GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 9:11-12

This is Luke's account of the first multiplication of bread parallel with *A/r* 14:13-21; *Mt* 6:30-44; *Mk* 6:1-13. This miracle is remarkable since besides the passion, death and resurrection narratives it is the only miraculous event mentioned by all four evangelists. After this episode St. Luke who, until here was following St. Mark's arrangement, omitted *Mk* 6:45-8:26 and immediately proceeded to the profession of St. Peter (v. 18). This is called "the great omission." This is why the continuation of the multiplication story, the walking of Jesus over the water, found in the three other evangelists is absent in Luke as well as the second multiplication of the bread narrated by *Mt* 15:32-39 and *Mk* 8:1-10.

According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus with the Twelve crossed the lake in a boat and went to "a lonely place," which Luke says was Bethsaida. There are, however, variants of this place in other manuscripts. Some has "desert place of a city," "desert place," "city," or simply "town." John just says "to the other side of the sea of Galilee." This place was also accessible by foot just walking along the shore of the lake and so the people reached the place a little after the arrival of Jesus and the apostles. John hinted the date of this miracle noting that there were grasses there which only happens in the spring time which was also the time when many pilgrims go to Jerusalem for the Pasch coinciding with what John said in 6:4. It is not far-fetched to suppose that many of them tarried for a while in Galilee to see and hear this wonder worker.

In the synoptics the apostles told Jesus to send away the people when evening was coming so they could buy food since they did not bring any. Luke did not mention the 200 denarii of Mark and John. The people were told to sit in groups of 50, according to Luke, and 100 according to Mark. This made counting easy and so the apostles were able to calculate the number of the crowd to about five thousand men excluding women and children.

The description of the miracle of the multiplication of the bread has been influenced by the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist. Jesus took the five bread, raised his eyes to heaven, blest and broke them. The manner of giving the bread to the people was enunciated by Luke and Mark in the

imperfect, *edidou*: "he was giving" them, that is the apostles. This could indicate how the miracle took place: the bread and the fish were multiplied in the hands of Jesus and were distributing them to the apostles.

The greatness of the miracle is confirmed by the satisfaction of all the people and the number of scraps gathered: twelve basketful.

### *HOMILY*

It has been a cause of wonder how our Lord can be present simultaneously in so many hosts in different places at the same time. Of course it would be easy to dispel this wonder just by saying that since Christ is God there is really no difficulty for him to accomplish this feat as long as it is not what philosophers call a "metaphysical impossibility," just like making a square circle or creating another perfect being. But being present in the Holy Eucharist, in his human nature, body and blood, in different places at the same time is not a metaphysical impossibility.

A comparison may be made using a modern invention as an example which can illustrate the seemingly multiple presence of an individual, without necessarily saying that the comparison would be perfect in all its aspects. Many are now familiar with television sets and the images they produce coming from a television station. It can readily be observed that the more TV sets there are the more the images are multiplied. The complete image itself does not depend on the size of the TV screen. A big screen contains the full image as well as a small screen. In the same way Christ's presence does not depend on the size of the host. He is fully present in a big host as well as in a small host.

Christ is present in the Holy Eucharist body and soul. This is another reality to which our human intelligence makes an assent and which our will voluntarily embraces. Is it not so foolish of us that in the presence of such a reality we still would look for other consolations in other areas and in other things? In the Eucharist we do not listen to his words which for many people are already a source of happiness and joy but we receive Christ himself in our person, the Word made flesh who is the author himself of our being and eternal beatitude.

**TWELFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**June 25, 1995**

The confession of Peter on the messiahship of our Lord and the prediction of the passion in the reading of the gospel is preceded by passages from Zechariah quoted in *Jn* 19:37 and applied to Christ: "and they shall look on him whom they have thrust through,..." (first reading). Christ's passion in effect was the cause of our incorporation with him — Paul's message in the second reading.

FIRST READING: *Zc* 12:10-11

This verse in Zechariah 12:10 is considered a messianic text of the New Testament as in *Jn* 19:37 and *Rv* 1:7. There is however a difficulty in the text. The Massoretic Text, the LXX, Vulgate and other versions have "on me" instead of "on him." But since the one speaking is God, the normal interpretation would be that God was the one pierced through. This is awkward in Old Testament thought. The LXX reads, instead of *dagar*, ("he pierced through"), a verb from the root *ragad* meaning "he jumped with joy," which when joined *totachat* ("under") acquires the meaning of "insult," in *Greek*, *katorcheomai*, "I jump over someone," or "I dance with joy over someone." Thus it could be translated according to the LXX: "They looked on me whom they have insulted." There is here, of course, a correction in the reading of the text (*romdagaru* (they pierced) *toragadu* (they insulted)). The reading "on him" is also supported by many Hebrew manuscripts, texts from the Fathers of the Church and especially, *Jn* 19:37 and *Rv* 1:7, applying this text to the crucified Christ. Up to now the textual difficulty remains unresolved.

Following St. John's reading and the application of the text to Christ, we can understand the great lamentation in Jerusalem on that day when Christ was pierced by a lance. The lamentation is compared to the mourning of Hadad Rimmon, here, either Hadad, the storm-god of the Canaanites, or Rimmon, the chief god of Syria (2 *K* 5:18) whose ritual death every year is celebrated with lamentations.

SECOND READING: *Ga* 3:26-29

The central message of the pericope is our incorporation with Christ

through faith (v. 26) and through baptism (v. 27). St. Paul means here a living and active faith actuated or informed by love. It includes the desire for baptism since through the positive divine will one cannot enter the *sal vi fie* plan of God without receiving the sacrament of baptism. Because of the inseparable nature of faith and baptism in justification and incorporation with Christ, St. Paul sometimes attributes justification only to faith: *Rm 3:28,5:1; Ga 2:16; Ep 2:8*; sometimes only to baptism: *Rm 6:3-11; Ep 5:26; Tt 3:5*; sometimes to both, like in our present passage, and in *Col 2:11-13*.

The phrase "in Christ" in verse 26 does not mean the object of faith as when one say "I believe in God" or "I have faith in God." It has rather the same sense as the phrase in verse 27 "baptized into Christ." It means more as: "incorporated into Christ."

Some authors compare the expression "clothed in Christ" to formulas in some mystery religions where the members put on the vestments of their gods and, thereby, identify themselves with these gods. There is no need to go that far. This can also be found in the Old Testament as in *Jb 29:14; Is 52:1*. St. Paul employs this a number of times: *1 Co 15:53; Ep 4:24, 6:11; Col 3:10*.

*In Rm 6:3-11*, St. Paul depicts the union of the Christian in Christ at the moment of baptism. "You have been taught that when we were baptized *in Christ Jesus* we were baptized in his death... If in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection" (*Rm 6:3-5*). Here in Galatians he goes further to say that those who are baptized and have faith are one in Christ Jesus. There is no more distinction of race, social standing or even sex.

Since Christ was the "heir of the promise" (*Ga 3:16*) we also in union with Christ become the "heir of the promise" and, therefore, not subject to the Mosaic Law.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk 9:18-24*

In Luke the profession of Peter in the messiahship of Jesus followed at once the miracle of the multiplication of the bread. Almost two chapters were skipped by him following the order of the narratives *in Mk 6:45-8:26*.

Luke omits Christ's travel to Phoenicia (*Mk* 7:24; *hit* 15:21) and, hence, no geographical indication was mentioned by him concerning this episode of Peter's confession which according to Matthew and Mark happened at Caesarea Philippi (the modern Banias, formerly Pnias during Greek times in honor of the god Pan). Perhaps, since Luke intends to localize all the episodes in Galilee until 9:50 of his Gospel he deliberately left out the indication of place.

Luke, as was his style, introduces this episode with Jesus at prayer. He did this when Jesus was baptized (3:21); the election of the apostles (6:12); when he taught his disciples to pray (11:1); the agony in the garden (22:41); even when he was hanging on the cross (23:46).

When Christ asked: "who do you say I am," Peter answered: "the Christ of God." In Mark the recorded answer of Peter was: "you are the Christ," while in Matthew: "you are the Christ, the Son of the living God." There is yet no indication here that Peter was confessing the divinity of Christ but that he was the realization of the expected Messiah - *Christos*: the Greek word of "anointed," the Aramaic *meshiha*.

Jesus told them to keep silent about the matter lest the people would hail him as a triumphant king which was their expectation of the Messiah. This is the so-called "messianic secret." Instead of a triumphant Messiah he would rather be the suffering Messiah who would die and suffer in Jerusalem, but "on the third day" rise again. Luke and Matthew has "on the third day" which in Mark is "after three days." Moreover Luke omitted the rebuke to Peter which was conspicuous in Matthew and Mark.

Similarly those who want to follow Christ must also renounce himself and take up his cross (in Luke he adds "every day," absent in Matthew and Mark).

The reference to the cross here need not be anachronistic since the cross was a well known instrument of death during those times with the condemned made to carry it.

## **HOMILY**

"But you," Christ said, "who do you say I am?" It was Peter who spoke up: "the Christ of God."

After about 2000 years of Christ's passion, death and resurrection **and** his ascension into/heaven, there are still many who are asking: "Who is Christ?" And we still receive so many answers. Some say he is a prophet or **a** great man, of Jesus Christ Superstar, or the "Omega Point," a revolutionary, a mere man and not God.

These answers are, pitifully, all mistaken or fall short of the truth. We still should say and confess with St. Peter: "You are the Christ of God" (St. Luke's version), or better still: "You are Christ the Son of the living God" (St. Matthew's version). Here we profess that he is not a mere man but consubstantial with God. He is God. He is the Word and the Word is God. This Word-God became flesh, took on our human nature and became man.

Christ cannot even be considered a great man or a good man if he were not God. He would be a deceiver because he acted and presented himself as God and the high priest and the Sanhedrin would be right in condemning him as a blasphemer. But they erred in their condemnation because he was truly God and was confirmed when he resurrected from the dead.

*"The son of man will suffer..."*

It was Fulton Sheen who said that all men were born into the world to live, but the Messiah was born into the world to die. He was aware of this mission and he predicted his death three times in the synoptic gospels. His first prediction of his passion came immediately after the confession of Peter and before the transfiguration, giving us the impression that these events were interconnected.

The apostles were saddened when they heard that their hero would die. Peter who a few moments before confessed Christ's messiahship, complained about this turn of events but instead he received a rebuke from the Lord who called him "satan," which means in this passage rather means "one who objects," since he was objecting against the will of God. Later on Peter with James and John would be privileged to see a most wonderful sight which would anticipate the resurrection. They would see the transfigured body of our Lord to assure them that even though he would suffer an ignominious death he would rise and conquer death. Thus, he showed us the true way to glory: the carrying of the cross daily.