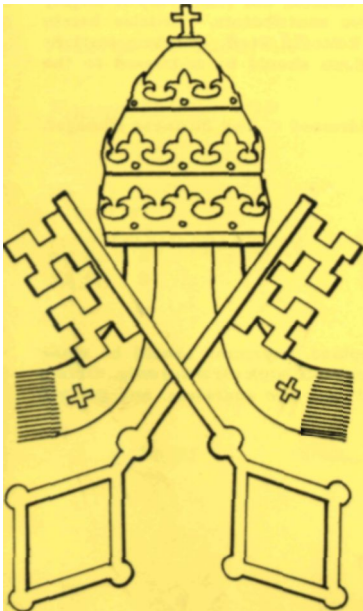


BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

VoLLXXIII, No. 801

July-August 1997



COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE
THREE DOCUMENTS...

Luis Jonie Aguirre

BISHOPS' INSTITUTE FOR
INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

FABC

TITHING IS SHARING

Archdiocese of Capi

CONSAGUINITY AS AN
IMPEDIMENT

Excelso Garcia, OP

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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Responses to the CBCP's call to celebrate the Great Jubilee

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Christians are called to celebrate the Great Jubilee in the beginning of the Third Millennium. The local churches have specific responses to the summon.

The people of Sagay, one little town in the Island of Camiguin (Mindanao), connected the celebration of the coming of the Third Millennium with the Holy Week Rites and the Eucharistic Year. During the Celebration of Good Friday, Jesus, who just died on the cross, was given a burial. A burial fit for a human Jesus. The people prepared a small chapel within the parish for their "*lamayan*". According to reports, the simple rite really touched the heart of the people.

In the same parish, the priest in-charge sent representatives to attend a seminar of the Vicariate. Paraphernalia on the Eucharist were distributed. The representatives re-echoed the said seminar in the barrios and *sitios* of the parish. The effort invited Eucharistic awareness.

One barrio near Tagbilaran (Bohol) accentuated the attention on Jesus during Bible sharing. The *Bibliarasal Approach* is used. Leaders of the said sharing groups deal on Person of Jesus as reflected upon and experienced by the participants who study the Word of God.

In a little barrio in Iloilo, the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is given a renewed accent. The people are trying to be close to Jesus as a good Shepherd with a tender heart.

Of course, these are just few. There are other greater efforts done in the diocesan levels that merit notice. But the ones mentioned show that "something" is happening in the grassroot level of the Church.

All these reports should make everyone happy because the year 1997 as year of Jesus, which is now in its mid-course, is harvesting fruits. The aforementioned are the concrete indications of local people's participation in the celebration of the Year of Jesus.

Priest is Set Aside for a Special Work

JOHN PAUL H

Holy Father reflects on mission of the priest and announces publication of his 'memoirs'

"On this exceptional jubilee, I have accepted the insistent requests coming from various quarters and have decided to write some memoirs and reflections on my vocation, which is a 'Gift and Mystery'", the Holy Father announced to the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square before praying the Angelus on Friday, 1 November. He had just celebrated a special Mass in St. Peter's Basilica to mark the 50th anniversary of his ordination. Here is the translation of the Pope's reflection, which was given in Italian.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. I have just celebrated a solemn Eucharistic liturgy in St. Peter's Basilica on the feast of All Saints. This celebration was enhanced with special significance for me this year. In fact I wanted to celebrate, with the beloved Diocese of Rome, the 50th anniversary of my priestly ordination, which occurred precisely on 1 November 1946.

I warmly thank you all, dear priests and faithful of Rome, who have taken part in this morning's celebration in the various groups of the diocesan community. I also greet the pilgrims who have gathered here for the Marian prayer. In a particular way I address a greeting to you, dear young people: may each of you joyfully discover your own

vocation and with God's help commit yourselves to living it faithfully. I ask the Lord that among you young people there will be some who feel called to the priesthood, as I was, in the years of my youth.

2. I cherish vivid memories of the day of my ordination and of the following day, 2 November, when I celebrated my first Holy Masses in the crypt of Krakow cathedral. I never cease to thank God for all he accomplished in me then. As the years pass, I become more and more aware that every priest has within him a "mystery of faith". His human "today" transcends the contingent events of everyday life, since he is inserted into the eternal "today" of Christ the Redeemer. Although he is fully involved in the social fabric in which he lives, the priest is also aware of belonging to a different dimension, precisely because he knows he has been set aside by the Spirit for a specific "work" which God intends to achieve among men through him (cf. Acts 13:2): he is called to be the steward of the mysteries of God (cf. 1 Cor 4:1).

3. On this exceptional jubilee, I have accepted the insistent requests coming from various quarters and have decided to write some memoirs and reflections on my vocation, which is a "Gift and Mystery".

I have written this testimony thinking of my brothers in the priesthood, and I offer it to them in the keen desire that it may be for each of them a source of hope and renewed zeal in the faithful fulfillment of their priestly mission.

I entrust my sentiments to Mary, Mother of the Church, calling upon her for all priests.

Comparative Study of the Three

Documents: Pastores Dabo Vobis, Directory on the Life and Ministry of Priests, and the Caceres Formation Manual for Diocesan Priestly Life and Ministry

LUIS JONIE AGUIRRE

INTRODUCTION

The Formation Manual for Diocesan Priestly Life and Ministry of the Archdiocese of Caceres, Naga City, Philippines (officially published in 1990) took a long, tedious process of fermentation in the form of unstructured experiments and applied modules in a series of actual meetings of Caceres Priests' five different groupings beginning from the time the Commission on Ongoing Formation of the Clergy was established by Archbishop Leonardo Z. Legaspi, O.P., D.D. in 1988.

Now, after a lapse of almost ten years, there arises a need to reflect more seriously on the directional course that this *Formation Manual* caters to, i.e., whether in the light of the more recent documents like, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and *the Directory on the Life and Ministry of Priests*, this same Formation Manual continues to be relevant, true to its form and attuned to the spirit of the aforementioned documents.

With the Commission's long standing experience in formation work, each month and each year of close association with the priests of the Archdiocese of Caceres, it now pronounces more confidently its own conviction that every fiber of the Manual's content and form is very

prayerfully inspired and solidly established in the spirit of the Magisterial teachings.

We therefore have every ground to stand and to set our feet aright and follow the course that our *Formation Manual* provides. This paper is an attempt to delineate the points of convergence in the context of both the actual experience of formation work among the priests of the Archdiocese of Caceres and the contents of the three documents: *the Caceres Manual, the Directory, and the Pastores*. Herewith is the rationale behind this paper.

THE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE

In Chapter **rn** of the Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests (which was issued on Holy Thursday of 1994 by the Congregation for the Clergy), the foundational principle that should now serve as framework for any localized ongoing formation program for priests is laid bare. To quote page 79 of this *Directory*, it states: "...as a man situated in history, he (the priest) needs to perfect himself in all the aspects of his human and spiritual existence **in order to attain that conformity with Christ**, the unifying principle of things."

Clearly, what has been stated by this principle is that a priest before all else has the primordial duty to himself by virtue of his sacred ordination to live progressively a life of union and identification with Christ (Caceres Manual p. 43). What then should be explicit in the statement of vision for the ongoing formation of priests is this principle: **That every priest may attain conformity with Christ.**

This well-defined principle expounded by the *Directory* is actually a replica of the same image in which *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (n. 22) would characterize as the nature of priestly vocation when it explains: "The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the Spouse of the Church."

The Caceres Manual, although a much earlier document than the two above, captures very likely the same primordial principle when it pronounces in page 3: "The point of departure in the consideration of

the image of the presbyter is not the distinction but the **participation in the one priesthood of Christ.**"

Obviously, every planned module of actual meetings is now given the proper proximate goal to achieve, that is, to deepen rapport with the person of Christ and to witness how this very image of Christ can grow through interaction with fellow priests.

TWO DIMENSIONS OF ONGOING FORMATION OF PRIESTS

Number 70 of the Directory stipulates that there are two dimensions that must be addressed in implementing this principle as a program, namely, (1) *the spiritual life*, and (2) *the pastoral life*. These two dimensions manifestly go hand and hand; they form one unitary life. This enunciation of two dimensions likewise finds an uppermost place in the very first goal set forth by the *Caceres Manual* when it describes on page 42: "The fuller development of the person of the minister lies in his spiritual, doctrinal and pastoral field of competence and ministry."

However, for purposes of personal formation of priests, there exists such categorization so that the actual convergence of each of the areas of priests' formation may be deepened and harmonized. The four key areas of priests' formation comprise the following: ***Human, Spiritual, Intellectual and Pastoral***. Although it is the *Caceres Manual* that does not mention these same four areas of priests' formation, *Pastores* in art. 42 underscores the precedence of the fundamental framework where localized programs for ongoing formation may be patterned.

THE MEANS

Having considered the primordial principle of priestly formation, the *Directory* initiates a rather simplistic and yet holistic means which is the service of God and His people; or as the *Caceres Manual* (p. 50) presents it, the means have three modes: the ordinary means, the specific categories and the extraordinary means.

For practical reasons, moreover, this same *Directory* recommends **that ongoing** formation of priests should include in the means the **following: (1) *developing priest's specific identity and* (2) *sanctifying him and others through the exercise of his ministry.***

What we have so far taken up are the principle and the means of the ongoing formation. The principle is conformity with Christ whose character is supernatural in nature. This signifies that the action of God's grace must be predominant in priests' lives if they are to conform to Christ.

As already mentioned, the means are the service to God and people whose character are both supernatural and human in nature. If the means **to** provide that service is its essential component, indeed, how should a priest look at himself as a servant of God and His people? This boils down to the question: What is the identity of a priest? If priestly identity, as explained in chapter 2 of *Pastores*, denotes a sacramental character uniting the person with the Trinitarian Persons of God, how should a priest try to live such dignity and sanctity? Simply put, the means must strive to answer in the formulation of any module the two above questions on priestly identity and sanctity.

THE RIGHT AND DUTY OF THE CHURCH

The giving of ongoing formation to priests is the *right and duty of the church*. In as much as "... the vocation to the sacred ministry is received in the church, only the church has the competence to impart the specific formation according to the responsibility proper to such ministry. Therefore, permanent formation - an activity linked to the exercise of the ministerial priesthood - belongs to the responsibility of the Pope and of the bishops."

This lengthy quotation from number 72 of the *Directory* summarizes in a nutshell the whole gamut of a permanent formation of priests. This formation task belongs to the church as the church is the mother of priests. The Mother Church gives birth, so to speak, to men, chosen by God, who serve Him and the people through the exercise of the sacred ministry. The right and duty of forming priests to configure to the priesthood of Christ belong by affinity to the Mother Church.

The responsibility of nourishing, nurturing and growing of priests in the sacred ministry has been singled out as tasks of the spiritual head, namely, the Pope and the Bishops.

However, on the part of the priest, who received the sacred character of ministry, he has the right to receive the necessary assistance to grow in his ministry so that he may attain the purpose of priesthood effectively and in a holy way.

The ministerial gift of the priest has a dynamic demand intrinsic to his life, a continuing formation which must be recognized and joyfully accepted. The important thing to note about here is that there is no one who has been ordained to the sacred ministry who can be considered a finished product.

To develop then a program of continuing formation for priests the following characteristics must be borne in mind: (1) *different levels have their own needs*; (2) *not all priests are in the same condition of life*; (3) *priests differ in their experiences because of pastoral assignments*. (cf. Caceres Manual pp. 43-50)

FOUR AREAS OF ONGOING FORMATION OF PRIESTS

Human Formation

The main objective, as succinctly stated in number 74 and 75 of the *Directory*, is that the priest may attain further development of his personality, matured in the spirit of service to others, for whatever task he may receive. To achieve this purpose the human predisposition of the priest must be so imbued with human virtues so that the Spirit's movement in his life may find a natural condition to operate and to sanctify. More particularly, both the *Directory* and *Pastores* (p. 116) suggest some listings that may be necessary in the human disposition: goodness of heart, patience, kindness, strength of soul, self-control, love for justice and truthfulness to his word.

Spiritual Formation

The aims of spiritual formation are to deepen the life of intimacy of the priest with Jesus Christ and to nurture his love for the Church. Some practical means are proposed *to promote this formation aspect of the priest*: (1) He must update himself in biblical, patristic and biographic teachings; (2) Study questions of spirituality such as Christian virtues, ways of praying, etc.; (3) Develop a concrete plan of life during retreats; (4) Meet his spiritual director regularly.

The other suitable aids are also recommended: (1) Daily meditation on the Word, (2) Daily encounter with Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, (3) Marian devotion, (4) Doctrinal formation, (5) Due rest, (6) Obedience to the Bishop and (7) Friendship with other priests, (cf. Directory n. 77-78 and Pastores pp. 122-139)

Intellectual Formation

The aim of this formation is to provide more adequate preparation in the theological as well as human- sciences so that the priest would render more effective means to witness his faith. The theological, humanistic and philosophical areas that every priest must continue to study are: the principal arguments of dogmatic, fundamental and moral theology, of Sacred Scriptures, of Canon Law, Liturgy and Ecumenism. Some special studies must also be devoted to: the documents *of the Magisterium*, Social Ethics, Bioethics, the Social Doctrine of the Church and the Social Means of Communications.

Pastoral Formation

The aim of this formation is to develop further the priest's zeal and dedication in serving God and people. This formation plan must include orientation of the new priests on the *Diocesan Pastoral Plan* or the *APPC*. The themes suggested by the *Directory* and the *Pastores* to invigorate pastoral initiatives among priests are catechesis, Family Life, vocations to the priestly and religious life, youth ministry and pastoral care to the elderly, the sick, the separated brethren and the fallen away laity.

A special mention is given to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* with which every priest must be well versed for greater effectivity in

preaching as well as in evangelizing activities. Moreover, now that the *Catechism for Filipino Catholic* or CFC is officially approved by the Vatican as a tool to help deepen the faith of our local faithful, particularly here in the Archdiocese of Caceres, greater effort is needed to encourage every priest to use this evangelizing instrument in his ministry. Sessions on all these suggested themes must be made available in the implementation of Pastoral Formation Plan.

Personal Formation

Aside from the four main areas of priests' ongoing formation, the Bishop, by way of his example being the first agent of his own formation, must encourage every priest under his care to assume responsibility of his personal formation.

ORGANIZATION

There are two main components suggested for consideration in the planning of the organization of the continuing formation program of priests. The first is the unified formative course or direction. *Such unity must converge in the true identification of every priest with Christ in such a way that the four main areas of priestly formation would be geared towards the gradual growth and maturity of the entire presbyterium.*

To ensure the continuum of formation course leading to the attainment of the primordial principle, which is, the conformity of the priest with Christ, it is recommended further that the different phases in every priest's life must also be taken into account. This is the second component, (cf. Caceres Manual pp.43-50)

Both the *Directory* and the *Pastores* give strong words in emphasizing that every area of priestly formation must be consistently addressed according to the phase of life of the priest. The content of any area of formation, say, the spiritual life must correspond to the phase of priest's life until the time he retires.

Now, who determines this content of priestly formation? It is said that the Episcopal Conference or the Diocese is the sole competent entity in determining such. Nevertheless, the Bishop may in turn entrust this

task to a theological institute, the seminary or any commission involved in the formation of priest provided that any of these may maintain doctrinal orthodoxy and fidelity to the Magisterium.

Pastoral Year

One of the strongest points which is taken up altogether in the *Caceres Manual*, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and the *Directory* is the recommendation to the Local Ordinaries to adapt for implementation what is called **Pastoral Year** for the *Deacons* and/or the *newly ordained priests*.

The establishment of this program has twofold purposes: (1) *to facilitate the smooth passage from seminary life to the main stream of ministerial service* and (2) *to continue to give guidance along the area of fuller human development and priestly maturation through a common life*.

Furthermore, it is suggested that a **house of clerics** be also constituted for this purpose. In this program, alongside with the activities to be undertaken, like sharing of experiences, mutual encouragement and deepening of one's relationship, is the regular time of meeting with the Bishop so **that** he himself would introduce the new priests to their ministry.

CONCLUSION

After everything is written about and done, we still ask the question: What are the points of convergence between the three documents: the *Caceres Manual*, the *Directory* and the *Pastores*? It may be well to note that the summary points would serve enough our interest here.

First, the central focus of any ongoing formation should be truly established in the recognition that the principal agent of such formation is the **Holy Spirit**. The human collaborators who represent the Mother Church are the Pope and the Bishops. All three documents have converged on this point. **Second**, the foundational principle as described at the outset can not be overstated if in the implementation stage of the modules for the different groups of priests it is always made clear that the proximate aim of every meeting is to help deepen the rapport of each priest with

Christ. Third, where the Caceres Manual falls short in the identification of the four key areas of ongoing formation, it settles well in its own ground of providing the clean landscape of its strategies where the equivalent terms are applied. Fourth, to see the stream running in one directional course, this paper provides now ample room to accommodate the main points of both the *Directory* and the *Pastores* in their discussion of the four areas of formation and creates a balance or merger in the strategies of the Caceres Manual.

The happy union of **themes** from the three documents thus emerges.

Suggested Themes for Ongoing Formation Meetings of Different Groups

(The bases from which these themes are developed were taken from the three documents and specific suggestions gathered through the 1993 survey conducted on the particular concerns and issues of priests from the Archdiocese of Caceres.)

INTERNSHIP GROUP (first two years in the Ministry)

I - Spiritual Formation

1. Personal and Communal Prayer
2. Models of Spiritual Journey
3. Spiritual Direction Program
4. Prayer in CCC

II - Intellectual Formation

1. Ecclesial Communion between Bishops and Priests
2. Priestly Communion
3. Social Teachings of the Church
4. Canon Law and Parish Administration

III - Human Formation

1. Christian Dimension of Sexuality
2. The Vow of Obedience
3. Personality Development
4. Enneagram 1

IV - Pastoral Formation

1. Review of Pastoral Synthesis
2. Lifestyle of Diocesan Clergy
3. Self-Evaluation Program in the Light of Priestly Life and Ministry
4. The Local Church in Caceres: APCC Seminar

GROUP 1 (25-35)

I - Spiritual Formation

1. Prayer in the Scriptures
2. Ignatian Contemplation
3. Carmelite Passive Recollection
4. Centering Prayer
5. Prayer in CCC
6. Liturgy of the Hour with the People
7. Affective Prayer
8. Personal Spiritual Direction
9. Contemporary Spirituality
10. Fidelity to God in Prayer

II - Human Formation

1. Celibate Loving and Living: A Lifestyle
2. Poverty as Lifestyle
3. The Obedience of Jesus
4. Enneagram 1
5. Intimacy, Sexuality and Celibacy
6. Myers Briggs and Personal Growth
7. A Journey to Inner Life
8. Program for Self-Development
9. Growth in Relationships
10. Forgiveness: A Healing Process

III - Intellectual Formation

1. Marriage in Canon Law 1
2. Seminar on *Evangelium Vitae*
3. Family Life Apostolate
4. Ministry and Social Justice

5. Counseling Skills
6. Contemporary Issues in Moral Theology
7. CFC Orientation
8. Canon Law and the Sacraments
9. Social Teachings of the Church **n**
10. Catechetical Program of Caceres c/o CCC

IV - Pastoral Formation

1. Preaching Ministry
2. Spiritual Direction Ministry I
3. Lay Apostolate and Movements
4. Pastoral Management
5. Leadership Skills
6. Seminar on APCC: The Local Church in Caceres II
7. Youth Ministry
8. Parish Administration and Management
9. Reviews of Pastoral Synthesis II
10. Social Action Program of Caceres c/o CASAFI

GROUP II (36-46)

I - Spiritual Formation

1. Ascetical Phase of Prayer Life
2. Patterns of Prayer Life
3. Problems and Obstacles in Prayer
4. Prayer as Lifestyle
5. Silence, Peace and Joy
6. Characteristics of Saints
7. Grades of Contemplation
8. Spiritual Relationship and Commitment
9. Marian and Apostolic Spirituality
10. Spiritual Life and Ministry

II - Human Formation

1. Forgiveness: A Healing Process
2. Celibacy as Lifestyle **n**
3. Psycho-Sexual Integration
4. Growth and Development in Maturing Age
5. Mid-life Crises

6. Affection, Intimacy and Relationship among Consecrated Persons
7. Experiencing God in Brokenness
8. Mindfulness in Everyday Life
9. Relationship Patterns
10. Personality and Community

III - Intellectual Formation

1. Formation of the Lay Faithful 1
2. Configuration to Christ
3. Priestly Life and the Gospel
4. Paschal Mystery and the Priest
5. Liturgy Update Seminars
6. Canon Law: Rights and Duties of the Pastors
7. Sacraments and Catechesis
8. Old Testaments Themes
9. New Testament Themes
10. Social Teachings of the Church in

IV - Pastoral Formation

1. Marriage in Canon Law II
2. Priest as Servant Leader
3. Spiritual Direction Ministry II
 - a) Ethics for Spiritual Direction
4. Integration of Missionary Values
5. Balance and Integration in Priestly Life and Ministry
6. Family Apostolate and Ministries
7. Jesus: Heart of Ministry
8. Review of Pastoral Synthesis III
9. Techniques in Pastoral Counseling
10. Pedagogical Skills in Ministry

GROUP III (47-57)

I - Spiritual Formation

1. The Art of Science and Inner Listening
2. Guidelines for Compassionate Living
3. Christian Perfection and the Beatitudes
4. Spiritual Discernment

5. Discernment **on** Priestly Life and Ministry
6. Communion among Diocesan Clergy
7. Passive Purgations
8. Priesthood and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit
9. Retreat and Spiritual Renewal
10. Solitude and Retreat

II - Human Formation

1. The Art of Reducing Stress
2. The Totally Developed Person
3. Growth and Development in Maturing Age
4. Mid-life Crises Management
5. Dimensions of Human Personality
6. Inner Healing Process
7. Program for Sabbatical Leave
8. The Wounded Healer
9. Group Guidance and Therapy
10. Affective Maturity

III - Intellectual Formation

1. The Priest in Persona Christi
2. The Priest and the Eucharist
3. Input in Generativity vs. Stagnation: Exercises on Change
4. Listening in Ministry
5. Canon Law Update on Marriage III
6. Reflection on Prophetic Books
7. Themes on Wisdom Books
8. Health Care Program
9. Formation of the Lay Faithful
10. Priestly Life and the Gospel

IV - Pastoral Formation

1. Creative Ministry
2. Pastoral Care of the Sick and Elderly
3. Confession and Spiritual Healing
4. Pastors and the Political Issues
5. Mission: as Doing and as Being
6. Support System in Ministry

7. Apostolate in the Local Church
8. Review of Ministry and Apostolate
9. Jesus: Heart of Ministry
10. The Pastoral Charity of Jesus

GROUP IV (57 up)

I - Spiritual Formation

1. Solitude and Reflection
2. Signs of Spirituality
3. Retirement Spirituality
4. Prayer of Quiet and Union
5. Night of the Senses by St. John of the Cross
6. Night of the Spirit by St. John of the Cross
7. Spirituality and Personal Integration
8. Psalms and Intercession

II - Human Formation

1. Growth in Life's Later Years
2. Shared Wisdom with the Young Priests
3. A Time for Letting Go
4. Integration in Mature Age
5. Phases of Retirement
6. Retirement: More of Living than Doing
7. Sharing of Life and Love
 - a) Pre-retirement
 - b) Honeymoon
 - c) Disenchantment
 - d) Stability
8. Overcoming Fears and Insecurity

III - Intellectual Formation

1. Input on Integrity vs. Despair
2. Jesus: Model of Compassion
3. Health Care Program
4. Open Mind and Heart
5. Poor of Yahweh Themes
6. Psalms and Prayers

7. Abiding Love of God
8. The Paschal Mystery and Priesthood

IV - Pastoral Formation

1. Companionship and Ministry
2. Growing Old Gracefully
3. Directions of Ministry in Old Age
4. Healing Ministry
5. Confession/Recollection Ministry
6. Marian Apostolate
7. Phases of Retirement
8. Vicarious Atonement

Christ Frees and Unites

ANTONIO AUREADA, OP

Introduction:

It may be that the organizers of this National Eucharistic Congress simply "rode on" the nationalistic air the country at the moment is feeling - at the most perhaps forced on to us by the government - which I call FVR "Freedom Virus Rampage." Remember that we have just celebrated Rizal's centennial martyrdom last month and now are looking forward with feverish preparations towards the centennial celebrations of the 1898 Philippine Independence next year. Perhaps, our guess is wrong; perhaps, also right. Yet it is legitimate to ask: What has this FVR - this "Freedom Virus Rampage" got to do with the Eucharist?

In this connection, one remark given by a-rhistbrian in a series of lectures conducted by the UST Graduate School suddenly jumped out of the storehouse of my memory - call it a footnote - save significant in view of our theme for this Congress. He asked the audience: "Why is there a sun embroidered right at the heart of our flag?" "What was the reason for its inclusion?"

Most probably, and this is what I would like you to listen to attentively - the Katipuneros in their provincial sorties as they gathered sympathizers for their cause never, despite their apparent hatred against the established institutionalized church of the Friars, denied visiting or passing by some of the Churches founded by the Friars, some of them

by the Dominicans. One of those items they found inside those Churches which perhaps caught their revolutionary fancy was the statue of St. Thomas Aquinas emblazoned with a burning sun right at the center of his chest. This sun of St. Thomas might have given them the inspiration to include the sun as a key emblem on the Filipino flag! We know full well that the sun of St. Thomas Aquinas is the symbol of his love for the Lord in the Eucharist. Just reflect on this beautiful insight, however debatable it may seem - the Eucharistic Lord right at the heart of the Filipino nationalism or the Filipino concept of freedom! End it - by stroke of divine inspiration!

Pope John Paul II wants us to celebrate a triennium of Jubilee years, Trinitarian inspired. He bases his idea of this Jubilee on a Scriptural passage taken from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians (4:4): It begins with:

When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!'

In fact this Scriptural basis is a refrain of an earlier encyclical letter entitled *Redemptoris Mater* (RM). Chronologically it is right to state, as the Holy Father himself indicates, that the Jubilee Year celebrations start with an acknowledgment of the role of Mary, Our Mother, in the history of salvation. Without her, no knowledge, yes, no economy of salvation, NO FULLNESS OF TIME is ever realizable. Right so, then, the Pope declared 1987 an International Marian year, the reason behind being that "the prospect of the year 2000, now drawing near, in which the Bimillennial Jubilee of the birth of Jesus Christ at the same directs our gaze towards his Mother." (RM, 3). Hence in this Marian encyclical letter, the Scriptural passage just mentioned is studied under a Mariological perspective. Now in this encyclical letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, (TMA) the Holy Father looks at this same text within the perspective of a Trinitarian theology but more particularly within the unfolding of the mystery of time, or the theology of time (TMA, 1; 9-10).

In deference to and appreciation of, therefore, this methodology, I allow me then brothers and sisters, all lovers of the Eucharist, to share with you my reflections on the topic: "Christ [in the Eucharist] frees and unites" within the same guiding framework, i.e., I shall discuss this theme within the theology of time or the *mysterium temporis*, (the mystery of time).

The Old Testament Root of Time

The Holy Scripture provides us with our point of departure. But it is silent about the nature of time. And if ever it talks about eternity, it always is an adjective describing the all-embracing quality of God. Listen to this assembly of texts:

Before the mountains were made, the earth brought forth,
from eternity to eternity you are God, (Ps 89:2);

All things were known to the Lord God, before they were
created; so also after they were perfected he beheld all things,"
(Sr. 23:99);

I am, I am the Lord ... from the beginning I am the same,"
(Is 43:11-13); and,

A thousands years in your sight are as yesterday come and
gone, (Ps 89:4).

Then an intriguing passage comes along: "Yahweh says to Moses: 'I am who am'." (Ex 3:13-14) in Mt. Sinai. This was the burning bush incident. Here in this particular incident, Yahweh did not stop simply at surrendering his I.D. card to Moses, but rather went on to the extent of commanding Moses: "You shall tell the children of Israel: He who is has sent me to you."

This particular passage signals Yahweh's constant interest and intervention in human history. It is in this particular perspective that we come to understand God as Emmanuel (God-is-with-us). It indicates Divine empowerment in the history of humankind. With this Divine empowerment, man gains insight into the real and genuine nature of his earthly vocation - his pilgrimage of faith in the world.

From this burning bush incident, it is suggested strongly that the concept of eternity should not be viewed as the extreme opposite of time, or that eternity is indifferent to time. But rather as eternity in and with time.

Christocentrality of Time

We recall a passage from the Gospels (Lk 9:59-60; Mt 8:19-22). Jesus invited a number of prospective followers most probably they were young gentlemen. A would-be follower underestimated his worth, and, excusing himself, said: "Let me bury my father first." Jesus replied: "Let the dead bury their dead; come away and proclaim the kingdom of God."

This quick and crispy but emphatic response of Jesus reflects the urgency of the matter: NOW. St. Paul reveals to us the full dimension of this urgency when he states in the doxology of his epistle to the Romans (16:25-27):

Now to him who is able to strengthen you in the gospel which I proclaim when I preach Jesus Christ, the gospel Which reveals the mystery hidden for many ages but now manifested through the writings of the prophets, and, at the command of the eternal God, made known to all the Gentiles that they may believe and obey - to him, the God who alone is wise, may glory be given through Jesus Christ unto endless ages. Amen.

The full and productive use of time, then, revolves around this Christ centered spirituality. This Christocentric emphatic NOW is explained by what precedes it and by what follows it - eternity. Meaning to say, God is yesterday, today and tomorrow. All roads of human activities, centripetal or centrifugal, gain value in life only from centering on the nub - the eternal God Himself, secretly arranging this mysterious economy in eternity, revealing it in the NOW of God's blessings through Jesus Christ, and bringing it to the fulfillment in conversion "so that at Jesus's name, every knee must bend," (Phil 2:10). Every tick of the clock is a tick for conversion!

In all indication, God intervenes in the affair of men in two glorious events of salvation history: creation and recreation (redemption): the

first, when man was fashioned for the first time after the image and likeness of His Creator, and the second, when man needed a refashioning through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Man and the Divine Gift Called Time

Although man through his living body exists in time, it is, however, as an incarnate or embodied spirit that man is meant to see through time in a manner as God sees it. Hence, according to St. Thomas, the human person is the frontier between the spiritual and material worlds, the direction of time and the direction of eternity (see ST. I, q. 77, a. 2). Man, therefore, being a frontier, is endowed with the ambiguous character of a creature with the capacity of moving to two different directions; in this context, between time and eternity. Thus, the human soul, being an immaterial entity and the form of the body, becomes the last point of eternity and the beginning of time.

As the animating principle of the body, the soul is linked in time. As it possesses spiritual acts, the human soul depends on God.

This brings us to the paradoxical character of the human soul. It is caught, as it were, between the pull of time through its body, and the pull of eternity because it is immortal: one downward and the other upward. This gravitation towards eternity, expressible through its spiritual operations, Jacques Maritain poetically describes as "fragments of eternity." In the words of *Gaudium et Spes*:

In man himself many elements wrestle with one another. Thus, on the one hand, as a creature he experiences his limitations in a multitude of ways. On the other, he feels himself to be boundless in his desires and summoned to a higher life. Pulled by manifold attractions, he is constantly forced to choose among them and to renounce some ... Hence he suffers from internal divisions, and from these flow so many and such great discords in society. (GS, JO)

Think of the many times you have wished an event would never end. Think of the haunting lines of a song popularized during the Olympic games in Seoul "as we're racing with destiny": "Give me one moment in time; yes with this one moment of time I can feel eternity!" How

I wish time stood still even under pretense! This feeling of eternity in disguise is what the Gospels call "the tenth hour" (see, e.g., Jn 1:35-39) - an "impact encounter" "a peak experience indeed the memory of which [continues] to move and nourish our inner lives." (Villote, *My Tenth Hour*, p. 1)

However, God in his eternity, is one. Eternity, by all means, implies unity. These fragments or glimpses of eternity in time, felt in the fleeting moments of inexpressible joys and successes, for example, find existence and meaning only in connection with this unity which is their foundation, - from which they spring as their source, and in which they reach fulfillment as their goal. Little by little, these "glimpses of eternity" form the unified continuity and the spiritual duration proper to man. We remember here St. Paul's remark when he said: "Now we see indistinctly as in a mirror." (1 Cor 13:12)

Founded in this unity, man's progress and development without losing his personality are neatly linked, because the soul shares in the unity of eternity, and participates in it. Its very being unifies its acts, giving them meaning and value. In Catholic theology, the unity of God is a community of three persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the seat of man's soul there resides this august mystery! (see Jose Antonio Aureada, OP, *The Language of the Grace of God: A Re-evaluation of the Analogical Character of Sanctifying Grace* according to St. Thomas Aquinas, Published Dissertation, [Rome: 1994], pp. 205ff.) Viewed from this eschatological perspective, eternity against time is not about chronological difference but about intimate personal encounters between Absolute Love and human love: "There are in the end three things that last: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love." (Ibid, v. 13)

On the other hand, the phases of human development are involved in time. Time is "connected" with them because they involve the activity of a body (made living by the principle of life, called the soul), the presence of material realities and the manner of man's reasoning which is step by step. That is why we feel, we cry, we laugh, we empathize, we err, and we will die.

However, a true and genuine human development strikes at a balanced personal ecology, i.e., man sees that body and soul interact harmoniously within, where the soul informs the body so that it is stirred to life opening it up towards the promptings of the Spirit; on the other hand, the soul owes the body its spiritual and external expressions. But since the body is dead without the life-giving support of the soul, the soul is much superior than the body.

A balanced personal ecology reflects what St. Thomas calls, echoing a description of the ancient Greek philosophers, man as a microcosmos - a small world of order by itself (see S.T. I-n, q. 17, a. 8, obj. 2; De ver. XXIV, 5, arg. sed contra). But why is it that man whose life is ordained by Beauty Itself to be in itself order is the source of the earth's destruction, degradation, and ugliness, and eventually, the cause of self-destruction? (*Redemptoris hominis*, [RH], 15)

Yes, man's disrespectful attitude towards the beauty in nature today is symptomatic of a sad plight: that man does not respect the beauty that is within. If there is an ecological imbalance out there, it is simply because there is a personal ecological imbalance within us.

The emerging scenario smacks of, according to a book written by Thomas Moore, *Care of the Soul: A 20th Century Ethical Malady*, "the loss of the soul." No less than the Holy Father has this foreboding remark: he describes the present affair of man's sanity as "the culture of death." (*Evangelium vitae*, [EV], e.g., 87) Man, therefore, creates falsely, and, therefore, destructively. He finds himself sadly in the end the victim of his own doing.

This loss generated and shown by neglect of the needs of the soul. The neglect is subtly pricking the conscience of the majority, silently screaming for its due recognition in symptoms shown through obsessions, addictions, violence, lust, materialistic cravings and worldly aggressiveness: in short, in greed for power.

As man grows in pain because of this opposite pulls of eternity and time, man becomes ever conscious about the passage of time. Time can never stand still. It is always forward looking, forward moving, forward reaching. He finds and discovers that He himself is the measure of time. As one who measures time, and against this consciousness, then,

man talks about his past recollections or memories, his present endeavors and struggles, and his future plans. What he is today is because of his past and what he will and can be in the future is his decision now. The rhythm of time out there (as the world rotates around its own axis) is the rhythm of his own time within (as man hears his heartbeat every second). He alone is conscious of time.

More at the personal level, in St. Thomas' view, man always lies at the frontier of truth and falsity, of freedom and slavery, of good and wrong, of authentic existence and false existence. This is the inconvenient challenge of time: the freedom to choose. Living under this unavoidable threatening alternatives, man cannot but live dangerously.

The Inconvenient Challenge of Time: Freedom to Choose

With his soul man constantly struggles to hear the angelic whisper of eternity for unity, but with his body man is distracted by the metallic, cacophonous sounds of time with its alluring, but fleeting moments and fragmented dreams. Man now in this unstable position, torn between two lovers, is challenged more than ever to choose. Indeed, the reality of freedom is innate to human consciousness unfolding within the framework of time.

Within the context of human freedom, the soul establishes two dimensions of time as part of human consciousness: one, horizontal (human), and the other, vertical (divine), (see Jean Mouroux, *The Mystery of Time*, pp. 43ff.) In the horizontal level, man, through his consciousness, finds himself rhythmically at home with other creatures and with his environment. The horizontal rhythms in time directly confront man as it measures these activities against his own.

Man in time does not only measure horizontal rhythms according to his own established standards but does so in the light of the standard of eternity, the vertical rhythm. By and large, time is rooted in eternity. The soul can structure time most productively only if something goes beyond time and unifies past, present and future because of and in view of the demands of eternity. This is why time is a free gift from God because its origin is eternity.

Time is given to a human person so that he may freely fulfill himself, i.e., towards self-esteem and peak performance. For the individual, time is the means of freely perfecting himself by personal activities deliberately and willing it. It opens this possibility and this personal obligation. It opens up his vocation in life. In time man responds to eternity, and must make himself eternal. Time is the battleground of freedom from and freedom to. Amidst varied possibilities, man is constantly called to be alert regarding opposing decisions, like between self-realization and globalization or between - one that is close to the concerns of the Holy Father - evangelization and anti-evangelization (see *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (CTH), p. 112); thus the great risks in human existence - risks portrayed by the two masks of showbusiness: one crying and one laughing. What are these opposing decisions within the theology of time?

The meaning and the efficacy of my time depends on my freedom. On the one hand, it can be destructive. If man absolutizes time as though it were eternity, time throws everything into neurosis, man included, back into past, to negativity and emptiness, and frustrations. On the other hand, it can be creative. It brings the future to realization, makes the past a rich synthesis, and perfects being if only man uses time rightly in the conscious acknowledgment of its indebtedness to eternity.

But my freedom, - "my will to power" for Nietzsche - determines which is to happen: time as creative or time as destructive.

"My will to power" gives time its possible spiritual, moral or psychological value. If "my will to power" is simply caught up in the passage of time and the burden or the bondage of the past, the human soul renounces its task, dries up or disintegrates: I end up a drifter; in the word of Auxiliary Bishop Paul Kazubiro Mori of Tokyo: "'hollow men' bereft of humanity." (from short Report sent by Fr. Anthony Prakash Lohale, OP, the Dominican Promoter of Justice and Peace of the Asia-Pacific Region). If "my will to power" takes hold of its past and its future, the human soul grows, coordinates, improves, spiritualizes itself, and in the end, perfects man as a human person. But because good is self-diffusive, it creates a universal ripple of harmony, too. Listen to these proverbial Chinese lines:

*If there is light in the soul, there will be beauty in the person.
If there is beauty in the person, there will be harmony in the house.
If there is harmony in the house, there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.*

When all is said and done, time is, therefore either absence or presence, emptiness or plenitude, bauble or treasure, despair or hope - in other words, *ginto* (genuine gold) *o tanso* (bogus gold). It depends on how man uses time productively in freedom.

This is the profile of man today inconveniently situated right at the center where the two rhythms, horizontal and vertical, intersect.

This man [we have just described] is the way for the Church - a way that, in a sense, is the basis of all the other ways that the Church must walk - because man - every man without any exception whatever - has been redeemed by Christ, and because with man - with each man without any exception whatever - Christ is in a way united, even when man is unaware of it: 'Christ, who died and was raised up for all, provides man' - each man and every man - 'with light and the strength to measure up to his supreme calling.

Since this man is the way for the Church, the way for her daily life and experience, for her mission and toil, the Church of today must be aware in an always new manner of man's "situation." That means that she must be aware of his possibilities, which keep returning to their proper bearings and thus revealing themselves. She must likewise be aware of the threats to man and of all that seems to oppose the endeavor "to make every element of this life correspond to man's true dignity - in a word, she must be aware of all that is opposed to that process. (RH, 14)

Christocentric Use of Time

The Christocentricity of time affords us to state that for Jesus, there is only one meaning for power: the power to use time creatively in service. Jesus proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom of God and performed miracles to liberate humanity from determined patterns of human disfunctions:

He came to Nazareth where he had been reared, and entering the synagogue on the sabbath as he was in the habit of doing, he stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord."

Rolling up the scroll he gave it back to the assistant and sat down. All in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. Then he began by saying to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." (Lk 4:16-20)

He made use of his earthly time by maximizing time through working for the Kingdom. To serve for Christ is to work creatively so that others may be free. The initiative of God to intervene in the affairs of man arose not from his own need of belongingness, but, precisely, from his concern about the sad plight of humanity. It is this divine stooping down to humankind that God initiates the upward movement of humanity towards Him so that man, although born in time, may end up enjoying eternity. This is eternal life:

The Gospel of life is not simply a reflection, however new and profound, on human life. Nor is it merely a commandment aimed at raising awareness and bringing about significant changes in society. Still less is it an illusory promise of a better future. The Gospel of life is something concrete and personal for it consists in the proclamation of the very person of Jesus. (*Evangelium vitae* [EV], 29);

and again "At other times, Jesus speaks of 'eternal life.' Here the adjective does more than merely evoke perspective which is beyond time. The life which Jesus promises and gives is 'eternal' because it is a full participation in the life of the 'Eternal One.' " (Ibid., 37).

Linking this aspect with the title of Jesus as Truth, Our Holy Father goes on to say:

// [eternal life] is happiness that comes from union with God ... Union with God is realized in the vision of the Divine being "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12), a vision called "beatific" because it carries with it the ultimate attainment of man's aspiration to truth. In place of the many partial truths which man arrives at through prescientific and scientific knowledge, the vision of God "face to face" allows enjoyment of the absolute fullness of truth. (CTH, p. 72)

When man opts to absolutize time, he finds work burdensome, cumbersome, and enslaving but when man sees time through eternity, he finds work self-giving as when God breathed on his own breath into the nostrils of our first parents in Paradise; it is joy-giving, as when God after every major creation, remarked with glee: "It is good"; and third, it is reward-giving as time productivity increases productivity of goods and services with less cost.

The Eucharistic Freedom within the Theology of Time

If Christ then is the sacrament of the Father's love and concern, so the Church is the sacrament of Christ's salvific action in the world today.

For this reason, the sacraments are the tangible encounters of these salvific and universal Christ-centered activities. The Eucharist is considered their apex and goal.

If man, then, as explained by the Holy Father, "is the way for the Church," in the sense that without the human person the breaking-in of God's grace in the world today remains an elusive dream and an unfinished task, the theology of the Eucharist must also be seen within the perspective of time, which as I have tried to explain, is the very nature of man's earthly existence whose meaning and bearing revolves around this *mysterium temporis*.

In fact, it is not quite difficult to see that the Eucharist following the incarnative pattern of Christ's redemptive act was also born and introduced in time by the Lord Himself as an objective memorial of his Passion, Death and Resurrection although its merits go beyond the limits of time and space. Hence, whenever a priest celebrates Mass every minute

around the world the meritorious effects of Christ's Paschal Mysteries are efficaciously made present again, now, in view of an impending heavenly banquet when "we shall see face to face," although such glorious event took place only once thousands of years ago.

Within the theology of time then, the Eucharist gains a deeper meaning so much so that we must not only be aware of its past origins or be conscious about the present benefits arising from our personal and communal celebration of the Mass. Over and above these concerns, our mind should be focused more on "the pledge of the glory that is to be ours" (CCC, 1402) someday "where every tear will be wiped away."

There is no doubt that the celebration of the Holy Eucharist as a take-off from the Old Testament sacrificial offerings is always a celebration of freedom.

Theologians say that the sacrificial aspect of the Holy Eucharist took its content from the theology of the Cross, and its liturgical or ritualistic structure from the celebration of the Last Supper. If that is the case then every Eucharistic celebration is a celebration of freedom. Even the rituals that accompanied the celebration of the Paschal Meal after which the Last Supper was patterned, bespeak the aspect of a freeman.

According to Montefiore in his book *A Rabbinic Anthology*,

it is laid down in the Mishnah that on Passover Eve not even the poorest Israelite should sup without reclining at the triclinium. For slaves ate their meals silling upright just as what your postures are now, while the triclinium was the privilege of the free. On this night, everyone was to be free, and by this symbolic action humanity would demonstrate its gratitude for the divine redemption, (p. 441)

Sparling Abraham (*Reasons for Jewish Customs and Traditions*) continues by stating that, "one should always recline on the left side. One should not recline on one's back or face, because this is not a posture appropriate to a sense of freedom." (p. 185)

In this light, the posture of reclining, - although this is done no longer today - gives us the origins of the rituals that undercut our Holy

Eucharist. More than the posture and any ritualistic accidentals, the meaning behind was that of freedom. If the Paschal meal or the Passover Meal - as the Last Supper - was celebrated to commemorate the freedom of the Israelites from the slavery of Egypt to the Promised Land, we, in the Eucharist, following the same pattern, do celebrate Christ's redemption of humankind from the yoke of slavery or bondage of sin to the Promised Land we call Heaven. It is freedom from sin and freedom to grace; or within the theology of time, freedom from time outside eternity and freedom to time with and in view of eternity:

"Housed in a body, dulled by the whims and desires of the senses, held captive by time, the soul unconsciously craves the Bread of heaven - its fuel to attain its goal in this life and immortality in the next" (Louis Kaczmarek, *Hidden Treasure, The Riches of the Eucharist*, (HTRE) [1990], p. 60).

The Spirituality of Work within Eucharistic Freedom

Secondly, the Eucharist as seen from the theology of time, makes work dignified. Indeed, work unfolds within the framework of time. To use time productively, i.e., to consider time as gold, means to consider work as a sharing in the activity of God as Creator based on the "Gospel of Work" in Genesis (*Laborens exercens* [LE], 25):

For it [the Book of Genesis] shows what the dignity of work consists of: it teaches that man ought to imitate God, his Creator, in working, because man alone has the unique characteristic of likeness to God. Man ought to imitate God both in working and also in resting, since God himself wished to present his own creative activity under the form of work and rest. This activity by God in the world always continues, as the words of Christ attest: "My Father is working still..." (Jn 5:17): he works with creative power by sustaining in existence the world that he called into being from nothing, and he works with salvific power in the hearts of those whom from the beginning he has destined for "rest" (cf Heb 4:1, 9-10) in union with himself in his "Father's house. (Jn 14:2)

Therefore, the Eucharist is the greatest proof that the Father is still working in the world today: His will is that His Son continually die

for us now, in a sacramental manner, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This is the kind of rest the Father would wish that all of us have on Sundays: that while we rest in the Mass, His Son works in the Mass for our sustained redemption.

Secondly, if we stretch our graphic imagination a little bit, we see the juxtaposition of the horizontal rhythm of time over and against that of the vertical rhythm as forming a cross. Man is always crucified on to it everytime he is faced with options of life. As we measure time in work we feel the burden of work. Yet work when properly evaluated within the framework of the *mysterium temporis* gains a deeper theological meaning. It is this:

The Christian finds in human work a small part of the Cross of Christ and accepts it in the same spirit of redemption in which Christ accepted his Cross for us. In work, thanks to the light that penetrates us from the Resurrection of Christ, we always find a glimmer of new life, of the new good, as if it were an announcement of "the new heavens and the new earth" in which man and the world participate precisely through the toil that goes with work. Through toil - and never without it. On the one hand this confirms the indispensability of the Cross in the spirituality of human work; on the other hand the Cross which this toil constitutes reveals a new good springing from work itself, from work understood in depth and in all its aspects and never part from work. (LE, 27)

Every Eucharistic celebration begins with the invocation of powerful names of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and ends with the same. Where we all came from there hopefully we should end. If ever Christ frees and unites us, He frees us, first of all, from all that oppresses us, from the past mistakes, and unites us towards the road leading to where we came from and ought to return-right at the bosom of the Blessed Trinity.

As we break bread together on Sundays, we wish to show one another that whenever we break ourselves in work for the coming days of the week, our work and the burdens that go with our task be sanctified by the presence of the Trinity so that whatever sweat and tears that accompany it be redemptive and productive:

*Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have this bread to offer,
which earth has given and human hands have made.
It will become for us the bread of life.*

*Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.
Through your goodness we have this wine to offer,
fruit of the vine and work of human hands.
It will become our spiritual drink.*

Mary, the Woman Who Always Is Ahead of Time

In his encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, our Holy Father shows Mary, a creature of God who has gone before the People of God. Her single privilege exemplified by her journey of faith is hidden in the best description of her personhood: "full of grace."

Here there opens up a broad prospect, within which the Blessed Virgin Mary continues to "go before" the People of God. Her exceptional pilgrimage of faith represents a constant point of reference for the Church, for individuals and for communities, ... The Council emphasizes that the Mother of God is already the eschatological fulfillment of the Church ... and at the same time the Council says that "the followers of Christ still strive to increase in holiness by conquering sin, and so they raise their eyes to Mary who shines forth to the whole community of the elect as a model of the virtues".

The sacrificial aspect of the Holy Eucharist took its content and form from the Holy Sacrifice of Calvary, which the Holy Father often calls "the scandal of the Cross" (CTH, p. 62). However, the last heroic act of Our Lord is incomplete unless the *Stabat Mater* is included. If the Holy Eucharist today is an efficacious reenactment of that glorious event on Calvary, and Mary was there, then Mary, by simple extension, must be present in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist today. In a way this conclusion is hidden behind the request of the Ambassadors from heaven for a chapel whenever (and mostly) she appeared on earth, for example, in 1531 in Guadalupe, 1858, Lourdes; and 1917 Fatima, among others.

Let me close my reflections with what happened in Fatima:

Three times in all, the Angel of Portugal visited the children, the third time holding aloft a chalice with a host suspended above it. From the host drops of blood fell into the chalice cup, and leaving both suspended in mid-air, he prostrated himself upon the ground and three times repeated this sublime prayer of reparation: "Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, I adore You profoundly and I offer You the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, present in all the tabernacles of the world. (John Delaney, ed. *A Woman Clothed with the Sun*, pp. 180-181)

And on one of those climactic apparitions on every 13th day of every month from May to October, 1917, Mary requested for a Basilica to be built on the spot of the apparition where pilgrimages must be done - an urgent request reminding us that, based on the fundamental nature of the Church as a "Pilgrim Church," (RM, 18ff.) Mary wishes to remind us that the Church is the Church because of the presence of Her Son in the Eucharist who becomes our daily food on the road to eternity!

"Was it a coincidence, or was it to reiterate Her Son's pleas, that she chose May 13, 1917 to come to the children? May 13 [by the way] is the feast day of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament." (Kaczmarek, HTRE p. 115).

The theology of the Eucharist, therefore, discussed within the mystery of time makes us consider the three moments of time in the celebration of the Eucharist: the Holy Eucharist is rich with the memory of the past; it is abounding with present benefits coming from the merits of Our Lord's Paschal Mystery, and it is a foretaste of what is instored for all of us as seen in the present state of our Mother Mary. Secondly, that within this framework through the study of the Eucharist we gain valuable insights into the spirituality of work as creative and redemptive.

There is a lighter side to this quite heavy a lecture. We all know how time can be brutally frank. Even what we hold to dearly as a secret can never be contained for long due to the passage of time. I am referring to our age. Here is a good news for all of us born in time. In eternity, there is no such thing as old, no such thing as young. For everything will be forever new!!!

Thank you. I hope I did not waste your time.

Abortion in Ethical and Christian Perspective

FAUSTO GOMEZ, OP

In the following pages, we shall reflect briefly, meditatively, on *Abortion in Ethical and Christian Perspective*. By abortion, we mean *induced or procured abortion*.

We shall speak first on the ethical dimension of abortion, in general; second, on abortion in some concrete cases, and finally, on abortion in Christian perspective. We profess from the beginning that abortion is gravely unethical - in human and Christian perspective.

1. REJECTING ABORTION: THE ETHICAL ARGUMENT

Why is abortion immoral? Because ethically speaking, abortion, procured abortion is, as John Paul II said in *Evangelium Vitae* (no. 58) "the deliberate and direct killing, by whatever means it is carried out, of a human being in the initial phase of his or her existence, extending from conception to birth."

The fundamental argument against abortion, therefore, is that it is against the *right to life*, which is the most basic human right: without it the other human rights cannot exist.

For a consistent life-ethics, human life is like "a seamless garment" and has to be protected and promoted from the beginning (against abortion), to the natural end (against euthanasia, and even the death penalty). As Jaime Cardinal Sin once said: "Indeed, human life is like

a continuous thread from conception to death, from the womb to the tomb. To deliberately break the thread and end that life is to arrogate unto ourselves a power that belongs only to God."

For believers, life belongs to God only: God is the Lord of life and death. We humans are stewards, ministers of human life. And we have one commandment: "Thou shall not kill" (Ex 20:13) any human being and, in particular, the innocent defenseless unborn child.

Theologian Yves Congar wrote: "Every fruit of conception, in any stage of its development, is something human and, therefore, worthy of absolute respect." After having performed thousands of abortions and reversing his pro-abortion stand, Dr. B. Nathanson wrote: "There is no longer any serious doubt in my mind that human life exists within the womb from the very onset of pregnancy."

Women's dominion over their own bodies cannot include "the right to abort" - euphemistically called "the right of choice"! From the moment of fertilization the zygote (to become an embryo, then a fetus) does not belong to the mother alone, nor to the mother and father: he or she is a new human being, different from the mother and the father - a new being that claims his or her right to life and its protection. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 2270) puts it: "From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life."

From the moment of conception, we have, then, a new human being: "It would never be made human if it were not human already. This has always been clear, and modern genetic science offers confirmation" (EV, no. 60).

2. ABORTION IN SOME CONCRETE CASES

"Humanitarian" Abortion

"Humanitarian" (?) abortion (called by some "ethical" (?) abortion) is the termination of a pregnancy due to rape. It produces a highly dramatic situation, for the pregnancy is not the product of love, but violence.

Although obstetrician-gynecologists tell us that in *case of rape or incest* pregnancy seldom occurs, it does, at times, happen. In this situation, some anti-abortionists make an exception, their only exception in favor of abortion. *But is abortion, then, a good way out of a violent pregnancy?*

While condemning strongly with a voice that cries to heaven rape, and being in compassionate solidarity with the violated mothers, we feel that abortion is not a good way out at all and it is objectively immoral. Abortion will not solve the problem of the raped. But even if it could, *abortion would pronounce the death penalty on the innocent unborn life.* Abortion, then, cannot be ethical. The moral alternative which is truly humanitarian is letting the human unborn being be born and giving him or her afterwards for adoption.

John Paul U cries out: "In no way could this human being ever be considered an aggressor, much less an unjust aggressor! He or she is weak, defenseless, even to the point of lacking that minimal form of defense consisting in the poignant power of a new born baby's cries and tears" (EV, 58).

Eugenic Abortion

Due to the great advances of genetic medicine, it is now possible to know through pre-natal diagnosis whether the embryo or fetus is affected by a disease, for instance the Down's Syndrome, or an illness contracted by the mother during pregnancy. *Should a diseased fetus, with a high risk of possible abnormalities after birth, be terminated before viability?*

We are talking of eugenic or selective abortion (also called a kind of "*therapeutic abortion.*") *Medically, it can easily be carried out but, ethically, it should not.* Why? The fetus is the patient and, therefore, has to be healed, not killed. Directly killing him or her would amount to pre-natal euthanasia. Moreover, society's acceptance and even promotion of eugenic abortion appear to us, objectively, as gravely intolerant and paternalistic.

Psycho-Social Abortion

It is regrettably true: a great number of abortions throughout the world is performed as means of contraception.

Abortion as a method of birth control for personal, economic or social reasons is obviously immoral: the end does not justify the means. It is, of course, more immoral than sterilization and contraception (cf. EV, no. 13). Moreover, to defend abortion - for poor women, only - is utterly immoral, paternalistic, and discriminatory. We are all obliged to struggle together against poverty, but not by killing born or unborn life, which is the result of a terrible kind of moral poverty. The great philosopher Julian Marias has written with deep sadness: "The social acceptance of abortion is, without exception, the gravest thing that has happened in our century." (By the way: the intrauterine device, or IUD, is a contraceptive and abortifacient. Likewise are some - or many - so-called contraceptive pills).

Therapeutic Abortion

Therapeutic abortion is carried out in cases where the life or even the health of the mother is in danger.

Morally speaking, when there are maternal-fetal conflicts, both the mother as well as the fetus have the right to life. Therefore, both ought to be saved. In case of a real grave threat to the life of the mother, when an operation/treatment/procedure cannot be postponed until the fetus is viable, then the mother has to be saved. This cannot - can never - be done by terminating the fetus directly (this would be immoral), but indirectly, when safeguarding the life of the mother immediately implies simultaneously or consequently the unintentional, accidental and regretted death of the fetus.

Let us add here that therapeutic experimentation on embryos may be ethical - if it does not involve disproportionate risks. However, the use of embryos as objects of research and experimentation is against their human dignity - equal for born and unborn children - against their right to life (cf. Ev, no. 63).

Similarly, the life of the mother may be risked indirectly and unintentionally when the life of the unborn child is at stake and the medical procedure is necessary - for instance by performing a dangerous caesarean operation that is necessary for a successful delivery.

3. ABORTION IN CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

Abortion is, in the traditional teaching of the Church, infanticide, homicide, murder. From the first centuries of Christianity the followers of Christ knew the letter attributed to Barnabas that said: "Love your neighbor more than your own life. Do not kill an unborn child through abortion, nor destroy it after birth." For Vatican II (GS, 51), abortion is, with infanticide, "an unspeakable crime." John Paul II declares in *Evangelium Vitae* (no. 62) that *direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being.*

The celebration of the *Annunciation of Mary*, the Mother of Jesus, signifies also the defense of human life from the moment of conception. (When we visited Nazareth in 1984, we were struck by the inscription over the place where - it is said - the angel appeared to Mary. The inscription reads: "Hic verbum caro factum est" - Here the Word became flesh.) Elizabeth said to Mary, the Immaculate Conception: "And blessed is the fruit of your womb... For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy" (Lk 1:42, 44).

Abortion is indeed profoundly inhuman and unjust. Procured abortion is, bit of course - and doubly so -, unchristian. For a Christian, the teaching of the Church based on human nature and on Christian faith is clear: *You shall not kill the unborn human life, which begins at the moment of conception.* From the moment of conception, our life begins and develops through different stages in a continuing, growing, seamless process which ends with natural death. John Paul II has written powerfully in *Evangelium Vitae* (no. 44). "How can anyone think that even a single moment of this marvelous process of the unfolding of life could be separated from the wise and loving work of the Creator, and left to human caprice?"

We must denounce abortion and defend human life. We denounce abortion, and remind doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals, that their role is to heal, to preserve life, not to kill; and repeat to legislators that their task is to make moral - just - laws; and proclaim to all that "legal abortion" is unjust and should be opposed by *conscientious objection*. As we read in the Philippine Constitution, "The

State shall equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception" (Art n, Sect. 12).

More than denouncing abortion, and homicide, and war, and the death penalty, *we preach, celebrate, and serve human life*. We protect life and promote an education in authentic human values, especially the values of life, truth, freedom, justice and solidarity. We pray for those couples and mothers who are caught in the web of poverty, lovelessness and suffering. We also pray - as the 11th Asian Federation of Catholic Medical Associations Congress resolved in Singapore, on November 9, 1996 - for the conversion of abortionists and all others who attack life and also for health professionals who have failed in their vocation to protect life.

We support, and ask the Church and the State to support, unwed mothers, pregnant mothers with handicapped and retarded unborn children. And we denounce the so-called development funding with strings attached, including procured abortion.

Let us be compassionate with those women who abort: Christ the merciful Lord made us brothers and sisters, not judges; but let us denounce abortion as absolutely immoral. Let's fight, nonviolently but actively, against clandestine abortions and, above all, abortionists. Mother Theresa of Calcutta has said: "To me, the nations with legalized abortion are the poorest nations. The great destroyer of peace today is the crime against the innocent unborn child. In destroying the unborn child, we are destroying the image of God and the world."

Let us, then, be committed to defend human life from the moment of conception to natural death. This defense is for Christians, in particular, part of their universal ministry of life centered on the little ones of Jesus - the poor, the sick, the marginalized -, including the defenseless unborn children, who are proxies of Christ, too: Truly I say to you, Jesus tells us, *what you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me*.

Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs

FABC

Foreword

Between 27 October and 1 November 1996, 47 participants from 15 Asian countries and the Vatican took part in BIRA (Bishops' Institute for Interreligious Affairs) V/5, an interreligious encounter of reflection and evaluation, in Bali, Indonesia, for days of reflection and discussion. The participants included Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, and Muslims and scholars of the Confucian and Taoist traditions. In addition to Catholics, the Christians included participants from member churches in the Christian Conference of Asia.

Most of the participants had taken part in one or more of the previous BIRA V seminars. Between 1991-1996, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences conducted a series of dialogue encounters with the followers of other religions. These encounters followed upon the BIRA I-IV series, which were aimed at educating bishops and other Christians about the need for dialogue and its theological bases. BIRA V was meant to bring Christians together with the followers of other religions to study the contributions of religions to harmony in society. The earlier encounters consisted of the following meetings: BIRA V/1 (Muslim-Christian dialogue, Pakistan, October, 1992), BIRA V/2 (Buddhist-Christian, Thailand, April, 1994), BIRA V/3, (Hindu-Christian, India, October, 1995), BIRA V/4 (Confucian-Taoist-Christian), Taiwan, April, 1996. The South-east Asia Muslim-Christian seminar, sponsored by the Pontifical Council

for Interreligious Dialogue (Thailand, August, 1994), was similar in theme and structure to the BIRA V seminars.

The main purpose of BIRA V/5 was to evaluate the earlier seminars and to reflect on issues related to interreligious dialogue. The meeting was opened by Mons. Manat Chuabsamai, Chairman of the FABC Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, and Mr. Imam Kuseno Mihardja, Director General of Catholic Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Mons. Anicetus Sinaga, chairman of the Indonesian Bishops' Conference Office of Interreligious Affairs, presided.

Evaluation of BIRA V

The general reaction of the participants to the earlier seminars was quite positive. The BIRA V series was seen as a sign of hope that believers of various religious traditions could listen to one another and respect and appreciate each other. The participants expressed a sense of satisfaction and gratitude for the opportunity to meet and share with followers of other religions. Their positive evaluation of the seminars was based on the high quality of participants and papers, the occasion for personal growth and transformation provided by the encounters, the possibility of coming to know more deeply adherents to other religions, an increased awareness of the sensitivities of others, a clearer perception of what is involved in dialogue, and an encouragement to more profound appreciation of one's own religion.

Each BIRA V seminar was presented by a participant, with a critical response by another participant. Since all the seminars focused on the theme of harmony, the positive elements in each religion were stressed. Relatively less attention was given to those religious elements and societal factors that produce disharmony and conflict. Participants at BIRA V/5 felt that in the future more attention might be given to the obstacles to dialogue and to conflictual issues that can divide and turn believers against one another. Thorny and sensitive issues such as conversion and inculturation and suspicions about dialogue must not be ignored or avoided.

In reflecting on the seminars, the participants suggested ways in which future seminars might be even more enriching. A better balance between learned discourses and time for discussion would provide more

room for personal sharing and contributions by participants. The strengths of the seminars could be utilized to stimulate dialogue within the local churches and communities of various religious groups. To some, it seemed that the deliberations, often at an elevated intellectual level, might better reflect the concerns of ordinary believers in Asia.

Types of dialogue

The participants exchanged views on the various forms of interreligious dialogue found in Asia today. Many considered the priority in dialogue to be that of the **dialogue of life**. By this is meant not mere peaceful coexistence or a passive tolerance of the other, but rather an active sharing of life in which believers of each religion live out the highest ideals and values of their own religion and, at the same time, are ready to respect neighbors of other faiths. This aspect of dialogue places the emphasis on communities of believers living harmoniously together, rather than on dialogue discussion of differences in dogma or religious practice. Although this form of dialogue has been widespread in Asia for many centuries, there was often little awareness that differences can provide healthy motivation and stimulation for deepening one's religious commitment. The goal of the dialogue of life is the building of societies characterized by harmony and mutual esteem.

Other participants stressed the centrality of the **dialogue of action**. Believers of various religions, impelled by their religious convictions, confront together the problems of their societies. Questions of justice, defence of the weak and oppressed, support for the rights of workers, minorities, women, and children, joint efforts for education, housing, and health care, facing the challenges raised by modernization, and withstanding the threats to communal harmony posed by extremist religious groups are some of the areas that demand interreligious cooperation. The goal of the dialogue of action may be described as the formation of basic human communities that work together for the good of all, rather than only for one's own group.

The **dialogue of discourse** can be carried out by a limited number of scholars, yet has undeniable value, the results of which are expected to be communicated to others. It enables believers to become better informed and to overcome suspicions, prejudices, and misunderstandings.

Even as a believer gains in understanding and respect for the beliefs and practices of others, one becomes more aware and appreciative of the uniqueness of one's own faith. The goal here is truth, coming to recognize more accurately what others believe and how they respond to the Truth, as well as to clarify one's own beliefs to oneself and to others.

The dialogue of the sharing of religious experience has its own importance. While remaining firmly rooted in their own faith, each has much to learn from the other. This form of dialogue can be called the most difficult, since it presupposes a high degree of trust. The sharing of religious experience challenges and transforms those who engage in it. Each grows and is changed through the encounter with committed believers of other faiths, and each bears the hope that others be equally enriched in the process of sharing. Traditions of meditation and spiritual discipline can offer benefits to believers of various religions. The goal of this form of dialogue is mutual enrichment.

Facing problems in dialogue

The participants observed that dialogue is an activity that requires careful planning and attention to the sensitivities of others. Religious groups must meet as equal partners, with no single group controlling or determining the course of the encounter. Cultural differences must be taken into consideration and a careful choice of participants is needed. Common religious terminology must be sought so that no group need feel constrained to express themselves in concepts alien to their own religious experience. Many of these challenges, it was felt, might be overcome by encouraging interreligious participation at all stages of planning and execution of seminars.

In their discussions, participants faced several of the recurrent criticisms of dialogue efforts. It is frequently said that dialogue involves too small a number of participants to be able to bring about any serious change in society in terms of attitudes towards other religions. Secondly, it is said that adequate follow-up is often lacking. A third criticism frequently expressed is that dialogue efforts tend to be limited to scholars and religious leaders, with the result that the concerns of ordinary believers are often not expressed. These questions, which raise the related questions of multiplying the effects of seminars, follow-up, reaching the grassroots,

and involving underrepresented groups, were addressed by BIRA V/5 participants. **The** following suggestions were offered.

Multiplying the effects of seminars should involve a better use of communications media such as press releases and press conferences, local newspapers, jointly produced interreligious radio and television programs and videos. **A better follow-up** could be achieved through the establishment of interreligious committees, both Asia-wide and in each nation, **through circular** letters **or** a newsletter, and through the production of materials **on** interreligious dialogue for schoolchildren. It was noted that follow-up relies on well-functioning structures of dialogue in order to succeed; where these structures are in place, follow-up occurs; where they do not exist, follow-up is rare. BIRA V participants were encouraged by reports of countries where significant progress has been made and recommended that where effective local dialogue networks are not yet functioning, the establishment of such remains a priority.

The **grassroots** can be reached through participation in feasts and religious celebrants, interreligious pilgrimage tours, exposure of students **to** places of worship of others, and through non-formal means of education **to** foster esteem for other believers.

Involvement of underrepresented groups in dialogue requires bold initiatives: national and international youth seminars, interchanges among university students and among those in religious studies; support for women who desire to meet and share concerns across religious boundaries; inclusion of indigenous peoples in interreligious encounters. Solutions are not easy. Women need both time to share their own experiences and concerns in their own groups, but also have much to contribute to mixed groupings. For young people, it is important to prepare action-oriented interreligious youth events and camps that brings youths together with companions of their own age.

Praying together

The difficult and complex issue of praying together in interreligious contexts was briefly examined. Many felt that some form of prayer in common was not only advisable but necessary. The form it takes depends upon the group addressed. In order to allay suspicions of unworthy motives and to avoid trespassing upon the convictions of participants,

interreligious prayer should be prepared by representatives of participating religions. Some participants held that listening in respectful silence to prayers and readings of the Holy Books of others was a form of prayer acceptable to most believers in Asia. In situations of dialogue with the followers of indigenous religions, suitable forms of attendance must be sought.

Conclusion

The participants realized that they did not have definitive answers to all the issues raised. Their observations and suggestions remained at the level of tentative insights that they offered to the Asian bishops. The consensus of BIRA V/5 was to thank the FABC for honest and conscientious initiatives taken in instituting the BIRA V series and to express the hope that this commitment to dialogue continue to grow and expand in the coming years.

ASIAN JOURNEY 97

"Promoting Peace Through Inter-Religious Dialogue"

INTRODUCTION

We, the 36 participants of Asian Journey 97, come from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, as well as Australia, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Unfortunately, participants from India, Japan, Singapore and some from the Philippines were unable to attend the conference.

We are Christians who are actively involved in Christian-Muslim dialogue at different levels. This statement was prepared to share with you, our brothers and sisters, the reflection and experiences we gained throughout this journey. We hope that through this statement we can encourage you to continue your journey to promote peace through interreligious dialogue.

THE CONFERENCE

We gathered at Lahore in the name of Peace. There was unrest in the city at that time due to a public bombing. This emphasized the urgency of the need for people of goodwill to pursue peace. We brought to the conference the diversity of our cultures and personal experiences which have empowered us to continue in this challenging field of dialogue. We followed a process of immersion/exposure, analysis, reflection and pastoral planning. Our discussion was complemented by the input of Christian-Muslim dialogue experts.

THE EXPOSURE

An important part of the program was the two days exposure to Pakistani life. In small groups, we went to different parts of the country. Some went to rural areas, others to the cities of Islamabad in the North to Karachi in the South.

We met Pakistani of different social backgrounds. We were exposed to the poverty of the slums and what is being done to alleviate the

suffering. Simultaneously our senses were bombarded with the sights, sounds, and colors of this vibrant land.

We were reminded of this region's glorious past and priceless heritage and the possibility of its future by the awe-inspiring palaces and forts and exquisitely beautiful mosques and shrines. The constant sound of the call to pray during Ramadan ensured that we never forgot that we were in a Muslim country.

We attended meetings of interreligious discussions and Bible and Qur'anic groups, took part in gatherings of Muslim and Christian members of various NGOs who work together for/with Pakistan's poor and some of us had the opportunity to meet respected leaders of a Muslim spiritual movement. Our hosts were Catholic Christians, actively involved in dialogue in all its forms. We were impressed by their enthusiasm, the respect in which they are held by Muslims of goodwill and their determination to pursue the goals of dialogue despite often fierce opposition.

COUNTRY REPORTS

At the conference proper, reports were presented and discussed highlighting some outstanding features of the present states of Christian-Muslim relations in our countries. A rather varying and complex overall picture emerged.

In the Philippines, Christian-Muslim relations are marked by the recent peace accord between the government and the major Muslim movement. Yet ambiguity and tensions remain. The sudden repeated outbreaks of anti-Christian violence in Indonesia, which was hitherto considered a model of religious harmony has not dampened the spirit of dialogue.

Interreligious relations in Thailand are greatly helped by the country's secular constitution and the integrating role of the highly respected monarchy.

The Islamization policies of the government of Bangladesh and Pakistan pose a special challenge to dialogue. However, this has not diminished collaboration between Christians and Muslims in action for a better way of life and greater justice.

With marked economic growth, Malaysia is not free from the dilemmas surrounding dialogue. There is a tendency within religious communities to look to their own interest rather than collaborate in the spirit of dialogue.

The reports from Australia and Europe noted that deep seated prejudices and negative images of Islam are still prevalent there. They also stressed the close links between the Churches' care for good relations with Muslim Asian migrants and Christian Muslim relations in their countries of origin.

The exposure and the country reports prepared us for the formal part of the Asian Journey program, the workshops and discussion. Out of the sharings and the issues discussed, several points were seen to be of immediate importance. These were:

1. The dilemma faced by Christians who enter into dialogue with Muslims, namely the seeming dichotomy between proclamation of the gospel and open dialogue;
2. The practical issue of Inter-faith marriages;
3. The issue of Ecumenical and Intra-Church dialogue;
4. The use of public space and Church institutions.

"Proclamation Vs Dialogue"

It was felt that this is a false dichotomy, as dialogue is a part of proclamation. When dialoging, a Christian does not hide who s/he is or what s/he believes. The Christian however, witnesses to Christ and does invite the Muslim to consider his/her faith. In doing so the Christian recognizes that the Muslim does the same.

For the Christian, the Bible reflects the on-going dialogue between God and humankind. "Relatedness" is the way of God, who calls us into relationship with others. The aim of dialogue is for humanity to think not of "we-they" but "us". In its fullness, humanity is *Inclusive* not *Exclusive*.

Christians and Muslims do have different views of God, humanity, the world, and there could be a clash of truth claims. However by acknowledging this, and in deep mutual respect we can go ever deeper

into the mystery of God. Our differences can be a source of mutual enrichment. We need to remember that God meets humanity in surprising ways and that he reveals himself in human experience.

Inter-faith Marriage

This is becoming an increasingly significant fact of life. Positively, inter-faith marriage can be a way of practicing the dialogue of life and serve as bridge between communities. However it can be socially unacceptable. A partner can be influenced to change religion and the religious upbringing of the children be compromised.

Ecumenical and Intra-Church Dialogue

As we encourage dialogue between peoples of different faiths, we need to be consistent. Ecumenical and intra-Church dialogue should be pursued in this spirit of consistency. These are essential for dialogue to become a way of life.

Use of public space and Christian institutions

In the use of public space we should develop a tolerance for peoples of other faiths and their practices and accompany them during their times of prayer where possible, in the spirit of solidarity.

Church institutions should be inclusive, promoting universal values based on respect for our common humanity.

PASTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS

With the awareness of our continuing need of a change of heart, mind and action in our dialogue and life with Muslim, Asian Journey 97 recommends the following guidelines to participants and fellow Christians:

1. That we strive to work towards the change of attitudes and mentality of our people by emphasizing the positive values and aspects of religions in Asia.
2. That Churches take note of the growing reality of inter-faith marriages and discern a fitting pastoral response in preparing, guiding, and helping such couples and families.
3. That a holistic approach to interreligious dialogue with Muslims

be forged by integrating the work of grassroots groups and communities with the understanding, and articulation of research institutes and formation centers.

4. That creative ways and strategies be found to communicate the findings of study centers and the learning of conferences to people in their respective languages.

5. That schools, seminaries and formation centers continue the education of the people in the values and teachings of other religions.

6. That increased pastoral care through continuing catechesis and education in the values of Christianity and other religions be directed to all sectors of the community.

7. The bishops in FABC communicate to members of their respective dioceses the urgent need to foster goodwill, harmony and reconciliation with Muslims and people of other religions.

CONCLUSION

We are conscious that we are a small group of people and that others within our communities could have different views. We are also conscious that not all Asian communities are represented. However, we believe that our experience could be of benefit to all. We pray that like ours, your journey be filled with the loving presence of God.

Pastoral Planning Preparing for the Year 2000

U.S. BISHOPS

"While special initiatives may be, and should be, planned for the jubilee year 2000, initiatives undertaken during the years of preparation should be woven into the regular activities of parish life," suggests the U.S. bishops conference Secretariat' for the Third Millennium and the Jubilee Year 2000. A booklet released by the secretariat offers planning principles and suggests focus areas for local-level planners developing ways to implement the call of Pope John Paul II for a three-year period of preparations leading up to the start of the new millennium. The booklet "pulls together several documents which have already been developed to provide guidance to the church's preparation," and it includes a vision statement, an overview of planning goals and objectives, a digest by The Living Light magazine of Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter "Tertio Millennio Adveniente" (Origins, Vol. 24, No. 24, in the edition dated Nov. 24, 1994), reflections on the themes of the three preparation years and a reading list. The booklet closes with two prayers: Pope John Paul II's prayer for the 1997 year of preparation and a prayer by Archbishop Oscar Romero titled "Creating the Church of 21st Century," which says in part: "We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work ...We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest." The text of the booklet follows.

Pope John Paul II, in his apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, has extended an invitation to the whole church to prepare for the coming of the third millennium with three years of preparation leading to a celebration of the jubilee year 2000, the anniversary of the coming of Jesus Christ into world history. These years of preparation and the celebration of the jubilee year 2000 present the church with a unique opportunity to enter the first years of the third millennium with a renewed spirit and energy. It is a time to root ourselves in Jesus Christ, build communities of faith and work with new energy to create a more just and peaceful world. It is an invitation to experience a "a new springtime of Christianity." This process must begin on the personal level through the development and strengthening of our relationship with Jesus Christ, bringing about a change of heart — conversion — and extend to our families, communities and society as a whole.

The next few years provide the church in the United States, in its pastoral mission, with a special graced opportunity to move forward together around the vision outlined by the Holy Father in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* ("On the Coming of the Third Millennium"). In fact, already present in our church today are many wonderful examples of how this new evangelization is taking place. This includes efforts such as small Christian communities and faith-sharing groups, the catechumenate, the renewal of liturgical life, social action initiatives that advocate for the sanctity of life, a renewed interest in spirituality, the participation of the laity, especially women, in many and varied roles in church and civic life, the formation of youth, and the continuing dialogue among Christians and with those of other faiths.

The goal of this brief publication is to introduce you to the church's hope for these years of preparation and the celebration of the jubilee year. This resource pulls together several documents which have already been developed to provide guidance to the church's preparation. These include a vision statement, along with several goals and objectives which have been developed by the bishops' subcommittee on the third millennium; a reflection on the themes of 1997-1999 developed by the same committee; and a digest of *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* with a glossary of terms reprinted with permission from the April 1996 issue of the Living Light journal. Along with these are some reflections on planning gleaned from conversations with diocesan staff around the country. Hopefully, this

resource will provide you with some first steps along your journey so that the new millennium may truly be a new springtime of Christianity.

Key Questions for Reflection

As the planning process begins, consider using the following three questions to guide the journey. Each of these questions can be considered on a personal, parish/diocesan and societal level.

1. Where are we right now? What is the state of our own personal lives — in what way am I in need of conversion and forgiveness? What is happening in parish life today? What is the state of things within society? Is parish life contributing to bringing about the kingdom of God in our world today?

2. Where do we want to be as we enter into the third millennium? What type of church and society do we hope for? This is the visioning question. What vision of life is the Holy Father calling us to in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*? What does this mean for me personally? For the parish or diocesan church? For our culture and society?

3. How are we going to get there? These are the planning and strategy questions. What practical things do we need to begin doing now in order to undertake this journey into the 21st century? Can we identify four or five things to do in the next few years that are achievable or would set us moving in the right direction toward building a culture of life?

Six Planning Principles

As we reflect on the above questions, consider the following six principles:

1. Take a timeout! Reflect. Begin with a fresh start. In order to prepare ourselves for the new millennium we need to take a break from the busyness of contemporary life. Our homes, work and church lives are typically marked by endless activities which can provide little time for personal reflection. Can we slow things down in the next few years so that we acquire the right insight as we move into the third millennium?

2. Study the Scriptures and the teachings of the church. Reread the documents of Vatican II, the Holy Father's exhortation *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* and other recent teachings to understand the church's vision for the next millennium. What does this mean for our parish and/or diocese? The "vision for the jubilee year" and the "digest" sections of this pamphlet can be helpful in getting you started. Work to focus the vision in your own mind.

3. Focus on spirituality, not programs. The Holy Father is primarily calling us to deepen our spiritual lives. What would parish or diocesan activities look like if the goal was helping people enrich and deepen their spirituality? Which initiatives arise from the expressed needs of people rather than perceived needs? Can we do more by doing less? Can we simplify parish life? While special initiatives may be, and should be, planned for the jubilee year 2000, initiatives undertaken during the years of preparation should be woven into the regular activities of parish life. Use the themes of 1997-1999 to provide a focus for regular parish and diocesan activities.

4. Bring people together to collaborate. This is not an initiative or project of one committee, but is the work of the whole diocese and/or parish. It is about being a church together. The next four years provide us with a unique historical moment - a special graced time. Be open to the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing forth the kingdom of God during this time.

5. Create a hopeful attitude. It is our belief in God's presence within human history that gives us hope. All things are possible through God. The Holy Spirit working within the world today provides us with hope. People with hope live with an eye toward the future.

6. Work ecumenically whenever possible. The jubilee year is not solely a "Catholic" celebration, but a Christian moment. It is also an opportunity for all men and women of faith to come together for the sake of the common good. Search out ways that initiatives, projects, etc., can be undertaken ecumenically and/or through interfaith collaboration.

Consider the following focus areas or reference points in planning. These parallel many of the various commissions and committees of the

Holy See's Central Committee:

- History and theology.
- Art and culture.
- Liturgy.
- Communications and media.
- Education and formation.
- Social justice.
- Family life and pastoral ministry.
- Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

ABCs of the Preparation Period

Consider the following three action steps as a way of simplifying the goals for the next four years:.

1. Accept Jesus Christ. Focus on helping people develop a relationship with Jesus Christ that will lead to continual personal conversion — a change of heart. It is Christ who is the foundation of our lives.

2. Build communities of faith. It is within these communities where people are able to grow in faith, be strengthened through the word and the sacraments, and be prepared for discipleship in the world.

3. Create a more just and peaceful world. The mission of the church is directed outward toward the world. Let us work with renewed faith and energy in creating a culture of life within our world today.

Vision for the Jubilee Year

The coming of Jesus Christ as a tiny child in the womb of a young Jewish woman and his birth in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago propelled world history in an irreversible forward direction. God truly entered the human family so that humanity could fully enter God's family. The preparations for the third millennium provide us Christians with a privileged historical opportunity — to proclaim anew to the world a profound faith that in Christ the Lord "can be found the key, the focal point and the goal of all human history" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 10). These preparations also provide us with the opportunity to usher in what our Holy Father Pope John Paul

n has termed a "new springtime of Christianity," a "new evangelization" of holiness and service.

To facilitate this Pope John Paul invites the church to enter into a kind of worldwide retreat, an intense period of prayer and "journey of authentic conversion." This spiritual pilgrimage has as its ultimate destination a full sharing in the loving community of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with the Son Jesus Christ as the way and companion of the pilgrim. It "takes place in the heart of each person, extends to the believing community, and then reaches to the whole of humanity." Such a call to conversion reinforces the goals of "Go and Make Disciples: The National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States," which emphasizes ongoing renewal and reform of persons, parishes and societies.

The principal texts for this worldwide retreat, drawing us closer to Jesus as the great anniversary of his birth approaches, are Luke 4:18-19, the Holy Father's exhortation on *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* and the documents of Vatican II. The Lucan passage presents Jesus the evangelizer, anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to proclaim good news to the poor and to everyone a year of jubilee — a time of freedom from bondage, restoration, forgiveness of debts and favor from the Lord (cf. Lv 25:8ff). We Christians are called today to imitate the great followers of Christ who have cooperated with God's grace in the transformation of the world — in such social justice movements as abolition, civil rights, women's rights, higher education and respect for life from conception to natural death. We are also called in a spirit of penance to ask God's forgiveness for those times in our history when we have fallen far short of serving his kingdom through our own negligence and sin.

As a Catholic church, we are compelled to examine our conscience according to the renewal challenges of the Second Vatican Council, the "Advent liturgy" of the jubilee year 2000. We are challenged to strengthen our commitment to deeper pursuit of holiness, wider community participation and a stronger witness of faith. Aided by the Catechism of the Catholic Church, we are invited to grow in our Catholic identity and knowledge of and enthusiasm for the faith. Through prayer and dialogue, we are to seek deeper unity within the Catholic family and to continue our ecumenical pursuit of full communion with fellow Christians.

In this manner, we shall all, by God's grace, some day break bread together and become in Christ bread for the world. And Christianity will indeed experience a new springtime.

Goals and Objectives

These goals and objectives are offered to assist the church in the United States prepare for and celebrate the jubilee year 2000. To an extent the first three goals are the ABCs of our planning: A — accept Jesus Christ; B — building faith-sharing communities; C — creating a just and peaceful world.

Goal 1:

Accepting Jesus Christ

To make the preparation for and celebration of the third millennium a "new springtime of Christianity" centered on Jesus Christ as the "key, focus and goal of all human history" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 10).

Objectives:

1. To continue to be an evangelizing church marked with a zeal for the Gospel, reaching those within and outside our community, helping all to know and more deeply appreciate the wonderful impact that Jesus Christ has made on the history of the world.

2. To assist in the ongoing conversion and reconciliation of individuals and societies in Jesus Christ, through prayer and catechesis, worship and preaching, and pastoral care.

3. To work together, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the unity of all Christians in the world today through study and dialogue, common prayer and pastoral action.

4. To effectively utilize modern communications to make known the profound impact of Jesus Christ in the world.

Goal 2:

Building Communities of Faith

To continue the renewal of church life begun with the Second Vatican

Council by studying the documents of the council and, with a newfound energy, working to implement the teachings and vision of the council for the world and the church.

Objectives:

1. For men and women of faith to deepen their understanding of the theology, spirituality and ecclesiology of Vatican II and its significance as the "Advent liturgy" of the great jubilee through the guidance of the church by utilizing the means of lifelong Christian education, catechesis, preaching and formation.

2. To continue to implement the teachings and vision of Vatican II by encouraging parishes and Catholic movements to be Christian communities of hospitality, outreach, catechesis, good preaching, life-giving worship and care for others.

3. To encourage parishes and national organizations to prepare for the next 1,000 years by a conversion of hearts and minds and through the continual renewal of church and civic life in the vision and altitude of Vatican II.

Goal 3:

Creating a Just and Peaceful World

To work toward the transformation of society in the spirit of the jubilee — the year of favor from the Lord — by proclaiming in word and deed the good news of Jesus Christ.

Objectives:

1. To become partners in the effort to promote cooperation and unity among the nations and regions of the world by seeking forgiveness of past wrongs and by affirming the dignity and worth of each person through a commitment to the common good.

2. To proclaim the Gospel of life in solidarity with one's neighbor, especially the poor, the marginalized and those who experience injustice, prejudice, discrimination, rejection or are "held captive" in any way.

3. To strengthen efforts to support families and to create a society filled with hope, care and respect for young people.

4. To lead the local church in continued heartfelt gratitude to God for the blessings, favor, power and grace which salvation has brought to us through the incarnation and redemption.

Goal 4:

Celebrating Jubilee

To develop appropriate efforts for the preparation and celebration of the jubilee year 2000 so that this "privileged historical moment" does indeed become a "new springtime of Christianity," leading us into the third millennium.

Objectives:

1. To prepare for the third millennium by working collaboratively with the NCCB/USCC, Catholic religious communities, Christian ecumenical partners, other faith communities and civic organizations.

2. To provide a vision and encouragement, along with practical suggestions, for local celebrations.

3. To promote the development of a unified evangelization effort highlighting the Catholic Church as a welcoming, reconciling and eucharistic community.

Themes

Year 1-1997

General Theme:	converting to Jesus in holiness.
Trinitarian theme:	Christ the Son.
Virtue highlighted:	faith.
Sacramental focus:	baptism.
Mariological theme:	model of faith.
Ecumenical goal:	sharing of faith.

Year 2 • 1998

General theme:	unifying the church in the Holy Spirit.
Trinitarian theme:	Holy Spirit.

Virtue highlighted:	hope.
Sacramental focus:	confirmation, charisms.
Mariological theme:	model of hope.
Ecumenical goal:	Christian unity.

Year 3 - 1999

General theme:	serving the Father in justice.
Trinitarian theme:	Father.
Virtue highlighted:	charity.
Sacramental focus:	penance.
Mariological theme:	model of charity.
Ecumenical goal:	dialogue with world religions and cultures.

A Digest of the Apostolic Letter

John Paul II's apostolic letter in preparation for the third millennium presents a year-by-year checklist of themes, goals and activities. Pope John Paul II asks that everyone "do as much as possible to ensure that the great challenge of the year 2000 is not overlooked." In the fall of 1994 he issued the apostolic letter *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* ("As the Third Millennium Draws Near"), which outlines a six-year program of preparation. The editors of *The Living Light* have prepared a digest of the pope's letter that provides a checklist of the main themes and emphases for each stage in the preparation (reprinted with permission: *The Living Light*, Spring, 1996, USCC Department of Education). The numbers in parentheses refer to paragraphs on which the digest is based. The full text of Pope John Paul's apostolic letter can be found in *Origins* Vol. 24, No. 24 (Nov. 24, 1994).

John Paul II begins with a reflection on the words of St. Paul, "when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman" (Gal 4:4). Thus the event that took place in Bethlehem 2000 years ago has cosmic significance (No. 3). Further, Christ "fully reveals man to man himself and makes this supreme calling clear" (No. 4). The incarnate Word is the fulfillment of the yearning present in all the religions of the world (No. 6).

Time is of fundamental importance in Christianity. The world was created in time. The history of salvation unfolds in time and finds its

culmination in "the fullness of time." John Paul quotes the liturgy of the Easter vigil, "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, alpha and omega, all time belongs to him, and all the ages, to him be glory and power through every age forever" (No. 11). It is in the context of time and the celebration of anniversaries that John Paul explains the idea and tradition of jubilees (Nos. 11-16).

Great Jubilee Preparations

With the eyes of faith we look to our own century, searching out events and signs that bear witness to God's intervention in human affairs. From this point of view the Second Vatican Council can be read as inaugurating a new era. Thus the best preparation for the third millennium is renewed commitment to the teachings of Vatican II (No. 20).

Other events that have helped in preparation for jubilee 2000 can be seen in:

- Synods with the underlying theme "the new evangelization" (Nos. 21, 25).

- New awareness of the church's salvific mission in postsynodal instructions (No. 21).

- Defense of basic values of peace and justice expounded in papal encyclicals (No. 22).

- Increased sensitivity to the working of the Spirit in different communities, cultures, societies (No. 23).

- Papal travels to every continent witnessing to the missionary character of the church and the concern for ecumenism (Nos. 24, 25).

- Holy years, especially the Marian Year (1986-1987) and the Year of the Family (1994) (Nos. 26-28).

The immediate preparation has two phases:

Phase 1 (1994-1996) continues work done earlier in this century and heightens appreciation of the value and meaning of jubilee 2000 (No. 31).

- A jubilee is always an occasion of special grace (No. 32).

- A jubilee is a time of thanksgiving and joy: thanksgiving for the gift of the church; joy based on the forgiveness of sins (No. 32).

- As the second millennium draws to a close, it is appropriate that

Christians recall the "times in history when they departed from the spirit of Christ and his Gospel" (No. 33).

— The church cannot "cross the threshold of the new millennium without encouraging her children to purify themselves, through repentance, of past errors and instances of infidelity, inconsistency and slowness to act" (No. 33).

— Christians must examine their consciences, repent of divisions in the church that occurred during the past millennium, and renew commitment to ecumenical efforts aimed at church unity (No. 34).

— Members of the church must express regret for their acquiescence to intolerance and even the use of violence in service of the truth and draw lessons for the future (No. 35).

— Christians need to examine themselves on their responsibility for the evils of our day: religious indifference, widespread disregard for the "transcendence of human life," the fundamental values of the family (No. 36).

— Catholics must also examine themselves regarding their commitment to the teachings of Vatican II, especially vivifying the preaching of the word and the renewal of the liturgy (No. 36).

— Martyrologies must be updated to include heroic men and women of our time whose holiness and steadfastness have witnessed to the faith and a commitment to ecumenism (No. 37).

— Synods are planned throughout the world, including a synod for the Americas on the problems of the new evangelization, issues of justice and the international economy (No. 38).

Phase 2 (1997-1999): Over a span of three years, "the strictly preparatory phase" will center on Christological and Trinitarian themes of jubilee 2000 (No. 39).

Year 1 (1997):

Jesus Christ

1. The distinctly Christological theme for this year is "Jesus Christ, the one savior of the world, yesterday, today and forever" (Heb 13:8) that includes:

— Renewed appreciation of Christ, savior and proclaimer of the Gospel.

- Deeper understanding of the mystery of the incarnation.
- Necessity of faith in Christ for salvation (No. 40).
- A return to the Bible in order to grasp better who Christ is and what his message of salvation means (No. 40).

- Reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church; it can be of great assistance in presenting a faithful and systematic exposition of Christology (No. 42).

2. Year 1 is a time to renew an appreciation of baptism that:

- Makes the mystery of salvation sacramentally present.
- Is the basis of Christian living.
- Witnesses to the communion of all Christians (No. 41).

3. Year 1 is a time to strengthen the faith and witness of Christians to inspire in them:

- True longing for holiness.
- A deep desire for conversion and personal renewal.
- Prayer and solidarity with one's neighbor, especially the most needy (No. 42).

4. The centrality of Christ cannot be separated from the role of Mary as:

- Mother of God.
- Model of faith (No. 43).

Year 2 (1998):

The Holy Spirit

1. The Trinitarian theme for 1998 focuses on the Holy Spirit, consubstantial with the Father and Son, who:

- Is the eternal source of every gift that comes from God in the order of creation.

- Is the direct principle of God's self-communication in order of **grace**.

- Makes present in the church and in the soul of each individual the unique revelation of Christ.

2. Year 2 calls for a renewed appreciation of the sacraments, especially confirmation and the variety of charisms and ministries whereby the Spirit:

- Inspires the unity of the church.
- Is the principal agent of the new evangelization.
- Prepares for the full manifestation of the kingdom of God at the end of time (No. 45).

3. In this eschatological perspective of the end of time, believers should have a revitalized sense of theological hope that:

- Encourages them not to lose sight of the final goal that gives meaning and value to life.
- Offers them reasons to transform reality according to God's plan.
- Helps them recognize the signs of hope present in the last part of this century that include scientific, especially medical, advances, an awareness of environmental responsibility, efforts to reconcile peoples, a deeper commitment to the cause of Christian unity, and dialogue with other religions and contemporary culture (No. 46).

4. Mary is contemplated and imitated as the woman who:

- Conceived the incarnate Word by the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Throughout her life was docile to the workings of the Spirit.
- Gave expression to the longing of the poor of Yahweh who entrust themselves to the power of God (48).

Year 3 (1999):

God the Father

1. The final year of preparation will aim at broadening horizons so that believers will see things in the perspective of Christ's revelation of "the Father who is in heaven" so that we discover:

- His unconditional love for everyone, in particular the prodigal son.
- That the pilgrimage to the Father begins in each person's heart, extends to the believing community and reaches to the whole of humanity (No. 49).

2. Christians should recognize that Christ revealed not only the Father but also what it means to be human and thus in the final preparatory year we must:

— Face the challenge of secularism and the crisis of civilization impoverished by its lack of religious commitment and common values (No. 52).

— Seize the opportunity of the new millennium to engage in interreligious dialogue, pre-eminently with Jews and Muslims (No. 53).

3. The sense of being on a "journey to the Father" requires an authentic conversion and a greater appreciation of the meaning of the sacrament of penance that celebrates:

— Liberation from sin.

— Renewal of commitment to ethical values in natural law, confirmed and deepened in the Gospel (No. 50).

4. The third year of preparation will put special emphasis on charity:

— Recalling its twofold aspect, love of God and love of neighbor as summing up the moral life of the believer (No. 50).

— Remembering that Jesus came to preach the good news to the poor and stressing the church's preferential option for the poor and outcast.

— Reflecting on other challenges such as women's rights and the promotion of family and marriage (No. 51).

5. Mary, highly favored daughter of the Father, appears before the eyes of believers as:

— Perfect model of love of God and neighbor.

— One who responded to God's call with complete openness.

— One inviting all to return to their Father's house.

Year 2000: Celebration of the Great Jubilee

— Jubilee 2000 will be celebrated simultaneously in the Holy Land, Rome and local churches throughout the world.

— The special aim of the jubilee will be to give glory to the Holy Trinity "from whom everything in the world and in history comes and to whom everything returns."

— An international eucharistic congress will be held in Rome to honor Christ who continues to offer himself as source of divine life.

— Plans call for a meeting of all Christians, carefully prepared to avoid misunderstandings.

— Everyone must do as much as possible to ensure that the challenge and special grace of the year 2000 is not overlooked (No. 55).

Glossary

Eschatology is the branch of theology concerned with the destiny of the world and human beings in the framework of God's plan of creation and salvation. It reflects on the second coming of Christ, the end of the world, death and the fate of human beings in the context of judgment, heaven, purgatory and hell.

Hermeneutics studies the principles of interpretation. Most often they are applied to a text, but Pope John Paul II describes preparations for the third millennium as a "hermeneutical key" to understanding his pontificate (No. 23).

Jubilee in the original Hebrew means a "ram's horn." It was used to herald "a year of the Lord's favor" (Is 61:1-2), when slaves were emancipated, lands restored to their original owners and debts forgiven (Lv 25:10). The Catholic Church adopted the practice. Since 1300 the church has celebrated jubilees or holy years as times of repentance, special blessings, prayers and pilgrimages.

Martyrology is a catalogue of the names of martyrs and other saints arranged according to their feasts in the liturgical calendar. The Roman Martyrology contains the official list of saints venerated by the Roman church, but other churches had their own martyrologies that record the names and feasts of local saints.

Milennarianism interprets the 1,000-year reign of Christ mentioned in the Book of Revelation (20:6) as a period of earthly happiness when the just shall rule the earth. This literal interpretation of Revelation has been universally repudiated by the Catholic tradition, but it continues to be held by adherents of the Adventist tradition (e.g., Jehovah Witnesses.)

Millennialism is a synonym for millenarianism favored by social scientists. They give it a secular meaning that refers to the coming of an ideal society, a new social order created by revolutionary action.

Millennium has two meanings. Most simply, as used by Pope John Paul II, it is a period of 1,000 years. In some Christian traditions it

takes on a special meaning in reference to the 1,000-year reign of **Christ described** in the Book of Revelation (see above).

New evangelization is a term favored by Pope John Paul to describe a renewed effort to proclaim the Gospel in such a way as to transform modern society and culture.

A Prayer of Faith

(Pope John Paul II's official prayer for the year of preparation, 1997.)

Lord Jesus, who are the fullness of time and Lord of history, prepare our minds to celebrate with faith the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 so that it might be a year of grace and mercy. Give us a pure and simple heart so that we might contemplate with ever renewed wonder the mystery of the incarnation when you, the Son of God, in the womb of the Virgin, sanctuary of the Spirit, became our brother.

[Praise and glory to you, O Christ, today and forever.]

Jesus, the beginning and fulfillment of the new man, convert our hearts so that, having abandoned the ways of error, we might walk in your footsteps on the path which leads to life. Make us live our faith steadfastly, fulfilling our baptismal promises, testifying with conviction to your word, so that the life-giving light of the Gospel might shine in our families and in society.

[Praise and glory to you, O Christ, today and forever.]

Jesus, power and wisdom of God, inspire in us a love for Sacred Scripture in which is heard the voice of the Father which enlightens, inflames, nourishes and consoles. Word of the living God, renew missionary zeal in the church that all peoples may come to know you, true Son of God and true son of man, the one mediator between man and God.

[Praise and glory to you, O Christ, today and forever.]

Jesus, fount of unity and peace, strengthen communion in your church. Give strength to the ecumenical movement so that all your disciples may become one by the power of the Holy Spirit. You who

gave us as the rule of life the new commandment of love, make us builders of a world that is united, in which war is conquered by peace and the culture of death by a zeal for life.

[Praise and glory to you, O Christ, today and forever.]

Jesus, only-begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth, the light which illumines every person, give the abundance of your life to all who seek you with a sincere heart. To you, man's Redeemer, beginning and end of time and of the universe, to the Father, unending source of all good, and to the Holy Spirit, seal of infinite love, be all honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Creating the Church of the 21st Century

(A prayer composed by Archbishop Oscar Romero, who was martyred in San Salvador in 1980.)

It helps now and then, to step back and take the long view. The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts', it is even beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us. No statement says all that could be said. No prayer fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection, no pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capability.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. Amen.

Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1997

DAVID BARRETT

How well is global mission going? Non-Christians in mid-1997 number 3,897 million. Each year their number grows by 47 million, an increase of 129,000 a day. Research identifies well over 15,000 distinct, separate, and different religions. Two or three entirely new non-Christian religions are begun every day. Other Christians are the focus of 97% of all Christian ministry in the world, with 3% focused on those non-Christians already in contact with the Christian world, and with the others not at all. Without a comprehensive contact Christians will be irrelevant to 4 billion non-Christians.

Yer:	1900	1970	mid-1997	2000	2025
1. Total population	1,619,886,800	3,697,141,000	5,892,480,000	6,158,051,000	8,294,341,000
2. Urban dwellers (urbanites)	232,694,900	1,352,784,000	2,716,806,000	2,926,306,000	5,065,354,000
3. Rural dwellers	1,387,191,900	2,344,357,000	3,175,674,000	3,231,745,000	3,228,987,000
4. Adult population (over 15s)	1,025,938,000	2,310,713,000	4,059,801,000	4,242,897,000	6,229,050,000
5. Literates	286,705,000	1,479,697,000	2,685,031,000	3,003,971,000	5,093,494,000
6. Nonliterates	739,233,000	831,016,000	1,374,770,000	1,238,926,000	1,135,556,000
WORLDWIDE EXPANSION OF CITIES					
7. Metropolises (over 100,000 population)	300	2,400	3,960	4,200	6,800
8. Megacities (over 1 million population)	20	161	400	433	650
9. Urban poor	100 million	650 million	1,782 million	2,000 million	3,050 million
10. Urban slumdwellers	20 million	260 million	1,043 million	1,300 million	2,100 million

WORLD POPULATION BY RELIGION

11. Christians (total all kinds) (= World C)	558,056,300	1,245,934,000	1,995,026,000	2,119,342,000	3,058,229,000
12. Muslims	200,102,200	564,212,000	1,154,302,000	1,24(1258)0	1,957,019,000
13. Nonreligious	2,923,300	556,169,000	886,104,000	915,714,000	1,112,191,000
14. Hindus	203,033,300	477,024,000	806,099,000	846,467,000	1,118,447,000
15. Buddhists	127,159,000	237,262,000	328,233,000	334,852,000	385,818,000
16. Atheists	225,600	169,277,000	224,489,000	231,515,000	300,878,000
17. New-Religionists	5,910,000	78,288,000	124,835,000	130,352,000	148,266,000
18. Tribal religionists	106,339,699	90,203,000	100,137,000	100,862,000	114,204,000
19. Sikhs	2,960,600	10,868,000	20,159,000	21,774,000	37,347,000
20. Jews	12,269,800	13,605,000	14,180,000	15,192,000	17,158,000
21. Non-Christian (=Worlds A and B)	1,061,830,500	2,451,207,000	3,897,454,000	4,038,709,000	5,236,112,000

GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

22. Total Christians as % of world (= World C)	34.4	33.7	33.9	34.4	36.9
23. Affiliated church members	521,563,200	1,159,119,000	1,808,278,000	1,888,270,000	2,589,206,000
24. Practicing Christians	469,259,800	905,352,000	1,315,693,000	1,356,313,000	2,280,000,000
25. Pentecostals/Charismatics	3,700,000	74,352,000	497,423,000	554,157,000	1,140,000,000
26. Great Commission Christians (active)	50 million	309 million	759,275,000	859,985,000	1,166,300,000
27. Average Christian martyrs per year	35,600	230,000	160,000	165,000	300,000

MEMBERSHIP BY ECCLESIASTICAL

BLOC

28. Anglicans	30,573,700	48,705,000	54,381,000	55,344,000	71,498,000
29. Catholics (non-Roman)	276,000	3,210,000	6,385,000	6,688,000	9,635,000
30. Marginal Protestants	927,600	11,092,000	34,513,000	40,155,000	90,056,000
31. Nonwhite indigenous Christians	7,743,100	60,118,000	197,022,000	212,405,000	360,938,000
32. Orthodox	115,897,700	146,863,000	214,692,000	219,592,000	261,839,000
33. Protestants	103,056,700	239,056,000	381,147,000	404,892,000	640,342,000
34. Roman Catholics	266,419,400	688,542,000	992,295,000	1,030,637,000	1,303,307,000

MEMBERSHIP BY CONTINENT

35. Africa	8,756,400	118,721,000	309,639,000	338,285,000	669,510,000
36. Asia (new UN definition)	20,110,000	90,003,000	299,170,000	323,192,000	521,534,000
37. Europe (new UN definition)	368,790,600	493,691,000	526,572,000	527,576,000	512,626,000
38. Latin America and the Caribbean	60,025,100	268,350,000	450,543,000	471,855,000	618,389,000
39. Northern America	59,569,700	173,331,000	202,843,000	207,251,000	241,519,000
40. Oceania	4,311,400	15,023,000	19,512,000	20,111,000	25,628,000

CHRISTIAN ORGANIZATIONS

41. Service agencies	1,500	14,100	23,400	24,000	40,000
42. Foreign-mission sending agencies	600	2,200	4,600	4,800	8,500
43. Stand-alone global monoliths	35	62	100	120	5,000

CHRISTIAN WORKERS

44. Nationals (all denominations)	1,050,000	2,350,000	4,748,000	5,104,000	6,500,000
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45. Aliens (foreign missionaries)	62,000	240,000	403,000	420,000	550,000
CHRISTIAN FINANCE (in U.S. \$, per year)					
46. Personal income of church members, \$	270 billion	4,100 billion	11,500 billion	12,700 billion	26,000 billion
47. Personal income of Pentecostals/ Charismatics, \$	250,000,000	157 billion	1,373 billion	1,550 billion	9,500 billion
48. Giving to Christian causes, \$	8 billion	70 billion	200 billion	220 billion	870 billion
49. Churches' income, \$	7 billion	50 billion	95 billion	100 billion	300 billion
50. Parachurch and institutional income, \$	1 billion	20 billion	105 billion	120 billion	570 billion
51. Ecclesiastical crime, \$	300,000	5,000,000	10.4 billion	13.2 billion	65 billion
52. Income of global foreign mission, \$	200,000,000	3.0 billion	10.9 billion	12 billion	60 billion
53. Computers in Christian use (total numbers)	0	1,000	315,000,000	400,000,000	2,500,000,000
CHRISTIAN LITERATURE					
54. New commercial book titles per year	2,200	17,100	24,400	25,000	70,000
55. Christian periodicals	3,500	23,000	31,300	35,000	100,000
56. New books/articles on evangelization per year	500	3,100	14,100	16,000	80,000
SCRIPTURE DISTRIBUTION (all sources)					
57. Bibles per year	5,452,600	25,000,000	64,094,000	70,000,000	180,000,000
58. New Testaments per year	7,300,000	45,000,000	99,385,000	110,000,000	250,000,000
59. Scriptures including gospels, selections	20 million	281 million	1,833 million	2,050 million	4,000 million
CHRISTIAN BROADCASTING					
60. Christian radio/TV stations	0	1,230	3,400	4,000	10,000
61. Total monthly listeners/viewers	0	750,000,000	1,896,176,000	2,150,000,000	3,800,000,000
62. for Christian stations	0	150,000,000	553,139,000	600,000,000	1,300,000,000
63. for secular stations	0	650,000,000	1,597,226,000	1,810,000,000	2,800,000,000
CHRISTIANIZED URBAN MISSION					
64. Non-Christian megacities	5	65	185	202	280
65. New non-Christian urban dwellers per day	5,200	51,100	127,000	140,000	360,000
66. Urban Christians	159,600,000	660,800,000	1,299,820,000	1,393,700,000	2,448,800,000
CHRISTIAN EVANGELISM					
67. Evangelism-hours per year	10 billion	99 billion	432 billion	480 billion	4,250 billion
68. Disciple-opportunities per capita per year	6	27	73	77	500
WORLD EVANGELIZATION					
69. Unevangelized population (=World A)	788,159,000	1,391,956,000	1,100,484,000	1,038,819,000	600,000,000
70. Unevangelized as % of world	48.7	37.6	18.7	16.6	7.1
71. World evangelization plans since A.D. 30	250	510	1,240	1,400	3,000

Messages on Monte De Piedad Issue

JAIME CARD. SIN

I

*If they do this to the green wood,
what will happen when it is dry?
Lk 24:31*

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This is your brother and bishop. The events of the past few days have prompted me to write you this letter to share with you the movements of my heart.

I am hurt when my priests are hurt specially by false accusations and irresponsible publications. My priests belong to Christ. They are Christs for the community. When they are subjected to media indignities, it is Christ who gets hurt. I get hurt when my priests are hurt. They are the treasures of the heart of every bishop.

The sale of Monte de Piedad was done with the very best of intentions. We wanted to have a bank to help the poor and to provide adequate support for our catechetical programs. But maintaining the bank was taking so much of us already. The Church is not for business. I have never had any illusions of making the Church a financial empire. Our kingdom is not of this world. There were nine offers to buy the bank. We took the offer of Mr. Vicente Tan. We showed him all the

audit reports available. He even boasted that he was able to secure some reports from the Department of Supervision of the Bangko Sentral. We told him everything we knew about the problems of the bank. I have never deceived anybody in my life. I believe that only the truth can set us free. It was the truth that set us free from the dictatorship in 1986. I live by the truth who is Christ Himself. Is it not foolish to buy something you do not know? I dealt with him with full trust and transparency. I cannot understand how he could turn the table against us and put up this orchestrated and unsubstantiated assault on the integrity of the Church. I am ready to forgive provided the truth is given a chance.

My blood brother and sisters have never benefited materially from the Church. Sometimes, I even think that because of my services to the Church, I even deprive my family of my spiritual support which they deserve as Catholics. But they always understand. I am their offering to God. They provided me with my clothes, my personal needs and even do my laundry. You can understand why I am hurt that they accuse me of nepotism. I have not thanked my family enough for their sacrifices for me and there they are being accused of bleeding the Church of its funds. It is so unfair. If such things as these are done when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry? (Lk 24:31)

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Manila did not make any withdrawals so as not to exacerbate the situation of the bank. Our archdiocesan funds were locked up in the Santa Cruz branch and the manager of the branch will confirm this. We did not abandon the sheep. We are not paid hirelings. We are shepherds of the flock ready and willing to lay down our lives for the lambs and the sheep. We are feeling the injury of the bankrun too. The pain is heavier because we are also being accused falsely. The lost money we can recover; but when integrity is attacked and our sacrifices are ignored, it is only the love of Christ that remains to be our sure consolation.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop was a passive investor of that bank. Why is the target on the investor and not on the managers? I do not even go to the bank. I visit them once in a while to do my priestly functions — to bless them and celebrate the Eucharist for them.

In all these, I feel I have been brought closer and closer to the humiliating experiences of Christ on the cross. He was stripped of His

dignity, He was robbed of His good name and ridiculed like a criminal. That was what they did to Christ. We cannot expect a lesser fate. Our detractors and false accusers are doing us a favor. They have brought us to the cross, to the same cross where Christ suffered and died for love of us.

The pain of those orchestrated assaults against the Church is more than the pain that sickness and disease could inflict on us. Sickness is caused by germs and viruses. These assaults are fruits of human evil.

I promise to love you even more. I will serve you all, including my detractors, to the last breath of my life and to the last drop of my blood.

My conscience is clean. I have never deceived anybody. I have never abandoned my sheep in danger. I will lay down my life for them.

Please pray for your Archbishop. I am praying for you all. We are strong with the strength of God.

II

FEAR NO EVIL, THE LORD IS WITH US (Cf. Ps 23:4)

This is your brother and bishop again reaching out to you through this letter.

Please receive my message of gratitude.

Join me in thanking God for His goodness and kindness through all the days when our detractors feasted on the unfounded criticism against the Church. In my moments of affliction and pain, it was God who was my consolation and sure support. I know that the evil that the enemies of the Church hurled against us has served us a good purpose. It has made us more united, more committed to the Gospel of truth and more ardent in the call to serve. Thanks be to God who makes everything bearable and possible.

I liken the events of the past days to the way of the cross. It was a road of anguish and terrible pain. It was also during these days that I met so many Simons of Cyrene to help me carry the load of the heavy cross; so many reliable friends similar to the women of Jerusalem who consoled Jesus along the way; so many Veronicas who came forward to assure me of their cherished support to wipe, not my bloodied face, but my bloodied reputation and integrity that my detractors want so desperately to destroy.

I thank God for you all.

I also have a word of thanks to my brothers and sisters who have brought this terrible cross on my weak shoulders. The betrayal that I endured from them challenged me to love God even more, to follow His will more ardently and to rest in His heart faithfully. The ridicule, sarcastic remarks and mockery we received from them are known to God. I plead mercy and forgiveness for them.

I thank the bishops, the priests, religious men and women all over the country for their consoling messages of support. The lay faithful have practically swarmed me with many gestures of affection and messages of loyalty by prayer vigils, Masses and public manifestations of loyalty to the Church.

I was wounded but not beaten, hurt but not discouraged, afflicted but not forsaken. All things are possible for the love of God in Jesus Christ the Lord.

Please keep on praying for me. The battle is far from over. I have forgiven my false accusers. I am grateful to the Catholic faithful. I am committed to keep up the fight for freedom, truth, love and justice.

If God is with us, who can be against us? Let nothing disturb us. Let nothing and no one frighten us. God is with us. God is more than enough.

I offer before the feet of Mary, conceived without original sin, the flowers of my afflicted heart. Mary, my mother, my only mother, stay with us, fight the battle for us, now until the hour of our death. Amen.

Tithing is Sharing

ARCHDIOCESE OF CAPIZ

"God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9, 7)

"No man should appear before the Lord empty-handed" (Deut 16, 16)

Why do we have Tithing in the Archdiocese?

The formation of Christian Communities throughout the Archdiocese, through Seminars and Follow-ups by Monitoring Teams, envisions that after or together with the three main Programs of Worship, Christian Formation, Social Service and Youth Ministry, the parish communities or Basic Ecclesial Communities will eventually be self-sustaining through Tithing and/or Pledges, thus doing away gradually with the Arancel System that according to the spirit of Vatican II smacks of commercialism.

PCP II stresses the importance of catechesis or education of the people concerning this program before its proper and faithful implementation. It decreed that "A catechesis, with a doctrinal and biblical basis, on the social character of spending and on *tithing* as part of Church life should be developed and implemented" (Art. 14).

Article 118 mandates: "Tithing, after a good pastoral catechesis, shall be introduced with the end in view of the gradual abolition of the Arancel System."

And to help in the implementation of this new System, PCP II reminds us: "The finance committee mentioned in the new Code of Canon Law (Canons 492 and 537) should be made operational to maximize parish and diocesan material resources.

The implementation of the TITHING SYSTEM, then, is within the context of the Archdiocese's THANKSGIVING PROGRAM. This is to implement the prescriptions and the *Desideratum* of Vatican II and the Code of Canon Law, and our Second Plenary Council of the Philippines. Can. 222 par. 1 states *"Christ's faithful have the obligation to provide for the needs of the Church, so that the church has available to it those things which are necessary for the divine worship, for apostolic and charitable work and for the worthy support of its ministers."*

OUR ARCHDIOCESAN THANKSGIVING OFFERING PROGRAM, ASIDE FROM THE FINANCIAL ASPECT AIMS TO:

1. foster among the faithful the sense of "belonging" to the Church;
2. inculcate among the faithful the responsibility to support the church in a more human and communitarian way by doing away as soon as possible with the Arancel;
3. provide for the needs of the Archdiocese, Parish and Christian Communities in their threefold function of teaching, serving and worshipping (that correspond to the three Programs of: Christian Formation, Social Services and Liturgy);
4. promote participation of Christian communities towards establishing a "participatory Church," that is truly consulted and really advisory;
5. establish a self-sustaining and self-governing (grateful or thanking) Church.

What is the relevance of Tithing to our relationship to God?

MAN — is the MASTERPIECE and GROWING GLORY of God's creation (Heb 2:6). St. Irenaeus says that "God's glory in "homo vivens" (man fully alive)."

God has given man dominion over all things. Thus, MAN IS GOD'S STEWARD (Gen 2:15; Heb 2:8).

- has INTELLECT - to know GOD;
- has power of choice - to love GOD;
- has WILL - to serve GOD;
- for Man is God's Icon/Image and likeness.
- God entrusted to man: LIFE (to care), TIME, TALENT, TREASURE (to share).

STEWARDSHIP is the administration of something which belongs to God because, in the end, "each of us will account for himself before God" (Rom 14:12), and everything we have comes from the Lord as St. Paul writes: "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor 4, 7).

Even in Ecclesiasticus we read the: "Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, ... this is a *gift* of God" (8:18).

How to do the Tithing?

1. Determine honestly your gross income so that you may compute the precise amount of your TITHING. You may begin with setting an amount that you think you can comfortably give to the Church; it may not be very radically exact at the start. But later think of your lifestyle, and decide whether what you set aside for the Church corresponds to your way of life and living, taking into account of course your dependents too. You can work gradually upward.

2. You must always remember that nobody forces you to strictly follow the ten percent. Rather, it is your personal conviction and faith that should be the gauge of your "offering". It is not that you have *something* to give but rather that you really *want* to freely and lovingly give.

3. When you have experienced spiritual, emotional and financial reward due to TITHING share the wisdom of the ministry of generous giving to others. Evaluate your contribution each year. If you have received a raise or additional income, increase your gift to the Lord; if you received less income, reduce your offering.

To offer your TITHE, secure tithing envelopes

For use in your Parish and, together with the other timers or pledgers, offer within the Holy Mass during the Offertory. Offering is a part of worship. According to the Lord, "No one shall appear before the Lord empty-handed, but each of you with as much as he can give, in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, your God, has bestowed on you" (Deut 16, 16).

For more information, see your Parish Pastoral Council Officers or talk with your Parish Priest.

What Is Tithing?

In the Old Testament...

TITHING is 10% of the land's produce offered to God as an expression of people's gratitude for His gift of land to them. It is commanded: "Every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod will be holy to the Lord" (Num 18:26). Also: "When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levites" (Deut 26:12).

The first instance of TITHING is found in the story of Abraham and Melchizedek, "Then Abraham gave Melchizedek (king of Salem) a tenth of everything" (Gen 14:18).

Thanksgiving was Jacob's motivation for giving one tenth of his goods to the Lord (Gen 28:20);

Israel, the Old Testament Church, was commanded to TITHE: (Lev 27:30; Num 18:21; Deut 12:5; 17; 26; Chron 31:2; Neh 10:25).

Faithful compliance with the tithe is a source of God's blessings and prosperity: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this", says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw and open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Malachi 3:10).

In the New Testament...

Tithing is a matter of CHRISTIAN-GIVING.

Our Lord, speaking of God's generosity and God's superabundance, commands us to give as we have received from God. He said: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap" (Lk 6:38).

The early Christians took Jesus' words seriously and offered even more than the ten percent prescribed in the Old Testament. The Acts of the Apostles described how the first Christians helped the Church: "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet and it was distributed to anyone as he had need" (5:34-35).

Christian Tithing Should Be Done...

* *REGULARLY.* "Every Sunday, let each of you put aside what he is able to spare" (1 Cor 16:2). St. Paul reminds us to "contribute with simplicity of purpose" (2 Cor 9:11).

* *GENEROUSLY.* "... If you have many possessions, give generously; if you have little, give some of what you have" (Tobit 4:8-9). "Give to the Most High as he has given to you, generously, according to your means" (Sirach 35:9).

* *CHEERFULLY.* "... be not sparing of freewill gifts. With each contribution, show a cheerful countenance, and pay your tithes in a spirit of joy" (Sirach 35:7-8).

* *PROPORTIONATELY.* Our giving must be in proportion to the blessings we received... St. Paul says: "Mark this: he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully. Let each one give according as he has determined in his heart, not grudgingly or from compulsion, for "God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Cor 9:6-7).

* **FAITHFULLY.** "Let each one give what is decided, r,3t reluctantly or under compulsion, for GOD LOVES A CHEERFUL GIVER" (2 Cor 9:7).

* **VOLUNTARILY,** "with willingness to give in accord with one's means" (2 Cor 8...)

* **SACRIFICIALLY** (in the spirit of sacrifice). "Their joy was so great that they were extremely generous in giving, even though they were poor. I assure you, they gave as much as they could and even more than they could" (2 Cor 8:2).

* **GRATEFULLY.** "Yes, thanks be to God for this indescribable gift." (2 Cor 9:15).

St. Irenaeus succinctly puts this: "Those who have been given spiritual freedom by God, devote what they possess to the Lord, not what is of lesser value, *cheerfully* and *freely* because they hope for *greater things...*"

Through Your Tithe, You Contribute to the RENEWAL of the Church...

1. Gradual removal of Arancel system. Article 118 or PCP II enjoins: "Tithing, after a good pastoral catechesis, shall be introduced with the end in view of the *gradual abolition of the Arancel system*";

2. Justice to the Church workers by giving them just compensation;

3. Systematic planning and budgeting for better Church services;

4. Develop participation of Christian Communities in the active implementation of the parish programs that need the financial support;

5. Decentralization of Church income in such a way that your **TITHE** shall be apportioned as follows:

50% - Parish Fund
20% - Priest's allowance
10% - (Assistant Priests - if none; to Parish Fund)
10% - Diocesan Chancery
10% - Seminary Fund
— (5% from Parish Fund covers Priests
Hospitalization/Retirement)

100%

Don't Forget These...

"Give and it shall be given to you ... for the measure you give will be the measure you get back" (Lk 6:38).

"It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

"With each contribution show a cheerful countenance. For the Lord is One who always repays and He will give back to you sevenfold" (Sir 35:9-10).

"Stop worrying ... Our heavenly Father knows all that you need. Seek first His kingship over you and all these things shall be given you besides" (Mt 6:31-33).

TITHING

*Is a Gift from God
and an offering to God*

"FOR ALL THINGS COME FROM YOU
AND WE OFFER IT BACK TO YOU."

- 2 Chronicles 29:14

TOWARDS THE FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

We are called, as individuals, to give a personal response to the call addressed to us by Jesus Christ: He calls us to form a *Christian Community* "of faith, hope and charity" (LG 8) that is *communion of life, love and truth*" (LG 9). As we can remember, the first disciples began this kind of community in which "*they devoted themselves to the teaching*

of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking «/ the bread and to prayers" (Acts 2:24).

The parish which, according to the Church's mind.

Basic Ecclesial Communities and Plenary Council of the Philippines II

Article 109. Basic Ecclesial Communities under various names and forms - BCCs, small Christian communities, small faith communities, covenant communities - must be vigorously promoted for the full living of the Christian vocation in both urban and rural areas. Active non-violence will be a guiding principle in their approach to social change.

Article 110. # 1. The CBCP shall issue an official statement on BECs, on their nature and function as recognized by the Church, making it clear that they are not simply *another organization*.

#2. This official statement of the CBCP shall be, among other things, for the proper orienting of priests and seminarians. Training for work with BECs shall be made part of seminary formation.

Article 111. #1. In the formation of BECs, re-evangelization shall be given the highest priority.

#2. A formation program of BEC workers and missionaries, including a common manual, shall be developed and made available to the dioceses through the CBCP.

Article 112. #1. The laity should be mobilized to participate in the task of evangelization and look upon BECs as a means of evangelization.

#2. Truly discerning communities shall be formed to prevent the faith from being instrumentalized by political and other groups and to ensure that the principles and activities of various groups shall always be guided by gospel values.

No. 16 of PCP II Documents:

There are so many "unchurched" Catholics and Christians in our

Catholic Philippines "because there are not enough priests, religious and other Church personnel to work with them. And the lack of "workers in the vineyard" is due in turn to a lack of Church-going, of catechesis **and** formation, the very factors that would encourage more vocations of service to the Church. A vicious circle.

No. 17. "The circle is being broken. And it is being broken in those dioceses and parishes where the very "unchurched" have been challenged to form themselves into little communities of faith and they begin to respond positively. Where such communities are advanced as a Church priority, the likelihood of a more intense participation of the laity, as envisioned by Vatican II, is greater. And if there is vibrancy in their life, one clear reason is that, in the participatory ethic that characterizes them, they are more able to put together the practices of popular piety with the greater use of scripture, real liturgical worship, the building up of a faith community and involvement in social issues.

Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* writes:

"A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young Churches - one sometimes fostered by the Bishop and their Conferences as a pastoral priority - is that of ecclesial basic communities which are proving to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach. These are groups, of Christians who, at the level of the family or in a similarly restricted setting, come together for prayer, Scripture reading, catechesis, and discussion of human and ecclesiastical problems with a view to a common commitment. These communities are a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society on a civilization of love.

"These communities decentralize and organize the parish community to which they always remain united. They take root in less privileged and rural areas, and become a leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor and the neglected, and of commitment to the transformation of society. Within them, the individual Christian experiences community and therefore senses that he or she is playing an active role and is encouraged to share in the common tasks. Thus, these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries. At the same time, by being imbued with Christ's love, they also show how division, tribalism and racism can be overcome."

Curriculum Vitae

MOST REV. JESSE EUGENIO MERCADO, D.D.

Date of Birth: June 6, 1951
Place of Birth: Sta. Cruz, Manila
Parents: Jose P. Mercado (+)
Leticia Eugenio
Brothers and Sister: Fr. Edwin, Joseph, Eugene married to
Daisy Lim, Susan married to Eugene
Daroy, Benedict married to Anna
Salonga.

Entered San Jose Minor Seminary:
June 4, 1963
Date of Ordination to the Priesthood: March 19, 1977,
Feast of St. Joseph.

Academic Preparations:

Elementary: St. Joseph School (*now La Consolacion
School*) in Kalookan

Seminary Training:

High School: San Jose Minor Seminary: 1963-1967
Philosophy: Ateneo de Manila: 1967-1971
Theology: Loyola School
of Theology: 1972-1977

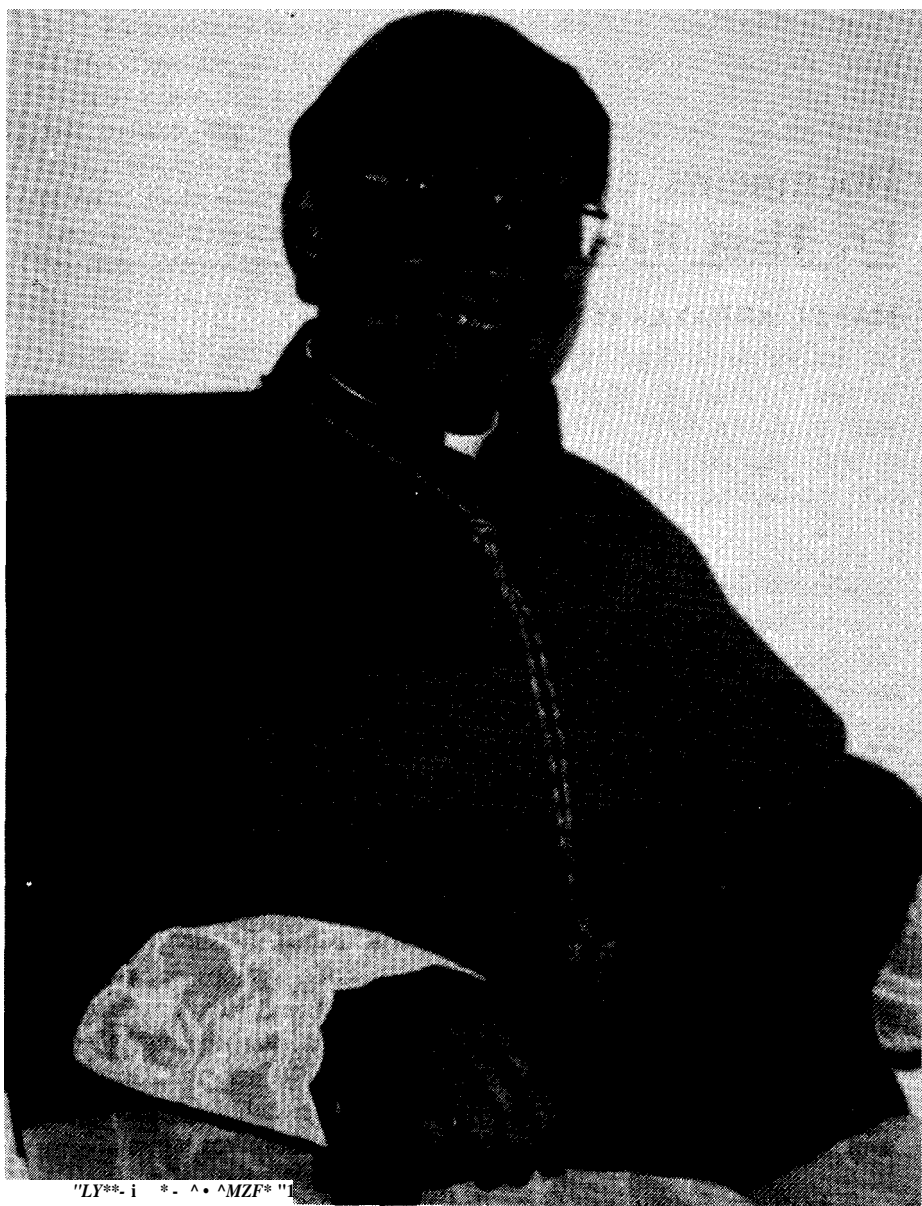
Post-Graduate Studies:

Licentiate in Spiritual Theology
Angelicum, Rome 1981-84

Assignments and Pastoral Work:

Parochial Vicar, San Isidro Parish, Pasay 1977
Spiritual Director, Regional Seminary of
San Pablo in Baguio City 1977-79

Director of the Pre-College Department	
San Carlos Seminary, Makati City	1979-81
Rome, (Further studies, Angelicum)	1981-84
Professor and Assistant Spiritual Director of San Carlos Seminary, Makati City	1985-88
Rector, Holy Apostles Senior Seminary, Makati City	1988-94
Secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Seminaries under Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, D.D.	1988-94
Rector of the Pontificio Collegio Filippino, Rome	1994-97
Appointed Auxiliary Bishop of Manila February 25, 1997 by Pope John Paul II	
Ordination as Bishop	March 31, 1997
Immaculate Conception Cathedral (Manila)	



MOST REV. JESSE EUGENIO MERCADO, D.D.
Auxiliary Bishop of Manila

Documents on the Case of Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, OMI

MANEL ABHAYARATNA

Mary and Human Liberation
... THE OTHER SIDE

Introduction

Of late much has been spoken and written about the book published by Fr. Tissa Balasuriya OMI titled "Mary and Human Liberation". It has featured not only on Catholic but also public media, including the print and electronic. Many accusations have been levelled, especially at the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, by different writers and speakers.

The bone of contention has been the alleged injustice meted out to Rev. Fr. Tissa Balasuriya OMI by the Catholic Bishops of Sri Lanka concerning his book, which was published in 1990 under the Logos series. On the 5th of June 1994 the Catholic Bishops' Conference published in the Catholic weeklies "The Messenger" (English) and the Gnanartha Pradeepaya (Sinhala) a statement which warned the Catholic faithful about some of its errors and advised them to refrain from reading it.

Fr. Tissa Balasuriya claims that the Bishops' statement was based on "distortions" and false interpretation of his text and he accuses the Bishops of unfair treatment. He also accuses them of not having given him a fair hearing.

Subsequently, it was also revealed that this book had been the object of an official inquiry by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, the highest Catholic Church institution which deals with such matters, and that even they had found unacceptable and erroneous certain positions in this book which go counter to the doctrinal heritage of the Catholic Church. It is said that among those who studied the book were not only reputed Catholic theologians drawn from different quarters but also some theologians of the Oblate Congregation to which Fr. Balasuriya himself belongs.

In June 1996 Fr. Balasuriya instituted per-legal action calling the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka to appear before the State Mediation Board for an inquiry.. This action, he later decided "not to proceed with" in accordance with the request made to him by the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, the Religious Congregation of which he is a member.

The Catholic Bishops of Sri Lanka, except for their first official statement in the Catholic weeklies of 5th June 1994 and another brief statement on the Status of the question published in the Catholic Messenger on 26th May 1996, have not so far made any statement in response.

All along it was clear to many people that there was another side to the question. Some of us felt that, in the name of truth, something had to be done to present "the other side" of the story to the public. We made a study of available documents and also interviewed some Bishops to obtain their side of the story. Having noted that booklets in "question and answer" form had been used to air the view points of Fr. Balasuriya, by whosoever that wrote them, we too decided to use the same format to present the facts we had gathered. We are presenting this book to the general public in a spirit of love for truth, filial devotion towards our Blessed Mother, esteem for our Bishops and profound thanks to the Holy See for faithfully guarding the deposit of faith.

CHAPTER 1

Preliminaries

1. Question: For quite some time much discussion and debate has taken place on the book "Mary and Human Liberation" by Fr. Tissa Balasuriya OMI. Newspaper articles, booklets and even TV programmes have been conducted in order to make it appear that the Bishops of Sri Lanka had treated Fr. Balasuriya unjustly. Except for two brief statements appearing in the local Catholic papers, the Bishops have remained silent. People expected some clarifications. What made you take that attitude of silence?

Answer: The Bishops have been silent on this matter on purpose. They should be examples of patience and charity. One must not be emotional in these matters and rush into things.

2. Question: But, could not such an attitude lead to the acceptance of an one sided story?

Answer: Yes, that is possible. More and more of our faithful have suggested to us that we come out with our side of the matter. We now intend of doing so.

3. Question: Some people also feel that it would have been better to have ignored this book altogether. Your statement on the book seems to have given it more publicity.

Answer: The Bishops followed that reasoning at first. But then there was a move, to make a video film based on the book and to make it available to parishes, BCC groups etc. We heard that attempts were also being made to get this book translated into Sinhala. In other words, a point was reached when it could not be ignored any longer. Continued silence could have been misinterpreted as a dereliction of duty. Besides, there were some of our faithful who were asking us for guidance on this matter. We were aware of the inherent dangers they could have encountered if they had read the book without being warned about it.

4. Question: What made you take up this matter finally?

Answer: First of all, as Bishops and chief Pastors of our churches, it is our duty to safeguard and defend the integrity of the doctrinal heritage of the church. This is part of our overall mission to "strengthen the brethren".

(Lc 22:32)

It is in the light of this same responsibility that canon law states that as Pastors we have "the duty and the right to demand that where writings of the faithful touch upon matters of faith and morals, these should be submitted to their (Bishops) judgement" (canon 823).

The same canon further states that Bishops "have the **duty** and the **right** to condemn writings which harm true faith or good morals" (canon 823).

5. Question: Isn't there any requirement of ecclesiastical law to submit such writings for ecclesiastical approval prior to publication?

Answer: Certainly, Canon 827 states "Books or other written material dealing with religion or morals may not be displayed, sold or given away in churches or oratories, unless they are published with the permission of the competent ecclesiastical authority".

In the case of this book, no such permission had been obtained. Fr. Balasuriya once challenged the application of this canon to his book stating that it is not sold in churches or oratories. But that was after the issue was taken up by the Bishops. Earlier this book was freely sold through some of our own church establishments and he was surely aware of it. Besides, we are told that the Centre for Society and Religion, which is the Publisher of this book, is selling it even now. The Centre is located in a church compound.

6. Question: Fr. Balasuriya has been repeatedly stating, that proper procedure was not followed in this matter. Is that correct?

Answer: This talk of proper procedure by Fr. Balasuriya is totally one sided. One has to ask "who really broke proper procedure?" He ignored procedure set out by canon law and published his book in 1990 - two years before the Bishops moved in on the matter. Even many of his other publications on some aspects of the faith had been already

published without adhering to such required procedure. When he had violated procedure, the Bishops were required to follow what is laid down for them as "duty", "to condemn writings which harm true faith" (canon 823: 1).

Yet the Bishops were patient and dignified in their approach. They did not, as could have been done, according to canon law 823: 1, condemn the book straight away but instead followed a long procedure, over a period of 1 1/2 years. To give an idea of it: -

1. An ad hoc committee was appointed to study this book and express their views on it in a confidential manner. This group consisted of two Bishops, well versed in theology and two theologian-priests, one of whom was a renowned Oblate of Mary Immaculate.

2. This group presented an interim report which advised a dialogue with Fr. Balasuriya and pointed out some of the misgivings that the members had expressed about the book.

3. On 7th January 1993 a dialogue between Fr. Balasuriya, some Bishops and the members of the ad hoc committee took place at which these misgivings were expressed to him in a fraternal manner with some advice on what could be done in the future. This dialogue was confidential and was to be only a sharing of views with possible clarifications. During this dialogue, Fr. Balasuriya took a negative attitude rather than face the arguments squarely.

4. The then president of the Bishops' conference who presided over that dialogue then invited Fr. Balasuriya to reflect over the points of the interim confidential paper and send his written submissions to him.

5. These submissions were sent by Fr. Balasuriya to all the Bishops in installments on - 31st March 1993 and - 12th June 1993.

6. The Bishops found such submissions inadequate and some Bishops met him privately in an attempt to convince him about at least some of the attitudes in the book which were wrong according to them. Among those who personally met him were his Grace

the Archbishop of Colombo, His Lordship Bishop Frank Marcus Fernando, His Lordship Bishop Vianney Fernando and His Lordship Bishop Rayappu Joseph. His Lordship Bishop Frank Marcus Fernando even sent him written appeals for flexibility on the matter.

7. When all of these attempts seemed to take them nowhere and knowing very well that some statement concerning the book would have to be made, they called Fr. Balasuriya for a second dialogue which was held in Kandy with the full Conference in session on 20th April 1994. Even that attempt to find some sense of flexibility on the part of Fr. Balasuriya failed as he adamantly refused to accept any of the errors pointed out to him by the Bishops. This is clear from the report of this meeting prepared by Fr. Balasuriya himself.

8. It is only after that, that on 5th June 1995 the public statement on the book by the Bishops was finally published - almost one and a half years after that first dialogue on 7th January 1993.

7. **Question:** You stated that Fr. Balasuriya always took a negative attitude to the whole issue from the beginning. How did you come to that conclusion?

Answer: Fr. Balasuriya assumed an unhelpful and reactive attitude to the whole issue from beginning. To cite some examples: -

a) Unlike the Bishops, he allowed the matter to go public from the very beginning calling the Bishops' sincere search for fraternal correction, a harassment. The Bishops wished the matter to be confidential. But even before the Bishops published their statement, public articles came out with information about:

1. his getting into hot water about this book (interview given by Fr. Aloysius Peiris S.J. to Sunday Times correspondent Noel Cruz on 14th February 1993) and

2. his being the victim of a "dialogue / inquiry / inquisition headed by a local Ratzinger" (article in Christian Worker 4th quarter 1992 page 61).

b) Even when he stated that he was ready to correct any errors in his book he placed a condition which rendered such readiness meaningless. He stated that he would correct himself if it was proved he was wrong "at the level of contemporary theological scholarship".

While the usefulness of new theological thinking is not denied, the main concern of the Bishops was the purity of the Catholic faith and doctrine as outlined and defined by the teaching Authority of the church. But Fr. Balasuriya wanted to have a debate with the Bishops on contemporary theology.

This is apparent from the letters he wrote to the Bishops :

- 12th June 1993

"If there is anything wrong in my book and it can be proved objectively at the level of contemporary knowledge, I will certainly correct it".

- 7th January 1994

"If my book contains doctrinal errors that can be objectively proved at the level of contemporary theological knowledge, I will certainly correct such proven material".

- 27th March 1994

"If anything I have written is shown to be wrong at the level of contemporary theological scholarship, I am prepared to correct it publicly".

- 1st February 1996

"I am prepared to correct publicly any errors proven at the level of contemporary theological scholarship".

Such conditionality practically negated his so called readiness to correct himself. It appeared that what he really wanted, was to drag the Bishops into a theological debate which would lead nowhere.

c) He took an attitude of reaction to all questions and criticisms of his book at different points during the period before and after the publication of the Bishops' statement.

I. He wrote letters of an angry tone to different persons involved in the matter in a manner that put them off and antagonised them.

- letter dated 9th November questioned the competence of the ad hoc committee and described as "sanctions", "disciplinary measures" or "threats", the well intentioned requests of the Bishops to Fr. Balasuriya.

- letters dated 30th March 1993 and 12th June 1993 issued a challenge for a debate and threatened to place his case before the church authorities in Rome.

- In a letter dated 27th March 1995 he accused the Bishops of criticising his work "unfairly, unjustly and in some issues untruthfully".

U. He challenged the Bishops to prove from his book, the errors pointed out by them in their statement of 5th June 1994 giving exact text, page and line references (letter dated 29th July 1994).

UI. After the public statement of the Bishops there was a plethora of public responses, criticisms and vehement attacks on the Bishops in the different media fora. We will outline some of these: -

- In mid 1995 Fr. Balasuriya with Mr. Eymard De S. Wijeratne, gave an interview over ETV 1 on the Insight programme rejecting line by line the statement of the Bishops and projecting only his side of the story.

- Protest campaigns and petitions against the statement of the Bishops announcements over public media in August / September 1994 organised at different levels.

- Special publications giving only his side of the story and very critical of the Bishops' were published

Publication	Date
Magazine: Quest 127 "The debate"	June 1994
Booklet: Response to the Catholic Bishops' Statement of the 5th June 1994 (Publisher: Centre for Society & Religion)	March 1995
Issue of Social Justice (Magazine)	July 15th 1996 Volume 19, No. 06.

- International **and** national level articles in newspapers, magazines, **letters** of protest from different groups and individuals, letters to the Editor **most** of which often contained information known only to Fr. Balasuriya.

8. **Question:** Is it true that Fr. Balasuriya was treated rashly?

Answer: You can make your own judgement from what has been stated above. It is true that error has to be repudiated firmly. But the rule of charity has also got to be observed strictly. The Lord too visualised a process whereby ample opportunity is given for a change of heart to any person (Lc 12:58). But understanding cannot end in acceptance.

Here a process of correction did take place. Yet, it was never rash or hard. For example : -

- The Bishops' statement in the press was a very mild one. It spoke sympathetically about Fr. Balasuriya's attempt to make Christ and Mary relevant to our times.

- The Superiors of the Oblates too have been very understanding and helpful seeking to wean him away from a hardened attitude, appreciating the good he has been doing while disagreeing with some of his theological views.

- The Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith too has taken a lot of time on this matter giving him many extensions of deadlines well beyond normal procedure, as a gesture of good will.

- Besides, the church authorities have been very discreet all along and respectful to Fr. Balasuriya's good name. Unfortunately, it is Fr. Balasuriya who has made this a world issue and raised much dust complicating matters further.

9. **Question:** Is it correct that Fr. Balasuriya was not given adequate opportunity to explain himself?

Answer: Well, the above presentation would have shown you as to how much of time, possibilities and occasions were offered to him to explain himself. One cannot wait endlessly when manifold dangers to the faith of the community entrusted to the Bishops' pastoral care are clearly seen and felt.

Besides, once a book is printed and sold, readers have a right to understand it *at* its face value - according to normal rules of semantics,

syntax' and common sense. It is public property. Nobody is to be blamed for "not allowing an explanation". People understand it as it is written and have a right to evaluate it positively or negatively. The author has given freedom for people to agree or disagree.

10. Question: Was that openness to other views the attitude underlying the book?

Answer: Fr. Balasuriya did explicitly mention that he welcomed "any comments on this book be they favourable or otherwise", (p. vi, para 3).

Though he states so his negative attitudes to criticisms of the contents of the book contradict the spirit of that invitation given to the readers. The spirit of a response he wrote on 9th June to a person who was critical of his book over the Sunday Times readers' column clearly reflects that attitude of being allergic to criticisms. He called the point made by this writer as something that "smacks of a self appointed one-person inquisition". The answer to question (7) above outlined the many occasions in which Fr. Balasuriya took a reactive attitude to criticisms. Basically his attitude was to reject every criticism of his book by the Bishops or by any others.

He called the Bishops before the Mediation Board accusing them of "defaming" him. He did so also against the editors of the twin Catholic weeklies the Pradeepaya and the Catholic Messenger.

11. Question: Is it correct to say that the Conference of Major Religious Superiors took a more sympathetic attitude towards him?

Answer: Well, there may have been the one or the other religious Superior who would have wished that Fr. Balasuriya had not been taken to task on this book, but we do not believe that they held that view as a body. In fact, at a joint meeting of the Bishops and Religious Superiors held on 22nd April 1994 the following comments were made: —

a) A well known theologian belonging to the same Congregation as Fr. Balasuriya referring to the book stated that "practically on every page, there is an error".

b) Another stated "I was so angry that I could not proceed reading more than a quarter of the book".

c) Some others stated that they do not want to have anything to do with this book".

12. **Question:** Fr. Balasuriya has claimed on different occasions that he is a reputed theological writer, for example, in his application of 13th May 1996 before the State Mediation Board. Similarly others too have claimed such in some of their letters.

The following are some of the quotes: —

a) "This statement (of the Bishops) has injured and adversely affected my reputation as a Christian and theological writer".

(Fr. Balasuriya to the State Mediation Board on 13th May 1996, p. 7).

b) Letter of Robert Cruz to the Bishops dated 18th April calls Fr. Balasuriya "one of Asia's most reputed theologians".

c) An organisation called "Just World Trust" in a letter dated 27th July 1996 to the Superior General of the Oblates, Rev. Fr. Marcello Zago, calls Fr. Balasuriya "a long standing theologian of international repute".

What is your view about these statements by people concerning Fr. Balasuriya?

Answer: Even in the public statement made on 5th June 1994 by the Bishops on the book "Mary and Human Liberation" the Bishops did not make any adverse statements or comments about Fr. Balasuriya as a person. Rather the Bishops spoke understanding^ of the goal for which he had written the book and the milieu in which Fr. Balasuriya's desire to seek a fresh interpretation of Jesus and Mary had arisen.

The Bishops' concerns were pastoral and doctrinal.

However, here one has to make a distinction between what he is and what he states. The Bishops could not agree with the latter and that exactly was the content of the statement the Bishops made.

Secondly, the Bishops did not question Fr. Balasuriya's claim of being a recognized and reputed theologian, but they questioned his claim to be a Catholic theologian. His views, found especially in the book under study were contrary to some beliefs of the Catholic church. To state so is the duty and responsibility of Bishops (canon 823: 1).

a) They studied the book from all its angles and found it lacking in orthodoxy.

b) The Oblate Congregation to which Fr. Balasuriya belongs too studied the book and expressed its reservations. A letter to Fr. Balasuriya dated 18th March 1995 by Fr. Marcello Zago OMI, Superior General states: "Several of us have read your book on Mary. We consulted three Oblate theologians who have studied it thoroughly; you know very well that they have expressed serious reservations. The members of the General Council share the same reservations".

c) Similarly, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has studied this book carefully, taking a lot of time and consulting different experts and found it unacceptable as a Catholic theological work. His Holiness Pope John Paul U. during an audience given to His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger on 12th May 1996 approved the decisions of the Congregation to pass sanctions on Fr. Balasuriya. The Congregation in a letter written on 22nd July 1994 to Fr. Marcello Zago, Superior General of the Oblates, stated thus about this book, "All the same, one finds in the books doctrinal affirmations (existence and nature of original sin, divinity of Jesus, necessity of redemption, Christ unique Saviour, nature and mission of the church, Mariology) that are manifestly incompatible with the faith of the church. Still further, in many cases fundamental truths of the faith from Revelation and from salvation to the various formulations of the faith expressed through dogma, that are taught and interpreted by the church and by the magisterium in the course of centuries, are denied" (Card. Ratzinger to Fr. Zago - 22nd July 1994).

The eleven page study on the book which the Congregation sent to Fr. Balasuriya through the Superior General on 22nd July 1994 calling for his comments had a long reply from him dated 14th March 1995 going up to 89 typed pages and a summary of 20 other typed pages. Even this was 'retained insufficient' by the same Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith as stated in a letter dated 20th November 1995 to Fr. Zago, the Oblate Superior General, by the Secretary of this Roman dicastery.

d) The claim by Fr. Balasuriya as well as by his admirers to his being a Catholic "theologian" is to be scrutinized in the light of the above.

CHAPTER 2

Doctrine

13. Question: What about the four glaring errors you mention in your statement? Fr. Balasuriya has often challenged you to prove **that** from his book. How would you explain yourselves?

Answer: Let us take each of these errors, one at a time, and we will give our reasons for calling them erroneous. This can be a bit long. But there is no way out.

The First Glaring Error - Sacred Tradition and its Role in Divine Revelation.

Bishops' Statement: 'The author down-plays the validity of Sacred Tradition which in the Church's teaching is on par with the Sacred Scriptures themselves as a source of Revelation. He rather portrays it as some sort of unwarranted creation of some self interested church men'.

Comparison of Texts

Ecclesial Teaching

"This living transmission (meaning the Apostolic Tradition handed over to the Bishops as their successors by the apostles and handed by them to-x»thers) accomplished in the Holy Spirit, is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture, though closely connected to it. Through Tradition, the church in her doctrines, life and worship, perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes".

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 78)

Fr. Balasuriya

"In Christian Theology we have the situation in which the **original mythical presentation** of the beginning of the universe, and of human life, have been subject to interpretations in later centuries, by ecclesiastical authorities. These in turn have claimed divine authority to do so, on the basis of divine inspiration, and the power given to them by Jesus Christ. These interpretators, have also been at the same time male clergy, feudal lords and medieval rulers as in the Holy Roman Empire. It is therefore necessary to exercise a critical judge-

"Hence, there exists a close connection between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine spring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend towards the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the Word of God in as much as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the Divine Spirit. To the successors of the apostles Sacred Tradition hands on, in its full purity, God's Word, which was entrusted to the apostles by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit. Thus led by the light of the Spirit of Truth, these successors can in their preaching preserve this Word of God faithfully, explain it and make it more widely known. Consequently, it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed. **Therefore both** Sacred Scripture **and** Sacred Tradition are to be accepted and venerated with the **same** devotion and reverence. (Vatican II - Constitution Dei Verbum No. 9).

"Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture form one Sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit, the entire holy people united with their shepherds, remain always steadfast in the teaching of the apostles, in the common life,

ment on the evolution of **myth** (or from the myth) into **religious teaching** and later **defined dogma** of the Catholic Church. We have in such a situation, a combination of myth interpreted by the authorities, turning into church tradition which itself is given a quasi divine sanction being considered **a source of Revelation**. There is then a possibility, of the human imagination of teachers and authorities being utilized to interpret the myth and develop it to foster their interests", (p. 1:44-45).

in the breaking of bread and in prayer (Acts 2: 42), so that in holding to practising and professing the heritage of the faith, there results, on the part of the Bishops and faithful a remarkable common effort. The task of authentically interpreting the Word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. The teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully by divine commission. With the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief, as divinely revealed. It is clear, therefore, that Sacred Theology, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the church, in accord with God's most wise design are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the other and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the Holy Spirit contributed effectively to the salvation of souls." (Dei Verbum 10).

Comment: From the above passages and documentation, it is clear that in ecclesial teaching, Sacred

Comment: For Fr. Balasuriya on the other hand it is purely original myth interpreted by ecclesiastical

Tradition is the locus of the living transmission of the faith of the Fathers, under the guidance of the **Holy Spirit**, through apostolic **succession and** is to be accepted and **venerated** as Sacred Scripture itself. It is **a** source of divine Revelation on par with Sacred Scripture itself.

authorities who claimed divine authority for themselves, made to evolve into religious teaching and later into Dogma of the Catholic Church. The role of the Holy Spirit and divine inspiration is in this presentation hardly visible. He also posits a motive for such creativity on the part of these authorities - self interest. This is a total watering down of the noble role assigned to Sacred Tradition by the church as a source of Divine Revelation or, shall we say, a down playing as stated in the charge".

The SCDF Document:

In fact the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its study of **the** book on the section relevant to Tradition states "The author (Fr. Balasuriya) shows that he does **not** have **a** clear view of **the nature of Tradition** as a way of knowledge of Divine Revelation (DV 8-10) ... He ignores the concept of divine-apostolic Tradition. This human tradition, he says, has led to simple myths becoming dogmas of faith **in the** Catholic Church. In the entire volume, but specially in Chapters 5 **and** 6, the author supposes that the single criterion of truth are the Gospels, and not Tradition which culminates in the formulation of dogmas, denying **in** this way the normative value of Tradition itself, as a source of revelation" (2:3).

Conclusion: When ecclesial documents of authority such as the dogmatic constitution on Divine Revelation of Vatican **n** affirm clearly that both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition are to be venerated and respected as sources of Divine Revelation (DV 9), Fr. Balasuriya almost ridicules the role of Sacred Tradition giving it an interpretation which is arbitrary and imaginary and questioning its role. Thus the Bishops have been correct in their calling it an error.

The Second Glaring Error - Faith and Theologising

Bishops' Statement - "The author minimizes the validity of faith, which is a free gift of God, with his view that doctrine or elaborations of theology become objectively valid only to the extent that they are —

- a) rationally convincing and
- b) in keeping with the core-values of other religious persuasions".

Explanation: This statement of the Bishops is based on the general mood of Fr. Balasuriya's book and not so much only a particular text. Yet some texts too will be quoted as supportive material for proof of the presence of this error. Fr. Balasuriya does not accept the objective validity of what he calls assumptions of one religion unless they are provable or are in keeping with the core-values of other religions. We shall elaborate:

Provability of dogma: On several occasions Fr. Balasuriya requires Rational or Emperical viability as a criterion for validity of doctrine. The role of faith in providing objective validity to such seems to be not given its worth. We shall outline: —

1. "The doctrine (original sin) is based on unproved and unprovable **assumptions** ... the whole doctrine is built on assumptions concerning a condition about which we have no knowledge ..." (p. 77-78).

N.B. We must note the word: assumptions (in normal semantics it means some thing that is assumed - not necessarily objectively true). And when Fr. Balasuriya goes to the extent of stating that it is not only unproved but also unprovable or never provable, he is certainly speaking about rational provability. He denies thereby, the possibility of positing, its objective validity through the way of faith. When faith is posited, provability does not become a question or a need.

2. "This accusation that all humanity other than Jesus and Mary are under the hegemony of Satan at conception is based on the hypothesis of original sin and this is what we find unproved or unprovable." (p. 90, para 2).

N.B. The role of faith, as a valid instrument, for the understanding of dogma as something objective, is not at all considered here.

3. "The teaching concerning the Virginity of Mary is another example of the evolution and widespread internalization with the Catholic Church, of a doctrine concerning which **there is and can be no convincing evidence**, except, again that it is traditional belief in the Church. It is a doctrine related to the **presuppositions concerning original sin, the ideology of male domination** and a generous **recourse to theological imagination**", (pp. 94-95).

N.B. Here, too the role of faith, in discerning objective truth is not taken into account and worse still by the terms "generous recourse **to theological imagination**" the author has belittled both the long history of the evolution of dogma and their seriousness.

4. "The traditional theology, has defined Jesus as one person having two natures: the divine and the human. This is the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon 451. Who is able to know these things with any degree of acceptable certitude?"

N.B. By stating the words any degree, an attitude of total exclusion of faith as a source of truth is evidenced by the author. It almost seems to exclude acceptability in toto.

Conclusion: Thus as a general tendency Fr. Balasuriya does minimize the role of faith in the search for truth and objectivity allowing only rational provability as a valid principle for such certitude. If he gave any weight to the role of faith in this matter he would not say such things.

Congruence with **the** Core-values of other Religions

The following texts from Fr. Balasuriya's book demonstrate this erroneous position. We quote: —

1. "In the Asian context when we have several world religions that have their different explanations of the origins of human life, of human destiny and the process of salvation and liberation, we **have to rethink Christology and Mariology** at a deeper level than is done in some other contexts" (p. 61).

2. "In Asia we have to **question** the bases of a theology that has been hurting our people for centuries and which are still an **Obstacle**

for Christians to be fully open to inter-religious dialogue and to be accepted as such by others." (pp. 60-61)

3. "Buddhism does not accept the need of an outside redeemer - much less of a divine redeemer. Thus the 'Privileges' claimed for Mary would be **obstacles** to an understanding between Christians and Buddhists at the level of intellectual dialogue", (p. 103)

4. "If we insist on the divinity of Jesus, as the exclusive and ultimate manifestation of God, and further regard other manifestations as inferior, subordinate or even **untrue**, the dialogue with **Hinduism will be rather difficult**. The situation would be worse with Islam which considers the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of Jesus a dilution of the monotheism which they hold fast to", (p. 103)

5. "**The traditional understanding of redemption, in which Jesus Christ is considered the** unique, universal and necessary redeemer in an ontological sense is not presentable **in** our multi-religious **context** as well as to secular (ist) persons", (p. 109)

Comment: From the above texts it becomes clear that Fr. Balasuriya places the dogmas of the church in subordination to, at least a certain degree of congruity with the core values of other religions for their presentability. The present incongruity for him is a problem and a reason that calls for a serious re-thinking. In fact he states that a critical re-thinking has to be done concerning the "basis construct of framework of Christian theology", (p. 61) and Fr. Balasuriya is "questioning the traditional dogmas as a whole construct that held together" (p. 191)

We, however, must state that congruity with the core values of the religions is not that which gives certitude to the dogmas but faith. Thus it is wrong to seek to recast dogmas in order to make them acceptable to the others or to remove obstacles to dialogue. Congruence or noncongruence with the core values of other religions is not that which makes the dogmas objectively valid. They are valid per se because they have been discerned through a process of serious and sometimes very long reflection, dialogue and even debate, and as consequences of the inter-action between the word of God in the Scriptures, and the realities of life and history or the ups and downs of human destiny, down the **centuries through the mediation of the magisterium ... As for inter-**

religious dialogue, Vatican II never visualized such dialogue to be at the cost of proclaiming Christ as "the Way, the Truth and the Life". (Jn 14: 16 NA 2)

The Third Glaring Error - Christology and Mariology

Bishops' Statement: "His presentation of original sin brings up serious questions on the basic teachings of the Church regarding Jesus Christ and His Mother Mary and casts serious doubts with regard to the:

- a) divinity of Christ
- b) role of Christ as Redeemer
- c) privileged position of Mary in the history of salvation.

We will first deal with the errors in the book of Fr. Balasuriya on the themes covering original sin and the need of a redeemer. Then we will deal with the three areas mentioned specifically in the Bishops' statement, just quoted. We must mention here, that these errors are the natural result of Fr. Balasuriya questioning, the ecclesial teaching on original sin. Fr. Balasuriya's presentation of original sin which is defective in relation to ecclesial teaching, has serious consequences on the ecclesial beliefs in Jesus Christ and Mary.

1. Erroneous statement No. 1

Nature of original sin and the role of the Redeemer

Teaching of the Church

The doctrine of original sin closely connected with that of redemption by Christ provides lucid discernment of man's situation and activity in the world. By our first parents' sin, the devil has acquired a certain domination over man, even though man remains free. Original sin entails captivity under the power of him who thenceforth had the power of death, that is, the devil. Ignorance of the fact that man has a wounded nature in-

Mary and Human Liberation by
Fr. Tissa Balasuriya

"What we question is the hypothesis in traditional theology according to which human beings are born in a situation of helpless alienation from God due to the originating original sin of the first parents. We have no difficulty with original sin in the sense of a human proneness to evil, that we all experience: nor with the concept of the collective sinfulness of a society and an environment that has a

clined to evil gives rise to serious errors in the areas of education, politics, social action and morals" (CCC 407).

"Man, having been wounded in his nature by original sin, is subject to error and inclined to evil in exercising his freedom". (CCC 1714)
"Man is divided in himself. As a result, the whole life of man, both individual and social, shows itself to be a struggle and a dramatic one between good and evil, between light and darkness" (GS 13).
"Affected by original sin men have frequently fallen into multiple errors" (AA7).

"Following St. Paul the church has always taught that the overwhelming misery which oppresses men and their inclination towards evil and death cannot be understood apart from their connection with Adams' sin and that fact that he has transmitted to us a sin with which we are all born afflicted, a sin which is the "death of the soul". Because of this certainty of faith the church baptizes for the remission of sin even tiny infants who have not committed sin". (CCC 403)

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Being justified freely by His grace through

corrupting influence on persons" (p. 66).

"The doctrine of original sin, as developed in Christian theology taught, that humanity was in such a state of original and unavoidable sinfulness, that only Jesus Christ and His merits could save human beings ... (even today it is generally interpreted to imply that salvation is by some means or other through Jesus Christ.)

The dogma concerning redemption was developed from the presuppositions concerning original sin. Jesus, the universal Saviour, was to confer the graces merited by Him, through the church founded by Him. The church did so through the Sacraments of which Baptism had to be the first. Baptism is said to remove the stain of original sin, not concupiscence, but the other consequences of original sin whereby humans are alienated from God. This claim of the church has a two fold impact which is questionable" (p. 80)

"If the doctrine of original sin and its consequences are questioned then the concept of redemption is also questioned. If we do not understand human nature as essentially fallen and incapable of doing good on its own, as God is not alienated from the whole of human-

the redemption that is in Jesus Christ" (Rom 3:23).

"By himself and by his own power, no one is freed from sin or raised above himself, or completely rid of his sickness or his solitude or his servitude. On the contrary, all stand in need of Christ, their model, Liberator, their Mentor, their Saviour, their source of life". (Ad Gentes 8).

"It is by grace that you have been saved, through faith not by anything of your own but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done so that nobody can claim credit". (Eph 2:8)

"No one comes to the Father but by me". (Jn 14:8).

"But we know by Revelation that Adam and Eve had received original holiness and justice not for themselves alone but for all human nature. By yielding to the tempter, Adam and Eve committed a personal sin but this sin affected the human nature that they would then transmit in a fallen State. It is a sin which will be transmitted by propagation to all mankind, that is, by the transmission of human nature deprived of original holiness and justice. And that is why original sin is called "sin" only in an analogical sense. It is a sin "con-

ity by original sin (i.e. God's grace available to all in so far as it is necessary) then there is no need for an ontological redemption by Jesus Christ" (p. 107).

tracted" **and** not "committed" - a state and not an act. (CCC 404).

Comment: The church teaches clearly, that by reason of the abuse of freedom that was conferred on our first parents we are fallen into a state of "woundedness naturally inclined to evil" (CCC 404), are "divided" within ourselves (GS 13) and it is an ontological state rather than an act (CCC 404).

And by ourselves or by our own power we cannot be saved. (AG 8). We need Christ and His saving grace. (Jn 14:; Eph 2:8).

Comment: For Fr. Balasuriya original sin is a mere proneness to evil in man or in the collective sinfulness of a society. Hence, if we draw its logical corollary it is outside of him and he can thus opt out of it by himself. He is able to save himself. If man can save himself, then the concept of an ontological redemption by Jesus Christ is brought into serious question. Hence for Fr. Balasuriya since man is not subjectively split he is capable of saving himself on his own and does not need an ontological redeemer like Christ. This is a position no Catholic can hold as it casts into serious doubt his faith in Christ as his Redeemer.

Erroneous Statement No. 2

"Original sin is not contained in the Old Testament". (p. 67 Mary and Human liberation).

Scriptures O.T.

"For sin began with woman and we all die because of her" (Sir. 25:24). "For behold I was conceived in iniquities and in sin did my mother conceive me". (Ps. 51:5)

Fr. Balasuriya

"The teaching on original justice and original sin is not contained in the Old Testament in any direct way." (p. 67)

Comment: Obviously these Old Testament texts prove just the opposite of what Fr. Balasuriya states in p. 67 of his book. Sin is presented in the Old Testament as an enslaving reality.

3. Erroneous Statement No. 3 -

"Jewish people did not understand the Genesis story to imply a human fall which led to a feeling of inadequacy" (p. 67 - Mary & Human Liberation).

Jewish Literature

"Alas Adam, thy fall came not upon thee alone but upon us thy descendants" (4 Es 1:118).

"If Adam first sinned and brought premature death on all, each of his descendants has incurred future pain" (Baruch 54:115)

Fr. Balasuriya

The Jewish people did not understand the story of Genesis to imply a human fall and inadequacy due to which they could not reach their eternal destiny without a divine redeemer", (p. 67)

Comment: The Jewish people, it is true, did not directly, visualize the concept of a Redeemer like Jesus, who saved them from sin as understood by Christian doctrine. But they did, however, have a strong notion of the fall of man into sin and of the resultant suffering. They understood the genesis story of the fall that way. The later tradition of Judaism developed strands of Messianism which visualized a spiritual redeemer. The increased frustration about the existing political leadership of Israel, and their continued sufferings led to a feeling of distrust in political Messianism and the growth of the hope for a Messiah-Redeemer among them ever more fervently. Deutero-Isaiah speaks of the "one who bore the sins of many" (Is 53:12). Fr. Balasuriya here has made a far too simplistic and an unscientific assertion, which is not factual.

Having spoken of Fr. Balasuriya's errors concerning original sin, and the need of a Redeemer, we can now deal with the three areas specifically mentioned in the Bishops' statement.

a. The Divinity of Jesus Christ

1. Self understanding of Jesus Christ

Ecclesial teaching

"Christ's human knowledge was free from positive ignorance and from error". (Decree of the Holy office 5th June 1918).

... "In virtue of the beatific vision which He enjoyed from the time when he was received into the womb of the Mother of God. He has for ever, and continuously had present to Him all the members of His Mystical Body and embraced them with His saving love". (Mystici Corporis Christi 75)

"By its union to the divine Wisdom in the person of the Word Incarnate, Christ enjoyed in His human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans He had come to reveal". (CCC 474)

Fr. Balasuriya

"We have questions concerning the nature of the humanity of Jesus. If Jesus was so God, so divine that from the beginning He had the fullness of knowledge including the beatific vision (as some theologians including St. Thomas do) then what is the relationship between Jesus and Mary?. Mary would have had very little to do in the formation of Jesus. Jesus could have known everything from His birth. Mary would have had to learn from the infant prodigy. Here again is a question of the nature of the divine in Jesus. It is related to the theological assumption of the hypostatic Union".

"The Marian doctrines are linked to the concepts of the divinity of Christ. What is the nature of the divinity of Jesus? It is one thing to say Jesus is divine, another to claim to be able to understand, clarify and even theologically define the way and the extent to which Jesus is divine", (pp. 104-105).

"I do not think Jesus began life with the fullness of knowledge. He made some mistakes such as concerning the end of the world. Even the disciples of Jesus had

some questionable views about it. **I do not think** that we need assume Jesus had the fullness of knowledge and the beatific vision **even at the end of his life**. Otherwise His agony and suffering would hardly be such a great sacrifice since He would have known that He would rise again on the third day", (p. 155)

Comment: Note the statements "I do not think", "He made some mistakes" that Fr. Balasuriya makes, assuming such a sure attitude concerning the self knowledge of Jesus, and in the same tone discounting ecclesial teaching on the subject, which is the fruit of reflection of centuries with callous disregard. How can he be so certain about a subject which is certainly beyond his human limits?

2. Divinity of Jesus

Ecclesial teaching

"The unique and altogether singular event of the Incarnation of the Son of God does not mean that Jesus Christ is part God and part man, nor does it imply that He is the result of a confused mixture of the divine and the human. He became truly man remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man" (CCC 464).

It is the basic belief of the church asserted all along. —

"We believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is God and man, He is God begotten of the substance of the Father before all ages and man

Fr. Balasuriya

"The traditional theology had defined Jesus as one person having two natures: the divine and the human. This is the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon 451. Who is able to know these things with **any degree of acceptable certitude?**" (P. 105).

"One of the consequences of the development of Mariology in a descending way i.e. postulating divine maternity, Immaculate conception and Virginity, Assumption is that Mary is not thought of as **a human mother of a human son** who lived in very ordinary circumstances, (p. 139)

born in time of the substance of His Mother. He is perfect God and perfect man".

N.B. Note how the accent is placed rather on the human nature of Christ,

(Athanasian creed; Creed of Nicea; Constantinople I, Chalcedon 451; Constantinople II and III).

"The church thus confesses that Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord become a man and our brother" (CCC 469).

Comment: The passages quoted above on the subject of Christology from Fr. Balasuriya's book show that while he places the accent on the human nature of Jesus, questions and doubts are raised about the certitude of the understanding of Jesus' divinity and the teaching of the church on the matter. While such teachings of the church on the divine human personality of Jesus are explained to be "assumption" (p. 104, para 5), "unable to be sure about their certitude to any degree" (p. 105, para 2), and "not presentable in our multi-religious context" (p. 108, para 2), or "unproved and unprovable" (p. 77), Fr. Balasuriya argues for a rethinking of Christology and Mariology that brings out Jesus' and Mary's "full humanity" (p. 105 para 3). To do this he questions some of the essential doctrines of the church such as that concerning original sin (p. 66 and Chapter 4), Redemption (pp. 107 and 108), need of Jesus Christ as an ontological Redeemer (p. 108 para 2) and the ecclesial understanding of His divinity (p. 104 para 5 and p. 105 para 2).

We must state, however, that these views cannot be held by a Catholic let alone a Catholic priest or theologian because they just simplistically question and seriously undermine the essential credo of the Church. The whole process is a result of how Fr. Balasuriya interprets original sin. In fact, the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains why the church's understanding of the doctrine on original sin is so vital to its faith and cautions against tampering with it. Says the catechism: —

"The doctrine of original sin is, so to speak, the "Reverse" side" of the good news that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men, that all need salvation and that salvation is offered to all through Christ. The Church, which has the mind of Christ, knows very well that we cannot tamper with the revelation of original sin without undermining the mystery of Christ". (CCC 389)

Thus any one tampering with the understanding of original sin as the church teaches is treading on dangerous ground. That is exactly what Fr. Balasuriya has done in his book. This he cannot do even for the best of motives because an analysis of this question on purely rational ground alone could lead to serious doctrinal error.

At this point it would also be good to mention what the expert commission on theology appointed by the Roman Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith states about Fr. Balasuriya's Christology : —

"In the entire work (his book) it is never said that Jesus is God, the eternal consubstantial Son of the Father. Naturally, the author knows the teaching of the church on the divinity of Jesus but shows himself hesitant or reluctant to express this fully. He is not inclined to profess that Jesus is really God: but says only that He is considered like God: Divinity was attributed to Jesus, (p. 95 of Mary and Human Liberation), p. 6: para 2 - observations of the SCDF 22nd July 1994).

3. Role of Christ as Redeemer:

Ecclesial teaching & Tradition	Fr. Balasuriya
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"This is my blood, the blood of the covenant which is to be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Mt 25:28).	"(Jesus) He does not speak of His mission and ministry as one of redemption i.e. of having to "buy back" a mere "humanity" (p. 68).
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"The Son of Man Himself did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mc 10:45; Mt. 20:28).

Comment: The Scripture texts quoted here clearly show that in the self awareness of Jesus, His death was visualized as paying a ransom for many. This clearly contradicts what Fr. Balasuriya states.

4. Baptism

Scripture

Fr. Balasuriya

"Jesus went with his disciples into the Judean countryside and stayed with them and baptized" (Jn 3:22).

"The Gospels do not say that Jesus baptized any one", (p. 68)

Comment: Fr. Balasuriya's statement is questionable when we see the report of the Gospel passage of John. It is true that Jesus placed a greater accent on conversion, in the sense of a radical change of life, than on the ritual aspects of Baptism. But Jesus did advocate Baptism.

- a) He mentioned Baptism quite a few times - (Mc 10:38; Mc 16:16; Mt 28:19).
- b) He Himself, was baptized in the waters of the Jordan and considered that, an important turning point of His life and Mission.
- c) The strong tradition of the apostolic church which considered baptism a necessity for salvation is something that is grown and matured in the Christ-experience of the apostles. Jesus must have insisted on it. Even if He did not personally baptize, the tradition of baptizing had His encouragement.

5. Need of Jesus Christ for salvation

Sacred Scripture

Fr. Balasuriya

"No one can come to the Father except through Me. If you know Me you know my Father too" (Jn 14:6)

"No one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him" (Lc 10:22).

"The theological basis for this was the teaching concerning original sin and the need for redemption through Christ by belonging to the church. Theologians posited that human nature itself was "fallen" and needed an ontological redemption i.e. of human nature itself. It was argued

"Whoever refuses honour to the Son refuses honour to the father who sent Him" (Jn 5:23).

this could be done by only a divine-human person who could redeem humanity and restore the friendship with God." (p. 82)

"In fact, both Jesus and Paul speak of a direct relationship between God and the human person. In **the** ultimate analysis holiness **and** salvation are in the relationship between a person and one's conscience and God", (p. 81)

Comment: Unlike the words of Jesus quoted above which posit the need of the Son for any relationship with the Father, Fr. Balasuriya posits a very self centered type of spirituality when he reduces holiness and salvation to a matter of a direct relationship between the individual person, his conscience and God. Such is a totally unchristian attitude let alone Catholic.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has more to say about that: "according to the author (Fr. Balasuriya), in Asia it would be necessary to revise all the elements of Christian faith which impinge on the sensitiveness of Asian countries and oriental religions, particularly the conception of salvation. Salvation is held to be a personal problem which is resolved in the direct relationship between God and the creature, (p. 81). Man is said to reach salvation through dedication to the moral obligation both in his personal and social life. The author does not see the need for a salvific intervention realised by a divine-human redeemer".

(p. 6 SCDF document 22nd July 1994).

While speaking of the "Third glaring error" mentioned by the Bishops in their statement, we have already touched upon two sections - namely

- a) Divinity of Christ, and
- b) Role of Christ as Redeemer.

Now let us proceed to the third — i.e. privileged position of Mary in the history of salvation.

c. Mary in the economy of Salvation

1. Immaculate Conception

Ecclesial teaching

"The most Holy Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception, by a unique gift of grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of mankind was preserved free from all stain of original sin" (Ineffabilis Deus 12 1641)

"It is no wonder, then, that the usage prevailed among the Holy Fathers, whereby they called the Mother of God, entirely holy and free from all stain of sin, fashioned by the Holy Spirit into a kind of new substance and new creature, adorned from the first moment of her conception with the splendour of an entirely unique holiness". (Lumen Gentium 56).

'To become the Mother of the saviour, Mary was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role. The Angel Gabriel at the moment of the Annunciation saluted her as "full of grace". In fact in order for Mary to be able to give the free as sent of her faith to the announcement of her vocation, it

Fr. Balasuriya

"If Mary is immaculate, in the sense that she has no stain of sin, or attraction or inclination to sin, how does she merit anything, how can she be virtuous ... is it better for Mary to be immaculate or to be normally human as other women and men have been and are ... is it necessarily better to be a virgin mother than an ordinary mother? What is bad about being a mother in the normal way, as this is how the Creator has made human nature? Why have we to imagine (note the word) such manner of divine intervention in the conception and birth of Jesus?" (pp. 92-94).

was necessary that she be wholly borne by God's grace." (CCC 490)

"Through the centuries, the church has become ever more aware that Mary "full grace" through God was redeemed from the moment of the Immaculate Conception. That is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception professes as Pope Pius DC proclaimed it in 1854" CCC 491).

Comment: Fr. Baiasuriya's rationalist and humanist orientations are visible in his statements on pages 92-94, where he just cannot, or does not wish to, accept anything above the ordinary as possible or needed for the birth of the Lord. He gives a sure hint that for him, all of those supernatural attributes probably are the result of somebody's imagination. The role of faith is not considered at all. For a purely horizontal and human visualisation of salvation and the role of the Redeemer, this kind of portrayal maybe valid but not for the noble presentation of the figures of Christ and Mary as the Church does in her millennial tradition and history. Fr. Balasuriya is in serious error surely.

2. Virginité of Mary

Ecclesial teaching

"From the first formulations of her faith, the church has confessed that Jesus was conceived solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, affirming also the corporeal aspect of this event. Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit without human seed..."

Fr. Balasuriya

"A doctrine concerning which there is and can be no convincing evidence except, again, that it is traditional belief in the church. It is a doctrine related to the presupposition concerning original sin, the ideology of male domination and a generous recourse to theological imagination", (p. 95)

"The Gospel accounts understand the virginal conception of Jesus as a divine work that surpasses all human understanding and possibility. That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit, said the Angel to St. Joseph, about Mary, his fiancée".

"The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made Man" (CCC 496-497).

Comment: The positions of Fr. Balasuriya and ecclesial teaching **are, as** one can see, basically irreconcilable.

3. Mary, Mother of God

Ecclesial teaching

"Called in the Gospel "Mother of Jesus" Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth at the prompting of the spirit, and even before the birth of her son as the "Mother of my Lord". In fact, the one whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the church confesses that Mary is truly the "Mother of God" (CCC 495)

"It (the doctrine) also **down played** the role of Joseph in the life of the Holy Family - both to have divine paternity for Jesus and to claim a perpetual virginity for his wedded wife", (p. 98)

"Normal sexuality was by passed in the teaching on the birth of Jesus", (p. 98)

Fr. Balasuriya

"The teaching on the divine maternity of Mary is also something which is beyond our human understanding. It is not a doctrine directly revealed in the Scriptures and is consequent on the acceptance of the divinity of Christ and the nature of the link between the divine and the human in Jesus Christ and in the womb of Mary." (p. 102)

"The Blessed virgin was eternally predestined, in conjunction with the Incarnation of the divine Word, to be the 'Mother of God'. (Lumen Gentium 61)

4. The Assumption of Mary

Ecclesial teaching

Fr. Balasuriya

"Finally, preserved free from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exalted, by the Lord as Queen of all, in order that she might be the more thoroughly conformed to her Son, the Lord of Lords (Apoc 19:16) and the Conqueror of sin and death". (L.G. 59, CCC 966).

"We are once again before a privilege of Mary about which we cannot have certain empirical knowledge to affirm or deny it", (p. 106)

Comment: When we read the comparative texts above we are immediately struck by the noble and mystic figures of Jesus and Mary in salvation history as explained in the texts from ecclesial documents and the hollow and totally, impoverished, merely human, and politico-social presentation, of the same figures in the texts quoted from "Mary and Human Liberation". In the latter case, the presentation is devoid of the majesty and nobility visible in the deeper vocation and mission that God entrusted to Jesus and the Blessed Mother. They are portrayed almost like empty political heroes of human history by Fr. Balasuriya.

Jesus' mission was, as St. Paul put it, metacosmic.

"For by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and for Him.

And He is before all things and by Him all things exist. And He is **the** head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the first born from the dead, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fullness (pleroma) dwell. And having made Peace through the blood of His Cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, by him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven". (Co 1:16-20).

He is for the church "the word that was in the beginning" (Jn 1:1). He is not a socio-political or revolutionary liberator as Fr. Balasuriya tries to portray but the Saviour and Reconciler of everyone and everything with God, the Messiah, the only begotten Son of God and the pleroma.

And Mary is the pre-destined elect of God who had the special mission of bearing Jesus: "Mary thus remains before God and also before the whole of humanity as the unchangeable and inviolable sign of God's election" (Redemptoris Mater II).

It is a pity that Fr. Balasuriya, in his laudable desire, to make Jesus and Mary more meaningful and stimulating towards a just world order, has deigned to lower them to the stature of cardboard heroes. Thus "Mary and Human Liberation", to say the least, is a shabby, puerile and unscientific treatment of these towering figures of salvation history — Jesus and Mary.

The Fourth Glaring Error

The Bishops' Statement: "The author often gives the impression, directly or indirectly, that the role of religion is basically to ensure humanistic and social liberation of mankind and help it to reach that goal".

Fr. Balasuriya on many occasions speaks of a far too horizontal orientation of salvation and does not give adequate room for the deeper spiritual vocation of Jesus and consequently of Mary in salvation history. Even if he does speak of these, they are presented as a consequence of that basic orientation or as flowing from it. Some of the dogmas are presented rather as down grading humanity or as obstructions to social transformation and hence, to be re-considered. Thus social concerns are placed above the deeper aspects of religion.

Social concern as human emancipation and liberation is the ultimate value.
We quote:—

1. "The more a theology is truly leading to genuine human **self realization** and fulfillment of all persons and peoples, the closer it is to the divine sources", (p. 51)
2. "The core message of the religions covering **human** life and **human** fulfillment can help bring people together in mutual understanding and respect and in common action for the good of all", (p. 53)
3. "**From a feminist point of** view the way Mary's special privileges are postulated can be down grading of the rest of humanity, especially women. For those concerned with social transformation they could be a deflecting of attention from the real issues of society" (p. 92)
4. "The teaching on the Virginity has deflected attention from the Mary of real life seen clearly in the Gospels and this has given Catholic spirituality an anti-sexual slant. It has also contributed to the neglect of Mary's message in the Magnificat and her role as a poor woman engaged in her peoples' struggle for the integral, personal and social liberation alongside Jesus", (p. 100)
5. "But Mariology has lacked a clear and systematic relationship to social transformation by bringing about Justice within communities in nations and internationally. There is hardly any shrine of Mary or any popular prayer or hymn addressed to her, that stresses the sharing of material goods — so that no one is in need. There is no analysis in Marian theology, of the conditions in society which prevent the realization of effective social justice, love and peace ... but throughout the centuries Marian spirituality has hardly been developed in any significant manner to oppose the evils and injustices of feudal society, of capitalism, of imperial colonialism and male domination", (pp. 114-115)
6. "The traditional Mariological dogmas are in many senses not adequate for understanding Mary in relation to society, (p. 152)

7. "We have seen in the preceding chapters how a traditional Marian devotion and Marian theology have been associated with, and partly responsible for such an oppression of women. The image of Mary was made to fit into the stereotype of the dominated patient woman and this Marian model itself fostered a concept of holiness linked to the subordination of women to men and the poor and weak to the wealthy and strong." (p. 166)

Comment: It is true that the vocation of a Christian to work for integral and total salvation has, to give expression, to and result, in a commitment to establish a better socio-economic order, justice and peace in the world. But such is only consequent to, and not the cause of a deeper spiritual urge for redemption in Christ. One must not place the cart before the horse.

A deeply lived redemptive experience necessarily, leads one to be committed to love and justice and to work for a just social order. Such an experience cannot be a cause for any oppression or marginalization. It is not Christological or Marian dogma that produces or supports oppression. It is man's own deep sinfulness, woundedness or if we call it technically original sin — the inclination to evil which is chronic in him. Dogmas are only a result of faith and deep spiritual reflection.

In his book Fr. Balasuriya makes a wild accusation that "traditional Marian devotion and Marian theology have been associated with and partly responsible for such an oppression of women" (p. 166). This has to be proved by facts. We do not believe that it is true. The image of Mary as proclaimed by the church does not demean women, and the poor, and keep them subservient to men and the wealthy. The church has assigned to **Mary** a role that is supreme in the history of salvation. The Second Vatican Council assigned to Mary "a place in the church which is highest after Christ and yet very close to us" (L.G. 54). In fact, the church has a much higher sense of respect for the dignity of women in society than Fr. Balasuriya ever imagines. It does not reduce the role of women in society to one of toiling for mere socio-political or humanistic emancipation but goes well beyond when it places the role of Mary as that of being a cooperator par excellence in the work of salvation itself. (L.G. 57). Some ecclesial traditions speak of Mary as Co-redemptrix. It is a very noble role that is visualised for Mary.

Thus, it is and exaggeration to seek to correct some insignificant imbalance that may exist, in one or the other custom or practice of the church between a deeper vocation to redemption in Christ, and one's socio-political commitment to freedom, swinging the entire accent on to a purely horizontal dimension. You don't correct one imbalance, even if it exists with another imbalance. Fr. Balasuriya gives evidence of being inclined to do so. We do not agree that such a path is correct.

14. Question: You stated that the role of faith in the discernment of objective truth has not been appreciated much in Fr. Balasuriya's writings. What role does faith have in relation to reason and empirical experience in the search for truth? Can you elaborate?

Answer: This is an important question. The normal sources of certitude for us, human beings, are empirical experience and rational argumentation. Increasingly, the area of the psyche too is becoming a source of knowledge, and certitude for modern man. A fourth important source of certitude for us, especially believers, is faith and this too can vary from the elementary human to the religious and spiritual. For a Catholic it is of even greater value. St. Augustine even visualized faith as a source of certitude for rational thinking. His often quoted "Credo ut intelligam" "I believe in order to understand" - is axiomatic of this thinking. The church too has explained this clearly in its Catechism when it states — "By faith man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred scripture calls the human response to God, the author of Revelation, "the obedience of faith". (Rom 1:5) (CCC 143)

Again the catechism states —

"What moved us to believe is not the fact that revealed truth **appears as true and** intelligible in the light of our natural reason. We believe because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, **who can** neither deceive nor be deceived. So that the submission of our faith might nevertheless be in accordance with reason God willed that external proofs of His Revelation should be joined to the internal help of the Holy Spirit. Thus the miracles of Christ and the saints, prophecies, the church's growth and holiness and her fruitfulness and stability "are the most certain signs of divine Revelation, adapted to the

intelligence of all"; they are "motives of credibility" (*motiva credibilitatis*), which show that the amount of faith is by no means a blind impulse of the mind" (CCC 156). Again it states — "Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge, because it is founded on the very Word of God who cannot lie. To be sure, revealed truths can seem obscure to human reason and experience, but the certainty that the divine light gives is greater than that which the light of natural reason gives. Ten thousand difficulties do not make doubt.

Thus, it is not true to say that faith cannot reveal objective truth, but is only a subjective experience. Faith does reveal objective truth which is valid for all. Such truth remains veiled to those who do not believe. The miracle of the cure of the blind man at Jericho where the conversation between Jesus and Bartimaeus went as follows, clearly shows how faith opens the eyes of those who "do not see". Jesus asked him "What do you want me to do for you?" "Master, he replied", "Let me see again". Jesus said to him, "Go, your faith has saved you". And immediately his sight returned. (Mc 10:51-52).

In his book Fr. Balasuriya tends to question the certitude of ecclesial doctrine or dogma, in the sense of their objective validity because according to him, they are "beyond our human understanding" (p. 102), "do not have certain empirical knowledge" (p. 196). "concerning which there is and can be no convincing evidence" (p. 95), "about which we do not have verifiable information" (p. 46), "something about which we cannot know anything by reason or experience" (p. 46) and is based on "unproved or unprovable assumptions" (p. 77). It is this attitude which has caused the book to appear a futile exercise — seeking to understand and explain dogmas and their content without accepting and assigning to faith its own unique role.

15. Question: What other errors or doctrinal defects do you find in this book?

Answer: There are several other disturbing statements, erroneous or disrespectful, concerning ecclesial teaching and their sources or persons held sacred by us. We will outline them as follows:—

1. The tendency to subordinate even the Sacred Scriptures themselves to a so-called "twofold principle" which Fr. Balasuriya posits

arbitrarily. This principle has a positive as well as a negative direction, according to him. The principle is basically as follows: — remove anything in theology, Sacred Scripture or Tradition which is dehumanizing and discriminatory of any sector of society (negative) and accept even from other religions anything that is humanizing and ennobling (positive). Only such according to Fr. Balasuriya can be called "authentically derived from God". Thus it is an altogether new principle. According to him, if this principle is applied, quite a few pages from Sacred Scripture will have to be removed because they speak of things which are against human rights, (p. 50)

This thinking is a total rejection of the teaching of the dogmatic constitution of Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council - *Dei Verbum* which presents the faith of the church on the subject, evolved over a 2000 year reflection of depth and seriousness. The constitution states that — "Holy Mother the church, relying on the faith of the apostolic age, accepts as sacred and canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16), they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the church herself (DV 11).

Fr. Balasuriya's contention also lacks exegetical seriousness in that, while just brushing aside the value of the bi-millennial reflection, which has gone into the formulation of this teaching, he does not seem to give due place to

- Christian hermeneutics (DV 13)
- Condescension of divine wisdom
- The patient pedagogy of God
- The gradualness of Revelation and
- Its incarnational mysticism.

He takes the Sacred Text at face value as his starting point and ignores all the modern day findings of hermeneutics, literary criticism, exegesis and philology, thus letting himself be led by facile arguments and perceptions on the nature of Sacred Scriptures and their so called ennobling or dehumanizing sections.

2. He also belittles the value of dogma by calling them essentially products of **myth** (p. 66), interpreted by the authorities who "possibly, likely and probably" (p. 43) wished to further "**their interests and power**" (p. 43) and having free recourse to what Fr. Balasuriya calls "theological imagination" (p. 46) created them and gave them a quasi divine sanction by turning them into church tradition which is considered a source of divine revelation. This interpretation of dogma lacks seriousness. **First** of **all**, these dogmas often evolved in a context of deep reflection, discussion even debate and re-thinking over several centuries before they were finally and officially proclaimed (example - the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary which took nearly a thousand years of reflection and discussion).

Secondly, they were based on a reflection that gradually emerged and developed in the context of an ongoing faith and prayer dialogue between the Sacred Scriptures and apostolic tradition on the one side and the life of the Christian community on the other side. It was often not as Fr. Balasuriya interprets from top to bottom but from the grassroots to the top.

Thirdly, the motives for fostering self interests through theology or dogma which Fr. Balasuriya attributes to ecclesiastical authorities are (pp. 42-43; 79-80; p. 111, pp. 190-191) very arbitrary and unprovable. It follows trends of tabloid journalism.

Finally, dogmas are not just ways of arbitrarily "attributing" this or that role to Jesus or Mary or any particular doctrine like that of original sin. They do not create or make Jesus the Son of God, "God and Man, Redeemer". They do not make Mary Immaculate or the Mother of God. Jesus and Mary are what they are per se. The church through her prayerful and faithful reflection on the loving and salvific plan of God "discerns" or "discovers" these attributes through a long process. Christological or Marian dogmas are part of that revelation or discovery which God Himself leads the ecclesial community into, through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition, life faith and prayer. In the case of Christology, Jesus Divinity is a result of a claim made by him too. Thus Fr. Balasuriya is, to say the least, unscientific, not at all serious and very arbitrary.

16. Question: Are there any other objectionable elements in the book which you wish to high light?

Answer: Certainly. There are some sentences or sayings in the book which, if written by any non Christian, would have led to immediate condemnation. For our faithful, Jesus and Mary are great challenges for their call to grow into total spiritual fulfillment. Among some of the sayings of Fr. Balasuriya we wish to focus attention on three particular instances which offend such susceptibilities. In a chapter entitled "Mary, a mature adult woman" where Fr. Balasuriya engages in a highly speculative, hypothetical meditation on Mary he states — "Mary would have thought why Jesus was not settling down to a married life. She may have asked herself, as oriental mothers still do, whether she should "arrange" a marriage for Jesus" (p. 129).

"She, (Mary) must have had the desire to have grand children of her own", (p. 129)

"If He, (Jesus) remained unmarried it was not because He did not love any woman, but rather because He wanted to give Himself fully to His cause." (p. 129) these are sayings which do not fit our cultural and religious milieu here where our non Christian brethren too hold values such as self denial and eschatological celibacy in high esteem. These sentences reflect rather the spiritual bankruptcy of the secularised West. It is a pity that Fr. Balasuriya had become an instrument for the diffusion of such values here through his master piece.

CHAPTER 3

Developments

17. Question: Did the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith oblige Fr. Balasuriya to sign a profession of faith specially drafted for him?

Answer: Yes. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith had studied the long reply (89 pages in detail and a 20 page summary) sent in by Fr. Balasuriya in March 1995 to their critical analysis of his book and after studying this reply in detail, they decided at one of their meetings that it was unsatisfactory. This decision resulted in their requesting Fr. Balasuriya through the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, (20th November 1995) to do a "profession of faith" before witnesses and it sent him a profession formula which was especially drafted for him keeping in mind the serious errors found in his book. Extensions of time to do so were given to him at his own request. But, he has continued to refuse to sign this document. Instead, circumventing required procedure he had signed an **old** formula of **a** profession of faith used during the time of Pope Paul VIth which did not contain some of the latest pronouncement of the Holy See and sent it to the Congregation. But, **that too** he had signed placing three conditions which practically rendered his signature void.

Was this an attempt to fool the officials of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, one wonders! In the final analysis, then, he continues to refuse any flexibility on his part, an attitude which he has demonstrated from the very beginning of this issue. Dialogue is a two way process and not a one way street, but it looks as if for him it is the latter rather than the former.

18. Question: What about the accusation of victimisation and the public campaign?

Answer: Fr. Balasuriya and a coterie of his friends, sympathizers and groups of people, most of whom have not even read this book, as they themselves state, have continued to carry on an orchestrated and a

totally one sided campaign. In a recent issue of his own magazine "Social Justice" (July 15th 1996, Volume 19, No. 06) only the version of Fr. Balasuriya has been presented. Nothing has appeared in it which explained the other side of the question.

19. Question: What about this recourse to the State Mediation Board by Fr. Balasuriya?

Answer: By summons dated 5th June 1996 Fr. Balasuriya called the entire Bishops' Conference and the proprietor, editor, manager of the Catholic Messenger and Gnanartha Pradeepaya before the State Mediation Board. He, it appeared, was getting ready to proceed with a defamation charge against the Bishops' Conference on their statement and against the papers for publishing it. He had accused the Bishops of not allowing a due process to take place within the church on the matter of his book and wanted the Board, therefore, to mediate. We do not wish to elaborate on this once again we have already indicated in our reply to question 6 concerning this charge.

Later, especially on the strong advice of Rev. Fr. Marcello Zago OMI, Superior General of the Oblates, he decided not to proceed with the matter at the level of the Mediation Board and thus this procedure was terminated.

20. Question: In your answers to our questions or in your own studies on the matter, what were the main sources of information you used especially in evaluating the views of Fr. Balasuriya?

Answer: The main tools we used in the discernment process concerning the errors found in Fr. Balasuriya's book were; the Old and New Testament, Documents of the Second Vatican Council, Code of Canon Law, the Compendium of authoritative pronouncements of the church down the centuries done by Denzinger and especially the Catechisms of the Catholic Church issued by the Holy See in the year 1992.

21. Question: Why especially the Catechisms of the Catholic Church?

Answer: The catechism is really the most recent, lucid and comprehensive presentation of Catholic doctrine. Pope John Paul II in

the Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* of 11th October 1992 stated "the Catechism of the Catholic Church ... is a statement of the Church's faith and of Catholic doctrine, attested to or illumined by Sacred Scripture, the Apostolic Tradition and the Church's Magisterium. I declare it to be a sure norm for teaching the faith" (FD 3).

It is not an invention or creation of the present leadership of the church but is a prayerfully prepared compendium of all what the church has discerned, proclaimed and believed as its spiritual heritage down the centuries. It is the most authoritative and the most ecclesial collection of sacred doctrine. It was prepared on an invitation extended to the Holy Father by the Fathers of the special Synod held in 1985 in Rome to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council. That was why it was considered as a very important source book for us.

22. What is the Final decision that has now been taken?

The Vatican Congregation for the doctrine of the Faith continued to appeal to Fr. Balasuriya, OMI to sign the Profession of Faith specifically prepared for him. Several extensions of time were also given at his own request. Yet he did not accede to these appeals.

The Congregation thus had no other option left to it other than to publish a notification for the guidance of the faithful on the book "Mary and Human Liberation" and the canonical status of its author Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, OMI. Yet as a sign of its good will to Fr. Balasuriya the CDF wished to accord him a final opportunity to sign the Profession of Faith. On 7th December 1996 Fr. Balasuriya was invited to the Apostolic Nunciature in Colombo where the Apostolic Nuncio read out to him the text of the proposed public notification by the CDF outlining the history of the issue, the principal errors contained in the book and the canonical consequences on Fr. Balasuriya. The gravity of these consequences were made known to him and an appeal was made for a reconsideration of his refusal to sign the Profession. Fr. Balasuriya refused to change his position on the matter even then and instead wanted a letter he had brought along with him, appealing against the decisions of the CDF and addressed to his Holiness Pope John Paul n, to be sent to His Holiness himself. This was done as requested.

The publication of the notification on Fr. Balasuriya and his book was then suspended pending a decision by his Holiness. On the 27th December 1996 His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Sodano, the secretary of state of His Holiness wrote to Fr. Balasuriya assuring him that "the Holy Father has from the beginning followed and personally approved the evaluation made by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and has similarly approved the steps taken by the same congregation in connection with the examination of your (Fr. Balasuriya's) publications". The Cardinal further states that "His Holiness is equally convinced that these publications contain statements which are erroneous and contrary to the Catholic Faith". The Cardinal informed Fr. Balasuriya that "with profound regret, in the face of your reiterated refusal to recognize and correct the grave errors which have been condemned, the Holy Father finds himself obliged to approve the notification which as read to you by the Papal Representative on 7th December and which declares that you are no longer a Catholic theologian, with the consequent disciplinary provisions in accordance with the code of canon law."

The notification was thus published in the official edition of the Vatican news paper "L'Osservatore Romano" of the 5th January 1997. The English version of the notification was also published in the English edition of the same newspaper. We published herewith as annexures to this little booklet the following documents.

1. The public notification of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of the 2nd January 1997 published on the 5th January 1997.
2. The list of canonical consequences of the said notification.
3. The letter of His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Sodano dated 27th December 1996 to Fr. Balasuriya.
4. The statement of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Sri Lanka Dated 5th January 1997.

List of Abbreviations

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----|------------------------------|
| 1. Scriptures - | Lc | - St. Luke's Gospel |
| | Jn | - St. John's Gospel |
| | Rom | - St. Paul to the Romans |
| | Eph | - St. Paul to the Ephesians |
| | Col | - St. Paul to the Colossians |

	2 Tin	- St. Paul's second letter to Timothy
	Sir	- Book of Sirach
	Ps	- Book Psalms
	Is	- Book of Isaiah
20	Others	
	a) Vatican II	
	Dv	- Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation - <i>Dei Verbum</i>
	LG	- Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - <i>Lumen Gentium</i>
	GS	- Dogmatic constitution of the church in the modern world - <i>gaudium et Spes</i>
	AA	- Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity - <i>Apostolicam Actuositatem</i>
	AG	- Decree on Missionary Activity - <i>Ad Gentes</i>
	NA	- Declaration on relations with non-Christians - <i>Nostra Aetate</i>
b)	CCC	- Catechisms of the Catholic Church
c)	SCDF	- Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
d)	DZ	- Denzinger - compendium of ecclesial statements

ANNEXURES

**CONGREGATION FOR THE
DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH**
Notification concerning the Text
Mary and Human Liberation
by Father Tissa Balasuriya, OMI

Introduction

On 5 June 1994, the Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka publicly declared that the publication entitled "*Mary and Human Liberation*"¹ by Father Tissa Balasuriya, OMI contained statements incompatible with the faith of the Church regarding the doctrine of revelation and its transmission, Christology, soteriology and mariology. The Bishops concluded by admonishing the faithful to refrain from reading the book. The author, on his part, reacted negatively, contending that his text had been interpreted erroneously and demanding that the truth of the accusations be demonstrated to him.

In spite of the declaration by the Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka, the erroneous ideas continued to be disseminated among the faithful, even beyond the borders of Sri Lanka; it was for this reason that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in keeping with its responsibility for safeguarding the faith throughout the Catholic world, decided to intervene. At the end of July 1994, the Dicastery sent the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate some observations on the text, confirming that it contained statements manifestly incomparable with the faith of the Church. In addition, the Superior General was invited to take the measures appropriate in such a case, including a request for a public retraction.

RESPONSE

In his response of 14 March 1995, Father Balasuriya once again stated his positions and maintained that the observations of the Congregation had misunderstood and falsified his doctrinal positions.

¹The text was published in the journal *Logos*, 29, 1-2; March/July 1990 (Colombo, Sri Lanka).

To assist the author to demonstrate his full and unconditioned adherence to the Magisterium, in November 1995, the Congregation forwarded the text of a *profession of faith* to the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate centred on magisterial definitions relative to those truths of the faith which the author had denied or had interpreted erroneously. Moreover, it was stated that if Father Balasuriya would agree to sign the *profession*, it would then be decided how most adequately to repair the harm done to the faithful; should he not agree, in addition to the disciplinary measures which would follow (can. 1364), the possibility of a public *Notification* would be taken into consideration by the Congregation.

In May 1996, Father Balasuriya responded by sending a different text, the "Solemn Profession of Paul VI" which had been signed by him with the addition of the following clause: "I, Father Tissa Balasuriya, OMI make and sign this Profession of Faith of Pope Paul VI in the context of theological development and Church practice since Vatican II and the freedom and responsibility of Christians and theological searchers, under Canon Law". Prescinding from the fact that the author had responded with a text different from the one requested, the addition of such a clause rendered the declaration defective, since it diminished the universal and permanent value of the definition of the Magisterium.

INVITATION TO SIGN PROFESSION OF FAITH

In June 1996, the Congregation again asked the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to invite Father Balasuriya to sign the text of the *profession of faith* already given to him, within a period of three weeks and without any conditioning clause.

In the meantime, the Secretary of the Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka had communicated that Father Balasuriya had made recourse to the State Mediation Board against the Episcopal Conference, as well as against the Archbishop of Colombo and the editors and manager of the Colombo Catholic Press, in response to the declaration regarding *Mary and Human Liberation* and its subsequent publication in Catholic newspapers.

On 16 July 1996, the Procurator General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate transmitted the response of Father Balasuriya, date 1 July 1996, in which he stated that he had suspended the civil proceedings against the Bishops, giving as the reason for this decision his hope that there would be a re-examination of his case within the Church. He was, in all probability, referring to his appeal against the Bishops of Sri Lanka, dated 13 June 1996, to the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, in which he maintained that the procedures that led to the declaration regarding his text had been marred by serious irregularities. The Tribunal responded, however, that the question did not fall within its competence. In a similar way, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, having received an appeal by Father Balasuriya dated 17 July 1996, recognized its lack of competence in this case and forwarded the author's letter to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Father Balasuriya also asked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to allow him some time to reflect further on its request that he sign the *profession of faith* without any conditioning clause, and promised a response before the end of September; such a response, however, never arrived.

Given the clear refusal of Father Balasuriya to publicly and unequivocally profess his adherence to the faith of the Church, on 22 July 1996, the Congregation, at a meeting with the Superior General and Procurator General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, communicated that such a situation could not be allowed to continue and that, therefore, a *Notification* would be published in his regard.

OFFER TO DEMONSTRATE FAITH

Father Balasuriya was offered a further opportunity to demonstrate his unconditioned adherence to the faith of the Church when, on 7 December 1996, he was called, together with his Provincial Superior to the Apostolic Nunciature in Sri Lanka. At that time, the Apostolic Nuncio read to Father Balasuriya the text of a proposed *Notification* which would be published should he not sign the *profession of faith* mentioned above. Father Balasuriya once again refused and appealed to the Holy Father, asking that a letter he had prepared be delivered directly to the Pope.

In this letter, Father Balasuriya continued to maintain that everything he **had written in his text** *Mary and Human Liberation* was within the limits of orthodoxy.

POPE'S APPROVAL

On 27 December 1996, in the name of the Holy Father, His Eminence Angelo Cardinal Sodano, Secretary of State, responded with **a letter to** Father Balasuriya, assuring him that the Pope had personally followed the various phases of the procedure used by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its examination of his writing, and that **the** Holy Father had expressly approved the *Notification* of the Congregation.

Therefore, given the failure of this latest attempt to obtain from Father Balasuriya an expression of adherence to the faith of the Church, the Congregation is compelled, for the good of the faithful, to publish the present *Notification*, in which the essential elements of the above-mentioned observations are made public.

EVALUATION OF THE TEXT "*MARY AND HUMAN LIBERATION*"

The aim of Father Balasuriya's publication is, in his own words, "the critique and evaluation of theological propositions and presuppositions" (P. iv) of the Church's mariological leaching. In pursuing this intention, the author arrives at the formulation of principles and theological explanations which contain a series of grave errors and which, to different degrees, are distortions of the truths of dogma and arc, therefore, incompatible with the faith.

Father Balasuriya does not recognize the supernatural, unique and irreparable character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, by placing its presuppositions on the same level as those of other religions (cf. pp. 31-63). In particular, he maintains that certain "presuppositions" connected **to** myths were uncritically assumed to be revealed historical facts and, interpreted ideologically by the clerical "power holders" in the Church, eventually became the teaching of the Magisterium (cf. pp. 41-49).

Father Balasuriya assumes, moreover, a discontinuity in the economy of revelation. In fact, he distinguishes "between the faith due in Christianity to what Jesus teaches and to what the Churches have subsequently developed as interpretations of his teaching" (p.37)². From this, it follows that the content expressed by various dogmas is considered to be on the same level as theological interpretations offered "by the Churches", which are the fruit of their cultural and political interests (cf. pp. 42-45, 76-77). This position involves, in fact, *the denial of the nature of Catholic dogma* and as a consequence, the relativizing of the *revealed truths contained in them*.

In the first place, the author relativizes *christological dogma*: Jesus is presented simply as "a supreme teacher", "one showing a path to deliverance from sin and union with God" (p. 37), "one of the greatest spiritual leaders of humanity" (p. 149), a person who communicates to us his "primordial spiritual experience" (p. 37) but whose divine sonship is never explicitly recognized (cf. pp. 47,104-105-153) and whose salvific functions is only doubtfully acknowledged (cf. p. 81).

ECCLESIOLOGICAL ERRORS

The ecclesiological errors of the text follow from this vision. In not recognizing that "Jesus Christ wanted a Church - say the Catholic Church - to be the mediator of that salvation" (p. 81) Father Balasuriya reduces salvation to a "direct relationship between God and the human person" (p. 81) and denies the necessity of baptism (cf. 68).

A fundamental aspect of the thought of Father Balasuriya is the denial of the *dogma of original sin*, held by him to be simply a product of the theological thought of the West (cf. pp. 66-78). This contradicts the nature of this dogma and its intrinsic connection to revealed truth³. The author, in fact, does not hold⁴ that the meaning of dogmatic formulas

²The same concept is found also in the Response of 14 March 1995, pp. 8-9.

³f. *Concilium Tridentinum, Decretum de peccato originali*, DS 1511-1512; Paulus VI, *Sollmnis professio fidei*, AAS 60 (1968), 434, 445.

⁴Cf. Response, p. 11: "Are not the definitions of dogma made by Councils also particular expressions concerning an ineffable, inexpressible, ultimate divine, and that according to the needs of those who do so, their particular philosophical terms and according to the culture of a given time? To absolutize them could result in a narrowness which the Vatican Council II wanted to avoid".

remains always true and unchangeable, though capable of being expressed more clearly and better understood.⁵

On the basis of these positions, the author arrives at the point of denying in particular, the *marian dogmas*, Mary's divine motherhood, her Immaculate Conception and virginity, as well as her bodily Assumption into heaven,⁶ are not recognized as truths belonging to the Word of God (cf. pp. 47, 106, 139, 152, 191). Wanting to present a vision of Mary free from "theological elaborations, which are derived from a particular interpretation of one sentence or other of the scriptures" (p. 150), Father Balasuriya, in fact, deprives the dogmatic doctrine concerning the Blessed Virgin of every revealed character, thus denying the authority of tradition as a mediation of revealed truth.⁷

Finally, it must be noted that Father Balasuriya, denying and relativizing some statements of both the extraordinary Magisterium and the ordinary universal Magisterium, reveals that he does not recognize the existence of an infallibility of the Roman Pontiff and of the college of Bishops *cum et sub Petro*. Reducing the primacy of the Successor of Peter to a question of power (cf. pp. 42, 84, 170), he denies the special character of this ministry.⁸

In publishing this *Notification*, the Congregation is obliged also to declare that Father Balasuriya has deviated from the integrity of the truth of the Catholic faith and, therefore cannot be considered a Catholic theologian; moreover, he has incurred excommunication *latae sententiae* (can. 1364, par. 1)

The Sovereign Pontiff John Paul II, at the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect, approved this Notification, adopted in the ordinary session of this Congregation, and ordered it to be published.

⁵Cf. S. Congregate pro Doctrina Fidei, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, n. 5; AAS 65 (1973), 403-404.

⁶Cf. *Concilium Vaticanum II*, Const, dogtn, *Lumen Gentium* n. 14; *Symbolum Apostolicum*, DS 10; *Symbolum Toletanum* DS 189; *Concilium Constantinopolitanum II*, DS 422, *Concilium Lateranense IV*, DS 801; *Concilium Ephesinum*, DS 252; Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus* DS 2803; Pius XII, *Munificentissimus Deus*, DS 3903.

⁷Cf. *Concilium Vaticanum II*, Const, dogm, *Dei Verbum*, nn 8-9

⁸Cf. *Concilium Vaticanum I*, Const, dogm, *Pastor Aeternus*, DS 3074; *Concilium Vaticanum II*, Cons dogm. *Lumen Gentium* nn 18, 22, 25.

Rome, from the offices of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2 January 1997, memorial of Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory Nazianzen, Bishops and Doctors of the Church.

+ **Joseph Card. Ratzinger**

Prefect

+ **Tarcisio Bertone**

Archbishop Emeritus of Vercelli

Secretary

SECRETARIAT OF STATE

N. 404. 318/G.B.

27th December 1996

Dear Father Balasuriya,

At the personal direction of the Holy Father, I write to assure you that he has carefully read the letter sent to him through the Apostolic Nuncio on 7 December last

With regard to your observations and objections, in the first place I would inform you that the Holy Father has from the beginning followed and personally approved the evaluations made by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and has similarly approved the steps taken by the same Congregation in connection with the examination of your publications. His Holiness is equally convinced that these publications contain statements which are erroneous and contrary to the Catholic faith.

With profound regret, in the face of your reiterated refusal to recognize and connect the grave errors which have been condemned, the Holy Father finds himself obliged to approve the Notification which was read to you by the Papal Representative on 7 December and which declares that you are no longer a Catholic theologian, with the consequent disciplinary provisions in accordance with the Code of Canon Law.

His Holiness earnestly prays that even at this difficult moment you will rediscover the path of correct doctrine and of filial love of Mary Immaculate, Mother of the Redeemer, from whom the Congregation which you entered more than fifty years ago takes its inspiration.

I too make this hope the subject of my prayer, and renewing the assurance of my regard, I remain

Yours sincerely in Christ,

Sgd. Angelo Card. Sodano
Secretary of State

The Reverend Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I.
Centre for Society and Religion
281, Deans Road,
Colombo 10.

APOSTOLIC NUNCIATURE

in Sri Lanka

Prot. N. 841/97

The Apostolic Nunciature presents its compliments to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka and, with reference to the NOTIFICATION, published in the L'Osservatore Romano, concerning Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, has the honour to inform of the immediate canonical consequences of the mentioned Notification:

A) The Excommunication is incurred automatically ("latae sententiae" "ipso facto"). Excommunication is a censure excluding one from communion of the faithful and barring one from various aspects of the Church's public life.

B) Canon 1331, par. 1 is applied:

"An excommunicated person is forbidden:

1) to have any ministerial participation in celebrating the Eucharistic Sacrifice or in any other ceremonies whatsoever of public worship;

2) to celebrate the sacraments and sacramentals and to receive the sacramentals;

3) to discharge any ecclesiastical offices, ministries or functions whatsoever, or to place acts of governance".

As a consequence (n. 3), Fr. Balasuriya cannot teach in catholic faculties, institutes or centers and cannot preach.

C) From the moment the excommunication is declared according to par. 2 of the mentioned Can. 1331:

The excommunicated person:

1) wishing to act against the prescriptions of par. 1, n. 1, is to be prevented from doing so or the liturgical action is to stop unless a serious cause intervenes;

2) invalidly places acts of governance which are only illicit in accord with the norms of par. 1, n. 3;

3) is forbidden to enjoy privileges formerly granted;

4) cannot validly acquire a dignity, office or other function in the Church;

5) cannot appropriate the revenues from any dignity, office, function or pension in the Church".

D) When the excommunicated person is a cleric and / or belongs to a Religious Institute, other sanctions can be further applied in the future, if the persistence of the situation so requires.

Colombo, January 5, 1997

To: His Lordship
Rt Rev. Fr. Vianney Fernando
Bishop of Kandy
President of the CBCSL
Lankarama, Balcombe Place
Colombo

Sid. Osbaldo M. Padilla
Titular Archbishop of Pia
Apostolic Nuncio in Sri Lanka

PRESS RELEASE

BY THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

IN SRI LANKA REGARDING THE CANONICAL STATUS

OF REV. FR. TISSA BALASURIYA, OMI

The Catholic Bishops' conference in Sri Lanka has been informed by the congregation for the doctrine of the Faith through the Apostolic Nuncio that a notification dated 2nd January 1997 regarding the Juridical status of Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, O.M.I, in the Catholic Church has been made public by the Vatican Press Office on the 4th January 1997 and subsequently published in the official edition of the Vatican Newspaper L'OSSERVATORE ROMANO January 1997.

The notification referred to above, declares that "Fr. Tissa Balasuriya has deviated from the Catholic Faith and therefore cannot be considered a Catholic Theologian. Moreover, he has incurred excommunication latae sententiae (Canon 1364 par, 1)"

The Catholic Bishops' Conference in Sri Lanka is aware that the notification is the result of a long and protracted exchange of correspondence among the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, the Superior General of the Oblate Congregation and Fr. Tissa Balasuriya.

Finally on 27th December 1996, on a submission made by Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, His Eminence Cardinal Sodano, Secretary of State, assured Fr. Tissa Balasuriya that the Holy Father has personally followed the various phases of the procedure used by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in the examination of this work (MARY AND HUMAN LIBERATION) and the Holy Father had expressly approved the Notification of the congregation. In his letter to Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, His Eminence the Cardinal also wrote as follows: "With profound regret, in the face of your reiterated refusal to recognize and correct the grave errors which have been condemned, the Holy Father finds himself obliged to approve the notification, which was read to you by the Papal Nuncio in Sri Lanka on 7th December 1996."

The full text of the notification which contains not only the declaration of the canonical status of Fr. Tissa Balasuriya, but also an outline of the history of the question as well as of the principal "errors" contained in the book "Mary and Human Liberation" will appear in the next edition of the Catholic Weeklies "Messenger" and "Gnanartha Pradeepaya".

Bishop Vianney Fernando
President
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CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Cases & Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

LIMITATION IN THE MASS APPLICATION

/ noticed that in your case entitled MASS APPLICATION you did not elaborate on the fruits that, by their very nature, benefit the faithful who request the application of the Holy Mass for themselves or for others, both living and dead. Likewise, you did not mention that the petitions of the faithful who apply the Mass for somebody cannot be granted sometimes. There are cases when the Church prohibits the application of Mass, for instance canon 1185 reads: "A funeral Mass cannot be celebrated for those who are not granted ecclesiastical burial." This is a topic of practical application for us Parish Priests.

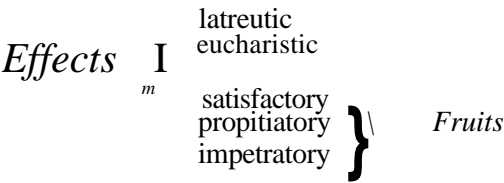
A Parish Priest

Effects **and** fruits of the Mass

Quite often the fruits of the Mass are taken for its effects and vice versa. Though the term *effects* covers both, the term *fruits* is restricted to three effects only. Theologians and Canonists dealing with the application of the Holy Mass distinguish them carefully in order to avoid confusion.

The term *effect*, with reference to the Holy Sacrifice, means whatever is produced by the Mass both in order to God and to men. The Eucharistic effects are five, namely: adoration and praise (*latreutic* effect), thanksgiving (*eucharistic* effect), satisfaction for the temporal penalties due to

sin (*satisfactory* effect), compensation for sins committed (*propitiatory* effect) and petition for spiritual and temporal favors (*impetratory* effect). Under the name of fruits, however, are understood only the effects that flow from the Holy Mass for the benefit of men, namely: the *satisfactory*, *propitiatory* and *impetratory* effects. Both effects and fruits can be easily seen and distinguished at a simple glance in the following scheme:



Distinction in the fruits of the Mass

The three fruits of the Holy Mass admit a threefold distinction, namely:

- a) *General* fruits, that flow from the Holy Sacrifice inasmuch as the Mass is celebrated by the priest in the name of Christ and of the Church. They are beneficial to all the faithful, even if the celebrating priests does not actually think of them;
- b) *Special* or *ministerial* fruits, that are produced for the benefit of those who request the application of the Mass and offer a stipend for the temporal needs of the celebrating priest;
- c) *Personal* fruits, that are perceived only by the celebrating priest.

Thus, the application of the Mass, which is requested by the faithful with an offering or stipend has reference only to the *special* or *ministerial* fruits of the Holy Sacrifice; not to the *general* fruits, which are independent from the priest's will, nor to the *personal* ones, which are beneficial to the priest alone and are not transferable.

Intention of the priest

In order to satisfy the desire of the faithful, who request the application of the Mass for their intention, the celebrating priest should make an explicit and concrete intention to offer the Holy Sacrifice as requested by the donor. Obviously such intention must be done by the priest before the celebration of the Mass. Authors dealing with this topic require that such intention must necessarily be done before the conse-

cration, at least before the consecration of the wine, since the Holy Sacrifice is considered to be essentially complete with the consecration of both species. It is logical, therefore, that the priest's intention to apply the Mass for the donor's request and desire should be done before the Consecration. The Holy Sacrifice produces its fruits *ex opere operato* at the moment of its realization.

For whom can the Holy Mass be offered?

Considering the divine law, the Holy Mass can be offered for all who can be benefitted by its application. Obviously, this is a general principle, reflected in the Church's norm formulated in canon 901: "A priest can apply the Mass for all, both living and dead".

The Mass can be applied for the faithful who are in communion with the Church, for the conversion and salvation of sinners and, privately and without making any public announcement, for heretics, schismatics, pagans and excommunicated persons.

In order that a living person may perceive the *satisfactory* fruit of the Mass, it is absolutely necessary that he/she be in state of grace, since mortal sin is an impediment or hindrance to receive this fruit. Sinners can perceive, however, the *impetratory* fruit, i.e. the grace of repentance from their sins, because then the state of grace is not absolutely necessary, although it would be more beneficial.

Restrictions on the application of Mass

The Church's norm is certainly favorable to apply that Mass for all, both living and the dead. But the Church herself, having been entrusted with the administration of the spiritual treasure by our Lord Jesus Christ can restrict, without violating the divine law, the Mass application in certain cases in order to avoid scandal with respect of the faithful. Canon 1185 states: "A funeral Mass whatsoever is denied to a person who has been excluded from a Church's funeral". And Canon 1184 gives us the list of persons to whom the Church's funeral is denied. It reads as follows: "Church's funeral is to be denied to the following, unless they gave some signs of repentance before death:

1. notorious apostates, heretics and schismatics;
2. those who for anti-Christian motives chose that their bodies be cremated;
3. other manifest sinners to whom a Church's funeral could not be granted without public scandal to the faithful."

Logically, therefore, all these foregoing persons should be denied the funeral Mass. The denial of funeral Mass to them does not imply, however, that other Masses are to be denied to them, specially if these Masses can be celebrated without scandal.

Threefold application of Mass

In this connection it should be said that there is a threefold application of the Mass, namely:

- a) *Public*, when it is publicly announced to the congregation the name of person for whom the Mass will be applied;
- b) *Semipublic*, when only the celebrating priest and the stipend's donor know for whom the Mass will be applied;
- c) *Private* or *occult*, when the priest alone knows the Mass application.

The foregoing classification of the application of the Mass should be borne in mind in order to avoid possible scandal of the faithful, if the Mass is applied for those included in the list given in canons 1184 and 1185, mentioned above. Thus, when the Holy Mass is offered for the souls of heretics, apostates, schismatics, excommunicated and public sinners, it should be done without any publicity in order to avoid scandal on the part of the faithful. It is licit, however, to offer the Mass for catechumens who, being well disposed and prepared to enter the Church's fold, have passed away before being baptized.

Mass for the dead

With regards to the dead, it was declared by the Council of Trent that the Holy Mass can be offered for them: "The Eucharistic Sacrifice is also offered *for the faithful departed* who 'have died in Christ, but are not yet wholly purified' (Council of Trent, 1562, DS 1743) so that they may be able to enter into the light and peace of Christ (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1371). The present Code of the Church

reaffirms this in canon 901. The Holy Sacrifice can be offered for the dead, **not** only for the validly baptized, but also for those who were not baptized, if they are in the Purgatory (Merkelback, in, 354).

Obviously, the Holy Mass cannot be applied for the following:

a) The Blessed Virgin Mary, the Saints and the Blessed. They are already in heaven. They cannot receive the fruit of the Mass, since its celebration will not increase their accidental glory in heaven. However, the Mass can be offered for the speedy process of their beatification or canonization.

b) The babies who were baptized and died before reaching the age of reason as well as those who died before the age of reason without being baptized.

c) The souls who suffer in Hell. Since we do not know for sure of any of them in particular, this restriction is theoretical, not practical.

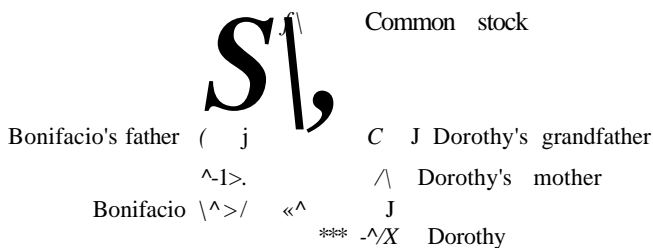
We hope that the two petitions of the consultant Parish Priest are answered with the foregoing explanations.

CONSANGUINITY AS AN IMPEDIMENT

My name is Dorothy, Catholic, with two kids from Bonifacio, also Catholic. The father of Bonifacio is the brother of my grandfather. We have been "living in" for five years, but now we would like to live as good Christians and give our children a Catholic education. However, somebody told us that we cannot marry in the Church by reason of our blood relationship and it would be more advisable to marry civilly. Is there a way for us to get married in the Church, so that our children may receive a Catholic education?

Dorothy

In order to answer Dorothy's question, I would like to show clearly that the degree of their consanguinity does not constitute an impediment to their Catholic marriage. She says that the father of Bonifacio, with whom she is "living in", is a brother of her grandfather. Their blood relationship is shown in the following diagram or genealogical tree:



Obviously Bonifacio and Dorothy are related by blood in the fifth degree of the collateral line. Both proceed from the same stock, i.e. from the grandparents of Bonifacio who are also the great grandparents of Dorothy. In order to know the degree of consanguinity in which they are related, we have only to count the number of persons found in both lines, excluding the common stock. Thus, we have Bonifacio, his father, Dorothy's grandfather, her mother and Dorothy, that is five persons. As we have said, the common stock where from both Bonifacio and Dorothy proceed is not counted. Hence, they are related in the fifth degree in the collateral line of consanguinity, which does not constitute a diriment impediment for a Catholic marriage. Canon 1091 states:

"Marriage is invalid between those related by consanguinity in all degrees of the direct line ... In the collateral line, it is invalid up to the fourth degree inclusive".

It is obvious, therefore, that Dorothy and Bonifacio can be married in the Church validly. They are related by blood in the fifth degree in collateral line, which is not an impediment.

The Family Code of the Philippines does not even consider the fifth degree of consanguinity in the collateral line as an impediment for the validity of marriage. Art. 38 reads as follows: "The following marriages shall be void from the beginning for reasons of public policy: (1) between collateral blood relatives, whether legitimate or illegitimate, up to the fourth degree".

With regard to this case one more thing should be born in mind. For Catholics, who are bound to marry according to the canonical form, civil marriage is not valid before the Church and before God. Besides,

the canonical marriage, if contracted as it should be, enjoys not only the canonical effects but also the civil ones, when registered in the civil registrar general (Art. 7, 2).

Besides, Dorothy and Bonifacio should be interested in giving to their two children the benefits of legitimation, equating them to the legitimate children, which both Codes acknowledge and grant through their valid marriage.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers

September - October 1997

EFREN RIVERA, OP

September 7, 1997

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

MARK 7:31-37

THE DEAF HEAR, THE DUMB SPEAK

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The story in today's Gospel, the healing of the deaf-mute, is an illustration of a particular aspect of Christ's work: the bestowal of faith, precisely in order that people may hear the word clearly and thus transmit it faithfully.

Focus Points. (1) V. 32 Some people brought him a deaf man who had a speech impediment and begged him to lay his hand on him. This episode recalls the time when Jesus was popularly known as a charismatic healer.

(2) V. 33-35 Jesus... put his fingers into the man's ears and, spitting, touched his tongue... then he looked up to heaven... and said to him, "*Ephphatha!*"... at once the man's ears were opened... and he began to speak plainly. The gestures of Jesus are those of a faith

healer. However, the early church recalled this episode in the life of Christ not precisely so that people will seek physical healing from Christ, but that they may go to him to hear the word of salvation and become evangelizers or bearers of the Good News.

(3) **V. 36c He has done everything well! He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!** The healing of physically deaf and dumb people happened during the public ministry of Jesus, hence in the past. What Jesus does NOW is heal people who have been deaf to the truth about salvation and/or do not proclaim the Good News.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. After the coming of the Holy Spirit on the disciples on Pentecost, Jesus, the Risen Lord, has shared his charism of healing with charismatic Christian healers, and, in a more scientific way, with doctors who studied medicine. It is Christ who heals, whether the healing is ministered by charismatics or by scientists.,

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Is your faith strong enough to let you see Jesus, The Risen Lord, active even now in charismatic Christian healers and also in scientific doctors?

2. Physical healing is indeed something desirable. But it should be preceded by spiritual healing, which is even more important. We should greatly desire to be healed from our deafness to the Gospel and our silence in its regard.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: If you have been cured from spiritual deafness and muteness, share this experience with your small group.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? Verse 31 of today's Gospel reading reminds us that the episode of the healing of the deaf-mute happened to a pagan, in the pagan territory of the Ten Cities.

Although Jesus was sent to minister to the people of Israel, he sometimes ventured into pagan territory to share the good news with Gentiles, in anticipation of what his future disciples like St. Paul would do more extensively. It is our duty to share the Good News with the whole world, in the sphere within our reach.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* The healing of the deaf-mute happened because people cared enough to bring the suffering man to Jesus Christ (see v. 32). Similarly, miracles happen in a Christian community when there is enough caring.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus affirmed pagans by going to their territory (Tyre, Sidon the Ten Cities, see v. 31), even though his ministry was intended for the "lost sheep" of Israel.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* When people do not forgive, they do not listen to one another, they do not talk to one another. This shows that listening and communicating are signs of forgiveness.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* Jesus "has done everything well! He makes the deaf hear and the mute speak!" (see v. 36).

C. STORY: Listen

A group of applicants in a steamship office were waiting to be interviewed for a job as wireless operator. The room was filled with such a buzz of conversation that they paid no attention to the dots and dashes which began coming out of the loudspeaker. Then in came a newcomer who sat down quietly by himself. Suddenly, he snapped to attention, walked into the private office and came out smiling.

"Say", one of the crowd called out, "how'd you get in ahead of us? We were here first."

"One of you would have got the job," he answered, "if you had listened to the message from the loudspeaker."

"What message?" they asked, surprised.

"Why, the Morse Code message of dots and dashes coming out of the loudspeaker," the stranger said. "It said: The man I want must always be alert. The first man who gets this message and comes into my office will be placed on one of my ships as radio operator."

National Canvas Goods / Frank Mihlalic, SVD

September 14, 1997

FEAST OF THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS

JOHN 3:13-17

THE SON OF MAN LIFTED UP

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Around the year 325 (326?) AD, St. Helena, mother of the Roman emperor Constantine I, found the relic of the Holy Cross on mount Calvary. The Church of Jerusalem immediately instituted a liturgical feast in its honor. But it was only in the 6th century that the Roman Church followed suit. Since that time until our own days, September 14 has been celebrated as the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

Focus Points. (1) V. 13 No one has gone up to heaven except the One who came down from there — the Son of Man (who is in heaven). This echoes verse 6 and 7 and 9 of Paul's hymn about the *kenosis* or "self-emptying" of Christ: see chapter 2 of Philippians (Second Reading of the Feast). The idea is that Christ's exaltation is the result of the humility he took upon himself at his Incarnation, which was his first level of descent. Ph 2:8 speaks of an even greater "descent" of Christ: "He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross!" Logically, the resulting exaltation from this lower descent is even greater than that achieved because of the Incarnation.

(2) V. 14-15 Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that all who believe may have eternal life in him. We read in Nu 21:9 (First Reading of the Feast)

about Moses lifting up a bronze serpent in the desert so that the rebellious Israelites who were bitten by poisonous snakes would not die. The bronze snake on a "T" was a prophetic symbol of Christ saving humankind by dying on a cross. The Israelites in the desert *looked up* to the bronze serpent in order to be saved. Similarly, people have to *look up to Christ with faith* — *that is, they have to believe in Christ* in order to be saved. Through the bronze serpent, the Israelites gained additional years of earthly life. Through faith in Christ, people gain eternal life.

(3) V. 16-17 Yes, God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Human salvation was the purpose both of the Incarnation and the Death of Christ on the Cross.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. It is customary to think of the Incarnation and the Crucifixion of Christ as different "mysteries" in his life. However, in reality, they are just distinct moments in God's plan of salvation for the human race. There is a very valid insight in the artistic portrayal of the baby Jesus laying upon a cross from the time he was born.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: From a certain viewpoint, the Crucifixion of Christ was not a necessary consequence of his Incarnation. But if Christ's mission on earth was to demonstrate God's love for us, don't you think the Crucifixion was necessary to achieve this purpose? Reflect on this and share the results with your small group.

2. God has already done his part in offering salvation to people. It is now the turn of people to respond by believing in Jesus Christ.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: To believe in Jesus Christ seems easy enough. Why, then, are there so many people who cannot accept Christ as their savior? Reflect on this and share the result with your small group.

3. Since Jesus died on a cross to demonstrate God's love for people, believing in Jesus is believing in God's love.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Why is it that some people just can't believe that God loves them? Reflect on this and share the results with your small group.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* God shared his beloved Son with us. This is the reason why we should not hesitate to share our prized possessions, both spiritual and temporal, with other people.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* God showed his caring in the Old Testament by healing people physically and in the New Testament by offering us eternal life. The second form of caring is superior to the first, but the two are not necessarily opposed.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Scripture affirms people when it says that "God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

4. *FORGIVENESS.* By dying on the cross Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of all humankind and made cleared the way for the forgiveness of sins.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* The Cross of Christ is not a symbol of meaningless suffering and defeat but of limitless love and ultimate victory.

C. STORY: September 14 in Rome

A group of Filipino pilgrims, by chance, entered the basilica of St. Clement in Rome. While they were admiring the beautiful mosaic of the crucified Christ in the apse of the church, an Irish priest in Dominican habit approached them.

"Good morning," the priest greeted them. "I thin! I recognize your accent. You're from the Philippines, are you not?"

"Yes. Father, we are. Are you American?"

"No. I'm an Irishman. You see, Irish Dominicans are in charge of this church."

"*Masuerte kami!*" (It's our lucky day), said the pilgrims. "Now we have someone to explain this mosaic which is very beautiful, but quite confusing."

"What do you want me to explain?"

"Everything. To start with, why are there so many circles around the cross?"

"Those are not exactly circles. Notice that they are all connected to the cross. The idea is that the cross is a tree with many branches or *tendrils* — that's what look like circles to you."

"What are those white doves painted on the cross?"

"Notice that there are twelve of them. They represent the twelve apostles."

"What's that hand on top of the Cross and what is it holding?"

"That's the hand of God the Father and he is holding a wreath of victory to signify the triumph of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Today is the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross and so we put on all the lights so everybody can admire this mosaic. I'm happy you came all the way from the Philippines to be here today."

September 21, 1997

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY ON ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

MARK 9:30-37

A VERY IMPORTANT LESSON

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

People are born egoists. Babies do not think of anyone else except themselves. Even when they think of their papa and mama, it is for something they can get for themselves. As babies grow up, they should become less self-centered. This, however, depends on the education or character formation they get from their parents and teachers. Too often children reach their teens as spoiled brats and reach their 20's still as self-centered people.

An experience called "maturing" is necessary to change from being a self-centered person to one who is other-centered. (Maturing is not a matter of gaining more years but of changing one's attitudes). Moreover, an experience called "conversion" is necessary to become a Christ-centered person.

Today's Gospel reading teaches us how to become mature as well as Christ-centered.

Focus Points. (1) V. 32 Though they failed to understand his word, they were afraid to question him. After the Caesarea Philippi episode (24th Sunday), Jesus begins to teach clearly that he is the suffering Son of Man, and if people want to continue as his disciples, they must share his suffering. Objectively, the teaching was very clear. The disciples, however, had psychological obstacles to overcome in order to grasp it. In fact, at the very moment Jesus was teaching about humility, they were discussing who among themselves was the greatest.

(2) V. 35b If anyone wishes to rank first, he must remain the last one of all and the servant of all. Jesus invites his disciples to become mature as persons and to undergo conversion.

(3) V. 37 Whoever welcomes a child such as tirs for my sake welcomes me. And whoever welcomes me welcomes not me, but him who sent me. As a model of the *servant* Jesus proposes a child. The lesson he wanted to teach is not that the disciples should receive children in his name, but that **THEY SHOULD BE RECEIVED IN HIS NAME LIKE CHILDREN**. If they are to become his apostles, they have to become little children first.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Jesus was trying to instruct his twelve chosen followers on the essentially **SERVANT** character of their role, but while he was teaching them about this their minds were preoccupied about their "dignity" in the kingdom about to come. This is something they had not thought of before, and indeed when they answered the call of Christ their desire was to learn from him, to be attentive to him. Time and circumstances, however, can change a person's priorities. Besides, success can make people's heads grow bigger. The twelve followers, at this time, were already thinking of themselves as successful missionaries.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Are you a "successful" follower of Christ? Has success tempted you to stop thinking of yourself as a **SERVANT**? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

2. If v. 35 is applied both to Jesus and his followers, two lessons emerge: (1) Although Jesus can rightfully claim to be the Lord and Master of all, he is in fact a **SERVANT MESSIAH**. (2) The community of disciples (the Church) must be a **COMMUNITY OF SERVANTS**.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Do I belong to an authentic **COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES/SERVANTS**? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

3. The child Jesus picked to be the model of the Apostles was surely not a spoiled brat but one taught and trained to be humble.

3.1 *Pointer for sharing:* Humble people are the ones who make God's Kingdom grow vigorously. Can you think of examples? (St. Francis of Assisi, Mo. Teresa of Calcutta and maybe Christian leaders you have personally known).

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* Not every form of sharing is effective. Jesus shared his vision "outside the house" and it fell on deaf ears. He was more successful when (a) he shared his wisdom "inside the house" and when (b) he availed of a living example: a little child.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Gestures can be a big boost to caring. Let us not forget that Jesus "put his arms around" the little child (v. 36).

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* Jesus, by showing his appreciation of the humility of the little child he brought to the midst of his followers (v. 36), implicitly affirmed the child's parents and teachers for bringing up the child properly.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* By repeating his teachings Jesus forgave the previous lack of attention of his followers.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* We have a Master who teaches us to be good servants by his personal example.

C. STORY: The Humble Mandarin

A Chinese mandarin held a big banquet to which he had invited many important people. Most of the guests arrived in very special carriages. Then the rain began to pour down and collected into a large puddle of water right in front of the main entrance to the mandarin's house.

Along came a carriage and stopped right in front of the water. An elegantly dressed old man tried to get out, but slipped on the carriage

step and fell headlong into the pool of mud. As he lifted himself up, he saw that he was a mess and was in no condition to go into the banquet hall.

Several of the guests made fun of the unfortunate man. But a servant who saw what had happened ran off to tell the master of the house about it. He came running out just in time to keep the muddied guest from going back home. He tried to coax the man to stay despite his appearance. But the guest was afraid of the stares and remarks of the others, and wanted to disappear.

So the well-dressed mandarin then let himself fall face-first into the very same puddle of water. He, too, was muddied from head to foot. Then he took his guest by the arm and the two of them together, "mudmen" as they were, marched into the banquet hall... and no one dared to say a word.

From Willi Hoffsuemmer/ Frank Mihalic, SVD

September 28, 1997

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

Note: The Feast of St. Lorenzo Ruiz and his companion take precedence in places where he is the Patron Saint.

MARK 9:38-43. 45. 47-48
ECUMENISM AND DIALOGUE

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

"Anyone who is not against us is with us" (Mk 9:40) is a basic principle of ecumenism among different Christian persuasions and of the dialogue of Christians with people of other religions. It is not, however, a self-evident principle and it needs to be clarified. Hopefully, our study of today's Gospel Reading will help us have clearer ideas about ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

Focus Points. (1) V. 38-40 John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we tried to stop

him because he is not of our company." The mistake of **John and the other** disciples is **to** think that they owned Jesus... that Jesus is **for them and his other** followers **but not for "neutral"** people or non-followers. This is a mistake because Jesus is for all people. Christians belong **to Jesus but they do not thereby put a limit to** his saving power. Jesus belongs not only to Christians but to all humankind.

(2) V. 41-42 "Any man who gives you a drink of water because you belong to Christ will not, I assure you, go without his reward. But it would be better if anyone who leads astray one of these simple believers were to be plunged in the sea with a great millstone fastened around his neck." These two verses indicate two different reactions to Christians. There are people who will have a kindly view towards Christians without wanting to be Christians. Jesus says they will not go unrewarded. On the other hand, there are people who **will lead the** simple believers **astray. In** the context, this means they will make the simple believers lose their faith. Jesus gives them a very stern warning.

(3) V. 43-48 ... **Better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to be thrown with both eyes into Gehenna, where "the worm dies not and the fire is** never extinguished." We have here the image that is taken by Christian artists as their model of Hell. Let us note, however, that "Gehenna" is not Hell itself but only an IMAGE of what Hell is. In reality, there are no worms nor even fire in Hell. As Fr. Donagh O'Shea says, "If you want images of Hell look into your own nightmares" But Hell exists, it is real. It is the existence **that dead** people **will** continue to lead after they have lost God for all eternity.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Today, almost 2,000 years since the birth of Christ, we can confidently say that there are no people who have not been influenced by the Gospel in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously. This does not mean that the effort of the Church to evangelize all nations can

now stop. Being influenced by the Gospel is certainly not the same as embracing the Gospel. It means, however, that Christians must develop a friendly attitude to all people, regardless of their religion. Christians must acknowledge that the seeds of the Gospel have already been sown everywhere.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you have a friendly attitude towards "other Christians" — Eastern Orthodox, mainline Protestants, "born again" — and towards people of other religions — Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianist, Taoists, Muslims, etc.? Whether your answer is yes or no, ask further: why? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

2. We should neither convert to another faith nor *pressure* others to convert to Christianity or to Catholicism. Conversion from one religion to another requires a break from a long-standing tradition. When such a break risks being traumatic, it should be avoided. We are not saying that conversion should *never* happen. It can happen and we do want people to convert to Catholicism, but without pressure and without trauma. Conversion must be the work of God's Spirit.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced being led by the Holy Spirit to break with long standing tradition without undergoing a trauma?

3. What is frightening about Hell is not the fire nor the worms nor the torture that Satan will inflict. Such images may frighten children, but mature people should think of Hell in another way. However, to say that Hell is "the existence that dead people will continue to lead after they have lost God for all eternity" is such an abstract idea that nobody will be frightened by it. A *mystic experience* is necessary to know what Hell is like (and also what Heaven is like). The next best thing is to compare Hell to a never ending nightmare.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Can you think of a truly frightening image of Hell?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* The best way of sharing our faith with others is by life-witness. This means living in peace and joy, persevering in equanimity, fairness and justice.

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* Caring can take such a simple form as giving a drink of water to a stranger. Still, it can also be a complicated process, as when a parent spends years and years to form or educate a child in the Christian way of life, steering the child away from "scandals" or obstacles to growth.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* It is better to affirm with some reservations than not to affirm at all.

4. *FORGIVENESS.* It is hard (impossible?) to forgive people who shut the door to forgiveness.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* Jesus Christ belongs to all people.

C. STORY: **Who are the** People in Heaven?

The founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley, had a dream. He came to the gates of hell and asked, "What kind of people are here? Catholics?"

The answer was, "Yes, many."

"Also Anglicans?"

"Yes, many."

"Also Lutherans and Baptists and Orthodox?"

The answer was always the same, "Yes, many."

"And what about Methodists?"

"Also plenty."

Wesley was upset and so he went to the gates of heaven. He knocked at the door and asked the same questions.

"Are there any Catholics here?"

"No, not a single one."

"And Anglicans?"

"No, not one."

"What about Lutherans and Baptists and Orthodox?"

"No, none."

Finally he dared to ask, "And what about Methodists?"

"No, not a single one here."

Wesley was shocked and in exasperation asked, "Well, what kind of **people** are there in heaven anyway?"

The answer came, "Only Christians and non-Christians of good-will"

Adapted from Willi Hoffsuemmer/ Frank Mihalic, SVD

October 5, 1997

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

Note: Feast of the Most Holy Rosary in some parishes

MARK 10:2-16

NO DIVORCE: GOD'S ORIGINAL PLAN

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Jews, following Mosaic Law, allowed divorce. Jesus, however, lays down a law that is both new and old. New, because it is more recent than the Mosaic Law; old because it brings Christ's followers to man's original situation at creation.

Today's Gospel Reading brings Christians face to face with a great challenge. On one hand they live in societies where Church and State are, as a rule, separate, and they are governed by man-made laws that allow divorce (as well as birth control, abortion and sometimes euthanasia). On the other hand they are followers of Christ, who commands them to follow God's original plan made known through Christian revelation.

The way to meet the challenge is not to try to immediately change the man-made laws of society (although a time may come when this can be done), but to change society from within, beginning with one's self. Each and every Christian today should ask Jesus for the grace to accept the whole of Christian Revelation and in particular God's plan of monogamous and indissoluble marriage.

Focus Points. (1) V. 2-9 "Some Pharisees came up and as a test began to ask Jesus... In what way was the Pharisee's question a test? Did they expect Jesus to openly disagree with Mosaic Law? Matthew (19:3), rather than Mark, offers a solution. The Pharisees wanted to test whether Jesus was as great a Rabbi as the people thought him to be. They wanted Jesus to come up with a list of circumstances when a man can divorce his wife — a list better than that already available from other rabbis. *To their surprise, Jesus comes up with something unexpected **and** radical: he changes the Mosaic Law.*

(2) V. 8b They are no longer two but one flesh. The corporeal unity of husband and wife (achieved through sexual union and the engendering of children) is given some prominence here, but let us not forget that for Jesus' original audience, "flesh" meant the total human being. The whole husband — body and soul, and the whole wife — also body and soul, become one total human being. This does not mean that, separately, they are incomplete human beings. It means that what they lose in "leaving father and mother" they regain in marriage. The props to one's life that one's family provides are given up through marriage, but they are immediately regained because of one's spouse. What is clear is that an individual only becomes or remains totally human either in the conjugal or familial society or the latter's equivalent.

(3) V. 9 Therefore let no man separate what God has joined. From the human or natural viewpoint it is not clear that God is the one who joins man and woman in marriage. This is a truth that pertains to divine revelation and is accepted by faith

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. The Mosaic Law permitting divorce, according to Jesus, was written for the Israelites "because of (your) stubbornness". Some versions propose other translations instead of "stubbornness." The Good News Bible: "you are so hard to teach"; the New International Version: "your hearts were hard"; the Contemporary English Version: "you are so heartless." Jesus changes the Law not only in order to reveal God's original plan, but also to proclaim that his mission is to change people.

The Christian law of "no divorce" can be followed only if both husband and wife cease to be "stubborn" that is, if they become docile to God, if they soften their hearts, if they deal with one another from the heart.

./ Pointer for sharing: To make the law of "no divorce" meaningful, husband and wife should treat one another as true Christians should. Reflect on this and share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

2. People need to have relationships with other people to become fully human. The more permanent the relationship is, the better.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Reflect on the above truth and share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

3. Bishop Fulton Sheen said that it takes three to get married: the bride, the groom and Jesus Christ.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you agree with Fulton Sheen? Does your answer come from experience?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? Christian marriage is a life-long sharing. For it to succeed, the partners must have a life-long trust in one another.

2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED? Caring, in marriage, must attend to both physical and spiritual needs.

3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED? Marriage begins with an exchange of yes's. It will endure if husband and wife continue to affirm one another.

4. FORGIVENESS. If there is any institution that needs mutual forgiveness to survive, it is marriage.

5. THE GOOD NEWS. Jesus Christ reveals God's original plan for man and woman at the time of creation.

C. STORY: St Vincent's Miraculous Water

A woman came to St. Vincent Ferrer and complained bitterly that her husband was so impatient and short tempered that she could not stand it anymore. She asked if St. Vincent could give her some remedy to bring peace and quiet back into the household.

"I'll tell you what to do," said the saint. "You go over to the monastery and ask the brother at the entrance to give you some water from the monastery well. When your husband comes home, take a good drink of this water, but don't swallow it. Just keep holding it in your mouth, and you will witness a miracle."

So the woman went home and followed those instructions carefully. No sooner had her husband come home in the evening than he began to complain and criticize. The wife hurriedly took a big mouthful of the mysterious water and kept her lips tightly sealed. Soon the husband stopped ranting and raving.

The housewife repeated the water treatment again and again with amazing results. Her husband changed completely. He began to speak loving words to her and even praised her patience and tolerance.

The lady was overjoyed with the change that had come over her husband and so she went back and told St. Vincent all about the miracle water. But the saint just smiled and said, "My dear, it was not the monastery water that caused the big change in your husband. It was your silence. Formerly your answers just made him all the more angry; but now your silence soothes and calms him down."

From Willi Hoffsuemmer/ Frank Mihalic SVD

October 12, 1997

TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

MARK 10:17-30
F O L L O W M E

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Jewish religion was a great religion, but it still needed fulfillment. Even those who have followed it as perfectly as possible have one thing lacking. Jesus presents the following of himself as that one thing lacking.

Focus Points. (1) V. 20-21 (The rich young man) replied: "Teacher, I have kept all (the commandments) since my childhood." Then Jesus looked at him with love and told him, "There is one thing more you must do. Go and sell what you have and give to the poor; you will then have treasure in heaven. After that, come and follow me." According to the Jews, obedience to the commandments was more precious than any riches (see Ps 19:10; 119:14, 72, 127, 162). Jesus is proposing his "way" as the "law" that must be preferred to all material wealth, or as the "wisdom" that is to be loved above all else (see Wis 7:7-11).

(2) V. 22-25 At these words, the man's face fell... Jesus does not ask everyone to actually renounce all possessions, but only those who have a vocation to be his close co-workers. The rich young man had this vocation. We should note that "Jesus looked at him with love" (v. 21). It is precisely this loving look of Jesus on someone that we call a "vocation." o It was indeed a sad day when the rich young man rejected his vocation to be a close co-worker of Jesus because of his attachment to his wealth. He had followed the commandments but he had not learned the wisdom taught by God's Word.

(3) V. 26-27 Who can be saved? ... For man it is impossible but not for God. With God all things are possible. Jesus' encounter with the rich young man and his teachings that ensued uncovered the

secret desire of the chosen disciples to become rich and powerful. They still had the mistaken idea that by following Christ they are assuring for themselves a position that will give them wealth and power in the kingdom of God, as well as salvation. ◇ It is through his example of being a servant-missionary and especially through his death on the cross and his resurrection that Jesus will transform his disciples. It is also through the power of the cross and the resurrection that he will save even those who do not follow their missionary vocation.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. The rich young man in this episode did not follow Christ but we read of other rich people who were converted. For example, there was Matthew/Levi the Publican (see Mt 9:9-13), Zaccheus (see Lk 19:1-10), and Lazarus with his sisters Martha and Mary (see Jn 12:1-8). Wealth itself is not bad. But people must love God's commandments more than wealth. Besides, good people must have such a detachment from wealth that they would not hesitate to give it up when the Master calls for such a course of action.

/./ Pointer for sharing: What is your experience about detachment from wealth? Share your reflection with your small group.

2. To enter the kingdom of heaven we must not only follow the commandments but also gain the Wisdom that comes from God's Word — the kind of wisdom that detaches us from temporal wealth and makes us ready to pursue our God-given vocation.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Are you in search of that practical wisdom that will enable you to live your life on earth meaningfully? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

3. People should experience salvation not only in the next life but also in the present world, see v. 30. In both cases salvation is made possible by the redemption and transformation achieved through Christ's Cross and Resurrection.

3.1 *Pointer for sharing*; Do you already enjoy salvation? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. *CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?* A true follower of Christ must be ready to share his material goods with the poor (see v. 21).

2. *CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?* God cares for all, and that is why He wants everyone to be saved. We ourselves must have this kind of caring.

3. *CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?* We affirm others when we look at them with love (see v. 21 & 27).

4. *FORGIVENESS.* Salvation becomes possible because of God's forgiveness.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS.* Whatever sacrifice we make for Christ and for the gospel (v. 29) will be amply rewarded in this life and in the next.

C. STORY: Salvation

Longfellow could take a sheet of paper, write a poem on it and make it worth sixty thousand dollars. That is talent.

Rockefeller could sign a piece of paper and make it worth a million. That is capital.

Uncle Sam can take an ounce of gold and stamp an eagle on it and make it worth \$40. That is money.

A mechanic can take material worth five dollars and make it into an article worth \$50.- That is skill.

A merchant can buy an article for 80 cents, put it on a counter and sell it for a dollar. That is business.

God can take a worthless sinful life, wash it, cleanse it, put his Holy Spirit within it — and make it a blessing to all humanity. That is salvation.

Sunshine / Frank Mihalic, SVD

October 19, 1997

TWENTY-NINTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

**MARK 10:35-45
SERVICE FIRST BEFORE GLORY**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Jesus taught his disciples about his entry into glory through suffering and service. They understood only one-third of the lesson, namely, that he will enter into glory. Fortunately, the events of his passion and death and the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, later reminded the disciples about the other two points of the lesson, which are brought forth in today's Gospel reading.

Focus Points. (1) V. 38b Can you drink the cup I shall drink or be baptized in the same bath of pain as I? A "cup" is a biblical symbol for suffering. Similarly, when people accept water-baptism this means that they are accepting all the sufferings that will come in their life as a means of purification from their sins.

(2) V. 40 As for sitting at my right or left, that is not mine to give; it is for those to whom it has been reserved. People's places in the eternal kingdom will not be due to merit or any claim determined from the human viewpoint but rather from the Father's viewpoint; Christ alone will merit his place through his redemptive death as Son of God.

(3) V. 42-45 Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest; whoever wants to rank first among you must serve the needs of all. The Son of Man has not come to be served but to serve — to give his life in ransom for the many. Jesus inculcates the need for service especially within the Christian community. This communal service is based and modeled upon the self-giving service of Jesus himself who clearly reveals himself as the one who fulfills the role assigned to the Servant of Deutero-Isaiah (Is 53:10-11).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. People need a vision, a dream, as a guiding star for a meaningful life. But disciples of Christ must form their vision according to his principle of finding one's self fulfillment in service to others. The Christian dream cannot be a place of glory granted through favoritism.

/./ Pointer for sharing: Why is it not right to separate your dream of your place in heaven from your commitment to serve people? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

2. Our very limited knowledge of realities both on earth and more specially in heaven should make us humble in assessing ourselves.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: How many times in your life have you overestimated your capabilities?

3. Christians must be ready to serve all humankind, but they must begin by serving within their immediate Christian community

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Why is it that some people project an image of being servants of society while they are far from being servants in their own community? Try to answer this question from your personal experience.

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? Let us have only such ambitions as can be shared with others.

2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED? To care for others is a very Christian dream.

3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED? We should affirm only the visions and dreams that are formed according to the Christian principle of service.

4. *FORGIVENESS*. Let us be as forgiving towards our brothers and sisters as Jesus was forgiving towards James and John.

5. *THE GOOD NEWS*. Jesus has provided us with the model of service that can be the object of our dreams.

C. STORY: Freedom to Serve

During the days when slavery was practiced in America, a wealthy plantation owner was attracted by the heartbreaking sobs of a slave girl who was about to step up to the auction block to be sold. Moved by an impulse of compassion, he bought her for a very high price and then disappeared into the crowd.

When the auction was over, the clerk came over to give to the sobbing girl her bill of sale that will tell her who her new owner was. To her astonishment the unknown man had written the word FREE across the paper that should have cause of her delivery to him. She stood speechless as, one by one, the slaves were claimed by their owners and dragged away. Suddenly she threw herself at the feet of the clerk and exclaimed, "Where is the man who bought me? I must find him. He has set me free. I must serve him as long as I live!"

Tony Castle / Frank Mihalic, SVD

October 26, 1997

THIRTIETH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B

MARK 10:46-52

GRANT THAT I MAY SEE

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Jesus performed many miracles during his public ministry but the Church recalled only those that can serve to illustrate the mission of Jesus and the way people should respond to him in faith. We have one such miracle in today's Gospel reading.

Focus Points. (1) V. 47-48 (Bartimaeus) begai. to call out, "Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me!" Many people were scolding him to make him keep quiet, but he shouted all the louder, "Son of David, have pity on me!" Bartimaeus uses a messianic title, "Son of David," to call on Jesus. Whenever such a naming occurred previously in Mark, Jesus tells the person naming him to keep the secret. This has been called by commentators the "Messianic Secret" in Mark. But now, surprisingly, it is not Jesus but the people who tell Bartimaeus to keep quiet. As far as Jesus is concerned, from this point onward, he will no longer insist on keeping his messiahship a secret known only by few people.

(2) V. 49-50. Jesus stopped and said, "Call him over." So they called the blind man over, telling him as they did so, "You have nothing to fear from him! Get up! He is calling you!" He threw aside his cloak, jumped up to come to Jesus. Some people seemed to have entertained the thought that approaching Jesus was something fearful. Bartimaeus demonstrates the exact opposite. By throwing away his cloak and jumping up, he represents all the people who joyfully give up every precious material possession to respond to Jesus and come near to him.

(3) v. 51-52 Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Rabboni," the blind man said, "I want to see." Jesus said in reply, "Be on your way. Your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and started to follow him up the road. The question of Jesus is directed not only to Bartimaeus but to everyone who reads this story. The answer of Bartimaeus is also not only his answer but the answer that each and every person must give to Jesus.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Until now the Jewish people are looking for a Messiah. We Christians, fortunately, have received the gift of faith whereby we acclaim Jesus as the promised Messiah. The early Christians coming from the

Greco-Roman world equivalently used the term "Savior." For many of us today, other titles might be more meaningful, like "Liberator" "Great Leader" or "Man of Vision and Action."

1.1 Pointer for sharing: What title would you like to use to call on Jesus?

2. Who are the people who are afraid to go near Jesus? Who are those who long to be near him?

2.1 Pointer for sharing: If someone tells you that Jesus is calling you, how do you think you will react? Will you be afraid, or will your heart leap with joy?

3. Jesus did not ask Bartimaeus to follow him to Jerusalem where he will suffer and die. He did not have to, because the best call to Christian mission and service is the giving of (spiritual) sight.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Are you, like Bartimaeus, following Jesus "up the road" to Jerusalem?

BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED? It should be both out of human pity (or compassion) and Christian love (agape) that we will share material and spiritual goods with others.

2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED? Jesus cared and that is why he was not deaf to the cries of Bartimaeus.

3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED? Let us not be like the people who scolded Bartimaeus when he clamored for help.

4. FORGIVENESS. Jesus forgives... and that is the reason why we should not fear to approach him.

5. THE GOOD NEWS. When we are told that Jesus is calling us, that should be enough reason for us to jump up with joy.

C. STORY: Baby's Birth and Death Give Sight

The doctor walked out of the delivery room and approached an anxious father in a New York hospital. He told him, "I am sorry to inform you but your baby lived only two hours after its birth, though we did everything we could to save its life."

As the sympathetic doctor was about to leave, the quick-thinking father said, "I read only recently that human eyes are needed in corneal operations. Could my baby's eyes be used to enable someone to see again?"

The next day the Red Cross carried an eye to two different hospitals. In one, a corneal graft restored the sight of a working man with a large family. In the other, sight was given to a mother.

Some two thousand years ago a baby was born and after about thirty years he died on a cross. We call his birth Incarnation and his death Redemption. Through this birth and death millions of people have received spiritual sight.

Adapted from Walter B. Knight / Frank Mihalic, SVD

Most Rev. Benjamin De Jesus

JAIME CARD. SIN

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

From the moment I was informed of the brutal slaying of my dear brother Bishop Benjamin De Jesus, I was consumed with earnest desire to honor his memory with this eucharist, which is the center of Bishop Ben's Episcopal Ministry and dedication.

Why do bad things happen to good people? This question reverberates in our ears upon the instance of a shocking death. The past months have seen the Philippine Church awash in the blood of her pastors, men who walked in the way of Jesus, the good shepherd.

We recall Fr. Jesse Palileo whose anti-illegal drugs campaign claimed his life. Remember too, our young Filipino Jesuit Missionary to Cambodia, Richie Fernando, whose martyrdom is revered by peoples of that Asian Land. And now in the roster comes Bishop Ben, whose toil in the Apostolic Vicariate of Jolo was marked by intense love for his brothers and sisters, regardless of creed, status or ethnic origin. His ministry, in full swing since his early missionary days as an oblate of

•Homily delivered by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, on the occasion of Holy Eucharist for the repose of the soul of Most Rev. Benjamin de Jesus, Apostolic Vicar of Jolo at the Our Lady of Grace Church, Caloocan City on Feb. 13, 1997 at 6 pm.

Mary Immaculate priest, was cut short by senseless bullet holes riddling his robust body.

It seemed unimaginable for such a man to encounter a tragic end. Beloved by Christians and Moslems alike, the Bishop's one passion was the upliftment of everyone. He had a contagious smile, a humble stance and a silent personality that commanded respect from others. Prior to the killing, witnesses say he even shook the hands of his would-be murderers, after briefly chatting with them.

So why should a benign shepherd be a victim of senseless murder, a crime only the ominous darkness of evil can dauntlessly plot? To understand the plight of Bishop Ben, we need the light of the Gospel. To fully comprehend the mystery of death, especially of a righteous and holy man, we need to return to the cross.

On the cross hangs the answer to the gnawing pain in our hearts. Upon the cross is displayed the reason why Bishop Ben had to culminate his life with a grotesque exit. For a christian's death is never isolated from the death of God's son Jesus Christ.

Jesus inspired the Bishop to live for others. And Jesus preceded the Bishop in a similar fate that cries for justice "God," as Romans 5 says, "proves his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us." That Christ died for us, does not mean he removes death from our total human experience. It rather means that Christ died on our behalf, for our advantage, through love for us.

Christ's death is the vicarial satisfaction for our iniquities, for the many sins that eliminate our hope in eternal salvation. He died that we may live again in harmony with God and with each other.

Bishop Ben's death reminds us of our sins against unity, our misgivings against peace, our complacency in espousing values and principles that benefit our brothers and sisters in society. He followed Jesus' example of giving meaning to life by voluntarily giving it up in wholehearted service to others. His death is a ratification of his constant "yes" to do God's will.

Jesus' death, too, was our reconciliation to God and with each other. He brought us back to the ties we have broken, restoring them anew. The good Bishop, in dying, has evoked the same reconciliation in our hearts. Now more than ever, our passion for unity is stirred. Our longing for true peace finds an impetus, a driving force. Our quest for genuine brotherhood in the Southern Philippines has another model and a heroic example Bishop Ben is his life and in his death has become a bridge of healing and reconciliation for our Filipinos in the South.

But Bishop Ben's death, marked though it is by a truly Christian yearning for forgiveness and reconciliation, continues to plead for justice. The sad fact of uncontrollable criminality needs to be addressed aggressively. This murder has merely reiterated the constant need for the upgrading of peace and order situation in the country. We are angered by the daily occurrence of violence in our midst. Joining our efforts as one, let us renew our vigilance against the perpetrators of intimidation and fear, arrogance and discord. It is our Christian duty to do so.

Lastly, I wish to address special words to the relatives and friends of Bishop Ben. Hulo, Malabon will be immortalized in history as the cradle of a Catholic Bishop who became a martyr in the service of Jesus Christ. The family and friends of the Bishop have, I believe all contributed to his deep convictions and principles. Though you have lost your beloved, I am certain that he is closer to you now, always interceding to God for you and inspiring you to reach the same heights of heroic sanctity he exhibited in his lifetime. You have a gem within your circle and you shared your treasure to us all, especially to the faithful of Jolo, God rewards your love.

To the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, your continued presence in the midst of the Christian Community has proven once again the luster of the missionary vocation which is the legacy of your holy founder, Eugene de Mazenod. Continue to walk in the path of courage and selfless loving that Bishop Ben so eminently exemplified.

The Church mourns for a son faithful to God's calling. The nation weeps for a man imbued with energetic pursuit for peace and understanding. What man will not be affected by the passing away of a person who brought to us the light of Christ, and whose torch is his very blood. God Bless you, dear Bishop Ben.

Most Rev. Antonio Nepomuceno, OMI*

JAIME CARD. SIN

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

It exactly one week ago that we were gathered in this very Altar of Mary's Shrine. The Oblate Fathers, diocesan clergy, men and women religious and scores of the faithful prayed for the eternal bliss of Bishop Ben.

Hardly a week passed since that day when our mourning is rendered fresh, and tears from the holy mother church once again flow. We did not expect that God will summon us again this time to pay respect and pray for the eternal repose of the soul of Most Reverend Antonio Nepomuceno.

This tragic demise of our brother Bishop Tony leaves orphan the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the faithful in his Diocese of Cotabato where he is Emeritus Auxiliary Bishop, his confreres in the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and his grieving family and friends.

Bishop Tony is a daring and audacious soul. A true Bulakefio, he has always strived for excellence. This drive for perfection propelled

•Homily delivered by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, on the occasion of the Requiem Mass for Most Rev. Antonio Nepomuceno, OMI, at Our Lady of Grace Parish, Caloocan on February 19, 1997 at 6 pm.

him to volunteer for missionary work as an oblate. His accomplishments in the various parishes he served in Cotabato and in this very parish of Grace Park are notable elements that catapulted him into the ranks of the hierarchy.

His ascent into the ranks of service brought the good Bishop closer to the people he vowed to serve as an auxiliary bishop, he showed true altruism, visiting the nooks and corners of his prelature. He was particularly interested in social development of peoples.

During the difficult moments of martial rule, Bishop Tony was uncompromising in his work for the poor. Abuses never go unchecked without his courageous denunciation. Because of this, Bishop Tony suffered considerable difficulties for his work. He was branded names, labeled as "leftist" or at times even, as "communist". He retired from his post but never from his principles.

His retirement only freed him for wider involvement in the life of others, in their struggle for freedom and democracy. He was immersed in organizing the christian clergy and the muslim religious leaders into meaningful dialogue. A lot of people owe their gratitude to Bishop Tony for the reconciliation he spearheaded and the understanding he brought about.

Up until the time of his death, our brother continues to work among the poor sections of Manila and in organizations devoted to the abandoned and marginalized.

A man for others, this truly is Bishop Tony. I can just imagine how he must have consoled his companions in the plane minutes before death became imminent. He must have given them a blessing or absolution, preparing them for the death that they all felt waiting for them below.

Bishop Tony's blood is spilled not in an act of martyrdom in the moment of death. But this life was a continuous oblation and martyrdom for the people he chose to serve.

He too is a hero of our faith. He too, is a faithful witness and model of the following of Christ. His act of communion with the church in attending the funeral of Bishop Ben is characteristic of His communion with every one of us.

The Philippine Church grieves for her pastor. But in reality the church is graced by the instance of his death for these moments highlight what we ought to be in life and in death.

Dear Oblates of Mary Immaculate, we thank you for sharing with the church the person of Bishop Tony, the first among you to be so honored with the episcopal faculties. We thank you for the labors he endured for the service of God's people. We thank you for the missionary fervor that emanates from your special marial charism.

I am confident that from where Bishop Tony looks down at us, he still possesses the benign look, the serene men and the big heart that we know is his response to God for the many blessings he received in his life.

The oblates have not decreased in number by the sudden and tragic demise of your two confreres. You have rather increased in number, since the entire church now learns from you the secrets of faithful discipleship. God Bless you, Bishop Tony and may the angels gather around you to confer on you the rewards you so richly deserve in heaven with the God you served on earth.