

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

VOL. LXXI, NOS. 786-787

JULY-AUGUST 1995

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

EDITOR	FR. VICENTE CAJIUG, O.P.
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PUBLICATION ASSISTANT	CHRISTINE P. BERMUDEZ
COVER DESIGN	RODOLFO ATIENZA, O.P.

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, the Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published bi-monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and printed at the 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.

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Subscription Rates:

	One Year	Per Copy
Philippines:	P160.00	P35.00
Foreign: (Sea Mail)	US\$30.00	\$ 6.00
(Airmail)	US\$40.00	\$ 8.00

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 communication to:

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

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That They All May Be One (UtUnumSint)

VICENTE CAJILIG, O.P.

"I myself intend to promote every suitable initiative aimed at making the witness of the entire Catholic community understood in its full purity and consistency... The present encyclical letter is meant as a contribution to this noble goal." Thus the Holy Father described the aim of the latest encyclical on ecumenism entitled *Ut Unum Sint*. The encyclical has been welcomed gladly by Christians of other denominations. In fact this is according to reports, the first Catholic document which both Protestants and Catholics have planned to publish together.

While the vision, direction, and thrust for ecumenical efforts of the Church through this document of the Holy Father are clear and practical, its contents are to be acted upon according to the local pastoral circumstances and environment. In other words, ecumenism must be contextualized. Contextualization of ecumenism would mean adjustment in paradigms. Adjustment in paradigms means identifying the local models of ecclesial living.

The Philippine Church has a lot of assignments to do. What effort, following the main teaching of *Ut Unum Sint* should be employed so that

the Catholic Church could strengthen its links with non-Catholic denominations found in uplands (like the Mountain Province), urban areas (like Manila), and parishes mostly served by the diocesan clergy?

According to the document following the Decree on ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 5), the task belongs to the faithful and the clergy "Concerns for restoring unity pertains to the whole Church, faithful and clergy alike. It extends to everyone according to the potential of each." To start with, maybe the area of para-liturgy has to be explored as a *locus* for common ecumenical efforts, but this will only be properly done if appropriate theological researches are first made. We recommend that studies and reflections be done because the "way of ecumenism" is "the way of the Church."

Asian Worship in Spirit and Truth

^Introduction

1.1. Over the years several meetings of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) have recognized the potential of the liturgy in the apostolate and stressed the importance of its Asian dimensions. In order to give concrete expression to this concern, liturgists from the Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India participated in a Pan-Asian Consultation on Inculturation in the Liturgy organized by the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy of the FABC, from April 9-11, 1995, in Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore, India. We identified and discussed burning issues in the liturgical field and articulated our common Asian concerns.

2. Objectives of the Consultation

The Consultation aimed to

- 2.1. enable experts to share on the liturgical scene in Asian Countries;
- 2.2. Identify and discuss issues common to the Asian Context;

brotherly concord and a people made one in the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit."¹⁶²

At the dawn of the new millennium, how can we not implore from the Lord, with renewed enthusiasm and a deeper awareness, the grace to proper ourselves, together, to offer this *sacrifice of unity*?

103.1, John Paul, *servus servorum Dei*, venture to make my own the words of the Apostle Paul, whose martyrdom, together with that of the Apostle Peter, has bequeathed to this See of Rome the splendor of its witness, and I say to you, the faithful of the Catholic Church, and to you, my brothers and sisters of the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities: "*Mend your ways, encourage one another, live in harmony, and the God of love and peace will be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and his fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all*" (2 Co 13:11, 13).

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 25 May, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, in the year 1995, the seventeenth of my Pontificate.

⁶² On the Lord's Prayer, 23: CSEL 3, 284-285.

Asian Worship in Spirit and Truth

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- 2.1. enable experts to share on the **liturgical scene in Asian Countries;**
- 2.2. Identify and discuss issues **common to the Asian Context;**

2.3. Evolve dialectics between the national particularities and the common Asian concerns in liturgy.

2.4. Plan for the future — set up the Asian Academy on Liturgy.

3. Inculturation of Liturgy

3.1. All Asian countries struggle with the issue of inculturation. Our sharing revealed that liturgical developments in Asia have consisted mainly in the translation of the typical editions of the Roman liturgical books in the wake of Vatican II. This has, by and large, marked the first phase of inculturation in most countries. We noted, however, that translation is not the same as inculturation. The translation of liturgical texts composed in another time and culture is an extremely difficult task. The transplantation of signs and symbols is even more difficult. Even supposedly universal signs and symbols, when transplanted into another culture, often hide or even distort the very mysteries they are meant to convey. No universal model can speak with equal clarity and force throughout the world. Moreover, no Christian community can become creative in a language and symbol system that is basically alien to it. Unless the Word of God becomes flesh in our cultures, the soul of Asia will remain untouched. Inculturation still remains a crucial issue for the life and mission of the Church in Asia.

3.2. Culture

3.2.1. Culture gives meaning to people's lives. It is a very dynamic and at the same time complex reality, as it includes everything which contributes to the makeup of a people. It is influenced by many factors, such as religion, philosophy, art, customs, traditions, technology, geography, economy, commercial exchange, media.

3.2.2. Asia itself is a continent of great cultural diversity. Even within the same country we face at times a pluri-cultural situation. Furthermore, the onslaught of the Western world, accelerated by the powerful influence of the mass media, is bringing about many changes in the traditional values of our people. The complex Asian cultural scene needs a careful, **critical** analysis. We have to respect **the plurality** of **cultural** expression.

3.3. Liturgy

3.3.1. Liturgy is a celebration of our faith, a form of proclaiming the gospel. It should not be reduced to a mere ritual action. Jesus abolished the ritual worship of the Old Testament, replacing it with a worship performed with his own acts of loving obedience to his Father (*Heb* 10:5-10).

3.3.2. St. Paul calls himself a *leiturgos* because he proclaims the gospel (*Rm* 15:16). Paul is convinced this will lead others to offer sacrifices sanctified by the Holy Spirit. His proclamation would evoke a response from the people in symbols taken from their own culture, from their own concrete life situation, enabling them to relate with others who also live in the spirit of Christ.

3.3.3. Though the mysteries we celebrate in the liturgy transcend all cultures, the expressions of the mystery and the people's response to it in liturgy are necessarily culturally conditioned. This makes a uniform liturgy throughout the world problematic.

4. Liturgy and Society

4.1. Relevance

Relevance is the most important aspect of contextualization. Liturgical services should resonate with the real needs and aspirations of the believing community and foster a sense of belonging and fellowship. Liturgy celebrates our relationships with God, with others and with nature, building up human persons and their communities.

4.2. Liturgy and Life

The presider should be in solidarity with the life experience of the people. Only in this way will he enable them to understand the present in the light of the Paschal Mystery, which alone gives hope for the future. The presence and action of God can thus be revealed even in seemingly hopeless and apparently meaningless situations. Just as the desperate pilgrims on the way to Emmaus were liberated by the breaking of the word and the bread, so should our liturgical celebrations throw light on the lives of today's pilgrims.

4.3. Relevant Symbols for Today's Youth

The youth of today tend to reject whatever they have not experienced personally. They are influenced less by concepts than by images and vibes. The controllers of the mass media know full well their ability to influence people, motivating them by unconscious forces they neither rationally understand nor easily control. In this context, our liturgy should use creatively symbols that can appeal to our youth. Youth are also helped to find God by nature's symbols, which can be used to create a sense of awe and mystery in our liturgical celebrations. Real life situations can serve as living parables, helping people understand life in the light of God's word, thus forming the minds and hearts of today's youth.

4.4. Prophetic and Contemplative Liturgy

4.4.1. Christian worship should prophetically oppose whatever is oppressive and dehumanizing. The prophetic dimension is an expression of God's will, denouncing everything that is against his plan. It unleashes the transformative power of the liturgy, challenging us never to accept anything which dehumanizes God's will. We should guard against opposing the prophetic to the contemplative, as if authentic contemplative traditions are not necessarily prophetic.

4.4.2. The contemplative tradition itself challenges the way of life of a people and of society. Even in Indian society, religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, arose out of a prophetic challenge against some elements in Hinduism. Prophetic currents are part of the religious scenario of Asia. In our interaction with them, the other religions should also be influenced by the indispensable social dimension of our worship. The contemplative will rise to action from the recognition of the mystery of the transcendent God.

4.4.3. Ezechiel tells us about the city (*polis*) of the future (*Ez* 48:35), called Yahweh Sham (Yahweh is there). He sees the nearness of God as coming to a climax there. A river flows from the side of the city's new Temple. On either bank are trees bearing fruit 12 times a year. The leaves of the trees are medicinal. The river itself brims with abundant fish, emptying into the Dead Sea and transforming its salty waters into living waters. This prophesy was only fulfilled when Jesus became the new

Temple (*Jn* 2:19-21), from whose side came the river of life and healing (*Jn* 19:34). This city, where God will be close to his people is built around the crucified Christ. God was never close to his people as when Jesus died on the cross. Building the polis around the cross is the highest act of our liturgy. All that concerns the city (politics) therefore has a close connection with the liturgy.

4.4.4. Whatever problems arise in the polis — crime and violence, oppression and injustice, waste and pollution, corruption and immorality — all these realities were not unknown to Jesus. Though sinless and innocent, he has been there before us, and pulls us out of the abyss by his Paschal Mystery, which we celebrate in the liturgy. The Paschal Mystery, however, includes Jesus' whole life. Jesus himself made a basic option for the poor and marginalized in his society, taking a clear stand on the social issues on his day. In like manner, our liturgies should sensitize us to the social situation in which our people live; making us agents of social transformation. We should not water down the word of God, shutting our eyes to injustices on the plea that things will be set right in the next world. Liturgies that do not challenge the injustices that prevail in this world only perpetuate the sinful structures of our polis.

4.5. Liturgy Builds Community

4.5.1. Every liturgical celebration should be a celebration of the total community, not of the priest alone. The laity have a right to a role in both preparing and celebrating the liturgy. All those with knowledge, proper attitude and interest should be encouraged to participate in this since liturgy should be both for and by the community. Our liturgies must be carefully prepared with a parish team so that their life experience is brought into the liturgy. This participative style of liturgy implies a parish whose administrative structures are also participative. Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs) will help change our impersonal congregations into communities of people who recognize and are supportive of one another.

4.5.2. In Asia, where almost all Christians live in the midst of brothers and sisters of other faiths, there is need to form human communities with them. This can be expressed by joint projects for justice and the common good, collaborating in people's movements and involvement in societal issues. This involvement could be an occasion for people to pray

and celebrate together on the basis of common human concerns, drawing inspiration from the resources provided by their own religious traditions. The different religions experience God as the source and destiny of our human family, moving us to work to establish God's kingdom of justice, peace and love.

5. Liturgy and Interreligious Dialogue

5.1. Attitude

Today Christianity is moving from a monocultural setting to a multi-cultural and multi-religious one, in which the symbols of one community may not evoke the same experience in another. Living as we do in a multi-religious situation, we have to re-examine our attitude to other religious symbols. We can understand the religious experience of others only through their particular symbols. Inasmuch as these are symbols that emerge from a human community to which both Christians and people of other religions belong, they represent a common heritage that we share with others, irrespective of religion. However, while we Christians feel the need to scrutinize and evangelize these symbols, reinterpreting them in the light of Christ, it is also important that we respect what these symbols mean for the other religious groups. In adopting the symbols of another religion, we should have a pastoral sensitivity for the feelings of those Christians who may have renounced these very symbols of a condition for joining the Church.

5.2. Celebration

5.2.1. In our encounter with other religions we are asked by Vatican II to discover in them "seeds of the Word of God." This discovery cannot be limited to an intellectual exercise. It embraces also the experiential level, leading to celebrations of these "seeds of God's Word."

5.2.2. For Christians, **the** Old Testament has a paradigmatic value. The experience of Christ of the early Christians was filtered through the longings of the Old Testament for the blessings of the messianic age. However, this may be difficult for people who come to accept Christ from a religious experience other than that of the Bible. In the light of this

consideration, could we not think of a possibility in the future of celebrating the "seeds of the Word" contained in their Scriptures, inasmuch as these have enabled them to recognize and accept Christ?

5.2.3. In our mission of evangelization we often meet situations in which people accept the gospel, but are not ready to enter the church. Their acceptance of Jesus deserves to be acknowledged and deepened in celebration. It is necessary to find symbols through which they can express their faith and their commitment to Christ.

6. Asian Liturgical Forum

6.1. History

6.1.1. The above-described Asian scene is indeed a challenge and opportunity for the entire Church in Asia to seek the pattern of her mission in terms of the inculturation and contextualization of her life, her ministry and her liturgy. This beckons Asian liturgists to engage in a continuing search for a relevant and inculturated liturgy. Knowing that this will involve serious and on-going study and research, collective reflection and discernment, we felt the need to create a forum for Asian liturgy.

6.1.2. Responding to the need of some experts in liturgy to help them for an Asian Academy of Liturgy, the FABC sent a letter to all Secretaries-General of the Episcopal Conferences who are members of FABC, which stated: "The time seems ripe to begin to bring together, at first on an informal basis, both members of the Asian Churches and those working in the Asian Churches, who have been trained in liturgy, and those who have acquired competence through experience in various liturgical endeavors of the Local Church. The beginning of communication among the churches in the field of liturgy would pave the way for the establishment of a professional organization of Asian liturgists, known as the Asian Academy of Liturgy" (Letter of Fr. Edward F. Malone, Assistant General of FABC, October 1988).

6.1.3. In view of realizing this, the Pan-Asian Consultation was asked to consider the nature, the objectives and the organization of such an Academy. The Consultation felt that it would be more properly called "The Asian Liturgical Forum" (ALF).

6.2. Objectives

The general objectives of this Forum are as follows:

- 6.2.1. To animate liturgical renewal;
- 6.2.2. Take up research in topical themes;
- 6.2.3. To bring together liturgists for common study, exchange of experiences in inculturation;
- 6.2.4. To pool together the experiences of various Asian countries in liturgical renewal;
- 6.2.5. To build up documentation of the various initiatives taken for liturgical renewal;
- 6.2.6. To make known as well as to facilitate the exchange of resources to the various Churches in Asia;
- 6.2.7. To publish a liturgical bulletin for Asia which can eventually grow into a review;
- 6.2.8. To make the unique Asian experience of God enrich the catholicity of the universal Church.

6.3. Methodology

6.3.1. An ad hoc committee should be formed in order to finalize the basic structure of the Forum, set up the initial membership group, and make the formation of this Asian Liturgical Forum known to all national Liturgical Commissions. We make the following recommendations for this committee.

1. A bishop chairman (to be chosen by the FABC);
2. An executive secretary (SUGGESTION):
 - Fr. Paul Puthanangady, India [for South Asia]
3. two other committee members (SUGGESTIONS):
 - for East Asia: Fr. Anscar Chupungko, Philippines
 - for North Asia: Fr. Franco Sottocornola, Japan.

6.3.2. We also recognize the importance, and recommend the eventual creation of another commission within the FABC for Bible, Catechesis and Liturgy. This would complement the work of the Liturgical Forum.

Conclusion

In liturgy, we continue to proclaim the marvels that God has effected in the lives of our people through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He is the Paschal Lamb who takes away all ambiguities from lives of our people and helps us appreciate the varied cultures of our continent. He brings into the new Jerusalem all the riches of the nations and places them in the hands of his Father. Thus the words of the prophet Haggai will be fulfilled in our lands: I shall shake all the nations and the treasures of all the nations will flow in, and I shall fill this Temple with glory... The glory of this new Temple will surpass that of the old and in this place I shall give you peace" (*Hg* 2:7-9). This should enable our people to respond like Mary, that every-faithful servant of the Lord, who after hearing the word of God and putting it into practice proclaimed with her whole being the greatness of our God.*

*A Pan-Asian Consultation on Inculturation and Liturgy, Kristu Jyoti College, Bangalore, 560 036, India, April 9-11, 1995.

CONSULTATIVE WORDS,

Cases and Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.

GUEST PRIESTS' REMUNERATION

I am a priest from diocese X and I was staying with the proper permission from my Bishop of diocese Y. I was invited by a parish priest to work in his parish with the proper appointment from the local Ordinariate of diocese Y. My official appointment was Assistant Parish Priest of the parish. I received a small monthly salary. For my extra services I got stipends. I said Mass and I received also a stipend. Occasionally I baptized and solemnized marriages. I had my regular office hours and worked in the parish as long and as often as my services were needed, even until ten o'clock in the evening, especially if there were meetings, lectures to be delivered by me. I was not given a room in the parish convent, though I know that part of my compensation was free board and lodging. The parish priest did not provide these for me, so I stayed in a house outside the parish convent. After serving the parish for almost ten years, I was separated from the service. I would like to know if I am entitled to the following compensations:

1. I was given after the first year my 13th month pay. Can I claim the 13th month pay for my second year of service?

2. *Can I ask for separation pay? According to the labor laws, the separation pay is computed as follows: for every year of service the employee gets one month separation pay.*

3. *Can I claim the cash equivalent of the meals that were due to me had I stayed in the convent? There were other priests in the convent who were not even appointed officially as assistant priests and they were given free board and lodging.*

This is a test case because some other priests may have the same problem. Thank you very much.

A Guest Priest in Diocese Y

Canon 535, § 1 establishes: "Whenever it is necessary or opportune for the due pastoral care of the parish, one or more *parochial vicars* can be joined with the parish priest." In the 1917 Code these priests were called "*vicarii cooperatores*" (can. 476). Here in the Philippines they were in the past and at times are still called "*coadjutores* or assistant parish priests." In order to solve the case of our consultant, we shall offer the Church's legislation according to both Codes concerning the matter mentioned by the Guest Priest in Diocese Y.

Appointment. The 1917 Code stated: "To appoint the vicar cooperator belongs not to the parish priest, but to the local Ordinary, after the parish priest has been heard." The 1983 Code establishes: "The diocesan Bishop freely appoints the parochial vicar; if he has judged it opportune, he will have consulted the parish priest of the parish to which the parochial vicar is appointed, and the vicar forane" (can. 547).

Residence. Canon 476, n. 5 of the 1917 Code stated that "the vicar cooperator is bound to reside within the parish according to the diocesan statutes or approved custom or episcopal decree; moreover let the Ordinary procure that in accordance with canon 134 he resides in the parochial house itself." Canon 550 of the new Code reads: "The parochial vicar is bound to reside in the parish... For a just reason, however, the local Ordinary may permit him to reside elsewhere, provided the carrying out of the pastoral duties does not in any way suffer thereby... The local Ordinary

is to see to it that, where it is possible, some manner of common life in the parochial house be encouraged between the parish priest and the parochial vicars."

Remuneration. The 1917 code provided in its canon 463, § 3 that "if a duty of the parish priest has been fulfilled by someone else, the fees or offerings belong to the pastor." And canon 476, § 1 stated that "a fair remuneration should be given to the vicar cooperator," adding in its § 5 that the local Ordinary should see to it that the vicar cooperator resides in the parochial house itself according to canon 134," which strongly advised the common life among clerics. The 1983 Code, following the changes effected by Vatican II, deals with the remuneration of the clergy with a different approach. Canon 281 establishes: "Since clerics dedicate themselves to the ecclesiastical ministry, they deserve the remuneration that befits their condition, taking into account both the nature of their office and the condition of time and place. It is to be such that it provides for the necessities of their life and for the just remuneration of those whose services they need... A suitable provision is likewise to be made for such social welfare as they may need in infirmity, sickness or old age." Likewise, canon 384 reads: "The diocesan Bishop is to ensure that priests are provided with adequate means of livelihood and social welfare in accordance with the law." And canon 1274 says: "§ 1. In every diocese there is to be a special fund which collects offerings and temporal goods for the purpose of providing, in accordance with canon 281, for the support of the clergy who serve the diocese, unless they are otherwise catered for. § 2. In countries where no provision is made for the social security of the clergy, the Episcopal Conference is to see to it that an institute or fund is established which will provide adequate assistance to clerics in cases of sickness, old age, inability to work, etc., through no fault of their own... § 5. If possible, these funds are to be established in such a manner that they will have standing in the civil law."

According to this new vision and approach of the 1983 Code, the rule established in canon 476, § 5 of the 1917 Code, mentioned above, has been changed in canon 531 which states that "even though another priest had performed some parochial functions, he is to give the offering he receives from the faithful on that occasion to the parish fund...; and it is for the

•

diocesan Bishop, after consulting the council of priests, to prescribe regulations concerning the destination of these offerings and to provide for the remuneration of clerics who fulfill such parochial function." And canon 551 states: "The provisions of canon 531 are to be observed with respect to offerings which Christ's faithful make to the parochial vicar on the occasion of his exercise of the pastoral ministry." In other words, the parochial vicar is to turn over to the parish fund any offering given to him by the faithful for carrying out his pastoral ministry, unless the contrary desire of the donor is evident in the case of voluntary offerings. In short, the offerings prescribed by the "arancel" for the administration of the sacraments and sacramentals go to the parish fund.

Concerning this matter the Conference of Bishops of the Philippines made in 1970 the following recommendations:

"A. As regards to the *Clergy Remuneration*, our priests should be given two kinds of remuneration, namely: (1) a personal basic remuneration which should be followed in the whole country, and (2) an allowance that should be decided on a diocesan level according to the conditions and financial capabilities of each diocese.

The allowance should include the following: (1) board and lodging, houseservice, lightand water; (2) clothingand laundry; (3) personal needs (soap, barber, cigarettes...); (4) transportation; (5) recreation; (6) reading matter; (7) allowance for emergencies; (8) insurance and retirement; (9) retreat and vacation."

"B. *Concerning Clergy Social Security*:

a) the diocesan curia should set aside investment funds for sickness, retirement and death provisions for the clergy. Other means to achieve the same purpose may also be employed;

b) encouragement towards the formation of an Association of the Clergy, also for sickness, retirement and death benefits;

c) eventual formation of Priests' Association as in the preceding number, on an interdiocesan or national level" (cfr. *BoletínEclesiástico*, 1980, p. 47).

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Concerning this matter the Conference of Bishops of the Philippines made in 1970 the following recommendations:

"A. As regards to the *Clergy Remuneration*, our priests should be given two kinds of remuneration, namely: (1) a personal basic remuneration which should be followed in the whole country, and (2) an allowance that should be decided on a diocesan level according to the conditions and financial capabilities of each diocese.

The allowance should include the following: (1) board and lodging, house service, light and water; (2) clothing and laundry; (3) personal needs (soap, barber, cigarettes...); (4) transportation; (5) recreation; (6) reading matter; (7) allowance for emergencies; (8) insurance and retirement; (9) retreat and vacation."

"B. *Concerning Clergy Social Security*:

a) the diocesan curia should set aside investment funds for sickness, retirement and death provisions for the clergy. Other means to achieve the same purpose may also be employed;

b) encouragement towards the formation of an Association of the Clergy, also for sickness, retirement and death benefits;

c) eventual formation of Priests' Association as in the preceding number, on an interdiocesan or national level" (*ch. Boletín Eclesiástico*, 1980, p. 47).

As Fr. Testera says: "the CBCP, besides ordering the creation of an investment fund in each diocesan curia for the purpose, has adopted the existing Pension Plan and Supplementary Pension Plan established in January 1, 1975, so that social assistance may be provided for the Bishops and diocesan priests in the way of retirement, death, disability **and** separation benefits" (*Canon Law Digest of the Philippine Church*, 1989, p. 114).

Moreover, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines in Decrees, Title XII, Section 5, Article 94 has established:

"§ 1. Respecting canons 1274 and 282 every diocese should undertake a realistic and systematic system of support for diocesan priests by setting up a clergy fund derived from contributions of the clergy and laity for the benefit of needy, disabled and retired priests (i.e. for insurance, hospitalization, housing, etc.). Special programs to prepare priests for retirement should be part of the support system.

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

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

Obviously the foregoing norms look at and consider the diocesan clergy only, not the guest priests who, belonging to a different diocese, stay in a certain diocese for their own convenience and purpose.

Hence, in the light of the foregoing both universal and local legislations we have to examine and solve the case proposed to us by the Guest Priest in Diocese Y, considering the details given by him concerning his own case.

Our consultant is, "with the permission of his own Bishop, a guest priest in Diocese Y with a proper appointment from the Bishop of this diocese," as "Assistant Parish Priest of a certain parish." If this appointment was given after the new Code was published, his appointment should

be not as "Assistant Parish Priest," but as "Parochial Vicar," as explained above.

He "received a small monthly salary." He does not say how much that "small monthly salary" was. Likewise, "he received stipends for his extra services." We do not know also what those extra services were and how much stipend he received for them. "He said Mass and he received also a stipend." We suppose the stipend was according to the *arancel*. "Occasionally he baptized and solemnized marriages." The term "occasionally" implies that it occurred not regularly, but at times only. We do not know whether the fees for such occasional celebrations were given to him or they went to the parish fund, according to canon 531. "He had his regular office hours and worked in the parish as long and as often as his services were needed: even until ten o'clock in the evening, especially if there were meetings and lectures to be delivered by him." How often did this occur, we do not know. Could not those meetings and lectures be scheduled within regular hours? Who scheduled them until ten o'clock? "He was not given a room in the parish convent, though he knew that part of his compensation was free board and lodging. But the parish priest did not provide these for him." May we ask: Did our consultant guest priest to diocese Y ever discuss this problem with the parish priest or with the diocesan local Ordinary who gave him the appointment as Assistant Parish Priest? Then was the time to clarify properly all his rights as parochial vicar, according to existing laws and regulations, not now.

Likewise, all his claims "for 13th month pay for his second year of service," "for separation pay according to labor laws" and "for the cash equivalent of the meals that were due to him, had he stayed in the convent," should have been ventilated and clarified when he was separated from the service.

Considering all we have said above and after having consulted some members of the clergy, who are supposed to know the status and Conditions of the guest priests, we formulate the following conclusions related to our case:

1. Our consultant or guest priest in diocese Y was *amere guest priest*, belonging to diocese X. He did not belong to the diocesan clergy of diocese

Y, since he had not changed his incardination to the diocese X. Hence, he was a recipient of hospitality from the local Ordinary and Bishop of diocese Y. Being a guest priest, some amenities and/or services were *gratuitously* extended to him. The Bishop of diocese Y could not consider at the same level a guest priest and his diocesan priests. It was simply the accommodatory generosity and gesture of charity that made the Bishop of diocese Y allow our consultant guest priest to stay in the parish of his diocese, giving him some faculties to perform some liturgical functions and do "*certa munera sacra*" in his diocese.

2. The consultant and/or guest priest to diocese Y was still incardinated to his diocese X and therefore it was in his own diocese X where he was duty bound to exercise his priestly duties and functions. He was still under the responsibilities of his own Bishop, who should give him the "*sustentatio decorosa*."

3. The guest priest to diocese Y should not forget that his relationship to the Church's or ecclesiastical Superiors cannot be compared with the extant relationship between an employee and his employer in the Civil Order. He was not an employee of the Bishop of diocese Y, nor was the latter his employer.

The answer, therefore, to the questions raised by our consultant is:

1. The guest priest to diocese Y is not entitled to a 13th month pay, nor can he make a claim for it;

2. He is not entitled to any separation pay;

3. He cannot claim the cash equivalent of the meals "allegedly" due to him. He cannot impose his will on his host parish priest and/or Bishop.

Festal Homilies: August - November 1995

REGINO CORTES, O.P.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR August 6, 1995

The parable of the Foolish Rich Man in the gospel of Luke is paired with the passage in Ecclesiastes or Qoheleth (first reading) concerning the vanity or worthlessness of toil in this life since every thing will end in death. It was worthless indeed for that foolish rich man to have hoarded wealth which he could not take with him to his grave. The second reading still follows the previous passages in the letter of Paul to the Colossians which have been the readings of the three preceding Sundays. Now he draws practical conclusions from the doctrinal points which he had laid down.

FIRST READING: *QO (Eccl)* 1:2; 2:21-23

The Hebrew word *hebel* translated here as "vanity" is a keyword in the book of Ecclesiastes or Qoheleth. It is found about 35 times in this book. Its original meaning, however, is "vapor" or "breath" and this indicates something that is passing, transitory, and, hence, worthless. The repetition suggests a superlative degree like "Song of Songs" which is translated "the

greatest song"; "Holy of Holies" = most holy. Consequently "vanity of vanities" would be "most vain."

Qoheleth faces the grim reality of death and concludes that toil is "vanity": "for what does a man gain for all the toil and strain that he has undergone under the sun, when he must leave what is his own for someone who has not toiled for it?"

We are still in Old Testament territory. Only in the New Testament when revelation would be completed shall we be enlighten⁴ed of God's plan for us and the true nature of work.

SECOND READING: *Col* 3:1-11

We have in chapter 3 of Colossians the start of the moral section in which St. Paul draws practical consequences from his doctrine on our union with Christ. Since in our present state, by baptism and faith, we have risen with Christ (this is our inchoative resurrection which will be perfected in the final resurrection) it is required of us that our life be conformed with the life of heaven and not that of earth.

The next verses are enumerations of vices which we have to avoid to mortify our flesh (vv. 5-11) and the virtues we must practice, putting on the new man (12-17). The universality of Christ's redeeming work is clearly expressed in verse 11: "There is no Greek or Jew here, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner (barbarian), Scythian, slave or freeman. Rather, Christ is everything in all of you."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 12:13-21

Chapter 12 of St. Luke is one of the longest chapters in his gospel (actually the fourth after chs. 1, 22, and 9). Its content, however, is not homogeneous. Many of the passages are also found in St. Matthew but in different context. The texts are rather linked by ideas or catchwords.

The parable of the Foolish Rich Man is another parable found only in Luke just like the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. This was told on the occasion of his teaching to avoid avarice when a certain man asked him to arbitrate so that his brother would give him his

inheritance. The gesture of the man was a recognition of Jesus as Rabbi since they were usually consulted on questions of this sort. Jesus, however, refused to involve himself on these matters which were a lien to his mission.

The cupidity of riches is stupidity since "a man may be wealthy, but his possessions do not guarantee him life" (v. 5). Death will come and all a man's riches will be worthless to save him from this hour.

Homily

TRUE INSURANCE FOR THE FUTURE

Memorial park advertisers are very resourceful in presenting their object of sales to the public: a little plot of land for a person's final resting place. They even term it "an insurance for the future," an investment that goes far beyond" and other similar slogans. Yet the goal of these advertisements is only a tomb where the lifeless body of an individual would be laid to rest. The only future here would be dust and bones and nothing more.

The true insurance for the future is in the kingdom of heaven; the true investment for eternal peace is to save in God's savings' bank.

What should we save in the form of investments for the future. They are our good works, our concrete virtuous actions and not only our good intentions. Hell is paved with good intentions.

Even faith which is understood only as an attitude of the mind is not enough. It has to be a living faith, a faith which acts through love. During the Last Judgment we are not going to be asked how intelligent we are, how many degrees do we have, how much money do we have in the bank, how popular we had been, how many times did we appear in the newspapers. We are going to be told what we did to our neighbors, whether we fed them, gave them water to drink, clothed them or visited them when they were imprisoned. These are all works of charity.

Now is the time to lay our treasures in heaven. We are still given this opportunity. Let us not lose it.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

August 13, 1995

FIRST READING: WS 18:6-9

The text of the iiturgieaf reading is found in the second section of the book of Wisdom whether the cut-off point is in 9:18 as in JB or in 11:1 as in the *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (NJBC). Again, according to NJBC, it is a part of the fifth diptych contrasting the fate of the Egyptians during the Exodus who were punished and that of the Israelites who were glorified as God's people.

The passage (v. 5) recalls the episode in Exodus (1:16.22) when the Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew boys to be killed, first by the midwives which was not followed and subsequently to be thrown into the river. In return the Egyptians were punished with the death of their first-born (*Ex* 12:29 ff.) and the destruction of their army drowning in the sea (*Ex* 14:27-31).

"That night (when the first-born of the Egyptians died) was known beforehand to our fathers." The "fathers" usually refer to the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the 12 ancestors of the tribes who were given this revelation of the chosen people's stay in Egypt and their subsequent deliverance (*Gn* 15:13-14 to Abraham; *Gn* 46:3-4 to Jacob).

The antithesis in verse 8 is very striki ng. "For when you punished our adversaries, in this you glorified us whom you had summoned." Egypt's punishment is Israel's glorification. Translations of this verse are varied. The JB has: "For by the same act with which you took vengeance on our foes you make us glorious by calling us to you"; The Good News Bible (GNB) is far fetched: "With the same act you punished our enemies and did us the glorious honor of calling us to yourself." In this last translation the act of glorifying the people, which is present in the verse, is lost.

The "divine institution" is the Passover which was first celebrated in "secret" inside their dwellings and became a yearly memorial of the exodus.

SECOND READING: *Heb* 11:1-2. 8-19

Chapter 11 of Hebrews is a sublime treatise on faith as 2 Co 13 is on love. In fact theologians take verse 1 as an excellent definition of faith: *elpidsomenon hypostasis, pragmaton elenchos ou blepomenon*, translated in our liturgical text as 'confident assurance concerning what we hope for, and conviction about things we do not see.' However *hypostasis* (*Ixomhyfistemi*: "I make something to exist") has also the meaning of "an act by which something receives a reality," or "existence," or "reality" itself. *Elenchos* has also the meaning of "demonstration," "proof," or "argument." Hence the Vulgate translates *sperandarum substantia rerum, argumentum non apparentium*. According to H. Koester in the article *Hypostasis* in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, "faith is said to be 'the reality' of the goods hoped for, the proof of things one cannot see."

The text then enumerates as examples of faith many characters of the Old Testament starting with Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, etc. Our liturgical reading has only given the lengthy discourse of Abraham's faith, verses 8-19. This passage is actually a summary of *Gn* 12-25.

Verse 19 gives a new perspective to the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham "reasoned out that God was able to raise from the dead, and so he received Isaac back as a symbol." In fact God prevented Abraham from killing Isaac at the last moment having been convinced of his faith and obedience. God's handing back of Isaac to Abraham is now taken here as a symbol of Christ's resurrection.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 12:32-48

After the "Parable of the Foolish Rich Man" (*Lk* 12:13-21), St. Luke followed this up with the discourse on "Trust in Providence" (w. 22-31) which St. Matthew, with some variants, has placed in the context of the sermon on the mount (*Mt* 6:25-33). This points to a common source which St. Luke seems to have modified in a way.

It is observable that our Mass reading has appropriately introduced this discourse as one made by Jesus to his disciples which is actually given in verse 22, chapter 12.

The audience, however, in 1J: 12 oscillates between the crowd and the disciples. Verse 1 already suggests this: "Meanwhile the people had gathered in their thousands so that they were treading on one another. And he began to speak, first of all to his disciples." Verses 12-21 is definitely addressed to the crowd but again shifts to the disciples in verse 22 as given by St. Luke. This is the passage on "Providence" which St. Matthew, in contrast, has placed in the "Sermon on the Mount" and, hence, addressed to the crowd (*Mt* 6:25-33). The question of St. Peter in verse 41 takes into account this varied listeners of Jesus' words which indicates that the context of this chapter is more literary than historical. In fact *Aft* 24:43-50 and *Lk* 12:39-48 are exactly the same except for the question of St. Peter in verse 41 and the concluding sentence in verse 48. Again this pericope in Matthew is placed in another context which seems to be more fitting, in the sermon on the parousia or Last Judgment.

The opening sentence of our liturgical reading is associated with the idea of "kingdom" in verse 31 which is also the ending of the pericope "on providence" in *Aft* 6:33. This seems to be an addition of St. Luke since St. Matthew does not have it. The two following sentences with some variants are again differently placed by St. Matthew some verses before the pericope on "Providence" (*Mt* 6:19-21).

Two prominent ideas are present in verses 35-48: watchfulness or vigilance and fidelity. The religious motif is discerned in the text which is given in verse 37 since the master's act of "putting on an apron and waiting on the servants" is not a trait of a human master. It refers more to Christ as he showed during the Last Supper washing the feet of his apostles (*Jn* 13:4-5). In contrast to Matthew's "servant" (*oikonomos*: 24:45) Luke has "steward" (*oikonomos*, v. 42). The admonition is understood to have been narrowed down to the apostles and other administrators in the Church.

Homily

VIGILANCE AND FAITHFULNESS

It is told that during one of the bank robberies in the city a security guard was not one of those killed because he came late and was still putting on his uniform in a room while three of his comrades already at their post

were all gunned down. No moral lesson is meant here that it is better to be late. We have still to advocate the virtue of watchfulness or vigilance as proclaimed by the gospel. The parable of the thief coming in unexpected moments has its sophisticated modern counterpart in bank robbers with speedy vehicles and lightning speed raid. The bank and the security guards killed just lacked the corresponding sophisticated instruments of vigilance that could have prevented the tragedy. The admonition of the Lord to be watchful, to be always prepared, because we do not know when the Son of Man would come remains valid for every man and for every generation.

The context of the gospel's admonition as it is commonly understood by commentators is to be watchful for the second coming or the parousia of the Lord because the time is unknown. But it could well be transposed to one's vigilance and preparedness for one's own death whose hour no one knows. Are we sure to live another day? How are we going to die? By sickness, old age, by accident? I have a **friend** who was diagnosed that she has cancer and had only 6 months to live according to her doctor. After ten years she is still alive while the doctor already died a few years back.

Furthermore the gospel tells us not only to be vigilant but also to be faithful to our assigned task. The Lord is our employer. Our task is to live and to spread the good news of salvation.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

August 20, 1995

FIRST READING: *Jr* 38:4-6, 8-10

The last days of the southern kingdom of Judah immediately before and during the time it was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar are depicted in chapters 37-41 of Jeremiah. This is also given in chapter 24 of 2 Kings and chapter 36 of 2 Chronicles. The last king of Judah was Zedekiah whose formername was Mattaniahson of Josiah (2.04:17). He is not mentioned in the genealogy of St. Matthew (ch. 1) since the Messiah did not come from his line but from his nephew Jehoiachin (Matthew's Jechoniah: 1:12) who »was already brought to Babylon in 598 B.C., about eleven years before the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem.

Because the prophet predicted the destruction of the city saying: "Yahweh says this: This city will certainly be delivered into the power of the army of the king of Babylon, who will capture it" (38:3), the leading men of Jerusalem branded him as a traitor. They asked the king for him who handed Jeremiah into their power. They threw him into a cistern without water but full of mud.

King Zedekiah had still respect for Jeremiah and in fact summoned him secretly once before into his palace to know the will of Yahweh (37:17 ff.). So that when Ebed-melech, a Cushite official of the palace and friend of Jeremiah, interceded to take Jeremiah out of the cistern lest he die, the king readily acceded.

The Hebrew text of verse 9 is here corrected. It has: "and he has died of hunger; for there was no more bread in the city." The corrected reading in the liturgical text is: "He will die of famine on the spot, for there is no more food in the city."

SECOND READING: *Heb* 12:1-4

After enumerating in chapter 11 exemplary personalities of faith from the Old Testament, who are here called witnesses (*martyres*), the letter now presents a practical conclusion for us which is of great importance for our spiritual life.

Christian life is compared to running a race towards a finish line, an image used often by St. Paul as in *Ga* 5:7, *1 Co* 9:24, *Ph* 3:12, *2 Tm* 4:7. The goal is Jesus on whom "we should keep our eyes fixed, who inspires and perfects our faith" (*archegos and teleiotes*: lit. "author and perfector"). Yet we must always be aware of the presence of sin which could hinder our progress.

"For the sake (*tmti*) of the joy...." Some take *irnti* as an adversative particle and translates it as "instead of." Hence the meaning would be: "instead of enjoying the fullness of life he endured the cross..." Our liturgical text understands it in the intentional sense, that is, "in order to," "in view of," "for the sake of."

"He has taken his seat at the right hand" is expressed in the Apostles' Creed as one of the articles of our faith simply meaning the equality of Jesus with God. This phrase is already found in *Ps* 110:1 and quoted in *Acts* 22:44 as referring to the Messiah. The formula is also found in *Heb* 10:12; *1P* 3:22; *Rm* 8:34; *Ac* 7:55 and 56, although in the three latter texts Jesus is said to be *standing* at the right hand of God as St. Stephen stated in his vision.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 12:49-53

The term "fire" is here taken with a different imagery. It is the image of conflict and division which purifies the gold of God's gospel from the dross. In some biblical text "fire" is used as a symbol of ardent passion for the cause of God's kingdom as in *Si* 48:1 referring to Elijah's zeal in preaching the word of Yahweh. In *Lk* 3:16 fire is associated with the Holy Spirit which was the form of the Holy Spirit perceived during Pentecost.

"Baptism" has also a different acceptance in the text. It refers to the sufferings of Jesus as in *Mk* 10:38. The term "peace," then, must be understood differently from that of *Lc* 2:14. The meaning in this passage is only the situation of the absence of conflict while in the hymn of the angels it means the Hebrew *shalom*, referring to the totality of salvation. As long as there are individuals who would not accept the gospel of Jesus conflicts would arise even among intimate members of the same family.

The origin of this pericope could be the actual experience of the first Christian communities whose members were the objects of persecution just like Jesus. Divisions actually occurred even among close family members whose religious affiliations were different.

Homily

TRUE PEACE IN THE MIDST OF CONFLICTS

When I was teaching at the UST College of Education some years back I had a Chinese student who was a Buddhist and whose parents and the rest of the family were Buddhists. Out of her own accord she decided to be baptized in the Catholic faith. Her parents did not approve of the idea and it was during this stage that her troubles started. She became the object

of persecution in her own home. During Sundays she was not allowed to go out to hear Mass. But she persevered in her faith and is now happily married to a Catholic gentleman with her own children all baptized in the Catholic Church.

Another individual confided to me that he cannot find peace in their house because his mother is a member of the Iglesia ni Kristo while he remains a Catholic. No day passes in their house without discussion or quarrel. The words of the Lord, then, in the gospel are very realistic even in our times.

Yet real peace can still be found in the midst of conflicts. This is the peace which Jesus gave to his apostles during the Last Supper (*Jn* 14:27) and after his resurrection (20:21). This is the peace which martyrs experienced even during their hours of torture. This is the peace which we wish all the faithful would possess when, during the Mass, we give each other the sign of peace.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR August 27, 1995

FIRST READING: *Is* 66:18-21

As a usual conclusion among the prophets the last passages are prophecies of consolation, of happiness, of restoration. This last chapter of the book of Isaiah is no exception. Our liturgical text speaks of the gathering of nations by Yahweh, a more radical exodus or the return of exiles. It involves not only the Israelites but peoples of every language going to Jerusalem, God's holy mountain.

This universalist motif was not common before the exile although Isaiah already mentions this in the 8th cent. B.C. (*Is* 2:2-3): "In the days to come the mountain of the Temple of Yahweh shall tower above the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills. All the nations will stream to it, peoples without number will come to it;..." However, since the reading in the liturgy is taken from chapter 66 which is now considered to have come from a third Isaian tradition dated after the exile, the idea of

universalism is not any more surprising. Yet, it can be said that it is an echo of the doctrine of the prophet Isaiah himself.

The nations mentioned here are found in *Gn* 10, usually called the "Table of Nations." Tarshish is understood to be the Tartessos in Spain, known before as the western boundary of the known world. Put and Lud are in Africa, Mosoch and Tubal in Asia Minor, Javan is modern Greece. Our reading omits "Rosh" (see J.B.) which is found in the Septuagint (Greek) but given by Hebrew as *qesheth*.

What is more surprising is the idea in verse 21 that the Lord would take these non-Israelites as priests and Levites. This is already a prelude of the New Testament institution of the priesthood not any more the domain of the tribe of Levi or the clan of Aaron but transferred to anybody from any nationality, any race, or culture to be called and to share in the priesthood of Christ.

SECOND READING: *Heb* 12:5-7.11-13

As part of the final exhortations in the letter to the Hebrews our liturgical reading reminds us of the training or discipline we receive from the Lord in order to be good children. "For, whom the Lord loves, he disciplines" (v. 6, taken from *Pr*3:12). A parallel English saying goes: "spare the rod and spoil the child." Discipline is the biblical way of education as found in other texts like *Jb* 5:17; *Ps* 94:12; *Si* 4:17.

"Endure your trials as the discipline of God, who deals with you as sons" (v. 7). Aside from punitive suffering there is also what we may call "disciplinary suffering," the aim of which is to train or educate a child. Later on discipline "brings forth the fruit of peace and justice to those who are trained in its school" (v. 11).

By training and discipline one strengthens the parts of the body which are weak. There is an image here of the effect of sin in one's spiritual life just as a man with a sprained or crooked limb. A man with a sprained foot walks painfully and crookedly as a man in the state of sin acts crookedly and suffers spiritually. In order to heal the lame leg it must be straightened but in the process one has to endure suffering. But this suffering or pain is for the cure.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 13:22-30

Many short passages in this Lucan text are also found in St. Matthew but in different contexts. *Lk* 13:23-24 = *Mt* 7:13-14 in the context of the Sermon on the Mount; *Lk* 13:25-27 = *Mt* 25:10-12, in the context of the parable of the Ten Virgins, and *Lk* 13:28-29 = *Mt* 8:11-12 in the context of the cure of the Centurion's servant. *Lk* 13:30 = *Mt* 19:30 and 20:16. This suggested to a number of literary analysts that these passages could have come from a common source.

Verse 22 speaks of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem which was also mentioned for the first time in 9:51, the beginning of the great addition of St. Luke departing from the arrangement of St. Mark until 18:14. The passages in this part of St. Luke are also found in St. Matthew but dispersed in his gospel in different contexts.

Jesus did not answer directly the question in verse 22 whether there would be few who would be saved but rather offered a practical norm. "Try to come in through the narrow door." This has to be supplemented by St. Matthew who gives the reason why the disciples should enter the narrow door, "since the road that leads to perdition is wide and spacious...but it is a narrow gate and a hard road that leads to life" (*Mt* 7:13-14). This reason is absent in St. Luke.

There seems to be a hidden polemic in this text against the Rabbinic doctrine that all Israel would participate in the joys of the future world as found in the Mishna (*Sanhedrin*, X, 1). It practically teaches that salvation depends on belonging to the people of Israel. This is contradicted by Jesus. Not all those who ate and drank in his company would enter the kingdom. The Jews who consider themselves first will be last while "people coming from the east and the west, from the north and the south will take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God" (v. 29). These are the last who will be first.

Homily

WHO ARE READY TO BE SAVED?

Salvation does not depend on belonging to a group even if the group

claims to be the chosen people of God. After the redemption of Jesus because of his death and resurrection salvation is offered to all. Not even those who call "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven, not even those who prophesy or cast out demons or work miracles in Jesus' name, but the "person who does the will of the Father in heaven" (*Mt 7:22-23*).

To do the will of the Father requires discipline that is why it is called the narrow road. It requires the practice of the virtues continuous training and perseverance. It is not enough to reject evil, one must practice the good.

The practice of the virtues is burdensome in the beginning but it can only be acquired by continuous action because a virtue by definition is a good habit and a habit is a repeated action. One cannot, for example, become a virtuoso at the piano just by playing for one or two weeks. It requires so many years and so many hours daily of practice. In the same token one cannot be virtuous in the practice of purity when the individual will always put himself in occasions of impurity. One cannot become charitable by quarreling with his neighbor and not controlling his anger.

Only through training and discipline can one become an expert in anything. Some people are creative and have employed the scientific method in training for sports. For instance, in order to train a player to jump higher which is important in basketball weights are added to the legs during practice as the player tries to reach a definite point. Shooting practices are done not only a number of times but more than a hundred times. The practice of the moral virtues can also be done in a systematic and scientific manner. Stories are told in some monasteries where monks, in order to strengthen their obedience, are commanded to do seemingly inane things: to plant trees upside down, to clean floors without a broom, to wash clothes without soap, etc. Other more effective methods could be used but the goal is to become morally virtuous: to be prudent, just, temperate, patient and persevering. But as the practice of the virtues become connatural there comes an exceeding joy in its accomplishment and in a way heaven is captured even here on earth.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

September 3, 1995

FIRST READING: *Si* 17-18, 20, 28-29

Just like the other texts of the wisdom or sapiential tradition the book of Sirach (taken from the original Hebrew title as found in a copy in Cairo called ms. B: "The Wisdom of Yeshua ben Eleazar ben Sira") contains diverse topics not arranged in logical order. The same topical hodge-podge is found in Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), Proverbs and Wisdom. In the Vulgate and other Latin biblical manuscripts the title is "Ecclesiasticus," which may mean an ecclesiastical book. In Greek it is called Sirach although this is rather the grandfather of the author whose real name is Yeshua (Jesus). This book is not found in the Hebrew canon and, hence, rejected by Protestant bibles but its canonical character which is the Greek text translated by the grandson of the author (see Prologue) has been proclaimed by the Council of Trent. The name of the author is given in 51:27 and 30.

Our short liturgical reading speaks of three topics: on humility, against curiosity, and on alms giving. Humility is one of the favorite ideas of the sages mentioned, for example, in Pr 11:2; 15:33; 18:12; 22:4. The greater a person is the more humble he should be.

Sirach is original in equating wisdom with the Law of Moses as found in 24:23. He is against philosophical curiosities especially Hellenic learning which was already making inroads on Jewish wisdom tradition. According to him "what (a Jew) has been taught already exceeds the scope of the human mind" (v. 23). This is the Torah or the Mosaic Law.

SECOND READING: *Heb* 12:18-19, 22-24

The contrast in the giving of the covenants, the Old and the New are presented in the text. The first covenant was given at Mt. Sinai amidst fear. Instead of "untouchable mountain" in the liturgical reading the Greek has "touchable" (*pselaphomeno*). or "material" that is why the JB translates it as "nothing known to the senses" (v. 18). The KJV has: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched."

The antithesis of the material or sensible Mt. Sinai is the spiritual Mt. Zion, "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." With the mention of "myriads of angels" the reference is understood to be heaven. Yet the giving of the New Covenant was already accomplished in the earthly Jerusalem. This seems to indicate that for the author all the occurrences of the New Testament accomplished by Jesus who came down from heaven have already their spiritual aspects which are perfected in heaven.

The "assembly of the first-born" is interpreted by some as the angels of verse 22 but the repetition of an idea is unusual. Hence the more probable interpretation could be the first Christians who are the "first-born" compared to future Christian generation. We are part of the later Christian generation also to be drawn to the heavenly Jerusalem with the myriads of angels and the first Christian "saints."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk*14:1, 7-14

The cure of a man with dropsy on a Sabbath (14:2-6) is omitted in our liturgical text. Still the gospel gives us two important lessons: avoidance of places of honor at table (w. 7-11) and the true guests to be invited in banquets (w. 12-14). All these three pericopes are peculiar to Luke.

St. Luke seems to be using here the term "parable" in a loosed manner. It could be taken as a metaphor of a lesson on good manners. The Greek word translated here as "guests" *iskeklemenoi* which is the passive participle perfect of the verb *kaleo* ("I call"), hence, "those who were called," and is repeated in verse 24 concluding the "parable of the invited guests who made excuses." There may be a second intention in St. Luke's use of this word contrasting this group of *ofkeklemenoi* with the "beggars (lit. poor), the crippled, the lame and the blind" in verse 13 which is repeated in verse 22. These rejected *keklemenoi* are precisely the Jews.

Two lessons are taught by the Lord to those who were invited which are correctives to the usual practice of the Scribes and Pharisees (see 20:46 and *Mk* 12:39). The first one is not to choose the first place at table, topping this with the maxim on humility: "For everyone who exalts himself shall

be humbled and he who humbles himself shall be exalted" (v. 11). The second has an eschatological import since by inviting **the** poor and **the** handicapped who cannot repay here on earth the **repayment will be** made "in the resurrection of the just."

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

September 10,1995

FIRST READING: *Ws* 9:13-18

The text of the first reading in this Mass is the third strophe of a prayer for wisdom the elements of which were largely taken from the prayer of Solomon in *1 K3:6-9* and repeated in *Ch 1:8-10*. The first strophe is *9:1-6*, the second in verses *7-12*. Solomon has been considered as the greatest patron of wisdom in spite of his downfall in *1 K11*. Wisdom texts are attributed to him even in this book of Wisdom which in some manuscripts actually bore the title of "Wisdom of Solomon." In *9:8* it says: "You yourself have chosen me to be king over your people, to be judge of your sons and daughters." The attribution to Solomon of this passage is clearly fictitious.

The text declares the weakness of human intelligence which can never know God's counsel that is why divine revelation is needed. There is an *inclusio* (repeated idea, here: "God's counsel") in verse 13 and 17. The parallel ideas "corruptible body/soul" and "earthen shelter/mind" is also part of the chiastic (*inclusio*) structure. The notion that the soul is in the body like a clay vessel is also found in Plato which has given the suggestion that the book of Wisdom has come from neo-Platonist circles but this idea is also found in *Jb 4:19* and *Is 38:12*.

SECOND READING: *Phm* 9-10, 12-17

This short letter of Paul to Philemon (only 1 chapter, 25 verses) is remarkable in many aspects. It was totally written by Paul in his own hands (v. 19) deals with the subject of slavery because of an actual experience when Paul took into his care a runaway slave called Onesimus while he himself was in prison. He converted Onesimus and baptized him (v. 10).

The place where St. Paul wrote this letter is still an issue. The former view with still many adherents is that St. Paul wrote this letter while he was imprisoned for the first time in Rome (61-63 A.D.). Some think it was in Caesarea when he was imprisoned there in 58-60 A.D. but this opinion has now few supporters. Yet stronger arguments are being presented by those who favor an Ephesian provenance when St. Paul was there in 54 to 57. Ephesus is not far from Colossae where Philemon was residing and it could explain Paul's wish to visit him in verse 22. However it is hard to explain why St. Paul calls himself "an old man" (*presbyter*) in verse 9 which would suggest a Roman origin.

St. Paul's view of slavery during this time when it was still an accepted social institution although definitely anti-Christian is spelled out in this letter and the Christian solution which he proposes. Now that Onesimus was baptized as a Christian he asks Philemon to accept him as a brother, "especially dear to me; and how much more than a brother to you, since now you will know him both as a man and in the Lord" (16). In fact the apostle asks the master Philemon to accept Onesimus as he would accept Paul himself. Onesimus is "Paul's heart."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 14:25-33

From the demands which Jesus requires from whomsoever would want to become his disciple, it can readily be seen that he is not an ordinary teacher or master. He exacts total detachment from everything using even a strong term, *misein* (lit. "to hate") which is here attenuated in the translation: "without turning his back." Of course the Lord does not set aside in this context the fourth commandment and so the word "to hate" in this passage does not have any psychological connotation but a question of preference. The parallel text in *Aft* 10:37 has in fact a positive verb, *philein* (lit. "to love" translated by JB, "to prefer"). In this same Matthaean text only the father and mother are mentioned. St. Luke added more close relationships.

The carrying of the cross (adding "daily" in 9:23) is also an important requirement in becoming a disciple of Jesus. This refers definitely to his own sacrifice which involved the carrying of the cross. Here the cross becomes personal to every disciple: "his" cross.

Two parables follow whose main issue is planning: the building of a tower and a military campaign. This is followed by a conclusion which is supposed to be drawn from the two parables since it is introduced by *houtos oun* ("in the same way"). The point of comparison is the planning of the best means to a goal. As a tower builder could not finish his project without the necessary funds and a king could not match another king being outnumbered two to one, so also one cannot become the special disciple of Jesus unless everything is renounced.

Homily

THE CARRYING OF THE CROSS

Because our Lord canted his cross first we are not anymore in a position to complain about our own crosses. Some crosses are in fact so small that those blessed souls who have them could very well help in bearing others' crosses which might be heavier. There was the story of a boy who kept on complaining that he had no shoes until one day he saw another boy without feet. From that time on he stopped complaining and felt blessed that his two feet are intact.

Sometimes we are not aware that we are being a cross to others. A husband may not know that he is a cross of his wife or vice-versa. Parents-in-law do not realize many times that they are the crosses of their children-in-law. Parents too could become crosses to their children or children to their parents. Openness is very important in this regard and sensitivity towards the needs of others. Of course this is all spelled out in the virtue of love which seeks not the good of oneself but the good of the other.

Still renunciation and the carrying of the cross is not a goal in itself. It leads towards another goal. This is the lesson given by the two similar parables of the man who wants to build a tower and the king waging a war against another king. In order to attain their specific goals they had to plan and seek the best means towards the attainment of their goal.

If our goal is to be a perfect follower or disciple of Christ then we must look for the best means to become one. We can never become his true follower if we are still attached to other things and to other persons.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

September 17, 1995

FIRST READING: *Ex* 32:7-11, 13-14

Chapters 32-34 of Exodus are placed in the final text of Scripture in between two similar bodies of laws which prescribes the building of the desert sanctuary (Tent of Meeting) and its furnishings. In chapters 25-31 God speaks to Moses concerning all the prescriptions in building the sanctuary. This is concluded by the giving of the two tablets of the Testimony (31:18).

Immediately, however, this is followed in chapter 32 by the episode of Israel's apostasy and the making of the golden calf which induced Moses to break the tablets (32:20). But in 34:1-2 Yahweh again ordered Moses to cut two tablets of stone and in 34:28 it is said that: "he (Moses, because of v. 27) inscribed on the tablets the words of the Covenant - the Ten Words." Again a long body of prescriptions concerning the building of the tabernacle (35-40 follows which in effect is similar to that of 25-31 with the difference that in this text Moses implements and gives instructions to the people what Yahweh told him in chapters 25-31.

Our liturgical reading narrates the apostasy of Israel as they changed Yahweh for a golden calf. Yahweh's anger blazed up against his people and had the intention of destroying them if not for the intercession of Moses who reminded God of his promise to the patriarchs. "So the Lord relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people" (v. 14).

SECOND READING: *1 Tm* 1:12-17

The three letters by Paul, 2 to Timothy and 1 to Titus are called "pastoral letters" because these were addressed to these two disciples of Paul in their capacity as pastors, now termed as bishops. Timothy became bishop (*episkopos*) of Ephesus and Titus of Crete.

Whether Paul really wrote personally the pastoral letters is a debated issue. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* is inclined towards a later date. "The Pastorals also present a much more developed church order than is found in the clearly genuine letters of Paul, a somewhat less

heightened expectation of an imminent *eschaton*, and a christology that stressed Jesus' birth and resurrection but not, at least as much as in Paul, his crucifixion. Although developments certainly occurred within Christianity even during Paul's lifetime, changes such as these, taken together, tend to point to a later period than Paul's own age" (p. 892). However these arguments of style, changes of doctrine, and others of this sort are not so formidable to topple the opinion of the letters' Paulinian authenticity. Some critics even think that these differences with the genuine letters of St. Paul could have been due to a secretary hinting that St. Luke was with St. Paul at this time.

Our liturgical reading is full of christological doctrines which can be authentically linked with the experiences of St. Paul. He was once indeed a blasphemer, a persecutor, a man filled with arrogance. He now acknowledges Christ's mercy towards him along with the overflowing of grace "along with the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." The mention of these two theological virtues are frequent in St. Paul.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 15:1-32

.(Note: please see the commentary and homily of FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT, March 26,1995).

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR **September 24,1995**

FIRST READING: *Am* 8:4-7

Of all the prophets whose writings have come down to us in the Bible the prophet Amos is the first in chronological order. Although he came from Tekoa (1:1) in the southern kingdom of Judah he exercised his prophetic ministry in the northern kingdom of Israel during the days of Jeroboam II (783-743 B.C). During this time Israel was politically prosperous but the rich were guilty of injustices towards the poor. Amos championed the cause of the poor and has been known as the prophet of social justice.

In the three last chapters of the book (7-9) five visions are given whose main message is the punishment of Israel because of social iniquities. The first three visions (locusts, drought, plumb-line), in poetic style, are interrupted by a prose narrative of the conflict between Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, and Amos. The fourth vision, the vision of ripe-fruit suggesting that Israel is ripe for punishment, is again interrupted by a denunciation of swindlers and exploiters which is our liturgical reading. The fifth vision which is an earthquake which destroyed the sanctuary of Bethel is given in 9:1-4.

The social injustices against the poor perpetrated by merchants are indicated in the liturgical passage. They "trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land. They cheat by fixing the scales, they buy the poor as slaves for a meager sum. The prophet warned them of the impending punishment which actually took place in 721 B.C. with the destruction of Samaria.

SECOND READING: *1 Tm* 2:1-8

Obedience to legitimate authority is an important Paulinian admonition (*Rm* 13:1; *Tt* 3:1). Here in Timothy St Paul exhorts the Christians to pray "for kings and those in authority." If Paul was the author of this letter this admonition could have been influenced by the political situation of his time. Nero was then emperor whose actions are unpredictable. St. Paul was apprehensive of what would happen and in fact his apprehensions were confirmed by the events that followed when in the summer of 64 A.D. Nero burnt a substantial portion of Rome and laid the blame on the Christians.

The phrase in 2:4: "for he wants all men to be saved and come to know the truth" has an enormous theological significance. Clearly salvation is universal. Christ redeemed all men and wants all men to be saved.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 16:1-13

This gospel passage from St. Luke has been termed "the parable of the unjust steward" in some biblical translations. It is more correct to entitle it "the parable of the astute steward." The lesson of the parable is

not in the wastefulness of the manager but in his act of astuteness which is here presented as an act of prudence, more specifically human prudence, but easily raised to the level of divine prudence as the principal lesson. "The owner then gave his devious employee credit for being enterprising!" (v. 8).

Verse 9 gives us a clear perspective of money or wealth (generalized in the translation as "world's goods") and how they are to be used in order to attain eternal life. It is definitely clear in this passage that money or wealth is not evil in itself but even become useful for salvation. Wealth should not become one's master but should make money a slave, using it for a greater supernatural good. We also have to be astute and prudent with regards to heavenly goods.

The "little things" and "greater things" in verse 10 seem to refer to things of this world and things of the spirit or religious things. The meaning then would be that those who had been faithful in the administration of worldly goods would also be trusted with religious goods. These religious goods are not identified with eternal life which is our goal but the spiritual means towards salvation. Money or wealth are not our own since they are not our permanent possession while religious goods are truly our own.

Homily

POVERTY AND STEWARDSHIP

There has been a time when detachment or renunciation of material goods is the measure of poverty. Nowadays the measure is good stewardship. This does not only refer to money, wealth, and treasures. It could refer to all earthly goods, whether natural or artificial. To be the stewards of creation is one of man's roles in the garden. The performance of this role has been terribly weakened by sin. So many calamities are attributed due to man's negligence of being a steward of creation. The continuous cutting of trees has been the major cause of floods and in the Philippines it has resulted in the Ormoc tragedy when more than five thousand people died. The unabated throwing of garbage in the Pasig river is suspected to be the major culprit in the seasonal red tide menace which has poisoned a number of people.

Yet these are just material or worldly things. Over and above the things of this world we have spiritual goods which are our means to attain eternal life. There are the sacraments, channels of graces which are freely offered to us. There is the word of God which we can share with others while it in turn inspires and nourishes our spiritual life. We can be prudent in acquiring these spiritual goods.

But the Lord observed that the worldly are more enterprising than the other-worldly. It seems to be true that we are more wasteful as far as spiritual goods are concerned. The Mass is one of the richest sources of heavenly graces but we take it for granted. We are like morons looking at a pot of gold not knowing its real value and think it is still full of dirt. This is the usual tragedy of a soul.

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

October 1,1995

FIRST READING:A/M 6:1, 4-7

Like in 5:7 and 18 this pericope is introduced by the Hebrew word *hoy* translated here as "woe" or in other passages as "trouble." The opposite of "woe" is "happy" or with the Hebrew term '*asher*. The Greek term for "happy" *ismakarios* that is why the texts introduced by this word is called a "makarism" as the "beatitudes" in the Sermon on the Mount. "Woe" is different from "curse" (Heb. '*arur*') the antithesis of which is *baruch* which is rightly translated "blessed." Hence the two antitheses: *hoy I'asher* and '*arurlbaruch* have different connotations.

Some biblical critics have the opinion that this passage did not come directly from Amos because the object of the "woe" oracle is the southern kingdom with the mention of Zion and David. But it is still possible that the prophet Amos pronounced them since at that time, as confirmed by the prophet Isaiah, the southern kingdom was not as blameless as the people of the northern kingdom. With the prosperity of Israel during the time of Jeroboam II, Judah was not far behind and was also perpetrator of social injustices.

"Improvising (haportim) to the music of the harp" is differently translated by the JB which has: "they bawl to the music of the harp." The root prt is taken by some to mean "to sing" but with ineptitude as when drunken men do their singing under the influence of wine. They continue their revelry amidst the impending collapse of the house of Joseph, that is to say, Israel.

SECOND READING: *1 Tm 6:11-16*

After warning Timothy of false teachers, St. Paul exhorts him how to conduct himself as a man dedicated to God. St. Timothy was in charge of the Church at Ephesus. This was before St. John the Evangelist settled in this place so that we do not have any means of knowing whether they ever met or have known each other.

The "noble profession of faith" which Timothy made in the presence of so many witnesses was probably the day of his baptism and not his ordination. His model was the confession of faith which the Lord proclaimed in front of Pilate.

Keeping God's command "without blame or reproach until our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear" does not necessarily mean that the expected second coming (*parousia*) of the Lord would happen during the time of Timothy but an exhortation to do always what is good. In fact in the following sentence the uncertainty of the parousia is averred. A sublime doxology concludes this passage.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk 16:19-31*

This parable of Lazarus and a rich man is peculiar to Luke. The contrast of the life of the rich man and Lazarus while they were still alive here on earth is artfully depicted so as to justify their diverse lot after death. The rich man had all the pleasures of life, seeing the poor Lazarus and even knowing his name (v. 24) but not pitying him, as dogs became his companions licking his sores. The lot of the two was reversed after death.

Probably there is not much doctrinal significance in the fact that when Lazarus died it is not said that he was buried in contrast with the rich man. Angels carried Lazarus to the bosom of Abraham which definitely

does not connote that he was there body and soul. This issue is not aimed by the parable. What is given is that after death there is such a thing as reward and punishment. There is consolation and torment.

The phrase "Moses and the prophets" seems to indicate Scripture as understood during that time. God's revelation is given through the instrumentality of Scripture. Jesus himself was the one who rose from the dead. Those who do not believe the revelation of Scripture found it also hard to believe the revelation of the Resurrected. In fact they doubt and deny the resurrection.

Homily

The story of Lazarus and the rich man can be transposed into the political and social level. The world has become smaller that what happens in one part of the world can now be perceived instantly in other parts, even transmitted live. The world is appalled viewing the emaciated bodies of children in some parts of Africa, refugees packed like sardines in boats sailing the rough seas sometimes becoming prey to pirates. Yet affluent nations of the world are fighting over trade. Products are destroyed to maintain higher prices - sugar sank into the sea, a million eggs thrown into the garbage dump, coffee crops destroyed so that prices of these goods would not go down. And yet teeming millions of human beings in the third world go hungry.

One reason is that rich nations have become enveloped by materialism and secularism. There is no conviction of the next life, of the spiritual dimension, of the supernatural reality. The revelation of Scripture is now relegated to myths, fictions, or inventions of the community. The basic doctrine of Christianity which is the resurrection of Christ who passed through the abode of the dead, opened heaven to all the just and is now equally reigning with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the heavenly kingdom is being subjected to skeptical scrutiny.

It is necessary to **put back the revelation of Scripture to its real role. It is necessary to be firmly convinced that it is the message of salvation although given in human literary media which otherwise would not achieve its salvific intent. It is necessary to reaffirm that there was already**

somebody who rose from the dead and that heavenly life is a reality the same is true with the life in hell which will never end. The rich man of the parable found this too late but yet it is not too late for those who heed the message of this parable.

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR October 8,1995

FIRST READING: *Hab* 1:2-3; 2:2-4

Authors have seen in 1:6 the key to determine the time of Habakkuk since it mentions the rise of the Chaldaeans which most probably refers to the period when Nebuchadaezzar became victorious at the battle of Carchemish (605 B.C.) defeating Neco, the Pharaoh of Egypt. Some years before in 612 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's father, Nebopolassar, together with Cyaxares of the Medes, laid waste the once proud Nineveh, capital of the Assyrian Empire. The mention of Habakkuk in *Dn* 14:33 f. is a literary creation and bereft of any historical reality.

Our liturgical reading is taken from two contexts in the prophet: the first complaint in 1:2-4 and the second oracle in 2:1-4.

"How long, O Lord?" This introductory phrase distinguishes the passage as a lament, a literary device frequent in the Psalms, in Jeremiah and in Job. This probably refers to the oppression of the Chaldaeans who were actually instruments of God's punishment. This is expressed by the prophet in 1:12-17. "Yahweh you have made this people an instrument of justice, set it firm as a rock in order to punish" (v. 12).

Putting this piece of God's revelation into writing, although a tragic one, will make those who read it realize God's mastery over mankind. "But the just man, because of his faith (JB: faithfulness), shall live." In spite of the chaotic situation surrounding the just man, by his perseverance in his faithfulness to God, he will live. St. Paul later on took this maxim as the basis of his doctrine of justification by faith, understanding the 'emunah of the Hebrew text which literally means "fidelity" as "faith" following the Septuagint (LXX) translation.

SECOND READING: 2 *Tm* 1:6-8, 13-14

Although there are questions about the authenticity of this letter, the nuances of personal touches are so striking that it is difficult to conceive it was not written by St. Paul. Perhaps the fundamental text came from St. Paul which was later amplified. The Apostle mentions himself as a prisoner and affirms that he is nearing the end of life (4:6). This could only be during the persecution of Nero (64-68 A.D.). His first imprisonment in Rome (60-62 A.D.) was not very strict, some say only a kind of house arrest but in chains.

The laying of hands is the rite of ordination which from the time of the apostles have been practiced in the Church. Timothy was ordained bishop of Ephesus. The Spirit was bestowed in a special manner on him and has given him strength (*dynamis*), love (*agape*) and wisdom (*sophronismos*, rather: "sound judgment,") derived from the active meaning *ofsophronidso*; but if from the middle *woicesophronidsomaiit* means "sobriety").

"Bear your share of the hardship" (*synkatopatheson*, a word also used in 2:3,9) on account of the gospel. But Timothy is not to worry because the "strength which comes from God will not be wanting.

The continuity of apostolic tradition is safeguarded in the second paragraph. "Rich deposit of faith" which Timothy must guard with the help of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is the object of evangelical preaching."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 17:5-10

There are two parts in this passage taken from St. Luke which seems not to be related: the doctrine about the power of faith even as small as a mustard seed and the parable of a servant or a slave whose role is to do his duty even without compensation.

The power of faith to move mountains is mentioned by St. Matthew twice but in different contexts: in the cure of an epileptic child (*Mt* 17:20) and the drying up of a fig tree (21:21). The context in Luke was most probably of his own doing. Since this passage is absent in Mark, and in

Luke it is found in the passages when he lengthily deviated from Mark, it is believed that a common source is behind this text from which Matthew also had known.

The parable of a servant doing his duty is unique to Luke. The comparison is then applied to the disciples: "When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, 'We are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty.'"

It is now, however, the point of the parable to teach that human action has no value at all in the eyes of God. But we cannot demand anything from God since our relationship with him as creatures is much infinitely more than the relationship between a master and a slave. Yet, God is not a cruel tyrant. He is a loving father. Even Christ told us to call *him* *Abba*. But with this parable the disciples are taught the great virtue of humility so as not to abuse that loving relationship which Christians have made with the Father.

Homily

FAITHFULNESS TO DUTY, NOT FOR REWARD

It is a great wonder to see in the circus how animals perform, like the monkeys and elephants, dolphins and seals. Yet these animals are not *educated* to do their act. They *are trained* to perform their roles in the same manner by means of a reward. The elephants are given peanuts, the monkeys, bananas, the seals and dolphins, fish.

Reward is a great incentive even for human beings. St. Paul awaits the crown that the Lord would award to him after fighting the good fight and keeping the faith (2 *Tm* 3:8).

Yet in the gospel a more perfect disciple is enjoined by the Lord not to expect any reward but to do his duty just like a slave who has no right to any recompense. But in the sacrament of baptism our status was elevated to become children and, in fact, heirs of the kingdom of heaven. We are not anymore slaves but freemen, and more than freemen since we become nobles in the reign of God.

All our actions, because of this new status, become meritorious. **But** it is always better to keep in mind that formerly we were slaves and we have a duty to be faithful and persevere until the end.

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

October 15, 1995

FIRST READING: 2 K 5:14-17

Chapter 17 of First Kings until chapter 13 of Second Kings are dominated by two prophets Elijah and Elisha from the time of King Achab (874-853 B.C.) to King Jehoash of Israel (798-783). Elisha was the disciple of Elijah who was the sole witness when the latter was taken up to heaven and consequently received a double share of the spirit of Elijah (2 K 2:10 ff.). What followed afterwards are narrations of the actuations and miracles of Elisha. One of these was the cure of Naaman, commander of the Syrian (Aramaean) army who became a leper. This event was well known that it merited mention by our Lord in the gospel (*Lk* 4:27).

The miracle was more remarkable because the attitude involved was more of obedience and less of faith. In the beginning Naaman was reluctant to obey and in fact became indignant when he was told to bathe seven times in the Jordan. At the instance of his servants "he plunged into the Jordan seven times" and was cured.

Because of his cure Naaman was converted to Yahweh. He proclaimed that "there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel." This is a confession of a universal God, a monotheistic confession.

SECOND READING: 2 Tm 2:8-13

A continuation of last Sunday's reading in which now St. Paul expressed his suffering in preaching the gospel, and treated like a criminal or malefactor (*kakourgos*). It is clear that he is in prison when he wrote this and it is reasonably assumed that this was his second imprisonment in Rome under Nero when he was not anymore released but suffered martyrdom.

"He bore all this for the sake of those whom God has chosen ("elect"; *eklektoi*). It is clear that salvation in St. Paul is not a static reality but a process with an initial stage, a developmental stage and a stage of fulfillment "to be found in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."

Verse 11, "if we have died with him" is a parallel idea of *Rm* 8:17: "if we suffer with him," while verse 13 is also an expression made directly by the Lord Jesus in *Mt* 10:33.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 17:11-19

The theme of the voyage to Jerusalem is still present in this passage. The translation of the Vulgate: *per mediam Samariam...* ("through the middle of Samaria and Galilee") is meaningless. *Dia meson* in Greek can also mean "in between" and this reflected in the liturgical translation: "along the borders of Samaria and Galilee," perhaps in the eastern limit of the valley of Jezreel where Galilee joins with Samaria.

It would be understandable then how a group of Judaeans lepers had one Samaritan with them or perhaps even more in that village of lepers.

But the intent of the story is not only of the cure but of the fact that out of the ten only one returned to give thanks. In the narrative itself there is emphasis that "this man was a Samaritan." Just as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Lk* 10:30-40), an enemy of the Jews was praised.

An interesting question could be asked: Would Luke have still inserted this story in his gospel (this pericope is absent in Matthew and Mark) if the one who returned were a Jew?

Homily

THE EUCHARIST, GREATEST ACT OF GRATITUDE

Gratitude is given due emphasis in our gospel, a universal virtue which in some cultures is exceedingly appreciated: "*Anghindi lumingon sa pinanggalingan ay hindi makakarating sa patutunguhan*," we say in Tagalog. However this has degenerated in some cases to an excessive "*utang iia loob* " attitude which makes someone beholden to a benefactor sometimes the former becoming some kind of a slave of the latter.

There is in fact a great act of gratitude which no other act of such a kind can surpass. This is the Eucharistic celebration (the word itself means "to give thanks"). Although thanksgiving is only one aspect of the Mass it is a very important aspect. The preface is the prayer of thanksgiving.

We can not thank God enough for all he has done for us. First by giving us our life and then calling us to become his children in baptism, and for some to be called to a special ministry. No amount of earthly expressions on our part can we ever duly give thanks. But in the Mass we are not the ones giving thanks. It is Christ the Lord. We associate our thanks with him to the Father which then acquires an infinite value.

The gratitude of someone in the gospel which the Jews regarded as a foreigner and even an enemy is the precursor of all the Gentiles who would be coming in droves to the new Israel where there would be no more distinction of races and cultures.

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 22,1995

FIRST READING: *EX* 17:8-13

One of the episodes narrated in Exodus before the arrival of Moses' group in Sinai is a battle against the Amalekites, a fierce tribe inhabiting the Negeb (*Nb* 13:29). Geographically there is a problem in the sequence of events in Exodus since the Negeb where the Amalekites were supposed to be found is north of the Sinai desert. During the time of Saul and David they used to wage war against the Israelites. The tragedy of Saul and one of the causes for his rejection was his disobedience in dealing with the Amalekites (i *S*15:10-23). They may have been prominent before because the prophet Balaam declared that "Amalek is first among the nations" (*Nb* 24:20).

Another indication showing that this passage is out of context is the mention of Joshua without any introduction of who he was. In *Nb* 13 his name was Hoshea son of Nun which was later on changed by Moses to Joshua (13:16). Hurisnotso well knowneither. He isagain mentioned with

Aaron in *Ex* 24:14. It is a cause for surprise that Aaron died at Mt. Hor which is supposed to be near Kadesh (*Nh* 20:22). Did tradition personify Mt. Hor and associated him with Aaron to be known as Hur?

The sacramental character of Moses' raising his hands holding the staff of God is obvious. The narrative even links the victory and defeat of the Israelites with the raising and lowering of his hands. Finally victory was gained because Aaron and Hur propped the hands of Moses letting him sit on a rock.

SECOND READING: 2 *Tm* 3:14 - 4:2

The exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy continues although our liturgical reading has jumped from last Sunday's text.

"What you have believed," (*epistothēs*) is in the aorist passive which then has the nuance of the faith received from someone. It has the hidden meaning of acquired faith and the relationship between a teacher and disciple expressed in the final clause: "because you know who your teachers were." St. Paul was one of the principal teachers of Timothy and perhaps some of the other apostles too.

Apo brephous (lit. "from infancy") does not necessarily mean "from babyhood" from his tender years which was in accordance with Jewish law. Timothy (according *Ac* 16:1) was the son of a Jewish mother Eunice (2 *Tm* 1:5) but of a Greek father that is why he was not circumcised from infancy. But he was brought up in the Scriptures by his mother and grandmother Loida (1:5). Here the Old Testament is still meant but having been baptized as a Christian the Jewish Scripture has taken on a new light which points to Jesus.

2 *Tm* 3:14 is the classic text to show that Scripture is divinely inspired. But it must be borne in mind that St. Paul is here speaking only of the Old Testament. Later on the Church would apply this text to the whole of the Scriptures including the New Testament: "All scripture is inspired of God (*theopneustos*)."

A solemn charge is made by St. Paul to Timothy by invoking God and Christ, to preach the gospel "whether convenient or inconvenient (*eukairos*)

askairos),—correcting, reproving, appealing—constantly teaching."/?/!
pase didache rather means "in all kinds of institutions."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 18:1-8

Two parables on prayer end the so-called "great interpellation" of St. Luke after having followed the order of St. Mark in his gospel presentation. This is the passage from 18:1-4. The first of these parables (which is already described in the reading as "a parable on the necessity of praying always and not losing heart" is the gospel for this Sunday.

In its basic lines this parable is parallel to the parable of an importunate friend in *Lk* 11:5-8.

The power of prayer of petition is here underlined. The parable expresses this jumping from something which is minimal to something which is greater (a *minore ad maiorem*").

A widow, because of her perseverance in prayer, conquers an unscrupulous judge. How much more could we who are children of the benevolent Father receive what we ask for in continuous prayer.

Perseverance is one of the attributes of a good prayer of petition but we must also know what to ask for. The petition of the widow was in itself just and the judge knew about it, but he could have delayed his judgment and hence deny it eventually. If what we ask from the Father is good for us or for the community he would never delay in giving it to us.

The second part of the last verse, 18^b, is considered by many interpreters as out of context. It is parallel to Mr 24:12 but with negative connotations.

Homily

TWO IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF PRAYER OF PETITION

Two of the most important characteristics of an effective prayer of petition are perseverance and a good motivation or objective. The motivation must be for the good of the individual or the community.

God is a loving Father knowing beforehand what is good and not good for us. He will never grant something which will separate us from him however much we ask for it.

A child may be attracted to something shiny, a knife, and would persistently ask his mother to give it to him but no mother in her right mind will ever do that. I know of a child who fell into tantrums because his mother would not give him a pair of scissors. Some even strike their mother or father for not giving in to their whims.

But if the object is good and especially salvific, God will surely grant it. The late Bishop Fulton Sheen has expressed the view that one of the most effective prayers is to ask God for suffering. **But** how many people are prepared to do just that?

THIRTIETH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

October 29,1995

FIRST READING: *Si* 35:12-14, 16-18

The three well-known groups of needy or poor in Scripture whom God favors since they are usually the victims of injustice are mentioned in the liturgical text. They are the oppressed, the orphans and the widows. Nowadays we include all the outcasts, the marginalized, the refugees, the oppressed migrant workers and others of this sort, God hears their cry.

A slight variant is found in the starting phrase: "The Lord is a God of justice," although the Greek has "the Lord is a judge" which is the translation of JB. The translation of our liturgical text is in fact the one of the original Hebrew. Although Hebrew was the original language of Sirach the canonical text accepted by the Church is the Greek found in the Septuagint (LXX) version. Since 1896, however, about sixty-eight percent of the Hebrew text has been recovered the latest in 1982. Some fragments in Hebrew were also discovered among the Qumran scrolls and in Masada.

The second paragraph of the liturgical reading speaks of the efficacy of prayer especially that of the humble (*tapeinos*). "The prayer of the lowly

pierces the clouds; it does not rest till it reaches its goal,..." Prayer here is somewhat personified as if it has its own action.

SECOND READING: *2 Tm* 4:6-8, 16-18

St. Paul is aware that his life is ending. This is presumed to be within the years 64 to 67 A.D., known as the "Neronian persecution," of which St. Peter was also a victim. Like the Lord St. Paul would seal his apostolic mission with his blood, "being poured out like a libation." The great confidence he has of having fulfilled his mission as Christ's apostle to the Gentiles, using the image of a soldier and an athlete, is a source of great consolation.

"A merited crown awaits me," seems to be a non-Paulinian phrase which supports the view that this letter did not come from St. Paul. The apostle is known to speak often of God's grace and not of man's merits. The verb, furthermore, is in the passive (*apokeitai*) and not active (awaits) as translated in the liturgical text. In the Jewish tradition the passive voice hides the action of God. This is made explicit in the next affirmation: "on that Day, the Lord, just judge that he is, will award it to me."

However it is not a good argument to conclude that since one or two sentences are non-Paulinian that the whole letter did not come from St. Paul since these sentences could have been inserted later on. Yet, as it is, these statements are canonical and, hence, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The "Day" usually means the second coming of Christ, but it could also mean, as it is in this case, the personal encounter of St. Paul with the Lord upon his departure from this world. The second paragraph is intensely a personal testimony that it is hard to imagine that it did not come from St. Paul himself.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 18:9-14

This second parable on prayer following last Sunday's gospel contrasts two prayerful attitudes from very concrete examples during Jesus' time even naming the groups to which the individuals belong: a pharisee and a tax collector. These two groups represent the two extremes of Jewish religious ideology.

The Pharisee is the epitome of legal exactitude but their emphasis is more on the externals. Rightly were they censured by the Lord comparing them to whitened sepulchers. They consider themselves just and because of this they do not have to pray to God for forgiveness. The prayer of the Pharisee is actually expressed in the Babylonian Talmud by Rabbi Nechunyah ben Hakana (*Berakoth*, 28b). The tax collectors or "publicans" are regarded to be in the lowest rung of the Jewish religious ideal. They are usually hated by the Pharisees for working with the Romans who were the hated colonialists. They were grouped together usually with sinners and prostitutes.

However, in the parable the tax-collector only looked at his sinfulness without comparing himself to anyone nor judging others. In the estimation of the Lord "this man went home from the temple justified."

Homily

PRAY WITH HUMILITY

St. Paul *1 Cor* 12:10 says: "esteem others better than yourselves." The former Pharisee had a complete turn around. The Pharisee in the gospel was in fact following his own religious tradition but the Lord said that this was not right. This kind of prayer and self-justification makes God a debtor to us. Because he was not crooked like the rest of men, fasting twice a week and paying tithes, he thinks of himself as already justified. But Christ censured this kind of attitude and said that the Pharisee was not justified at all when he went home from the temple.

The attitude of the tax collector on the other hand is in consonance with what the Lord already said in one occasion: "judge not that you will not be judged." Only God is the judge. The Pharisee judged the tax collector as a sinner when in fact, in the eyes of God, he might have been a greater sinner than the publican. But let us not judge either.

Here another characteristic of prayer is put into focus. This is to pray with humility. "Everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled while he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

November 5, 1995

FIRST READING: WS 11:22 -12:1

The reading in today's liturgy is contextually included in the second part of the book of Wisdom which is a kind of a homily on what God did to his people during the exodus. This is given in 5 antitheses showing that the very things which God used to punish the Egyptians are "in contrast" beneficial to the Israelites. These 5 contrasts are: (1) water punishing the Egyptians while water from the rock benefited the Israelites; (2) Quails instead of harmful animals; (3) elements as rain, hail, fire favor the Israelites but punished the Egyptians; (4) pillar of fire for God's people, plague of darkness for the Egyptians; (5) the tenth plague punished the Egyptians but glorified the Israelites.

Our reading is a digression in the second antithesis triggered probably by the mention of sin in 11:6. God's immanent side and not his transcendence is presented in these verses. "For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made." What a contrast to the verdict in *Gn* 6:5 ff.!

The "imperishable spirit" should rather be linked with the "breathe of life" of *7/12:7* and not to be understood as the world-soul taught by some Greek philosophies.

SECOND READING: 2 *Th* 1:11-22

The texts of the second reading in the next three Sundays of the year in Cycle C before the feast of Christ the King are all taken from the second letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. When St. Paul was in Corinth during his second apostolic journey (*Ac* 18), he wrote two letters to the Thessalonians, in fact, these are regarded as the earliest canonical literature in the New Testament written about 52 A.D.

There is a connective in verse 11 (*eis ho*) which is omitted in the reading. It is translated as : "Because of this," and gives the reason for Paul's prayers for the Thessalonians with the concrete objective that God

would make them "worthy of his call, and fulfill by his power every honest intention and work of faith."

Eudokia agathosynes as a genitive structure is ambiguous. In the liturgical translation it is taken as an adjective so it is rendered as "honest intention," but it can also be understood as an objective genitive and, thus, can be translated as "effort of probity." "The work of faith" are works which spring forth from faith. This is regarded as a subjective genitive.

In the second paragraph, St. Paul clarified some misunderstandings on the "parousia" or the second coming of Christ which he mentioned in his first letter as it caused some negative effects on some Thessalonians. In fact his authority was being falsified even forging his signature, that is why in 3:17 he gave his signature in his own hand.

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 19:1-10

All the three synoptists are one in narrating that before Jesus made his entry to Jerusalem which we now celebrate as Palm Sunday he first passed through Jericho and there performed his last miracle of healing of a blind man (*Lk* 18:35-43; called Bartimaeus in *Mk* 10:46, two blind men in *Mt* 20:23 ff.).

St. Luke, however, added on his own two pericopes not found in Mark and Matthew: the episode about Zachaeus, a tax collector, and the parable of the nmas. The story of Zachaeus is the gospel narrative in today's Mass.

Zachaeus was a tax collector and, hence, enriched himself unjustly. There is a bit of humor in the story as the reader is presented in his imagination a short fellow trying to get a glimpse of this teacher and wonder worker. Not being able to see Jesus because of his height he climbed a sycamore tree.

Jesus looking up saw in him not a curious tax-collector but a son of Abraham. His curiosity was rewarded by a salutary visit from the Lord.

The episode has some parallel points with the call of Levi, another publican, now more known as St. Matthew.

Homily

THE RICH MAN ENTERED THE EYE OF THE NEEDLE

"It is easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." The story of Zachaeus is proof that it could be done. For God nothing is impossible. It was done before by another tax collector named Levi who became Matthew when he left his custom's table and followed Christ; it was done by a St. Francis, the son of a rich merchant who embraced Lady Poverty; it was done by a King Ferdinand, by a Princess Elizabeth.

It is not the possession of wealth or money that is evil. It is, according to St. Paul, the *philargyria*, "love of money" (1 *Tm* 6:10). It is to be enslaved by money. A person cannot serve both God and Mammon.

It is said that money may be the shit of the devil but it is good fertilizer. Money can be used very well as an instrument for good, to elevate the quality of life of peoples so that they can praise and glorify God more.

The religious embraces poverty not because it is good in itself but because it is the means to a higher good which is richness. Call it spiritual richness, the kingdom of heaven, the reign of God, but it is a great treasure towards which our hearts must be fixed.

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

November 12, 1995

FIRST READING: 2 *M* 7:1-2, 9:14

The two books of Maccabees are not accepted in the Protestant canon of Scripture but have been declared canonical by the ecumenical councils of Florence (1441), Trent (1546), and Vatican I (1870). Second Maccabees is not the continuation of First Maccabees but a parallel narrative. However the author declares that his work is an abridgment of the five books of Jason of Cyrene (2 *M* 2:23) and even offered an apology in the end if his work was "trashy and mediocre."

The liturgical reading narrates the story of the martyrdom of seven brothers including their mother during the persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) although it only reached until the martyrdom of the fourth brother. The story follows that of the martyrdom of Eleazar a teacher of the Law already advanced in years (6:18-31). This persecution of Antiochus was the main reason for the revolt of Mattathias and his 5 sons (2 M 2: 1-7): "John known as Gaddi, Simon called Thassi, Judas called Maccabaus, Eleazar (not the martyr) called Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus. As he willed before his death Mattathias designated Judas Maccabaeus as general and, hence, the whole group came to be known as Maccabaeus. The name "maccabaeus" could mean "hammer-head" or, for some, a shortened form of "makkabiah," (designated by Yahweh).

SECOND READING: 2 Th 2:16 - 3:5

After St. Paul has clarified somewhat the false understanding of some converts from Thessalonika about the second coming of the Lord which his first letter could have caused, he now prayed to the Lord Jesus and the Father to console and strengthen them. The *paraklesis aionias* which is here translated as "eternal consolation" could easily refer to the Holy Spirit and, hence giving a Trinitarian focus to the text.

The "hope" which is unqualified in the reading has an adjective in Greek, *elpis agathe*, which literally means "good hope." Does this imply that there is an "evil hope" or perhaps a false hope? Some versions translate the phrase as "joyful hope."

A missionary sensibility was touched by St. Paul among the Thessalonians to pray for the progress of the gospel and to be "glorified" (*doxadsetai*) or be "regarded in high esteem" by others.

The "confused" men in the reading are the *atopoi* in Greek which means literally "out of place, perhaps those who lost their way," but who are not necessarily "evil," or *iheponeroi*

The text has opted to understand the *touponerou* in verse 3 in the masculine which is, I think, right and translates it as "the evil one," which is different from the Vulgate reading in the neuter (*a malo*: "from evil").

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 20:27-38

It is observed that like the first chapters of the Synoptics, especially St. Mark followed more closely by St. Matthew, there is a sequence of five controversies against the Jewish authorities. So also in the last chapters before the passion we note five episodes of controversies: (1) parable of the evil laborers in the vineyard; (2) the tax for Caesar; (3) on the resurrection of the dead; (4) the greatest of all the commandments; (5) whose son in the Messiah? This is the order given in St. Mark. St. Luke omits the fourth of these since he made it the introduction to the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Lk* 10:25). The third of these controversies is our gospel for this Sunday.

The antagonists this time were the Sadducees. The issue was about the resurrection which the Sadducees did not believe in. Using the law of the levirate (*Dt* 25:5-6) as their argument they propounded to Jesus their doubt on the resurrection.

This pericope in Luke however has some notable divergencies with that of Matthew and Mark. It is commonly admitted that Mark is the most original followed by Matthew and then by Luke. The text of Matthew is here again closer to that of Mark. Luke, on the other hand, especially in the answer of Jesus, has some ideological nuances added to that of Mark which caused some biblical analysts to think that it came from another source. The basis for this opinion is weak, however, which gives more probability to the view that Luke adapted his text to the hellenistic readers of his day.

He omits, for example, *Mk* 24 and 27b, substituting the latter with: "All are alive for him." He introduces in verse 35 the idea of the two worlds (*aion*: lit. "age") — the present age and the age to come. He added in verse 36: "Sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God," perhaps to explain that "those in the age to come" will not remain spiritualized like angels but would resurrect which in hellenistic would be the union again of body and soul.

Homily

WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION

In our times the spirit of the Sadducees is still very much alive. There

are millions who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead or who live as if there is no afterlife and the resurrection. Their philosophy is summed up in a phrase in a song of the movie "Student Prince," *Gaudeamus Igitur* ("Let us, therefore, be merry") which says: *post jucundam juventutem usque istam senectutem nos habebit humus* (after a mirthful youth, until this old age, the earth will claim us").

The proliferation of memorial parks, which is a thriving business, is a sign that many are preparing for their last piece of ground as if that would be their destination for all eternity.

A monk confronted an atheist who does not believe in the afterlife and the resurrection with this argument. He said: "If I am mistaken and you are right then I would only lose perhaps about seventy years or at most a hundred years of life; but if you are wrong and I am right then you will lose a whole eternity."

The resurrection of the dead is one of the fundamental articles of our faith which we express in the Apostles Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Amen."

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

November 19, 1995

FIRST READING: *Mal* 3:19-20

The book of Malachi is the last of the prophetic books in our canon though chronologically it was not the last to be written. It antedates Daniel for more than two hundred years. Yet the name of the author seems to be unknown since the word "malachi" may not be a proper name but means "my messenger."

The "day" as already mentioned by Amos, Isaiah, Zephaniah and the other prophets is the "day of the Lord." It is a day of God's visitation either to punish the wicked or to console the just.

SECOND READING: 2 Th 3:7-12

The relationship between master and disciple, teacher and student, father and son, is here invoked by St. Paul in verses 7 and 9: you know how you ought to imitate us,... "Not that we had no claim on you..." The Thessalonians, having been converted by St. Paul, are in a way his disciples, his children.

He could sincerely claim when he stayed for about two months with them {Ac 17:1-8} that he did not live the life of an *ataktos* ("inordinate," "undisciplined") and that he worked for his food. The Thessalonians seem to be prone to laziness and was aggravated having found an excuse in misunderstanding St. Paul's doctrine on the parousia which they interpreted as imminent. Hence many of them stopped working and merited the fatherly rebuke from the apostle which, as he said, he already made a rule when he was with them that anyone "who would not work should not eat." The phrase *ou telei ergadestai*, however, does not mean in general those who are not actually working but those "who do not like to work." There may be others who like to work but could not find work or are handicapped to work like the sick, the lame, the blind. These should be the object of charity for the Christians.

GOSPEL READING: Lk 21:5-19

As the liturgical year is coming to an end our gospel for this Sunday preceding the feast of Christ the King is part of the discourse "on the parousia" or the "second coming of Christ" found among the synoptics: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The basic text is Mark which is closely followed by Matthew with some variants and again adapted by Luke to hellenistic readers and colored by his own personal experiences.

Jesus had just come out of the temple with his disciples {Mk 13:1} when he predicted its destruction on the occasion of the remark of one of his disciples {Mk} or disciples {Mt} or some individuals not identified {Lk}. Matthew specified that Jesus made this prediction while they were walking towards the Mount of Olives (24:1) since in his narrative (v. 9) and also in Mark (13:3) the discourse on the parousia was pronounced on this mountain "facing the temple." In fact in Mark the hearers were only Peter,

James, John, and Andrew (13:3), while in Matthew they were the disciples. Luke, on the contrary, gives the impression that the sermon took place in the temple precincts addressed to a crowd.

As already narrated by Matthew and Mark the discourse on the last days or eschatological sermon is a mixture of the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ. Our gospel reading is the introduction to these two themes.

What is already notable in this text of Luke, another big difference from that of Matthew and Mark, is the hint that the parousia was not imminent: "These things are bound to happen first, but the end does not follow immediately" (v. 9). He also omitted the phrase before the end that the gospel must first be preached throughout the world (*cf.* *Afk* 13:10; *Aft* 24:14) because he had the experience that during his time it was already proclaimed throughout the known world. That was at least his impression.

Homily

CHRIST'S COMING IS AWAITED WITH JOY

As the millennium is ending we now hear very often predictions of the end of the world, some terrifying which forecast that mankind would be annihilated by a nuclear holocaust. Some doomsday seers base their predictions on biblical grounds or on Nostradamus' quatrains, or on St. Malachy, bishop of Armagh's list of 112 popes beginning with Pope Celestine II (+1144). This list was published by a Benedictine monk, Arnaldus Wion, in 1595 in a book entitled *Lignum Viæ*, purported to be prophecies of St. Malachy. Every pope in this list is given a Latin phrase and our present pope, John Paul II is already the 110th in this list under the title *De Lahore Soils*. Only two more popes are included in the list: the 111th called *De Gloria Olivæ* and the last is Petrus Romanus. It is interpreted that the last of the popes will also have the name of Peter as the first one. Many serious critics, however, do not believe that these prophecies came from St. Malachy himself who died in 1148 but suspect that it was the work of Arnaldus Wion.

Our government is more optimistic launching the "Philippines 2000" movement to propel the country to NIChood (Newly Industrialized

Country). The target is the end of the twentieth century but it will actually go on towards the next millennium starting with the year 2001.

The Church is more prudent in this issue of the parousia or Christ's second coming. Actually the eschatological age has already started with the resurrection and ascension of Christ to heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit. There is, of course, the tension between the "now" and the "not yet." The reign of God has already come towards its *pleroma*, its fulfillment at the end of time which corresponds to the second coming of the Lord. This is what we profess during the Mass after the consecration: "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

A Christian, therefore, should not worry about the parousia or second coming of Christ. It Should rather be a joyful event. In fact the Christians of the first century pray that it would come during their time in the expression *maran atha* ("the Lord is coming") or *marana tha* ("O Lord, come").

SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST, THE KING OF THE UNIVERSE November 26,1995

FIRST READING: 2 S 5:1-3

David was actually anointed king three times according to biblical tradition: first when he was still a boy in Bethlehem (2 S 16:13; then by the people of Judah after the death of Saul when David transferred from Ziklag to Hebron (2 S 2:4); and the story in our liturgical reading when he was anointed by the Israelites (2 S 5:3) thus constituting him king of both Judah and Israel.

It was in fact only during David's time that the people purported to have come from Abraham became united. This unity was again disrupted after the death of Solomon creating the two kingdoms of the north and the south. They were never united again until the destruction of the northern kingdom when refugees from the north migrated to the south and joined the kingdom of Judah where the dynasty of David continued until the birth of the Messiah, the son of David, who formed the new messianic kingdom.

SECOND READING: *Col* 1:12-20

Verses 12-20 of Colossians are part in Greek of a long sentence starting from verse 9 and ending in verse 20. It can be divided into several sentences in English which was done in our liturgical reading.

The perspective of this letter about Christ is cosmic which justifies its choice for this Sunday's solemnity of Christ the King. This is the focus of the hymn in verses 15-20: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures."

There is no account in the Acts that St. Paul ever visited Colossae, but this place which is south-west of Laodicea was evangelized by Epaphras (v. 7) perhaps when St. Paul was in Ephesus (cL4c 19:26) who was the one who presented to the attention of Paul the problems facing the Colossians making Christ equal to other cosmic forces.

Paul stresses the fact that Christ is greater than all these forces: "He is before all else." The phrase "first-born of all creatures" does not place Christ in the category of creatures. Grammatically it is taken as a genitive of comparison which can roughly be translated as "first who was born than any other creature."

Another kind of adjective is found in verse 18 where the expression has: *kephale somatos tes ekklesias* (lit. "head of the body of the Church"). The phrase "of the Church" is understood as an epexegetic genitive or genitive of apposition where the "of" is equivalent to a comma. Hence the translation would be "head of the body, the Church" as it is given in our liturgical text.

We have in the passage St. Paul's doxology of Christ, his primacy over all creation. By means of Christ, God "reconciles everything both on earth and in the heavens."

GOSPEL READING: *Lk* 23:35-43

On the feast of Christ the King, Cycle C presents the gospel of Luke taking the text from the narrative of the crucifixion until the words to the good thief which is the second "word" of the 7 Last Words of Good Friday.

"The leaders kept jeering (*exemykteridson*) at Jesus (lit. "having one's nose corrugated"; *mykter* means "nose"). The passage is parallel to *Mk* 15:31-32 but Luke omits "the phrase "king of Israel" which may not be understood by his gentile readers. The words of the soldiers in verse 37 and the title of the cross in verse 38 say: "king of the Jews." There is clear reference here, as far as the insults are concerned, with P[^] 22:8, but Luke removed any allusion to the insults of the passing crowd which is present in Mark. He seems to emphasize more the role of the Jewish leaders in the crucifixion who persecuted Jesus until the end.

For the first time in his narrative of the crucifixion Luke mentions "the soldiers" in verse 36. But what is most peculiar in his story is the pardon of the good thief. This is mentioned in a general way by *Mk* 15:32 that those who were crucified (*synestauromenoi*) with him insulted him. St. Luke says that only one was blaspheming him avoiding the word "crucified" and only reserving it to Jesus. For the criminals he used the word "hanging" (*kremasthenton*). The addition of "in crucifixion" in our reading is not in the Greek text.

"Remember me when you enter upon your reign" (or "into your kingdom"). This is the usual translation. But it has an alternative rendition depending upon the original preposition whether *eis* or *en*. If it is *en* then it can be taken as locative and would have the sense of *eis* = "into." But it can also be taken as associative with the meaning of "with" and in this case, *baseleia* would mean not "kingdom" but "royalty" or "power." It can then be translated: "Remember me when you come (*erchomai elthes*) with your power or in your majesty." Paradise is a Persian word which means "garden." In Rabbinic theology (cf. 4 Ezra, 4, 7) it is a supra-terrestrial place.

Homily

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GOVERNMENT IN CHRIST'S REIGN . \

Monarchy as a form of government is a disappearing breed. In some countries where it still exists it is just functioning within honorary role. The real power is in parliament or in legislature headed by a prime minister.

Yet the Church has remained monarchic in its own way. There is a sole head with the power to bind and to loose. But it is also very democratic starting with the college of bishops in the whole Church, the presbyteral college in dioceses, and pastoral councils with lay people as members in parishes.

There is truly one true head who is unchangeable because, in fact, his sovereignty is above all creation. He is Christ our King, the head of the mystical body, the Church, represented on earth by his Vicar, the Pope of Rome, successor of St. Peter.

There is no government on earth which would compare with the kingdom of Christ. It has its own laws, the law of the Spirit; it has its own judiciary procedures; it has its own army which engages not armies of flesh and blood but powers of darkness. The head of this army is also Christ as depicted in Rv 19.

The economic system in this kingdom is not ruled by the "monetary system." It is regulated by the "love-system," hence its option for the poor who may have less in wealth but more in grace because of their nearness to God.

