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ADULT CATECHESIS

Gino Henriqu.es, CSsR

THE USE OF BIBLE IN CATECHESIS

Jose Varickasseril, SDB

THE PRE-MATRIMONIAL INVESTIGATION

Excelso Garcia, O.P.

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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Local Catechetical Methodology

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

This is the goal that catechists should achieve according to Pope John Paul II: *"To seek ways to strengthen catechesis throughout the Church in Asia as a necessary and effective way of fostering the renewed missionary evangelization which is required in order to open wide to Christ the doors of Asia."*

With this in mind, bishops, priests, religious and laity who embrace the vocation of a catechist should strive in their daily catechetical endeavors in the classrooms, summer catechetical programs, summer camps and in similar occasions organized to conduct teachings of the Catholic doctrine.

In the Philippines, the Episcopal Commission on Catechesis on Catholic Education (ECCCE) has exerted efforts to strengthen catechetical methodology for effective assimilation of faith. Catechism is an **art** of practical pastoral theology devised *"to transform the actual praxis of Christian Church community in specific societal, cultural and religious situations"* (cf. Docete, vol. XVIII, no. 83, p. 10).

The publication of articles on Catechesis will hopefully supplement whatever is done by the catechists in the dioceses, parishes and basic ecclesial communities. All the faithful should remember that part of our Christian vocation is to be catechists especially in our homes.

Adult Catechesis

GINO HENRIQUES, CSsR

When one approaches the topic of Adult Catechesis, the word that best expresses it is "Challenge". It is a challenge that began in a striking way after the World War II and the Vatican Council II. And it is a challenge that is sharpened by the impact of modernity on the lives of people to-day. One may deplore the faith-crisis that was occasioned or caused by the war, the Council and modernity. One can also look at our world situation with hope and see the challenges posed to us today. These are not mere challenges that help one to cope with the difficult situations of one's world. They are challenges to a 'New Evangelization: new in fervour, new in method, new in expression', (Pope John Paul II). Hence, the title of this presentation without detriment to the topic under consideration could read: "**Adult Catechesis: Challenges to consider**".

1. The first challenge of adult catechesis is the perennial one of sharing or handing on the faith. The mode of sharing will change. The challenge is to share the faith in **fidelity to its essentials**, which never change. New concepts and new ideas may help in the deepening of the knowledge of these essentials of the faith. The challenge is, a fidelity that prevents a watering down of their basic content, and a nurturing so that it arises from the very marrow bones of the faithful.

2. The second challenge of adult catechesis is the effort to make it **relevant with the Catholic thinking of the day**. For example, one may consider the purposes of catechesis as follows: i) It brings forth

the *reign/kingdom of God*, (Mk. 1:15) making Christians historical agents of the same;

ii) It fosters and nurtures a *living Christian faith*. (Eph. 2:8; Mt. 12: 28-31; *believing, trusting and doing*). This lived faith is cognitive, a believing activity whose convictions and decisions flow from Gospel values. It is also affective in that it bears a personal relationship with God in Jesus, the Christian faith community and all humankind. Christian faith also has an obediential dimension, a doing of God's will in the world. Thus, a lived faith informs, forms and transforms people in head, heart and life-style (Gal. 5:6; Jam. 2:26; Jn. 8:31-32).

iii) It strives for a *wholeness of human freedom* that promises a fulness of life here and hereafter. Thus, it works to bring about freedom as understood today in its related terms such as 'liberation' or 'emancipation'. (Rom. 1:16; Gal. 2:21; 2 Cor. 5:18-21; Gal. 5:1; 2 Cor. 3:16-18: three "classic" model images of Jesus: *Saviour, Redeemer, Divinizer* (*Eastern Church-' God became man so that man might become God' of Athanasius*).

3. The above two challenges could apply to all catechesis. The third challenge is for the **adult** catechesis **itself**. In the past, catechesis was the activity that was meant for children (perhaps youth) or for those adults who sought for baptism. The last four decades have seen the rise of secularism that has affected the faith of Catholics at all levels. The rise in the consumption of secular values spawned by the media gives way to a loss of faith and Christian values. The result has been that so many Christian adults have a faith that is superficial and at times non-existent. When the earlier years of one's life have been influenced by secularistic values, these make inroads into one's faith values. This is the case of a large number of adults today. Hence, the need and consequent challenge to revive the faith of the adult Catholics.

Furthermore, in those places where the Christians are traditional or devotional, the adult faith can be fervent but not enlightened. When the challenge of revival or enlightenment through adult catechesis is not offered, numerous Catholics seek for it in other churches or Christian groups. The loss of numerous Catholics to other churches is a well known phenomenon.

4. The next challenge is the making of adult catechesis a God-experience.

The period of the World War n and after has often been characterized as the time of experience. The seeking for experiences that are spiritual, sensual, relational and of other types are well known today. An aspect of experience that is negative and called hedonism is accepted as a major evil of our day. Two examples would suffice: i) the proliferation of pornography through the media; ii) Sinful consumerism: where 5% of a people consume 35% of world produce, portrayed as the ideal in media.

In a world that is enticed by such varied experiences, the search for the experience of god is not lacking. It is here that adult catechesis can be of service to people. The God of the Bible is the God who intervened in history and gave His people an experience of Himself. The resurrection of Jesus was an experience and the foundation of the faith of the early Church (1 Cor 15:12-14). One of the most significant developments in Christian theology in this century has been the recovery of experience as an integral element in the exercise of theology. The challenge then is to make the experience of God in Jesus an integral element in the exercise of adult catechesis.

In such a catechesis, the kerygma of the gospel and discipleship would play an important role. The catechist leads a person to encounter God in Jesus and to accept Him as Master. Saviour and Lord. The catechist/evangelizer can verify the God-experience of the other, having walked through the experience oneself. Whereas there is always a subjective element in such an experience, there is also an objective element whereby to verify it for the other. Spiritual movements in the Church such as the charismatic renewal, the RCIA and similar forms of catechesis aim at a God experience. The use of the kerygma and discipleship is also known in other Christian groups. Many a Catholic that has joined them has been known to say: "I've found a personal relationship with Jesus in this group" or "in this group Jesus has become real to me". Adult catechesis needs to lead persons to such an experience. It should help them to grow to Christian maturity in it.

It is helpful to know in such catechesis that a religious experience is not chosen but given. It is a grace. Hence, it is necessary for the

facilitator of the catechesis and the one being facilitated to be open to God's Holy Spirit from whom these experiences flow.

5. Another challenge to adult catechesis, and to any catechesis, is **the use of the modern means of communication**. One can only make a few suggestions as this topic may already have been touched upon, i) The use of the electronic media often helps to communicate a message very effectively, ii) The persuader-facilitator and not the mere provider-user approach is a role that educators have proven to be highly effective not only with adults but also with children. An example of this approach would be in the asking of a right question: "What is your faith?", and not, "Do you have faith?". In 1 Thess. 2:3-8 one can sense the mind of a Christian persuader, iii) Essential today is the attitude of accompaniment. The image here is not of an educator passing on information, but of companions sharing a journey.

6. A further challenge in adult catechesis is its **contextualization**. There exist various forces in any country that shape the lives of people. Adult catechesis cannot remain oblivious to them, i) In Asia we have witnessed the changing shape of the Church. This had necessitated position papers at FABC meeting with headings such as "A New Way of being Church". The multicultural and multireligious situations and environments demands of Christians an authentic and true spirit of dialogue ii) One also notices in Asian countries a widening gap between the rich and the poor. Hence, catechesis has to deal with the liberative aspects of justice and the formation of a social conscience, iii) The movement of peoples is a common phenomenon in Asian countries. The spiritual care through adult catechesis of those who migrate needs to be a constant concern of the Church. — The identification of such trends and needs is an ongoing exercise to the relevancy of adult catechesis.

7. The last challenge to adult catechesis is **evangelization**. Pope Paul VI says that the evangelized must become evangelizers, (EN. 24). He emphasizes a truth in the words the Church exists to evangelize (EN. 14). Hence the challenge in adult catechesis is to not only facilitate a person's transformation into Christ, but also to show them how he/she may do the same for others. The reality of the words of Pope John Paul II could be made to come alive when he says: "Missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive", (RM 2). The challenge of evangelization

will ensure an ongoing growth in faith in the process of adult catechesis.

At Bandung, in 1990, the Asian Bishops discerned that the need for the spiritual and social transformation of Asia is ever urgent. This discernment was made as they viewed the Asian realities in two general rubrics: "a crisis of survival" and "a hope at the crossroads". A vigorous response to do the challenges in adult catechesis can ensure the realization of hope for the Asian Church.

The Use of Bible in Catechesis

JOSE VARICKASSERIL, SDB

The Word which is the source of creation (Gen 1, If), nourishment (Deut 8, 3; Wis 16, 26), listened to with docility (1 Sam 3, If), a lamp for one's feet and light on one's path (Ps. 119, 105), that does not return empty (Is. 55, 11), builds and plants (Jere 1, 10), devoured by the prophet and proved to be delight and joy for the heart (Jere. 15, 16), eaten and tasting sweet as honey (Ezek. 2, 8), irresistible (Amos 3, 8), living and active ... discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart (Heb 4, 12), to be read in public (1 Tim 4, 13), profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, for equipping for every good work (2 Tim 3, 16-17), to be kept and pondered over in the heart (Lk 2, 19), the test of love (John 14, 23-24), that cannot be neglected (Acts 6, 2), that keeps on increasing (Acts 6, 7), - this Word should dwell richly in everyone (Col. 3, 16). It is about this Word and its use in Catechesis that we draw our attention in this paper.

Scripture is the criterion to evaluate Christian living.¹ In under-

¹ Cfr. R.M. Rummery, *Catechesis and Religious Instruction in a Pluralist Society*, Sydney, 1975, p 64. The dogmatic constitution on the *Catholic Faith* during the Council of Vatican (1870) considered the Scriptures as the unique font and unique judge of Christian Doctrine. See "Dei Filius" (Concilium Vaticanum I), in *Enchiridion Biblicum: Document della Chiesa sulla Sacra Scrittura*, Bologna, 1993, pp. 128-131.

scoring the importance of the Word² and its use in Catechesis, we examine first and foremost the primacy of place that biblical catechesis occupied in the primitive Church, then the Church's emphasis on the Word in her recent teachings and finally, we would like to propose methods of a very practical nature for the effective use of the Bible in Catechesis.

In the course of our discussion, we subscribe to the view that there is no water tight distinction between evangelization and catechesis. We accept what the General Catechetical Directory (GCD) says, namely, "evangelization can precede or accompany the work of Catechesis proper."³

BIBLICAL CATECHESIS IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH

In examining the use of Bible in Catechesis, it is important to go back to the sources, to the origins, to the earliest days of Christianity to take stock of the importance that the Word of God occupied in the imparting of catechetical instruction.

The entire Bible as it exists today was born out of the need for leading a people to God. In desiring to educate a people to the faith, need was felt to base all teachings on a solid basis, on a strong foundation. The entire Pentateuch is aimed at directing the attention of a people to a God to whom they are indebted for everything. The historical books and the prophetic literature show the role of God in the life of Israel and His expectations from them. Similarly, the Wisdom literature aims at inculcating perennial and permanent values in the hearts of the people so that their faith will grow to maturity.

² The Italian Episcopal Conference has given primacy of place to the Word in Catechetical Renewal. This trend noticed elsewhere is a return to the earlier days of the Church. The same conference states that the pilgrim Church on her journey ought to be sustained through the Word. Cfr. "II Rinnovamento della Catechesi", (Conferenza episcopale Italiana), Rome, 1970, pp 1-27. See also "Catechesis" C. Dolley, in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, M. Glazier & M.K. Hellwig (Eds.), Collegeville (MI), 1994, pp 135-136.

³ GCD, no. 18. Evangelization is the period of gestation, baptism is the moment of birth and indicative of the intense desire for conversion and Catechesis is the life long process of nurturing the faith. The Scriptures are needed at each of these stages but more especially at the third stage.

For Catechesis as an on-going evangelization, see J. Patmury, *Play in Religion: A Means for Evangelization and Catechesis*, Bangalore, 1988, p 4, See also CT, 18.

For Jesus, his point of departure in his teachings and instructions were the Scriptures. Even a casual glance at the Gospels will indicate how frequently he cited the Scriptures and based his teachings on the Word.

The primitive Church treasured the OT and referred constantly to the words and deeds of Jesus. The New Testament was born in a catechetical context.⁴ Jesus had left behind no written literature. However, the early Christian community felt a strong need to enhance their kerygmatic and didactic ministry by narrating to the possible converts, as well as to the adherents of the new faith whatever Jesus had taught, said or done. In the years that followed immediately after the departure of Jesus, the heralds of the new faith limited themselves to an oral transmission of the teachings of Jesus. As years rolled by, the benefit of written Word was taken stock of. Thus the different books of the New Testament came into existence. To have an idea of the importance of the Word in kerygma and Catechesis, it suffices to look at the numerous occurrences of *logos* (Word) and *rhema* (Word) in the Acts of the Apostles which describes the birth and consolidation of the Church⁵.

a) The occurrences of *logos* in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles*

We intend to make only a very brief study of the occurrences of *logos* in the Acts. The study will reveal the importance that the primitive church attached to the Word. During the course of this our discussion we also hope to indicate the numerous nuances attached to *logos* and its close link to Catechesis.

⁴ Cfr. J. Theckanath, "Adult Catechesis Through Sunday Liturgy of the Word", in *Moving with the Spirit*, D.S. Amalorpavadass (Ed.), Bangalore, 1979, pp 134-138. See also C. Mesters, *Dio, Dove Sei?*, Brescia, 1972, pp 163-169. He says that the new adherents to the faith had to know how to conduct themselves in the new way of life. Therefore the various books of the New Testament came into existence.

⁵ By making a special reference to *logos* and *rhema* it is not implied that there no other indications in the Acts or the New Testament that emphasise the importance of the Word in catechesis. In fact, G. Friedrich gives a list of 32 words for *kerusso* See G. Friedrich, *kerux*, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. EI, p 703. Similarly, R. Pesch refers to a huge list of 95 words to describe the missionary activity of the primitive Church (cfr. R. Pesch, 'Voraussetzungen und Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission', in *Mission im Neuen Testament*, K. Kertelge (Ed.), Freiburg i.B., 1982, pp. 14-15.

*There are a total of 64 occurrences of *logos* in the Acts of the Apostles. Of these, 43 occurrences are closely related to the proclamation of the word which awakens faith or sustains faith.

Luke says that those who received the Good News by listening to the words of Peter were baptized (Acts 2, 41f). The Word is the prerequisite for baptism, for initiation into the community of believers. It is the hearing the Word that leads to faith (Acts 4, 4). One need not be apologetic about the *word* that he wants to proclaim. Nay it is to be proclaimed with courage (Acts 4, 29). Prayer and the presence of the Holy Spirit can give the necessary courage for a community to keep on proclaiming the *word* (Acts 4, 31). Nothing ought to come between the *word and its proclamation*. Everything else is to be subservient to the *word* (Acts 6, 2). The early Christian community would not replace the *word* with philanthropic activities which are good in themselves. For the disciples of Jesus prayer and ministry of the *word* were to be accorded the priority of place (Acts 6, 4). The growth of a community is tied to the increased or abundant proclamation of the *word* (Acts 6,7). True discipleship of Jesus is made possible through a dynamic listening and acceptance of the *word*.¹

Persecutions in the primitive Church made Christians seek shelter elsewhere. However, even when fleeing to places of refuge, their preoccupation was the preaching of the *word* (Acts 8, 4). The community was aware that the content of proclamation was the *word*. Any community that had opted for the *word* drew the attention and care of the Church leaders in a special manner. Peter and John would rush to Samaria where the people had accepted the *word* (Acts 8, 14). The Word is of the Lord. The apostles took pains to bear witness to *word* and testify to it (Acts 8, 25). Speaking the *word* and evangelizing are used as synonyms. Therefore, they are interconnected and at the source of the kerygmatic activity is the *word*. The *word* was proclaimed by Jesus (Acts 10, 36). The Holy Spirit takes possession of an individual on account of the proclamation and explanation of the *word* (Acts 10, 44). Through the *word*, differences are broken down between peoples and peoples, between groups and groups. One single community is formed through the *word* (Acts 11, If). The proclamation of the *word* is not a part time activity. Luke uses the present participle of *laleo* (= to speak/proclaim) to describe the proclamation of the Christians who were scattered (Acts 11, 19). The *word* is something active and dynamic. It keeps on growing as can be

¹ Cfr. Mt 7, 24-27; 12, 46-50

deduced from the imperfect of *auksano* (= to grow/increase - Acts 12, 24) and this leads to the multiplication of the communities. Perseverance in the proclamation of the *word* produces results (Acts 13, 5f)- There are people who seek the *word* (Acts 13,7) and there ought to be dedicated men who will fulfill this longing for the *word*. Reading of the Scriptures and clarifications as well as paraenesis proceeding from the proclaimed *word* (Acts 13, 15) are part and parcel of evangelization and Catechesis, and this same *word* leads to salvation (Acts 13, 26). Repeated proclamation of the *word* can lead people to a generous acceptance of the demand set forth by the same (Acts 13, 44f). Rejection of *word* does not indicate that the *word* has failed but that man has failed. If one rejects the *word*, the salvation bringing *word* will be given to someone else (Acts 13, 46f). True glory is given to the *word* when one accepts it (Acts 13, 48). Every place, every group comes within the purview of the *word*. It is to break forth into every nook and corner of the world (Acts 13, 49).

Bold and persevering proclamation of the *word*, though not without obstacles, will bring about positive results (Acts 14, 3). The Lord himself will accompany those who boldly proclaim his *word*. Competent and prepared men for the proclamation of the *word* are also important (Acts 14, 12). When one proclaims it is the *word* and the person of Jesus that are receiving primacy of place. Nothing else and no one else is proclaimed (Acts 14, 25). In the council of Jerusalem, there was no doubt that it was the *word of the gospel* that had initiated faith (Acts 15, 7). In the early Church the Scriptures were used to support the stance taken by someone (Acts 15, 15). The tool for exhortation as well as for strengthening a community was the *word*. Teaching the *word* and proclaiming the *word* can be used as synonyms and many are involved in this task (Acts 15, 35). There is need to follow up the proclamation. It is not a one time activity in the past or of the past (Acts 15, 36). There could be due to historical factors more opportune times and more opportune places for the proclamation of the *word* (Acts 16, 6). The ambience of a home where a more personal and direct contact can be had, the *word* can find easier and quicker access (Acts 16, 32).

It is consoling for the heralds of the gospel to know that they will come across also people who accept the faith with eagerness. These give a sure foundation to their newly accepted faith by diligent searching of

the Scriptures (Acts 17, 11). The use of the passive imperfect of *kattanggello* (= to proclaim - Acts 17, 13), also shows that the real agent of evangelization is God himself and persons are used as instruments by God in the work of proclamation and sustaining of faith.

Proclamation of the *word* is something that should engage all the faculties and the total attention of the proclaimer, and it is aimed at showing that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18, 5). Teaching the *word* is a time-consuming process. What is taught is the *word* of the Lord (Acts 18, 11). Luke reverts back to the same idea of teaching the *word* as a long and time-consuming process. What is done in evangelization is carried to completion through instruction (Acts 19, 10). The *word* calls the believer to constant self evaluation and self examination which lead to a change of heart and the subsequent effectiveness of the *word* (Acts 19, 20).

b) The occurrences of *rhema* in the Acts.

Luke uses *rhema* (Word) 15 times in the text of the Acts. The first occurrence of *rhema* (Acts 2, 14) is on the day of Pentecost when through the *word* of Peter, three thousand people were brought to the faith. His *word* consisted of a narration of the salvific activity in and through the person of Jesus. In Acts 5, 20, the *rhema* is qualified as 'words of life'. For Peter and the apostles, witnessing to the *words* (Acts 5, 32) is a witnessing to an event and to a person, namely to all what Jesus said and did. References to the *rhema* in Acts 6, 11-13 remind one of the consequences of proclaiming Jesus. Here the proclamation of the *word* also implies a return to the history of salvation culminating in the saving deeds of Jesus. It is through the *word* that Cornelius is introduced into the community of believers, the Holy Spirit is made present in a person and salvation is brought to Cornelius and his household (Acts, 10, 22-36, 27-44).⁸ The proclamation of the *word* (Acts, 11, 16) is also obedience on the part of the heralds of the Good News to the command of Jesus (Acts 1, 7-8)

⁸ The close connection between *logos*, *rhema*, and *evangelizomai* can be taken note of in Acts 10, 36-37. Luke makes no major distinction among these three words. They are used here as synonyms. Consequently, faith comes through the Word and faith is deepened and illumined through the Word.

There are people eager for the *word* (Acts 13, 42). The *word* which is sown amidst obstacles often bears fruit. Faith is a consequence of the *word* that is proclaimed (see Acts 13, 42-52). Paul proclaimed the *word* (Acts 25, 23) with courage in front of governor Felix, King Agrippa, Bernice, the military tribunes and prominent men. And the content of the *word* was *metanoia*, the suffering, death and rising to life of Jesus and an invitation to accept Jesus (see especially Acts 25, 13-26, 32). The last reference to *rhema* (Acts 28, 25) is replete with references to the kingdom of God and a challenge and invitation to accept Jesus (Acts 28, 23-29).

We have examined the importance that the primitive Church attached to the Word for implanting the seed of faith as well to further nourish that faith. Now we shall examine the modern trend of the Church to go back once again to the origins of the Church so as to have a more effective Catechesis by using the Bible.

THE CHURCH'S EMPHASIS ON THE WORD IN HER RECENT TEACHINGS

From the early middle ages to the end of the nineteenth century there was a certain amount of decline of interest in the Word of God. Only a few and qualified people had easy access to the Scriptures. This is especially true when we compare it with the interest that the ordinary Christian folk showed in the primitive Church for the Word. However, in the twentieth century there is once again a renewed interest in the Word and this interest is particularly noticed in the field of Catechesis. We shall have a quick glance at some of the more important teachings of the magisterium where attention is focussed on to the Word.

a) The Word of God and Liturgy

The liturgy is a moment of intense formal catechesis. There is no liturgical celebration without the proclamation of the Word. We know that the early Christian community gave great importance to the apostles' teaching, to the breaking of bread and to sharing (Acts 2, 42). In the Liturgical ambience that was specially suited for formal catechesis it was the Word of God that animated and enhanced the celebrations (see also Acts 20,7-12). Today the Church is trying to recapture this earlier interest in a biblical Catechesis.

Therefore, we shall draw our attention to some of the magisterial teachings where the role of the Word of God in liturgy is emphasized.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*) makes frequent references to the importance of the Word of God. SC affirms that Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. The homily and prayers of the Mass are based on it. And the Constitution invites everyone to have a "sweet and living love" for sacred scripture.⁹ The greatest importance is given to sermons¹⁰ in liturgical celebrations. The Constitution also highlights the advantage of Bible services.¹¹ Emphasis is laid also on the need for sharing the treasures of the Bible through liturgical celebrations.¹²

The Church has taken note of the importance of the Word in liturgy which is among the best forms of Catechesis that is at our disposal. There is in fact no liturgy without the Word and the Word is also among the best means of nourishing one's life of prayer.¹³

In the "Instruction on the worship of the Eucharistic Mystery" (S.C.R., Eucharisticum Mysterium, 25 May, 1967), we are told of the primary place of the Scriptures since God himself speaks to us when they are read in the Church.¹⁴ The same document says that the Word is necessary for the administration of the Sacraments¹⁵ for nourishing the people, and recommends a short bible service when communion is given outside the Mass.¹⁶ The same instruction also recommends reading of Scriptures and a short homily also during the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.¹⁷

The Word of God aims at revealing to the people of God the wonderful salvific plan of salvation.¹⁸ Consequently Catechesis which

» **SC 24**

¹⁰ SC 35, 52; Inter Oecumenici, 15

¹¹ SC 35

¹² SC 51; Inter Oecumenici 37, 38

¹³ Cfr. SC 56, 90, 106, 112

¹⁴ Cfr. EM, ch. 1, E

¹⁵ Cfr. EM, ch. 1, F

« EM, ch. 2, m, C 2

" EM, ch. m, V, B

" Cfr. General Instruction on the Roman Missal, ch. VII, nos. 318-320

aims at revealing God's plan of salvation should have more and more recourse to the Word.

In the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, the importance of the Word of God and the need to break the same so as to make it meaningful and relevant is indicated.¹⁹ To derive the maximum benefit from the readings, it is suggested to introduce briefly the readings.²⁰

The *Third Instruction On the Correct Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (S.C.D.W., *Liturgiae Instaurationes*, 5 September, 1970), devotes much space in bringing out the use of the Word in formal liturgical Catechesis. Nothing can replace or substitute the Word of God in liturgy.²¹

In the *Directory on Children's Masses* (*Pueros Baptizatos*), the magisterium tries to rectify one of the false notions, **namely, that the children are not prepared to profit from the Word.** This directory encourages exposing the children to the Word of God.²²

b) Focus on the Word of God in other documents of the Vatican Council

Besides the instructions related to Liturgy and **Liturgical** celebrations, several references were made to the Word **when the Vatican Council** was in session. The entire dogmatic constitution **on Divine Revelation** (*Dei Verbum*, 18 Nov. 1965) is devoted **to the treatment of this theme.** Among other things this dogmatic constitution says **that catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction are healthfully nourished through the Scriptures and that the catechists must immerse themselves in the Scripture by constant reading of the Word.**²³ The Decree **on the Apostolate of the lay People** (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 18 Nov. 1965) makes an important connection between the Word and **Catechesis when it states that the "laity cooperate in the spread of the Word of God, particularly by catechetical instruction".**²⁴ Similarly, the Decree **on the Church's**

¹⁹ General Instruction on the Roman Missal, ch. H, nos. 8, 9.

²⁰ General Instruction on the Roman Missal, ch. II, no. 11

²¹ *Liturgiae Instaurationes* 2

²² *Pueros Baptizatos* 14, 47

²³ Cfr. DV 24, 25.

²⁴ A A 10.

Missionary Activity (*Ad Gentes Divinitus*, 7 Dec 1965) indicates* the importance of the Scriptures in Catechesis by asking the catechists to study the Catholic doctrine with special reference to the Bible.²⁵ The Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church (*Christus Dominus*), the Bishops are told of their particular obligation to be concerned about catechetical instruction, and this instruction is to be based on the Holy Scripture.²⁶

Evangelii Nuntiandi affirms the teachings of *Ad Gentes*. The Gospel message is necessary, unique and irreplaceable.²⁷ Paul VI affirmed once more that the essential mission of the Church is to evangelize all men and by citing Rom 10,17 drew the attention of everyone to the fact that faith comes from what is heard.²⁸ Since Catechesis by its very nature aims at evoking faith, the Gospel ought to be used more and more so as to ensure a deepening of the faith.

c) General Catechetical Directory (11th April, 1971)

This directory indicates at various points the great importance of the use of Scriptures in Catechesis. It affirms that "It is a function of the ministry of the word to uncover, purify, and develop the authentic values which are found in the spiritual heritage of those human cultures wherein a religious sense remains alive and operative and is all-pervasive in human life."²⁹

Since we find people drifting away into religious indifference, "there is the greatest possible need for the ministry of the word, especially evangelization and Catechesis."³⁰ It follows therefore that indifference to the faith can be attributed in large measure to an ignorance of Scriptures and a lack of a good grounding in the Word of God. The directory also speaks of the need for adapting creative ways of presenting the gospel message to men.³¹

²⁵ AG 17, 26.

¹⁶ CD 14.

¹⁷ EN 5

» EN 14, 42

» GCD 5c

» GCD, 7d

" GCD, 8c

Part two of GCD, consisting of articles 10-17, draws the attention of the entire Christian world to the supreme importance of the Word in Catechesis. God's revelation has taken place in numerous ways but especially through the deeds and words of Jesus. It is the task of Catechesis to make these known.³² It is by examining the Scriptures that man can be informed of God's plan of salvation.³³ Hence what can serve to prop up the catechetical instruction is an abundant use of Scriptures. In the section on *the functions of catechesis*, the directory states that it is through listening to the Word that one arrives at a mature faith.³⁴ The directory also puts across the need for a faithful reading of Sacred Scripture in order to grasp the whole truth about the divine plan. However, a mere reading of the Scriptures is not sufficient, there is also the need for an assiduous meditation on the word of God.³⁵

d) Catechesi Tradendae (16th October 1979)

Catechesis is among the primary tasks of the Church and its object is the mystery of Christ. True catechesis therefore will transmit what Jesus said and did³⁶ for which an assiduous study of the Word is a *sine qua non*. The same document also teaches that the Church is born of the Word and also nourished by the Word.³⁷ Due to several factors, there is the need today, in the field of Catechesis, not only to nourish and strengthen the faith, but also to arouse an indifferent or dormant faith. Therefore, a great need is being felt for more and more of Scripture to awaken a simple and lively faith. Catechesi Tradendae says that the whole of a person's humanity is to be impregnated by the Word.³⁸ In authentic Catechesis, through searching into Scriptures the gospel kerygma is deepened.³⁹

³² GCD 11, 12.

³³ GCD 15.

³⁴ GCD 22.

³⁵ GCD 24, 25.

³⁶ See Catechesi Tradendae 1, 4, 5, 6, 15.

³⁷ CT 10

³⁸ CT 20, 21.

³⁹ CT 22-27.

e) Catechism of the Catholic Church

The post-Vatican trend of giving great importance to the Scriptures is noticed when we examine the two recent Catechisms that we have had. The New Catechism (published soon after the Vatican Council) had given to Scriptures greater importance as in the first centuries. In fact, this New Catechism is replete with biblical references as in St. Augustine's *De catechizandis rudibus*.⁴⁰ These numerous references to the Scriptures indicate that in catechesis scripture is "not ancillary but fundamental".⁴¹

It is important to take note of the fact that in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (11 October 1992), the biblical references that are made in the course of the exposition of the Christian doctrine run to something like 4121. The Catechism is well spelt out into 4 main sections, namely, 1) faith professed, 2) faith celebrated, 3) faith lived and 4) faith prayed. All these sections are replete with Scriptural quotes and biblical references.⁴²

⁴⁰ Cfr. B.L. Marthaler, *Catechesis in Context: Notes and Commentary on the General Catechetical Directory Issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy*, Huntington (IN), 1974, p 43.

⁴¹ G. Betori, "Le Fonti del Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica", in *Un Dono Per Oggi: II Catechismo della Chiesa Cattolica, Riflessioni per l'accoglienza*, T. Stenico (Ed.), Milano, 1993, p 250.

⁴² The Catechism of the Catholic Church that we have is the result of a decision made at the synod of Bishops in 1985. It is the fruit of a serious study by a team of competent persons and the result of wide consultation done in the entire church. In part one of this Catechism, we have 2125 biblical references, in part two 572, in part three 896 and in part four 528. This is a unique trait when we compare the very recent Catechism of the Catholic Church with previous Catechisms. Compare this Catechism of the Catholic Church with the previous catechisms of the earlier days like *The German Catechism* (1529), *The Small Catechism* (1529), *The Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), *The Canisian Catechism by Peter Canisius* (1521-1597), *St. Robert Bellarmine's Catechism* (1542-1621), *Roman Catechism* (Trent-1566), *Universal Catechism* (1870), *Catechism of the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore* (1885) etc. For more details on the different Catechisms that have been published, see "Catechism", C. Dooley, in *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, Collegeville (MI), 1994, p 136. In the post-conciliar era, there is already an increasing awareness of the need for basing the catechetical instruction on the bible. The *Catholic Catechism* which was written according to the norms established by the Holy See in the new General Catechetical Directory has its first chapter entitled "The Word of God". See *The Catholic Catechism*, J.A. Hardon, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1975, 1977; M. A. Brees, "The Bible and the New Catechism", in *The Bible Today*, 33 (1995), pp 170-174. See also A. Nichols, *The Splendour of Doctrine: The Catechism of the Catholic Church on Christian Believing*, Edinburgh, 1995, pp 3-4.

f) Summing-up

A recapitulation of the main points is in place before we proceed to the next section where we give proposals for a more effective use of Bible in Catechesis. We have examined the Catechesis of the early Church. The study of the Acts of the Apostles reveals in particular the biblical orientation of the Catechesis of the primitive Church. Similarly, a brief glance at the teachings of the Church in the recent times have shown a strong tendency to stress the Word of God which constitutes the very essence and nature of the Church.⁴³

PROPOSALS FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF BIBLE IN CATECHESIS

The proposals that we are giving below are based on the premise that Catechesis can be formal or non-formal.

1. The Catholic communities and groups can learn from other denominations about the importance of making available copies of the Bible.⁴⁴ When and where possible concerted efforts at ecumenical translations can help prevent scattering of energy and means.⁴⁵ Printing even parts of the bible⁴⁶ can help create a greater interest in the Word of God. In the Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication, six articles are devoted to "the printed word". This same Instruction also draws the attention of the reader to the use of "comics" aimed at illustrating the Sacred Scriptures.⁴⁷

⁴³ There is an extensive article of K. Rahner on "The Word and the Sacrament". Here he speaks of the close link between the Word and the Sacrament which together constitute the very essence and nature of the Church. See K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, (translated by K. Smyth), Vol. IV, London, 1974, pp 253-286.

⁴⁴ On circulating editions of Scripture with suitable notes among the non-Christians, see DV 25.

⁴⁵ For the importance of the ecumenical translations of the Bible, see also the Encyclical Letter of John Paul II dated 25th May 1995, *Ut Unio Sint*, 44

⁴⁶ The General Catechetical Directory (Rome, 11th April 1971) highlighted the importance of catechesis adapted to different age levels (See no. 76 & 77).. This all important aspect of Catechesis should not be forgotten in the transmission of the Word of God.

⁴⁷ For the use of "comics" as a method to diffuse the Scriptures, See *Communio et Progressio*, no. 136.

2. Bible Study groups should be given pride of place in the programming of parish activities. However, to make these study sessions more effective and challenging grouping⁴⁸ of different types of peoples according to their profession, educational background, cultural upbringing, social status etc. is important.

3. There are communities where the lay catechists, both part time and full time, offer an indispensable leadership especially in conducting Sunday liturgical services where a priest cannot be present. These catechists are to be offered regular and systematic study of the Bible⁴⁹ if they are to be effectively equipped for their ministry. The parishes can bank on the competent service of professors of Seminaries in better equipping the catechists.

4. Sacramental Catechesis that is offered before the reception of sacraments, especially when the sacrament is being received for the first time, is an ideal occasion for an effective presentation of biblical teachings for the recipients as well as for the parents and relatives of the recipients of the sacraments.⁵⁰

5. The bible is meant for all.⁵¹ Direct contact with the bible is the heritage also of children and the bible should not be substituted with

⁴¹ In the Archdiocese of Shillong, effective catechetical instruction with a strong biblical slant was conducted for doctors and professors (all of them lay men and-women). Great satisfaction expressed by the participants indicated that the grouping done on the basis of the status and educational preparation is highly beneficial.

⁴⁴ In the Archdiocese of Shillong, a week long study session on the bible was offered for part time and full time catechists as well as for those involved in the preaching ministry. The large numbers of enthusiastic groups that turned up for such sessions is indicative that they not only appreciate such sessions but that they consider them essential for an effective catechetical ministry

⁵⁰ The parish of Raliang (in the Archdiocese of Shillong) has been gathering children between the age of 7 and 10 for a two week programme in view of first confession and first communion. The children (some 500 of them) flock to the parish from distant villages for three consecutive years. They live in the parish premises for these 2 weeks and they are given an intense preparation - a sacramental Catechesis during which also the New Testament is extensively utilized to explain to them the meaning of the sacramental life of the children.

⁵¹ In the September issue of *Lumen Vitae*, there is an article of Jean-Claude Baru where the author reminds the reader that Bible is a folk narrative and the audience of Jesus consisted mainly of ordinary people. Hence there is no doubt that the Bible should be within reach of everyone. The Bible should be made accessible to everyone. It is not meant only for the scholars. Cfr. Jean-Claude Baru, "Lire la Bible en milieu populaire" in *Lumen Vitae* 3 (1995), pp 331-340

anything else.⁵² The bible can be used and ought to be used also for babies, children, adolescents, the young, the adults, the old. But it is important to adapt the use of the bible in a manner suitable to these differing groups. Consequently, there is need for a lot of creativity and inventiveness.

6. The bible in songs, charts, pictures-⁵³ paintings, in skit forms, in dramas, in films,⁵⁴ on the radio,⁵⁵ in TV programme, through cassettes and other audio visual aids like slides, montage, banners, collages etc. are effective means of catechising with the bible themes. The utility of these various aids should not be neglected or underestimated.⁵⁶ Film festival with Bible films can be a powerful means of imparting the teachings found in the Scriptures. Similarly 'street plays' based on biblical themes can be a useful means to impart catechetical instruction.

7. In Catechesis meant for children and the less literate, group activities like role playing and simulation etc. which have as their point of departure some biblical events can serve as effective methods for the imparting religious instruction.

ⁿ R. & G. Gobbel, *The Bible: A Child's Playground*, London, SCM, 1986, pp 151-154.

⁵³ From very early times Biblical paintings and pictures prominently exhibited in basilicas, churches and chapels etc. were an effective means of Catechesis. Cfr. *The Good News and its Proclamation: Post-Vatican II Edition of the Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine*, J. Hofinger and F.J. Buckley (Eds.), Indiana, 1969, p. 49. See also *Gesu "Verita: Lezioni de Religione Sopra le Verita delta Fede"*, O. di Francesco, Turin, 1958, pp 1-231. However to gain more profit from these exhibits, trained men should be there to give appropriate explanations.

⁵⁴ Among the films widely accepted as classics many have biblical themes. (*Communio et Progressio*, no. 144). This proves that good films with appealing themes are highly popular and consequently such means should be effectively tapped also in Catechesis.

⁵⁵ Speaking of the Radio, *Communio et Progressio* says that there are peoples and places where the church cannot reach, but she can bring the message of the Gospel through radio and television (*Communio et Progressio*, 150 & 157). See also B.L. Manhaler, *Catechesis in Context: Notes and Commentary on the General Catechetical Directory Issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy*, Huntington (IN), 1974, p. 43.

^k General Catechetical Directory speaks about the need for explaining and transmitting the Word in a *lively manner* for the peoples of every culture (see no. 32). Therefore the methods that we have referred to above are effective means of making the transmitting of the Word in a lively manner. The Decree on the means of Social Communication (*Inter Mirifica*, 4 December, 1963), gives very suitable and practical directives. Article 17 is particularly significant since it is related to the theme of the Word. See also "The Use of the Media for giving the Good News", in *Communio et Progressio*, 29 January, 1971, nos. 126-134; EN 45.

8. To this day in our Asiatic continent we come across numerous villages where many of the modern means of effective communication cannot be done due to lack of electrification. Especially, in such areas a very popular means of spreading the bible would be the bible scenes set in drama.⁵⁷ They form an effective means of making the transmission of the Word lively.

9. Bible captions and phrases can be artistically written and displayed on roads, in the streets, public halls, offices, hotels, restaurants, parks, picnic spots, homes etc. If youngsters and core groups in our parishes can be motivated to undertake this as an apostolate, there is a vast possibility ahead of us to spread the Word.

10. Bible can find an effective home in family catechesis.⁵⁹ Families of different sections of a parish can come together during which the reading and explanation of appropriate passages can be an effective means for Catechesis.⁶⁰

11. Most of the communities of the Orient excel in music and singing. Putting the Bible to music would be one of the most effective ways of transmitting the Word. Here, there is also the added advantage

⁵⁷ In this connection see J. Patmury, *Play in Religion: A Means for Evangelization and Catechesis*, Bangalore, 1988; J.M. Peel and D.L. Swann, "Understanding the Bible through Drama" in *Drama for the Church: A Handbook on Religious Drama*, Madras, 1970, pp 55-64 and *Communio et progressio*, nos. 158-161.

⁵⁹ Cfr. EN 43; For the effective use of Bible in the ambit of a home, see *The Parish Comes Alive*, E.W. Southcott, London, 1966, pp 58-82. On the desirability of family welcoming the Word and announcing the Word, see *Familiaris Consortio*, 51-52

⁶⁰ A few families coming together for prayer is a hundred year old practice among the tribal group known as the Khasis in the Archdiocese of Shillong. On several occasions families of a section of a parish come together for prayer session known in the local language Khasi as *Jingiaseng*. Such gatherings of families take place especially on important occasions like baptism, reception of Holy Communion, a religious profession of a family member, death or death anniversaries of a dear one etc. Non-catholic relatives also take part in such prayer meetings. And on such occasions, the bible will be read during the prayer service and two or three laymen will address the assembly (in a homiletic style). Normally the priest concludes the prayer service with his closing words of exhortation. The prayer assembly adjourns after a small snack. The *jingiaseng* is a very useful tool in the hand of the Christian community in this region to help propagate the Word of God.

that people retain more easily what is sung. And people, both literate and illiterate can profit immensely from bible put to music.⁶¹

12. It is needless to mention the benefits deriving from a good homily where the Word of God is broken. During the celebration of the Eucharist and other liturgical celebrations where we have an ideal occasions for Catechesis, every effort must be made to give well prepared and suitable homilies to nourish the faithlife of the people of God.⁶²

13. Today the media gives wide publicity to important events and situations. And the current events in our world offer us an opportunity to reflect on them from a gospel perspective⁶³ and the Word of God can shed light on such events.⁶⁴

14. In evangelization a "person-to-person" approach is very important.⁶⁵ So also in using bible in Catechesis, effort should be made to foster communication of the Gospel at a personal level.

15. Popular religiosity is picking up in different parts of the world today.⁶⁶ Since people are flocking together to give expression to their devotion in very popular forms, such occasions should be well made use of for Catechesis and the Bible should be the point of departure for a solid instruction of such fervent and receptive groups.

⁶¹ See *The Instruction on Music in the Liturgy (Musicam Sacram)*, 5 March, 1967), no. 46. See also General Instruction on the Roman Missal, chapter II, no. 19. Singing can be particularly beneficial in children's mass - cfr. *Pueros Baptizatos*, nos. 30-32; see also "Letter to the Bishops on the minimum repertoire of plain chant, S.C.D.W., April, 1974", in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, A. Flannery, (Ed.), Bombay, 1987, pp. 257-259).

⁶² For the importance of homily, see S.C., nos. 7,33, 52; General Instruction on the Roman Missal, no. 9; 33-42; *Liturgiae Instraurationes*, no. 2; *Eucharistiae Participationem*, no. 15; *Pueros Baptizatos*, no. 48, and CT, 48; J.M. Pathrapankal, "The Word of God and History", in *Jeevadhara* 2 (1971), pp 150-151.

⁴³ L. Bach, *Where Bible and Life Connect: Reflections of a Spiritual Director*, Collegeville (MI), 1995, p. 230.

⁴⁴ For the bible as a source for finding solutions to the problems that confront contemporary man, see Johannes Hofinger, *The Art of Teaching Christian Doctrine: The Good News and its Proclamation*, Bombay, 1959, pp 22-26; See also J. Theckanath, "The Catechizing Church in the N.T. Literature", in *Catechetics India* 4 (1987), pp 3-6.

⁴⁵ EN 46.

⁴⁴ Cfr. EN 48.

16. One of the very positive traits exhibited by the present day charismatic groups is their deep interest in the Scriptures. This interest can be profitably guided. Instead of crying over certain exaggerations or aberrations, one should back on the enthusiasm of such groups by satiating their love for the Scriptures.⁶⁷

17. The Ecclesial basic communities⁶⁸ are playing a greater role than ever in the past. Such groups come together motivated by common interests. In such Ecclesial Basic Communities, the Bible can be an important tool of animation.

18. Enthronement of the bible in the home, especially if done keeping in mind the principles of inculturation can help inculcate a great veneration for the Scriptures. This could be done also in class rooms and during paraliturgical and biblical services with a view to inspiring everyone to follow the example in their homes.

19. In Catechesis, there is the need to appreciate once again the value of learning by heart important passages from the Scripture and this especially at lower age groups. There is nothing like familiarity with the scriptures for imbibing of biblical values. In learning by heart, special attention should be paid to the parables, miracle stories and teachings found in the gospels and other books of the NT.⁶⁹

20. The "Lumko" method where groups, particularly smaller groups come together for reading of the scriptures and the interiorization of the Word has been found to be very useful. This method also offers an opportunity to share with the others the insights gained through prayerful reading of the scriptures.⁷⁰ The Lumko method can pave the way for a deeper initiation into the mystery of Christ that will lead every man into becoming "mature in Christ" (Col. 1, 27-28).

" One of the most powerful tools in renewal and Catechesis found in South India is the VACHANOLSAVAM (= Festival of the Word). There is a team of men (both laity and priests) who go from place to place preaching and praying with the Word.

" EN 58.

⁶⁹ II Rinnovamento della Catechesis, (Conferenza Episcopale Italiana), Rome, 1970, p. 82.

⁷⁰ On the need to accompany the reading of scriptures with prayer, see DV, 25; CCC, no. 2653; C. Bissoli, "The Catechist: A Minister of the Word in the Church", in *Catechetics India* 3 (1986), p. 10.

21. Group studies of important biblical themes are beneficial. And during these session a brief introduction to the various books of the Bible can facilitate greatly the understanding of Scriptures. Starting and concluding of such study sessions can be done also with a prayerful reading of the Word.

22. Bible Quizzes well prepared and conducted for children on a competitive basis can do much good at motivating children in familiarizing themselves with the content of the biblical books. Similarly jigsaw puzzles can be used to diffuse biblical knowledge. Children should be encouraged not only to solve such puzzles, but even to create puzzles for others.

23. Another useful practice is the devout and attentive listening to a passage from the Scriptures when a community or a family gathers together for meals. However, care should be taken to provide an atmosphere of recollection to facilitate a devout listening to the Word that is proclaimed.⁷¹

24. When explaining the Scriptures to others, they can be trained to gain further clarification on the Scriptures by the examining the cross references found in the margin of the bible and for this Jerusalem Bible is of special advantage.

25. Children are creative and as such they can be given lot of encouragement in drawing or painting parables and miracle-stories of the Bible. Though tender in age, they will thus gradually and unconsciously imbibe various biblical values.

26. Besides the group studies, discussions and lectures⁷² which have the Scriptures as the point of departure are not outmoded. Every person is different and efficacy of methods will differ from person to person. There are learned and knowledgeable laity and among them in particular this above method can prove most useful.

⁷¹ The Baptist community in Mizoram has an interesting practice. When a congregation gathers together for bible conventions or a symposium recorded Scriptures are broadcast through the loud speakers during intervals so that the congregation keeps on listening to the Word all through out the day.

⁷² CT 45-46.

27. The Bible is a library of books collected and edited at different periods in history. A background information from a historical perspective for each of the book of the bible and the interconnection between the different books of the bible can go a long way in creating an eagerness to devour the Scriptures.⁷³

28. Every people has its own legitimate aspirations.⁷⁴ Consequently, in opening the treasures of the bible the benefits that accrues to one from the acceptance of the gospel should also be made known. A Catechesis that does not keep in mind the background and context of a people and also neglects their legitimate aspirations and longings will turn out sterile, boring and void. When people can find solution for their genuine aspirations in the Scriptures, interest in and attachment to the scriptures will be reawakened.

29. Citations from the bible proliferate on *the*, pages of the CCC.TM However, it will remain simply as a source book if the Christian community is not helped to understand the context of these numerous Scripture quotations. Therefore, ways and means should be discovered to give a systematic explanation of these various biblical references that are found in the text of the CCC.

30. Bible by Correspondence is something for which great interest is shown in many parts of the world. A systematic presentation of each book of the Bible is done through questions and answers that are carefully prepared and lessons are offered through correspondence. The Word of God thus diffused can also help form the conscience of the reader.⁷⁶

31. Already, from an early age, the habit of personal reading of the Scriptures should be inculcated in everyone without exception. Children should be trained to locate with facility the different books in the bible already from a very early age.

⁷³ On paying attention to the unity of the whole of Scripture, cfr also DV 12

⁷⁴ GCD 23

⁷⁵ G.S. Sloyan, "The Role of the Bible in Catechesis According to the Catechism", in *Introducing the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Traditional Themes and Contemporary Issues*, B.L. Marthaler (Ed.), New York (NY), 1994, pp. 32-42

⁷⁶ Y. Simoens, "The Sermon on the Mount: Light for the Christian Conscience", in *Lumen Vitae* XLI (1986), p. 141.

32. In the Universal Church there is already a Bible Sunday celebrated once a year. In every parish, a Bible week can be contemplated during which biblical seminars and symposium can be held.⁷⁷

33. There are Catholic schools run by the Church in many part of the world. And some have the practice of a 'morning talk' where a thought is given through a common reflection of the Word. Similarly one day in a week can be set aside in parishes and institutions for reading and exposition of the scriptures for those who show greater eagerness for the Word.

34. Keep bibles (possibly also in different languages) in sitting rooms, parlours, hospitals etc. so that people have easy access to the Word.

35. There are special occasions like wedding reception of a sacrament, jubilees etc., when souvenirs with some apt verse from the scripture can be printed and distributed.

36. Pastors when visiting homes or hospitals could say a prayer after reading some suitable pericope from the Scriptures tailored to the needs of the persons being visited.

37. In preparing the budget parishes and institutions and possibly even families and individuals could put aside a certain percentage of the income for the spread of the Word.

These proposals given above for the use of the Bible for a better Catechesis is not an exhaustive list. They are meant to be inspirational and open the way to the person and mystery of Christ through every possible means to use the Sacred Scriptures⁷⁸ so that the Christian faith has a solid basis and foundation.

⁷⁷ Among the St. Thomas Christians of South India (in Muringoor), festival of the word has gained a tremendous momentum. Every week, from Sunday to Saturday, some ten to fifteen thousand people gather together for the reading and proclamation of the Word. It is a time of intense catechesis when faith can be deepened through reading and explanation of the Bible.

⁷⁸ Synod of Bishops, *Ultimis temporibus*, 30 November, 1967, Pan I, no. 2, in *Vatican Council II: More Post Conciliar Documents*, A. Flannery (Ed.), Bombay, 1988, p 677.

CONCLUSION

One could ask if Word of God is one of the contents of Catechesis or the content. Evidently, the Bible is not just one of the items of Catechesis nor even one among other contents, it is the soul and essence of catechesis. Through Catechesis, the figure, the sayings and the deeds recorded in the Gospels have entered into very warp and woof of Christianity.⁷⁹ To give Christianity its pristine splendour and vitality, the means par excellence is a more systematic introduction of the Scriptures in the course of catechetical instruction. However it is important to keep in mind that it is not sufficient that every individual goes through the Bible but the Bible must go through everyone. Thus the goal of Catechesis, namely a journey towards Christian maturity, can be achieved when supported and sustained by the Word.⁸⁰

Let Catechesis become a time when the Scriptures and the gospels in particular are presented, understood and accepted so that correct Christian attitudes⁸¹ inspire every individual. Interest in the Scripture and in a bible oriented Catechesis are catching up. However what is still needed is a more creative and a more suitable presentation of the Word.⁸²

⁷⁹ K.S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity* (Vol. 1, The First Five Centuries), Grand Rapids (MI), 1976, p 47.

¹⁰ P. Giglioni, "Evangelization Process: Kerygma to Local Church," in *Following Christ in Mission: A Foundational Course in Missiology*, S. Karotemprel (Ed.), Bombay, 1995, pp 146-151.

•• CT. 39

" GCD 32

Asia: A Call for Renewed Catechesis Towards Year 2000 and Beyond

FABC

"I put this duty to you... proclaim the message ... Do all with patience and with the intention of teaching. Make the preaching of the Good News your life's work, in thoroughgoing service." (2 Tim 4:2.5).

I. Introduction

From 12 countries of Asia (Bangladesh, Hongkong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand), Divine Providence called us to come together to the Pan Asian Conference on Catechesis, held in St. Francis Xavier Major Seminary, on 19-23 October 1995, coordinated by the Pastoral Institute of Singapore, under the sponsorship of the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (OESC-FABC).

We, the 49 participants, have joined efforts to listen and respond to God's call to the Church in Asia towards renewed catechesis.

In this document we made an attempt to paint the situation of catechesis in Asia against the background of its civic and ecclesial realities. But we did not stop here. We offer to the Church of Asia our dream and response to the challenges arising from the present context with the hope of bringing about present catechetical renewal in Asia today and tomorrow.

Through our presentation of Asian realities affecting our catechetical ministry today, we also intend to offer them as guidelines to the concerned body that is currently revising the General Catechetical Directory.

Renewal in catechesis, like catechesis itself, must be systematic and organized. The way to achieve this is by having a common reference point through a national catechetical directory. The second part of the document contains guidelines for the episcopal or national commissions on catechesis in Asia in their task of drawing up or revising their respective national catechetical directory.

We know that the Church in Asia wants to see renewal in catechesis in action. The last part of the document has several lines of action to ensure that catechetical renewal in Asia becomes a reality.

All in all, what we hereby offer in this document have been the fruits of our common and serious reflection on Asian realities affecting the ministry of catechesis and of the consensual realization and feeling of preparing the ministry of catechesis towards the coming third millennium.

II. Asian Realities Through The Third Eye Of Faith

Our reflections on the renewal of faith-education in Asia paid close attention to our total life-situation of our churches. We now briefly recall some of these more relevant realities, both positive and negative. We do this not only from available statistics and survey studies. We review our Asian context both with the third eye of faith and with the compassionate heart of Christ.

A. Civic Challenges

With the exception of the Philippines, all Churches in Asia are tiny communities. These new churches are being confronted today with massive realities and challenges for change:

(1) a very fast accelerating economy, which is now globalised. This new economic structure brings with it both new opportunities and serious threats especially to the poor sectors and particularly to tribal communities, who are threatened with extinction in the name of economic development.

(2) an unrestricted media invasion of our countries and homes.

(3) precious values of our Asian cultures are being supplanted by counter-values, e.g. against our family-centredness, our deep respect for the sacred, our traditional world-view that was holistic and harmonious with nature.

(4) the dignity and freedom of women and girl-children are further degraded and dehumanised.

(5) youth is confused, frustrated and angry by contradictory value systems in their adult communities. Yet, these same youngsters constantly show their ability and readiness to sacrifice themselves for worthy causes.

(6) crises in leadership with every area of adult life.

(7) the poor and destitute sectors throughout Asia are being left behind by the fast-growing high-tech culture which fosters consumerism and hedonism.

(8) the culture of death is being promoted by the pandemic spread of Aids/HIV; along with this there is a parallel ecological devastation of our forests.

(9) in the name of development cultural minorities-particularly Tribal communities-are being systematically oppressed in their struggle for survival.

(10) the arms' race, under the guise of national security, consumes a disproportionate amount of national budgets, taking away needed funds for health and education and further promoting debt-traps.

B. Ecclesial Realities Relevant To Catechetical Renewal

The Churches in Asia, though small flocks, are definitely growing annually. These young faith-communities in many areas are experiencing strong renewal-in-the-Spirit. Along with this are other realities:

(1) in the laity there is a clearly perceived hunger for God and a thirst for a mature spirituality.

(2) there is a definite need and demand for a participatory Church rather than one that is clericalised.

(3) because Asian Churches are so small and threatened in places to be overcome by huge civic problems, there is a perceived need for inter-religious collaboration for confronting justice issues and pursuing integral development for all.

(4) throughout Asia, there is a resurgence of world religions which often takes the form of fundamentalism and communalism, with some unscrupulous political and religious leaders using religion as a trump card for power.

(5) because Christians are a minority, there are many pastoral demands coming from mixed marriages.

(6) religious formation in our parishes is often devotionalistic and pietistic. Little effort is made to confront radically unjust situations with the Church's social doctrine and principles.

C. Catechetical Realities in Asian Churches

Thanks to Vatican II and post-conciliar teaching there is a renewed vision of Catechesis. This updated understanding seeks to interpret our life-situations and to discern the lead of the Spirit within each community in light of Christ the Word. However, there are serious deficiencies as well:

(1) an urgent need to develop a communitarian dimension to faith-education, both in the family and in small Christian communities.

(2) a top priority to train adequately all catechists.

(3) to provide basic catechetical material, including small-group media.

(4) in practically all our Churches the conditions of work—particularly salaries—are seriously in need of reform.

(5) there needs to be more collaboration with diocesan and parish ministries, so that all labour with a common faith-vision and

mission of the Church.

(6) Asian realities and exigencies demand on-going dialogue with: a) cultures, b) other religions, and c) the poor. This dialogical principle needs find expression at every level of the catechetical ministry.

(7) whole sectors of our people are neglected in the catechetical apostolate: migrant workers, the illiterate, handicapped, the elderly, women, etc.

III. Response

These and other Asian realities from the standpoint of the catechetical ministry invite the Asian Churches and the catechetical community in particular to bring about a major shift in focus and strategy in our catechetical ministry.

These shifts can be spelt out as follows:

1. In the first place there should be a shift from over-emphasis on school/student-centered catechesis to adult (including young adults) and family catechesis,
2. from informational and overly doctrinal catechesis to experiential and contextual catechesis
3. from an individual-oriented catechesis to a community-centered catechesis, directed to and conducted by the whole community.

A. Adult and Family Catechesis

Put into other words, there needs be a structure to catechesis wherein the stages of faith-maturation are central. These stages begin in infancy with UNCONSCIOUS faith, which grows into an IMITATIVE stage. But unless and until children/adults are helped to a PERSONALISED faith, we cannot expect them to grow into the subsequent mature stages of a COMMUNITARIAN and MISSIONARY faith. The culminating stage is FAITH-UNTO-FULLNESS, which is literally CATHOLIC faith that embraces the whole of creation. We see this exemplified in the New Testament and in the lives of the Saints.

In discerning the Lord's plan for us catechists, we realize that our response to each of the concrete historical contexts of our life must be critical and creative. We believe that the Spirit of the Risen Lord is at work in ever new ways in our churches empowering us to take bold steps. In the context of the dehumanizing and death-dealing forces at work in most Asian countries, our catechesis has to be life-promoting. Catechesis should awaken all sections of our Church to the agonizing cry of God in the midst of his people, leading all to a response in life. This cannot be achieved unless Catechesis begins with the evocation and interpretation of human experience in the light Jesus Christ, the Word of God as present in scripture, tradition, liturgy and the witness of the Church. It should lead Christian disciples to a faith response characterised by a personal and collective transformation culminating in a missionary life of witness.

B. Experiential Catechesis

Asian religious realities and Asian religious ethos are marked by a relentless quest for the divine, for intimate experience of God, highlighting the sense of mystery and the sacred. In such an atmosphere our catechetical ministry should lead the catechised to a deep experience of God. Our scriptures must come across to our people as records of a God experience - not as proof-texts or as a mere documents justifying some theological doctrine. The proclamation of God's living Word should facilitate an experience of the Abba of Jesus in the hearts of his family. The Word is proclaimed so that those who hear and respond to it may have "fellowship" with the triune God (1 Jn 1:2-3). The Bishops of Asia describe this: "As Jesus immersed himself into the depths of Abba's life and love, so the disciple-community has to immerse itself totally in the life of the triune God." (FABC, 1995) Recovery of the God-experience as an integral element in every form of catechesis and for every age group will prepare our Christians not only to understand their faith but also-and above all-to be witnesses of the presence of God in the heart of Asia. This requires that the facilitators in catechesis may not be merely efficient teachers of faith. They need to be men and women who are capable of sharing God-experiences and Christ-experiences. They need to internalize and live the insights of ~~the~~ IVth Part of the CCC.

C. Contextual

A new way of being Church in Asia today demands that every dimension of catechesis - including its planning and prioritizing of concerns - take into consideration a very important principle: the context determines the Church's path of mission. We will, then, be able to render a relevant ministry of the Word only if we take seriously the socio-economic, multi-religious and multi-cultural realities of our countries. For this reason the pastoral cycle proposed by the FABC must be used in all expressions of the Ministry of the Word, including catechesis. This cycle is comprised of: a) analysis, b) faith-reflection, c) pastoral planning and d) action. All these steps need be done with a contemplative attitude.

D. Community Catechesis

Such a contextual catechesis can be meaningfully undertaken only in small Christian communities. Catechesis should become a community endeavour which is in, by and for the community! Given the multi-religious character of our countries, Asian catechesis must become an instrument for the promotion of inter-religious dialogue, collaboration and harmony. The result of such faith-education will be that Christian disciples so catechized will then themselves become facilitators of dialogue. They will be agents and animators of basic human communities that seek to do God's will in the context of their lives.

IV. Guidelines on How to Construct the NCD (National Catechetical Directory)

By NCD, we mean a systematic and well-organized set of principles, norms and guidelines on how to proceed with the different activities of the catechetical ministry in a country.

The content of the NCD could adopt the following structure:

Section One: THE CONTEXT

Identification of the contextual realities of the Church and the catechetical ministry in the country.

Section Two: VISION

The main goals of catechesis are the education in the faith of the individual believers and the building of the Kingdom of God.

Catechesis, therefore, should move beyond the preparation of the faithful for the reception of the sacraments of Christian initiation, and become community-based. It should devote special attention to youth and adults, aiming at forming apostolic communities which in turn will help build common human communities, characterized by justice, peace and love - the signs of God's Kingdom on earth.

The present culture created by the media affects the growth of the Kingdom. In this situation particular attention should be given to catechesis as a communication event and process, rather than considering media simply as instruments to use or a phenomenon to reckon with in communicating the faith message. Catechesis should then aim at bringing about the communication process that God started with humanity through his Revelation and follow the pedagogy of God, the Perfect Communicator.

Section Three: SOURCES

The basic sources of catechesis are: Revelation, Church, and Faith,

We must also take into account the values found in the other religious faiths present in the country, and by reading aright the signs of the times, such as:

- promotion of justice,
- empowerment of women,
- defense of human rights,
- practical acknowledgement of the role of the laity in the Church.

Section Four: CONTENT

The basic contents of the NCD should include the main components of the Christian Faith, namely: Doctrine, Moral, and Prayer / Worship. It should derive its inspiration from the latest doctrine in the Church, and it should be Trinitarian and Christ-centered.

It should also be related to the living experience of the Christian community and of the wider human society.

Section Five: METHODOLOGY

All catechetical methodology should be characterized by:

faithfulness to God and the human person.

This entails an integral presentation of the content of Divine Revelation as mediated and lived by the Church, and related to the realities experienced by individuals as well as by the community.

Catechesis as a pastoral ministry should be based on human experience of contextual realities.

This experience should be reflected upon in the light of the Word of God, and this reflection should lead to Christian commitment.

In this process due attention should be paid to the different stages of human and faith development of the catechized.

Effective use should be made on traditional, as well as modern means of social communication.

Section Six: ORGANIZATION

The catechetical ministry should have coordinating agencies at national, diocesan, and parish levels.

At parish level, catechesis should find its proper setting in the family, the school, and the small communities within the parish.

Section Seven: PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES

There must be proper training centers for the formation of catechists, both at national and regional levels.

Aside from full-time, professionally trained catechists, encouragement should be given to as many as possible to participate voluntarily in the catechetical ministry.

All those engaged in the catechetical ministry should be adequately trained in the use of the available means of social communication.

The National Episcopal Conference, implementing the guidelines of the NCD, should prepare a national catechism, rooted in the Word of God, Trinitarian in structure, Christ-centered, integrated, systematic, inculturated, and community building.

It should also encourage and support the preparation by experts of other suitable catechetical materials for different age levels and groups.

Adequate financial allocation should be made at the diocesan and parish levels for catechetical materials and the remuneration of the full-time catechetical personnel.

Every parish should have a catechetical resource center adequately equipped and made available to the catechists.

V. Plan of Action

In order to concretize the response to Asian realities and achieve the dream of every country to come out with its own national catechetical directory, we lay down lines of action. Through this plan we hope to energize with enthusiasm and empower with skills the catechetical coordinators and everyone involved in the organization of the ministry of catechesis at the regional and national levels. This we do in the spirit of communion among our Asian neighbors (IV FABC Plenary Assembly, no. 13.1 & 14.2).

1. At the Regional Level

That the Coordinators of North East, South and South East Asia of the FABC's Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy organize a program for the training of coordinators in their respective team.

2. At the National Conference Level

That the Commission on Catechesis will facilitate the production and dissemination of materials and the making of local catechism as support to the catechetical ministry.

3. At the FABC Level

That existing catechetical institutes be requested to devise programs that will empower catechists with the wisdom from the New Catechism of the Catholic Church and strategize methodologies fitted for the sharing and living of faith with the realities in Asia as context.

VI. Conclusion

Having accepted the challenge of proclaiming the Good News and having seen our rootedness in the multi-racial and multi-religious Asian context, we move forward to promote a catechesis that is community-based-and-directed, and that is deeply rooted in the Word of God for the year 2000 and beyond. This we hope to realize under the guidance of our respective catechetical directory. This we entrust to the loving intercession of Mary, a woman from Asia, the mother of Jesus.

The Commandment of Annual Confession

EXCELSO GARCIA, O.P.

With greatest interest I follow your "Cases" in the Boletin. Allow me to present to you a case, a problem really.

Some years ago I learned in my Canon Law class that every Christian is obliged to approach the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at least once a year, if there are grave sins. Now I read in The Catholic Faith Catechism (ECCE, 1994) that we are obliged to confess "one's sins at least once a year" (Chapt. 14, II, p. 161, footnote).

Could you enlighten me about this apparent discrepancy. Thank you very much.

Fraternally in Jesus,

A Wounded Pilgrim

After reading the foregoing case I get the impression that the consultant himself does not believe there is any real, discrepancy in the case. He qualifies it as "an apparent discrepancy". Certainly nothing has been changed on this matter from what he learned in his Canon Law class, namely: "every Christian is obliged to approach the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation at least once a year, if there are grave sins." Canon 989 states: "All faithful who have reached the age of discretion are bound to confess their grave sins at least once a year."

The "apparent discrepancy" can be easily dispelled by looking at what the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH says on the matter of this Church's commandment and comparing it with the footnote of the CATHOLIC FAITH CATECHISM, mentioned by the consultant. Both are published by ECCCE WORLD & LIFE PUBLICATIONS, Manila, 1994. They read as follows:

a) The CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH says in its number 1457: "According to the Church's command, after having attained the age of discretion, each of the faithful is bound by an obligation faithfully to confess serious sins at least once a year."

b) THE CATHOLIC FAITH CATECHISM says in the footnote to its number 595: "Commandments of the Church include: to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation; to fast and abstain on the days appointed; to confess one's sins once a year..."

Comparing both quotations we notice a difference. Where the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH says "*serious sins*", the CATHOLIC FAITH CATECHISM reads one's sins. However, we have to bear in mind that both quotations are different in nature. The one contained in a) is a doctrinal statement dealing with the persons who are bound to confess yearly and the kind of sins to be declared in the annual confession, while the footnote contained in c) is a mere and brief enumeration of the commandments of the Church without elaborating on the doctrinal implications. Hence, it should not be taken as a denial or correction of what *ex professo* is taught in the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Our consultant can be sure that nothing has been changed from the traditional teaching of the Church. Annual confession binds those who have committed mortal sins, as canon 989 states: "All faithful who have reached the age of discretion are bound to confess their grave sins at least once a year".

THE PRE-MATRIMONIAL INVESTIGATION

Two months ago the undersigned solemnized the wedding of German and Aniceta. German had been working in a factory within my parish about twenty days before the wedding. He is from the North of Luzon. He knew Aniceta some time before. They had decided to marry upon German's arrival at the factory and planned to live in the Aniceta's place, which is in the neighboring town. They came to see me to inform about their plans, and asked me to solemnize their marriage. I asked them whether both were Catholics. Aniceta said she was a practicing Catholic. German seemed not to be as good as Aniceta. However, he produced an affidavit to prove his baptism. I interviewed them, asking both parties the usual things. Everything appeared to be in order. Thus, I announced their wedding at the door of the church, as it is the custom here. Nothing wrong was discovered. So I solemnized their marriage in my parish. To my surprise the parish priest of the place of Aniceta came to see me last week saying that such a marriage was illicitly solemnized and most probably it was also null and void. Apparently he came to know that German belonged to an Aglipayan church, where baptism is invalidly administered. I am now a little confused. Could you tell me whether this marriage was licit or illicit, valid or invalid. Thank you.

A Parish Priest

By reading this case, one can easily see that the consultant is not yet familiar with the rules issued by the Catholic Bishops conference of the Philippines on the pre-matrimonial investigation to be conducted by the parish priests in accordance with the norm contained in canon 1067 of the new Code of Canon Law. This canon reads as follows: "The Episcopal Conference is to lay down norms concerning the questions to be asked of the parties, the publication of marriage, and the other appropriate means of inquiry to be carried out before marriage. Only when he has carefully observed these norms may the parish priest assist at a marriage."

For the benefit of our consultant, we will transcribe the portions of the norms issued by our local Hierarchy, which can be found in the Manual for Parish Priests, 1985 edition, number 623, as the present case requires.

"Those who intend to marry should inform their own parish priest, at least one month before the date of their wedding, in order to enable him to help them prepare for its celebration according to the laws of the Church" (Number 1).

The parish priest who solemnized the wedding of German and Anjceta was not the own parish priest of the contracting parties. German had not resided in his parish for even one month. He "had been working in a factory within my parish about twenty days before the wedding. Aniceta had her domicile in the neighboring town." Number 2 of the Norms given by our Hierarchy reads: "No parish priest will solemnize the marriage of persons who do not belong to his parish by reason of domicile, quasi-domicile or residence of at least one month, without the written permission of the local Ordinary or of the parish priest, as provided in canon 1115." And number 27 repeats again that "only the own parish priest can give such permission." It is clear that the parish priest who solemnized the marriage had no permission of the own parish priest of the contracting parties.

Number 10 of the Norms states: "The baptismal certificate, issued within six months, for the purpose of the marriage, shall always be required from both parties, if they are not baptized in the parish where the investigation is conducted or where the marriage is solemnized. Whenever the baptismal certificate cannot be obtained, a sworn statement according to canon 876 will suffice." In our case German "produced an affidavit to prove his baptism." It is not stated who signed this affidavit. Aniceta simply said that "she was a practicing Catholic", but no baptismal certificate was presented by her. The fact that her own parish priest went to see the priest who performed the marriage and told him that "such marriage was illicitly solemnized and most probably it was also null and void," indicates that he did not know anything about the wedding before its celebration.

In number 5 of the Norms the purpose of conducting the pre-matrimonial investigation is stated, namely:

"a) to find out possible impediments ...;"

"b) to ensure the freedom of both contracting parties;"

"c) to see whether the parties are instructed in the Catholic doctrine, specially about marriage."

Number 7 says that the parties are to be interviewed "cauciously and separately".

With regards to these points all we know is that the priest solemnizing the marriage asked the parties "the usual things". How? We don't know. He was satisfied with the result: "everything appeared to be in order."

Number 19 reads: "The banns shall be announced in the proper parish of each of the contracting parties, where they are better known." In the parish of Aniceta there was no publication of banns, if we consider the reaction of her own parish priest when he came to know about the wedding. With regards to German, it is not even said by the consultant whether he had made any attempt to seek some information about the status of German. All we know is that "he came from the North of Luzon." How can the priest who performed the marriage be sure that German was free from any impediment? It seems that no information was sought about German. No wonder that the information given to him by the parish priest of Aniceta was a surprise to him: "German belongs to an Aglipayan Church where baptism is invalidly administered." This information could be sought by the parish priest before the wedding and proceed accordingly.

The last two numbers (28-29) of the Norms issued by our Hierarchy state that "the own parish priest who gives permission is entitled to an offering to be determined in the local arancel." We think that the own parish priest who was ignored in our case, and did not give such permission, was entitled too to the same offering. "The parish priest who, without permission has illicitly solemnized a wedding, is not entitled to the stole fees, which should be remitted to the diocesan curia." These last two numbers speak by themselves. If the Church's norms would be implemented to the letter, as stated, cases like the one we have studied would hardly happen.

Message to the Youth of the World on the occasion of the XI Youth Day

JOHN PAUL II

*"Lord, to whom shall we go?
You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68).*

Dear Young People!

1. "I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine" (Rom 1:11-12).

The words of the Apostle Paul to the Christians of Rome sum up the feelings with which I turn to all of you, as we enter upon the path of preparation for the XI World Youth Day.

It is, indeed, with this same longing to meet you that, in thought, I come to you, in every corner of the planet, where day by day, you face the intense adventure of life: in your families, in the places of your study and work, in the communities where you gather to listen to the Word of the Lord and open your hearts to Him in prayer.

My eyes turn especially towards the young people who are personally involved in the all too many dramas that are still tearing humankind apart: those who are suffering through war, violence, hunger and dire poverty, and who are prolonging the suffering of Christ, for in his Passion, He is close to every human person oppressed beneath the burden of pain and injustice.

The World Youth Day, as is now the custom, will take place in 1996 within the diocesan communities, while we look forward to the next world meeting, that will take us to Paris in 1997.

2. We are henceforth on our way towards the Great Jubilee of the year 2000.

With the Apostolic Letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, I have invited the whole Church to prepare for this appointment through a conversion of heart and of life.

I ask you also, already now, to undertake this preparation with the same spirit and the same intentions. I entrust to you a plan of action. Based on the words of the Gospel and corresponding to the subjects proposed for each year to the whole Church, it will be the guideline for the next World Days:

Year 1997: "Teacher, where are you staying?
Come and see" (Jn 1:38-39).

Year 1998: "The Holy Spirit will teach you all things" (Jn 14:26).

Year 1999: "The Father loves you" (Jn 16:27).

Year 2000: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14).

3. To you, young people, I address in particular the call to look towards the epochal frontier of the year 2000, remembering that 'the future of the world and the Church belongs to the younger generation, to those who, born in this century, will reach maturity in the next, the first Century of the new millennium ... If they succeed in following the road which Christ points out to them, they will have the joy of making their own contribution to his presence in the next century' (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 58).

Journeying towards the Great Jubilee, may you be accompanied by the Conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which I mean to entrust to you all, as already I entrusted it to your contemporaries of the continent of Europe, gathered last September at Loreto: It is "a valuable and ever youthful document. Reread it attentively. You will find in it light to discern your vocation as men and women called to live in this both marvellous and dramatic era, as artisans of brotherhood and builders of peace" (*Angelus* of 10 September 1995).

4. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" He is the aim and the goal of our life: Christ, who is waiting for us — for each one individually and for all together — to lead us beyond the limits of time into the eternal embrace of the God who loves us.

But, if eternity is our horizon, as men and women hungry for truth and thirsting for happiness, history is the scenario of our day to day commitment. Faith teaches us that human destiny is written in the heart and mind of God, who rules the vicissitudes of history. It also teaches us that the Father entrusts to our hands the task of initiating already here below the building of that "Kingdom of Heaven" that the Son came to proclaim and that will have its fulfilment at the end of time.

It is our duty, therefore, to live within history, side by side with our contemporaries, sharing their anxieties and their hopes, for the Christian is, and must be, fully a part of his or her time. The Christian does not escape into another dimension, ignoring the dramas of the time, closing eyes and heart to the anxieties of Existence. On the contrary, the Christian is one who, while not being "of this world, is "in" this world, daily immersed in it, ready to go in haste wherever there is a brother or sister to be helped, a tear to be dried, a request for help to be met. On this we will be judged!

5. Remembering the Master's warning: "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me" (Mt 25:35-36), we have to put into practice the "new commandment" (Jn 13:34).

In this way, we will take our stand against what seems to be the "defeat of civilization", strongly reaffirming the "civilization of love" which — alone —, for the humanity of our time, can open up horizons of genuine peace and lasting justice, in legality and solidarity.

Charity is the great highway that must lead us also to the goal of the Great Jubilee. To arrive at this appointment, we must be able to call ourselves in question, facing a rigorous examination of conscience, the indispensable premise for a radical conversion, that can transform life and give it an authentic meaning, making believers capable of loving God

with all their hearts, all their souls, all their strength, and their neighbours as themselves (cf. Lk 10:27).

Confronting your daily existence with the Gospel of the one Teacher who has "words of eternal life", you will be able to become authentic agents of justice, following the commandment that makes of love the new "frontier" of Christian witness. This is the law of the world's transformation (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 38).

6. From you young people, there must also come, above all, a strong witness of love for life, God's gift; a love extending from the beginning to the end of every existence and combating every pretension to make of man the arbiter of the life of brother or sister, of the unborn as of the one whose life is drawing to its close, of the handicapped and the weak.

You young people naturally and instinctively make of the "will to live" the horizon of your dreams and the rainbow of your hopes. I ask you to become "prophets of life". Be prophets in word and gesture, rebelling against the civilization of egoism that often sees the human person as an instrument rather than an end, sacrificing human dignity and sentiments in the name of mere profit; do this by giving concrete help to the one who needs you and who, without your help, might be tempted to give way to despair.

Life is a talent (cf. Mt 25:14-30) entrusted to us, to be transformed and multiplied, by making it a gift to others. No human being is an "iceberg", drifting in the ocean of history; each one of us is part of a great family, in which he or she has a place to occupy and a role to play. Egoism makes us deaf and dumb. Love opens wide our eyes and our hearts, making us capable of an original and irreplaceable contribution. A contribution that, together with a thousand gestures of so many brothers and sisters, often distant and unknown, goes to make up the mosaic of charity that can change the seasons of history.

7. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life".

When many disciples, finding his language too difficult, withdrew from Him, Jesus asked the few who had remained: "Will you also go

away?" Peter replied: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:67-68). And they chose to remain with Him. They remained because the Master had "words of eternal life"; words that, while promising eternity, gave full meaning to life".

There are moments and circumstances when we have to make choices that are decisive for our whole existence. We are living — and you know it — in difficult times, when it is often hard to distinguish good from evil, true teachers from false. Jesus warned us: 'Take heed that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name, saying: 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them" (Lk 21:8). Pray and listen to his words; let yourselves be guided by true pastors; never give way to the enticements and the facile illusions of the world, which then, very often, change into tragic delusions.

It is in the difficult moments, the moments of testing, that the quality of our choices is measured. So it is in this season, no easy one, that each of you will be called to the courage of decision. There are no short cuts to happiness and light. Proofs of this are the torments endured, throughout the history of humankind, by those who have set out on the arduous quest for the meaning of existence, for answers to the fundamental questions inscribed in the heart of every human being.

You know that these questionings are nothing other than expression of that nostalgia for the infinite of which God has sown the seeds in each one of us. So it is with a sense of duty and of sacrifice that you have to journey along the paths of conversion and commitment; seeking, toiling; in voluntary work, in dialogue, with respect for all; not giving up when faced with failure, knowing well that your strength is in the Lord, Who guides your steps with love, ready to welcome you back like the prodigal son (cf. Lk 15:11-24).

8. Dear young people, I have invited you to be "prophets of life and love". I ask you also to be "prophets of joy". The world must recognize us by the fact that we are able to communicate to our contemporaries the sign of a great hope, already fulfilled, the hope of Jesus, who has died and is risen for us.

Do not forget that "the future of humanity lies in the hands of those who are strong enough to provide coming generations with reasons for living and hoping" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 31).

Purified by reconciliation, fruit of divine love and of your sincere repentance, working for justice, living in thanksgiving to God, you can be credible and efficacious prophets of joy in the world, which so often is gloomy and sad. You will proclaim the "fullness of time", of which the Great Jubilee of the year 2000 recalls the present relevance.

The road that Jesus points out for you is not an easy one; rather, it is like a path scaling the mountain. Don't lose courage! The steeper the way the more quickly it rises towards ever wider horizons.

May Mary, Star of evangelization, be your guide! Docile, as She was, to the will of the Father; pass along the stages of history as mature and convincing witnesses. With Her and with the Apostles, be able to repeat at every moment your profession of faith in the life-giving presence of Jesus Christ: "You have the words of eternal life!"

From the Vatican, 26 November 1995, Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.

MOST REV. PRECIOSO D. CANTILLAS, SDB, DD

Curriculum Vitae

PERSONAL DATA

Name	MOST REV. PRECIOSO D. CANTILLAS, SDB, DD
Date of Birth	July 3, 1953
Place of Birth	Naga, Cebu
Home Address	Don Bosco Technical High School Cebu Boys Town Punta Princesa, Cebu City P.O. Box 271
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Priesthood:	December 7, 1979
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EMPLOYMENT RECORD

1992 to present	Rector Don Bosco Technical High School Cebu Boys Town, Punta Princesa, Cebu City
1992 to present	Provincial Councilor Don Bosco Philippines Southern Province, Cebu
1994 to present	Board Member Technical Education & Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Republic of the Philippines (Government Office accepted with permission of Higher Superior)
1991 to present	President Philippine Association of Private Technical Institutions, Inc. (PAPTI)
1991 to present	Member Management Committee National Science Teaching Instrumentation Center (NSTIC), DECS
1998 to present	Editorial Director Blue Collar Magazine Magazine for Young Workers Don Bosco Publications, Philippines
1985 to present	Superintendent Don Bosco Schools and Training Centers, Phils.

1991 to 1992	Rector Don Bosco Technical College Mandaluyong Center
1988 to 1991	Executive Vice-President Philippine Association of Private Technical Institutions Inc. (PAPTI)
1987 to 1991	Vice-Rector Don Bosco Technical College Mandaluyong City
1985 to 1990	Director Industrial Technician Center Don Bosco Technical College Mandaluyong City
1983 to 1988	Dean of College Don Bosco Technical College Mandaluyong City
1983 to 1992	Provincial Councilor Don Bosco Philippine Province, Manila
1980 to 1983	Dean of College and Technical Director Don Bosco Seminary College Canlubang, Laguna
1974 to 1976	Training Director and Machine Shop Supervisor Don Bosco Seminary College Canlubang, Laguna

EDUCATIONAL RECORD

1980 to 1982	Masters in Industrial Education (MAIE) Technological University of the Philippines Ayala, Boulevard, Manila
1976 to 1980	Bachelor of Science in Sacred Theology University of Santo Tomas, Manila
1969 to 1974	Bachelor of Science in Industrial Education Don Bosco Seminary College Canlubang, Laguna
1965 to 1969	Technical - Academic Secondary Course Don Bosco Technical High School Cebu City
1959 to 1964	Elementary Course Langtad Elementary School Langtad, Cebu

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers July - August 1996

FR. EFREN O. RIVERA, O.P.

JULY 7, 1996

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

**MATTHEW 11:25-30 REVELATION
AND INVITATION TO LITTLE ONES**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. Mt 11:25-30 is between the Missionary Discourse used in the previous Sundays and the Parabolic Discourse (Mt 13:1 ff.) which will be taken up in the following three Sundays (15th to 17th).

Jesus 'yoke' is not an imposition but a liberation. It consists simply in the recognition of God as Father, with the gentleness and lowliness which this recognition implies. This recognition releases us from all the tension and anxiety inherent in a religion based on law, with its preoccupation with what must be done and avoided. The attitude of gentleness and humility towards the Father issues necessarily in an attitude of gentleness and tolerance towards our fellows.

Focus Points. (1) The Son transmits to people the revelation concerning the Father. People with childlike qualities are, by Christ's choice, the favored recipients of this revelation.

(2) Jesus, the Incarnate Wisdom of God, beckons to all those who are "weary and heavily laden" to shake off their burdens and instead walk beside him. With Christ and the Christian pulling together — like two oxen harnessed to a double yoke — the task of going through earthly life meaningfully becomes easy.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. The Old Testament revelation was made a special field of study by the Scribes and Pharisees and they had learned and clever rabbis. It turned out, however, that these teachers could not bring the Old Testament revelation to any flowering and fruit-bearing. It became like a tree with much foliage and nothing else. Jesus alone could make it bloom and bear fruit by injecting to it a new revelation which he preferably directed to the "unlearned" or little ones.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. What approach have you found most fruitful in Bible study? Has it been the bookish approach or the life-experience (DABAR) approach?

2. Burden-bearing or experiencing the trials and sufferings of life is inevitable. The important thing is for us to see an aim and purpose in all the ups and downs of life.

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. What has made your life meaningful in spite of sorrow and pain?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Jesus shares his knowledge of the Father by revealing this to "little ones." "Little ones" taught by Christ, instead of trying to share their knowledge with others, should try to convince them to become "little ones" too, so that they could be taught directly by Jesus.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* People need "rest." We help them when we lead them to Christ, who will give them "rest."

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus affirmed people who are childlike. We should do the same, after we ourselves have learned to be childlike.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Christ's invitation to come to him implies that he is forgiving the sins that have made us "labor" and have burdened us.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* God's revelation of himself is at the same time an invitation to fellowship, that is, to share his own divine life.

C. STORY: SURPRISE!

At a shopping mall near a university campus, an enterprising businessman put an owl in his display window. Two professors at the University passed by and they started criticising what they thought was a stuffed bird. One said, "The eyes are not natural." The other said, "Its wings are not in proportion to its head." At that the first also noticed, "Its feathers are not neatly arranged." And the other said "Its feet could be improved."

When they had finished with their criticism the old owl turned his head ... and winked at them.

Meanwhile, two boys were watching and listening. When the owl moved and winked, one of them said: "Those two professors think they know how to make an owl better than God himself."

JULY 14, 1996

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

MATTHEW 13: (1-23) 1-9 THE PARABLE
OF THE SOWER

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. The Parable of the Sower is the first story in Matthew's Parabolic Discourse of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the third

collection of discourses in the book. It is from this Parabolic Discourse that the 15th, 16th and 17th Sundays in Ordinary Time, Cycle A take their Gospel Reading.

God addresses us here and now in Christ. We must listen to him: "He who has ears, let him hear" (Mt 13:9). Two thousand years is a tiny drop in the ocean of time. The seed of God's word has hardly touched the ground of men's hearts. The Church has still to prove itself to be the 'good soil.'

Focus Points. (1) If we disregard the allegorizations in the parable, its message is simple. The disciples of Christ are not to be discouraged by the apparent fruitfulness of many of their evangelistic ventures. These are like the seeds that are wasted because they fall by the wayside, or on rocky ground, or among thorns. The seeds that fall on good soil compensate for all the losses because they yield a hundred or sixty or thirty-fold. Similarly, it is enough for the disciples to get a few good converts to the Good News because these will recruit many others and in the end there will be more followers of the Good News than those who reject it.

(2) If we take account of the allegorization, the birds that eat the seeds that drop by the wayside are the devil and his accomplices who take away the Good News from people who hear the message "without understanding it."

(3) Other types of people who do not bear fruit are a) those who falter when some setback or persecution involving the message occurs (seed on rocky ground) and b) those who are overcome by worldly anxiety and the lure of money (seed among thorns).

(4) The people who bear fruit are those who "hear the message and take it in" (NAB); or "hears the word and understands it" (NJB).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. The Good News is like a seed that has the potential of producing a bountiful harvest if it is sown on good soil. It is true that there are

almost always some obstacles to the fruit-yielding, but normally the combination of good seed and good soil lead to a good and even excellent harvest.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. "Circumstances" or "environment" do contribute to good or bad results. But let us not forget that we are masters of our destiny. The story is told of twins who had an alcoholic father who was cruel to his children. The twins grew up and went on separate ways. After many years, a childhood friend who had become a researcher traced them to find out whether their father's influence had anything to do with their lives. The researcher found out that one of the twins had also become an alcoholic and cruel father whereas the other did not have any drop of alcoholic drink in his house and was very close to his children. To the researcher's surprise both of these men gave the same answer to explain their situation: "With a father like the one I had, what would you expect?" Do you have a similar experience that you can share?

2. For Matthew the Evangelist, the one who fails to become a follower of the Good News is the one who fails to understand it (see v. 19) while the one who becomes a fruitful follower is the one who "hears it and understands it" (see v. 23)

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. A well known British writer who was a convert to Catholicism, G.K. Chesterton said that Christianity has not been tried and found wanting, but it has been found too difficult and has been left untried. Maybe Chesterton uses the term "try" for Matthew's term, "understand." Is "understanding the Good News" not the same, in reality, as "trying to put it into practice"? Maybe you have an experience that can clarify this matter.

3. Persecutions are evident dangers to the Christian Faith. But we usually fail to see the danger that comes from "worldly anxiety" and the "lure of money."

3.1 Pointer for Sharing. Has your faith ever been endangered by persecutions? by worldly anxiety? by the lure of money?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? Christians who do not want to share their material possessions with those in need fall under

the category of people compared to the soil with thorns that choke the Good News.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* When people are being targeted by the devil, they certainly are in need of our help. Let us be sensitive to their situation.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* The whole parable was originally taught by Jesus to affirm his disciples. It was meant to assure them that they are capable of coming up with an excellent harvest even if they have to undergo difficulties and failures.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* People who do not want to forgive are certainly among those who have not understood the Good News — they have let the devil take away the seed sown by Jesus Christ.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* In the end, the countless multitudes following Jesus Christ will be the plentiful harvest of the Good News he has sown.

C. STORY: A MODERN PARABLE

A lady economist was asked to talk to a group of business people. She tacked up a big sheet of white paper. Then she drew a black spot on the paper and asked a man in the front row what he saw.

The man answered promptly, "A black spot."

The speaker asked every person in the room the same question and each replied, "A black spot."

With calm and deliberate emphasis, the speaker then said, "Yes, there is a little black spot, but none of you mentioned the big sheet of white paper. And that's my speech."

JULY 21, 1996

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

**MATTHEW 13 (24-43) 24-30 THE PARABLE
OF THE WEEDS**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. The longer form of the Gospel Reading for the 16th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, takes three parables: the Weeds among the Wheat (Mt 13:24-30); the Mustard Seed (vv. 31-32); the Yeast (vv. 33); touches on the Use of Parables (vv. 34-35), **and** gives the explanation of the Parable of the Weeds (vv. 36-43).

Whether we look at ourselves as individuals or as Church or as humankind we can see that we are a mixture of good and evil. The perfect individual, the holy Church, the perfect humankind have never existed on earth. We should not be shocked or scandalized by flaws we detect around us. Rather we should do something about them if we can. If there is nothing we can do, let us at least have the confidence that in the end God will make things work out as he really wanted.

Focus Points. (1) The original "point" of this parable is that, like the grains of wheat that can withstand weeds and still yield a good harvest, the Kingdom of God can withstand competition from evil and still produce a rich harvest in the end.

(2) When the parable was allegorized, the sower was thought of as Jesus, "the Son of Man; the field is the world, the good seed the children of the Kingdom. The weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels (Mt 13:37-39).

(3) "Just as weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and are evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Mt 13:40-43a).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. Sometimes, like Queen Elizabeth of England, we experience a "horrible year" when problems follow one after the other without let up. In the Philippines this seems to have been the case from mid-1995 to mid-1996. Heinous crimes of rape, murders of people in their own house, and kidnappings have hogged the newspaper headlines. Natural calamities like typhoons, floods, and lahar have been more destructive than before. Disasters due to human carelessness like a boat without safety equipment capsizing a few meters from shore causing dozens of children to drown, the Ozone Disco fire, where more than 160 young people died, the flow of Marcopper mine tailings into rivers and the sea, have kept investigators busy. Fighting between rebels and government soldiers have jeopardized the peace process in Mindanao. How should a follower of Christ take all these horrible happenings? Isn't the Kingdom of God supposed to be growing, specially since the 2000th anniversary of the birth of Christ is just four years away? The Gospel parable of the Weeds among the Wheat gives us the answer. We must trust the power of goodness and salvation that Christ has sown in our hearts and in this world. It can yield a rich harvest for us individually as well as for society in spite of all setbacks in our individual lives and in society.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. Surely, you have encountered the problem of evil in your life. How did you cope? Did you come out a better person?

2. The good seed are the children of the Kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one. The "Kingdom" cannot be simply identified with the Church because there are good people who are "children of the Kingdom" who are not members of the Church, and there are members of the church who are evil and are children of the evil one. But the Church is the institution that takes care of the children of the Kingdom *and fights against the Devil and all those allied with him.*

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. Share about the care or lack of care that you experienced from the institutional Church.

3. The early Christians were very conscious of the fact that, with the first coming of Christ in his Incarnation and Public Ministry, leading to his Death and Resurrection, the final age of the world has come upon us. All that remains is his Second Coming and the early Christians prepared themselves for it. This is called the "eschatological dimension" of their faith. It is something that few of us cultivate today. Yet, such a dimension is necessary for faith to be vigorous. Most probably it is the lack or weakness of this dimension that makes us lukewarm Christians.

3.1 Pointer for Sharing. Even if the Second Coming of Christ does not happen in our lifetime, the thought of it should influence our day-to-day living. A daily examination of conscience before sleeping is a good practice to keep this thought operative in our lives.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* We should think of other Christians as being, like ourselves, wheat or good seed growing in God's field. What makes us "wheat" and not "weeds" is the gift of grace given to us by God. We should share this grace with others through good works.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* As members of the institutional Church each of us should help the Church care for "the children of the Kingdom" whether they are inside the Church or not. Let each of us resolve to start doing this today, because the institutional Catholic Church has been very deficient in this duty in recent times. Those who leave the Church to join sects and cults say they have found more caring in these sects and cults than they have experienced in their whole life inside the Church.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* One day the righteous "will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Mt 13:43a). When we see glimmers of that brilliance in our sisters and brothers, let us tell them so.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* It is hard to tell the good and the bad until it is almost time for the harvest. Let us not categorize someone as "bad" just because of a few mistakes. Let us forgive the mistakes and take the erring sister or brother to stand side by side with us in God's field.

Let God decide who should be part of the harvest and who should be part of the weeds to be burned.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS*. The "children of the Kingdom" have been given by God enough strength to withstand the weeds — the children of the Devil — and produce a rich harvest in the end.

C. STORY: HE THREW IT INTO THE FIRE

During his administration, Lincoln received a delegation from a Western state containing a list of objections against the appointment of a Senator Baker, who was a longtime friend of Abe's. The objections were reflections on Baker's character.

Holding the paper in his hand, Lincoln asked with calm dignity. "This paper you have given me is now mine, isn't it?"

When they assured him it was, he asked further, "To do with it as I please?"

"Certainly, Mr. President," replied the spokesman. Lincoln then threw into the fire and said, "Good day, gentlemen."

JULY 28, 1996

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

MATTHEW 13: (44-52) **44-46 THE PARABLES** OF THE TREASURE AND THE PEARL

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. Only two parables — that of the Treasure and that of the Pearl — are included in the short form of the Gospel Reading. The longer form includes one more parable — that of the Dragnet — and the concluding remark of Jesus about the "scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven ... who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."

Despite all the signs of the Kingdom, knowledge of the Kingdom is essentially God's gift. It is a knowledge more of the heart than of the reason. If a person knows intuitively that he is loved by God as

by a Father there is nothing that will prevent him from responding to that love. If he is not aware of this love there is nothing else that will convince him of the value of Christianity.

Focus Points. (1) Both the parable of the Treasure and that of the Pearl speak of a man who "sells all he has and buys" the thing of great value that he has come across. The thing of great value is no other than the life of Faith in Jesus Christ.

(2) Moreover, the parable of the Treasure teaches that one who finds this thing of great value experiences such "joy" that for its sake he makes the sacrifice of "selling all that he has."

(3) The Parable of the Dragnet, like that of the Weeds, reminds people of the punishment of the wicked "at the end of the age." The reward of the good people is that their value is recognized.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. When we live the life of Faith in Jesus Christ, we acquire a new value that is added to our value as persons: we become "children of God" in a way that lesser creatures are not. We enter the realm of the divine. God shares his "mysterious life" with us and makes us heirs of heaven.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. When was the first time you appreciated the value of your life of Faith in Jesus Christ?

2. A life that is not marked by a deep seated joy is not a Christian life.

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. When did you first realize that a deep seated joy is a sign of true Christian life?

3. The "children of the Kingdom" who, in addition to their value as persons, have the added value of the life of Faith in Jesus Christ, find more meaning and satisfaction in life in this world, and in the next life they will receive additional reward.

3.1 Pointer for Sharing. Do you have an experience that illustrates the truth that the greatest reward is not something material or worldly but something that makes a human being a better person?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* When we share our Christian joy with others it is not diminished but enriched.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Many people who seem to be successful in life are actually searching for the meaning of human existence. We must be sensitive to their needs and help them in their search.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* For us Christians, it is not wealth, power or fame that really counts. Let us not praise people for being wealthy, powerful or famous. But let us affirm them for being true to themselves and for being followers of Jesus Christ.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* For many people, the real life equivalent of "selling everything to buy" the life of Faith in Jesus Christ is to forgive their enemies or the hurts and pains that have been inflicted on them by parents, friends, society.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* Our life of Faith in Jesus Christ is the Treasure we have found in a field, the Pearl of great price.

C. STORY: THE MAN HE COULD HAVE BEEN

A reporter asked George Bernard Shaw, the famous author and playwright, to play the "What if" game shortly before he died. "Mr. Shaw," he asked, you have visited with some of the most famous people in the world. You have known royalty, world-renowned authors, artists, teachers of the world. If you could live your life all over again and be anybody you've known, or any person from history, who would you like to be?"

I would choose," replied Shaw, "to be the man George Bernard Shaw could have been, but never was."

AUGUST 4, 1996

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Cycle A

**MATTHEW 14:13-21 JESUS FEEDS FIVE
THOUSAND MEN**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. The fourth booklet of Matthew starts right after **the** conclusion of the parabolic discourse. The narrative part, from which the Gospel Readings for the 18th to the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A, are taken, will lead to the "Discourse On Church Order" in chapter 18. The first passage in this narrative part used in the Liturgy is about the feeding of five thousand men, which is this Sunday's Gospel Reading.

At every Mass, we, the 'crowds', are nourished by the bread of Christ, that is, his teaching, his life, death and resurrection. Sharing the one bread, we become one body (see 1 Cor 1:17). But, becoming the Church, the body of Christ, we must, in turn, "break ourselves" for others, that is, for the 'crowds' who do not yet belong visibly to the body.

Focus Points. (1) The Feeding of the Five Thousand is placed by Matthew in the larger context of the *compassion Jesus felt for the crowds* that followed him wherever he went, even when he wanted to escape from them (Mt 14:13-14). The usual way by which he showed this compassion was that of healing the sick that the crowds brought to him (see v. 14b).

(2) The Disciples wanted the crowds to be dismissed by Jesus without attending to their need for food (v. 15). By contrast, Jesus wanted his disciples to give food to the crowds (v. 16)

(3) Jesus did not produce food from thin air but waited for his disciples to bring out the five loaves and two fish that they had (v. 17). These were the materials from which Jesus produced enough to feed five thousand men "not counting women and children" (v. 21b).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. The multiplication of loaves did not happen everytime Jesus was with hungry crowds. But Jesus always had compassion for the crowds. In fact this compassion of Jesus is more important to us than the passing miraculous gesture by which he expressed it.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. What are the ways by which you have experienced the compassion of Jesus for you?

2. Time and again the disciples of Jesus have to try to be more like him in caring for the needs of people and doing something about it.

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. Can you recall a time when you made real progress in being more like Jesus in caring for others?

3. The world has enough goods for everyone's need, but not for anyone's greed. Our real problem is not the lack of material goods to be shared with others but the hardness of heart found among too many rich people.

3.1 Pointer for Sharing. Do you know of any miracle of a rich man's heart being changed to become committed to giving to the oppressed poor?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Even when our material resources are meagre, if we share them with others who are in greater need than ourselves, the Lord will bless our efforts and make miracles happen.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Even when we have become disciples of Jesus, there is still much room for improving our caring for others. Jesus is still far ahead of us in caring.

3. **CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** By feeding 5,000 men Jesus affirmed them as people who have done **the right thing** by following him even when he wanted to be alone in a deserted **place**.

4. **FORGIVENESS.** Jesus forgave the importunity of the crowd in following him to a deserted place. He also forgave the initial selfishness of his disciples.

5. **THE GOOD NEWS.** *The compassion of Jesus for us is still* there, ready to work miracles for us in our time of need if we invoke it with faith.

C. STORY: GRACE AT MEALS

A farmer who was a loyal church-going Christian was spending the day in a large city. He entered a restaurant and sat down at a table near a group of young men of the world. When his meal was served, he quietly bowed his head and said grace.

One of the young sophisticates though he'd have some fun with the farmer, and he said in a loud voice, "Hey, Tatang, does everyone do that where you come from?"

The old man looked at him and replied, "No, son, the pigs **don't**."

AUGUST 11, 1996

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

MATTHEW 14:22-33 JESUS WALKS ON WATER

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. Like **the multiplication of the loaves**, Jesus' walking **on** the water is not just an extraordinary phenomenon. It is a sign of Jesus' relationship with his disciples, the Church. Frequently we may feel, either as individuals or as the Church, that we are about to be submerged in the chaotic forces surrounding us. At such times, particularly, we need to recall Jesus's words to his disciples on the Sea of Galilee: "Take heart, it is I: have no fear" and to Peter. "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?"

Focus Points. (1) Jesus goes up into the hills by himself to pray (Mt 14:23). There he spends the whole night in prayer, for it is only at the "fourth watch" (v. 25), that is, shortly before dawn, that he shows himself to his disciples. Meanwhile, the boat of the disciples was being tossed by the stormy sea. It is implied by the story that the disciples survived because of the prayer of Jesus.

(2) In Matthew's mind the disciples' journey across the lake was a symbol of their mission into foreign territory, a type of the universal mission of the Church. The boat was the Church on the move.

(3) For the Jews of the Old Testament, as for many other peoples, the sea is a symbol of malevolent forces, and only God was considered to have power over it: "who dost still the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves" (Ps 65:7). Jesus' putting the waves beneath his feet is a divine prerogative, a sign that he is God with his disciples. This is expressed clearly in Jesus' words: "It is I; have no fear" (Mt 14:27; see 14:33). The phrase, "It is I" is virtually a claim to be Jahweh, the God of Israel.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. In this story the prayer of Jesus was not a prayer for himself but for his disciples and therefore for us. He is in a place of peace, we are tossed by the stormy sea of this world, this life with all its vicissitudes.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. Have you experienced prayer as a bridge that spans the stormy sea of life and connects you with the peace of Jesus?

2. Let us not forget that the Church is essentially missionary. Every Christian must be an "evangelizer" and when a Christian gets the opportunity to venture as a missionary in a dangerous environment, he or she must not be afraid but must rely on the saving power of Jesus Christ.

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. As one duty-bound to be an evangelizer, have you ventured into dangerous situations to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to people? Did you experience the protection of Jesus Christ and the workings of his salvific power?

3. The Church could not have survived for almost 2,000 years if its founder, Jesus Christ, was not divine. It is true that there are religions that have lasted much longer, but they were not attacked as the church was attacked during the Roman persecutions, during the time of the great heresies, during the military onslaught of Islam, during the religious and political turmoils of Europe, etc.

3.1 Pointer for Sharing. We must love and serve not only the "Kingdom of God" but also its institutional incarnation, the Catholic Church. Share on the "agony and ecstasy" of serving the Church.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Praying is a form of sharing, when we pray for others and for the Church.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* To show his care for the Church, Christ exhorts his disciples: do not fear (Mt 14:27). When we show our caring to others, we drive fear away from them.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* It was a form of affirmation when Christ answered Peter's desire to walk on the water. However, Peter, the person affirmed, began to doubt being sustained by the power of Christ. Fortunately, Christ can save and not only affirm.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Christ's gesture of reaching out his hand to pull Peter out of the engulfing waters, includes forgiveness.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* The Church, blessed by the divine presence brought to it by Christ, may experience many crises but will never be engulfed by the forces of evil.

C. STORY: REASSURING SMILE

A storm caught a sea-faring vessel off a rocky coast. The wind and waves threatened to drive the boat to its destruction.

In the midst of the terror, one daring passenger, contrary to orders, made his way across the ship. Groping along a passageway, he found the pilot house. There he beheld an intriguing sight: the ship's pilot was lashed to his post. Secure against the raging elements, he held the wheel fast, turning the ship inch by inch once more out to sea. The pilot saw the watcher and smiled.

The daring passenger found his way below deck where the other passengers huddled in fear. Encouragingly, he said, "I have seen the face of the pilot, and he smiled. All is well."

AUGUST 18, 1996

TWENTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

**MATTHEW 15:21-28 JESUS REWARDS THE
CANAANITE WOMAN'S FAITH AND HUMANITY**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. The Church is the new Israel. This Israel, like the old one, is always in danger of becoming a sect, that is, of being known by people as having distinguishing marks other than being the community of people with faith who are obedient to Christ. The Canaanite woman's faith is a reminder of the essentially non-sectarian character of faith. Even people who are "outside" of Israel can get "inside" the Kingdom by their faith and enjoy the blessings of God's mercy.

Focus Points. (1) The episode of the Canaanite woman contrasts strikingly with the previous episode (Mt 15:1-20, not used in the Sunday liturgy), in which Jesus inveighs against the Pharisees, the self-styled cream of Israel: "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mt 15:8, see Isa 29:13). The Pharisees thought they were near to God whereas the gentiles were far from him. Matthew juxtaposes the two episodes to show how, paradoxically, the gentiles are nearer to the kingdom than the Pharisees.

(2) The Canaanite woman's attitude is one of humility and dependence, that of the *anawim*: "Have mercy on me, O Lord." She is *spiritually poor*, recognizing her need of Jesus' mercy. By contrast

the Pharisees, proud of the tradition of their elders, lost sight of what is essential in the man/God relationship: I desire mercy, and not animal sacrifice" (Mt 9:13).

(3) The Canaanite woman is contrasted not only with the Pharisees. In comparison with her the disciples cut a very dim picture. In the episode immediately preceding Jesus' invective against the Pharisees they appear as men "of little faith" (Mt 14:31) and their reaction to the woman's demand is typically intolerant: "Send her away, for she is crying after us" (Mt 14:15). The woman, however, is praised for her faith: "O woman, great is your faith" (Mt 15:28). Matthew's point is very clear: it takes a woman, a pagan woman at that, to teach both the Pharisees and indeed the disciples what faith is.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. The true disciples of Christ must cultivate the "Kingdom values," especially faith and humility - the desire for God's mercy - rather than just pride themselves for belonging to either the Old or New Israel.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. Do I realize that even in one's spiritual life, one must have a "hierarchy of values?" From your experience, what are the highest "Kingdom values"?

2. Those who are materially and spiritually poor are specially blessed by God because he takes them under his wing, in his Kingdom. In the gospel narratives they are often exemplified by women. For Luke, Mary, the mother of Jesus, embodies the *anawim* - the ***Church of the poor*** (see Luke's Infancy narrative).

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. It seems that women are specially qualified to represent those who are materially and spiritually poor - the ***Church of the Anawim***. Why? Could women in the group share on this?

3. Disciples of Christ can experience a deterioration of their faith. They sometimes, need the example of people whose faith is "oven fresh", to revive their original fervent faith-experience.

3.1 *Pointer for Sharing.* Have you experienced a revival of faith because of witnessing faith at work in other people?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* We should share our faith not only with those within our group but also those "outside".

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* The disciples knew that Jesus was sent to minister only "to the lost sheep of Israel" and therefore they presumed that the Canaanite woman had no chance of obtaining a favor from Jesus Christ. Their mistake was to make this so absolute a rule that it would never allow any exception. Let us take care not to absolutize rules, lest, like the disciples in this story, we also fail to show caring where it is needed.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* In affirming and even praising the Canaanite woman's faith Jesus has warned us that there are many people outside "Israel" (the Church) who have a faith even greater than that of the ordinary Christian. Let us try to identify people like the Canaanite woman and affirm them.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Christ redeemed the whole human race and is ready to forgive anyone who asks for forgiveness.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* Any person's greatest asset is his or her faith in Jesus Christ.

C. STORY: HOUSEWIFE'S AWARDS

A man who looked on himself as an achiever was decorating his new den and decided it was a good place to display all the awards he and his two sons won at various athletic competitions.

When he had filled two whole walls, he remarked to his wife that it was a shame she had no awards to contribute.

The following day, she produced, neatly framed, the birth certificates of their two sons, and added them to the display.

AUGUST 25, 1996

TWENTY FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle A

**MATTHEW 16:13-20 PETER IS GIVEN A ROLE
IN THE BUILDING OF THE CHURCH**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Use in the Liturgy. The Church, considered as a building, is built on rock. This rock is Jesus himself whose preaching and teaching, that is, the Gospel, sustains the building. Among the disciples, one man - Peter - is a sign of this rock. His role (and that of his successors) is to act as a visible focal point of unity after Jesus is taken from the sight of people. Peter's role is relative to, not a substitute for, the Gospel.

Focus Points. (1) Matthew is the only evangelist to use the word, "church" The Greek original - *ekklesia* - means a congregation or community which has assembled as a result of being "called" (from the Greek *ek-kaleo*, to call out). Thus for Matthew, as indeed for the whole New Testament, the Church is the community of all those who have received and welcomed God's call addressed to them in the Gospel. This Gospel, comprising Jesus' preaching, teaching and work summed up in his person, is at the origin of the Church, and is the only unifying force within the Church. All else, including social structures and the sacraments, is at the service of the Gospel.

(2) As *ekklesia* the Church enjoys a certain distinction from the Kingdom. The Church is not the Kingdom, since God's Word which constitutes his rule is operative in all men's hearts, whether they belong to the Church or not. Neither is the Kingdom the Church, since all those who welcome God's ruling Word have not yet been visibly assembled by the explicit recognition of this Word. For Matthew, the Church is the comparatively small community of Jesus' disciples who form and *ekklesia*. It is the visible, experiential presence of the Kingdom, **the** sign of the reality to which all men are called. It is the first-fruits of **the** Kingdom.

(3) One of the disciples - Peter - is a sign of the rock on which the Church is built. Jesus does not say: "You are Peter and on you

I will built my Church" but "... and on *this rock* (that you represent) I will build my Church" (Mt 16:18). It is not on the person of Peter but ***upon the rock symbolized by Peter*** - the Gospel summed up in the Person of Jesus Christ - that Jesus will build his Church. Peter's role is relative to, not a substitute for, the Gospel. His successors, the Popes, will continue this role until the end of time.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN & SHARE

1. Before thinking of fidelity to the Church, we should think of fidelity to the Gospel, because without the Gospel, there is no Church. Hence, before promoting "Church projects" we should promote "*Gospel or Kingdom values.*" These are the values of Faith, Humility, Peace, Justice, Solidarity with the human race, etc.

1.1 Pointer for Sharing. Are you more committed to "Church projects" than to "Kingdom values"? One should not neglect one for the other.

2. We should love the Church, but we should love the Kingdom more. Not everyone who is in the Kingdom is in the Church.'and members of the Church can fall out of the Kingdom.

2.1 Pointer for Sharing. How can we make our Church more and more a concretization of the Kingdom?

3. Jesus wanted the help of Peter to promote the Kingdom and its values visibly or experientially. This will be pursued until the end of time by the Popes, the successors of Peter. There may have been Popes long ago who were untrue to their calling but we are fortunate that as far as the living memory of the Church today is concerned, our Popes have been promoters both of the Church and the Kingdom values.

3.1 Pointer for Sharing. How has the Pope helped you to become a better Christian?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Christ shared his mission to save humankind with his Twelve Apostles and his Church - the community of disciples whose beginnings he took care of personally. We must gladly take our share - our role in the Church - and work out its unfolding as best we could.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* We should care not only for the needs of the Church today but also for its needs in the future. That is why, for example, we must be concerned with working for priestly and religious vocations in the Church

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* JuSt as the Pope affirms us, we must also affirm the Pope.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Church ministers are not perfect. We must readily forgive them and help them to be of greater service to the Church and to the Kingdom.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* The Kingdom of God has taken visible form in the Church, and the Church strives to take care of "the children of the Kingdom" wherever they may be found.

C. STORY: A PARISH WHERE THE CHURCH DIED

Coming to a small town in the most undeveloped part of the Province, a newly ordained priest was met with the flat statement that he was wasting his time, that as far as that town was concerned, the church was dead.

The new priest various ways he learned in the seminary to get the people to come to church, but he could get only the same old women and the few "manangs" who had remained faithful to the old priest who was his predecessor and had died five years ago.

Finally in desperation he made some posters and hired a young man with a bicycle to post them all over the town. It stated that, since the church was dead, the funeral would be held on the next Sunday afternoon.

The church was crowded by the curious who were rewarded by the sight of a huge coffin covered with flowers. After reading the obituary, the young pastor invited the people to pay their last respects. As the long queue passed by, each looked into the coffin, then glanced guiltily away.

At the bottom of the coffin lay a mirror solemnly reflecting the last remains of the church in the startled faces of the parishioners.