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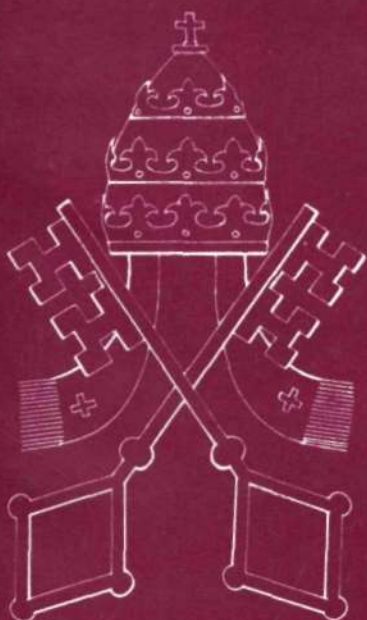
January -February 1996

THE MYSTERY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURE
Herman Mueller, SVD

TERTIO MILLENNIO ADVENIENTE
John Paul II

THE SACRAMENTAL SEAL
Excelso Garcia, O.P.

FESTAL HOMILIES
Efren Rivera, O.P.



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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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times when **all** the inspired authors said their "yes" to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and wrote their book.

1. Holy Scripture a Second Incarnation

Thus it is true, Holy Scripture is a second incarnation. This is an analogy, but a true analogy. The Holy Spirit and a man. Our Blessed Lady was at work to bring forth the God-man, Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit and a man, the inspired author, were at work to produce a divine-human book, Jesus Christ in Holy Scripture. Jesus is God and man on earth, Christ is God and man in Scripture.

Thus we can unfold this analogy a little.

1. Christ is God

a) on earth, as we can see

(1) in *Mt.* 15:21-28 : The Canaanite Woman

- 21 Then Jesus went from that place and withdrew to the region of Tyre and Si don.
- 22 And behold, a Canaanite woman of that district came and called out, "Have pity on me, Lord, Son of David! My daughter is tormented by a demon."
- 23 But he did not say a word in answer to her. His disciples came and asked him, "Send her away, for she keeps calling out after us."
- 24 He said in reply, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
- 25 But the woman came and did him homage, saying, "Lord, help me."
- 26 He said in reply, "It is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs."
- 27 She said, "Please, Lord, for even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from the table of their masters."
- 28 Then Jesus said to her in reply, "O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed from that hour.

Here is a Canaanite, a pagan woman, whose daughter is possessed by a demon. And she looks for a cure for her. How she was told about Jesus we do not know. But she was convinced, if anybody could help her it was this Jesus of Nazareth. And so she presented her petition.

But Jesus does not even answer her. How impolite! Her persistence gets on the nerves of the apostles who intervene and ask Jesus to help so that they can get rid of her.

And now, when the Lord finally answers it is a clear "no": Christ cannot help since he is sent only to the lost sheep of Israel, not to the pagans (15:24).² That is the mystery of the Father's mission of Jesus. The Jews are the chosen children of God and consequently it would be like taking the bread away from the children and casting it to the dogs, would the Lord grant the petition of the Canaanite woman.

"To call a person a dog was a deadly and a contemptuous insult. The Jews spoke with arrogant insolence about 'Gentile dogs,' infidel dogs,' and later 'Christian dogs.'"³

But the woman sees the divinity of Jesus shine through and presents the climax of her faithful petition. Yes it is true, she as pagan is only like a dog. But there are dogs and doggies, whom the children of the house like and give them some crumbs, falling from the table, not the precious food which is only for the children. She is satisfied with some crumbs. The woman has faith and a sense of humor.⁴

Here the Lord can no longer resist and gives her what she wants: the healing of her daughter.

The conclusion is obvious: Had the woman not seen something about the divinity of Christ she would have turned her back on Jesus and have said: "Jump into the lake from my part. I do not take your insult."

(2) in *Mt* 14:22-33: Peter walks on water

- 22 Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds.
- 23 After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone.

²Joachim Jeremias. *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*. Studies in Biblical Theology 24 (London: SCM Press, 1967), p. 26.

³William Barclay. *The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 2 Chapters 11-28*. The Daily Study Bible (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1986), p. 122.

⁴John P. Meier. *Matthew*. New Testament Message 3 (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1980), p. 172.

- 24 Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waters, for the wind was against it.
- 25 During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea.
- 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear.
- 27 At once (Jesus) spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."
- 28 Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water."
- 29 He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus.
- 30 But when he saw how (strong) the wind was he became frightened; and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"
- 31 Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him: "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"
- 32 After they got into the boat, the wind died down.
- 33 Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying: "Truly, you are the Son of God."

The context of the story shows: Christ had multiplied the loaves (*Mt* 14:13-21) as a symbol of the Holy Eucharist, where he would be the bread of life. The next morning he would in the synagogue of Capernaum deliver one of his most important speeches about the institution of Holy Eucharist (*Jn* 6:22-71), climaxing in the sentence: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him on the last day" (*Jn* 6:53-54). The reaction of many would be: "How can he say this. This is cannibalism (*cf.* *Jn* 6:60)". And so Christ prayed the whole night for the success of this sermon, so that at least his disciples would not be scandalized but say with Peter: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (*Jn* 6:68).

At 3:00 A.M. Jesus leaves the mountain and walks on the water of the lake toward his disciples whom he had sent ahead. When they see him, they are frightened and take him for a ghost. It needs the distinction of the spirits to see who is who. But Jesus reassures his disciples and says: "It is I, do not be afraid." It is the same answer Yahweh gives in the Old Testament theophanies: "It is I, fear not," which "probably means what it meant in *Ex* 3:14: 'I am here to save you'".⁵

⁵John P. Meier. Matthew, 165.

Then and there Peter feels the need to show his love for the Lord and says: "Lord, if it is really you tell me to come to you across the water" (11:28). And the Lord just says: ""Come!"

And then the unheard of happens: Peter leaves the boat and walks on the water, where nobody had ever walked before. He does not ask: "What do the other apostles do? Do they do the same?" He feels he has to show his love for his master. And as long as he looks at Jesus, he succeeds and walks. But as soon as he feels the wind in his face, sees the big waves and forgets to look at Jesus, he doubts and he sinks. But he has at least that much faith left that he shouts: "Lord, save me!". And the Lord takes him by the hand and soon they are ashore.

The conclusion is the same as with the Canaanite woman: Had Peter not been convinced that Jesus is the Son of God (not that he did already know that Jesus is the second person in the Blessed Trinity), he would never have walked across the water.

b) in Scripture

(1) *Mt* 5-7: The Sermon on the Mount

One can certainly see something about the divinity of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. It is the magna carta of Christianity. "It is the jewel of Matthew's gospel."⁶

It is said, the great Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi was enthusiastic about the Sermon on the Mount and would have gladly given away his books could he have claimed authorship of the Sermon on the Mount. And he has been quoted as saying: "You Christians would make me almost a Christian if you would live the Sermon on the Mount. But that is the trouble, you do not live it."

(2) *Jn* 14-17: The Farewell Address equally reveals the divinity of Christ. The topic is unique: "You are sad that I go and die, in reality you should be glad because I go to establish the union between me and you that you and I are one as the Father and I are one." And that union

⁶Peter F. Ellis. *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 1974), p. 31.

he explains by the parable of the vine and branches. The same sap, the same divine life pulsates in vine and branches, in branch and branch.⁷

2. Christ is man

a) on earth. This nowadays hardly anybody doubts as it was in the beginning of Christianity. After all, he was hungry and thirsty (*Mt* 4:2), he was so tired that the apostles had a hard time waking him up when he was sleeping on the cushion (*Mk* 4:38), he suffered as we see in the passion story in all gospels.

b) in Scripture. One good example is Christ's genealogy in *Mr* 1. Christ becomes so human that he has in his genealogy four women of whom we would be ashamed. But he is not. And these four women are Tamar (1:3 "Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar"), Rahab (1:5 "Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab"), Ruth (1:5 "Boaz became the father of Obed, whose mother was Ruth") and Bathsheba (1:6 "David became the father of Solomon, whose mother had been the wife of Uriah").

(1) Tamar⁸

Tamar was the daughter-in-law of Judah. She had married the first son of Judah: Er. But Er "greatly offended the Lord, so the Lord took his life" (*Gn* 38:7). What the offense consisted of is not said. Now according to the Levirate marriage law (levir = brother-in-law) in *Dt* 25:5-10 Tamar married the second son of Judah: Onan. and the first child of Onan would have been considered the child of Er. 'Onan, however, knew that the descendants would not be counted as his; so whenever he had relations with his brother's widow, he wasted his seed on the ground, to avoid contributing offspring for his brother" (*Gn* 38:9). This hatred of Onan of his brother Er the Lord resented and he let Onan die (*Gn* 38:10). Now Tamar was supposed to marry the third son of Judah: Shelah. But

Raymond E. Brown, S.S. The Gospel according to John (XIU-XXI). The Anchor Bible 29A (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1970), p. 581-582 writes: "The Last Discourse partakes of the glory of "the hour" and surpasses in nobility and majesty even the most solemn discourses of the ministry... Jesus speaks to "his own" (XIII 1) for whom he is willing to lay down his life, so intense is his love (XV 13)... Although he speaks at the Last Supper, he is really speaking from heaven."

⁸For details see: Gerhard von Rad. Genesis. Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972) pp. 355-362.

meanwhile Judah had his second thoughts: Why did two of his sons already die? Was there perhaps something wrong with his daughter-in-law Tamar? Thus he postponed the marriage between Tamar and Shelah.

But clever as Tamar was she took her fate into her own hands and thought: "I have a right to marry Shelah." She knew that men can live a double life. Thus when her father-in-law Judah, after his wife had died, went to shear his sheep, Tamar saw her opportunity, dressed as a harlot, and Judah asked to have relations with her. She agreed under the condition that he would send her a sheep. He had to give her as a pledge his ring for signing documents. When Judah next morning sent a servant with the sheep the "prostitute" was gone and Judah did not get back his ring to his great embarrassment. After some months it was reported to Judah that his daughter-in-law was with child. Judah wanted to burn her. But she quietly showed him his ring and Judah knew that she had the child from him. So he had to admit: "She is more in the right than I, since I did not give her to my son Shelah" (*Gn* 38:26).

(2) Rahab was the prostitute of Jericho.

The story we find in *Jos* 2.⁸ Joshua secretly sent out two spies to Jericho to find out how it could be conquered. Rahab was hiding these two Jewish spies in her house, on her roof among stalks of flax. Her house was built into the city wall so that opening her windows meant opening the city wall at the same time. Thus, when some people of Jericho did not find the Jewish spies on top of the roof of Rahab, she let them out of the city wall with the request that the Jews should spare her house when they conquered Jericho, which they promised and which was actually done, when the Jews conquered the city (*Jos* 6:23).

As a reward the Lord takes Rahab into the genealogy of the Messiah. She becomes the mother of Boaz (*Mi* 1:5).

(3) Ruth was not a bad woman, but a pagan. And the Jews were very particular that their genealogy should be pure. The book of Ruth tells us the story. In the time of the Judges there was famine in the land and also in Bethlehem. And so Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and his sons Mahlon and Chilion left Bethlehem for Moab. Elimelech died and Naomi

⁸J. Alberto Soggin. Joshua: A Commentary. The Old Testament Library (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1972), p. 34-43.

was left behind with her two sons who had married Moabite women: Orpah and Ruth. After ten years Mahlon and Chilion died and Naomi was left alone with her two daughters-in-law Orpah and Ruth. When the famine in Bethlehem was over Naomi decided to go back to Bethlehem. Naomi suggested to the two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab. After all, they did not know Bethlehem and their two husbands were dead. They would better stay in Moab and marry other husbands from Moab. Orpah took the advice and stayed in Moab. But Ruth said the wonderful word: "Wherever you go I will go, wherever you lodge I will lodge, your people shall be my people, and your God shall be my God" (*Ruth* 1:15). It was unknowingly faith in the Messiah.

Naomi has a kinsman by the name Boaz, of the clan of her husband Elimelech. In his field Ruth gleanes ears of grain. And at the end Boaz marries Ruth. And the son of Boaz and Ruth is Obed (*Mt* 1:5).

(4) Bathshebah is mentioned only indirectly in *Mt* 1:6. Her name is connected with David's greatest sin in *2 S* 11. One evening David rose from his siesta and strolled about on the roof of the palace, from where he saw a woman bathing, Bathshebah. He calls for her, had relations with her. When a child was on the way David wanted to hide it and calls Bathshebah's husband Uriah from the battle lines to go home to his wife. But Uriah refused to go home. During the war he wanted to make a sacrifice and had no sexual relations. Even when David made Uriah drunk he did not go home. Thus David added one more sin by asking his general Joab to place Uriah at a dangerous spot that he would die in an attack, which actually happens. Thus David married Bathshebah. But the Lord let the first child die. The second child of David and Bathshebah was Solomon.

The Lord is not ashamed to have such a person in his genealogy.

2. Greatness of Scripture

The greatness of Scripture consists in this that what, objectively speaking, happened about 2000 years ago: Christ's preaching, his miracles, his suffering, death and resurrection becomes now subjectively speaking available for us in Scripture, since Christ is present in Scripture. He can tell us: "Do not feel bad that you were not living 2000 years ago. I am in your reach now in Scripture."

Yet in a way we even have some advantages over the contemporaries of Christ. They could not come to him any time of the day but had to wait till he was available. In *Lk* 4:43 the crowd is looking for Jesus. But they cannot find him, since he has left for a deserted place to pray. They can listen to him only afterwards.

That will never happen to us with Christ in Scripture. We have a hotline to Christ in Scripture, which is never busy. It is our private line. And we can listen to Christ in Scripture day and night. We do not have to wait. We have our own Bible and thus can listen to Christ anytime.

People did not dare to approach the Lord in any dress. That was not proper. Thus Peter, after Easter, when his friend John told him that the Lord was standing at the shore of the Lake of Gennesareth did not see it proper to jump into the lake lightly dressed as fishermen, "but tucks in his garment" (*Jn* 21:7).

In our own situation, I think the Lord would not mind if I read Scripture at night in pajamas.

II. HOLY SCRIPTURE A MYSTERY OF TRUTH.

Christ on earth was god-man. Thus he could not sin.

Christ in Scripture is equally god-man, and therefore he cannot lie. Holy Scripture is infallible. As simple as that sounds, it is rather complex. Because infallible in Scripture is only what the author wants to teach, not what he uses as a comparison. Thus we have to know something about literary forms.

Suppose, a Filipino invites a friend in New Guinea who has never seen anything but Papua New Guinea to come to the Philippines and tries to impress his friend about the beauty of the Philippines, saying: "In the Philippines it is even raining cats and dogs." Then the friend may think: "How wonderful that is. There are no meat problems in the Philippines. One just catches the cats and the dogs, slaughters and fries them. And has always meat, if one likes dogmeat." But when the friend comes to the Philippines he finds out, this is only a literary form for saying: "It rains mightily."

There are many such literary forms in the Bible, different from our

literary forms. And so we have to learn the meaning of these different literary forms if we went to understand the Bible correctly. Just to mention a few:

Instead of saying "Man consists of body and soul, where the body decays and the soul goes on, the Bible says: "Man is a breathing dust. God created man from clay." Dust signifies the material element, breath the spiritual part of man.

The fact that man and woman have the same dignity, that woman is the dream of a man, that woman is the better half, the support of a man is expressed by the picture that God created woman from the rib of man.

The author wants to tell us that only old people are venerable. Youngsters are stupid and have to keep quiet. Thus the patriarchs from whom we all descend were very venerable. Consequently he gives them a "beard" of almost a thousand years. A thousand years would have been perfect, too perfect. Obviously, the ages must not be taken literally. If we take them literally, nine generations would have lived at the same time. Adam would still have seen the birth of Lamech who was born in the year 874 from the beginning of the world and belonged to the ninth generation, whereas Adam died in the year 930 from the beginning of the world.

The Oriental kings have even more fantastic numbers and live on an average 45,600 years, and if we divide them by sars, 3,600 years, then a king lived on an average 9 sars. Bruce Vawter has the Berossos list of kings and the Weld Blundell 444 and Weld Blundell 62.¹⁰

in. HOLY SCRIPTURE IS A MYSTERY OF LOVE

If we ask ourselves why certain totalitarian systems, like the Nazis, the Communists, the Fascists succeeded in making people members of their systems the answer is: They exposed people day and night to their propaganda.

If that is true for bad things it is even more true for good things.- If we listen with attention and love to Jesus Christ present in Scripture

¹⁰On Genesis: A New Reading (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1977), p. 104-105.

we will slowly become transformed into him.

Thus there are three steps in this process of love:

1. listen,
2. obey,
3. become transformed into Christ.

1. Whenever we read Scripture or Scripture is read to us, we want to listen to Christ, present in Scripture. After all, we cannot remain neutral. What Scripture tells us is not just information, which can leave us cold, but a message, telling us to take a stand. If we accept Christ, present in Scripture, we have already eternal life now and we will rise on the last day. But if we do not accept Christ, we have condemned ourselves. Christ does not condemn anybody. We condemn ourselves. That is what the Lord tells us in *Jn 5:24-25*: 24 "Amen, amen I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me, has eternal life and will not come to condemnation, but has passed from death to life. Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live."

2. Thus we reflect for a while, ask ourselves what the Lord wants to tell us with the particular passage or pericope and do the second step: We obey Christ, present in Scripture. From the hearing comes the obedience.

The different languages have sensed this connection by coining the expressions: *audire - obedire* (in Latin)

hören-gehören (in German).

If we listen with love and care we will obey.

3. The result of this obeying is the being transformed into Christ. This connection is again expressed in German
gehören-gehören.

By obeying we belong to Christ, become transformed into Christ.

IV. SOME PRACTICAL POINTS FOR SCRIPTURE READING

1. Pray to the Holy Spirit!

Since the Holy Spirit inspired Holy Scripture he holds the key for the understanding of the Bible. Thus we should turn to him in a short prayer before we read a passage of Holy Scripture that he may enlighten

us to understand the meaning of a passage and move us to put the insight into action.

2. Read

a. every day! The Bible is not a novel, or a biography which one reads once and then not any more, but often, even every day, since Christ in Scripture is a daily companion.

b. in short portions. Since many parts of the Bible, especially in the New Testament, are short parables, short sayings, independent from one another, one cannot read them for hours in a sequence, otherwise one would not understand them.

One must read them in small portions, let them sink in, let them make their impression and then act on them.

One could compare the Bible with a box of chocolates, or a box of ice cream which one eats in small portions to relish them. One does not eat them in one session, otherwise one gets an upset stomach. Or one can think of it as a book of jokes. Such a book one does not read in one session either, otherwise one gets dull and is not able to tell any joke. How often are people asked to tell a joke at a get-together. Many are not able to do so because they have not made it a habit to read a joke and tell it the next opportunity, lest they forget it.

I have often told the joke of a missionary who went through the African bush, when all of a sudden a lion came. Scared to death the missionary closed his eyes and prayed: "Lord, make a good Christian out of this lion!" When the missionary hesitatingly opened his eyes to see what had happened he could not believe his eyes: There the lion was, he had gotten on his hind paws and put the front paws together and prayed: "Bless, us O Lord and these your gifts which we are about to receive from your bounty through Christ our Lord." If you have told that joke once you cannot forget it. If we tell small portions and insights from Scripture we cannot forget them.

3. Read Scripture

a. cursorily

That means read all the books of Scripture. Do not except any, not even "dry" books like Leviticus. God has inspired them all, and thus they are worth reading.

Some truths of our faith are mentioned several times in Scripture, others seldom. And thus if we would exclude certain books from reading we would miss these truths.

- One good example is the doctrine about purgatory in 2 *M* 12:38-46. Judas the Maccabean readies his soldiers killed in action for burial. Under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had been slain, They all therefore praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully plotted out. The noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been *useless* and *foolish to pray for them in death*. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin.

Several fallen soldiers have committed a light act of idolatry, as one finds out when they are readied for burial: They wore pagan amulets. Judas wants to atone for their sins by sending a collection of money for atoning sacrifices in Jerusalem.

Where were these soldiers killed in action? That is not said but we conclude it. Not in heaven because we do not pray for anybody in heaven. He does not need our prayer. They were not not in hell either. For we can pray as long as we want for somebody in hell. He will never get out of hell. Thus they must have been in a place in between, which we call purgatory. The name is not found in Scripture, but the reality. Judas

has sacrifices offered in Jerusalem for the atonement for the dead that they might be freed from their sin.

Protestants have difficulties to admit the purgatory,, since they do not recognize the Books of the Maccabeess as inspired. For them they are apocrypha. We call them deuterocanonical.

b. under certain topics we shall read the Bible.
Some such topics would be Holy Eucharist, Blessed Virgin Mary, Holy Spirit, generosity, self-denial, prayer, imitation of Christ, suffering, heaven, hell, last judgment etc.

There are Topical Concordances e.g. D.M. Miller, The Topical Bible Concordance Manila: OMF Literature Inc. 1993. But the point is we could and should make our own topical concordance, because then everything becomes more personal and part of ourselves. It will be very handy for giving sermons, talks or conferences.

4. Be convinced that Scripture was written for you personally, not just for the contemporaries of Christ or the Jews!

a. Rom 15:4 we read: "For whatever was written previously was written for our instruction, that by endurance and by the encouragement of scriptures we might have hope."

b. And in 1 Cor 10:1-8 Paul writes to the Corinthians:

- 1 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea,
- 2 and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.
- 3 All ate the same spiritual food,
- 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was the Christ.
- 5 Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert.
- 6 These things happened as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things, as they did.
- 7 And do not become idolaters, as some of them did, as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to ravel."
- 8 Let us not test Christ as some of them did, and suffered death by serpents.

The apostle refers to the incident in Ex 17:1-7 and tells the Corinthians; "Do not make the same mistake as the Jews made in the desert. They thought it would be enough for them to be circumcised and thus be children of Moses and have the guarantee of salvation and be able to go to the promised land. After all, they were fed with manna and drank the water from the rock. In reality however nobody entered the promised land with the exception of Joshua and Caleb since the Jews did not do what the law entailed. And then Paul continues and tells the Corinthians: "See yourselves on the screen in Ex 17:1-7! If we do not live a life of unity and break up in factions you will not be saved."

c. Lk 5:1011 The great catch of fish was a text of Scripture which a theologian in World War II took as written for him and found an answer to his problem.

- 1 While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret.
- 2 He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets.
- 3 Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.
- 4 After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."
- 5 Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets."
- 6 When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing.
- 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking.
- 8 When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."
- 9 For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized them and all those with him,
- 10 and likewise James, and John, the sons of Zebedee who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men."

The theologian slowly got discouraged the longer the war was dragging on. Would he ever get out of the war alive? Would he wind

up in one of the concentration camps in Siberia of which we do not know much yet, since they have been kept secret.

With this depressive mood he came to one of the rare Masses during the war, and on one Sunday above gospel was read. Then the theologian said to himself: "Am I not written on the screen? Am I not in the same situation in which Peter was? He had tried to catch fish the whole night without success. And now the Lord comes and tells him: "Lower the nets for a catch." Peter was certainly tempted to tell Christ: "Lord, you certainly know Scripture, but if you do know much about catching fish, I am not so sure. After all, if we did not catch anything during the night, the best time for catching fish, we will not catch anything during bright daylight." But Peter suppresses the uncharitable remark and says: "What you say, Lord, makes always sense, even if I do not understand it. Thus I will lower the nets." And then he catches so many fish that it is almost too much for two boats.

And so the theologian concluded: "For me to serve in the army is waste of time and does not make sense. But I can say: 'I did not volunteer, I was drafted and acted out of obedience.' And so I will continue, even if I do not understand the meaning of it."

Thus the theologian found an answer to his problem in Lk 5:10-11 although Luke certainly did not think of that theologian in World War II when he wrote that pericope and it is not the literal sense. It goes to show, we will find answers to our problems in Scripture if we keep on listening long enough.

5. Read Scripture with great reverence!

Scripture is the word of God. And thus it is infinite. We never come to an end. We always get new insights, if we read Scripture with reverence and awe. We may have studied or taught Scripture for many years, we are still beginners. And there is only one master: Jesus Christ.

But if we should think: I have heard it so often, I know it all, the Lord will not open our eyes and ears.

6. Write down your insights and read them from time to time!

Forgetful as we are we must not think that we will always remember the insights the Lord gave us, when we read a certain pericope of Scripture.

Rather we should write down whatever insight the Lord gave us.

And the insights become more vivid if we read them from time to time. We might be surprised to see how early a certain insight dawned on us.

CONCLUSION

A priest is

1. a man of the word of God.
2. a priest who administers the sacraments, especially Holy Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation,
3. a pastor who
 - a. goes ahead and gives the direction,
 - b. and is at the same time always in reach and available.
4. a man who prays for the people of God and the whole world.

With above pages we have seen something about the priest as the man of the word of God.

The Sacramental Seal

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.

/ usually help in our Parish Office in whatever the Parish Priest tells me to do. There are two young priests, A. and B., appointed as Parochial Vicars. Not having yet much experience in their priestly ministry, they communicate to each other their difficulties. Moreover, they consult each other about problems they meet in hearing confessions. In sharing these problems, they lack prudence, I think, in the way they talk in the office, so much so that sometimes I can hear things that belong only to the confessional. The most serious thing is that the faithful, who confess to them, comment saying that both priests, A. and B., behave exactly in the same way when they give some advise to the penitents, raising suspicion that probably they communicate to each other what the penitents reveal in the confessional and eventually they can identify the penitents.

I have told the Parish Priest about this and he has reminded them of the seriousness of their obligation to keep the sacramental seal, which binds the confessor not to make use outside the confessional anything he hears during the confession. Both replied that they know how strict the church's law is regarding the sacramental seal. Considering their answer, the Parish priest believes that nothing else can be done.

May I ask whether these two priests are correct in sharing their-experiences in the confessional? And what else, if there is anything, can be done by the Parish Priest? Don't you think it would be good to explain in the Boletin Ecclesiastico the obligation to keep the sacramental seal,

what it implies and how prudent the confessor should be in using any knowledge he acquires in the confessional?

A Religious Sister

The case the Religious Sister sent us deals with a delicate matter, the sacramental seal. We will try to answer her by giving a general idea of the sacramental seal and its implications. Then we shall comment on the behavior of the two Parochial Vicars and on what the Parish Priest could really do. For more detailed information, our readers may consult any manual of Moral Theology dealing with the Sacrament of Penance.

Notion of Sacramental Seal

The sacramental seal is a most serious obligation binding the confessor and accidentally other persons, who have knowledge of confessional matters, to keep secret everything declared to him by the penitent in order to receive sacramental absolution, since such revelation would cause harm to the penitent and render odious the sacrament of Penance. The obligation to keep the sacramental seal is most serious. It does not admit of any exception, unless the penitent himself gives express permission to the Confessor to talk about what has been declared to him in confession. It continues to bind even after the penitent's death.

The sacramental seal always binds under mortal sin if it is directly violated; indirect violation admits exceptions, according to circumstances.

Subject of Sacramental Seal

The person who is mainly bound to keep the sacramental seal is the priest who, with or without jurisdiction, hears the confession; secondarily, all other persons who, in one way or another, have come to know something that has been declared in confession, are also bound to keep the secret. The penitent himself is not bound by such obligation.

Hence, the following persons are specifically bound to keep the sacramental seal:

1. The confessor. A person who simulates himself as confessor is likewise bound by the secret (St. Thomas, 4, dist. 2, q. 3, a. 1, sol. 3);

2. The interpreter, who perhaps has been used during the confession **and** others who, in one way or another, came to know the sins confessed (can. 983, 2);

3. The superior to whom the confessor or the patient had recourse for absolution in cases that are reserved;

4. The theologian or canonist whom the confessor has consulted with the express permission of the penitent;

5. Readers of a written confession, especially if found in possession of the confessor or in the confessional.

Although the penitent is not bound to keep the sacramental seal through which his good name is respected and protected, he is bound however to keep in secrecy what has been told to him by the confessor, especially if some harm can follow its revelation.

The Object of Sacramental Seal.

The object of the sacramental seal is twofold, namely, the penitent and the sins confessed by him in view of sacramental absolution. The confessor is not strictly forbidden to talk about the penitent, provided that he does not mention in any way the sins the penitent confessed, or about other sins confessed to him as long as no reference whatsoever is made about the penitent.

The sins constituting the direct object of the sacramental seal include the following:

a) all mortal sins confessed by the penitent concerned, without exception, both in general or in detail; also, all venial sins, individually confessed, unless they are known by the confessor through other sources. Sacramental seal always presupposes sacramental confession or accusation of sins. It does not require, however, that absolution has been given; and

b) all things that are known only by the confessor, the revelation of which can cause harm to the penitent.

The indirect object of the sacramental seal is everything revealed by the confessor, which may raise real suspicion about the penitent's sins, like the latter's impatience or ill-disposition to receive the confessor's advice

(related to sins revealed in confession). All this may reflect the gravity of sins confessed or the difficulty in granting absolution.

The consequences of the foregoing are:

a) the confessor is duty-bound to keep the seal even when absolution is denied to the sinner;

b) the confessor cannot reveal the penance imposed on the sinner, at least if the penance is serious, since the gravity of sins can be deduced from a serious penance;

c) included in the object of the sacramental seal is the name of the penitent's accomplice and the denial of absolution;

d) the confessor cannot reveal the penitent's natural defects, like his being scrupulous, if these defects are known only through confession and the penitent tries to hid them from public knowledge;

e) the confessor must exercise utmost prudence in participating in conversations where public events or notorious sinners are the topic. He should not reveal that such facts or events have been confessed to him or such persons have already confessed to him; and

f) the confessor should refrain from commenting on the spiritual condition of his penitents, even if they are proficient in holiness. Canon 1550, 2, n. 2 reads: "The following are deemed incapable of being witnesses: priests, in respect of everything which has become known to them in sacramental confession, even if the penitent has asked that these things be made known. Moreover, anything that may in any way have been heard by anyone on the occasion of confession, cannot be accepted even as an indication of the truth."

However, the confessor is not duty-bound to keep the sacramental seal when the penitent does not intend to confess his sins, but is merely seeking the confessor's advice or opinion on any problem, or has the evil intention to tempt the confessor himself or declare his evil life in order to ask the confessor's financial help. The reason for the sacramental seal is sacramental confession alone.

Outside the confessional, the confessor should not talk with the penitent about sins revealed to him in confession, unless the penitent freely

allows him to do so. However, during confession, the confessor can talk to the penitent about sins previously confessed by the penitent. When a penitent has confessed the same sins to different confessors, they cannot talk about the penitent's sins, unless the penitent expressly allows them to do so.

Sources of this Serious Obligation

The obligation to keep the sacramental seal is most serious, so much so that its violation (at least the direct violation) is always a mortal sin. The gravity of the obligation binding the sacramental seal springs from three sources, namely: a) natural law, b) divine positive law, c) ecclesiastical law.

a) Natural law. The penitent declares his sins to the confessor on condition that the latter shall keep strict secrecy about the sins the former declares to him. Confession should be considered as a quasi-contract, the violation of which is tantamount to defamation, forbidden by natural law due to the harm done to the good name of the penitent.

b) Divine positive law. The Lord instituted the sacrament of Penance as a judgment wherein the penitent confessing his own sins is the accuser, the accused and the witness, and the confessor, representing God, is the judge. Hence, the sacramental seal springs from the divine law itself; otherwise the declaration of one's sins would be morally impossible.

c) Ecclesiastical law. The Church has always reminded confessors of this most strict obligation. The Lateran Council IV in its chapter on the Sacraments stated: "Let the confessor take care, lest by word or signs or any other way whatsoever he may at any time betray the sinner; but if he should need more prudent counsel, he should seek it cautiously without any mention of the person, since he who shall presume to reveal a sin entrusted to him in confession, we decree not only must be deposed from priestly office but must also be thrust into a strict monastery to do perpetual penance" (R. Deferrari, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 438).

On November 18, 1682, the Holy Office rejected the following proposition: "As long as there is no direct or indirect violation of the sacramental seal and there is no burden upon the penitent, it is lawful to use the knowledge obtained in confession, unless a much greater burden follows from not using said knowledge, when comparing the latter with

the former" (Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum, Definitionum, Declarationum*, 2195, p. 470). This was confirmed by Pope Innocent XI, who said: "The above proposition, even with the aforesaid explanation or limitation, must be altogether prohibited inasmuch as it admits the use of said knowledge with a burden upon the penitent" (R. Deferrari, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 1220).

Canon 983 states:

1. The sacramental seal is inviolable. Accordingly, it is absolutely wrong for a confessor in any way to betray the penitent, for any reason whatsoever, whether by word or in any other fashion.

2. An interpreter, if there is one, is also obliged to observe this secret, as are all others to whom knowledge of sins from confession shall come in any way."

And canon 984 establishes: "The confessor is wholly forbidden to use knowledge acquired in confession to the detriment of the penitent, even when all danger of disclosure is excluded. A person who is in authority may not, in any way, for the purpose of external governance, use knowledge about sins which has at any time come to him from the hearing of confession."

Violation

Obviously the violation of keeping in absolute secrecy whatever the confessor has come to know in hearing confessions is most serious. No private or public harm which could be prevented nor any good which might be obtained through the revelation of this knowledge may justify a confessor to disclose what he knows through the sacramental confession. Any other person who, in one way or another, has this knowledge is also duty-bound to keep secrecy.

The violation of the sacramental seal can happen either directly or indirectly. There is direct violation of the obligation to keep the sacramental seal when the sins confessed by the penitent are revealed, so that the identity of the sinner will be discovered. The way or manner of revealing confessed sins is immaterial, as long as the knowledge is conveyed through the details given by the violator of the sacramental seal. Likewise, it is immaterial whether the penitent has made a good or bad confession or if he is denied the sacramental absolution.

There is indirect violation, when without pointing out clearly the sins of the penitent, the latter can be identified or suspected by the details given away by the confessor or by those who know what has been declared in confession.

Penalties Against Violators

The penalties imposed by the Church's Code upon the violators of the sacramental seal are contained in canon 1388, which reads:

"1. A confessor who directly violates the sacramental seal incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; he who does so only indirectly is to be punished according to the gravity of the offense.

"2. Interpreters and others mentioned in can. 983, 2, who violate the secret, are to be punished with a just penalty, not excluding excommunication."

Moreover, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued the following warning in 1988: "Anyone who by means of a technical devise is able to know those things said by the confessor or by the penitent in the Sacrament of Penance, whether true or feigned, done by himself or somebody else, or divulges them through the mass media incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication" (AAS, 1988, p. 1367).

Solution of the Case

To answer the two questions raised by the Religious Sister we may say the following:

1. The kind of sharing of their experiences in the confessional as practised by A. and B. cannot be approved in any way. This does not mean, however, that they have directly violated the sacramental seal incurring the *latae sententiae* excommunication dealt with in Canon 1388, 1. Fortunately, they did not violate the seal directly. The possible identification of the penitents by A. and B. could be caused not really by their mutual exchange of information, but by what each of them already knew by personally hearing the confession of the same penitents. In other words, A. could possibly identify penitents whose sins were mentioned by B., not because of the information given by B., but because he had that knowledge already through the confession of the same sinner to him, and

vice versa. Without their personal knowledge through the previous confession of the same sinners, A. and B. could not identify the penitents. They could identify only those penitents who have previously confessed to them, not others. In short, A. could suspect or identify the penitents whose sins were mentioned by B. and vice versa, since he foreknew the sins, which were the topic of their sharing. The important thing is that they never mentioned the name of any penitent whose sins they discussed. Readers who may be interested in knowing more about this, please consult Palazzini - De Jorio, *Casus Conscientiae*, n, 324; Genicot, *Casus Conscientiae*, 852, ed. 1928; Fanfani, *Theologia Moralis*, IV, 429; Lumbreras, *Casus Conscientiae*, V. X.

2. However, in the sharing by A. and B. there is an indirect violation of the sacramental seal, notwithstanding their good intention to learn in their priestly ministry. If a confessor is allowed to consult other more learned priests about his doubts, it is on the condition that the consulted priests do not know the penitent. And any consultation of this kind should be restricted to the substance of the case without giving particular details; otherwise, the permission of the penitent should be obtained beforehand.

3. With regard to the Parish Priest, he fulfilled his duty in calling the attention of both Parochial Vicars. However, he should not consider that nothing else could be done. He should have informed the Bishop who could have certainly stopped both Parochial Vicars from sharing their experiences in hearing confession, even by punishing them according to Canon 1388, 1, which states: "A confessor who ... indirectly violates the sacramental seal is to be punished according to the gravity of the offense." The Religious Sister says that "The most serious thing is that the faithful, who confess to them, comment saying that both priests, A. and B., behave exactly in the same way in advising the penitents, arousing suspicion that probably they communicate to each other what the penitents reveal in the confessional and eventually they can identify the penitents." The danger of scandal on the part of the faithful would have been a strong reason for the Parish Priest to report the case to the Bishop.

Address to the Fiftieth General Assembly of the United Nations Organization

JOHN PAUL II

*Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. It is an honour for me to have the opportunity to address this international Assembly and to join the men and women of every country, race, language and culture in celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations Organization. In coming before this distinguished Assembly, I am vividly aware that through you I am in some way addressing the whole family of peoples living on the face of the earth. My words are meant as a sign of the interest and esteem of the Apostolic See and of the Catholic Church for this Institution. They echo the voices of all those who see in the United Nations the hope of a better future for human society.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude in the first place to the Secretary General, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for having warmly encouraged this visit. And I thank you, Mr. President, for your cordial welcome. I greet all of you, the members of this General Assembly: I am grateful for your presence and for your kind attention.

I come before you today with the desire to be able to contribute to that thoughtful meditation on the history and role of this Organization which should accompany and give substance to the anniversary celebrations. The Holy See, in virtue of its specifically spiritual mission, which makes it concerned for the integral good of every human being, has supported the

ideals and goals of the United Nations Organization from the very beginning. Although their respective purposes and operative approaches are obviously different, the Church and the United Nations constantly find wide areas of cooperation on the basis of their common concern for the human family. It is this awareness which inspires my thoughts today; they will not dwell on any particular social, political, or economic question; rather, I would like to reflect with you on what the extraordinary changes of the last few years imply, not simply for the present, but for the future of the whole human family.

A Common Human Patrimony

2. Ladies and Gentlemen! on the threshold of a new millennium we are witnessing an extraordinary global acceleration of that quest for freedom which is one of the great dynamics of human history. This phenomenon is not limited to any one part of the world; nor is it the expression of any single culture. Men and women throughout the world, even when threatened by violence, have taken the risk of freedom, asking to be given a place in social, political, and economic life which is commensurate with their dignity as free human beings. This universal longing for freedom is truly one of the distinguishing marks of our time.

During my previous Visit to the United Nations on 2 October 1979, I noted that the quest for freedom in our time has its basis in those universal rights which human beings enjoy by the very fact of their humanity. It was precisely outrages against human dignity which led the United Nations Organization to formulate, barely three years after its establishment, that Universal Declaration of Human Rights which remains one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time. In Asia and Africa, in the Americas, in Oceania and Europe, men and women of conviction and courage have appealed to this Declaration in support of their claims for a fuller share in the life of society.

3. It is important for us to grasp what might be called the inner structure of this worldwide movement. It is precisely its global character which offers us its first and fundamental "key" and confirms that there are indeed universal human rights, rooted in the nature of the person, rights which reflect the objective and inviolable demands of a universal moral law. These are not abstract points; rather, these rights tell us something important about the actual life of every individual and of every social group. They also remind us that we do not live in an irrational or meaningless

world. On the contrary, there is a moral logic which is built into human life and which makes possible dialogue between individuals and peoples. If we want a century of violent coercion to be succeeded by a century of persuasion, we must find a way to discuss the human future intelligibly. The universal moral law written on the human heart is precisely that kind of "grammar" which is needed if the world is to engage this discussion of its future.

In this sense, it is a matter for serious concern that some people today deny the universality of human rights, just as they deny that there is a human nature shared by everyone. To be sure, there is no single model for organizing the politics and economics of human freedom; different cultures and different historical experiences give rise to different institutional forms of public life in a free and responsible society. But it is one thing to affirm a legitimate pluralism of "forms of freedom", and another to deny any universality or intelligibility to the nature of man or to the human experience. The latter makes the international politics of persuasion extremely difficult, if not impossible.

Taking the Risk of Freedom

4. The moral dynamics of this universal quest for freedom clearly appeared in Central and Eastern Europe during the non-violent revolutions of 1989. Unfolding in specific times and places, those historical events nonetheless taught a lesson which goes far beyond a specific geographical location. For the non-violent revolutions of 1989 demonstrated that the quest for freedom cannot be suppressed. It arises from a recognition of the inestimable dignity and value of the human person, and it cannot fail to be accompanied by a commitment on behalf of the human person. Modern totalitarianism has been, first and foremost, an assault on the dignity of the person, an assault which has gone even to the point of denying the inalienable value of the individual's life. The revolutions of 1989 were made possible by the commitment of brave men and women inspired by a different, and ultimately more profound and powerful, vision: the vision of man as a creature of intelligence and free will, immersed in a mystery which transcends his own being and endowed with the ability to reflect and the ability to choose — and thus capable of wisdom and virtue. A decisive factor in the success of those non-violent revolutions was the experience of social solidarity: in the face of regimes backed by the power of propaganda and terror, that solidarity was the moral core of

the "power of the powerless", a beacon of hope and an enduring reminder that it is possible for man's historical journey to follow a path which is true to the finest aspirations of the human spirit.

Viewing those events from this privileged international forum, one cannot fail to grasp the connection between the values which inspired those people's liberation movements and many of the moral commitments inscribed in the United Nations Charter: I am thinking for example of the commitment to "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights (and) in the dignity and worth of the human person"; and also the commitment "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" (Preamble). The fifty-one States which founded this Organization in 1945 truly lit a lamp whose light can scatter the darkness caused by tyranny — a light which can show the way to freedom, peace, and solidarity.

The Rights of Nations

5. The quest for freedom in the second half of the twentieth century has engaged not only individuals but nations as well. Fifty years after the end of the Second World War, it is important to remember that that war was fought because of violations of the rights of nations. Many of those nations suffered grievously for no other reason than that they were deemed "other". Terrible crimes were committed in the name of lethal doctrines which taught the "inferiority" of some nations and cultures. In a certain sense, the United Nations Organization was born from a conviction that such doctrines were antithetical to peace; and the Charter's commitment to "save future generations from the scourge of war" (Preamble) surely implied a moral commitment to defend every nation and culture from unjust and violent aggression.

Unfortunately, even after the end of the Second World War, the rights of nations continued to be violated. To take but one set of examples, the Baltic States and extensive territories in Ukraine and Belarus were absorbed into the Soviet Union, as had already happened to Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia in the Caucasus. At the same time the so-called "People's Democracies" of Central and Eastern Europe effectively lost their sovereignty and were required to submit to the will dominating the entire bloc. The result of this artificial division of Europe was the "cold war", a situation of international tension in which the threat of a nuclear holocaust hung over humanity. It was only when freedom was restored to the nations of Central and Eastern Europe that the promise of the peace which should

have come with the end of the war began to be realized for many of the victims of that conflict.

6. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, spoke eloquently of the rights of persons; but no similar international agreement has yet adequately addressed the rights of nations. This situation must be carefully pondered, for it raises urgent questions about justice and freedom in the world today.

In reality the problem of the full recognition of the rights of peoples and nations has presented itself repeatedly to the conscience of humanity, and has also given rise to considerable ethical and juridical reflection. I am reminded of the debate which took place at the Council of Constance in the fifteenth century, when the representatives of the Academy of Krakow, headed by Pawel Wlodkowic, courageously defended the right of certain European peoples to existence and independence. Still better known is the discussion which went on in that same period at the University of Salamanca with regard to the peoples of the New World. And in our own century, how can I fail to mention the prophetic words of my predecessor, Pope Benedict XV, who in the midst of the First World War reminded everyone that "nations do not die", and invited them "to ponder with serene conscience the rights and the just aspirations of peoples" (To the Peoples at War and their Leaders, 28 July 1915)?

7. Today the problem of nationalities forms part of a new world horizon marked by a great "mobility" which has blurred the ethnic and cultural frontiers of the different peoples, as a result of a variety of processes such as migrations, mass-media and the globalization of the economy. And yet, precisely against this horizon of universality we see the powerful re-emergence of certain ethnic and cultural consciousness, as it were an explosive need for identity and survival, a sort of counterweight to the tendency toward uniformity. This is a phenomenon which must not be underestimated and regarded as a simple left-over of the past. It demands serious interpretation, and a closer examination on the levels of anthropology, ethics and law.

This tension between the particular and the universal can be considered immanent in human beings. By virtue of sharing in the same nature, people automatically feel that they are members of one great family, as is in fact the case. But as a result of the concrete historical conditioning of this same nature, they are necessarily bound in a more intense way to particular

human groups, beginning with the family and going on to the various groups to which they belong and up to the whole of their ethnic and cultural group, which is called, not by accident, a "nation", from the Latin word "nasci": "to be born". This term, enriched with another one, "patria" (fatherland/motherland), evokes the reality of the family. The human condition thus finds itself between these two poles — universality and particularity — with a vital tension between them; an inevitable tension, but singularly fruitful if they are lived in a calm and balanced way.

8. Upon this anthropological foundation there also rest the "rights of nations", which are nothing but "human rights" fostered at the specific level of community life. A study of these rights is certainly not easy, if we consider the difficulty of defining the very concept of "nation", which cannot be identified a priori and necessarily with the State. Such a study must nonetheless be made, if we wish to avoid the errors of the past and ensure a just world order.

A presupposition of a nation's rights is certainly its right to exist: therefore no one — neither a State nor another nation, nor an international organization — is ever justified in asserting that an individual nation is not worthy of existence. This fundamental right to existence does not necessarily call for sovereignty as a state, since various forms of juridical aggregation between different nations are possible, as for example occurs in Federal States, in Confederations or in States characterized by broad regional autonomies. There can be historical circumstances in which aggregations different from single state sovereignty can even prove advisable, but only on condition that this takes place in a climate of true freedom, guaranteed by the exercise of the self-determination of the peoples concerned. Its right to exist naturally implies that every nation also enjoys the right to its own language and culture, through which a people expresses and promotes that which I would call its fundamental spiritual "sovereignty". History shows that in extreme circumstances (such as those which occurred in the land where I was born) it is precisely its culture that enables a nation to survive the loss of political and economic independence. Every nation therefore has also the right to shape its life according to its own traditions, excluding, of course, every abuse of basic human rights and in particular the oppression of minorities. Every nation has the right to build its future by providing an appropriate education for the younger generation.

But while the "rights of the nation" express the vital requirements of "particularity", it is no less important to emphasize the requirements of universality, expressed through a clear awareness of the duties which nations have vis-a-vis other nations and humanity as a whole. Foremost among these duties is certainly that of living in a spirit of peace, respect and solidarity with other nations. Thus the exercise of the rights of nations, balanced by the acknowledgment and the practice of duties, promotes a fruitful "exchange of gifts", which strengthens the unity of all mankind.

Respect for Differences

9. During my pastoral pilgrimages to the communities of the Catholic Church over the past seventeen years, I have been able to enter into dialogue with the rich diversity of nations and cultures in every part of the world. Unhappily, the world has yet to learn how to live with diversity, as recent events in the Balkans and Central Africa have painfully reminded us. The fact of "difference", and the reality of "the other", can sometimes be felt as a burden, or even as a threat. Amplified by historic grievances and exacerbated by the manipulations of the unscrupulous, the fear of "difference" can lead to a denial of the very humanity of "the other": with the result that people fall into a cycle of violence in which no one is spared, not even the children. We are all very familiar today with such situations; at this moment my heart and my prayers turn in a special way to the sufferings of the sorely tried peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

From bitter experience, then, we know that the fear of "difference", especially when it expresses itself in a narrow and exclusive nationalism which denies any rights to "the other", can lead to a true nightmare of violence and terror. And yet if we make the effort to look at matters objectively, we can see that, transcending all the differences which distinguish individuals and peoples, there is a fundamental commonality. For different cultures are but different way of facing the question of the meaning of personal existence. And it is precisely here that we find one source of the respect which is due to every culture and every nation: every culture is an effort to ponder the mystery of the world and in particular of the human person: it is a way of giving expression to the transcendent dimension of human life. The heart of every culture is its approach to the greatest of all mysteries: the mystery of God.

10. Our respect for the culture of others is therefore rooted in our respect for each community's attempt to answer the question of human

life. And here we can see how important it is to safeguard the fundamental right to freedom of religion and freedom of conscience, as the cornerstones of the structure of human rights and the foundation of every truly free society. No one is permitted to suppress those rights by using coercive power to impose an answer to the mystery of man.

To cut oneself off from the reality of difference — or, worse, to attempt to stamp out that difference — is to cut oneself off from the possibility of sounding the depths of the mystery of human life. The truth about man is the unchangeable standard by which all cultures are judged; but every culture has something to teach us about one or other dimension of that complex truth. Thus the "difference" which some find so threatening can, through respectful dialogue, become the source of a deeper understanding of the mystery of human existence.

11. In this context, we need to clarify the essential difference between an unhealthy form of nationalism, which teaches contempt for other nations or cultures, and patriotism, which is a proper love of one's country. True patriotism never seeks to advance the well-being of one's own nation at the expense of others. For in the end this would harm one's own nation as well: doing wrong damages both aggressor and victim. Nationalism, particularly in its most radical forms, is thus the antithesis of true patriotism, and today we must ensure that extreme nationalism does not continue to give rise to new forms of the aberrations of totalitarianism. This is a commitment which also holds true, obviously, in cases where religion itself is made the basis of nationalism, as unfortunately happens in certain manifestations of so-called "fundamentalism".

Freedom and Moral Truth

12. Ladies and Gentlemen! Freedom is the measure of man's dignity and greatness. Living the freedom sought by individuals and peoples is a great challenge to man's spiritual growth and to the moral vitality of nations. The basic question which we must all face today is the responsible use of freedom, in both its personal and social dimensions. Our reflection must turn then to the question of the moral structure of freedom, which is the inner architecture of the culture of freedom.

Freedom is not simply the absence of tyranny or oppression. Nor is freedom a license to do whatever we like. Freedom has an inner "logic" which distinguishes it and ennobles it: freedom is ordered to the truth,

and is fulfilled in man's quest for truth and in man's living in the truth. Detached from the truth about the human person, freedom deteriorates into license in the lives of individuals, and, in political life, it becomes the caprice of the most powerful and the arrogance of power. Far from being a limitation upon freedom or a threat to it, reference to the truth about the human person — a truth universally knowable through the moral law written on the hearts of all — is, in fact, the guarantor of freedom's future.

13. In the light of what has been said we understand how utilitarianism, the doctrine which defines morality not in terms of what is good but of what is advantageous, threatens the freedom of individuals and nations and obstructs the building of a true culture of freedom. Utilitarianism often has devastating political consequences, because it inspires an aggressive nationalism on the basis of which the subjugation, for example, of a smaller or weaker nation is claimed to be a good thing solely because it corresponds to the national interest. No less grave are the results of economic utilitarianism, which drives more powerful countries to manipulate and exploit weaker ones.

Nationalistic and economic utilitarianism are sometimes combined, a phenomenon which has too often characterized relations between the "North" and the "South". For the emerging countries, the achievement of political independence has too frequently been accompanied by a situation of de facto economic dependence on other countries; indeed, in some cases, the developing world has suffered a regression, such that some countries lack the means of satisfying the essential needs of their people. Such situations offend the conscience of humanity and pose a formidable moral challenge to the human family. Meeting this challenge will obviously require changes in both developing and developed countries. If developing countries are able to offer sure guarantees of the proper management of resources and of assistance received, as well as respect for human rights, by replacing where necessary unjust, corrupt, or authoritarian forms of government with participatory and democratic ones, will they not in this way unleash the best civil and economic energies of their people? And must not the developed countries, for their part, come to renounce strictly utilitarian approaches and develop new approaches inspired by greater justice and solidarity?

Yes, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen! The international economic scene needs an ethic of solidarity, if participation, economic growth, and

a just distribution of goods are to characterize the future of humanity. The international cooperation called for by the Charter of the United Nations for "solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character" (art. 1.3) cannot be conceived exclusively in terms of help and assistance, or even by considering the eventual returns on the resources provided. When millions of people are suffering from a poverty which means hunger, malnutrition, sickness, illiteracy, and degradation, we must not only remind ourselves that no one has a right to exploit another for his own advantage, but also and above all we must recommit ourselves to that solidarity which enables others to live out, in the actual circumstances of their economic and political lives, the creativity which is a distinguishing mark of the human person and the true source of the wealth of nations in today's world.

The United Nations and the Future of Freedom

14. As we face these enormous challenges, how can we fail to acknowledge the role of the United Nations Organization? Fifty years after its founding, the need for such an Organization is even more obvious, but we also have a better understanding, on the basis of experience, that the effectiveness of this great instrument for harmonizing and coordinating international life depends on the international culture and ethic which it supports and expresses. The United Nations Organization needs to rise more and more above the cold status of an administrative institution and to become a moral centre where all the nations of the world feel at home and develop a shared awareness of being, as it were, a "family of nations". The idea of "family" immediately evokes something more than simple functional relations or a mere convergence of interests. The family is by nature a community based on mutual trust, mutual support and sincere respect. In an authentic family the strong do not dominate; instead, the weaker members, because of their very weakness, are all the more welcomed and served.

Raised to the level of the "family of nations", these sentiments ought to be, even before law itself, the very fabric of relations between peoples. The United Nations has the historic, even momentous, task of promoting this qualitative leap in international life, not only by serving as a centre of effective mediation for the resolution of conflicts but also by fostering values, attitudes and concrete initiatives of solidarity which prove capable of raising the level of relations between nations from the "organizational"

to a more "organic" level, from simple "existence with" others to "existence for" others, in a fruitful exchange of gifts, primarily for the good of the weaker nations but even so, a clear harbinger of greater good for everyone.

15. Only on this condition shall we attain an end not only to "wars of combat" but also to "cold wars". It will ensure not only the legal equality of all peoples but also their active participation in the building of a better future, and not only respect for individual cultural identities, but full esteem for them as a common treasure belonging to the cultural patrimony of mankind. Is this not the ideal held up by the Charter of the United Nations when it sets as the basis of the Organization "the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members" (art. 2.1), or when it commits it to "develop friendly relations between nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and of self-determination" (art. 1.2)? This is the high road which must be followed to the end, even if this involves, when necessary, appropriate modifications in the operating model of the United Nations, so as to take into account everything that has happened in this half century, with so many new peoples experiencing freedom and legitimately aspiring to "be" and to "count for" more.

None of this should appear an unattainable Utopia. Now is the time for new hope, which calls us to expel the paralyzing burden of cynicism from the future of politics and of human life. The anniversary which we are celebrating invites us to do this by reminding us of the idea of "united nations", an idea which bespeaks mutual trust, security and solidarity. Inspired by the example of all those who have taken the risk of freedom, can we not recommit ourselves also to taking the risk of solidarity — and thus the risk of peace?

Beyond Fear: the Civilization of Love

16. It is one of the great paradoxes of our time that man, who began the period we call "modernity" with a self-confident assertion of his "coming of age" and "autonomy", approaches the end of the twentieth century fearful of himself, fearful of what he might be capable of, fearful for the future. Indeed, the second half of the twentieth century has seen the unprecedented phenomenon of a humanity uncertain about the very likelihood of a future, given the threat of nuclear war. That danger, mercifully, appears to have receded — and everything that might make it return needs to be rejected firmly and universally; all the same, fear for the future and of the future remains.

In order to ensure that the new millennium now approaching will witness a new flourishing of the human spirit, mediated through an authentic culture of freedom, men and women must learn to conquer fear. We must learn not to be afraid, we must rediscover a spirit of hope and a spirit of trust. Hope is not empty optimism springing from a naive confidence that the future will necessarily be better than the past. Hope and trust are the premise of responsible activity and are nurtured in that inner sanctuary of conscience where "man is alone with God" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 16) and thus perceives that he is not alone amid the enigmas of existence, for he is surrounded by the love of the Creator!

Hope and trust: these may seem matters beyond the purview of the United Nations. But they are not. The politics of nations, with which your Organization is principally concerned, can never ignore the transcendent, spiritual dimension of the human experience, and could never ignore it without harming the cause of man and the cause of human freedom. Whatever diminishes man — whatever shortens the horizon of man's aspiration "to goodness — harms the cause of freedom. In order to recover our hope and our trust at the end of this century of sorrows, we must regain sight of that transcendent horizon of possibility to which the soul of man aspires.

17. As a Christian, my hope and trust are centered on Jesus Christ, the two thousandth anniversary of whose birth will be celebrated at the coming of the new millennium. We Christians believe that in his Death and Resurrection were fully revealed God's -love and his care for all creation. Jesus Christ is for us God made man, and made a part of the history of humanity. Precisely for this reason, Christian hope for the world and its future extends to every human person. Because of the radiant humanity of Christ, nothing genuinely human fails to touch the hearts of Christians. Faith in Christ does not impel us to intolerance. On the contrary, it obliges us to engage others in a respectful dialogue. Love of Christ does not distract us from interest in others, but rather invites us to responsibility for them, to the exclusion of no one and indeed, if anything, with a special concern for the weakest and the suffering. Thus, as we approach the two thousandth anniversary of the birth of Christ, the Church asks only to be able to propose respectfully this message of salvation, and to be able to promote, in charity and service, the solidarity of the entire human family.

Ladies and Gentlemen! I come before you, as did my predecessor Pope Paul VI exactly thirty years ago, not as one who exercises temporal power — these are his words — nor as religious leader seeking special privileges for his community. I come before you as a witness: a witness to human dignity, a witness to hope, a witness to the conviction that the destiny of all nations lies in the hands of a merciful Providence.

18. We must overcome our fear of the future. But we will not be able to overcome it completely unless we do so together. The "answer" to that fear is neither coercion nor repression, nor the imposition of one social "model" on the entire world. The answer to the fear which darkens human existence at the end of the twentieth century is the common effort to build the civilization of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice, and liberty. And the "soul" of the civilization of love is the culture of freedom: the freedom of individuals and the freedom of nations, lived in self-giving solidarity and responsibility.

We must not be afraid of the future. We must not be afraid of man. It is no accident that we are here. Each and every human person has been created in the "image and likeness" of the One who is the origin of all that is. We have within us the capacities for wisdom and virtue. With these gifts, and with the help of God's grace, we can build in the next century and the next millennium a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and must do so! And in doing so, we shall see that the tears of this century have prepared the ground for a new springtime of the human spirit.

CBCP OFFICERS FOR 1996-1997

PRESIDENT - ABP. OSCAR V. CRUZ
 VICE PRESIDENT - BP. EDMUNDO M. ABAYA

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES (Permanent Council Members)

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1. Bp. Edmundo M. Abaya
2. Bp. Sofio G. Balce
3. Abp. Gaudencio B. Rosales
4. Bp. Jesus Y. Varela
5. Bp. Ramon B. Villena

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2. Bp. Leopoldo S. Tumulak

Mindanao:

1. Abp. Jesus A. Dosado
2. Abp. Carmelo D.F. Morelos
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EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Elementary:	BATANGAS SOUTH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	1951-1955
	(GRADE 1 - 4)	
	ST. BRIDGET'S COLLEGE	1955-1959
	(GRADE 5 - 2ND YEAR)	
High School:	OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE MINOR SEMINARY	1959-1963
	(2ND YEAR - 4TH YEAR)	
College:	SAN CARLOS SEMINARY	1963-1966
	MAKATI, METRO MANILA	
	(BACHELOR IN PHILOSOPHY)	
	SAN CARLOS SEMINARY	1966-1970
	MAKATI, METRO MANILA	
	(THEOLOGY)	
Post Graduate	ANGELICUM	1972-1976
	BACHELOR IN SACRED THEOLOGY	
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	ROME	
	UNIVERSITE D'ETE	1973
	LANGUAGE FRANCAIS	
	PARIS	
	AGELICUM	1974-1976
	SOCIOLOGY	

ROME	
GOETHE INSTITUTE	1976
DEUTSCHPRACHE	
PASSAU, GERMANY	
CENTRE SPIRITUEL VENASQUE	1981-1982
TERESA DE AVILA	
FRANCE	
NEMI RENEWAL INSTITUTE	1988
TERTIANSHIP	
ROME	
MADONNA HOUSE	1988-1989
POUSTINIA	
COMBEREMERE, ONTARIO	
ST. BEUNO'S	1989
APOSTOLIC SPIRITUALITY	
NORTH WALES	

ASSIGNMENTS/POSITIONS:

PAROCHIAL VICAR		
SOMMER VERTRETER	SAN JOSE DE NAVOTAS	1970-1972
	HOXTER 1 LUCHTRINGEN	1973-1974
	CLEMENSKIRCHE, HANNOVER	1975
PREFECT & ACTING	GROSSKOLNBACH/ISAR	1976
RECTOR	GUADALUPE MINOR SEMINARY	1977-1978
PRIEST-IN-CHARGE	MAKATI, METRO MANILA	
RECTOR	FIL - MISSION SEMINARY	1978-1981
PARISH PRIEST/	SAN CARLOS SEMINARY	1982-1986
CHAPLAIN	UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES	1986-1988
PARISH PRIEST	DILIMAN, QUEZON CITY	
	OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL	1989-1990
RECTOR	PROJECT 6, QUEZON CITY	
	COLLEGIO FILIPPINO	1990-1994
CHAPLAIN OF	ROME	
FILIPINOS	ROME, ITALY	1990-1992
PROFESSOR IN		
CHRISTOLOGY	MOTHER OF LIFE CENTER	1977-1986
PATROLOGY	SAN CARLOS SEMINARY	1977-1988
INTRO. TO THE	DIVINE WORD SEMINARY	1978-1981
SCRIPTURES		
SPIRITUALITY	SUMMER INSTITUTE	1983-1985
AUXILIARY BISHOP	ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA	1994-1995
MILITARY ORDINARY	MILITARY ORDINARIATE OF THE	1995-present
	PHILIPPINES (AFP/PNP)	

Pontifical Bull

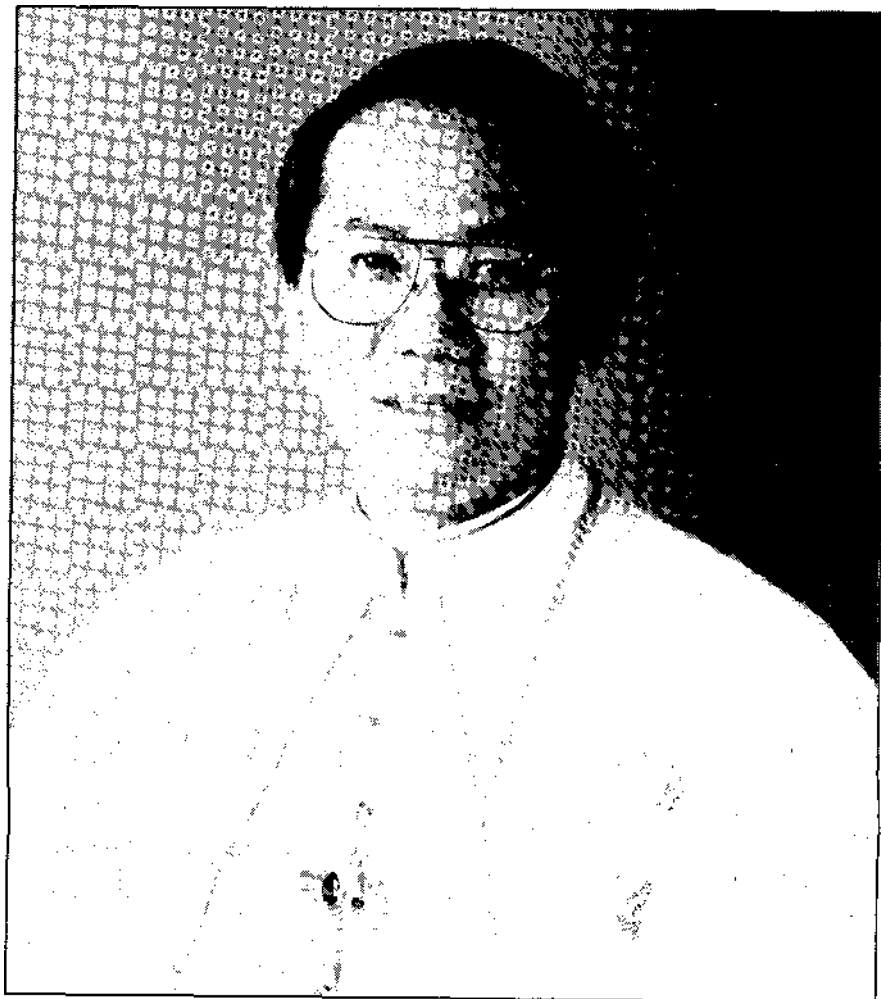
JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI dilecto filio Raimundo Arguelles, Pontificii Collegii Philippine in Urbe rectori, Auxiliari Antistiti Archiepiscopi Manilensis destinato, nominatoque simul Episcopo vacantis Sedis ipsius Rosgrensis, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Quandoquidem universalis Nostri muneris apostolici partem quandam praecipuam esse arbitramur singularum per orbem dicionum ecclesiasticarum communitatumque moderatoribus Episcopis pro viribus efficaciter subvenire, quippe quos maiore usque munerum cotidianorum gravari cernamus pondere, nihil idcirco dubitare consuevimus iustis eorum obsequie precibus, ad efficientiorem praesertim quod attinet cuiusque ecclesiae gubernationem ac pastoralis industriae procurationem. Cum igilur haud ita pridem Venerabilis Frater Noster Jacobus S.R.E. Cardinalis Sin, Archiepiscopus Manilensis, propter mire auctum fidelium inibi numerum proindeque suorum ipsius officiorum singulare incrementum a Nobis rite sibi Auxiliarem Antistitem poposcerit, quicum immensum suum apostolatus multiplicis dividat opus, perquam libentes eum hodie exaudimus regue ipsa iuvamus hac in gravissima causa. Te vera, dilecte Fili, cogitamus in praesentia idoneumque esse existimamus utpote cuius sacerdotales virtutes dotesque ingenii magni et humani animi laudes cognoverimus in sapienti tua Collegii Pontificii Philippini in Urbe rectione aliisque Ecclesiae negotiis. Adsensi ideo iudiciis Congregationis pro Episcopis de te, tuaque spectata dignitate, pro apostolicae auctoritatis Nostrae plenitudine constituimus legitime Auxiliarem te Episcopum memorati Ordinarii Manilensis simulque Praesulem sedis titulo Rosgrensis, tributis una tibi iuribus cunctis ac privilegiis et iniunctis omnibus officiis et obligationibus quae ex sacrorum canonum praescriptis cum eadem ilia condicione episcopale necnon statione auxiliaris episcopi copulantur. Cum ita ex statis formulis iusiurandum nuncupaveris fidelitatis erga Nos Nostrosque Successores ac similiter pronuntiaveris rectae fidei professionem coram Cardinali Protodiacono, inter alios probatos Ecclesiae ministros perplacebit mox in proxima Epiphaniae Dominicae sollemnitate Nobismet ipsis per manuum Nostrarum impositionem episcopalem tibi impertire ordinationem ad Apostolorum limina apud Petrianam Basilicam. Numquam ergo tui oblivisceris in Ecclesia Dei status excelsi neque tam clari episcopaliu tuorum operum principii sed omem quam adhuc in te commostravisti consiliorum soliditatem, fidei maturitatem, oboeditionis fidelitatem deinceps videbis, ut in participatam hanc gregis Manilensis curationem alacriter conferas et quaecumgue tibi obtigerint episcopalia munia, firmiter ipse confisus Divinum tibi numquam defuturum Pastorem pro virili parte cotidie contendenti caelitusque necessaria praesedia sacerdotalibus experenti precibus. Datum Romae apud S. Petrum, die vicesimo septimo mensis Novembris, anno Domini millesimo nongentesimo nonagesimo tertio, Pontificatus Nostri decimo Sexto.

Joannes Pulus II

Franciscus Chiaurri, Proton. Apost.



MOST REVEREND RAMON C. ARGUELES, D.D.
Bishop of the Military Ordinariate



MOST REVEREND CRISOSTOMO A. YALUNG, .D.D
Auxiliary Bishop of Manila

Pontifical Bull

JOANNES PAULUS EPISCOPUS SERVUS SERVORUM DEI dilecto filio Chrysostomo Yalung, Seminarii Manilensis Sancti Carol Rectori, electo Episcopo titulari Ficensi et Auxiliari Praesulis Manilensis, salutem et Apostolicam Benedictionem. Ingens Christifidelium copia causa iusta censetur cur sacrorum Antistites ab hac Apostolica Sede novos postulent adiutores, qui, regiminis opera et tot negotia participantes, facilius simulque fructuosius apostolicum reddant ministerium. Cum vero Venerabilis Frater Noster Jacobus S.R.E. Cardinalis Sin. Archiepiscopus Manilensis, eam ob causam quam supra diximus postulaverit ut alius Praesul sibi daretur, Nos, solliciti de omnibus Ecclesiis particularibus, precibus libenti animo satisfaciendum esse duximus. Quocirca, consultis Venerabilibus Fratribus Nostris Congregationi pro Episcopis praepositis, ex Apostolicae Nostrae potestatis et auctoritatis plenitudine, te, dilecte fili, religiosis humanisque ornatum virtutibus nee non sollerti ingenio, prudentia et experientia pastoralis, hisce Litteris ad Sacerdotii plenitudinem evehimus atque Auxiliarem Manilensem nominamus et constituimus, titulum tibi conferentes vacantis episcopalis Ecclesiae Ficensis, secundum normas quas ius commune praescribit. Ad tuam episcopalem ordinationem quod attinet, eam a quolibet catholico Episcopo extra urbem Romam accipere poteris, liturgicis servatis legibus. Prius tamen est tibi fidei professio facienda et ius iurandum interponendum fidelitatis erga Nos Nostrosque in hac Apostolica Sede Successores, coram sacro rectae fidei Praesule; quorum actuum formulas sine mora ad Congregationem pro Episcopis usitato more signatas sigilloque munitas mittendas curabis. Tu denique, dilecte fili, qui ex Christi Evangelio vitam et doctrinam ardentemque animarum caritatem hausisti, sine intermissione vitam eius imitare, ut per curam de his ipsis adhibitam, supremam amoris Christi legem potissimum significes, et saluti Christifidelium tuae communitatis favere valeas, toto animo tecum reputans illud Pauli Apostoli: - Tu autem... sectare... iustitiam, pietatem, fidem, caritatem, patientiam, mansuetudinem. Certa bonum certamem fidei, apprehende vitam aeternam - 1 Tim 6, 11-12. Datum Romae, apud S. Petrum, die quinto et vicesimo mensis Martii, anno Domini millesimo nonagesimo nonagesimo quarto, Pontificatus Nostri sexto decimo.

De mandato Summi Pontificis
+ Angelus Card. Sodano
Secretarius Status

Angelus Lauzani, Proton. Apost.

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EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Elementary:	STO. ROSARIO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ANGELES CITY, PAMPANGA	1960-1966
High School:	HOLY ANGEL COLLEGE ANGELES CITY, PAMPANGA	1966-1970
Pre-college:	MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL SEMINARY SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA	1970-1972
College:	SAN CARLOS SEMINARY MAKATI, CITY (BACHELOR IN PHILOSOPHY)	1972-1975

	SAN CARLOS SEMINARY MAKATI, CITY (THEOLOGY)	1975-1979
Post Graduate:	PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL INSTITUTE LICENTIATE IN SACRED SCRIPTURES ROME	1980-1984
	PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY DOCTORATE IN SACRED THEOLOGY ROME	1984-1987
	FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY SPECIALIZED STUDIES ON CHINESE LANGUAGE & CULTURE TAIPEI, TAIWAN	1988-1989

ASSIGNMENTS/POSITIONS

PAROCHIAL VICAR	IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH BALIBAGO, ANGELES CITY, PAMPANGA	1979-1980
SPIRITUAL' DIRECTOR (THEOLOGY)	MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL SEMINARY SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA	1987-1988
PROFESSOR IN SCRIPTURES	MOTHER OF GOOD COUNSEL SEMINARY SAN FERNANDO, PAMPANGA	1987-1988
VICE RECTOR	LORENZO MISSION INSTITUTE (SCPFC), MAKATI CITY	1989-1991
RECTOR	SAN CARLOS SEMINARY MAKATI, CITY	1991-1994
AUXILIARY BISHOP	ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA	1994-present
DISTRICT BISHOP OF MAKATI	ARCHDIOESE OF MANILA	1994-present
VICAR GENERAL	ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA	1994-present
MODERATOR CURIAE	ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA	1994-present

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers

March-April 1996

FR. EFREN O. RIVERA, O.P.

March 3, 1996

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT, Cycle A

MATTHEW 17:1-9: THE TRANSFIGURATION

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBLIARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Significance of the Transfiguration for the Original Disciples of Christ. The Transfiguration was, for the original disciples of Christ, a REVELATION OF JESUS' TRUE BUT HIDDEN IDENTITY as (1) the one who accomplishes all that is contained in the Law (evoked by Moses) and the Prophets (evoked by Elijah), and (2) as the one who transcends both **Law** and Prophets because he is the TRUE SON OF GOD.

Original audience of the story. The story was written down to instruct the Jews who had become Christians and were being asked: how did Jesus prove he was the Messiah?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, (1) the title "Savior" is more significant than "Messiah" (which is the better title for those with a Jewish background). (2) We need to renew our belief in Jesus as the **TRUE SON OF GOD, EQUAL WITH THE FATHER**. (3) The Transfiguration of Christ occurs twice in our liturgy: today and on August 6. (4) Every year, whether cycle A, B, or C is followed, the Second Sunday in Lent is focused on the Transfiguration of Christ. This is consonant with the original objective of the event. It was something to be **REMEMBERED** by the disciples and **PREACHED AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS** to demonstrate God's plan which called for his **TRUE SON**, who never ceased to be divine, to experience rejection by his own people and death of the cross for the salvation of all, and then be raised to new life as the **SAVIOR OF ALL HUMANKIND AND THE WHOLE COSMOS**. The Transfiguration, therefore, provides the program for the Lent-Easter celebration.

Focus Points. (1) For the Theophany of the Transfiguration to occur, Jesus and his disciples first experienced the arduous task of climbing a high mountain - something which apparently took them a whole long day to do. (2) The Theophany of the Transfiguration was not intended to be witnessed by all but only by three chosen disciples. These three, however, were given the responsibility of being **WITNESSES** to bring the other apostles and indeed all the followers of Christ, in due time (see v. 9), to the mystery of what happened on top of the mountain. (3) The symbols of "sun" and "light" are used to underscore the **DIVINITY** of Christ. Although, at the time of the event it was enough for the three disciples to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus, the Transfiguration was later used in Christian preaching to teach Christ's divinity. (4) Peter's words reveal that he did not grasp the deeper meaning of what was happening. The voice from heaven was both a rebuke to him and an instruction for would-be believers to first **LISTEN** to (the words of) Jesus so as to be able to accept him as Lord.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. Why did the Transfiguration - Theophany occur on top of a high mountain? Several reasons can be given, but what seems to be most fruitful for the cultivation of our spirituality is the reason that the disciples first had to exert some effort before they experienced they beheld the wonderful happening. Think of the disciples as three people who were exhausted by the climb, hungry and thirsty. They were probably asking themselves what all that effort and sacrifice was for. Was it worth it? Jesus didn't seem to care about them, indeed he had again separated himself from them to pray. Left to their own devices, they couldn't think of anything better to do than to sleep. It was when they least expected it that the wonderful theophany happened.

Ask yourself: when did I feel exhausted for having served the Lord and I was ready to call it quits but then the Lord manifested his PRESENCE and his POWER in a very special way?

2. Reflect on the MAJESTY of Christ revealed in his Transfiguration and *ask yourself: when did I first experience the majesty of Christ?* Maybe it was when an excellent catechist told you about Christ the King or when you were "slain" during a Life in the Spirit Seminar.

3. With His voice and His words God totally overwhelmed Peter and the other disciples.

Ask yourself: what has been the impact of God's words to me? Has my life been changed because of the impact of the biblical teaching that JESUS IS THE TRUE SON OF GOD?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? The three companions of Christ on the mountain top were told to wait for the proper time to share their experience with others. This warns us to avoid being just "talkative" about religious experiences. Wait for the proper time and place and for the needed atmosphere of trust before sharing them.

2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED? From the looks of it, Jesus did not seem to care about the needs of the disciples - for water, food, rest - after their arduous climb. These, however are little things. Jesus looked after their spiritual need **TO KNOW HIM AS HE REALLY IS**. Let us look at spiritual needs as greater than material needs.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Even Jesus, as a true human being, needed affirmation. Through the Transfiguration, God affirmed him as His Son. This should be a reminder that, even more than Jesus, our weak brothers and sisters need to be affirmed. Let's give them the affirmation they need.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Listening to Jesus is a prerequisite for being forgiven by God.

5. *WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?* The Good News is that God's divine presence or power is often hidden in ordinary human forms and indeed in people who are rejected (outcasts) or are terribly suffering.

C. **STORY:** The Transfiguration in Caleruega, Philippines

The original Caleruega, the birthplace of St. Dominic de Guzman, is in Spain. But now there is also a place called Caleruega in the Philippines. It is in the mountain range of Batulao in Nasugbu, Batangas, where the Filipino Dominicans have built a little village for conventions, spiritual retreats and recollections. On top of the hill overlooking the village is the Church of the Transfiguration. Inside is a beautifully designed stained glass window depicting Christ in glory, surrounded by Moses and Elijah.

The Caleruega in Spain does not have a similar church, but St. Dominic died on the feast of the Transfiguration (August 6), hence a Transfiguration church in a place designed to remind people of St. Dominic's life and legacy to Christian believers is certainly not out of place.

The Church was dedicated by the Archbishop of Lipa, Most Rev. Gaudencio Rosales, on December 7, 1995. In his homily he shared an insight that can help us take to heart the message of Christ's Transfiguration. The Archbishop pointed out that the Transfiguration church in Caleruega was not built by bulldozing a hill but by keeping its natural contours and enhancing its natural features. The result, he said, was a very friendly place, truly conducive for the spiritual growth of users. It is a case of a little corner of the cosmos being transfigured. It demonstrates to us how every true transfiguration does not destroy nature but gives fulfillment to its beauty. Let us all strive for this kind of change in ourselves and in our environment.

March 10, 1996

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, Cycle A

**JOHN 4:5-42 THE ENCOUNTER OF JESUS
AND THE SAMARITAN WOMAN**

(Short form: 4:5-15. 19b-26. 39a. 40-42)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBLIARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Parts. The passage has four uneven parts: (1) V.5-15 on Living Water; (2) V. 16-30 & 34-42 on True Worship; (3) V. 31-34 on Jesus' Food and Drink; (4) V. 35-36 on Jesus the Sower.

Samaritans were people of mixed races: pre-Israelite people, Israelites, and colonists from various parts of the Assyrian empire who replaced the Israelites exiled by the Assyrians after the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. Samaritans accept the Jewish Torah (the first five books of the Bible) but they refuse to worship in the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem. Instead, they hold their own rituals on their own holy place at Mt. Gerizim.

A woman plays a vital role as Jesus' dialogue-partner in today's story. Hence it has special interest for a feminist reflection.

The significance of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman for the woman herself and for her townmates. This encounter completely changed the Samaritan woman. Since she asked Jesus to give her "living water" (v. 10 & 15), Jesus gave this water to her, if not immediately, then certainly in due time. Her townmates, too, were spiritually renewed (see v. 39-42). Chances are, they were among the Samaritans who later accepted Christian baptism (Acts 8:12) and were filled with the Holy Spirit (Ac 8:17).

The original audience of the traditional story. This story in the life of Christ was narrated to pagans who had been converted to Christianity and most probably lived in Asia Minor. John wanted them to realize that Baptism not only washed their sins away but also gave them "living water," the Holy Spirit, the one who enables believers to worship "in spirit and truth."

BIBLIARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, the story is of special interest because of our quest for the FULLNESS OF LIFE (of which food and drink are symbols) ... and for a MEANINGFUL WORSHIP OF GOD.

Focus Points. (1) A woman, equipped to bear children, is a most appropriate dialogue-partner for a discussion on the true source of life. (2) V. 8 "Give me a drink." Jesus initiates the DIALOGUE through which he will be able to EVANGELIZE the Samaritan woman and through her, the town (see v. 28-30. 39-42).

(3) V. 10 "Living water" (see v. 14). This is not the potable water from the well but the Holy Spirit (see 7:39), which Jesus will be able to "hand over" to people because of the redemption he will accomplish through his passion and death (see Jn 19:30). (4) Since water is a liquid like blood, which was used for the Old Covenant, the prophet Ezekiel had used its sprinkling upon the people as a symbol of the New Covenant, See Ez. 36:25-27. The Holy Spirit is the spiritual water that washes and purifies people from their sins, and thus enables them to be partners of God in a New Covenant.

(5) Jesus is the PROPHET (v. 19) and indeed the MESSIAH (v. 25, 29) or SAVIOR OF THE WORLD (v. 42) who has come to make it possible for people to WORSHIP GOD IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH (v. 23). Jesus is himself the Truth (see Jn 14:6), but we need the spirit of Truth (see Jn 14:17) to work on us so that we would accept Jesus. It is when we center our life on Christ that we become worshippers of God "in spirit and in truth."

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. Think of how important water is to your life. Without it you cannot live and without its purifying and cooling power you cannot attain to that quality of life that is truly and fully human, since you will be dirty and uncomfortable without bathing.

*Ask yourself: **what is the equivalent of water in the spiritual life?** Do I **have** access to this spiritual water? When did I first consciously drink this spiritual water?*

2. Can you identify with the Samaritan woman in one way or another? She was not a Jew, but she awaited the coming of the Messiah (v. 25)... She was a sinner (see v. 16-18), but at first she resisted conversion by trying to change the topic of her dialogue with Jesus (v. 19-20)... She made people curious about Jesus and became a bridge for their conversion to him (v. 28-30. 39-42).

3. To worship God in spirit and truth requires centering one's life on Jesus who is the Truth (Jn 14:16) and who gives the Spirit (see Jn 7:37-39).

Ask yourself: have I centered my life on Jesus Christ? Am I ready to share with others how this happened?

BIBHARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? The Samaritan woman gives us a good example of evangelistic sharing. She shared her experience of encounter with Christ so that others would also come out and meet Christ. This kind of sharing is a form of evangelization.

2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED? In today's story the example of one who cares is no less than Jesus himself. He was "sensitive" to the need of the Samaritan woman for "living water" and offered this to her without being asked.

3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED? At first the Samaritan woman had nothing but disdain for Jesus because he was a Jew. But Jesus was able to change her attitude and she came to the point of affirming him, saying, "I can see you are a prophet" (v. 19). The converted townfolk also affirmed Jesus saying, "we know that this really is the Savior of the world" (v. 42). We can see from both of these incidents that the best way of thanking someone who has helped us spiritually is by affirming him or her.

4. FORGIVENESS. From the way Jesus treated the Samaritan, woman it is clear that she could not be given "living water" until she repented of her immoral way of life and obtained forgiveness.

5. *WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?* The Good News in this story is twofold: (1) Jesus has made it possible for us to have access to the "living water" which is the Holy Spirit; and (2) he has also made it possible for us to worship God "in spirit and truth."

C. STORY: Paying for Water

Clean, cool water used to be available for free. This was true out there in rural areas and also in towns and cities where restaurants did not charge for a cool drink of water.

Today, people have to buy bottled water to make sure there are no harmful elements in what they are drinking. School canteens sell more bottles of water than soft drinks.

Come to think of it, even in the spiritual sphere we have to pay for pure spiritual water. Not with cash, but with repentance and turning our backs on a life of immorality. Like the Samaritan woman. She could be given "living water" only after she repented of "living in" with a man.

March 17, 1996

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT, Cycle A

JOHN 9:1-41 THE BLIND MAN CURED AT SILOAM

(Short Form: **9:1.** 6-9. 13-17. 34-38)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBHARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Parts. The passage has three parts: (1) V. 1-12, physical sight given to a man born blind who washed in the pool of Siloam (meaning "one who has been sent"); (2) v. 1-8, spiritual sight given to the same man, who becomes Christ's disciple; (3) v. 39-41, Jesus' comment on who are truly blind and persist in their blindness.

Significance of **the** story. The story tells us how a beneficiary of one of Christ's miracles undergoes a process to become Christ's disciple. The "Jews" or "Pharisees" - understood in the Johanine perspective - are the villains in this drama. They try to negate Christ's miracle, and worse, they try to prevent the healed man from becoming a disciple of Christ.

BIBHARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, the blind man who is cured by Jesus is any sinner who obeys Jesus' call for repentance and becomes his follower. The "Jews" or "Pharisees" today are the type of person who refuse to become disciples of Christ in spite of repeated calls and even miracles.

Even today there is so much spiritual blindness - there are so many people who do not see the truth about Jesus Christ and humankind's need for him. The problem is not that there is no light, for Jesus continues to shine as 'the Light of the world.' The problem is that a good number of people harden their hearts. In an inimical confrontation with the "Light of the world" they get blinded.

Focus Points. (1) The miracle of the blind man's cure is narrated not so much to show the goodness of Jesus to one particular human being, as to demonstrate the validity of Jesus' claim: "while I am in the world, I am the light of the world." Jesus, like the sun, shines for all, but not all benefit from him through their own fault. Only those like the blind man who **OBEY HIS WORD** and **PUT THEIR FAITH IN HIS CLAIMS** benefit from his mission. Those who say they can see on their own and do not need him are like plants kept in darkness. They will not know that hit them but one day they will wither, die and rot.

(2) V.7, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (this name means "one who has been sent"). We are studying a Johanine text and there is both palpable reality and hidden symbolism in the words and actions of Jesus. The blind man is both a historical personage and a representative of sinful persons who retain an **OPENNESS** to the grace of Jesus Christ. The pool to which he is sent is both a place in Jerusalem and a symbol of both (1) the person of Jesus Christ - the one sent by the Father - and (2) the Sacrament of Baptism by which people are washed and enlightened to walk as followers of Christ.

(3) The blind man's OPENNESS to the grace of Christ is manifested in his good disposition throughout the story: he obeys Jesus' instruction **to get healed and later** uses his common sense to defend Jesus from his detractors. By contrast, the Pharisees not only reject Christ but actively fight him. They are blinded by their slavish adherence to the Law of Moses **and** their traditions - the very things which, properly understood, could give them the **light to** see Jesus as "the one sent" by God.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. Jesus Christ continues to be in the world and continues to shine as the Light of the world. Today, as in the past, there are those who are enlightened by him and those who confront him and are blinded.

Ask yourself: when did I experience enlightenment by Christ? Do I know someone who was blinded or whose sight was impaired because of staring at the sun? (This can illustrate how someone who confronts Jesus Christ - like the Pharisees - can be blinded instead of healed.)

2. There are people who are apparently sinners like the blind man (who was not really a sinner but the victim of circumstances) and people who are apparently righteous like the Pharisees. The real situation of people is revealed by their response to Christ's call. If, by **their actuations** they say, "Yes" to Christ, like the blind man who was healed, they are saved. But if their actuations say "No" to Christ, they **are lost.**

Ask yourself: what has been my basis for considering myself "righteous" or "sinful"? Are my criteria external (like going to Mass every Sunday, belonging to a religious association, joining a pilgrimage, etc.) or are they internal, that is to say, my relationship to Christ, my submission to the Father, my openness to the Holy Spirit? Has there been any change in the criteria I used in the past and those that I use now?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* The illiterate blind man cured by Jesus, because of his good disposition or openness to spiritual influences, obtained insights he was not afraid to share, like seeing that Jesus is a prophet (v. 17) and that he came from God (v. 33). To have more insights to share, let us be open to the Spirit just like the man in today's story who became a disciple of Christ.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* The caring that Jesus showed to the blind man was not only for this man but also for the instruction of all Christian disciples, both the original ones (see v. 2-3) and those who follow Christ today. Our caring, too, should produce ripples and exert influence on others.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus affirmed the blind man and his parents by asserting that neither his nor his parents' sin was the cause of his blindness (v. 3). We will be more ready to affirm our brothers and sisters if we learn not to judge them.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* God's offer of forgiveness is frustrated by spiritual blindness like the one demonstrated by the Pharisees.

5. *WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?* "Sinners" deserve a second look. Maybe they are not sinners at all, only people waiting for a healing encounter with Jesus Christ, for God's glory.

C. STORY: The Wise Men and the Elephant

A celebrated poem tells of wise men who went to see an elephant, though all of them were blind. Depending on that part of the elephant that they laid their hands on - the side, the tail, the tusk, the ear, etc. - they authoritatively declared that an elephant is very much like a wall, a rope, a spear, a fan, etc. The end result of their learned research was a very confused image of an elephant.

To know God properly, we cannot depend on our sightless abilities. We need Jesus who will reveal the Father to us and give us the Holy Spirit.

March 24

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, Cycle A

JOHN 4:5-42: LAZARUS RAISED
(Short Form: 11:3-7. 17. 20-27. 33b-45)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBLIARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Significance of the story. The original or immediate significance of the story for Lazarus himself, his sisters Martha and Mary, for the disciples and the onlookers, is the return of a dead man for the grave back to life on earth. This kind of resurrection, however, was meant by Christ to teach people about another, more permanent kind of resurrection: his own and that of his disciples at the end of time when he comes again. The resurrection of Lazarus was a return to earthly life, while the resurrection of Jesus was the start of an entirely new, other-worldly kind of life. The resurrected body of Lazarus was an earthly body eventually subjected to death a second time, while the resurrected body of Jesus is a heavenly body that will never die again.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, the story of the resurrection of Lazarus is a preparation for Holy Week, which is just seven days away. More importantly, it symbolizes what Jesus is constantly doing for those who become his disciples, namely, giving a new kind of life by the power of his own resurrection. This new life we are talking about is not something that will be given to people at some future time. It is the new communicated by the Spirit of the risen Christ to those who live as Christ's disciples here and now. It is the present life of the disciples of Christ inasmuch as they lead it in the Spirit and by the power of the Spirit. In this perspective every person who becomes truly a disciple of Christ is spiritually a Lazarus who is called forth from the grave.

Focus Points (1) Lazarus is presented by the passage as someone loved by Jesus (see v. 3. 5. 36). Aside from being a person who live

in Jesus' time, he represents people at all times and in all places who become true disciples of Jesus, and therefore his friends, truly beloved by him.

(2) Death, for a follower of Christ, is only a temporary slumber (v. 11-14).

(3) For the disciples the miracle of raising Lazarus from death is a sign - an opportunity to grow in faith, see v. 15.

(4) In this story Jesus is shown as a man moved by emotions. For him, Lazarus is a "beloved" person. He shows his concern for Mary by asking for her (v. 28). He was not ashamed to weep in the sight of the Jews (v. 35), nor did he hide his emotional turmoil at the sight of the tomb of his friend (v. 38).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. Love as a human emotion with a salvific dimension theme in this story. Jesus love for Lazarus is a power that saves and gives life.

Ask yourself: have I experienced salvific human love. Have I loved in a way that saves or gives life to my beloved?

Or: what kind of love dominates in my life. Ego-centered love? Friendship? Christian "agape"?

2. Jesus shows himself as a human friend with divine power.

Ask yourself: Do I have God-given power within me whereby I can be a better friend to others?

3. Death, for Christian is a temporary slumber, but it is also the end of earthly existence. Which is something valued by Jesus, and so he weeps because this has been lost by his friend Lazarus and he himself will lose it soon (never to regain it because when he rises from death, it is not to return to earthly life but to inaugurate a new, heavenly one.)

Ask yourself: Do I value my earthly experience ... too much? too little? just enough?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. **CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** Christ was not ashamed to show his emotions in public. Sometimes, in our sharing of experiences, we will need to follow example.

2. **CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Christ cared for each of his friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary, in a manner appropriate to the needs of each.

3. **CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** The best affirmation is to give "heart" to someone disheartened or "life" to someone who is, in one way or another, lifeless. We also affirm others by helping them attain, materially and/or spiritually a better quality of life.

4. **FORGIVENESS.** Through the miracle of raising Lazarus to life the Lord CONVERTED "many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary" (v. 45). Their unbelief was forgiven. This demonstrates that Jesus not only gives physical life but also spiritual life.

5. **WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?** We are the "beloved" of Jesus. While we live on earth he is constantly improving our "quality of life" both materially and spiritually. When we die, it will be only a temporary slumber because he will raise our bodies to live a new life in him.

C. STORY: Borrowed Life

Troubled by a tumor which she tried to ignore for many months, a young lady who lived all alone because she had opted for single blessedness and her parents, brothers and sisters had migrated to the USA, finally went to see a cancer specialist. After examining her thoroughly, the specialist finally took her to a quiet room for the verdict. "How strong are you, young lady?" the specialist asked. "I can take whatever you will tell me, doctor. Do not hide anything from me," the young woman said. "Well," the doctor said, I am really very sorry that you came to me too late. Your cancer is very far advanced, and I dare not operate. Put your things in order, because you only have a few more months to live." Although she thought she was brave and strong, the young lady broke down in tears.

When she went home, the house seemed like a big dark cavern to her, but there was enough light for her to see her favourite statue of the Sacred Heart shown as a child with his right hand upraised in a gesture of blessing. He seemed to be looking at her. "Why are you staring at me?" she spat out. "I have served you all these years. I even gave up my green card in the USA and came back to serve in the biblical apostolate, and then you do this to me?" She turned the statue to face the wall and she stomped, crying, to her room. After a long, lonely cry in her bed, she gathered her wits and felt sorry for blaming her predicament on the Sacred Heart. So she went back to the statute and turned it again to face her. Then she took a chair, sat in front of the "Nifto" and had a long chat with him.

After that, the young lady tried Chinese medicine. As months passed and she still found herself on her feet, she started to take heart and stormed heaven. She went on pilgrimages to Medjugorje and Lourdes. She went to Catholic Charismatic healers. Her tumor decreased and grew, decreased and grew, until she finally had to have surgery.

Wonder of wonders, when the tumor, surgically removed, was biopsied, it was not cancerous! Yet, YL knew that the cancer specialist did not make a mistaken diagnosis. She knew she really had cancer, but the Lord had cured her. She decided to live her borrowed life entirely in the service of the Lord and his people, especially the poor.

March 31

THE LORD'S ENTRANCE/PALM SUNDAY, Cycle A THE PASSION ACCORDING TO MATTHEW 26:14 - 27:66 / Short Form: 27:11-54

MATTHEW 21:1-11: THE LORD'S ENTRANCE

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBLIARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Significance of the original event. Jesus' life was in danger (see Mt 12:14-15; Jn 11:45-54. 57), but he had the COURAGE to do his Father's will to publicly, solemnly yet humbly enter the holy city of Jerusalem, as prophesied by Zechariah 9:9. This caused the admiration of his disciples and the enthusiasm of the masses.

One cannot help but observe that the same crowd that acclaimed Jesus with hosannas when he triumphally entered Jerusalem, will in a matter of a few days, ask for his blood (see Mt 27:25 in today's reading of the Passion.)

BIBLIARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, the Triumphal Entry of Jesus takes the same festive spirit it had when it happened in history, but this gladness is soon damped by the reading of the Passion in today's Mass. Those weighing the pros and cons of Popular Religiosity have an opportunity to study both the manifestations of the phenomenon at the time of Jesus and in our own time. The sentimental force of Popular Religiosity can keep a religion - whether the Jewish religion or the Christian religion - alive and appealing to the grassroots, but it can also serve as a vehicle of superstition. Worse, it can be manipulated by unscrupulous religious leaders to serve nefarious ends, as the Pharisees manipulated the Jewish crowds to demand the death of Christ.

Focus Points. (1) Christ's humility (v. 5). Just as St. Paul celebrated Christ's humility in his famous poem in Philippians 2:6-11, the Gospels portray this trait of his in the whole Passion story starting with today's ride on the back of a donkey.

(2) Though truly a KING (v. 5), a SON OF DAVID (v. 9), Jesus is not presented as a member of the urban aristocracy but as a man of the people. He is "the PROPHET Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee" (v. 11). If we recall the long tradition of prophets who were persecuted, we can see in these words the acknowledgement of Jesus' COURAGE in coming to confront the enemies of true religion.

(3) The MISSION of Christ should not escape our attention. He "comes in the name of the Lord" and as the people acclaim him, they praise God who sent him, "Hosanna in the highest." (v. 9).

(4) The Hebrew (Aramaic) word, "Hosanna" literally means "Oh grant salvation" and it was originally used in Psalm 118:25 (Vulgate 117:25) as a prayer to God asking him to permanently help his people after their victory over their enemies. Later the words were used to acclaim God and the king, just like the English "Long live the king!" or the Tagalog "Mabuhay!" which, in the perspective of the Resurrection, is a very dynamic equivalent.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. Jesus showed himself to be a courageous man. He had the courage to go to Jerusalem although he knew he will be captured, tortured and crucified.

Ask yourself: has my courage as a follower of Christ been tested? Did I pass or fail the test? Why?

2. **Though a Son of David and** fully qualified **to** be king, the only royal treatment Jesus acquiesced to receive was that of being acclaimed by the people - not by the aristocracy - as he entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. This is an example of humility which is held up as a model for his followers.

Ask yourself: Who are the leaders I know who are humble? Are they better leaders because of their humility?

3. **Reflect on POPULAR RELIGIOSITY.** In today's story of the Triumphal Entry of Christ into Jerusalem we have a laudable example of popular religiosity, but in the condemnation of Christ by the populace misled by scheming leaders in today's Passion story we also have an example of popular religiosity of the misguided kind.

Ask yourself: is my popular religiosity laudable or misguided? OR: has there been a change in my popular religiosity from being misguided to being laudable?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. **CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** In the Gospel passage we are studying, an anonymous person shares his material possession - his donkey - with Christ. In the story of the Last Supper, another anonymous person lets Jesus and his disciples use his or her house's upper room for their Passover meal. These examples of sharing material goods should not escape our attention.

2. *CAN OUR CAKING BE IMPROVED?* Jesus Christ's Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem was his response to the people's need for Hope. What can we do to give hope to people in need of it?

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* By saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord," the people manifested their affirmation of Jesus at a time he needed this badly. Do we affirm our brothers and sisters when they are badly in need of affirmation?

4. *FORGIVENESS.* By fulfilling the prophecy about the Messiah's entry into Jerusalem, Jesus showed the Israelite people God's readiness to forgive their oft repeated sins against Him. This should remind us that we, too, on our part must forgive people time and time again.

5. *WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?* Jesus came to fulfill God's promises by fulfilling the ancient prophecies.

**C. STORY: Light Cross for the Humble,
Heavy Cross for the Proud***

Ancient records tell us that the relic of the True Cross, which was kept in Jerusalem from the time of its finding (AD 326?) was carried away to Persia by the Persian invader King Khusrau (Chosrocs) who defeated the Christian Emperor Phocas. Eventually, however, the Christians led by Emperor Heraclius defeated the Persians and King Khusraus was assassinated by his own son Shirva (Siroes.) To appease the Christians, Shirva turned over the relic of the True Cross to Emperor Heraclius whose soldiers brought it in triumph to Constantinople, and from there, in the spring of AD 629, to Jerusalem.

Emperor Heraclius wanted to have a spectacular restoration of the cross to its shrine on Mount Calvary. The people of the city were invited to watch him do this. He put on his imperial robes of state and his crown. But when he tried to lift the cross to his shoulders, he could not budge it. This took him completely by surprise, because previously, other people had no difficulty in carrying that piece of wood. To his great embarrassment in front of all the people, he tried once and again but the cross was simply too heavy.

Watching the Emperor's predicament, the Patriarch Zacharias gave him a piece of advice. "Your Majesty," he said, "remember that when Jesus Christ carried that cross, he did not have a golden crown nor expensive robes." The Emperor took the hint, took off his crown and shed his expensive outer robes. When he tried to lift the cross again, it was so light it seemed hollow inside, and without any difficulty at all he was able to bring it up the hill to its chapel.

APRIL 7

EASTER DAY, Cycle A

**JOHN 20:1-9: MAGDALENE, PETER AND JOHN AT THE
EMPTY TOMB**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBUARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Significance of the "Empty Tomb" for the Original Disciples of **Christ**. V. 1 "Early in the morning of the first day of the week (Sunday), while it was still dark..." The Sabbath ended on the evening of Saturday, but, because of the onset of night, the women who wanted to add spices and ointments on Jesus's corpse waited until early Sunday morning to visit his tomb. Womanly piety or concern for the proper anointing of Jesus' dead body led to the early discovery of the Empty Tomb and to the early announcement of Christ's Resurrection. These two realities belong to two different spheres. The Empty Tomb is earthly and lends itself to historical investigation. The Resurrection of Christ is an other-worldly Mystery and is an object of faith.

. V. 1. xxx Mary Magdalene... V. 3 xxx Simon Peter and the other disciple (the one Jesus loved)... These three personages were chosen to be key players in the proclaiming of the Good News of Christ's Resurrection.

The "disciple whom Jesus loved" is given a special role in the Resurrection happenings only in John. This is because the Fourth Gospel was written originally for the churches which were influenced by this disciple - the churches of Ephesus and its surrounding region (Asia).

BIBLIARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, the Easter Vigil Mass focuses on the event itself of the Resurrection of Christ while the Easter Day Mass focuses on its **proclamation**.

Focus Points. (1) Women, especially Mary Magdalene, were the first to discover the Empty Tomb - the aspect of the Resurrection that pertains to history - and Simon Peter was the first to go in to "officially" **verify** the report of the women, but it was 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' **who** first "saw (the Empty Tomb) and believed (the mystery of the Resurrection of Christ)."

(2) Mary Magdalene **was the first to proclaim the Empty Tomb and** thus merited to be called "the apostle to the Apostles" because she was the one chosen to tell this Good News to the Twelve Apostles.

(3) The prerogative of the Twelve Apostles to be the **official witnesses and proclaimators of the Resurrection of Christ** is nevertheless kept intact. It is clear from the narrative that it was an Apostle - John, the disciple Jesus loved - who **first "saw and believed."** (Mary Magdalene saw the Empty Tomb and was the first to tell others about it, but her belief in the Resurrection of Christ will be elicited later, when Jesus appears to her.) What is special to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" is that **he believed in the mystery of the Resurrection even before being favored with an appearance of Jesus. In this he is the model of believers like us who have not been favored with appearances of the Risen Christ.** In Luke ch. 24 it is clear that others believed in the Resurrection of Christ not because of the say-so of the women (v. 22) **but because of the authority of Peter to** whom the Lord appeared (v. 34).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. The successor of Peter in the see of Rome. The Pope, is, even today, the most important official witness to the Resurrection of

Christ. It is ridiculous to settle the question of whether Jesus resurrected or not on the basis of the votes of some so-called "Theologians" - as was done by a group in the U.S.A. History, Archeology, etc. can only go as far as proving that the body of Christ has never been found - and this is really what the Empty Tomb is all about. The **Mystery of the Resurrection of Christ** is something beyond the realm of the inquisitiveness of man. To attain it by faith what we need are not scholars but witnesses.

Ask yourself: Should I give any importance to "theologians" who deny the Resurrection of Christ? Or: how much has the Pope, as a witness of Christ, influenced my life?

2. The Resurrection of Christ is not just a thing of the past, but a Good News that is happening here and now inasmuch as, by the power of Christ's Resurrection, men and women today are being raised to a new way of life - the Christian way.

Ask yourself: Has my being a Christian meant for me being raised to a new way of life? Have I shared to others how this came about?

3. Good News is not something you can keep to yourself.

Ask yourself: Have I been true to my Christian duty of proclaiming the Good News?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? The best kind of sharing is not just the sharing of material goods nor even of ideas and insights. It is the sharing of experiences that have made an impact in our lives. This is what Mary Magdalene did. She shared with others her experience of finding Christ's Empty Tomb on Easter mom. And, in an even deeper way, this was done by the "disciple whom Jesus loved," the one who is presented as our model in our belief in the Resurrection of Christ. He believed in die Resurrection even before he was favored with an appearance of the Risen Christ, and later, in his ministry especially in Asia Minor, he shared this belief with people who had no chance of witnessing any earthly appearance of Jesus Christ.

2. **CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Because the women cared. They cared about giving Christ a decent burial, not satisfied with the hurried anointing and spicing of Christ's body by the men who buried him. This is the reason for the early discovery of the Empty Tomb and the proclamation of Christ's Resurrection within 24 hours after it occurred.

3. **CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** "The disciple whom Jesus loved" affirmed Peter's position as the top ranking Apostle by not entering the tomb first - giving this honor to Peter - although he was the first to arrive there after Mary Magdalene's astonishing news.

4. **FORGIVENESS.** Peter ran to the tomb after Mary Magdalene's report not just out of curiosity but because he wanted to seek forgiveness and make amends for his cowardice during Jesus's capture and trial. He represented every sinner who wants forgiveness from the Lord.

5. **WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?** The Good News here is a reality that is rooted in history but transcends it. It is the Good News that Christ's Tomb was found empty on Easter morn - and this is something historical - and that he, in his entire human being of body and soul, alive as one unit, now lives beyond time and space and is the Lord who gives NEW LIFE to every human being who wants it - and this is his mystery, accepted in faith by Christians.

C. STORY: An Easter Tradition Revived by Pope John XXIII

Giuseppe Roncalli - Pope John XXIII - was a historian by training and when he became Pope he revived many long-forgotten traditions that surrounded the papacy. One such tradition was the greeting given to the Pope on Easter morn. The papal household gathers as a family, and when everything is ready, the Pope says joyfully: "SURREXIT DOMINUS VERE" ("The Lord has been raised! It is true!"). And the whole household in chorus responds, "ET APPARUIT SIMONI" ("He has appeared to Simon"). All this is a very simple but also very evocative dramatization of what is written in Luke 24:34.

We should recall this today as a reminder that our faith in the Resurrection does not rest on the speculation of people who claim to be "theologians" but on a long long line of men and women whose lives were completely changed upon accepting the apostolic witness about the Empty Tomb and the Risen Lord.

April 14

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, Cycle A

JOHN 20:19-31: EIGHT DAYS LATER

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBLIARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Significance of the event for the original Twelve Disciples of **Christ**. The story tells us how one of the Apostles insisted that he will not believe the Resurrection of Christ "without probing the nailprints in his hands, without putting (his) finger in the nailmarks and my hands into his side." This attitude is commonly described as one of doubt, giving rise to the epithet, "doubting" Thomas... Modern commentators point out, however, that the point of the story is not Thomas' doubt but his **NEED TO HAVE AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE RISEN CHRIST TO BE AUTHENTICALLY ONE OF THE TWELVE OFFICIAL WITNESSES TO HIS RESURRECTION**. Without such an encounter, Thomas would have been reduced to the situation of those, like us, who have not "seen" the Risen Lord. Fortunately, because of what happened on the eighth day after the Resurrection, he is one of those who "have seen and believed."

Furthermore, the incident gives rise to one of the most explicit acknowledgements of the **DIVINITY OF CHRIST**, who is here proclaimed as **LORD AND GOD**.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, the story is an invitation to rejoice in the blessedness of believing without seeing or experiencing the mysterious aliveness of Christ with his body and soul united. For us, the Sacraments especially the Eucharist, Sacred Scriptures, and the Hand of God made manifest in some grace-filled moments of our lives are the equivalents of Thomas' encounter with the Risen Lord.

Focus Points. The three focus points are: (1) Thomas' prerogative as one of the Twelve Apostles to have a face to face encounter with the Risen Christ; (2) his profession of faith, when he said, "My Lord and my

God!" (3) Christ's observation: "Blest are they who have not seen and have believed."

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBUARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. Christian believers today must be able to trace their faith back to the personal testimony of the Twelve Apostles who were favored by a face to face encounter with the Risen Christ. We in the Roman Catholic Church are assured of this lineage.

Ask yourself: Have I appreciated the fact that I am a Roman Catholic and that my faith in the Risen Christ can be traced to an Apostolic Witness?

2. The spread of the Good News of salvation depended on the witness of the Twelve Apostles about their encounters with the Risen Lord. This original witness generated the vicarious witness of those who followed afterwards. Until now it is our Christian duty to give witness. We have to prove that the power of the Risen Lord works among us by living a life that is qualitatively different from worldly life.

Ask yourself: Is my spiritual quality of life better than that of people who have not yet come to an explicit faith in the Risen Christ?

3. Jesus proclaimed a blessedness reserved to future generations of followers.

Ask yourself: Have I felt this blessedness in my life?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* We are blest because the Twelve Apostles shared their faith with others and these others kept the sharing going on through the centuries. Let us be aware of our great calling to be a link in this great chain of sharing.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Jesus cared for Thomas. He knew the need of Thomas to have an encounter with him and he

graciously masterminded the encounter. We should learn from him how to respond to the spiritual needs of our sisters and brothers.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus' affirmation of us was done long before we were born. We read about it in today's Gospel Reading.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Thomas' "doubt" was not a sin because there was no hardness of heart in it. It was a temporary lack of communication that was soon remedied. If we resolve never to put malice where and erring brother or sister intends none, we will not find it hard to forgive people when they admit their mistakes. We will see them, after all, as honest mistakes.

5. *WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?* Belief brings blessedness.

C. POEM: God Knows Best
by Helen Steiner Rice

Our Father knows what's best for us,
So why should we complain -
We always want the sunshine
But He knows there must be rain -
We love the sound of laughter
And the merriment of cheer,
But our hearts would lose their tenderness
If we never shed a tear.
Our Father tests us often
With suffering and with sorrow,
He tests us, not to punish us,
But to help us meet tomorrow.

The testing of Thomas by Christ was planned to assure future generations of Christians that their faith rests on the testimony of Twelve Chosen Ones who met the Risen Christ face to face.

April 21

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, Cycle A

LUKE 24:13-35: THE WALK TO EMMAUS

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBUARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Significance of the Event for the Original Disciples of Christ. The significance of this story can be gleaned from the elements which are contained in it, namely, (1) the walk of two disciples with Christ whom they did not recognize, (2) the explanation of Scriptural prophecies by Christ himself, (3) the meal which Christ graced with his presence, and finally (4) the recognition of Christ in the breaking of the bread, reminiscent of the Last Supper.

The Walk to Emmaus is the story of how people who have believed in Jesus as the Messiah and have been disillusioned by his Crucifixion, by journeying with him and listening to the scriptural prophecies, and especially by breaking bread in a meal graced by his presence, come to recognize him as the Lord of Life.

BIBUARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, the Walk to Emmaus should open our eyes to what happens at Holy Mass. In this celebration we first walk with Jesus as a stranger since we are too preoccupied by his death on the Cross. But then we are instructed by the Scriptural Readings and the Homily. Then Jesus becomes sacramentally present in the consecration of the bread and wine. When we receive him not only externally but in our hearts we experience the New Life which he imparts as the Risen Lord of heaven and earth.

Focus Points. (1) The Walk. A spiritual journey is needed so as to be able to recognize Jesus as Lord. (2) Scriptures. The study of Scriptural prophecies concerning Christ should make our hearts burn with longing for him. (3) Sharing a meal or Christian hospitality and good works set the atmosphere for the revelation of Christ. (4) Jesus Christ is recognized

as the Risen Lord in the Breaking of the Bread (the Eucharist), which, however, should not be set apart from all the foregoing, but should be considered their climax.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBHARASAL STEP 5: SHARE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. There are times in our life when the shadow of the cross blackens everything else.

*Ask yourself: Have I been disillusioned in my spiritual aspirations?
Or: have I traveled with Christ as a stranger?*

2. Reading Scriptures, including the Old Testament as long as this is done with reference to Christ, should make our hearts burn with love for Christ. Ignorance of Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.

Ask yourself: Have I experienced a surge of new life in me because of reading Scripture?

3. Holy Mass is our present-day equivalent of the walk to Emmaus.

Ask yourself: Is my attendance at Mass a true spiritual experience?

BIB LIAR AS A L STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? In this Sunday's Gospel passage there are three moments of sharing: (1) the sharing whereby Christ explained Scriptures to the disciples; (2) the sharing of the Jerusalem disciples to the returning Emmaus-bound disciples that "The Lord has been raised! It is true! He has appeared to Simon!" (3) and the sharing of the returning disciples of their Emmaus experience. Let us try to pick up something from these three sharings to improve our own sharing.

2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED? Christ showed his sensitivity in identifying the need of the Emmaus-bound disciples to understand the scriptural prophecies and the "breaking of the bread" that he did with, them at the Last Supper. Let us imitate this sensitivity.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* There are two moments of affirmation included in this Sunday's Gospel story: (1) Christ affirmed the two disciples by joining them in their journey, and especially by accepting their invitation to sup with them, and (2) Christ affirmed Simon by appearing to him (v. 34).

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Christ forgave the "little sense" of the disciples and their "slowness to believe all that the prophets have announced" (v. 25). We must learn to forgive precisely these shortcomings when we find them in our community.

5. *WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE?* Although the Risen Lord does not appear bodily to us, he gave us a Great Sacrament through which we have easy access to him.

C. STORY: Mysteries Explained by Boni

Boni is a Catholic Filipino Chinese who slowly got involved in Church activities. First he noticed that quite often there was no Lector at Mass, so he volunteered to be a Lector. Then he observed there were too few catechists, and so he also volunteered to be one. Later he became aware that people had difficulty obtaining Bibles. So he opened a Bible store where people could buy Bibles at discounted prices.

One of his most interesting projects had to do with his fellow Filipino-Chinese. Many of them were not Christians and they thought of a Catholic Church as something taboo - a strange, mysterious place. So Boni organized tours inside the church for them. He begins by showing them the big crucifix and he explains why they see a naked man hanging on a cross. Then he brings them to the Sacred Heart chapel and tells them why the same man, clothed, is showing his heart. Next they go to the image of the Sto. Nifio and Boni explains why the child is holding an orb.

At the end of the tour, most of the "tourists" express their desire to attend Mass. At that point Boni tells them they should first attend catechism class and he volunteers to organize it for them. Many of Boni's "tourists" eventually become Catholics - all because Boni takes the time and trouble to explain the Catholic Church "mysteries" to them.

April 28, 1996

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, Cycle A

JOHN 10:1-10: JESUS - SHEPHERD AND GATE

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT

BIBLIARASAL STEP 3: AGAIN LOOK AT THE TEXT.

Significance of the Allegory for the Original Disciples of Christ.
In the **Fourth** Gospel, allegory is used instead of parables. A parable has usually only one main point from which a lesson is drawn. But in an allegory there is a hidden code, and certain elements mentioned in the story symbolize something else. In the present Sunday Gospel allegory, the symbolism is an ancient one, because the Old Testament, notably E/ckicl 34, describes Israel as a flock and its leaders as shepherds. In E/ekicl 34 the faithless leaders of Judah (Ezck 34:2) are contrasted with both **Yahweh** himself, who will become the true shepherd (34:11), and the future **dauidic king** (34:24). In John 10 Jesus is presented as fulfilling both of these aspects, for he is both Yahweh among men (Jn 10:11) and the **true dauidic Messiah**. The faithless leaders with whom Jesus is contrasted are the **Pharisees** (see Jn 9:13 f). It is these who, in John's mind, are the "thieves and robbers" of Jn 10:8, whose aim is only "to steal and kill and destroy" (Jn 10:10).

Jn 10:1-9 superimposes the allegory of the sheepgate to that of the shepherd and sheep. In Palestine, when a Hock is small and the weather is good, as in late spring and summer, the shepherd himself sleeps at the entrance of the sheep-pen, and therefore serves as "gate".

BIBLIARASAL STEP 4: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN.

For Us Today, in the Philippines, the allegory of the sheep and the shepherd, and especially that of the sheepgate, is rather puzzling because our people do not have much experience with these. The message, however, which is summed up in Jn 10:10, "I came that they might have life, and have it to the full," is something very relevant. More than ever today people seek for a life that truly fulfills their aspirations.

Focus Points. (1) Jesus Christ is the Gate to Life. (2) Life within the enclosure is for rest and protection; life outside, in the pasturelands, is for nourishment and development. (3) "Life to the full" is the life which does not end with earthly death, but goes beyond. It is the transcendent, eternal life.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBUARASAL STEP 5: SHAKE your insights on one of the points below, or better yet, TELL YOUR SMALL GROUP ABOUT A HAPPENING IN YOUR LIFE RELATED TO IT.

1. Christ is the Gate. When we enter, he gives us rest (see Mt 11:28) and protection. We become specially aware of these salvific benefits when we take a retreat.

Ask yourself: do I give importance to having a yearly restful and invigorating retreat? Or: do I remember a retreat that has truly given me rest from struggles and vigor for new life?

2. Christ is the Shepherd who calls us by name (with whom we have an interpersonal relationship), and leads by going ahead of his flock (not egging them on from behind, with a whip). His sheep listen to him. They recognize his voice.

Ask yourself: Do I have a truly interpersonal relationship with Christ? Is he my friend?

3. The life that Jesus gives both enriches earthly life and goes beyond it.

Ask yourself: has my Christian faith, hope and love enriched my earthly life? Has it made my planning for the future transcendental with an eye to what will be eternal?

BIBUARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Jesus the Good Shepherd gives himself FULL-TIME to his flock. Maybe we can not give ourselves full time to those we love, much less to our sisters and brothers in a Christian community. But let us remember: it is the time you spend on your rose that makes it important.

2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED? The Good Shepherd anticipates **the** needs of his flock, especially the ordinary ones. He is also equipped for emergencies and that is what his crook symbolizes: it is something to be used in warding off attacking wolves, and it can also be used to lift up a sheep from a ditch into which it may have fallen. Let us have this kind of caring. Let us be equipped to help our sisters and brothers in their ordinary needs, and also in emergency needs.

3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED? Calling someone by name in a friendly manner is one of the simplest but very effective ways of affirming a person.

4. FORGIVENESS. The Good Shepherd easily forgives his erring sheep but he is fierce against thieves and marauders.

5. WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS HERE? Jesus is the Gale of our sheepfold - when we enter through him we get rest and protection. He is our Good Shepherd who leads us by going ahead of us, he nourishes and develops us.

C. TWO STORIES

A man grumbled about his wife's vacation trip to Hong Kong: "She spent one week shopping here preparing for two weeks shopping over there."

An actor who's been visiting a psychiatrist for years says, "I must be the only guy who ever spent 200,000 pesos on a couch - and still doesn't own it.

These two stories show the shallowness of modern life, plagued by consumerism, psychological disorientation, etc. To attain life fullness of life, people have to turn to the Good Shepherd and ask him to take the center of their lives.