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# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

## The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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***EDITOR'S NOTE***

In this issue, we publish the reports of the different commissions of CBCP covering the year 1991-1995 with the hope that the data contained will reach the parishes and religious houses.

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## **Department of Doctrine and Religious Affairs**

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### **1 Commission on Doctrine of the Faith**

*The Commission promotes and safeguards the doctrine of faith and morals in the country. The Commission's concern is to promote the communication of the teaching of the faith in a correct, i.e., orthodox, manner. It is the link between the Episcopal Conference and the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.*

- The Commission issues guidelines on publications related to faith and morals. They also exercise supervision over movements, associations, and groups which influence faith and morals in the country.
- The Commission's functions cover three areas of focus, **viz:**
  - **Catholic Education** - The commission ensures correct teaching in seminaries, universities and schools. In coordination with the Episcopal Commission on Seminaries, it prepares the list of approved textbooks.
  - **Writings** - A number of experts recommended by the doctrinal Commission assist the bishops in granting the Imprimatur called for by Canon Law.
  - **Publishing Houses** - Episcopal Conferences, in conjunction with the Conference of Religious are charged with publishing books on faith and morals, in an effort to counteract the

problem of the lack of religious responsibility among most publishing houses. Ten theologian consultants on doctrinal matters were appointed in 1994.

- The Commission is undertaking two major projects:
  - A study of all existing national and transdiocesan religious associations, groups, or movements (except those already approved) claiming to be Catholic in order to ascertain their identity and orthodoxy. This is being done in collaboration with the Episcopal Commission on the Laity.
  - The preparation of textbooks for the seminaries and educational institutions by authors recognized for their scholarship and steadfast fidelity to the Church Magisterium.

## 2 Commission on Catechesis **and Catholic Education**

*The Commission makes studies and recommendations to the Conference on matters of specific applications of ecclesiastical decrees affecting catholic education as well as on the related policies and legislation of the State. It assists and serves the dioceses principally as an information center regarding catechetical developments.*

- The Episcopal Commission on Catechesis and Catholic Education (ECCCE) in coordination with Word and Life Publications, was given the exclusive right to publish in the Philippines the English edition of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC). It was launched during the second day of the 69th Bishops' Plenary Assembly in July 1994. In January 1995, with 30,000 copies of the CCC having been sold, another 30,000 copies were printed and marketed. Work has begun on a Tagalog translation.

- The final draft of the Catechism for the Filipino Catholic (CFC) was approved during the January 1994 Bishops' Plenary Assembly, subject to amendments to be made by the Bishop-members of the Commission. The amended text was submitted to Rome on April 4, 1994. The Conference received a number of General and Specific Observations from Rome. The opportune responses were made and approval of the Holy See is awaited.

Previously called Catholic Faith Catechism (CFC), it is an inculturated catechism according to the intent of PCP-II. It is especially intended for the use of those who are actively involved in the catechetical ministry - bishops, priests, religious, catechetical coordinators, religious formators.

The overall structure of the catechism introduces in an integrative manner the Catholic Faith's threefold structure of doctrine, morals, worship. A Question and Answer section attempts to give clear answers to specific questions on the points of the faith that are under attack or are widely misunderstood. It also aims at presenting what is most important and central to each chapter, summarizing its essential content.

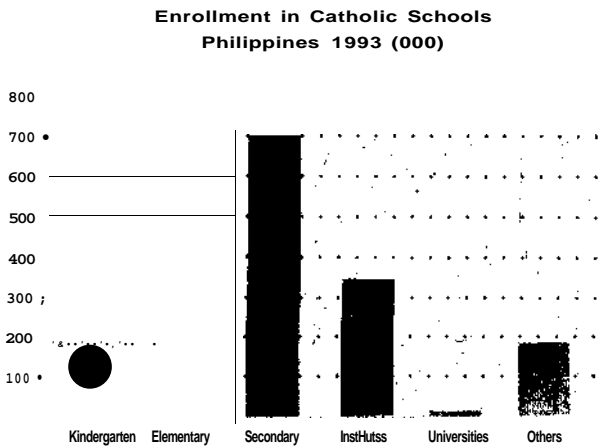
- The National Convention of Formators of Catechists was held on April 3-5, 1991 at the CFA in Manila. The response was excellent: 107 delegates attended.

- A new Tagalog translation of the National Catechetical Directory of the Philippines was completed by Bishop Deogracias Iniquez in 1994.

- The Commission worked on the amended text of the Supplementary Ordinances to *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* on Catholic educational institutions, following suggestions and corrections received from the Congregation for Catholic Education and incorporating comments from those involved in Catholic education. The texts were sent to Rome and were approved. Noteworthy features of these Supplementary Ordinances are:

- the responsibility of assuring the proper geographical distribution of Catholic tertiary institutions and that they be more accessible to the poor.
- the responsibility of the diocesan bishop to decide whether a college or university may exist as catholic is carried out by approving and/or recognizing its statutes which should contain the clear upholding of the principles of catholic doctrine. Another is to give the proper mandate to every theology teacher or professor in a catholic institution.
- the suggestion that the priest in charge of Campus Ministry be given as much power as needed to attend to the pastoral needs of those entrusted of his care.

- In view of the regionalization program of the Commission, the Northern Luzon Catechetical Center was organized on October 20, 1994 during the First Luzon Workshop on the Catechists' Basic Formation Program.



### 3 Commission on Canon Law

*The Commission makes studies and recommendations to the CBCP concerning the implementation of the CBCP Complementary Norms on the New Code of Canon Law. It organizes, promotes, maintains and facilitates annual seminars on Canon Law.*

- On the proposal of the Episcopal Commission on Ecumenical Affairs for a uniform policy to discourage the celebration of Mass for Inter-Church Weddings, the Commission studied the pros and cons of the matter and presented them to the Bishop's Assembly. It was decided to leave the decision to the individual bishops, suggesting, however, that they ask the Parish Priests to discourage mixed marriages, giving the reasons therefore.

- After study by this Commission, an Admonition was issued by the CBCP in 1992 to the faithful regarding the Society of St. Pius X, a schismatic group establishing a center and seminary in the country. On account of news that the St. Pius X Priestly Fraternity was recruiting new members in the Philippines, the Commission recommended to the CBCP that the Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Dei*, (July 2,1988)

be known to the priests and faithful so that they can refrain from joining the fraternity.

- At the 70th Plenary Assembly of Bishops, after studies made by this Commission on the Society of St. Pius X, the following motion was adopted: "That the bishops are not giving and, where it has been given, they are withdrawing the faculties in the ministry from those who do not recognize the legitimacy of the Novus Ordo Missae, and that they are forbidding the people from participating in Masses celebrated by priests who deny the legitimacy of the Novus Ordo Missae."

- A three-day seminar of Canon Lawyers was held in 1993 to organize the Canon Law Society of the Philippines. The statutes were approved by the 67th Bishop's Plenary Assembly, thus creating the Canon Law Society of the Philippines (CLSP). The Second Annual Convention of the Canon Law Society of the Philippines was held in Tagaytay on April 11-14, 1994 resulting in two resolutions: 1) the establishment of a Speaker's Bureau to help dioceses update their clergy on Canon Law; 2) the publication of a handbook on practical pastoral solutions and correct Canonical formularies for daily pastoral use.

#### 4 Commission on Liturgy

*The Commission studies liturgical directives from the Congregation of Divine Worship and other agencies of the Apostolic See and makes appropriate recommendations to the CBCP for their implementation. It assists the Conference in carrying out their task of promoting and directing the whole liturgical life of our people, for animating it and protecting it from abuses in experimentation.*

- The CBCP commissioned the Paul VI Institute of Liturgy to operate under its auspices in January 1990. In March 1991, it was granted patronage by the Pontifical Liturgical Institute in Rome. It began operations on July 15, 1991 and was formally inaugurated on September 5, 1991. The Paul VI Institute of Liturgy aims to contribute to the ongoing liturgical formation of the clergy, religious and lay leaders in the Philippines and surrounding Asian and South Pacific countries. Its orientation is both theological and spiritual with pastoral exposure to parish liturgical life. It stresses community life among participants through common prayers, meals and recreational activities. Priests,



sisters, seminarians and lay leaders have participated in the modules given by the Institute and a number have received the "Certificate of Competency in Pastoral Theology" after completing a paper on liturgy.

- Among the major projects of the Commission during the five year period were: The Roman Order of Mass for Philippine Dioceses (Misa ng Bayan), an Original Eucharistic Prayer in Tagalog for Marriage, Mass formulary that integrates the Salubong and the Easter Dawn Mass, Mass formulary for the World Mission Sunday, and Mass formulary for the Tribal Filipino Sunday.

- In 1994, three new consultors of the Commission representing the three regions of the country were named for a term of three years.

- In 1995 the Commission presented and received approval from the Plenary Assembly for the following:

- The first four of six segments of the Order of the Mass which were translated by ICEL.

- Misa ng Bayang Pilipino revised in 1995 in accord with the Fourth Instruction on Inculturation published on January 25, 1994 by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments.

- The Commission prepared and endorsed to the Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship the approval of:

- The Cebuano translation of the Tagalog Rite of marriage;
  - The Ilocano translation of the Rite of Baptism;

After study and recommendation by the Commission, the Ilocano translation of the Rite of Baptism was approved by the 70th Plenary Assembly in January, 1995.

- As a measure against the instrumentalization of the Stations of the Cross for ideological motives, the Commission studied and recommended that new churches in which the traditional Stations of the Cross are not yet set up should adopt one of two biblical series of the Stations of the Cross.

- Series One: the Last Supper, Agony at Gethsemani, Jesus before Pilate, Scourging, Carrying of the Cross, Fall, Simon of Cyrene, the Women of Jerusalem, Stripping, the Repentant Thief, the Blessed Mother and St. John, the Death of Jesus, Burial and Resurrection.
- Series Two: The Last Supper, Agony at Gethsemani, Jesus before the Sanhedrin, Jesus before Pilate, Scourging and Crowning with Thorns, Carrying of the Cross, Simon of Cyrene, the Women of Jerusalem, Stripping and Crucifixion, the Repentant Thief, the Blessed Mother and St. John, the Death of Jesus, Burial and the Resurrection;

This was approved by the 69th Bishop's Assembly in July, 1994.

- In 1994, three new consultants of the Commission representing the three regions of the country (Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao) were named for a term of three years. The Commission continues to assist the dioceses in establishing Regional Commissions on Liturgy.

## **5 Commission on Ecumenical Affairs**

*The Commission functions in accordance with the prescriptions of the New Code of Canon Law as embodied in the revised Vatican documents related to ecumenical collaboration. It keeps contact with the Vatican Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. It fosters dialogue with ecumenical councils and leaders of other christian churches and represents the conference in ecumenical conferences.*

Ecumenical activity consisted of the steadily growing rapport with pastors of other Christian Churches along the path of a fuller communion. The main vehicle for sharings and exchanges is a breakfast fellowship called "Kasapas" (Kapihan sa Casa Pastoral) held twice a month in Manila. The churches regularly represented are: Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF), Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI), United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), and the United Methodist Church (UMC). A regular core group of some 15-20 active participants has emerged, and a typical program of group interaction is evolving, usually centered on a scriptural reading and its relevance to daily life.

This ecumenical experience has served as the foundation for the joint preparation of the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity in close coordination with the NCCP (National Council of Churches in the Philippines) and its regional branches. The Commission has prepared a prayer service for all Catholic Schools channeled through the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP). Contacts with other Churches in provinces have also been made (Lucena, Tayabas, Baguio City, Tarlac, San Fernando and La Union).

Structures that serve as a venue for interaction among leaders of various churches are already in place such as the National Ecumenical Consultative Committee (NECCOM) and the Philippine Inter-Church Organization for the Promotion of Christian Unity Inc. (PICOPCUI).

## 6 Commission on Inter-Religious Dialogue

*The Commission maintains contact with the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious dialogue. It assists dioceses and religious institutions in the Philippines which desire to promote dialogue with Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Shintoism, Zoroasterism and the natural religions.*

- The Commission's executive secretary and staff attended the 5th Silsilah Summer Course on Muslim-Christian Dialogue. The objectives of the course were: a) to contribute to the formal knowledge on Islam and Christianity in general; b) to develop a greater consciousness of the aspirations and problems of both religious communities; c) to provide conducive atmosphere for genuine fraternal encounter between Muslims and Christians; and d) to evoke awareness and appreciation of dialogue in the religious, cultural and political life of muslim and christian communities.

- The Commission is in the stage of linking and coordinating with other groups promoting inter-religious dialogue. Muslim-Christian dialogue is its priority but it plans to extend its attention to the Buddhist among the Chinese and the Animists among the tribal groups.

- In 1992, Euntes Asian Center opened its doors to the pioneering group of 17 priests, sisters and lay people from Singapore, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh and the Philippines. Its

goal is to form a renewed spirit of mission and dialogue with different religions and cultures.

- A meeting of the Commission with the Iranian Embassy officials was held on December 1, 1993 at the CBCP Headquarters. During the meeting the Iranians spoke about their willingness to promote better understanding between Christians and Muslims and raised the possibility of a meeting between Iranian Shiite theologians and Catholic theologians in the Philippines.

- The Commission initiated three significant conferences on Muslim-Christian Dialogue: in Marawi in May 1994 and in Iligan in June 1994, and on August 13, 1994 in Marawi.

A Statement of Solidarity was signed by Christians and Muslims gathered at the Notre Dame University in Cotabato City (1994). It called on Muslims and Christian especially in Basilan, Zamboanga and Sulu "not to fall into a cycle of violence and revenge but to exercise restraint by renewing their commitment to peace and life."

- Collaboration is currently pursued with existing ecumenical groups such as Kapisanan sa Kasa Pastoral (KASAPAS), the Thursday Breakfast Fellowship with Bishop George Castro of IEMELIF Church as moderator, and with members of the Philippine Inter-Church Organization for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Inc. (PICOPPCUI).

A joint project "Ecumenism in Action" was launched on July 20, 1994 in the presence of the ECEA Secretariat and the NCCP. Its first project was a medical mission to Barrio Talaba, Bacolor, Pampanga on August 26-27, 1994 followed by a relief mission on October 1994 to typhoon and lahar victims, and another medical mission to evacuees in the same province.

- Bishops and pastors of the different Christian Churches were invited to grace any or all of the three main events of the Papal Visit: the Quadricentennial Mass, the Youth Vigil and the Closing Liturgy.

## **7 Commission on Culture**

*The Commission promotes the meeting between the saving message of the Gospel and the culture of our time. It undertakes appropriate*

*initiatives concerning dialogue between faith and cultures and inter-cultural dialogue. It studies the problem of unbelief and religious indifference and organize and establishes dialogue with those who do not believe in God or who profess no religion.*

- The work of this Commission was being done previously by the Commission on Inter-religious dialogue. At the 68th Plenary Assembly in January 1994 the CBCP amended its Constitution and By-Laws to create the Episcopal Commission on Culture. Bishop Fernando Capalla was confirmed as the first Chairman of this new Commission.

- The Commission held a National Dialogue with Media on "Culture and Politics" in Malaybalay, Bukidnon on March 30 to April 1, 1995. A total of 60 people mostly coming from the media participated in the dialogue.

- Future plans include: Dialogue on "Faith and Youth Subculture" by Summer 1996, Seminar for Catholic Educators on "Media and Political Education", and Mindanao Regional meetings on "Culture". The Commission is also planning to publish an annotated bibliography on faith and culture.

# Department of Clergy Formation

## 1 Commission on Clergy

*The Commission promotes the spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation of the clergy. It studies and recommends to the Conference means of implementing the canonical norms of the New Code of Canon Law regarding the life, discipline, rights and obligations of priests.*

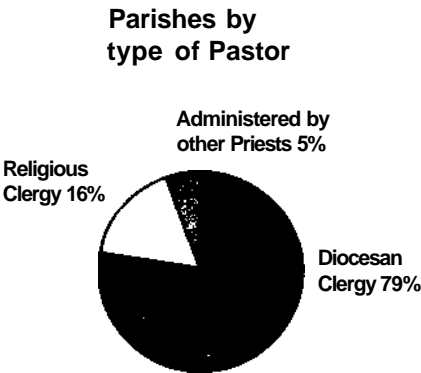
- The National Retreat for Priests held at the SVD Seminary in Tagaytay City on Nov. 1992 was the first of its kind. It was sponsored by the Episcopal Commission on the Clergy, the Council of the Laity, and the Love our Priests Movement. Around 500 priests from various archdioceses participated.

The Second National Retreat for Priests was held on November 8-12, 1993 in Cebu City and November 15-19, 1993 Tagaytay City and facilitated by Fr. Kevin Scallon, CM, and Sister Briege Mckenna, CSC, with an attendance of almost 800 priests.

- In a determined effort to enforce the discipline of the Church the Conference has agreed to face the issue of priestly celibacy seriously. The consensus is that the first remedies should be preventive, through a better screening process. Other preventive measures include changes on the structure of presbyteral lives; the appointment of a director of continuing education in each diocese; team ministry of various kinds; the appointment of a episcopal vicar or visitor; the institution of priest-

to-priest ministry within the presbyterate; better and more systematic use of recollections, retreats, input sermons and workshops; spiritual direction; true fellowship within the presbyterate and encouragement for dialogue between priests who seem to be having difficulties, and the laity.

- The Commission helps dioceses set up programs of continuing renewal for priests. A month-long Renewal Program was held at Bahay Pari, San Carlos Pastoral Formation Complex, Manila from February 1-26,1994 with 19 participants. More have been scheduled. A nationwide Intensive Renewal for Diocesan Priests program was held in Southeast Asia Inter-Disciplinary Development Institute (SAIDI) lasting three months beginning August 3, 1994 with 20 priests in attendance.
- The 4th National Consultation of Priests was held on August 22-26, 1994 in Cebu to set up diocesan and regional commissions on the clergy in order to enhance the work of renewal of the clergy. The participants were trained as retreat directors to give diocesan and regional retreats.



2 Commission on Seminaries

*The Commission makes studies and recommendations to the Conference for the proper and effective Implementation of the decrees and instructions from the Apostolic See regarding the formation of future priests at all levels.*

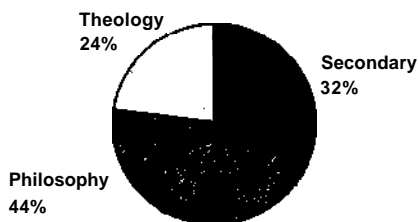
- The first Luzon Diocesan Seminarian's Congress on PCP II was held on February 28, 1992. It was an attempt at a theological understanding of the ordained ministry of seminarians. Thirteen seminaries participated.

- The official apostolic visitation of seminaries in the Philippines started in 1992 and ended November 1994. All reports were sent to the Congregation for Catholic Education. The base document was a report consisting of two parts:

- The first, which provides the profile of the seminary community, number of seminarians and their background is available to the public.
- The second, which deals with the critical areas of priestly formation: human, intellectual, spiritual, pastoral, community life, finance and administration is for limited circulation.

- Following the National Consultation on Seminaries held in 1994, the Philippine Program for Priestly Formation is presently being revised based on the observations and suggestions of the formators themselves from the National Consultation, the Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, the Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and the observations from the Apostolic Visitations of Philippine Seminaries.

### **Philippines: Candidates for Priesthood (1993)**





- The Commission worked and presented the following "NO ADMISSION POLICY" for Seminaries which was approved by the 71st Bishops' Plenary Assembly in July 1995:

- First. At the time of application the candidate must be absolutely free from Substance Abuse. Any rehabilitation and treatment of dependency on drugs, alcohol, depressants, inhalants, grass, etc. must be addressed outside the seminary. There is an absolute NO ADMISSION POLICY in the seminary (at any level of formation) for any type of drug or substance dependents.
- Second. Sexually active homosexuals and those behaving with an overt homosexual behavior should not and cannot be admitted to any level of priestly formation program.
- Third. A sexually active heterosexual cannot and should not be admitted to the priestly formation program at any level of formation.
- Fourth. Individuals with overt extreme effeminate behavior cannot and should not be admitted to the priestly formation at any level.

### **3 Commission on the Pontificio Collegio Filippino**

*The Commission administers the "Pontificio Collegio Filippino" in Rome, which enjoys both ecclesiastical and civil juridical personality, in accordance with the norms approved by the Conference and the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education.*

- The Collegio focuses on building up a community of disciples as servant-leaders of the Church, the People of God. Following the Holy Father's exhortation, the Collegio tries to cultivate "desire of every resident priest to witness to such call — to joyfully live as a community of priests."

- The Commission assigns a high priority to the intellectual life of residents. The Committee on Academics and Culture has introduced a series of lectures on biblical themes and on theological and philosophical issues for the residents. There were lectures by Cardinal Gagnon and

Msgr. Pierri on the life of priests in the light of *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. The residents also listened to Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi on the National Pastoral Plan and Cardinal Sin on the Philippine Church. It has become a tradition for doctoral candidates to give a pre-defense lecture to the community. During schoolyear 1993-94, 8 priests finished their doctorate and 16, their licentiate.

- The Collegio has always given paramount importance to the ongoing spiritual formation of the resident priests. In accordance with *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, various means are provided to help them attain closer union with Christ. These include the daily Eucharistic celebration, the availability of an external confessor, praying of the Divine Office and the Rosary as a community, the weekly Holy Hour, the annual retreat, monthly recollections, and the practice of Marian devotions. The Collegio extends its work to ministering to the Filipino Migrant Workers by assisting their Chaplain in Rome.

- The building underwent much needed restoration and this was completed on December 15, 1993. The budget was L534,810,200. All the bishops contributed to the project and came up with almost one-third of the total cost. The rest came from the efforts of Cardinal Sin and other sources, like the friends of Collegio from the U.S.A.

#### 4 Commission on Vocations

*The Commission coordinates programs in the promotion, accompaniment and preservation of vocations to the priesthood, the consecrated life, the secular institutes and lay missionary groups.*

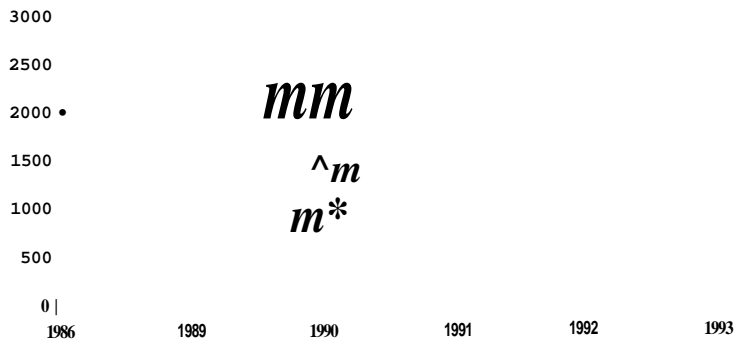
- Noteworthy for the period 1991-1992 was the realignment of the vocation recruitment procedures. Religious Congregations are screened before these are allowed to recruit vocations in the different regions/dioceses. The Directors of Vocations of the Philippines (DVP) Secretariat is the screening center.

- Regional visitations and consultations were conducted by the DVP National Team in the different ecclesiastical regions nationwide.

- The National Vocations Convention was held in Cagayan de Oro on April 4-8, 1993. The theme was: Vocation, Family and Local

Culture. 216 delegates from 51 dioceses and 86 religious congregations attended. Training Programs for Vocation Promoters were conducted. The following aspects were offered by the DVP National Office: a) skills; b) theological foundations; c) cultural dimensions; d) personhood; e) DVP structures; and f) spiritual directions and interviews.

Philippines: Growth Priestly  
Vocations



# Department of Lay Formation

## 1 Commission on the Laity

*The Commission studies and promotes a more effective implementation of the lay apostolate in accordance with the intent of Vatican II, using the Council of the Laity of the Philippines (CLP) as the promoting, implementing and coordinating body which will animate, facilitate, link and integrate all forms of christian lay activity of all lay apostolic movements, associations, organizations and pastoral councils at all levels, and coordinates with the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).*

• From a mere administrative, coordinating structure, CLP has emerged as a network of relationships by bringing the national leadership to the local level thru the following:

- the lay coordinators;
- the local councils of the laity;
- an advisory team consisting of experienced and professional lay leaders who were appointed to form a consultation forum on issues of vital importance;
- the opening of the National Secretariat to the service of member organizations and to activities of government and non-government organizations; and the Bishops' Institute for Lay Apostolate (BILA) - an experiential dialogue and sharing between and among the laity, priests, religious and bishops.

- Out of 489 total attendance in PCP-II, 156 were lay leaders. Participation of the laity in PCP-II was in general outstanding, and many of the insights of the council originated from laity interventions.

- The Commission coordinated with the Commission on Family and Life in the activities of the 1994 International Year of the Family. Foremost was the issuance of the CLP Statement entitled: "Defend the Sacredness of Human Life". The Commission also participated in the National Congress on the Family of Commission on Family and Life and in the UST Symposium on the International Year of the Family.

- During Congressional hearings of bills related to the family, lay groups under the umbrella of the CLP monitored legislation that posed a threat to family values. Lay groups were also active in challenging the constitutionality of the entire contraceptive birth deceleration program of the government before the Supreme Court.

- The CLP Administrative Council requested the President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the President of the Pontifical Council for the Family to endorse the establishment of the John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and the Family in Manila.

## 2 Commission on Biblical Apostolate

*The Commission animates, coordinates, supervises and promotes the biblical apostolate in the Philippines. It prepares biblical formation programs for priests, religious, seminarians and lay people.*

- March 6, 1992 marked the formal launching of the Catholic Bible Society (CBS). It is a foundation aimed at intensifying the publication and dissemination of Catholic bibles and promoting the awareness of the Bible especially among the youth in the country. Affiliated with the International Catholic Bible Society in Rome, it falls under the umbrella of the Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate.

- The Commission gives Basic Bible Seminars covering the following topics:

- understanding the Word of God in the Bible;

- knowing Jesus in the Bible;
- finding Mary in the Bible; and
- promoting the Biblical apostolate.

- The Commission has organized National Bible Workshops, Basic Bible Seminars and courses on Formation of Lay Ministers of the Word in line with the 1985 CBCP Joint Pastoral Letter on Biblical Apostolate. It publishes the magazine "Sharing God's Word" which is now on its sixth year of continuous publication. It published the "Teachings of the Popes (Bible Documents from Leo XIII to John Paul II)".

- The Commission collaborated and became the implementing committee in the Philippines of the Bishops' Institute for Biblical Apostolate (BIBA), under the auspices of the FABC Office of Evangelization.

### 3 Commission on Family and Life

*The Commission promotes the formation of christian families as churches-in-miniature, on whom the future of evangelization depends in great part, in accord with the apostolic exhortation "Familiaris Consortio". It provides for the formation of diocesan and other workers towards this one vision of the family and life apostolate.*

- Several bishops recognize the need for more time devoted to preaching about the value of human life by the priests. The challenge is to motivate priests to counteract the influence of government workers. In fact some church workers need to be persuaded into acceptance of the church doctrine on contraception.

- The most recent development plans of provinces and cities according to the local government code includes a strategy for the "good" of the family. It includes sterilization, and contraception, but not abortion. As a last item, it mentions prophylactic immunization for high population risk groups (women between ages 18 and 32). The health centers in the provinces are becoming anti-life centers.

- Family Life Value Orientation Seminars and orientation seminars on the Family Life Apostolate and Natural Family Planning are held by

the Commission throughout the year. More were given in 1993 on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*. The Commission networked with government and non-government organizations to lobby for family life issues in congress. In 1991 it collaborated with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), other government entities and non-government organizations in helping direct and orient the DSWD Family Life Bureau away from a population control mentality to one of holistic family development.

- The role played by the CBCP, especially through the Commission, in supporting the stand of the Holy See during the Cairo Conference was forcefully shown at the historic and very well attended Mass-rally for moral and spiritual principles at the Luneta on August 14, 1994. The Church panel appointed to dialogue with a government panel was able to forge a final statement of the Philippine delegation to Cairo that was satisfactory to the church.

- The Commission organized in 1993 regional meetings with the diocesan coordinators for the celebration of the International Year of the Family (IYF). It centered on the theme of the family as the heart of church and society. The main objective was to articulate the following:

- the good news about the family and through the family which serves as an occasion for incarnating the vision of PCP II and *Familiaris Consortio*;
- that the family is an inexhaustible wellspring of human resources for social transformation;
- that the future of evangelization rests to a large extent on the Church of the home.

The national launching of the IYF was held on December 11, 1993 with Alfonso Cardinal Trujillo, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, presiding.

The Commission organized the National Congress on the Family on Nov. 26-27, 1994 to culminate the activities of the IYF. Noteworthy was the fact that the celebrations and activities were not limited to the big cities and centers of population, but filtered down to the grassroots level through the parishes and Basic Ecclesial Communities.

- At the recommendation of the Commission the 65th Plenary Assembly in July 1992, approved to lengthen the Pre-Marriage Instruction Programs to better prepare engaged couples for Christian marriage; and to revise such Programs in terms of content and methodology.

#### **4 Commission on Missions**

*The Commission promotes awareness, encourages and assists missionary activity in the country in coordination with the objectives of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. It helps promote the activities of the Office of the Pontifical Mission Society of the Philippines as well as encourages lay missionary organizations and formation groups.*

- The Episcopal Commission on Missions and the Pontifical Missionary Societies are two independent entities but with the same objectives and therefore coordinate and work closely.

The Mission Society of the Philippines (MSP) General Assembly was held on January 25-31, 1991 at the Betania Retreat House in Tagaytay City, attended by 16 priest-delegates from the different mission stations and existing mission/service areas. It reassessed the life and direction of the society; evaluated the MSP statutes ratified by the General Assembly of January 1988, approved the proposed MSP Directory and adopted two important features:

- the associate membership program
- the inclusion of the Migrant Workers Apostolate as a new service area for Fil-Missionaries.
- The San Lorenzo Mission Society trains missionaries particularly for mainland China. The Philippine Lay Missionary Center in the Archdiocese of Davao conducted by the Maryknoll Fathers in training lay people for missionary work.
- Most theologates now include Missiology in their curriculum. The P.I.M.E. Fathers run a school for missionaries called EUNTES in Zamboanga City. Schools of Evangelization have been established in many dioceses, one of which is the inter-cultural school in Lucena City open to Asian students of Evangelization.



- The Chairman of the Commission has appealed to all to continue supporting the MSP since "it is the fruit of the bishops' awareness almost 30 years ago about the Philippine Church becoming a missionary Church."

## 5 Commission on Youth

*The Commission undertakes studies and periodic research on the current needs and aspirations of the Filipino youth. It draws up policies and proposes formational and pastoral programs that may be relevant to the needs of the regions and dioceses.*

- The National Secretariat for Youth Apostolate (NSYA) holds dialogues with the network of grassroots communicators, which is a potential force to enhance the system of communication in Youth Ministry.

- A meeting of all Youth Organizations on June 10, 1991 led to the establishment of the Federation of National Youth Organizations. Twenty-five organizations are presently affiliated.

- A National Youth Congress on Evangelization and the Bible was held in Manila in January 1993 in response to the resolution of the 7th National Workshop for the Biblical Apostolate. It was tied up with the celebration of the Asian Congress on Evangelization which likewise stressed the role of the Bible in Evangelization.

- In response to the call of the Holy Father for spiritual preparation on the occasion of World Youth Day '95 and the continuing implementation of PCP-II, the National Secretariat for the Youth Apostolate (NSYA) prepared the program of spiritual and formation activities to be implemented in the dioceses. The activities proved very productive. For follow-up activities, the NSYA aims to upgrade its services and to focus on formation and the Youth Ministry Master Plan.

The World Youth Day (WYD) preparation was spearheaded by the Commission's Chairman and its Executive Secretary. The tenth World Youth Day was launched on April 22, 1994 in Roxas City followed by a Biennial National Youth Coordinating Council Conference on April 23-24, 1994 with 350 Youth Ministers in attendance. Youth delegates had a meeting in Rome with the Pontifical Council for the Laity regarding

the preparations for the World Youth Day. The Jubilee Cross was handed to them on Palm Sunday and made its spiritual journey to various cities and parishes all over the country.

The Youth Jubilee Cross and the pre-WYD activities became opportunities for strengthening the youth ministry programs in the local level. WYD '95 in Manila gathered the biggest crowd since the birth of WYD in 1985.

# Department of Social Services and Communications

## 1 Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace

*The Commission promotes and conducts studies on fostering social justice, encourages movements animated by christian principles and warns against associations with unchristian orientation. It promotes social action projects for the benefit of the poor, deprived and the oppressed, and continually establishes and builds a firm solidarity with God's people.*

- In 1992, the Commission's Justice and Peace Department conducted Fact Finding Missions in 14 dioceses to promote and protect human rights; interceded through solidarity letters on behalf of victim's political repression and injustice, held and attended seminars and symposia on issues ranging from ecological destruction, human rights, Local Government Code, women migration and sex tourism.

- The Commission's Relief and Rehabilitations Department continues to give direct assistance to calamity victims. Emergency disbursements for food, medicine and livelihood and shelter programs.

- The Share and Care Apostolate for Poor Settlers (SCAPS), a separate agency under the Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace, caters to the urban poor. SCAPS has projects in Manila, Antipolo, Cebu, Bacolod, and Davao.

- The Commission restructured its offices in 1994.
1. The National Office defined a new set of programs for 1994-1996. There are now 4 major programs, namely:

- Policy Studies
- Human Resource Development
- Research and Development
- Promotions and Publications

There are two special programs:

- Alay Kapwa (Lenten fund campaign for the poor)
- Relief and Rehabilitation

The National Secretariat in Social Action (NASSA) Network is concentrating quite strongly on the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs). This is not to take over the formation and work of BECs in the dioceses but to try to push the Social Apostolate as an integral part of BECs.

2. Parallel to the National Office's restructuring, the Regional Secretariats have realigned their programs and services. Included in the their programs are:

- Peace Advocacy Program;
- Socio-economic Development Program;
- Development Education Program;
- Disaster Response Program;
- Information Management Program.

- 2.1 The Luzon Secretariat for Social Action (LUSSA) introduced and promoted the new NASSA thrust on BECs to Diocesan Social Action Centers (DSAC) personnel. It assisted individual DSACs in developing comprehensive programs in line with the new directions and goals. It also became involved in the

Commission's anti-illegal recruitment campaign and continued its regular relief and rehabilitation work in areas affected by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption and in typhoon-ravaged areas.

- 2.2 The Visayas Secretariat for Social Action (VISSA) conducted a research study on socio-economic work of the Visayas Social Action Centers, gave various trainings and seminars, extended technical and planning assistance, provided relief and rehabilitation to typhoon victims, participated in peace efforts, and maintained linkages with local and international organizations. A Visayas Social Action General Assembly (VISAGA) was held from September 27 to October 1, 1993. It formulated an ecology networking plan among the dioceses.
- 2.3 The Mindanao Secretariat for Social Action (MISSA) thrust and primary activities are Organizational Development Program Building, Technical Assistance to Dioceses, and Networking. It extended technical assistance on organic farming and alternative construction materials. It conducted a survey on the diocesan profile in Mindanao, and a research on Disaster Management Program in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS).

### 3. Other National Office Activities:

- CBCP-NCCP Joint Peace Consultation

A Joint Peace Consultation between the CBCP and the National Council of Churches of the Philippines (NCCP) was held in May 1994. It decided to form an ad hoc Joint Peace Committee composed of six members, three members each from the CBCP and the NCCP. The first thing which the Committee decided on in order to push the peace effort was to write all the warring parties in the Philippines, namely, the NDF-NPA, the MNLF and the Military rebel groups, asking them to "pursue all efforts to heed the peoples's call to peace." A letter of appeal to all the leaders of asking them to sign the letter of appeal to the warring parties.

- Electoral Reform Caucus

The Commission was a participant in the Electoral Reform Caucus held on May 25, 1994. Among the initiatives undertaken was to push for the enactment into the law of the entire proposed 1993 Election Code.

Bishop Fernando Capalla sits as one of the two representatives of the private sector in the National Unification Council (NUC) established by President Ramos.

- The following were the activities of the Commission in 1994-1995:

- A. BEC Organization and Formation - The research entitled: "A Baseline Study on BECs in the Philippines as Inspired by the Philippine Catholic Church", was started in May 1994 and finished in May 1995. Serving as a bench-mark study of BEC-related activities, the research gives a general information of BECs in terms of number, names, origin, groups established and supporting them, thrust and training.
- B. Peace Advocacy - This is a continuance of an ecumenical work for peace started 2 years ago. The thrust now is to build up a "peace constituency", i.e. to allow the people to give their input in the peace process.
- C. Capacity-building - The Human Resource Development Unit of NASSA has initiated the following:
  1. the finalization and submission of the 3-year HRD project proposal to Caritas Neerlandica;
  2. training needs assessment of all secretariat personnel and the formulation of 3-year Network Organizational and Training Program;
  3. an on-going data banking of information on network personnel, among others. Capability-building activities

have also been conducted by the Regional Secretariats for their staff.

- "Project Vote Care (Voters' Organization, Training and Education towards Clean, Authentic and Responsible Elections)": undertaken by NASSA and its regional secretariats, the project "was organized in response to the CBCP's call to take decisive but non-partisan role" in the May 1992 polls. The project mobilized 300,000 volunteers to monitor electoral processes to insure a clean and honest election. Vote Care was also supported by the other CBCP Commissions, Church groups and other aggrupations.

Vote Care succeeded in carrying out its objectives. Moreover, it has experienced significant breakthroughs and realizations. Some of these are: Vote Care became a venue for cooperation and collaboration of multisectoral groups and non-government organization; unity between Christians and Muslims; and it elicited a spirit of volunteerism among the laity as an expression of integral evangelization.

NASSA recommended that Vote Care be retained "as the Church's involvement in electoral processes and national and local governance."

## 2 Commission on Social Communication and Mass Media

*The Commission makes studies and recommendation on the effective use of mass media of communications for the apostolate of the Church. It develops and promotes Christian formation of public opinion.*

- The means at the disposal of the Church, in addition to commercial radio and TV stations and newspapers, are:

- 43 Catholic radio stations on the air;
- 3 small Catholic TV channels are now on the air in Tawi-Tawi, Sorsogon, and Bacolod; and
- a network of Catholic printing presses and diocesan newspaper all over the nation.

The Church, therefore, has the largest potential reach in the country. With 43 radio stations it has gained the following stature:

- . it is the biggest potential network in the Philippines;

- it has credibility;
- it has the biggest potential for clout;
- it has the greatest number of institutions for linking, i.e., schools, church organizations; and it has the biggest potential in helping the poor since the Church has a strong influence on them.

- The 43 radio stations carried live and canned proceedings of World Youth Day '95 and the Papal Visit. The radio coverage was completely satisfactory for all the events.

- The Commission and National Office of Mass Media undertook or participated in the following activities:

- National Workshop to prepare a medial plan for the implementation of PCP II;
- Golden Jubilee Celebration of the Family Rosary Crusade, September 8 - December 12, 1992;
- Satellite Telecasts from the Vatican;
- Press Conferences for CBCP;
- Preparation for the International Year of the Family, 1994;
- Preparation for the national retreats for lay people and for priests, Manila, Cebu, Tagaytay, November 1993;
- seminars on Media awareness
- Radio Dramas: daily and weekly
- TV Commercial on Ecology
- TV Commercial for Caritas

- On July 14 and 15, 1993 a National Meeting of Communicators was held at the Lay Formation Center, San Carlos Pastoral Formation Complex, to plan a unified national campaign thru the media to implement PCP II. The Commission requested the Bishops to send to the meeting their diocesan directors for Mass Media. The International Catholic Association for Radio and TV (UNDA) meeting was also scheduled on the same dates.

- The Commission spearheaded the production of 5 excellent video lessons:

- The power of media,



- Gospel values vis-a-vis Media Values,
- The Power of Advertising,
- The Inside Story of Advertising, and
- The Media Baby.

- The Commission also promoted the training of young boys and girls in a program called Core of Leaders for Morals and Media (COOLMM).

### 3 Commission on Prisoners' Welfare

*The Commission studies and evaluates all matters pertaining and related to the members of the prison society in general, and recommends to the Conference such other issues that may require its decisions. It generates public awareness of the plight of the prison society and encourages active involvement in prison apostolate.*

- Being the poorest of the poor, with no one interceding for them, prisoners merit the attention of the church, especially those who have stayed in prison beyond their sentences or those who have not been sentenced after many years of imprisonment. These are among the beneficiaries of the Commission's work.

Programs implemented by the Commission include: Seminar and Consultation with Chaplains of Bureaus of Corrections: Training of pastoral workers; recollection for staff and National Bureau of Prisons inmate Church Workers; Pastoral Workers' Program; Catechetical Program; Social Services Program and Para-legal Program.

- The Commission has been conducting seminars to promote and organize the Volunteers in Prison (VIPS). The Commission organized the First General Assembly of Volunteers in Prison Service (VIPS) in October 1993 in Antipolo Rizal. It was attended by 131 delegates from 27 dioceses who shared their experiences ministering to the prisoners. The Assembly inspired and strengthened the commitment of 31 units to continue in this difficult ministry in line with PCP-II to be a community of disciples at the service of the Church of the poor.

- The commission publishes a Newsletter, SUMMONS, to give information on the prison ministry.

- A seminar-workshop for the Bureau of Corrections Chaplains was held on February 1-5, 1993, during which they formulated their vision-mission statement and action plan for the next three years. In 1994, direct services which were rendered through the Chaplaincy office of the Bureau of Correction and through the VIPS units included the following: Para-legal services, educational assistance, medical assistance, bible project and gift-giving project.

- The Commission is working with different groups to seek structural and institutional changes in the penal system. The Commission campaigned and lobbied with other groups against the reimposition of the death penalty and is working for the creation of a separate institution for youth offenders and the restoration of the juvenile court. It is spearheading the coalition against the reimposition of the Death Penalty and the Philippine Action for Youthful Offenders (PAYO).

#### 4 Commission for Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People

*The Commission makes studies and initiates measures to protect and promote the spiritual, moral and material welfare of migrants, refugees, tourists, seafarers, and other people on the move. It executes the norms given by the Apostolic See and those approved by the Conference regarding the religious and moral needs of people on the move.*

- In Title V, Art. 23 and 56, the PCP II gives special attention to the Filipino migrant. There are two aspects to the pastoral care of migrants and overseas workers, namely:

- Social assistance or human promotion. It includes assistance in the protection of human rights, safeguards against abuse, illegal or fake recruiters, counseling, etc. Due to the large number of migrants and overseas workers, the Commission asked the help of other agencies such as: LUSSA, VISSA, and MISSA.
- Evangelization (catechesis) and sacramental ministry. Filipino priests and nuns, especially the religious have been sent to

take pastoral care of overseas workers and migrants. Somehow Filipino migrants have also become evangelizers to other countries. But evangelized Filipino migrants presupposes an evangelized people.

- The Committees/agencies that comprise the Commission are:
  - The Coordinating Office of the Episcopal Commission on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ECPCMIP);
  - Center for Overseas Workers;
  - The Apostolate of the Sea;
  - The Apostolate of the Air;
  - Chaplaincy for Japanese Tourists and Migrants;
  - The Center for Assistance to Displaced Persons (Vietnamese Refugees), and
  - The Pastoral Center for Tourism.

• The Center for Overseas Workers (COW) has organized a direct assistance program to migrant workers by coordinating with the Philippine Overseas Employment Authority (POEA) in the Pre-Evangelization Orientation Sessions. It also organized the Anti-Illegal Recruitment campaign, providing spiritual formation for the workers and their families, by giving instructions to about 45,000 departing overseas contract workers (OCWs) and helping about 431 persons in various needs.

• The Apostolate of the Sea (AOS) remains vigilant over the plight of sea-based OCWs, in the wake of many ship accidents, illegal recruitment of fresh graduates of maritime institutes, illegal deployment of and violations against poor fishworkers, the slow justice system frustrating seamen and fishworkers, the inability of government to obtain justice for seabased OCWs killed by foreign nationals and the stoppage of the value formation seminar for seamen and their wives.

• The Commission launched a nationwide Anti-Illegal Recruitment Consciousness Year Program July 17, 1994. It was held simultaneously in Vigan, Naga, Cebu and Davao. With the aim of putting up a massive information drive against illegal recruitment, the program attracted wide media coverage and the attention of the government.

- The execution of one of our overseas contract workers has focused the church's attention on the social phenomenon of migrant workers that we share with other third world countries. From the point of view of the teachings of the Church, the welfare not only of the contract workers themselves but also of their families left behind are a key pastoral concern for the church. A Pastoral Letter was issued to fulfill our prophetic duty as pastors especially of the marginalized among our people.

- The Preventive Education on Migration Seminar was given to already more than 3,000 students and teachers in Metro-Manila, Cagayan de Oro, and Kalibo.

In May 1993, some 5,000 Filipino migrant workers in Europe converged in Rome for an audience with Pope John Paul II. Elated by the encounter, the Holy Father exhorted them to remain steadfast to their Christian faith as he also reminded them to nurture their family, a vital cell which often bears the burden of migration. Bishop Gabriel Reyes attended in his capacity as Chairman of the Commission.

- A five-year medium-range plan was made to address the problem of scarcity of priests who will work in the Filipino-Chinese parishes and schools. Arrangements will be made with local ordinaries so that priests for this specialized apostolate can be trained in Taiwan. A distinctive approach is used for the elderly Filipino-Chinese who are comfortable only with either Fookienese or Mandarin dialects. In view of this a new nuptial mass and funeral wake in Fookienese (Amoy) have been printed. Pre-sacramental catechesis (available in print and in tapes) with annotations have also been translated to Fookienese to facilitate a better understanding of the sacraments.

- The Commission has prepared priests and sisters going abroad to minister to overseas contract workers (OCW), in coordination with sending and receiving churches.

## 5 Commission on Indigenous Peoples

*The Commission works for and with indigenous peoples in their efforts to: 1) secure justice for themselves; 2) protect their ancestral lands; and 3) preserve their cultural heritage. It fosters among the Christian*

*majority a greater awareness and appreciation of the indigenous peoples and thus helps lessen deep-seated prejudices about them.*

- The Indigenous Cultural Community Solidarity Program was launched in several parishes/shrines during the celebration of Tribal Filipino Sunday on 11 October 1991. This resulted in donations of cash and goods for the Aeta families in Palayan City. For the continued relief and rehabilitation of displaced Aeta families, Task Force Mt. Pinatubo was formed to gather data and information on their situation, put forward.

- The Study Group for the Promotion of Indigenous People's Rights was formed to sensitize the public on the dreams and aspirations of indigenous people. The group is composed of dedicated and knowledgeable advocates from academe and institutions who could help substantiate and activate the issues concerning indigenous people.

- The following projects and activities were launched:
  - relief and rehabilitation activities for indigenous peoples affected by the Mt. Pinatubo eruption
  - formation of study groups
  - publication of Tribal Forum
  - the holding of a national convention
  - exposures
  - packaging of project proposals
  - staff development
  - seminars, etc.

These projects and activities were geared towards the formation of pastoral support base in the parishes and universities and toward internal organizational advancement.

- In its advocacy program, the Commission has followed up legislation in Congress concerning indigenous people and ancestral domain, and established coordination and linkages with other non-governmental organizations especially for the purpose of meeting the targets of the Indigenous Cultural Community Solidarity Program (ICCSP).

- The Commission held a National Consultation and Convention in September 1994. It was attended by 124 participants representing

Tribal Filipino Apostolates and various indigenous communities. The thrust was on sustainable development with a critical discussion on the Medium Term development Plan of the country, the Uruguay Round of GATT, political repression, and militarization policies affecting indigenous people and ancestral domain.

## **6 Commission on Health Care**

*The Commission spreads, explains and defends the teachings of the Church on the subject of health care and encourages their penetration into health care practices as well as among its workers. It establishes forums for discussions on current medico-moral problems in different health care associations and movements in the country.*

- The Commission organized conferences and conventions on AIDS, Deaf Care and Health Care Ministry. Pilgrimages to the sick were organized in many dioceses. Lenten retreats were held for the spiritual and moral formation of health care workers.
- The Clinical Pastoral Education Program is continuously made available at Makati Medical Center, National Kidney Institute and the Philippine Heart Center. This program guides the participants in the art of caring in different pastoral settings.
- The Commission endorsed the book *Where is Love?* by Fr. Jose Dimaculangan. It provides the necessary understanding and skills in the art of ministering to the sick, the aged, the disabled and the dying.
- The Wounded Healer Foundation, Inc. is preparing a directory of Health Care Workers and Medical Services in Metro Manila, which will assist people in locating medical services.
- Regional conventions for Diocesan Health Care Coordinators of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao were held with delegates from the different ecclesiastical jurisdictions. The objective was to impart the necessary knowledge, skills and spirituality to equip the diocesan pastoral health care coordinators all over the country for the following functions:
  - from diocesan/parish pastoral care ministry based on the PCP-II mandate;

- prepare the diocesan/parish celebrations of the World Day of the Sick as directed by Pope John Paul II;
- initiate the network or linkages of health care resources and services of the church, government, non-government organizations and private individuals.

# Department of External Relations

## 1 Permanent Committee on Public Affairs

*The Committee serves as a liaison body of individual bishops, other CBCP Commissions and the Conference itself with the government. It provides a forum for discussion regarding matters that affect Church-State relations and discusses appropriate official statements for dissemination.*

- Shortly before the Cairo Conference on Population and Development, the Committee worked on a Letter to the President and the Pastoral Statement to the Filipino People alerting them to the fact that the draft document of the Cairo Conference was proposing a new philosophy, an ideology, new life-styles that touch on the very nature and meaning of sexuality, marriage and the family.

- The Committee also worked on the draft of the Pastoral Statement on the Reimposition of the Death Penalty for Heinous Crimes. The CBCP, as a result, firmly stated its opposition to the restoration of the death penalty, proposing other means to address the root causes of criminality.

- The Committee also worked on the Pastoral Statement on the Value Added Tax wherein the bishops urged a thorough review of R.A. 7716 and asked that "...our people be consulted and informed about its provisions so that any inequitable aspect may be eliminated, and the consent of the people obtained."



- Members of the Committee acted as watchdogs of the House Bill banning undue ecclesiastical influence in the electoral process. The House Bill proposed an exception cleverly crafted to favor the Iglesia ni Kristo and the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association (PBMA). Bishop Bacani intervened so that an amendment was made stating that "nothing in the Code shall prevent any religion, denomination or sect or their leaders from exercising and/or protecting religious freedom in the matter of suffrage." Some denominations lobbied against it. Eventually, the House Bill did not prosper.

- The Committee plans to appoint two liaison people for each house of Congress to monitor and to lobby for Church Bills that will promote the welfare of Filipino Christians.

## **2 Mixed Commission on Mutual Relations Between Bishops and Religious**

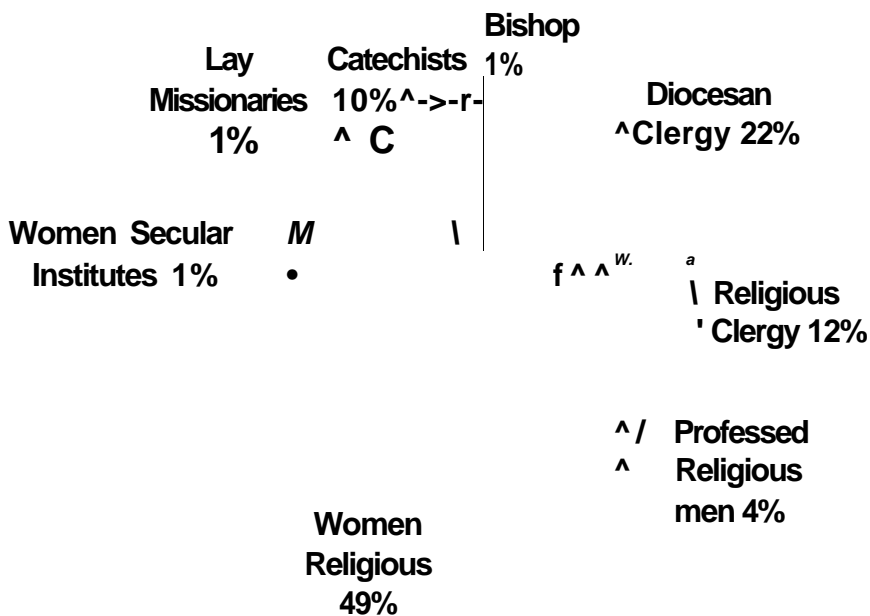
*The Commission generates communications between the Conference and the Association of Major Religious Superiors of Men and Women in the Philippines. It fosters mutual esteem and close collaboration between the bishops and religious working in the country to achieve unity and harmony as demanded by our apostolate.*

- The Commission participated in the Asian Consultation on Consecrated Life held in Hua Hin, Thailand on May 9-14, 1994. Attended by about 50 bishops, priests, sisters and brothers from 12 East Asian Countries, the theme of this pre-Synod Consultation was: "Bishops and Religious partners in Mission."

- The Chairman of this Commission attended the Combined Assembly of Men and Women Major Religious Superiors in Cebu on July 13-15, 1993 and the Annual Convention of Major Religious Superiors of men in Cagayan de Oro City on January 11-13, 1994.

- Three members of the Commission attended the Synod of Bishops on Consecrated Life and its Role in the Church and in the World held in Rome in October 1994.

## 1993 Apostolic Work Force



## **Other Matters from the Permanent Council**

- In 1992 the Permanent Council tasked the National Appellate Matrimonial Tribunal to establish a section therein specifically to process Cases of Dispensation from Obligations arising from Priestly Ordination. Only those cases expressly endorsed by the competent Bishop are processed.

- The first seminar on financial management for all diocesan Treasurers and financial staff members was held in 1993. Upon recommendation of the Permanent Council, the 67th Plenary Assembly approved to add to the functions of the CBCP Treasurer's Office that of organizing these seminars every three years.

- In November 1994, the Council created an Ad Hoc Committee on Women which studied the Draft Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women organized by the United Nations in September 1995. The Committee also studied the recommendations of NGOs on Women in Development related to the Conference. It undertook consultations and consensus building among church-based NGOs and mobilized a coalition of women to lobby and make interventions in the governmental and non-governmental sessions in Beijing in September 1995. Through the CBCP official representative in the Philippine delegation and the members of this Committee, the voice of the Church in the Philippines was made known in Beijing.

- In the light of the discussions on the issue of the Catholic laity's non-partisan or partisan involvement in the political electoral process after the 1995 election, the conference unanimously approved the following directives (guidelines) for the guidance of the clergy, religious, and laity:

1. That the laity shall be encouraged to participate in the political electoral processes, impressing upon them that it is their duty;
2. That the laity be encouraged to discern on whether to be non-partisan or partisan in their political participation; the Catholic lay people who opt to go non-partisan are encouraged to join the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), Voter's Organization Training and Education towards Clean, Authentic, and Responsible Elections (VOTECARE), National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL), or other diocesan non-partisan groups, engaged especially in voters' education. On the other hand, those who opt to go partisan may organize themselves or join any other such groups. However, they shall speak on their own as groups of Catholics and not in the name of the Catholic Church.
3. That the task of the Church Hierarchy through the bishops, clergy, and religious is to give groups on-going religious education and moral formation needed in their tasks of involvement; and
4. That those who opt to be involved actively in the political processes may choose their candidates or form their line-ups and even actively campaign for them - - assuming, however, full responsibility for their choices, while allowing and respecting the choices of other responsible groups.

- The Permanent Council recommended the creation of the Office for Bioethics and to place it under the Episcopal Commission on the Doctrine of the Faith. This was approved by the Bishop's Assembly.

The sphere of competence of the Office encompasses issues that have to do with the practice of medicine and a host of other life-issues, including abortion and fetal research, contraception, sterilization, organ transplant, human experimentation, genetic engineering and reproductive technologies, among others.

Its general objectives are: "... To act as an advisory body to the CBCP regarding decisions and opinions to be taken in matters related to bioethics, and to disseminate and defend where necessary the teaching of the Church on bioethical issues, especially in the Philippine context."

## Cases and Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

### MARRIED RELIGIOUS

*Canon 643,I states: "The following are invalidly admitted to the novitiate:...; 2. a spouse, while the marriage lasts". It is clear then, that a person who is validly married cannot enter the religious state, as long as his/her marriage subsists. An existing valid marriage, whether consummated or not, is an impediment to be admitted validly to the novitiate, which is the necessary requirement to become religious.*

*This impediment, being of ecclesiastical origin, can certainly be dispensed by the Church. But three questions can be raised, namely:*

- 1. What happens with the existing marriage when a married person is allowed to become religious? Is the marriage annulled?;*
- 2. If marriage is not annulled, can the spouse who does not become religious contemplate another marriage?;*
- 3. If the married person, who becomes religious with a dispensation, decides, for one reason or another, to abandon the religious state and become again a simple lay Christian, is bound to resume his/her married life again?*

*A Priest*

1. The answer to the first question by our consultant Priest is: the valid marriage constituting the impediment to enter the religious state is not annulled. When the impediment of being married is dispensed in order to enter the religious state, marriage perseveres and continues existing. Only its being an impediment to enter the religious state is dispensed. Its being a sacrament *in facto esse* does not cease to exist.

The Church's law clearly points out when a marriage is dissolved. Canon 1141 says: "A ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or by any cause other than death". And canon 1142 establishes that "a non consummated marriage between baptized persons or between a baptized party and an unbaptized party can be dissolved by the Roman Pontiff for a just reason, at the request of both parties or of either party, even if the other is unwilling".

As our consultant says, a validly married person is prohibited by the Church in canon 643,1 to enter the religious state. The reason behind this ecclesiastical prohibition is clear. Marital rights and obligations are a hindrance and obstacle to achieve the goal of religious perfection, which is objectively higher than simple Christian perfection sought in the married state.

How is it that notwithstanding this Church's prohibition, there has been and still there are married persons in the religious state? They are true religious and they continue being truly married persons too. To explain how this fact can happen we should say that these married persons once they become religious may not, of course, enjoy the marital rights nor are bound by marital obligations as before. In pronouncing their religious vows they have freely waived and renounced their marital rights in order to practice the religious vows they have professed when they entered the religious state. Their marriage, as we have said before, continues existing, as long as both spouses are still alive.

With the foregoing observation it is easy to understand how these married persons are dispensed from the impediment and allowed to enter the religious state. Aside from the above clarification, it should be noted also that married persons, who want to enter the religious state, have to declare before obtaining such dispensation that no natural obligation flowing from their marriage, towards their children, if any, remains unfulfilled, such as the proper care for their growth and sustenance, as

well as their intellectual, moral and religious education. No dispensation to enter the religious state is given to any married person if there is no guarantee that the fulfillment of these paternal obligations is properly ascertained. Likewise, no married person will be allowed to become religious if the other spouse is in need of temporal care and support. If the other spouse, for instance, is sick or handicapped, he/she cannot be left by the spouse who wants to become religious without an assurance that he/she will be properly taken care of, for instance by accomodating him/her in an asylum or residence established for old or disabled persons. This kind of obligations are imposed by natural law.

This dispensation to enter the religious state can be obtained from the Holy See both when marriage is only ratified and when it has already been consummated. Likewise, it can be given to only one of the spouses or to both of them, as long as the fulfillment of the obligation mentioned before has already been satisfied. Needless to say, that the agreement or consent of both spouses is absolutely necessary.

2. The answer to the second question of the consultant is in the negative. The spouse who gave his/her consent to the other spouse to enter the religious state, as mentioned before, cannot in any way contemplate another marriage. His/her previous marriage has not been nullified. It continues existing with its essential properties of unity and indissolubility.

3. The third question is: if the married religious person decides, for one reason or another, to abandon his/her religious vocation and becomes a simple lay Christian again, is he/she bound to resume the marital life?

Three different situations should be contemplated and solved in this respect, namely:

a) When only one spouse enters the religious state and later on abandons the religious life;

b) When both spouses enter the religious state and one of them abandons the religious life;

c) When both enter the religious state and both abandon the religious life.



Let us see how each case should be solved.

a) When only one of the spouses enters the religious state and later on abandons, for one reason or another such life, he/she is bound to restore the marital life with the other spouse. Their marriage was not dissolved when he was allowed to enter the religious state. It continues subsisting. Only in the two cases dealt with in canons 1141 and 1142 transcribed in n. 1, such marriage is dissolved.

b) When both spouses enter the religious state, obviously both are bound to live faithfully the religious life by observing the three religious vows and other religious obligations. Their marital rights and obligations were implicitly waived when they made their religious profession, assuming instead the religious observances for the sake of the kingdom of God. Marital rights and obligations are, so to say, dormant while they are bound by the religious vows.

Being human beings, however, they can change their minds and decide to leave the religious life, becoming again simple lay Christians. This can happen to either of them or to both. If only one of them decides to leave the religious institute, he/she cannot expect that the other will follow his/her example because they are spouses. In entering the religious life they have waived their marital rights and been dispensed from the obligations to seek religious perfection. This religious perfection binds them individually, not as a couple. No condition that they might put surreptitiously to the contrary binds them. Hence, one's failure to continue living as religious may not be considered as a valid reason by the other to follow his/her example leaving the religious life too.

c) If both of them decide for their own individual and personal reasons to leave the religious life, they should remember that their marriage is still subsisting. Hence they have to resume their marital life, as before entering the religious life.

Summing up what has been explained, we can say the following.

A married person cannot be admitted to the religious state, unless he/she is allowed by the Holy See. The Pontifical permission to allow a married person to become religious does not annul the marriage. It merely removes the prohibition existing in the Church's law to this effect.

A married person who legally enters the religious state, continues being married. Marital rights and obligations are implicitly waived and dispensed in making the religious profession by which the married person assumes the obligation to pursue religious perfection, which is objectively higher than Christian perfection attainable in the married state.

If, for one reason or another, the married person cannot continue being religious and decides to go back to the world as a simple lay Christian, he/she must resume the married life, as before entering the religious life, if the other spouse is still alive.

## CONSECRATION OF THE SACRAMENTAL SPECIES

*The following case occurred on Christmas Eve last year. Our church was packed with faithful. We prepared enough hosts, we believed, to be consecrated during the concelebrated Mass; but they were unfortunately insufficient. So one of the concelebrants distributing Holy Communion, seeing the long lines waiting for Holy Communion, called the sacristan and told him to bring to the altar another ciborium with unconse'crated hosts. The priest went to the altar, pronounced the words of the consecration of bread and distributed the newly consecrated Hosts among the other ministers.*

*Was the priest right or wrong in consecrating the hosts at the time of Communion?*

*A young Priest*

The answer to the consultant's question is given in canon 927, which reads as follows: "It is absolutely wrong, even in urgent and extreme necessity, to consecrate one element without the other, or even to consecrate both outside the Eucharistic celebration".

Two different things are contained in this norm of the Church, namely:

a) it is never allowed by the Church to consecrate one species without the other;

b) nor can ever be justified to consecrate both elements outside the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

It is true that the valid consecration of the bread does not depend on the consecration of the wine and viceversa. Both consecrations would be valid, if performed independently. However, the prohibition of the Church to consecrate one element without the other is emphatically clear: "It is absolutely wrong, even in urgent and extreme necessity, to consecrate one element without the other... outside the Eucharistic celebration". This means that in no case it is lawful to do so. The reason is the following.

The Lord commanded the Apostles to do in His memory what He has done, i.e. the consecration of both species, the bread first, then the wine, commemorating His real Sacrifice on the Cross. And the Church, faithful interpreter of the Lord's will, has issued in a clear way the above norm on the matter, not leaving its performance at the will of each individual priest.

Nor can it be said that the priest in the present case consecrated the bread during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, since he did it during the Holy Communion. The Church's law contained in canon 927 is clear: the consecration of one or both sacramental species cannot be performed outside the Holy Sacrifice Mass, meaning outside the most important part of the Holy Sacrifice called CONSECRATION.

We should bear in mind that the essence of the Mass Sacrifice consists in the Consecration of both sacramental species, to feed the souls of the faithful in Holy Communion. The traditional Theology teaches us that the essence of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is in the Consecration of both sacramental species in order to feed the souls of the faithful. Without Transubstantiation, the Eucharistic Sacrifice is *not possible*. *Even the priest's Communion, though necessary, is considered as a necessary integral part of the Holy Mass Sacrifice*. "Holy Communion, said Pope Pius XII, pertains to the integrity of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to the partaking of the august Sacrament; but while it is obligatory for the priest who says the Mass, it is only earnestly recommended to the faithful" (*Mediator Dei*, 115).

The right solution to the case would have been to have consecrated in such occasion a greater number of hosts than the number of communicants expected. After all, the remaining consecrated Hosts could be reserved in the tabernacle for subsequent Communions. But to do what the priest in the case did is absolutely wrong and consequently seriously prohibited.

# **Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers**

## **January-February 1997**

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**EFREN O. RIVERA, O.P.**

**January 1, 1997**

**SOLEMNITY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD, Cycle A,B,C**

**LUKE 2:16-21**

**THEY FOUND MARY AND THE BABY**

### **A. STUDY OF THE TEXT/BIBLIARASAL STEP 3**

The first of January is one week after Christmas and in the liturgy it is the *octave* of the birth of Christ. An "octave" prolongs the celebration of a feast, sometimes with a little shift in focus, as in the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. The Christmas Solemnity had focused on the baby, and it is now time to focus on his mother.

Five personalities have roles in the story of Luke 2:16-21: (1) The shepherds, (2) Mary, (3) Joseph, (4) Jesus, and (5) all who heard the shepherds and were astonished. • It is suggested that readers identify themselves with the last mentioned personalities. The shepherds, too, deserve special attention from readers who want to apply the lessons of this story in their lives. The author purposely emphasizes their actions: (1) they went in haste, (2) they found, (3) saw, (4) understood, (5) glorified and praised God. • Readers are invited to imitate these actions.

*Focus Points.* (1) In v. 16, which describes what the shepherds found at Bethlehem, Mary is placed first, even though the sign that the shepherds were to look for is "an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes" lying in a manger (v. 12).

(2) Mary, the first to know about the Incarnation of the Son of God, is portrayed in this story as a silent observer. It is the shepherds who cannot keep quiet — they who have had little time to think deeply about the mystery.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Mary is the woman who was with Jesus when he was found by the shepherds. Jesus was not found as an abandoned child as some protestant fundamentalist preachers and their followers would want. Since this fact cannot be denied, these fundamentalists turn to Mk 3:31-35 / Mt 12:46-50 / Lk 8:19-21 to claim that at that point in his ministry Jesus repudiated his mother. They fail to realize that, had Jesus really done this, he would not be worthy of people's respect. Jesus himself teaches that repudiating one's father or mother is a sin that cries to heaven, see Mt 15:3-9; Mk 7:9-13.

What is clear in the marcan passage carelessly interpreted by fundamentalists is that: "whoever does the will of God is brother and sister and mother" to Jesus. This means that Jesus gives value to a kinship that is not based merely on blood or legal ties.

Did Mary have this kind of kinship with Jesus? She certainly did. No one can offer any proof that Mary ever disobeyed the will of God. In fact no other person besides Jesus himself was more obedient to God than she was.

The more the fundamentalists reject the role of Mary in human salvation, the more we should reject them and vigorously assert that without Mary, the shepherds would not have found the "sign" given to them by the angel — the "baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" (Lk 2:12). For in the first place it was Mary who cooperated with God so that His Son would become a baby. Secondly, it was she

who "wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger" (Lk 2:7).

*1.1 Pointer for sharing.* The early preaching of the Twelve Apostles did not include the story of Christmas. But when the evangelist Luke was preparing to write his account of the Good News of Jesus Christ, many Christians were already asking about how Christ was born. Luke's research on this led him to Mary, who was his main source for what we now know as the Christmas story. Luke's encounter with Mary made him a better Christian — more balanced in his faith in Jesus as both God and man.

*Have you been like Luke — someone who first got to know only about the grown-up Jesus Christ and then learned about Christmas and the infancy of Christ from his Mother? Or have you been like the shepherds who were told to look for a baby but found both the baby and his mother?*

2. Mary treasured the words (of people favored with revelation) and the happenings (surrounding Christ's birth) in her heart and reflected on them. By telling us about this, Luke again presents Mary as the FIRST CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE. Previous presentations were the story of her "fiat" at the annunciation (Lk 1:38) and her visit to Elizabeth marked by the "MAGNIFICAT" song (Lk 1:39-56).

*2.2 Pointer for sharing.* When Luke interviewed Mary about the birth of Jesus he realized that she had been a disciple of Christ longer than himself and even longer than the Twelve Apostles. For this reason, in his Christmas story, he draws a contrast between the quiet, mature faith of Mary and the exuberant beginner's faith of the shepherds.

*Are you just a beginner in your Christian faith, or have you started to reach the maturity of faith manifested by Mary in the Christmas story?*

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** The shepherds can serve as our models for sharing inasmuch as they shared with others the Good News they received. This kind of sharing is a way of *evangelizing others*.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Mary and Joseph cared for Jesus by doing for him what he could not do on his own: they had him circumcised and named. Do we similarly show our care for the needy members of our community or parish?

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* The shepherds affirmed Mary and Joseph and helped them deepen their joy as parents of Jesus by retelling the angel's message. Are there member of our community who will have greater joy if we affirm them?

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Shepherds who rarely, if ever, attended religious rites because they were always busy at work, were looked upon as sinners by the refined Jewish community. God showed his forgiveness to them by choosing them to be the first to find the child lying in the manger. Can we not forgive similar people in our community?

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* Although we are told to look for an infant Savior, it adds a lot to our joy to find him with his mother.

#### C. COMMENT: THE REASON FOR MARY'S SILENCE

Carl Jung, the famous psychologist wrote:

A person who is afraid feels helped by noise, blaring music, and loud company. These drive away the evil demons of fear. Noise — the louder the better — gives a sense of security. Being in a milling crowd protects us from our thoughts. It assures us that we are all together and making such a din that no one dare attack us. Loud noise saves us from any effort to do or say something, the very air trembles with vibrating loudspeakers.

Most people are afraid of silence and stillness. Did you ever notice the awkward pause whenever a heated discussion ceases? Something just has to be said, or sung, or whistled, or coughed, or murmured.

We seem to have a need for noise nowadays. Even when noise is unbearable, we tolerate it rather than an ominous silence. We talk about a "deathly silence." If a large group of people is silent, we get suspicious, and fear that they are up to something, particularly if they are a group of young people.

As people mature, they enjoy bits of silence. They are not afraid to be alone with their thoughts. Silence is creative and healing. Noise distracts and wounds. That is why there are "Silence" signs around a hospital.

**January 5, 1997**

**EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, Cycle A,B,C**

**MATTHEW 2:1-12**

**HOMAGE TO THE NEWBORN KING**

### **A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3**

The Good News of Jesus Christ fulfills the hopes and aspirations of all men, regardless of their culture, color or creed. In recognizing Jesus as king and in worshipping him the Magi did not become converts of the Jewish religion, nor explicitly of the Christian religion. They became Christ-centered members of the Kingdom of God.

Instead of emphasizing what was extraordinary in the homage of the Magi to the Christ Child we should focus our attention on what is ordinary, namely, that they found their expectation for salvation after they asked people for directions; they found the Savior when they entered an ordinary house, and they found him in the ordinary situation of a mother holding her baby.

The role-players in this story are: (1) the wise men (plural, but no number is given); (2) the star; (3) Herod; (4) the people of Jerusalem; (5) the chief priests and experts of the Law; (6) Scripture; (7) the child with Mary his mother. • Readers are invited to imitate the wise men but warned not to be like Herod and the people of Jerusalem (who were "greatly disturbed" by the wise men's search for a newborn king — see v. 3), nor like the chief priests and scribes of the people (who knew Scripture but did nothing about it — see v. 4-6).

*Focus points.* (1) **V. 9. The star** rises (see v. 2), goes ahead ... stops over the place where the child was. This description of the star immediately indicates that it is not a real one. It "rises" and then apparently disappears. When it reappears, it moves to guide the wise



men only from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, a distance of a few kilometers for which travelers do not really need a guide. It would have been more logical for the star to guide the wise men over a much greater distance, that is, from the "East" to Jerusalem. When it "stops over the place where the child was" apparently only the wise men and no other people notice the phenomenon. How could that happen if the star were real?

The "Star of Bethlehem" is a symbolic star. What matters is not its reality but what it stands for. And in fact this is something very important. It stands for **God's revelation by means of Word-Events — happenings whose meaning are made clear by Scripture, or, vice versa, Scripture made clear by happenings.** Anyone who wants to become a Christ-centered person must be open to this kind of revelation.

(2) **V. 11. Gold, frankincense and myrrh.** In Matthew's viewpoint gold, frankincense and myrrh did not have a significance beyond the fact that they were the precious products sought by traders who went to the East, and therefore they were fit to be gifts of Easterners travelling to another place. Early Christian commentators, however, see in these gifts the symbols of royalty, **divinity, and the Passion of Christ.** The Magi offered **GOLD** because they were paying homage to the King of Kings. They offered **INCENSE** — which was traditionally offered to a divinity — because the newborn King was at the same time the Son of God. They offered **MYRRH** as a symbolic prophecy that the Savior they were venerating will one day redeem mankind with his passion and death (when myrrh will be used to prepare his body for burial).

*BIBLIARASAL STEP 4 I Focal Points.* (1) The first focus of the story is the revelation of Jesus to non-Jews who come to offer him gifts and worship. (2) Secondly, importance is given to what guided the wise men, namely a/ the mysterious or miraculous **star** and b/ Sacred Scriptures. (3) Thirdly, it is significant that Jesus is found in a **house** (signifying the Church) "**with Mary, his mother**".

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

**1. Our most reliable guides in our search for Jesus, are, happenings in our own lives which can be quite ordinary — like the**

**birth of a child, the death of a loved one, success or failure in business, and so on — which are clarified by our reading of Sacred Scripture.** In the happenings and the Scriptures we have the two elements that unite to form a Word-Event or what the Bible calls a "DABAR" — A REVELATORY WORD OF GOD. This is what was symbolized by the star followed by the Magi.

*1.1 Pointer for sharing.* Have you joined a Bible-sharing group where you have learned from the examples of your companions how to discern the "Word-Events" in your life? Has your life become more spiritual because of this practice?

2. There is nothing more precious to a person than one's own self. This is the GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH that one must offer to Jesus Christ to become a Christ-centered person. Unless we get converted from being self-centered to being Christ-centered, we cannot belong to the Kingdom of God.

*2.1 Pointer for sharing.* Have you become a Christ-centered person? How did this happen?

## **BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH**

*1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* The Israelite leaders, guardians of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, shared God's Word with the wise men from the East. Now we who are Christians must share both the Old Testament (re-read from a Christian perspective) and the New Testament with all who are searching for the truth that will make them free or save them. • The wise men shared the best products of their land with the infant King they visited. Why don't we also share the best we have by laying them at the feet of Christ?

*2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* God responded to the wise men's need for guidance by sending them a Sign and his Word. We can do something similar by giving good counsel to those looking for the right path.

*3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* The importance of affirmation is shown by the second appearance of the Star which affirmed the wise men in their quest, and by the offering of gifts, which

affirmed the Kingship of the infant Jesus. By affirming others we give them joy. Why don't we do it?

4. *FORGIVENESS*. At some point in past human history the gentile nations rejected God. But God has forgiven them, that is, all of us. He calls all of us to offer gifts of reparation at the feet of Jesus.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS*. We can rejoice not only at seeing the Messiah's star over his house, we have entered that house (the Church) and have found him with Mary his mother.

### C. STORY: LEARN FROM WISE MEN

For years, fishing aficionado had gone fishing with little success. Then suddenly he started to come home with a bountiful catch. This increased his appetite for the sport and he went more frequently.

One day he and his wife were on a trip in the mountains and he found a lake he wanted to try. He got all his fishing gear ready and then he stood looking all around the lake.

"What are you looking for?" his wife asked.

"The old man."

"What old man?"

"Whenever I go fishing nowadays," he said, "I always look for an old man. He has more time to figure out where the good spots are. When he has his line full and leaves, I take his place."

He then walked off in the direction of a white-haired man fishing in an unusual spot. Within an hour he returned with six fish.

**January 5, 1997**

**BAPTISM OF THE LORD, Cycle B**

**MARK 1:7-11**

**JESUS, THE EVANGELIZED EVANGELIZER**

### **A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3**

When was the first public revelation of the "Good News" that Jesus is the Son of God? Mark tells us that historically, this Good News was first proclaimed when "a voice came from heaven" (directed to Jesus): 'You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests'. "This means, logically that Jesus was the first to receive the Good News," the first to be "evangelized". He himself is the model of all others — including ourselves — who are evangelized.

**Focus Points.** (1) *Verse 11.* Whereas Matthew and Luke, through their Infancy Narratives, present Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the Magi, Simeon and Anna as the models of believers, Mark presents Jesus himself as the unique model of the believer because he listened to the voice from heaven that proclaimed him as God's Son on whom God's favor rests.

(2) Through his baptism Jesus was both evangelized and made an evangelizer. His baptism was the external sign of his having been anointed as the Prophet who will proclaim the "Good news" of the Kingdom.

(3) For Mark, the "Good News" was a SECRET that was unraveled by Christ's public ministry and especially through his death and resurrection.

### **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

1. The "listening" that God asks from us is not the act of hearing a voice. To "listen" in the biblical sense, one must prepare by putting

oneself in a humble attitude. One has to be like Jesus. He humbled himself by his Incarnation. He became humbler yet by submitting to the baptism of John.

*1.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Are you a listener (a humble person) in your relationship to Jesus?

2. Everyone who has received the Christian Sacrament of Baptism must become an EVANGELIZER. The trouble with us is that we were baptized as infants. We need something — an experience — in adult life that will awaken us to our duty of becoming EVANGELIZERS. For many today, this experience happens through a Charismatic Life in the Spirit Seminar.

*2.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Are you an evangelized EVANGELIZER? When were you evangelized? When did you become, actually, an evangelizer?

3. Learning the "Good News" is not just reading the Bible every day but walking with Jesus everyday, like the disciples walking with the unidentified Jesus to Emmaus (see Luke 24:13-32).

*3.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Have you walked with Jesus today?

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

*1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Sometimes, like John the Baptist who could not give the Holy Spirit to people, we are limited in what we can share with others. But let us make ourselves instruments of Christ, who has everything and is the number one Sharer. He, through us, can share the Holy Spirit with others.

*2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* At Christ's baptism, God the Father and the Holy Spirit showed their caring for Jesus, true God and true Man. The Father assured Jesus: "on you my favor rests" (v. 11). The Spirit "descended on him like a dove" (v. 10). Jesus needed these signs of caring because he was about to start his ministry as Evangelizer.

*3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* In this Sunday's gospel passage, John's role is that of AFFIRMATOR or Jesus. Let us learn from him and affirm Jesus as we see him in people.

4. *FORGIVENESS*. If we want to receive the Holy Spirit, we must first forgive those who have sinned against us.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS*. In Jesus, his Son, God gave us the best example of an Evangelized Evangelizer.

### **C. STORY: WHY ONE BOY LISTENED AND ANOTHER DID NOT**

Two four-year-old boys were playing "follow the leader" on top of an old tottering city wall, fully 18 feet above the ground.

Each dared the other to harder and harder challenges. They tiptoed across very narrow spots to prove that they would not get dizzy and were very brave. Then they came to where the wall had crumbled completely. As they stood there looking down, the part behind them broke off. So now they were stranded on a little island 18 feet above the ground.

They had to call for help. Up came a man, stood at the foot of the wall, stretched out his arms and yelled to them, "Jump down. I'll catch you."

What happened? The two lads were so alike, as almost to be twins, but each reacted to the invitation in opposite ways.

One jumped off the edge of the wall without hesitation. The other sank to his knees, cried in panic and waited for the firemen to come with their long ladders.

The question now is: why did one boy have the courage to jump and the other, not?

The answer is easy: the man down below was the first boy's father.

Please note: (1) *National Bible Week* begins on *Monday, Jan. 20* and ends on *Sunday, Jan. 26*, which is *Bible Sunday*. In this connection, a special collection is made in churches for the support of the Biblical Apostolate. 40% of the collection is used by the Diocese, 30%, goes to the Regional Biblical Center and 30% goes to the Episcopal Commission for the Biblical Apostolate. The ECBA appeals to Parish Priests to cooperate in this most worthy endeavor.

(2) *The National Eucharistic Congress* begins on *Wednesday, Jan. 22* and will be concluded at the Luneta — where the International Congress was held in 1937 — on *Sunday, Jan. 26*.

January 19, 1997 (Third Sunday of the Year)  
STO. NINO, Cycle B

MARK 10:13-16  
JESUS EMBRACED THE LITTLE ONES  
AND BLESSED THEM

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

More than four hundred years ago, when the first Spanish missionaries came to evangelize the people in these (Philippine) islands, the people were like the little children in the gospel passage that Jesus embraced and blessed (v. 16) because to such as them belongs the Kingdom of God (verse 14b). It was so that the simple people of the islands would have easy access to him (see verse 13-14a) that, in his providence, he sent the missionaries here.

*Focus Points.* (1) Verses 13-14a. Jesus wants the little ones to have access to him.

(2) Verse 14b. To the little ones belong the Kingdom of God.

(3) Verse 16. Jesus embraced and blessed the little ones.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Historically, the public ministry of Jesus was only for the people of Israel. Yes, he did come to save all humankind. But such a plan called for the help of missionaries. In his Providence, therefore, he sent Spanish missionaries to our islands so that the islanders could have easy access to their Savior.

*1.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Have you been a "missionary" who has made it easy for little ones to approach Jesus, or have you put up obstacles between Jesus and the little ones?

2. Several times in his ministry Jesus made it clear that the Kingdom of God belongs to people who are humble and put all their hope of salvation in God's hands. Children symbolize such humble people. Even grown-ups who are poor, marginalized, or are aware to their sinfulness in spite of good intentions are, as far as Jesus is concerned, "little ones."

*2.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Do you qualify to be among the "little ones" that Jesus is inviting to come to him?

3. The coming of Catholic Christianity to the islands later to be called "Philippines" is the embrace and blessing that Jesus bestowed on the "little ones" who were our ancestors. Are we still deserving of Christ's embrace and blessing today? It depends on whether or not we have remained "little ones."

*3.1 Pointer for Sharing.* From your personal experience, is there proof that Jesus still embraces us and blesses us today?

### BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Easy access to Jesus is one of the great blessings we must share with others.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* We must be specially SENSITIVE to the needs of "little ones" because they rarely speak for themselves.



3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* The Filipino gesture of "mano po" is an affirmation of both the one giving the hand and the one taking it.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Those who are good and kind to "little ones" find it easy to forgive their faults.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them. It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs" (verse 14b).

### **C. STORY: SLOW STARTERS CAN WIN**

Since the Philippines seems to be presently at the tail end of the Asian countries that have gained a measure of economic well-being, it might give Filipinos some consolation to consider the following bits of information.

There is a gallery of famous people who were slow starters. Winston Churchill seemed so dull as a boy that his father thought that when he grew up, he would not be able to earn a living in England.

Naturalist Charles Darwin did so poorly at school that his father once told him, "You will be a disgrace to the family."

The famous writer G.K. Chesterton could not read until he was in the third grade. One of his teachers told the fat boy, "If we could open your head, we probably would not find any brain, but only a lump of white fat."

The inventor Thomas Edison's first teacher called him a dunce.

The genius Albert Einstein's parents were worried about his poor performance at school. He was good only in mathematics. In fact, his teacher asked him to leave school, telling him, "Einstein, you'll never amount to anything."

Looking back now, we see how wrong the judgement was about all these men, who have made an undying name for themselves in history.

January 26, 1996

(1) SUNDAY OF THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS

(2) NATIONAL BIBLE SUNDAY. Suggestion: Use the readings of the Second Sunday of Advent, which can be shortened as follows: First Reading: Isaiah 40: 9-11; Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:13-14; Gospel: Mark 1:1-8 (Focus on v. 1, "*Here begins the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*" and v. 8, "*He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.*")

(3) THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

MARK 1:14-20

"I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN"

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This Sunday's Gospel Reading has two parts that compel each other: (1) Jesus' proclamation of the Good News in Galilee, and (2) his summons to four fishermen (Simon, Andrew, James and John) to become fishers of men. These parts taken together teach us that Jesus did not preach alone. He preached surrounded by chosen disciples so that they, too, some day, will do what he was doing. He was the Number One Fisher of people, and by following him, people like Simon, Andrew, James and John — people like us — can also become FISHERS OF PEOPLE.

*Focus Points.* (1) Jesus' preaching was both an ACTIVITY and a COMMUNICATION OF A MESSAGE. In Mark's gospel the focus is on the activity, but in verse 15 he gives an excellent summary of Christ's message, concentrating on three points: (1) The TIME (Greek KAIROS) of fulfillment has arrived; (2) the Kingdom of God is already present; (3) people have to reform and believe the gospel.

(2) The invitation of Jesus in v. 17, which, when literally translated from the Greek would read: "I WILL MAKE YOU BECOME fishers of men..." points to a PROCESS OF FORMATION. The four fishermen will not immediately become fishers of men. They have to start by becoming followers of Jesus. The first thing they have to do is LEAVE

their nets, boats, father and companions (in the case of James and John). Next, they have to be constantly with Jesus to observe... listen... undergo training. It is only in the end, on Pentecost day, that they will be filled with the Holy Spirit who will put them in the place of Jesus — at least visibly — to catch people for the Kingdom.

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

**1.** The summary of Jesus' teaching was so formulated by Mark that it is directed not so much to the historical contemporaries of Jesus, but to the READERS OF THE GOSPEL, and therefore to us. Although we are already Christians, we are still being urged to REFORM OUR LIVES AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL (verse 15c).

**1.1 Pointer for Sharing.** Does verse 15c mean anything to you when you hear it said on Ash Wednesday during the imposition of the ashes?

**2.** We, too, do not become fishers of people at the snap of a finger. We have to undergo a process of formation. The important thing, as far as today's Gospel Reading is concerned, is that we BEGIN THE PROCESS.

**2.1 Pointer for Sharing.** Are you already a beginner in the process of becoming a fisher of people?

## APPLICATION TO THE NATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS.

The theme of the Philippine National Eucharistic Congress is the same as that of the International Eucharistic Congress which will be held in Poland in May 1997. Pope John Paul TJ himself chose the theme, taking it from *Gaiatians 5:1*, 'It was for liberty that Christ freed us.'

When we think of freedom we should not only think of freedom FROM (... want, ... fear, ... graft and corruption,... consumerism, etc.,) but also of freedom FOR. Mark 1:16-20 teaches that it is a great favor from Jesus to be delivered from the slavery of an occupation — the slavery of "boats" and "nets" and "hired companions," — indeed from family ties, to be free to "fish for people" and bring them to the Kingdom.

## APPLICATION TO BIBLE SUNDAY

MK 1:14, "Jesus appeared in Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God."

Those who engage in the Biblical Apostolate — Bishops, priests, religious Brothers and Sisters and the laity, especially married couples, parents and youth — are the ones today who take the place of Jesus proclaiming the Good News in Galilee. For us Filipinos, the Philippines is our "Galilee."

"Proclaiming" the Gospel is not just bringing it to people's attention but even more, it is helping people make the called for response to God's Word. Friends of the Biblical Apostolate — Directors, Coordinators, Promoters, Animators, Facilitators, Servants, Ministers, and whatever else you may want to call them — must undertake projects like: (1) Bible distribution ("Easy access to Sacred Scriptures must be afforded to ALL the Christian faithful." Vatican II Const, on Divine Revelation, n. 22); (2) Bible Enthronement in homes, offices, schools, and (3) Small Community weekly "BIBLIARASAL."

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Jesus shared his mission with others.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Because Jesus cared for people, he went to them, instead of waiting for them to come to him.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus affirmed the four fishermen in this story by making them realize that the abilities that made them good at catching fishes can be sublimated into abilities that will make them good at catching people for the Kingdom of God.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* The Good News preached by Jesus implied an offer of forgiveness of sins.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* "Come after me; I will make you fishers of men" (verse 17).

### C. STORY: EDUCATION COMES FROM LOOKING

A teacher of biology wanted his class not only to learn biology but to learn how to learn. So, from the very first day his high school biology class entered the classroom, the students had before their eyes a blackboard covered with the names and locations of the major bones and muscles of the human body. The diagram remained on the board for months and months but the teacher never referred to it.

On the day of the final exam the board was wiped clean. The examination consisted of only one question: "Name and locate every major bone and muscle in the human body."

The class protested with one voice: "We never studied that."

"That's no excuse," said the teacher. "That information was right in front of your eyes for a good number of months."

After the students struggled with the test for a while, the teacher collected the papers, scanned over the sparse answers, and tore them up.

"Always remember," he told the class, "that education is more than just learning what you are told. Most education comes from looking."

**February 2, 1997**

**PRESENTATION OF THE LORD**

**LUKE 2:22-40**

**(See Feast of the Holy Family, Dec. 31, 1996)**

**STORY:**

**THE INVISIBLE *BARONG* A CARPENTER WORE**

In a town at the fringe of Metro Manila, the father of an economically struggling family was a carpenter, and his children never saw him dress up in nice clothes. Except when his wife died, when the children had already finished their studies. He bought a beautifully embroidered *Barong Tagalog* and was dressed to the teeth as he went heart-broken to his beloved wife's funeral.

A year or so later, the carpenter's daughter was in a clothing store and saw a *Barong* that was almost identical with the one her *tatay* had worn at her *nanay's* funeral. She got into a conversation with the salesman about her *tatay* and how he always wore very ordinary clothes except for her *nanay's* funeral.

Then the elderly salesman said to the young lady, "My dear child, I knew your *tatay*. He often came in here to admire the fine clothes we stock, but he never bought any. He always said that you kids needed things more than he needed clothes."

When the young lady heard that, her eyes filled with tears. But the old man went on to say, "Your *tatay* told me that he always felt dressed up inside himself. And I believed him. He smiled so much, he just had to be wearing a really nice *Barong* around his heart."

When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple, they offered a pair of turtle doves for him. That was the offering of the poor. But in their hearts, they carried the wealth of the whole world, for they had with them the child who held the whole world in his hands.

**February 9, 1997**

**FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B**

**MARK 1:29-39**

**JESUS HEALED, PREACHED, PRAYED**

**A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3**

Jesus healed and preached. These are two sides of one and the same coin. In the mind of Jesus and his contemporaries, whatever affected a person physically was considered to affect him also spiritually, and the other way around. Jesus' acts of healing are the "gospel" in action, signs that God's kingdom is proclaimed and must be received by faith. Christ's healing miracles were not just displays of his divine power but a way of calling people to CONVERSION and SERVICE, as exemplified in the case of Peter's mother-in-law.

*Focus Points.* (1) Verses 29-31. The vocabulary used to describe the healing of Peter's mother-in-law consists of terms used by Christian preachers after the resurrection of Christ: "he grasped her hand and helped her up." This, in fact, is what God is presently doing in the world through Christ and the Church. The woman's cure concludes in service, v. 31b, "She immediately began to wait on them."

(2) Verse 35: "Rising early the next morning, he went off to a lonely place in the desert; there he was absorbed in prayer." Christ's prayer is the contemplation that will overflow into action — the kind of prayer that the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans, have taken as their model.

(3) Verse 38: "Proclaim the good news ... that is what I have come to do." Healing and prayer were the buttresses that supported Christ's mission of preaching.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Peter's mother-in-law is presented and a model of the Christians who, by sharing in the resurrection of Jesus at baptism, are healed of their selfishness and begin a new life of service within the "house" of the Church.

*1.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Have you been healed physically or spiritually. Did your healing lead you to serve in the Church?

2. Having learned from Jesus, Christian preachers from earliest times resorted to prayer as the best preparation for a preaching or teaching assignment.

*2.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Did you turn to prayer when you were given a difficult preaching or teaching assignment? What was the result?

3. The example of St. Paul reminds us that in early Christianity, the main job of Christian leaders was to preach as Jesus did. Unfortunately, in later Christianity, this was neglected and more attention was given to the ministry of the Sacraments. We must not forget that the Church has two feet: the foot of preaching and the foot of the sacraments.

*3.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Do you walk with two feet in your spiritual life — the foot of the graces you receive through teachings and the foot of the graces you receive through the sacraments?

### BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* The greatest treasure we can share is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* The people in Peter's house showed their caring for Peter's mother-in-law as evidenced by verse 30b: "the first thing they did was to tell (Jesus) about her." More of this caring should be practised in "Peter's house" which is the Church.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus affirmed people by going to their villages (v.38) instead of waiting for them to come to a "headquarters."



4. *FORGIVENESS*. When angry or hard-hearted people forgive, demons are expelled from them.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS*. Jesus the Healer and Preacher still visits us in our villages in the persons of his disciples.

### **C. STORY**

#### **A SIMPLE WAY OF EXPELLING DEMONS**

A married couple came to a counsellor for advice. No sooner were they seated, that they began speaking at the same time in a duel of criticisms. When they finally stopped for lack of breath, the counsellor suggested that they tell each other all the good they see in one another. There was total silence.

Then each was given a ballpen and a sheet of paper and told to write down something praiseworthy about the other. Neither of them wrote. They both sat and stared at the paper. After what seemed like a long time, the husband started to write something. At once the wife also began to write — fast and furiously.

Finally the writing stopped. There was silence again. The wife pushed her paper over to the watching counsellor. He pushed it back signalling that she was to give it directly to her husband. She reluctantly shoved the paper half way across the table. He took it and in turn, slid his paper toward his wife.

Each began to read. The counsellor watched... Soon a tear slid down the cheek of the wife. She crumpled the paper in her fist and held it tight. That proved that she treasured the sudden revelation of good things her husband had expressed about her. The whole atmosphere of the room changed. There was no need for anything to be said. The husband's recognition of his wife's true worth had exorcised the demon of anger and hatred from his wife.

The husband and wife left arm in arm.

**February 16, 1997**  
**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT, Cycle B**

**MARK 1:12-15**  
**JESUS BEGINS TO FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT**

**A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3**

Like Jesus, the Christian, at his baptism, becomes an adversary of an individual, personal spiritual force, external to the human being, known in Judaism as Satan, the devil, Beelzebul. The fight against this adversary lasts for a lifetime and can sometimes be disconcerting. Two considerations, however, can give the Christian a measure of comfort. First, the devil cannot enter a human being unless he is let in by a person's refusal to follow the path of light and goodness. Secondly, and more importantly, the Christian through his baptism already shares in the victory that Christ won in his struggle against Satan, exemplified by the story of his temptation in the desert.

*Focus Points.* (1) Mark depicts Christ's mission as a struggle against Satan. This struggle does not refer to one specific period of Jesus' life, but to the whole of his life, seen as a time of constant "temptation" by Satan. The number forty symbolizes a life-time and Mark wishes to suggest that Jesus was in the "desert" — that is, in the arena — throughout the whole of his life.

(2) The Spirit was the inner force that impelled Jesus to fight Satan in the desert. Since nothing is said about the Spirit abandoning Jesus, it is implied that the Spirit remained with Jesus. Throughout the whole of the gospel there is a conflict between this Holy Spirit, active in Jesus, and the "impure spirits," of whom the leader is Satan (see Mark 3:19-30).

(3) All of Jesus' cures are "trials," moments at which his "power" (the Spirit within him) is tested. Their number and repetition in Mark give the impression that Jesus undergoes a progressive trial and struggle, that evil is not easily overthrown, even by Jesus' word. Jesus' death will be the final test. It is only when he has expired (see Mk 15:37), that is, literally, when he released the "Spirit," that the ultimate evil in

people — their own hardheartedness by which they resist God's call to conversion and salvation — is expelled.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. The "Temptation" of Christ does not mean bad thoughts or lustful desires that produced turmoil in Christ's mind or heart. The Greek word Mark uses (*peirazein*), suggests a "test," a "trial," a "contest." It is like a physical wrestling match between Christ and Satan. It is not something experienced sporadically or at a specific moment in Christ's life. It is simply his mission of fighting Satan.

*././ Pointer for Sharing.* Do you feel that you have, like Jesus, a mission to fight Satan? When did you become aware of this mission?

2. Jesus won the victory in his struggle against Satan because he possessed the Holy Spirit. It was through the Spirit and Christ's Word or Command that Satan was vanquished. We, too, will be victorious because we, too, possess the Holy Spirit and we can command Satan in Christ's name.

*2.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Do you have an experience of vanquishing Satan because you invoked the Holy Spirit to come upon you, and you commanded Satan in the name of Jesus?

3. People who seek physical healing must also desire spiritual healing. It is by both kinds of healing that Satan is routed.

*3.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Do you have a personal story of a physical healing that followed after spiritual healing?

### BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* God the Father shared his Power — his Holy Spirit — with Jesus in order to vanquish Satan.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* The dimension of caring is introduced in to temptation narrative with the words, "angels waited on him" (v. 13b).

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* The Holy Spirit affirmed Jesus by being himself the one to send him to the desert (the Greek word *ekballein* connotes strong force) and not abandoning him.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* It is because of his desire to obtain the forgiveness of humankind's sins that Jesus undertakes to fight Satan.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* Victory over sin and Satan belongs to Jesus and to us. Ours is the victory!

### C. STORY: ONE DAY AT A TIME

When 52 Americans were held hostage at the embassy in Teheran, Iran, Thomas Schaefer was the senior military officer of the group. Of a total of 444 days in captivity, he spent more than 100 in solitary confinement.

When he was asked how he managed, he answered, "While I was in training as a soldier, I learned some basic survival and anti-terrorist tactics. Surviving on a minimum of food and keeping your sanity were two of them. I read whenever I could and kept to an exact daily schedule."

"But the bottom line of my survival was: I handled only one day at a time."

February 23, 1997

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT, Cycle B

MARK 9:2-10

KEY TO GLORY: LISTEN TO JESUS

### A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The transfiguration of Jesus is the clearest revelation of Jesus' true identity in the gospel — he is not only the Christ (see Mk 8:29) but is indeed the Son of God (v. 7). And yet the chosen disciples, Peter, James and John, do not understand it. They are blinded by their own ideas about messiahship (the Messiah should be a political Liberator)

and divine sonship (God's Son should be like an Avenging Angel striking all his foes down). Even when the voice from heaven tells them to LISTEN to Jesus (v. 7), they only expect to hear what they want to hear — that he will soon make them potentates in an empire that will encompass the whole world.

*Focus Points.* (1) The Transfiguration scene is situated "six days after" (Mk 9:2) the account of Peter's profession of faith at Caesarea Philippi (Mk 8:27-30) in which he, the disciples' spokesman, finally recognized Jesus as the Christ (Mk 8:29). Thus one aspect of Jesus' identity has been unveiled. But this is still an incomplete revelation demanding an incomplete faith. The complete revelation happens on the mount of Transfiguration. Jesus is not only the Christ but also the Son of God (v. 7b).

(2) V. 7c. "Listen to him." This command indicates a main difference between the theophany at Jesus' baptism — which was for Jesus alone and therefore has no command to listen — and the theophany at the Transfiguration. This latter theophany was done for the sake of the disciples who needed a deeper understanding of Christ's preaching ministry. If Jesus is God's Son, his word has absolute authority. Even when people do not fully understand its full meaning, they must accept it as God's word. Indeed, it is through their acceptance, their faith, that they will be given clearer understanding.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. At the historical moment of the Transfiguration, Peter, James and John failed to respond to the more complete revelation about Jesus with a more complete faith that will encompass belief in Christ's divinity. Only after the resurrection will they be able to attain this kind of faith.

*1.1 Pointer for Sharing.* Were there times in your life, when your faith was supposed to grow — for example during a retreat or prayer rally or a charismatic convention — and yet, for some reason the growth did not materialize? Were you able to "catch up" later on?

2. The command to LISTEN to Jesus — to accept his word as God's word — is directed not only to Peter, James and John, but the Christian readers of the gospel — to you.

2.1 *Pointer for Sharing.* Have you really listened to the words of Jesus as God's own words?

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* There are some truths that are to be shared at the proper time. In the case of the theophany (manifestation of God) at the Transfiguration, the three chosen disciples were commanded "not to tell anyone what they had seen before the Son of Man had risen from the dead" (v. 9).

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Caring must be based on a proper understanding of a situation. Peter showed that he cared for Jesus by offering to build a booth for him (and also for Moses and Elijah, v.5), but he made a mistake because he did not understand what was happening.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus affirmed Peter, James and John as the frontline leaders of the apostolic group by choosing them to accompany him to the top of the mountain.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Peter, James and John showed their shortcoming when they failed to grow in faith in spite of witnessing the transfiguration of Christ. Jesus, however, forgave this failure and gave them another chance, that is, at the resurrection, to encompass his divinity in their faith.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ, continues to be with us so that we can listen to him.

## C. STORY: HOW TO BECOME A TRUE EAGLE

One day a farmer brought home a baby eagle from the woods and put it in a chicken pen to grow up. It learned to do everything chickens do.

Some time afterward, a naturalist came to visit and remarked to the farmer, 'Hey! You've got an eagle in there with the chickens.'

"I know," said the farmer, "but there's nothing of an eagle left in him anymore. He might have gigantic wings, but he can't fly three meters."

"I don't believe that," said the naturalist. "He must have an eagle's flying instinct hidden inside him. I'll see if I can awaken it."

So he lifted the eagle in his hand and tried to toss him off and force him to fly. But the eagle just looked down at the chickens on the ground and jumped back down to them.

The next day the naturalist took the eagle up on the roof of the house and tried to coax him to take off. But again he just flopped back into the chicken yard.

So the naturalist made one last try. He took the eagle up to a high mountain just as the sun was beginning to rise. The eagle stretched its long wings and shook its feathers as if awakening from sleep. But he did not take off. So then the scientist pointed his head and eyes straight at the blinding sun. Something clicked inside the big bird. He took a big jump, stretched out his mighty wings and took off ... first circling and sailing without any effort on the unseen wind currents... Then up, up, and away he went — never to return.

He needed a challenge.

»»»

Although we have become Christians and therefore eagles of God, we usually think of ourselves as chicken. But inside us is an eagle waiting to be brought to a high mountain and challenged to show itself to be what it truly is.

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