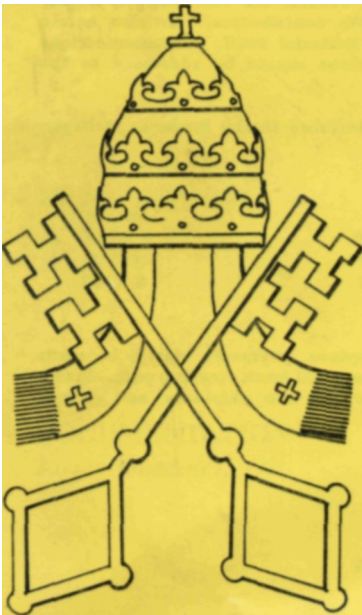


# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

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*September - October 1997*



PASTORAL LETTER ON THE DRUG  
CRISIS

*Oscar Cruz, DD*

CELIBACY: GOD'S GIFT, OUR GIFT

*Jaime Card. Sin*

CBCP NORMS AND AUTHENTIC  
INTERPRETATIONS

*Javier Gonzalez, OP*

ON "MARRIED PRIESTS" ISSUE

*Danilo Tag-at, OP*

# BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

## The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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## Knowing More About the Religious in Asia

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VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

The association called South East Asian Major Superiors (SEAMS) had been studying its direction. Some five years ago, in order to find a more clear direction, the 1992 annual meeting of the said group held in Hua-Hin, Thailand opted to align its direction along the path taken by the bishops. Bishops Michael Bunluen Mansap of Thailand and Archbishop Orlando Quevedo of the Philippines were there to orient and explain to the delegates the direction of the Church in Asia. From that time on, the organization of Major Superiors has become more sharp, animated and vibrant.

Lately, SEAMS has been concentrating its attention on the question on how to care of Mother Earth. The concern on ecology is one major issue which calls the attention of the Church. The Episcopal Conference of the Philippines has the pride of issuing the first pastoral letter on 1988 on how to care the environment. The name of the pastoral letter is *What is happening to our beautiful land?*.

Another association of Major Superiors of the whole Asia called AMOR (Asian Meeting of Religious) organized a meeting on June 4-14 held in Bangalore, India. Its concentration is along the line that SEAMS (IX) has taken this year. This time, ecology is seen in the perspective of feminism. The keynote speech entitled *"Roots and Shoots of Eco-Feminism"* emphasized a *call to a woman to express her inner power with that of nature to build the inner dynamism of our planet earth.*

Meanwhile, we could not but pay attention to and pray for the religious (male and female) in Cambodia, the country that has been in trial in the past years, but, specially recently: 2 French Bishops; 2 Indigenous Priests; 9 Religious Priests (Jesuits and Salesians); 7 Brothers (Marists, Salesians, Maryknoll); 11 Missionary Sisters of Charity; 5 Maryknollers; 4 Thai Missionary Sisters (Servants of Mary of Ubon and Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary); 2 Rosary Sisters; 1 Mercy Sister; 6 Salesian Sisters; 2 Daughters of Charity. Their presence must have brought sustaining inspiration and strength to the troubled Cambodian people.

Knowing these contributions of religious women and men in the Churches of Asia will enable us to appreciate more the value of religious life in the task of evangelization.

# **Pastoral Letter on the Drug Crisis**

OSCAR CRUZ , DD

## CHOOSE LIFE

Beloved People of God:

Today never has our country been menaced so dangerously and seriously by a health and moral crisis since AIDS exploded into our national consciousness. And the name of the crisis is Drugs, dangerous illegal, addictive drugs.

### **A Crisis Situation**

Already more than 1.5 million Filipinos are users of illegal drugs. The youth are specially hard hit. They are the greatest number of drug users. Among them are more than 350,000 high school students, at the most impressionable period of their lives, threatened by an addiction the horrendous consequences of which they seem to ignore - until life itself is endangered.

Reports state that, next to Mexico, the Philippines has become the second largest exporter of marijuana and is fast becoming one of the major points for transshipping illegal drugs in Asia.

Dangerous illegal drugs have spawned a shadowy subculture in our communities, barraged and battered as they already are by various forms of vice and violence, injustice and criminality. It is a subculture that

is constituted by a web of illicit relationships involving: at the surface level, curious, docile and gullible thrill seeking users and their silent, fearful accomplice-friends; at a deeper level, aggressive pushers, smugglers, and violent protectors; and at the deepest level of the evil gutter, faceless criminal drug syndicates of financiers, producers, and secret sources — bereft of moral conscience, seeking only their criminal profits at the expense of a victim's humanity.

The street value of illegal drugs is reported to be more than half of our national budget. Such huge amounts of unaccountable funds can surely reach and influence the highest levels of government. Drug lords are some of the most powerful in our land and can even make or unmake political careers. No wonder that many law enforcement agents, who should be protecting the people against dangerous drugs, are so easily tempted and become, as newspaper reports indicate, protectors of this criminal industry.

In the process, every drug bust, every arrest of a pusher or a user becomes, it would seem, an exercise of pseudo-justice, since powerful tentacles always reach out to protect the drug subculture from exposure to the light of righteousness. Justice has reached no further than the surface level of the subculture whose deeper levels seem untouchable. But Jesus has this to say to them: "Woe to the world because of the things that cause sin! Such things must come, but woe to the one through whom they come!" (Mt 18:7).

Thus the drug problem is a tragedy of terrifying proportions. Lives, values, relationships, and the processes of justice are brutally sacrificed before the idol of dangerous drugs.

### **A Crisis Against Human Life and Dignity**

Using dangerous illegal drugs is against life. It dehumanizes. It debases human dignity. It weakens and injures the God-given faculties of intellect and will, disables judgment, causes irrational impulses and unpredictable mood changes. As human beings we do not have the right nor the freedom to take such drugs. God did not give us the right to harm ourselves, despite what some current false morality might say about not interfering with, or setting moral norms about, what we can do with our own bodies. Human life and personal dignity are God-given and



we cannot abdicate our responsibility to protect and promote them. We are but stewards of these precious gifts.

From the experiences of victims, we know that those who take illegal drugs have little understanding about the meaning of life. They think of life as adventuring, as getting high, as escaping from responsibility, as seeking sensual, emotional and psychological thrills and pleasure. Not finding these and facing the reality of life's ordinariness, drudgery and depression, they seek physical total oblivion through overdose. Many deaths from overdose are voluntary suicides — yet another proof of the anti-life character of illegal drugs.

In the teaching of the Church, using dangerous illegal drugs "is always illicit, because it implies an unjustified and irrational refusal to think, will and act as free persons" (John Paul II, *To the Participants at the International Conference on Drugs and Alcohol*, November 23, 1991). Clearly is this dramatized by the phenomenon of drug dependency, when "an individual feels an uncontrollable need" for drugs, "the privation of which can cause him psycho-physical disorders" (Pontifical Council for Pastoral Assistance to Health Workers, *Charter for Health Care Workers*, 1994, no. 90).

But even more culpable are the drug dealers, pushers, protectors, financiers and producers who "for the sake of money, care nothing about drawing others, especially innocent youth, into addictive dependency that ruins their very lives" (*Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, no. 1036; see also *PCP II*, no. 381).

### **Addressing the Root Causes of the Crisis**

At the very root of the crisis is the lack of appreciation of the God-given meaning of human life and dignity. As in the days of the Old Testament, so today we are asked to choose between life and death. "I have set before you life and death ... Choose life ... by loving the Lord, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him" (Dt 30:19-20). To choose life is to live the newness of life in Christ such as integrity, justice, love, and fidelity to his commandments. To choose death is to choose sin, vice, crime and all death-dealing values and behavior; it is to ignore the meaning of life in Christ.

It is, therefore, for reasons of the call to human life in its very depths that we all need to address the root causes that drive people to use drugs. Among the causes are peer pressure, the negative quality of relationships within the family, the rigidity or laxity of home discipline, ignorance or apathy, a lack of self-esteem, the influence of hedonism through mass media, and laxity of law enforcement at various levels.

Information about illegal drugs and their deleterious effects is necessary. But even more imperative is religious and value formation that should be given within the family, by schools and by churches. A holistic strategy involving all sectors of society is indispensable to respond effectively to the drug crisis.

While we should "punish the pusher", we must "save the user." We do not condone the possible fault of the drug dependent person. But we must assist the liberation and reintegration of the individual.

Reintegration means more than medical treatment. It requires pastoral care. As an integral human process, the rehabilitation of an individual addicted to drugs requires getting "to know the individual **and** to understand his inner world; to bring him to discovery or rediscovery of his dignity as a person, to help him to reawaken and develop ... those personal resources, which the use of drugs has suppressed" (John Paul II, *To the Participants at the VII World Congress of Therapeutic Communities*, September 7, 1984; cited in *Charter for Health Care Workers*, no. 95). Such process needs the services of skilled and compassionate physicians, psychologists, social workers, guidance and spiritual counselors — acting in the manner of Jesus, the Compassionate Healer.

### **Urgent Measures to Respond to the Crisis**

We, therefore, urge the government to expand its social services on behalf of drug victims so that rehabilitation may be done expeditiously, with compassion, care and dignity.

In no uncertain terms, we strongly condemn the drug subculture and the clandestine producing, smuggling and trafficking of illegal drugs. We likewise strongly denounce the relative inaction, the apparently **token** anti-drug campaigns, and the reported complicity of many law enforcers in this criminal industry.

Lawmakers should re-examine our present laws and see if they actually embolden rather than deter criminals; stiffer laws with stiffer penalties should be enacted.

We urge government authorities and courts of justice to faithfully and zealously perform their task of promoting law and order and eradicating this scourge of drugs. They must seek to identify the leaders of the drug subculture, pursue them and bring them to justice, irrespective of power, class, status, family connections, and without palakasan or paki-usap.

They must ferret out the reported syndicates among law and order officers that are allegedly raking in millions of pesos by framing up local and foreign businessmen on drug charges. All scalawags in uniform involved in the drug business have to be weeded out and punished with the full force of the law. They stain the official uniform which so many others wear with justifiable pride and integrity.

We urge parents to provide the necessary loving and caring environment, where the young can grow in responsibility and discipline, imbued with a vibrant sense of personal dignity, and deeply convinced of the moral and religious meaning of life.

We appeal to educators who act in the place of parents to provide a similar environment and formation. They must concientiously fulfill the law which prescribes the integration of drug education into the curriculum. They must also ensure that drug pushers do not gain entry into the school community.

The death of a victim or the brutal murder of an anti-drug crusader, such as a beloved young priest in Cavite, should evoke not only community abhorrence but community solidarity. The community must take concrete united action, within the law, to rid itself of any drug pusher or dealer.

We commit ourselves to direct the pastoral ministry of the Church towards a deeper awareness and concern with regard to the drug crisis, a more active role in value formation in the light of the Gospel, and a more extensive compassionate care of drug victims. We hereby direct Church instrumentalities to cooperate with government agencies and

NGO's in the campaign against drugs. Wherever possible and necessary, dioceses should set up referral centers to help drug victims.

In this holy crusade, prayerfully do we invoke the intercession of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Life, that the saving grace and power of her Son, Jesus the Compassionate and Divine Healer, accompany our efforts to promote life in its fullness.

# **Pastoral Letter on the Homeless**

**OSCAR CRUZ, DD**

## **"I WAS HOMELESS AND YOU TOOK ME IN"**

[Matthew 25:35]

Pope John Paul II has called the attention of governments and of peoples to the plight of the homeless in his Lenten message for this year (1997). He reminds us that "the right to housing belongs not only to the individual as such, but also to the family made up of several individuals." He stresses that "the family, as the basic cell of society, has a full right to housing adequate to its needs, so that it can develop a genuine domestic communion." (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, N. 6; 5 February 1997, p. 1).

This message of the Pontiff comes at a very opportune time for us here in the Philippines. It directs our attention to Christ-like solidarity with a large section of the poor in our country as we prepare for the Great Jubilee. In our country, millions of people have no home to call their own, and thousands of shanties have been demolished, while many more are being threatened with the same gloomy prospect in the near future. These demolitions have caused untold anguish and suffering to the people affected. Especially sad has been the effect of such demolitions on women and children.

Some demolitions have been done to carry out court orders or to remove dwellings from danger zones. Others have been done for cosmetic purposes, to remove or hide ugly sights from the eyes of foreign visitors. Still others are carried out to make way for recreational facilities for the rich. Most are done in the name of development, which however often turns out to be soulless.

The World Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II, held in Istanbul in June, 1996 focused humanity's attention on the need to seek an ever better harmony of development and economic progress with solidarity and concern for the less fortunate. And the Pope, as though speaking directly to our Philippine situation says, "It is not right for anyone — still less for public authorities responsible for the common good — to disregard the tragic situation of so many individuals and entire families forced to live on the street or to be content with inhospitable, makeshift shelters." He adds, "Ensuring a suitable habitat for everyone is demanded by the respect owed to every human being and, therefore, is a measure of civilization and the condition for a peaceful, fraternal society." (Pope John Paul II's Angelus address on June 16, 1996 *L'Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, N. 25; 19 June 1996, p. 1).

In the light of these words of the Pope, we appeal to the government to make sure that evictions are carried out in a truly humane manner and with adequate provision for suitable relocation. Many demolitions conducted supposedly to remove squatters from danger areas only move them to even more dangerous areas, and expose to the elements. The affected people cry out that they are being transferred from danger zones to death zones.

It must be acknowledged that the government has at times responded with compassion to the situation of affected persons and groups. But often also, it is perceived to act without sufficient sensitivity to the plight of the poor, especially when the demolitions come without sufficient warning, without provision for adequate relocation sites, and with brutality.

We ask the people in government to scrupulously follow the provisions of law in the matter of demolitions. When relocation is necessary, let the evicted be relocated, whenever possible, in places near

their sources of livelihood. Or, let the government with the help of private business and other concerned groups make provisions for employment and livelihood of those relocated. The government should also provide basic services in relocation places.

Our plea for the humane treatment and humane relocation of those evicted does not signify disregard for the property rights of others. We are aware of the unjust encroachment of these property rights by professional squatters and criminal syndicates who set up structures and lease land to others to the prejudice of rightful land owners. Such violators must be dealt with strictly, according to the law. But those who are forced by necessity to build temporary dwellings on government land or on the properties of others should be treated with greater consideration in view of the fact that God made the earth and everything in it for the use of all persons and families, and the right to use takes precedence over the right of private ownership (*Laborem Exercens*, no. 14, and *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines*, par. 301).

Closely connected with the problem of demolitions is the need for adequate housing. We recognize that providing adequate housing for every person and family is not the responsibility only of government but of the whole community. The Church itself has sought to do its share and provide low-cost housing for the poor according to its capability.

We wish to make a call to those who are in a position to supply low-cost housing to do so, or to continue doing so without, however, putting the price of houses beyond the reach of the people they are intended to help. For this reason we also appeal to the consciences of those in government and business to refrain from the giving and taking of bribes and from other corrupt deeds that increase the price of housing for the low-income groups and effectively deprive many of needed housing. Such acts of corruption certainly merit the condemnation of the Lord because they rob the public coffers and oppress the poor.

The task of providing adequate housing for all families is a long process. The poor themselves must take their part responsibly and not alienate, for example, the land or housing given to them. The conflicts spawned by the clashes of interests cannot be remedied by legal solutions

alone. Other non-legal solutions which involve consultation and dialogue are also necessary and should be explored. We ask the government to find out and address the causes of homelessness, such as the centralization of business and livelihood opportunities in the cities, and the conversion of agricultural lands for recreational and business purposes. We propose that the government, the Church, poor people, NGO's helping the homeless, agree to form a study body that will make a thorough analysis of the problems of homelessness, land and land use, eviction and resettlement, and recommend concrete solutions. The chairperson of this body should be acceptable to the government, the Church, the poor people affected, and the NGO's.

We thank in the name of the Lord all those who have truly made efforts to help their homeless brothers and sisters, and we encourage them to continue their noble and praiseworthy work. Theirs will be the reward of the Lord, who will say to them, "Come, O blessed of my Father, for I was homeless and you took me in" (cf. Mt 25:34-35).



# Celibacy: God's Gift, Our Gift

JAIME CARD. SIN

My Esteemed Brothers in the Priesthood:

I want to share with you some of my personal thoughts on the gift and task of celibacy that is attached to the grace of our priesthood. I do not intend to present a theological treatise on celibacy. Let me speak to you from my heart.

Celibacy is God's gift to us. Let us be grateful for it. Let us safeguard it as we would take care of the precious gifts given to us by those whom we love and hold close to our hearts.

Celibacy is our gift to God. Let us keep it beautiful. It is a gift that we offer to God not only at the rite of ordination but at every moment of our lives. God cherishes this gift from us. May it remain pure and holy, undefiled and whole.

Celibacy is God's gift to us and our duty to keep. Let me suggest three ways of keeping this gift beautiful and pure.

The first is **PRAYER**. We need to pray. I know that due to the severe lack of priests in the Church today, you have to attend to so many duties and functions. Most of our clergy have two full time appointments calling for a lot of energy and time. All of us are busy. There is indeed a lot of work to be done. Those among us who are not so busy should

spend at least half an hour before the Blessed Sacrament everyday. If you are very busy or think you are too busy, you should spend one hour before the Blessed Sacrament. While idleness is the pillow of the devil, being too busy is the wheel that drives the devil's cart. Strike a balance. Never be too busy to pray all the parts of the liturgy of the hours. Ask the religious sisters to pray for you. Organize the lay people to pray and sacrifice for you not only in crises but everyday. Pray for yourselves. Ask others to pray for you on a regular daily basis.

The second is **COMMUNITY**. Celibacy can only be lived within a community. We are celibates for the community. We are celibates through the community. Priests within the same vicariates must gather not only for business and recreation but for prayer especially. Be regular in attending the vicarial and district meetings of the clergy. The vicars forane and district episcopal vicars must organize regular prayer sessions among the priests under their care. Reach out to those who have not been attending meetings. Do not allow those who are always absent during priests' meetings to just drift away. They are our brothers. God will hold us responsible for them. Do not forget to go to confession regularly. Maintain a filial relationship with your spiritual director. Nobody is a good judge in his own case.

The third is a life of **SIMPLICITY**. We are not priests for pay. Nobody should be deprived of the services of the Church because of material poverty. Keep your tastes simple, your choice of clothes austere, and your recreation plain. If you fall in love with a woman, that is bad. If you fall in love with money, that is worse. I know that the people want to pamper us with so many comforts. They want to offer us their best things and most expensive adornments for the rectory, the latest accessories for our vehicles or the best restaurants to dine us out. Let us learn how to say "No" without being ungrateful. Let us learn to live simply, austerely and plainly. To be simple is to be great in the Kingdom of God.

Celibacy is a gift. Celibacy is our task. It is our obligation. We owe the people of God the powerful witnessing of happy and dedicated celibates. Let us give the Lord and the people of God our very best. Only our best is good enough.

May our Lady, Mother of Priests, at whose feet we offer the flowers of May, be our guide and consolation.

# **Pastoral Statement on Centering Prayer**

**JAIME CARD. SIN**

For several years now a growing number of the faithful in the Archdiocese of Manila have been practicing Centering Prayer, and a greater number have heard about it, some through opinions which praise it, others through judgments which condemn or warn against it. The spread of the practice of Centering Prayer and the varying opinions about it have moved the authorities of the Archdiocese of Manila to study the matter. This study included consulting experts in spirituality and persons with extensive experience in teaching and practicing Centering Prayer. It is after such study and consultation that this Statement is being issued for the guidance of the faithful.

## **Centering Prayer defined**

Centering Prayer, correctly understood, is a method designed to prepare sincere followers of Christ for contemplative prayer in the traditional sense in which spiritual writers understood the term for the first sixteen centuries of the Christian era. Centering Prayer is rooted in the word of God, both in the person of Jesus Christ and in Scripture. It comes out of traditional Christian spirituality, principally from two sources: *The Cloud of Unknowing* (by an anonymous fourteenth-century author), and St. John of the Cross. Throughout the history of Christianity this kind of prayer has been known by different names, such as the prayer of faith, the prayer of simple regard, the prayer of simplicity, and the prayer of the heart. Centering Prayer is an effort to present these elements

of traditional Christian spirituality in updated or contemporary form, and to put a certain order and regularity among and into them.

Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer (such as vocal prayer, meditation, affective prayer, veneration of sacred images). Centering Prayer is not contemplation in the strict sense, which in Catholic Christian tradition has always been regarded as a pure gift of the Holy Spirit. It is rather meant to prepare Christians for contemplative prayer.

To understand Centering Prayer it is necessary to first grasp what contemplative Prayer or contemplation is and what its main effects are.

### **Meaning of and main effects of contemplative prayer or contemplation**

Contemplative prayer, also known as contemplation, is the opening of one's mind, heart and whole being to God, beyond thoughts, words, and emotions. It springs from and deepens one's experiential knowledge of God, a knowledge that is rooted in love.

Contemplation is a great gift of the Holy Spirit which is available in principle to all Christians by virtue of Baptism. It should be a normal development, moved and made possible by God, of the grace of Baptism. By this development, one's relationship with God gradually grows so that one comes to a friendship with God so deep that one's mind and heart, going beyond thoughts, words, and emotions, no longer actively seek God, but begin to "rest" in God, "tasting" and "enjoying" God. This condition is not the suspension of all activity, but the reduction and simplification of many acts and thoughts into a single act or thought to sustain one's consent to God's loving presence and action.

Contemplative prayer moves beyond ideas and reflections and the multiplication of particular acts, to the level of interior silence in which the person communicates with God in the wordless union of deepest love. In contemplative prayer the deep awareness of God's presence frees one from making oneself or one's relationship with God the center of one's attention. Though one's own reflections and acts of will are necessary preliminaries to deeper friendship and union with God in and through

Christ, one has to transcend these if in the power of the Holy Spirit one is to be able to share with Christ in his most personal prayer to the Father, which is characterized by total self-surrender.

The essence of contemplation is the trusting and loving faith by which God both elevates the human person and purifies him or her from all the conscious and unconscious obstacles that oppose the values of the Gospel and the work of the Spirit. Contemplative prayer therefore makes one "spiritual" in the deepest sense; docile to the guiding of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of our life. It makes for the deep transformation of one's life in Christ.

### **How Centering Prayer prepares Christians for contemplative prayer**

Centering Prayer prepares Christians for contemplative prayer by its method. This method is precisely meant to deepen faith, hope, and love, to free one from attachment to one's own condition and activity, and to focus one's mind and heart on consenting and surrendering to God's presence and action within one. Centering Prayer reduces the obstacles to contemplation caused by hyperactivity in prayer and excessive dependence on concepts in order to go to God. Centering Prayer prepares Christians for contemplation by cultivating their heart—their inmost being—through disciplining it in order to reduce the obstacles—chiefly selfishness and distraction—that prevent them from following the gentle and subtle inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the process of Centering Prayer one intention predominates—the movement of one's will to consent to God's intention, which according to Christian faith, is to communicate God's life to us. Centering Prayer therefore promotes personal union with God, which is the essence of contemplation.

### **What Centering Prayer is not**

Centering Prayer is not a technique which supposedly automatically produces union with God. It is not a relaxation exercises. It is not a form of self-hypnosis. Neither is it merely an altered state of consciousness. It certainly is not Transcendental Meditation or Hinduism or Buddhism in Christian attire. Nor is it a New Age teaching and practice infiltrated into the Christian Churches.

Centering Prayer is not a charismatic gift specially given by the Holy Spirit to some individuals for the encouragement and building up of the Christian community (as in 1 Corinthians 12:1-13). It is not limited to the "felt" presence of God. Nor is it meditation or effective prayer.

### **Advantages of Centering Prayer**

The advantages of Centering Prayer include the following:

- \* It habituates those who practice it to the language of God, which is loving silence.
- \* It addresses the contemporary hunger for spirituality in a way that in principle is practicable by anyone, and those who do not find it helpful simply drop it without suffering any harm.
- \* It is completely rooted in the Christian contemplative tradition. Unlike other systems like Christian Zen and Christian Yoga, which borrow some elements from other religions and integrate these in a Christian framework, Centering Prayer emerges purely from the teaching of the recognized masters of Christian spirituality.
- \* It renews the Church by fostering contemplative prayer and transformation in Christ, with a deepening of faith, hope, and love authenticated in practice, which results from authentic contemplative prayer.
- \* It helps attract back to the Church many Catholic-Christians who have gone elsewhere searching for spiritual experiences.

### **Points of caution in relation to Centering Prayer**

Though from a Catholic Christian viewpoint, Centering Prayer is a very helpful practice, certain points of caution need to be observed in relation to it. Among these points of caution are the following:

- \* The practice of Centering Prayer needs spiritual guidance, as its promoters themselves affirm. A qualified spiritual guide is one who has a thorough conceptual background of the Christian contemplative tradition, good judgement, and experience of

contemplative prayer. The need for guidance arises in relation to several matters, such as the following:

- \* There is need for adequate preparation of beginners in prayer, before they can practice Centering Prayer correctly and fruitfully. Beginners need advice, instruction and support on the following:
  - \* reform of life
  - \* concrete questions on God's self-revelation in Scripture and in the core teaching of the Church (since one cannot love what one does not know) basic truths of Catholic Christian faith in order
  - \* to clarify their interpretation of their spiritual experiences.
- \* Those who are advancing in the practice of Centering Prayer need spiritual guidance to understand and manage the difficulties that occur in the development of Centering Prayer into the classic mystical path of St. John of the Cross.
- \* Outside the context of Orthodox Catholic Christian faith, it can conceivably be distorted to promote wrong and harmful worldviews and practices.
- \* It can be misused by the poorly instructed or those with psychological problems, towards such harmful directions as fundamentalist and simplistic interpretation of Scripture, fanaticism, and emotionalism.
- \* A few of its leading figures have made naive and injudicious pronouncements. These seem to approve of such systems and techniques as Transcendental Meditation and the teaching of Mahareshi Mahesh Yogi, which aside from being opposed to Christian teaching, also dubious, to say the least, as far as their claims to be forms of authentic spirituality.

## **Overall assessment of Centering Prayer**

On the whole, Centering Prayer, correctly understood, merits the approval of the Catholic Christian faith community. It merits this approval because it is a method which has brought renewal and deepening of Christian prayer and life among increasing numbers of individuals **and** communities, and has brought many seekers for God and for spiritual life back to the Church. It is a movement of renewal which was born and remains in the bosom of the Church, from which God works much good to all kinds of people everywhere. As long as the necessary precautions mentioned earlier are observed, those who wish to start learning and practicing Centering Prayer are highly encouraged to do so.



# **Pastoral Statement on the Enneagram**

**JAIME CARD. SIN**

Within the Archdiocese of Manila the Enneagram is being more and more as a diagnostic and therapeutic tool, for both purely psychological and psychospiritual purposes, by and for lay persons, religious, and clergy. For more than a decade the Enneagram and the above described uses to which it has been put did not elicit much adverse opinion and comment, if any. In the last few months, however, some of the faithful have become suspicious of the Enneagram. Their suspicions have been aroused because of accusations, coming from Catholic Christians abroad, particularly the United States of America, that the Enneagram is a part of some currents contrary or even hostile to Christian faith and spirituality, such as New Age, magic, and occultism, and that these currents are infiltrating and harming the belief and practice of Catholic Christian individuals and communities. These accusations have been brought to the attention of the authorities of the Archdiocese, who have inquired into the matter with the help of experts. The result of this inquiry is summarized in this Statement.

This statement concisely answers the following questions:

- \* What is the Enneagram?
- \* What further teachings characterize the Enneagram system?
- \* What are the historical origins of the Enneagram?
- \* What are the main uses of the Enneagram?

- \* What points of caution should be observed in relation to the Enneagram?
- \* What overall assessment can we make of the Enneagram?

### **What is the Enneagram?**

The Enneagram is a system of personality typology — the classification of personalities into distinct types — with applications for the diagnosis of psychological and psychospiritual problems related with these personality types, as well as for the therapy of these problems. The system is called "Enneagram" from two Greek words: *ennea*, meaning "nine," and *gramma*, meaning "picture." The Enneagram holds that basically there are nine types of personalities, each corresponding to a picture representing a facet of the divine face or a demonic distortion thereof. Each individual is essentially one of these types, although he or she may have characteristic of all the other types. This sign of this typology of nine personality types is the Enneagram circle with nine points on its circumference.

### **What further teachings characterize the Enneagram System?**

To expand on the above, the Enneagram posits that each person is born with certain gifts or qualities that reflect the divine image. Each individual reflects, as it were, some facet of the face of God. It is both the individual's privilege and destiny to be stamped with this particular image of God. These gifts or qualities are one's contributions to the human community. Each person participates in all the elements of the divine, but he or she has a special likeness to one aspect of the divine face. Each aspect of the divine face is especially rooted in one of the nine realms of experiencing, and is particularly inclined to one of the nine avenues of perceiving reality and of responding to it.

But just as any good can be misused or misappropriated, so can a person misuse his or her gift. Instead of using it for the common good, one could misuse it for one's narrow interests and selfish desires. Thus the divine image can be distorted into a devil image, a caricature of the divine face. One's strength or gift (virtue, speaking in Christian terms) can become a weakness or liability (vice). Just as there are nine manifestations of the divine face, so are there nine distortions of the divine face, nine distortions or compulsions or fixations which masquerade as

the real self. These correspond to nine realms of narrowed experiencing, nine exclusive or biased views of the divine, nine sets of wrong ideas about oneself, the world, and God, and nine types of compulsive life-styles.

For example, the divine quality of omnipotence, reflected in genuine human strength, can become distorted as aggression and domineering behavior. Divine peace is distorted into indolence, divine perfection into perfectionism, divine love into the compulsion to help and the neurotic need to love and be loved, divine authorship of the exquisite laws of the universe into cunning and calculation, divine uniqueness into the compulsive need to be special and original, divine wisdom into detached intellectualism, divine faithfulness into authoritarianism, divine joy into naive overoptimism. Each divine quality is susceptible of being distorted into its caricature by and in human beings.

This distortion process begins early in life. Persons becomes set and rigid in their perceiving and responding. They lose sight of their respective true images of God, their true selves, and begin to identify with their caricature which masquerade as their real selves.

Energy and feelings become attached to these nine sets of false assumptions. In the Enneagram system as presently developed, these wrong ideas and the attached feelings are called "passions" or "vices" or "false emotions". They represent nine manifestations of a disordered heart, in which the person's basic strengths or virtues become distorted into weaknesses or vices.

The most important modern systematizers of the Enneagram claim that each person, in his or her divine image or inner reality or "essence", is perfect and in loving unity with the entire cosmos, including with God, with other human beings, and within himself or herself, in his or her "essence" the person would have available to him or her the entire repertory of responses represented in the Enneagram circle.

However, in effect, during the first four or six years of life, in the process of socialization, each person's parents or guardians, and society as a whole, cause him or her to suffer distortion of the divine image. Each becomes confined to realms of narrowed experiencing, to exclusive or biased views of the divine, to overlooking the other aspects of the

divine image and overuse of one aspect of the divine image, to wrong ideas about oneself, the world, and God. Contradictions arise between the person's inner reality and the environment to which he or she must conform. A defensive layer is slowly formed that begins to cover the person's essence. This defensive layer characterizes what theorists of the Enneagram call the "ego" or "personality" of the individual.

It is important to note that the latter is a negatively charged use of the term "personality," differing from the usual neutral meaning — the totality of one's qualities of mind and character — used at the beginning of this Statement, and in subsequent parts as well.

It is on the basis of the above described ninefold typology of personality that the Enneagram depicts the structure and dynamics of the human personality, indicates the ways of healthy growth and of disordered functioning, and proposes the way for a person to regain his or her true self.

### **What are the historical origin of the Enneagram?**

The historical origin of the Enneagram lie in Sufism, the mystical tradition within Islam. Sufi masters used it as an aid in guiding the spiritual development of their disciples. The disciple would consult with his master in the same way that one seeking spiritual growth consults a spiritual director. Over the course of these meetings, the Sufi master would gradually delineate the various aspects of the disciple's personality, indicating his strengths and weaknesses, using the Enneagram system as framework of reference. The disciple would learn only about his own personality. The master would not reveal the whole system.

Following the practice of the ancient Near East, the Enneagram was preserved through oral tradition and was passed on from master to master. There was a concerted effort not to reveal the Sufi personality typology in written form.

The Enneagram was introduced into Western circles through Oscar Ichazo. Born in Bolivia in 1931, Ichazo dedicated himself to the study of the various spiritual paths to self-development and realization. One of these paths which Ichazo encountered was the Enneagram, which he systematized in his own way as a system of self-development. He began

lecturing on this system of self-development. He began lecturing on this system at the Institute for Applied Psychology in Santiago, Chile. Subsequently he transferred his training program to the small town of Arica, Chile, where he worked in an intensive program with a small group of followers.

In 1970 fifty-four North Americans traveled to Arica to begin ten months of intensive training under Ichazo. Among this group were Claudio Naranjo and John Lilly. Upon completing their training, the group unanimously decided to continue working together and to bring the system to the United States to give it a broader audience. In 1971 the Arica Institute was incorporated and began giving three-month training programs in New York, in which the Enneagram is included as an integral part of the training. Since then the Arica Institute has founded other centers throughout the United States.

It was from the United States that the Enneagram was picked up by persons working in psychology, spirituality, and cognate fields, and introduced into the Philippines. Since then the Enneagram has become widely used in the Philippines.

### **What are the main uses of the Enneagram?**

The Enneagram system is being used as a tool for diagnosis as well as for therapy. It provides a description of personality dynamics and distortions that has much diagnostic utility. Its indications of healthy personality functioning and integration provide a therapeutic dimension to the system.

The Enneagram has been used in a clinical setting for individual, marital, and family therapy. It has been employed in a growth-oriented setting for essentially healthy individuals who seek to realize their potentials more fully. It has been applied to the study of the structure and functioning of business corporations and the management of people. It has been utilized in spiritual direction and counseling.

Many of those who have used it say that it works well as a diagnostic and therapeutic tool. Others however say that it is at best a rather rough gauge of personality type, and that other tests, such as Myers-Briggs test, yield more accurate and precise diagnostic results and therefore predispose to more effective therapy.

## **What points of caution should be observed in relation to the Enneagram?**

Several points of caution should be observed in relation to the Enneagram. Not surprisingly, since it originally arose within Islam, the Enneagram system does not of itself have a clear place for the Christian doctrines of original sin, of redemption, and of Christ as the agent of redemption, all of which Islam rejects. Consequently, the Enneagram, from a Christian viewpoint, would be over-optimistic about the psychospiritual integrity ("essence," in Enneagram terms) of young children, and would posit an original state of blessedness, rather than the involvement of all human beings in sin and its deleterious consequences. Redemption would be a matter of unmasking the distorted image of God, that persons have developed, and their recovery of their authentic image of God without the need for Christ's offering of himself as our example and savior.

Like any other system, the Enneagram is susceptible of being given too much importance by its practitioners and adherents. It should not be absolutized; it is only a tool, although a useful one. It has limitations, some of them mentioned above. Some of its premises and claims are questionable. For Christians, the worldview of Christian faith should be the framework of reference into which valid elements of the Enneagram system should be integrated.

Because it is susceptible of being misunderstood and misrepresented as a store of secret knowledge accessible only to the initiate or the adept, and as a way to psychological or spiritual wholeness through purely human insight and effort, the Enneagram system arouses some understandable suspicion of being neo-Gnostic or New Age lore. The suspicion is deepened by its abundant use of meaning-laden numbers, a practice often found in some New Age teachings and groups.

## **What overall assessment can we make of the Enneagram?**

In sum, as Catholic Christians, what are we to think of the Enneagram? An accurate response to this question would include the following.

The Enneagram is a system of personality typology that can be used with much benefit both as a diagnostic tool and as a therapeutic instrument, whether for purely psychological or for psychospiritual purposes. It carries much intuitive wisdom and often produces certain beneficial practical effects, but it has certain premises which are questionable from both an empirical scientific and a Christian viewpoint, which if acted upon consistently could harm human beings and damage Christian faith and life.

Although some of its premises are questionable, the Enneagram system has some valid theoretical and practical elements capable of beneficial integration into the Christian worldview and practice.

The Enneagram is a diagnostic and therapeutic tool of more than considerable utility. Yet it is only one among many systems which can be used to develop the personalities and enrich the spiritual lives of people. What we should do is, in the light of our Christian faith, to use such elements of the Enneagram as help other people and us become persons in harmony with our own selves, with other human beings, with nature, and with God.

# **Doctrinal Foundation: The Call to Communion and Mission\***

JAIME CARD. SIN

*"THROUGH YOU, I WILL BRING LIGHT TO THE NATIONS!"*  
(ISAIAH 42:6)

Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other, they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and the fruit of mission: communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion. It is always the one and the same Spirit who calls together and unifies the Church and sends her to preach the Gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) (*Christifideles Laid* 32). From Vatican II to the local councils of PCP II and PCM II, the church has recognized the importance of cultivating communion and mission among its members. It is both a great gift and a tremendous responsibility. Relationships of laity and clergy can continue to develop towards greater harmony if there is a recognition that all of us are brothers and sisters in Christ and fellow disciples sharing in a single mission: evangelization. The laity should respect the clergy as servant-leaders of the People of God. It is necessary, on the other hand, for clerics to remember that they are servants who lead, and not kings; lay people should remember that the clergy are servants, not slaves. (PCM II Ch. 6).

PCP II recognized the contributions made by movements of renewal in the church today. PCP II provides direction in the following:

\* Pastoral Statement on *Couples for Christ*, June 24, 1997.



Movements of renewal not only for their members but for the whole church. Priests should welcome, encourage, and support these renewal movements, whenever they could be led into the mainstream of parish and diocesan pastoral priorities and programs. When properly guided they draw attention to the continuing presence, power, and activity of the Spirit in the Church and in the world. (PCP II, Art. 611-612). Such is the confidence of the council to renewal movements in the church today.

Within the past few years, a strong evangelistic movement has emerged in our country. This is the Couples for Christ (CFC). CFC has spread rapidly and has had a big impact on the Church and on the country. With this rapid growth has come some controversy. Some are all praises for CFC, while others are critical of it. Issues have emerged as to its relationship with the communion of the Archdiocese and the parishes, in particular.

It is in relation to this that the Archdiocese of Manila is issuing this pastoral statement. This will clarify our stand regarding CFC and will provide guidelines in the proper relations between the CFC and the Vicariates and the parishes.

## **A BRIEF DESCRIPTION**

CFC started in June of 1981 in the Archdiocese of Manila. Since that time, CFC has spread to almost all the provinces in the Philippines, as well as to 35 other countries. CFC is basically a family life renewal ministry. Its thrust is the Renewal of marriage and Christian family life. It reaches not only to couples, but also has ministries for children, youth, singles, widows and widowers and separated spouses. It touches all sectors of society - the rich and poor, the young and old, the educated and the illiterate. Its ministry transcends all social economic, cultural, educational and racial distinctions.

It currently has a committed membership of 200,000 couples, 80,000 youth, 50,000 singles and 30,000 others. Its committed membership is growing rapidly, almost doubling from year to year.

## HOW WE LOOK ON CFC

1. CFC is an approved Catholic group. It is a CBCP—recognized national private association of the Lay Faithful.
2. CFC's vision and mission is very much in line with the mission of the Church. CFC's focus is on evangelization and family life renewal — two of the major areas of importance in the life and mission of the Church.
3. While the major thrust of the church today is the formation of BECs, the fruit of CFC's work is precisely the same fruit we desire in promoting BECs: the renewal of Christian life and the revitalization of church and society. Parish priests should cultivate the charism of the CFC in their parishes as they work for the growth of BECs in parishes.

### Guidelines for CFC:

1. CFC is called to coordinate and cooperate with the parish and the vicariate regarding the scheduling and holding of Christian Life Program seminars and other CFC-related activities. It is suggested that some modules of the CLP be given by the parish priests of the area for CFC to get to know their pastors. We are aware that our priests perform so much work. However, taking the time to be with the people during occasions of formation will help in strengthening communion between CFC and the parish community.
2. CFC modules of formation should include topics on church, parish community life and BECs in order for CFC members to be made aware of diocesan and parish programs. These modules on church will invite more CFC to take active part in the renewal of the parish. As Vatican II states: "The parish offers an outstanding example of the apostolate on the community level, inasmuch as it brings together the many human differences found within its boundaries and draws them into the universality of the Church. The lay faithful should accustom themselves to working in the parish in close union with their priests bring to the Church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which need to be examined together and solved through general discussion.

3. CFC is part of the renewal movement in the Philippine Church. Like other transparochial communities, it has done a lot in strengthening marriage and family life among Filipinos. For this reason, it has contributed in the work of building the church of the home.

4. CFC is also moving strongly into helping build the church of the poor. This is realized through its contribution in nation building by working to renew not only the citizenry but its many important government leaders and officials.

### **PASTORAL DIRECTION:**

Guidelines for the clergy and parishes:

1. CFC is both transparochial and parish-based. It is transparochial simply due to the reality that it is one community throughout the country. Thus its membership spans many parishes and dioceses. However, CFC is parish-based because many CFC members are called to serve actively in their respective parishes in various capacities as lay ministers, pastoral council members, lectors, music ministers, etc.

2. Following PCP II, D 115#2, CFC submits to both the diocesan bishop and the parish priest. It is a prime example of lay empowerment where lay people take the initiative to carry out the work of evangelization. Parish priests should encourage CFC in its work. They should be allowed reasonable access to and use of parish facilities. Moreover, parish priests should recognize CFC's unique charism of evangelization and family life renewal. They can fully entrust these areas to CFC. In addition, CFC can help very much in service such as pre-Cana and natural family planning work in the parish.

As far as possible the lay faithful ought to collaborate in every apostolic and missionary undertaking sponsored by their own ecclesial family". (AA, 10)

As we walk in pilgrimage towards the Great Jubilee 2000, we summon our people to work tirelessly in the building of a church of

communion under the inspiration of the Blessed Trinity. Truly communion is grace: grace to be truly fruitful as we work in cooperation with each other and in dialogue with others. I trust in the pastoral solicitude of our parish priests and the service of the CFC in the Archdiocese of Manila in bringing about partnership among the sectors of the church.

# **The Emerging Spirituality in the Philippine Church: Its projected impact on the Economic and Socio-Political Dimensions of Society**

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VIRGILIO OJOY, OP

There are 1,669 Catholic schools in the Philippines. 429 are devoted to basic education. 985 concentrate on the middle or high school and 155 are higher education institutions dedicated to the tertiary level of education. Of the 155 higher education institutions 134 are Colleges and 21 are Universities.

Five years ago, three of these Catholic Universities were included in ASIAWEEK'S list of Asia's finest universities: Ateneo de Manila University, De La Salle University and the University of Santo Tomas. Of the 1,347,750 students in the tertiary level around 420,000 (30%) are enrolled in Catholic Universities and Colleges.

From the foregoing statistical data, one can immediately see that Philippine Society is permeated with citizens who had been, in one way or the other, educated in a Catholic School and/or had been privy to values and teachings preached in the Churches on Sundays. Needless to say many political leaders of the country had been educated in Catholic institutions and had been highly visible in Church functions and liturgical celebrations. This fact notwithstanding, Philippine society is gripped with massive graft and corruption in public office, with widespread crimes

involving vicious attacks on human persons (murder, rape, exploitation), and with the enduring presence of poverty and suffering for the majority of the Filipino people. If religion is taught and spirituality encouraged in these institutions, then the Catholic schools and the Catholic Church in general may have to work harder in order to realize their mission of transforming men and women into the ideal vision of what it means to be a Christian.

The hypothesis of this paper is that many Catholic schools and the Philippine Church in general had been perpetrating a spirituality that may have been effective in the Middle Ages but which may prove anachronistic when encouraged even towards the onset of the second millennium. Vis-a-vis this *old* spirituality, a *new* spirituality is emerging. However, before delving on our understanding of the concept of this old and new spirituality and their effects on the socio-economic dimension of societies, it is important to have a general notion of what spirituality is all about. Thus, this paper hopes to develop the following sub-topics: a) What is Spirituality? b) What is the so-called *old* spirituality and what are its perceived effects on society? c) What is the so-called *new* spirituality and what difference can it make in the transformation of Philippine society?

### **A) What is Christian Spirituality?**

Christian Spirituality is essentially a following of the Will of God as revealed in Scriptures which culminates in the words, the deeds and the Person of Jesus Christ in the Gospels. The history of Christian Spirituality demonstrates the variety of ways in which the Gospel teaching has been interpreted, adapted and applied to the needs of nations, cultures and individuals (AUMANN, p. 11). Spirituality involves the twin elements of *contemplation* and *practice* (G. GUTIERREZ, p. xiii) where traditionally practice depends on the fruits of contemplation. Contemplation is a prayerful openness and reflection on God's revelation with the hope that God's will would become clearer for one's life and world. It is the understanding of God's Will for one's life and world that generates differences in Christian Spirituality. In essence, there should only be one Christian Spirituality since there is only one wellspring who is Jesus Christ. The appellations *old* and *new* spirituality only points to the development and growth in the understanding of God's will

revealed through Jesus Christ and in its applicability to a constantly changing world which may be characterized by new realities.

## **B) What was the Old Spirituality?**

The Old Spirituality is characterized by a preponderance of the sufferings of Christ in the Cross understood simply as a means of expiating or cleansing humankind from the stains of original sin. For Christ's sufferings to be effective in one's life, one must also have to undergo suffering in imitation of the Christ on the Cross. This is the best way to prepare for heaven in the next life. Thomas A. Kempis' *Imitatio Christi* which had a strong influence in the life of many Christians is a good example of this understanding.

Some of the characteristics of this old spirituality were a) emphasis on self-abnegation, b) flight from the world, c) predilection for the next life and d) indiscriminate acceptance of suffering.

From the foregoing characteristics, one can immediately perceive that the old spirituality was heavily influenced by the lifestyle of the monks both from the East and from the West. Cassian, for example, who lived in the East and who introduced into the West the monastic practices and types of organization first developed in the East writes regarding the three phases of the monk's asceticism:

*The first is to reject all the pleasures and all the riches of this world. The second is to renounce ourselves, our vices, our wicked habits, and all the unruly affections of the spirit and of the flesh. And the third is to withdraw our heart from all things present and visible and apply it only to the eternal and invisible ... We shall then arrive at this third renunciation when our spirit ... purified from the affections of the earth, is raised to heaven by continual meditation on divine things, and is so taken up with the contemplation of the eternal truth that it forgets that it is still enclosed in fragile flesh (Conferences, 3, 6 as quoted in AUMANN, 73).*

The quotation clearly indicates self-abnegation or self-renunciation which is demanded of monks who profess the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. This self-abnegation is later on preached to the rest of the world by priests who lived a quasi-monastic life but who

included in their spirituality a direction towards pastoral ministry i.e., a leading of the rest of humankind to a spirituality that smacks of monasticism. This was the task performed by the great orders of Augustinians, Dominicans, and Franciscans.

The second characteristic of flight from the world, is also evident in the quotation. Certainly, "to withdraw our heart from all things present and visible and apply it only to the eternal and invisible..." is openly a disdain for this-worldly realities in favour of the spiritual and eternal realities of the life beyond. The world is but an ephemeral, passing reality that should not be given important attention.

Predilection for the next life which is the third characteristic is exemplified in the quotation by the following words: "when our spirit ... purified from the affections of the earth, is raised to heaven by continual meditation on divine things, and is so taken up with the contemplation of the eternal truth that it forgets that it is still enclosed in fragile flesh."

Acceptance of suffering as a way to master the cravings of the flesh and as a faithful sharing in Jesus Christ's pain on the Cross is reflected in the monk's practice of flagellation where they strike their own bodies with a horse's whip repeatedly. With this thinking, any form of suffering, even those induced by other persons, are wholeheartedly accepted as a gift from God.

The dominant method of propagating this spirituality in the Philippine is preaching in the pulpit by priests. It finds its way into the curriculum of educational institutions through priests who run schools and through religious sisters who share the priest's spirituality. The practice of sacramentalization rather than evangelization further strengthens the hold of this spirituality in the Christian lives of Filipinos. Sacramentalization only aims at the quantity of persons receiving the sacraments rather than the quality of their understanding of what transpires as they receive the sacraments. Often, they view the sacraments like Baptism, Anointing of the Sick, magically as external spiritual help from God which they can use against all dangers rather than as a sharing in God's life and virtues which should permeate and transform their own lives.



This spirituality helps cause or legitimizes the coming to be of schizophrenic Christians, the paralytic Christians, Christians who do not care for the future of the earth and Christians who tolerate abusive leaders.

Schizophrenic Christians are Christians who are very observant in matters of religious practice but have no qualms in committing heinous crimes against other persons. They go to Church, join religious professions, donate to the Church large amount of money, but it is public knowledge that they steal and kill. The hand that gave a donation to the parish priest is the same hand that shot to death a political rival. In fact, a picture of a politician in the Philippines was shown holding a rosary while walking on his knees inside a Church. He is in prison now. He was convicted for brutally killing a young lady after raping her. This kind of Christianity is called by a Jesuit priest in the Philippines as split-level Christianity (BULATAO, 22-31).

Paralytic Christians are those who do not seem to care even when confronted with so much evil. They continue doing their daily routine inspite of the millions of pesos misued by their politicians or inspite of corruption in government. They seem not to abhor evil anymore. They are not shocked by massacres and calamities caused by man's misuse of the environment. For sure, there are other reasons for their numbness but the predilection for the next life, the acceptance of evil and suffering of this world have a great role to play in its realization.

Since their spirituality espouses a flight from the world and a predilection for the next life, many Filipino Christians do not have much concern for the earth and its future. Forests are decimated, lakes, bays, seas and rivers have become common receptacles for toxic wastes especially those near the cities.

The acceptance of suffering as a gift, as an occasion to be united with the Christ on the Cross helps Christians to be tolerant of abusive or exploitative leaders. Political leaders can amass wealth from taxpayers' money, or landowners can be cruel to their tenants. Even if they are convicted of wrongdoing, there is no public indignation — apathy predominates.

In all four types of Christians, religion is used as legitimation (T KUDO and C. TOVAR, 63): of the evil and suffering caused by human beings for their fellow human beings, of the rape of nature and the

deterioration of the environment. Religion either justifies, or makes the evil less obnoxious and more acceptable all in the name of the glorious, peaceful, joyous hereafter.

### **The Emerging Spirituality and its Projected Effects**

The spirituality we perceive to be emerging does not imply a contempt of and flight from the world. As a matter of fact, this spirituality is very much linked with the world and its affairs. Following Gustavo Gutierrez, the Peruvian theologian, our concept of spirituality is identified with St. Paul's "walking according to the spirit." (Rom 8:4).

To better understand this spirituality, it would be useful to have a discourse on St. Paul's related concepts of *flesh*, *spirit* and *body*. St. Paul considers 'flesh' to be a force for evil that lays hold of human beings and subjects them to their evil desires. Thus, 'walking according to the flesh' means categorically 'leading to death.' In contrast with the 'death-dealing flesh', the 'spirit' brings forth life. The dynamism and vitality that proceeds from the spirit would signify a life that is in accordance with God's will.

In a deeper sense, St. Paul not only identifies the spirit as the human person who has been permeated by the Spirit of God Himself. Someone is called 'spirit' or is considered 'spiritual' because of the action and presence of God in the inmost part of the person's being. (GUTIERREZ, 64).

The 'body', unlike the 'flesh' which is death-dealing, and the 'spirit' which is life-giving can be either death-dealing or life-giving. In fact, St. Paul recognizes the possibility of both a 'fleshly body' and a 'spiritual body' (1 Cor 15:44).

It is through the Pauline concept of a 'spiritual body' that we can harmoniously assimilate the world, the human community into the very essence of spirituality. God's coming and the infusion of His Spirit's gifts into the world spur it to undergo the process of spiritualization. In other words, the working of God's grace opens up to the possibility of a 'spiritual world.' Implied in this is the possible spiritual — ness of man's action *in* the world and *for* it. Thus, 'spiritual society', 'spiritual politics' or 'spiritual economics' would not be illusory projections.

Since this spirituality embraces the world and matter as a *locus theologicus* or a privileged place where one can speak of God, or where God is eternally present, one may not seek union with God in the hereafter but here and now. Moreover, inasmuch as every person and everything speaks of God, every person and every thing must be revered and loved.

Thus, the pitfalls of the 'old' spirituality can be avoided. Schizophrenic Christians will not flourish since there are no two worlds to deal with. One must reckon with only one world: the here and now. If the hereafter is valued, it is only as a consequence of a person's rightful, truthful and just dealing with the present world.

Paralytic Christians will be freed from numbness in the face of evil situation. Since one is dealing with a spiritual world, a life-giving world, anything in it that is contrary to life will be confronted with indignation by authentic Christians. Rape, murder, massive graft and corruption that spells poverty to many Filipinos will be vigorously fought against.

The decimation of rainforests, and the almost irreversible destruction of lakes, bays, seas and rivers will likewise be abhorred. Reverence for the world and matter as spiritual realities will mitigate the irreverent rape of nature. Henceforth, the undesirable effects of development (e.g. the transformation of ricelands into housing projects or golf courses) and industrialization will be closely watched.

In sum, while religion in the previous brand of spirituality functions as legitimation or justification of the repressive or oppressive status quo, in the new spirituality, religion functions as protest. (T. KUDO & C. TOVAR, 63) It criticizes the use of social, political, economic and cultural powers for the destruction of peoples and the world because this is against the Will of God. On the contrary, religion wants that these powers should promote life, not just for a few but for all mankind, and for the world.

## CONCLUSION

Religion and Spirituality in the Philippines is alive and flourishing. I am sure it is the same with the rest of the countries in the Asia-Pacific Rim. In the Philippines religion played a crucial role in the EDSA

Revolution which terminated the Marcos dictatorship. Presently it also engages in political power play by opposing changes in the Philippine Constitution which purports to extend the term of the present elective officials. At the outset of the Third Millennium, the rest of the world looks at the Asia-Pacific Rim as the epicenter for economic activity and development. For sure, huge capital investments will be poured in this region from the Developed nations. Added to this fact is the rapid growth and widespread use of information technology. In the face of these changes, there will be profound and irreversible effects in the behavior and lives of people in the Asia-Pacific Rim. Economic, political, cultural and social powers will interplay in the making of historical leaps forward. The danger of these historical upheavals in the Asia-Pacific countries is *the future of peoples with little or no power at all, and the adverse effects of development in the physical environment*. A spirituality that embraces matter and the world and a religion that functions as protest are needed to act as voice for the voiceless, and power for the powerless and to ensure that mankind takes the path of sustainable development.

In the words of PCP II: "Our way of life — our spirituality — for social transformation ... listens to and heeds God's word, discerns and follows the Spirit of Scriptures, in the Church and in history, in the voices of the voiceless and powerless and finds in the Eucharist not only its full nourishment but also its total prayerful communion with the Lord of salvation and liberation. It urges one to care for the earth as God's gift." (PCP II, 281) The Catholic Church through the Catholic schools is a potent venue for propagating this spirituality that will ensure that the Will of God or the Gospel of Life realized through the values, teachings, and deeds emanating from Christ will be incarnated in society and in the world. It is a powerful means of allowing God to pitch His tent in the midst of human history.

# **The Code of Canon Law: CBCP Norms and Authentic Interpretations**

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**JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP**

It was in 1983 when Pope John Paul II promulgated the "new" Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church.

Almost fifteen years have passed since then. Yet many Catholics today ask: What was it all about? What does the Code contain? How does it affect me?... Others wonder, more fundamentally perhaps, why we need at all a Code of laws in the Church: Is not the Church a spiritual organization, founded on the gospel, while the very idea of law has such a worldly ring about it? In any event, why a new Code of laws and why just now?

These inquiries show that many Catholics are not fully aware of the law of the Church... And yet, a sufficient knowledge of the Church's law —since it is a necessary means for the preservation of justice and communion— is a must for all the members of the People of God.

In the following pages, I will (1) first describe the *role of that law in the life and in the mission of the Church*; (2) then, I will highlight the *contents of the present Code of Canon Law*, (3) a selection of some *canonical norms issued by the CBCP* for the Philippines will follow; (4) finally, I will offer a compilation of the *Authentic Interpretations* issued by the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts since 1983 up to the present.

## I. DOES THE CHURCH NEED A LAW?

In our present times, when everybody is in a hurry, traffic lights are hated. Who, in fact, does not get impatient when, being late for an important appointment, has to stop for a red traffic light? And yet, we understand that a city without traffic lights would be in chaos.

Laws are something like traffic lights. They do not move the cars (engines make cars move!) but they facilitate speedy and safe driving. Man does not walk because of the laws; but he needs them. The same is true with the Church and her law...

### The Unpopular Face of the Church

Law has few friends and it is not difficult to understand why. Very often law is seen as something "imposed from outside" that restrains individual and personal freedom.

At times the blame is put not on the law itself, but on its personifiers, the lawyers. Again, there may be reasons for it. In fact, excessive legalism and occasional burdensome administration of justice have induced in many people such antipathy towards the lawyers that the very term *lawyer* is jokingly translated into *liar* and, what is worse, the administration of justice is associated with injustice.

In fairness to all, we have to admit also that the unpopularity of the law is in many instances irrational, rooted in ignorance and misunderstanding. Take for example the attitude of Catholics towards the Church's law. A large number of lay faithful either simply ignore the existence of the Code of Canon Law [the book of laws of the Catholic Church] or they do not know anything of its content. And if ever they come to hear about it, the normal reaction is as if it were something that in no way affects them. On the other hand, many among the clergy look at it with indifference, even disdain. I find it somewhat amusing to see how theologians hurry up to hide this "ugly" (legal) face of the Church, as if they were ashamed that people would come to know that the Church they love has also a juridical dimension; as if they did not know that the Church founded by the Lord is a unique, mysterious society, which is not only *spiritual*, but also human and, therefore, *juridical*.

Antagonizing these two aspects, apart from rendering a poor service to the Gospel, has proved unfortunate: the "canons" of the Church book of law are rendered into "cannons" and their lawyers, once more, into "liars."

This alone shows that both clergy and laity need further religious education in order to have the proper understanding of the Church as well as of the law that plays a role in her life and mission.

### **Should there be Church law?**

Many Catholics find strange to talk of *law* and *kingdom of God* in the same breath. "Should there be Church law?," they ask. Perhaps this question should be addressed to the Church herself. And the surprise might come from learning that it is precisely the Church herself understanding the reason why the Church has a law...

It is true that what counts in religion, especially in the Christian religion which is a religion of love, is the internal attitude, not the external. Law, instead, regulates only the external aspect of man's action. Moreover, Jesus openly condemned the pharisaic legalism and showed us the way of Christian heroism: charity, forgiveness... All this would seem to render useless a code of laws in the Church.

But religion is not something merely internal; what is merely internal is impossible to perceive. There are fields in the life of the Church where clearly formulated laws are necessary precisely because clarity and certainty are needed there. No one should be left in doubt, for instance, about the outcome of a papal election or about the appointment of a bishop to a diocese. The faithful also have the right to know which of their members have been consecrated priests for the service of the community, and which of their members are bound together by the sacrament of marriage, etc.

Those, therefore, who say that "the Church Christ founded is the Church of charity and its only law is the Gospel," should remember that charity can never exist in the visible society of the Church without the right atmosphere for it to be lived out. The reason is simple: without

law there is no justice, and without justice, which establishes the minimum of love, charity is impossible.

The real question then is not "Should there be Church law?" but "What kind of law should the Church have and in what spirit should it be observed?"

### **Canon Law: Rooted in the Gospel**

In principle, there cannot be contradiction between Canon Law and the Gospel. Actually, the Church's heritage of law is found in the Scriptures; and it is to the Word of God that we must turn in the end when discussing canonical questions fully.

The New Testament itself validates the existence of law in the Church when witnesses to stable ministries in her speak of the power "to bind and to loose," and describes the regulation of Christian life in the earlier apostolic communities.

Besides, a good number of divine demands have been translated into canonical norms. For instance, the rights and duties inherent to the equal dignity of the children of God, or those born from the common baptism and mission; the competence (and duty) of the pastors to dispense the means of salvation, specially the Word and the Sacraments; the mutual relationship between the universal Church and the local communities, and so on.

"It would be a mistake" John Paul II wrote, "to oppose Gospel and Canon Law, not only because the latter is founded on revelation, but also because justice — the object of law — is a primary demand of charity, essence of the Gospel values."

The same thing Paul VI had earlier said when affirming that "the law [in the Church] is not for the law's sake... but it is at the service of truth, justice and charity — virtues which constitute the essence of the Gospel."



## **Law at the Service of Communion**

A code of laws in the Church, though necessary, cannot be an end in itself but only an instrument or means to serve an end. This end cannot be other than the Church herself, understood nowadays in terms of communion (*koinonia*). Hence the expression "law at the service of communion" is another way to say "law at the service of the Church."

How does law serve ecclesial communion? Can juridical structures ever create communion? The answer would be "No." Law by itself does not create communion, but makes its existence possible. "Without Canon Law," Paul VI wrote, "there cannot be a *de facto* ecclesial community." This is not too much to say if we think that the Church is not only a spiritual/invisible reality but also a juridical/visible one.

The Second Vatican Council firmly demanded this law "as a necessary consequence of the authority Christ gave his Church, and as an element belonging to the nature of the Church, which is both social and visible, communitarian and hierarchical."

Canon law then is a vital and effective means by which the Church may carry out her mission. The life of the Church, as long as she is in this world, must be manifested externally: Canon law lays down ways by which sacraments can be validly administered and fruitfully received, and divine cult exercised; moreover, it safeguards the unity of faith and morals...

Is not this to be "at the service of communion"? Certainly, it is. Canon law serves — with the limitations proper to an instrument — to render the Church one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Having its roots in the will of God himself, Canon Law is a means Christ uses to save us. Great dignity of the law!

## **The Salvation of Souls, the Supreme Law**

The purpose of the Church is the salvation of souls — using a classical expression. It is so stated in the very last words of the Church book of laws, where we read that all those provision are to be applied

"keeping in mind the salvation of souls, which in the Church must always be the supreme law." (c.1752).

This aiming at the salvation of souls explains why in the Code of Canon Law juridical norms are side by side with others that are non-judicial in character. One example is when it says: "All Christ's faithful, each according to his or her own condition, must make a whole hearted effort to lead a holy life, and to promote the growth of the Church" (c.210).

This aiming, likewise, enables us to distinguish between the *spirit* and the *letter* of the law. Law should not be mechanically applied; human beings are gifted with intelligence, which enables them to penetrate into the spirit of the law and to know its true meaning. Normally it is impossible to safeguard the spirit without observing the letter. But the opposite may also be true in particular instances, like when the material fulfillment of a law entails great incommodity or the neglect of a higher duty.

## **Law and Charity**

Charity is the soul of the Church. No life or salvation can exist without it. As the Second Vatican Council said, "Even though incorporated into the Church, one who does not however persevere in charity is not saved. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church but 'in body' not 'in heart'" (LG.14).

Law describes what love demands. Charity needs of legal provisions to express and safeguard its necessary requirements. Law then is not opposed to charity. Our Lord himself said: "If you love me keep my commandments."

Can there be in this world a community without law? "A community without law, far from being or ever being able to be in this world the community of charity, has never been and will never be anything else than a community of the arbitrary," Paul VI said. He was actually reacting against the distinction made by some theologians between the "juridical" Church and the so-called Church "of charity"

asserting that "the precept of charity is the highest of all and must be given the first place, whereas the evils which trouble the Church have arisen from juridicism." The Pope's sentence on this regard was that "...just as the soul cannot be separated from the body without death following, so also the Church which they call 'of charity' cannot exist without the 'juridical' Church."

## **Law and Freedom**

Crying out that *man is free* seems to be a modern fashion. But it is also a truth we miss very much in our lives.

Certainly, law in itself is not opposed to freedom, for law is nothing else than the expression of conditions which must exist for man to be free. Of course, freedom is not absolute; only God is absolutely free. Man's freedom is ordained and conditioned by certain aims, such as the promotion of justice, peace, love and brotherhood. These aims determine the goodness of the choices that man takes.

The main task of the law is not to repress or obstruct, but rather to guide, stimulate, promote, protect and safeguard the area of true freedom. Freedom without the restraint of laws becomes oppressive. Take this simple example, connected with what we said before regarding law and traffic lights: In most modern cities, it will take at least an hour to reach the airport by car. If there were no traffic regulations of any kind, if it were a "free for all", it would almost certainly take twice or more that length of time to get there. The point about any traffic regulations is that they are designed to provide the greatest degree of freedom possible for everyone, consistent with the maximum degree of safety that is practically achievable. It is taken for granted that each road user has an equal right to the same freedom.

It is the same with every good law. Its positive purpose is the creation of circumstances in which true freedom is possible and true human goals attainable. The opposite of law is not freedom but chaos, which has been described quite well as a much more restrictive tyranny.

## II. THE 1983 CODE OF CANON LAW

The 1983 Code of Canon Law —considered by some the last document of the Second Vatican Council— is indeed the Church's fundamental legislative document. Its study allows us to enter into a field endowed with great terminological clarity, and with important dogmatic elements. And because the Code is based on the juridical and legislative heritage of revelation and tradition, it must be regarded as an essential instrument for the preservation of justice — and consequently of charity and communion — among the members of the Church.

This alone attests to the need of having a good knowledge of it.

Moreover, such knowledge would prevent us from easily giving in into wrong theories, from undergoing disappointments in the confronts with the real Church, and from ignoring our most basic rights and obligations as members of the People of God.

### 1. Historical Background

The Catholic Church has always recognized the need for rules and regulations. The Council of Jerusalem in AD 48 or 49 was the first obvious example. From then, the Church has through the centuries consistently enacted laws (often called *canons*, hence the name *canon law*) for the guidance and well-being of her members. These laws dealt with almost every area of Catholic life, according to the current times and circumstances.

Over the centuries scholars had made various collections of those laws. The problem, however, with such collections was their sheer bulk; there were so many books that for the ordinary person the law became literally a "closed book."

In an effort to deal with this problem at the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) a number of bishops asked that the Canon Law should not only be updated, but be cast in a more accessible form. The idea of

a "Code" started to take practical shape at the beginning of this century. In 1904, Pope St. Pius X set up a special Commission with the task of revising the Canon Law and presenting it in the form of a Code. It was an arduous task brought to completion in 1917, the year in which Pope Benedict XV promulgated the first Code of Canon Law for the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite.

What emerged was a volume of approximately 110,000 words, the size of a bulky novel. It contained 2,414 canons or provisions, divided into five books or sections. This at once replaced the huge mass of legal material which had built up over the preceding centuries. That Code was enforced until 1983, when it was replaced by the present one.

### **The Preparation of the 1983 Code**

The revision of the old Code was formally launched by Pope John XXIII on March 28, 1963, only a few months before his death. It took almost twenty years to complete the revision.

There were two main reasons why it took such a long time. First, because the Second Vatican Council had taken place in the meantime, which made it necessary to take a whole new look at how the Church should best be expressed and presented. And second, because of the tremendous amount of consultation held with the Church at large.

The final draft was presented in 1982 to Pope John Paul II, who signed it on 25 January 1983. The new Code came into force on 27 November 1983.

### **The Organization of the 1983 Code**

The new Code is shorter than its predecessor: 1,752 canons as against 2,414. What is far more important is its very appearance or structure, for the 1983 Code contains a complete different principle of division (the threefold mission the Church, namely, of teaching, sanctifying and governing), and carries a whole new vision of the Church, the vision inherited from the Vatican II.

## How "New" is the New Code?

The first impression a reader gets when he browses through the present Code is that it contains materials that are already familiar: Mass celebrated and sacraments administered in the vernacular; the Eucharist distributed also by lay ministers; Mass concelebrated by several priests; general absolution permitted, while the traditional practice of individual confession is retained; some new forms of abstinence re-introduced; bishops and parish priests required to resign from office at age seventy-five; abolition of the subdiaconate; rules about mixed marriages; institutions as the Synod of Bishops, Episcopal Conferences, Pastoral Councils... None of these was so under the previous Code, but it had all become commonplace since the midsixties!

What, then, is new? I would say, mainly the approach, the manner in which the Church is presented. Those who read the new Code attentively will be greatly enriched in their understanding of the Church, and of how her law can help them to fulfill their respective vocation as members of the People of God. The Code offers, in Paul VI's phrase, a "new way of thinking" (*novus habitus mentis*), a new method of law itself, a new framework in which the Church's juridical system is seen as completely *unique*.

John Paul II has also singled out this "newness" (*novitas*) of the Code, and identified the principal elements that serve as its foundation: the teaching about the Church as the people of God; the role of service that hierarchical authority must fulfill; the reality of the Church as a communion and the essential relationship between the universal Church and the particular churches, and between collegiality and primacy; the participation of all the Christian faithful in the threefold office of Christ as priest, prophet and king, and the rights and duties that flow from it.

Many other interesting innovations were also introduced by this Code, for instance, the "bill" of rights and obligations of the members of the Church; the decentralization of decision-making; the wider powers given to local churches and bishops; the involvement of lay people in Church affairs; the new concepts on marriage incorporated into the law; the great reduction of sanctions in the Church; the updating of procedures for marriage annulments; and so on.

**In** general, the new law is more liberal in spirit, far more pastoral in tone, and definitively more ecumenical than the former.

Let us now take a closer look at each of the seven books which comprise the 1983 Code.

## 2. Contents

### **Book 1: *GENERAL NORMS***

Any code of law needs a portion devoted to *General Principles*: these principles, built up over centuries of legal tradition, do not change substantially; they can be re-phrased, as they are here now and again, and they can be developed to meet new circumstances.

This book, which covers a wide range, tells us:

- *about law itself*: How does a law come into being? Who can make laws in the Church? How may one find out the real meaning of these laws? What about their binding force in case of ignorance or doubt?
- *about custom*: When does a custom have the force of law? What part can it play both in understanding and interpreting the law?
- *about administrative acts*: How, and by whom, is authority to be exercised in the Church? What about particular decrees and precepts? Which are the norms concerning privileges and dispensations?
- *about persons*: When does one reach the age of majority in the Church? What does *domicile* mean? How do we reckon the degrees of both consanguinity and affinity between people? What about juridical persons?
- *about office-holders in the Church*: What are the rules governing the appointment of parish priests? How is an election conducted?

What about resignation from office? What rights can be acquired or lost by prescription? How is time to be reckoned? And other such problems are dealt with.

Though this book is not easy reading because of its many technical terms, it remains as it were a hinge on which the whole Code moves. Certainly, a careful study of the book pays off.

## **Book 2: *THE PEOPLE OF GOD***

This book deals with the Church itself: who make up the Church, the respective obligations and rights of its members. It is divided in three parts:

- *Christ's faithful*: those believers who, being incorporated into Christ through baptism, and in communion with one another, constitute the "People of God." There is a genuine equality of dignity and action among all of them; and because of this equality they all are called, each according to his or her particular condition, to exercise the mission that the Lord entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world. This significant section begins with the obligations and the rights of all the faithful. This is followed by the norms on the obligations and the rights of the laity, and then a detailed section on the clergy.

- *The hierarchical constitution of the Church*: This part sets forth the ordered structure of the Church's communities and offices. The word *hierarchical* indicates that the Church is not a democracy, but has a specific structure of authority established by Christ its Founder. Hence, the Code here treats first of the Pope as the supreme authority and pastor; and then of the bishops as successors of the Apostles who with the Pope guide the universal Church and, in communion with him, govern their individual dioceses. It is in this latter context that we find the appropriate regulations concerning the various institutions, offices and organizations among and within dioceses, as for example Episcopal Conferences, Auxiliary Bishops, Episcopal Vicars, Councils of Priests, Pastoral Councils, Parishes, Parish Priests and Parish Councils, and others.



• *Associations in the Church*: This section deals principally with the associations of the faithful who dedicate themselves to what is generally known as "religious life", a special consecration to God through the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience: "Not... a kind of middle way between the clerical and lay conditions of life, (but) rather... a form of life to which some Christians, both clerical and lay, are called by God so that they may enjoy a special gift of grace in the life of the Church and may contribute, each in his own way, to the saving mission of the Church" (LG, 43). Here the Code deals with Institutes of Consecrated Life, including both religious and secular institutes, with Societies of Apostolic life, and then with other forms of associations of the faithful.

It is in this second book where the full impact of the Second Vatican Council becomes most apparent.

### **Book 3: *THE TEACHING FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH***

This book is based on the principle that Christ commissioned his Church to teach in his name, to guard carefully the truths revealed, to probe those truths ever more thoroughly, above all to announce them and to explain them to the world so that by them the world might be saved. Two tasks particularly are at the heart of the teaching function of the Church, namely, the ministry of the word and missionary action.

The book deals with:

- preaching the word of God, especially at Mass;
- catechetical instruction;
- missionary activity;
- basic Catholic education, in the home and in school;
- Colleges and Universities;
- communications media;
- books and other publications.

This a short book on only some 87 canons has much to say to those who are in any way engaged in the Church's teaching mission, and it makes very ample provision for the vital part which the laity have to play in this regard.

#### **Book 4: THE SANCTIFYING FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH**

To his Church, Christ also entrusted, and in a very special way, the task of sanctifying, of making holy, as his Father is holy. Here the Code turns its attention to this vital aspect of the Church's life.

This lengthy book is concerned primarily with the worship of Almighty God, whereby we fulfill our primary duty as creatures and are thereby made holy. The Church fulfills her sanctifying function in a special way through the liturgy (Sacraments), although prayer and works of penance and charity also belong to the Church's sanctifying function. The book deals with:

- *The Sacraments*, instituted by Christ himself, which remain "the principal means of sanctification and salvation." They appear as "actions of Christ and of the Church... signs and means by which faith is expressed and strengthened, worship is offered to God and our sanctification is brought about" (c.840).

Each of the sacraments is introduced by a dogmatic or quasi-dogmatic canon, followed by others with emphasis on those things minimally necessary for sacramental administration, and the requirements for validity. It is of prime importance to recognize that most of the Church's liturgical rules are not found in the Code, but in her ritual books. This explains why the Code does not attempt to describe the fullness of sacramental celebrations, with active participation, diverse ministerial roles, integrity of signs, and pastoral adaptations.

A careful study leads the reader to the Church's rules about a vast diversity of topics: What is the significance of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist in Christian initiation? Who may be sponsors at baptism or confirmation? Can priests administer confirmation? Is it possible to administer the Eucharist to non-Catholics? How often may a priest say Mass on any given day, whether alone or in concelebration? Are those caring for the sick or elderly bound by the eucharistic fast? What about the "faculties" to hear confession? Which are the conditions required for "general absolution"? Is the sacrament of anointing of the sick to be administered to the mentally handicapped? What form of investigation

must precede admission to sacred orders? What is meant by the "right to marry," and what is the pastor's obligation before he may admit a couple to the sacrament of matrimony? What are the implications of marriage as a "covenant"? What about "mixed marriages"? Separation of spouses while the bond remains? How can marriage be validated? And so on. In such a vast arena, it is obviously impossible here to detail the many matters which are determined in this legislation.

- *Other acts of divine worship:* Sacramentals; the Liturgy of the Hours or "divine office"; Church funerals; the cult of the saints, of sacred images and of relics; vows and oaths... constitute the object of the second part of this book.

- *Sacred places and times:* This is the closing part in which the Code deals with Churches, Oratories and private chapels, shrines, altars, cemeteries, feast days, and days of penance.

It is a powerful and inspiring book, deserving of the most careful study and reflection.

## Book 5: *THE TEMPORAL GOODS OF THE CHURCH*

The shortest book of the Code, it deals with temporal goods and accountability.

The Church is necessarily involved in possessions, in money and income, in investment and administration, if it is to fulfill her tasks of providing divine worship, of caring for the needy, of ensuring a moderate standard of living for the clergy. The Code asserts that the universal Church, the Apostolic See, particular churches (e.g., dioceses), and all the other juridical persons within the Church (e.g., parishes, seminaries, religious communities, monasteries) are capable of acquiring, retaining, administering and alienating temporal goods.

It is here, too, that we find regulations governing such matters as the use of collections from the faithful, schemes for the equitable remuneration of the clergy, finance boards, dispositions made in wills

for religious or charitable purposes, the sharing of resources between the richer and the poorer parts of the Church, and many others.

The theme that the administrators of ecclesiastical property are stewards of a sacred trust whose aim is the spiritual well-being of the People of God is very obvious in this book.

## **Book 6: *SANCTIONS IN THE CHURCH***

Punishment may seem entirely out of place in a community of grace and charity. However, the Church is a community in which every member is acknowledged to be a sinner as well as a saint. In spite of the Lord's leadership and the Spirit's guidance, some members, even ordained ministers, go astray on occasion. Sometimes, when their misdeeds are serious and public and clearly contrary to the faith or discipline of the Church, the community must respond with a sanction.

It is a crime, for example, to procure an abortion, to commit perjury before ecclesiastical authority, to profanate the Blessed Eucharist, to engage in persistent disobedience to the lawful directives of one's bishop, and to break the seal of confession.

This book on penal law is an obvious necessity for the "pilgrim Church." Many priests will remember the complexity of this part of the previous Code. They will be glad to know that the number of canons has been reduced from 220 to 89. They will be even more glad to know that so many of the intricacies of the earlier legislation have been eliminated. Spectacular though these changes are, an even more substantial change is that of attitude to the role of the penal law in the Church: its application must always be measured against the Church's mission to save souls.

This explains why punishment is a last resort: pastoral exhortation, kind admonition, familial correction, earnest entreaty and even firm rebuke should all precede penalties (c.1341). And even in its application, leniency and mercy should temper the severity of a canonical penalty.

## **Book 7: PROCESSES**

The last book of the Code contains 352 canons on judicial and administrative processes, i.e., the legal procedures to be observed in solving disputes and questions.

These procedural regulations are quite important, for they relate mainly to matters of justice and the protection of rights. Among human beings, some controversies and disputes are inevitable; and if due order is to be maintained in the Church, it will from time to time require an authoritative and binding decision by some form of ecclesiastical court. So in this book the Code makes provision for the Church's tribunals (their competence, rules of evidence, system of appeals, etc.), administrative recourses, and removal and transfer of parish priests.

The book ends with a beautiful statement that pervades the whole Code, namely, that the supreme law in the Church is "the salvation of souls." This is the supernatural dimension of ecclesiastical law that goes beyond the mere maintenance of external order and explains why the Code contains both juridical and non-juridical norms.

### **III. THE CODE OF CANON LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES**

How was the new Code of Canon Law received in the Philippines? It was most welcomed by the bishops, priests and scholars who had been awaiting it for long years. However, for most Filipino Catholics the promulgation of the 1983 Code did not cause great impact, due mainly to ignorance about it. In fact many people in the Philippines may still remember the year 1983 because of a variety of reasons, especially for being the year in which the tragic political event of Ninoy Aquino's killing took place. But how many remember 1983 for being the year in which the revised Code of Canon Law for the Latin Church was promulgated? Very few indeed! This is not surprising. After all, a Code of laws — even if it is the Code of the Church — cannot surely be the primary concern of millions of people, some of whom in addition are living in a precarious situation... Yet the appearance of the Code of the Church initiated a process of renewal that affected not only canon lawyers and the clergy but all members of the Church.

In the Philippines, the process of renewal has been accompanied during the past twelve years by lights and shadows, by achievements and failures. On the national level, the 1991 Plenary Council was held as part of the implementation of the Second Vatican Council, showing that the Church has vitality in this part of the globe. In the field of Canon Law, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has acted on a good number of issues which required its intervention. A green shoot has recently sprouted: the Canon Law Society of the Philippines (CLSP) that is now three years old. Finally, an increasing number of priests, theology students and even laypersons have lately showed interest in pursuing canonical studies.

These events offer a ray of hope in a situation where much has yet to be done. Many dioceses, for instance, do not have yet ecclesiastical tribunals, mainly due to lack of prepared personnel. And the lack of canonical formation, even among the clergy and the religious — let alone the laity — is still widespread.

Renewal, of course, cannot be the "mere study or change of structures and regulations. Renewal will not take place unless the material reforms are accompanied by the "new way of thinking" so many times proclaimed by Pope Paul VI.

### **Some Church Norms for the Philippines (CBCP)**

The 1983 Code of Canon Law leaves space for the Episcopal Conferences to issue complementary norms particular to their own countries. The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) during these past 12 years has issued specific norms for the Philippines, approved by the Holy See. The following are some of them:

#### ***PRIESTS***

**What is the proper clerical attire in the Philippines?** The proper clerical attires approved for the Philippines are as follows: (1) Cassock or religious habit; (2) Clergyman's suit; (3) Trousers of dark one-tone color or white, and shirt of one-tone color, with the clerical collar. The shirt may also be either *polo-barong* or *barong tagalog*, with a distinctive cross.

### **What is the accountability of the clergy to the community?**

Among the matters of clergy accountability to the community the following should be included: a) praying the divine office; b) going to confession and hearing confessions; c) celebrating Mass regularly; d) integrating prayer and sacraments in their daily life; and e) providing generous service to the community, especially to the poor and the needy (PCP-II, a.82).

**Are parish priest to be appointment for a special period of time?** As a fundamental norm, it is necessary that a parish priest has the benefit of stability, and therefore, he is to be appointed for an indefinite period of time. However, in the Philippines, diocesan bishops are allowed to appoint parish priest for a term of six years renewable.

**Standardization of priest's sustenance for all dioceses?** It was decided that the CBCP should undertake a serious study of the possibility of equalization and/or standardization of priests' honest sustenance for all dioceses (PCP-II, a.94,2).

**Social Security of the Clergy.** Every diocese should undertake a realistic and systematic plan of support for diocesan priests by setting up a clergy fund derived from contributions of the clergy and of the laity for the benefit of the needy, disabled and retired priests... Special programs to prepare priests for retirement should be a part of the support system (PCP-II. a.94). The present Pension Plan of the CBCP is adopted, so that through a Pension Fund, benefits due to retirement, death, disability and separation may be provided for the bishops and diocesan priests.

**Is the Continuing Formation for Priests mandatory?** It clearly appears that continuing education for renewal and updating is a necessity for all priests. Each diocese must hence set up specific programs for this purpose. They should be mandatory for priests after a certain time in the ministry. On the other hand, the Program of the Philippines for Priestly Formation approved by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education for the years 1980-1985 hereby stands.

## **BAPTISM**

**What are the ways of administering Baptism?** Baptism can be conferred either by immersion or by pouring of water. Both are suitable symbols of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ.

**Can any member of the Church confer Baptism?** Yes, in case of necessity, if the ordinary minister — bishop, priest or deacon — is absent or impeded. In such cases, usually a catechist or some other person is deputed for this purpose by the local ordinary; but in case of urgent need, any person who has the required intention may do so.

**When should infants be baptized?** Infants should be baptized within the first weeks after birth. In danger of death, without any delay.

**When was the Rite of Baptism in Philippine dialects approved?** Rome confirmed the new Rite of Baptism for children in English (ICEL) and Samareno on 26 February 1970; in Cebuano on 17 March 1971; in Ilocano on 5 October 1971; and in Bicolano, on 23 January 1973.

**What are the Churches that administer valid baptism in the Philippines?** They are :

- Lutheran Church in the Philippines (LCP).
- Philippine Episcopal Church (PEC).
- United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP).
- Iglesia Evangelica Metodista en las Islas Filipinas (IEMELIF).
- United Methodist Church in the Philippines (UMCP).
- Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC).
- Presbyterian Church.
- Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

## **CONFIRMATION**

**When were the vernacular translations of the rite of confirmation approved?** They were approved as follows: Cebuano, 2 May 1972; Bicolano, 15 May 1973; Tagalog, 10 October 1973; Ilocano, 21 January 1976. The English translation was approved on 5 February 1973.



**What is the age for Confirmation?** The age for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation throughout the country is 12 years, unless in the judgment of the minister a grave reason suggests otherwise.

### *CONFESSION*

**When was the Tagalog translation of the Rite of Penance approved?** The Roman confirmation of the Rite of Penance in the Tagalog version came on May 20, 1976.

**When can General Absolution be given?** General Absolution can be given outside the danger of death, whenever there exists great necessity, that is, given the number of penitents, there are not enough confessors available to properly hear the individual confessions at a given time, so that, without fault of their own, the penitents are deprived of the sacramental grace of Holy Communion for a lengthy period of time.

These conditions may be verified in the cases that follow, according to the judgment of the diocesan bishop:

a) When priests go, once a year or very seldom during the year, to remote barrios or islets, or to other places where there is a serious difficulty in the access to the sacrament of confession on the part of the faithful on account of distance or geographical or climatological reasons;

b) On Christmas, Paschal Triduum, local religious fiestas, popular missions and school graduations; whenever the conditions set above exist.

On these occasions the priests may be permitted to give the General Absolution, only after having undertaken all means to give opportunity to the penitents to make their individual confession.

### **Reconciliation Room as an alternative to the Confessional?**

Subject to the provisions of c. 964, §2, a reconciliation room may be used, upon request of the penitent, as an alternative to the confessional.

### *EUCCHARIST*

**Can laymen be installed as Lectors and Acolytes?** Yes, they can be admitted to these instituted ministries on stable bases, their exercise of office being subject to periodical renewal (three or five years). The requirements are the following: (a) They must be exemplary Catholics; (b) They must be at least twenty-one years old; (c) They must

be adequately literate; (d) They must have finished a proper training formation seminar for lectors and acolytes.

**Lay Eucharistic Ministers?** When the necessity of the Church warrants it, lay persons, even if they are not installed acolytes, can be deputed to act as Extraordinary Eucharistic ministers (distribute Holy Communion, take it to the sick, exposition of the Blessed Sacrament...).

**Communion in the hand or in the tongue?** In general, the custom of placing the consecrated bread on the tongue of the communicants should be maintained, since it is based on a traditional practice of several centuries. Nevertheless, communion may also be given by placing the consecrated bread in the hands of the faithful, provided that precautions are taken against danger of insufficient reverence, or false doctrines arising in the mind of the faithful. The CPCP approved this option in January 1989.

**Is communion under both kinds permitted?** Yes, specifically during Masses on days of special religious or civil importance to the Filipino people in general or to families and groups to whom it would be of special importance and benefit. It is up to the Ordinary to determine to what extent, for what motives and in which conditions the faculty may be granted in such special occasions.

**Communion twice a day?** A person who has received the Holy Eucharist may receive it again on the same day only during the celebration of the Eucharist in which the person participates.

**How to give the sign of peace at Mass?** In the Philippines it has been prescribed that the sign of peace be given by slightly bowing the head toward the people being greeted, with the hands joined before the breast. The greeting is: *Peace be with you*, and the answer: *And with you*.

**What about shared homilies?** The homily is reserved to a priest or deacon. Shared homilies are not allowed and if ever this is done it should be for small, educated groups only. The prohibition of shared homilies does not include shared reflections and the like.

**Are Lay Persons permitted to preach outside the Mass?** The diocesan bishop may deputize lay persons to preach outside the Mass, whenever there is need because of scarcity or physical inability of sacred ministers. The requirements: (a) they must be Catholics of good moral character; (b) they must be well prepared through formation in Christian doctrine and Scriptures; (c) they must be distinguished by their loyalty to the Hierarchy and fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church; (d) they are deputized for one year, renewable.

**Is the old Mass in Latin permitted?** If, in the judgment of the diocesan bishop, there are sufficient reasons for allowing the use of the 1962 Roman Missal to some of the faithful or priests who desire the celebration of the Mass in Latin, such a Mass can be arranged under the following conditions:

- Certainty that the priest and faithful do not call in doubt the doctrinal correctness of the 1970 Missal;
- The celebration must be intended for the benefit of the group that requests it and in the place and circumstances approved by the bishop;
- The 1962 Missal in Latin must be used;
- There must be no mingling of the rites and texts of the two Missals;
- Each bishop must inform the Holy See of the concessions granted by him and on their outcome within the year.

**Mass for the Dead on November 1?** The Philippine bishops requested Rome permission to celebrate in the afternoon or evening of November 1 a Vigil Mass for the dead. This would be more in accordance with the mentality of the people, and particularly applicable for Masses in the cemetery. However the Sacred Congregation turned down the request for the reason that this would be against the spirit of the liturgy and that the Mass of November 1, *All Saints*, rings out the paschal significance of death.

**The *Misa ng Bayang Filipino*?** The *Misa ng Bayang Pilipino*, prepared by the Maryhill School of Theology, accepted by the bishops at their meeting in January 1976, was forwarded to Rome for confirmation.

**Anticipated Mass on Saturday afternoon?** The obligation of participating at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days is also satisfied wherever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic rite on the evening (after 4 o'clock) of the previous day.

**Are the *Aguinaldo Masses* a legitimate custom?** Yes. The custom observed in the Philippines since time immemorial of celebrating the so-called *Aguinaldo Masses*, for the perseverance of the Filipino people in the faith and for the preservation of the Catholic religion in this part of the world, is a legitimate one.

**Have the Gregorian Masses effectivity if interrupted?** The series of *Gregorian Masses*, when unexpectedly interrupted by an impediment (illness, for instance) or for other reasonable cause (e.g. the celebration of a wedding or funeral Mass), by dispositive action of the Church continues to have the effects of suffrage for the deceased which the practice of the Church and the piety of the faithful have hitherto attributed to it. The priest-celebrant, however, remains obliged to complete the celebration of the thirty Masses as soon as possible.

**Is it allowed to celebrate Masses in private houses?** Mass may be said outside a sacred place whenever, in the judgment of the celebrant, in a particular case necessity requires. Permission from the local Ordinary is no longer needed. However, a particular law could well set a pattern to be followed within the territory.

## ANOINTING

**When were the vernacular translations of the Rite of Anointing approved?** The Roman confirmation of the Rite of Anointing in the English ICEL version came on 23 January 1975; Cebuano, on 4 March 1974; Tagalog, on 16 June 1976; Ilocano, on 26 June 1976.

## MARRIAGE

**Is there a Philippine Marriage Rite?** A definitive version of the Philippine Marriage Rite, adapted in some places to the new Roman Rite, was approved by the bishops and confirmed by Rome on 26 February 1970. It became obligatory on the first Sunday of May 1970. The Marriage Rite in Cebuano was confirmed on 16 October 1971, and in Bikolano, on 23 January 1973.

### **What is the age required for the licit celebration of Marriage?**

It has been established that the age for the licit celebration of marriage shall be 18 years for the bridegroom and 18 years for the bride. Below the foregoing ages, marriage may be solemnized only with the permission of the local Ordinary.

**Can lay persons solemnize marriages?** The norm is that "where there are no priests and deacons, the diocesan Bishop can delegate lay persons to assist at marriages, if the Episcopal Conference has given its prior approval and the permission of the Holy See has been obtained."

**Is marriage license needed?** Without permission from the local Ordinary, no canonical wedding may be celebrated without the marriage license, or marriage contract if civilly married, in order not to deprive the spouses of the civil effects of the marriage.

### **BETROTHAL**

**What are the conditions for its validity?** Betrothal is canonically valid only under the following conditions: a) the parties should be in possession of canonical capacity to marry; b) they should execute the promise in writing before a priest, or a deacon or two witnesses. In case of minors, the parents should be previously informed. An appropriate ceremony of betrothal may be observed, taking into account the local customs and laws of the land.

### **FUNERAL RITES**

**Vernacular translations of the Funeral Rite?** The Roman Rite, as accepted by the CBCP with its three stations — home, church, cemetery — obtained confirmation on the ICEL text on 3 January 1971. The Cebuano version was approved by Rome on 8 July 1971; in Ilocano, on 5 October 1971; in Pampango, on 22 December 1971.

**Is white color accepted for Masses for the Dead?** Yes, white may be used in masses for the dead, although the rule for using black or violet for such occasions is still in force.

**Are laymen allowed to conduct funeral services?** The Philippine bishops decided to allow laymen to conduct funeral services at the home and at the cemetery, as the new ritual allowed them. They

also obtained permission from Rome (on 1 April 1971) to allow lay persons to preside over non-Eucharistic funeral services in Church when necessary.

**To whom is Church burial to be denied?** Ecclesiastical burial is a right that can only be denied to unworthy members of the Christian community. They are, under the law, notorious apostates, heretics and schismatics; those who chose the cremation of their bodies for anti-Christian motives and manifest sinners whose burial cannot be granted without public scandal to the faithful.

### *TRIBUNALS*

**Can lay persons be appointed judges in Ecclesiastical Courts?**

Yes. The diocesan bishop may recommend lay persons to the CBCP to be appointed judges in the ecclesiastical courts, provided that they are Catholics of unimpaired reputation and have a doctorate, or at least, a licentiate in Canon Law. (If there is a real need to appoint judges who lack these academic qualifications dispensation has to be sought from the Apostolic Signature). Lay persons, however, cannot sit as judges in cases against clerics or in cases concerning declaration or imposition of interdict or excommunication.

**Are bishops permitted to entrust cases to a single judge?** Yes, whenever they find impossible to establish a collegiate tribunal, even assuming a lay person as judge, for trial in First Instance of cases requiring such tribunal. He must be a cleric and should have the help of an assessor and an auditor when this can be done. This norm has to be reviewed periodically by the CBCP.

**A single appellate court for the whole Philippines?** A single appellate court has been established for all judicial cases for the whole territory of the Episcopal Conference of the Philippines, the seat of which is Manila. The appointment of president, judges, promoter of justice, and defender of the bond, belongs to the Episcopal Conference; the duration of their term is for three years.

**A permanent committee for amicable settlements?** In every diocese, the diocesan bishop is enjoined to establish a permanent committee whose job is to look for and suggest equitable solutions for

the amicable settlement in recourse against administrative acts. The committee shall be composed of not less than six (6) and not more than nine (9) members who are presented by the priests working in the diocese and chosen by the bishop from those presented by the clergy, and who shall serve for three years or depending upon the policy of the diocesan bishop. As the nature of the case demands, the members may call the assistance of lay people, (cf. c. 1733, §2)

### *FAST AND ABSTINENCE*

**What are the norms for fast and abstinence?** Fast and abstinence is to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. The general form for abstinence, which is binding on the faithful throughout the year, is abstention from meat. It was been noted, however, that abstaining from meat cannot be considered a penance for a great part or number of Filipino people who can no longer afford to buy meat... The local norm is that, except on Good Friday and Ash Wednesday, abstinence may be substituted with exercises of piety, such as reading the Bible, going to Mass, visiting the Blessed Sacrament, praying the Holy Rosary, or with acts of charity, such as visiting the sick and prisoners, giving alms to the poor, or teaching catechism.

### *CATECHESIS*

**Catechetical instruction for all.** All Catholics of the Philippines should be given systematic and progressive instruction on the doctrines of the Catholic faith through a National Catechism to be drawn up by the appropriate ecclesiastical authority, based on the Second Vatican Council, the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, the National Catechetical Directory, and in accord with the text of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the prescriptions of c. 775.

**Financial support of catechetical training.** There should be a catechetical fund in every parish to cover the training of catechists, the salaries of professional catechists and the allowance for volunteers. Funding for catechists should be in the annual budget of every seminary, and of every school. This fund can be drawn from the sharing of parents, special benefactors and the like. Catechesis should be considered as a necessary activity of every parish, of every seminary, of every Catholic school.

**Creation of a Catechetical Office.** A "Ministry for Evangelization and Catechesis through Electronic media" (MECEM) shall be created at national and diocesan levels.

### *RELIGIOUS EDUCATION*

**Are there norms concerning Catholic religious education in schools?** Yes, a National Catechetical Directory was published by ECERI in 1983 with the approval of the Congregation for the Clergy given in October 1984, for the direction and guidance of all Catholics engaged in catechizing and teaching religion throughout the country.

**Is religious instruction to be allowed in public schools?** Presently, at the option expressed in writing by the parents or guardians, religion shall be allowed to be taught to their children or wards in public elementary and high schools within the regular class hours by instructors designated or approved by the religious authorities of the religion to which the children or wards belong, without additional cost to the government.

### *LITURGY*

**Which are the holidays of obligation in the Philippines?** The following feasts are holy days of obligation in the Philippines:

- January 1 - Motherhood of Mary. New Year.
- December 8 - Immaculate Conception, Patroness of the Philippines.
- December 25 - Nativity of the Lord. Christmas.

Other universal feasts (Epiphany, Ascension of Christ, the Body and Blood of Christ...) are transferred to the nearest Sunday, preceding or following the feast. Of special significance is the feast of Santo Nifto (on the third Sunday of the month of January). The memories of San Isidro, St. Lorenzo Ruiz and Companions and San Pedro Bautista are obligatory memorials in the Philippines.

**Which are the official liturgical languages?** Twelve vernacular languages have been so far recognized and accepted as official for the liturgy in the Philippines: English, Spanish, Tagalog, Cebuano, Pampango, Ilocano, Pangasinense, Hiligaynon (Ilongo), Samareno, Chabacano and Ibanag.



**Local materials for sacred vestments?** Besides the materials traditionally used for making sacred vestments, natural fabrics from each region are admissible. The faculty formerly granted to the Filipino Church (BEF, 1960, 614) to use ramie and opal in the making of sacred vestments is now confirmed by the new ruling.

**Is there any local adaptation in the Holy Week Rites?** Three adaptations for the Philippines were approved by Rome on March 16, 1971:

- The use on Good Friday of as many crosses as are pastorally necessary for the smooth and *orderly* veneration by the people;
- Incorporation of the *Encuentro* or *Salubong* as entrance rite at the beginning of the Mass on Easter morning;
- Renewal of the baptismal vows in the same way as in the Vigil Mass in each of the Masses of Easter Day.

Roman confirmation of the Holy Week Rites was also given for Cebuano, on 17 March 1971, and for Hiligaynon, on 10 December 1971.

**What kind of music should be used in Liturgy?** "Any kind of sacred music as long as it corresponds to the spirit of the liturgical celebration itself and the nature of its parts, and does not hinder the due and active participation of the people."

**Tribal Filipino Sunday?** The bishops agreed to make the Second Sunday of October every year, a Tribal Filipino Sunday. The purpose is to focus the attention of our faithful on our brothers in the remote areas of the country.

## *COUNCILS*

**What are the norms regarding the Presbyteral Council or Senate of Priests?** The following norms are part of their statutes:

- There should be a presbyteral council composed of *ex-officio*, by elective and appointive members, of which at least one half is elective.
- *Ex-officio* members shall hold office for as long as they are in

the position of which *ex-officio* membership is attached. All elective members shall hold office for a term of two (2) years, and they may be re-elected, but not for a third consecutive term. All appointive members shall hold office for a term of two (2) years, and they may be reappointed, but not for a third consecutive term (c. 501).

- The presbyteral council should have its regular meetings at least quarterly.
- Though the presbyteral council is a consultative body, however, the diocesan bishop should seriously consider its advice.

**A diocesan Committee for the Removal or Transfer of Parish Priests?** The Presbyteral Council, upon the proposal of the diocesan bishop, shall elect a number of priests, no less than four (4) and no more than eight (8), who will serve for two years and whose advice the diocesan bishop has to request in the proceedings for removal or transfer of parish priests (c. 1742, §1)

### *MASONRY*

**Can Catholics join the Masonic Lodge?** The latest position of the Church on Masonry is that "it is not allowed to Catholics to join a Masonic lodge. A basic incompatibility of principles remains between the Catholic Church and Masonry. This basic incompatibility precludes membership of Catholics in a Masonic lodge." Catholics who belong to a Masonic lodge are not automatically excommunicated from the Church. But if, knowing the prohibition against joining a Masonic lodge, they nevertheless persist in retaining active Masonic membership, they should not receive Holy Communion, nor stand as sponsors in a Catholic baptism or confirmation.

### *COLLECTIONS*

**Are there rules for collections done by private persons?** With reference to c. 1265, §2 permission for collections done by private persons, physical or juridical need permission from the Bishop or local Ordinary. The permission should be in writing, indicating therein the purpose and the territory where the collections may be made; proper accounting shall be done. Likewise, collections done in places other than in churches, oratories or shrines where people congregate for special devotions have to be regulated by the local ordinary.

## ADMINISTRATION/ALIENATION

**What amount is considered an extraordinary act of administration?** An act of administration is considered extraordinary when it involves the amount of US \$20,000 and above or its peso equivalent. Consequently, the diocesan bishop cannot validly proceed with transactions involving such amount without the consent of the finance council and the board of consultors (c.1277, §2). Likewise, pastors and other administrators are required, for validity, to obtain a written permission from the ordinary in such cases (c.1281).

### **What are the maximum and minimum sums for Alienation?**

The minimum amount in the alienation of temporal goods in the Church is US \$20,000 or its peso equivalent, and the maximum amount US \$100,000 or its peso equivalent.

## IV. AUTHENTIC INTERPRETATIONS

Given the importance they have for everyone and in particular for Canon lawyers, and upon request of some bishops, efforts have been exerted to compile here all the answers issued by the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts, since the promulgation of the 1983 Code of Canon Law up to the present. The complete reference of their publication in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (AAS) is also added for personal documentation.

The answers have been arranged not chronologically, but according to the numerical order of the canons, as they appear in *Communicationes* XXVII, 2 (1995) 195-209.

### **Canon 87, §1**

Q. - Whether outside the case of urgent danger of death can the diocesan bishop dispense according to c. 87, §1, from the canonical form for the marriage of two Catholics?

R. - *Negative.*

Response	May 14, 1985
Papal approval	July 5, 1985
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVII (1985) 771.

**Canon 119, 1°**

Q. - Whether, during elections held according to the norm of c. 119, 1°, an absolute majority of votes of those present is required even in the third scrutiny, or, except in cases of a tie, does a relative majority suffice?

R. - *Negative* to the first part; *affirmative* to the second.

Response	May 5, 1990
Papal approval	June 28, 1990
Promulgation	AAS, LXXXII (1990) 845.

**Canon 127, §1**

Q. - Whether when the law requires that the superior must have the consent of the council or of a body of persons in order to act, in keeping with c. 127,§1, does the superior have the right of voting with the others, at least to break a tie?

R.- *Negative*.

Response	May 14, 1985
Papal approval	July 5, 1985
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVII (1985) 771.

**Canon 230, §2**

Q.- Whether among the liturgical functions that according to c. 230, §2 can be performed by the laity, either men and women, can also be included the altar serving.

R. - *Affirmative and in accordance with the norms given by the Apostolic See.*

Response	June 30, 1992
Papal approval	July 11, 1992
Promulgation	AAS, LXXXVI (1994) 541.

On its part, the following were the norms given by the Apostolic See:

*Upon mandate by the Roman Pontiff regarding, the authentic interpretation of can. 230, §2, the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments issued the following norms:*

1. The intent of c. 230, §2 is to allow not to prescribe: "*LaicL.possunt.*" Consequently, the license granted by a certain Bishop must not be understood in any way as binding other Bishops. Each Bishop then, taking into consideration the views of the Episcopal Conference, has the power of prudently judging and deciding what has to be done in his diocese for living the liturgy.

2. The Holy See upholds what some bishops have prescribed as fitting the local conditions in matters of c. 230, §2, but at the same time admonishes that it is most convenient to keep alive the tradition of young boys assisting at the altar. It is a well-known fact that it has been a great contribution to the most desirable increase of priestly vocations. It will always remain a permanent obligation to maintain and promote groups of young men serving at the altar.

3. If in a particular diocese the bishop, having in view c. 230 §2 and because of peculiar reasons, allows that women also be permitted functioning at the altar, this must be clearly explained to the faithful according to the norms given above, and clearly manifesting at the same time that women are empowered to take frequently the role of readers in the liturgy and to distribute the Holy Communion as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist and to provide other services in the manner c. 230, §2 predisposes.

4. In consequence it must be evident that those liturgical services are exercised "in virtue of a temporary deputation", following the decision of the bishop, as there is no right in the laity, be they men or women, to perform them.

Issued  
Promulgation

March 15, 1994  
AAS, LXXXVI (1994) 541-542.

**Canon 230, §3**

Cf. Authentic interpretation can. **910, §2.**

**Canon 299, §3**

Cf. Authentic interpretation can. **1737.**

**Canons 346, §1**

Q. - Whether the bishops *emeriti* mentioned in c. 402, §1, may be elected as members of the Synod of Bishops by the conference of bishops according to c. 346, §1.

R. - *Affirmative.*

Response	July 2, 1991
Papal approval	October 10, 1991
Promulgation	AAS, LXXXIII (1991) 1093

**Canon 402, §1**

Cf. authentic interpretation can. 346.

**Canon 434**

Q. - Whether an auxiliary bishop is able to undertake the office of president (or pro-president) of an Episcopal conference. Whether he can undertake such a position in gatherings of the bishops of ecclesiastical regions mentioned in c. 434.

R. - *Negative* to both.

Response	January 19, 1988
Papal approval	May 23, 1988
Promulgation	AAS, LXXXI (1989) 388.

## Canon 452

Cf. Authentic interpretation can. 434.

### Canon 455, §1

Q. - Whether the expression "general decrees" in c. 455, §1, also includes general executory decrees of the sort in cc. 31-33?

R. - *Affirmative.*

Response	May 14, 1985
Papal approval	July 5, 1985
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVII (1985) 771.

### Canon 502, §1

Q. - a) Whether according to c. 502, §1, a member of the college of consultors who ceases to be a member of the presbyteral council remains in office as consultor?

R. - *Affirmative.*

Q.- b) Whether during the five year term, if a consultor ceases from office, must the diocesan bishop appoint another to replace him?

R. - *Negative and ad mentem.* The mind of the legislator is that an obligation to appoint another consultor exists only when the minimum number required by c. 502, §1, was lacking.

Response	June 26, 1984
Papal approval	July 11, 1984
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVI (1984) 746-747.

### Canon 509, §1

Q. - Whether it is required to elect the president of a chapter of canons in the light of c. 509, §1?

R. - *Negative.*

Response	January 24, 1989
Papal approval	May 20, 1989
Promulgation	AAS, LXXXI (1989) 991.

### **Canon 684, §3**

Q. - Whether the term "religious" in c. 684, §3, is to be understood only of religious in perpetual vows or also of religious in temporary vows.

R. - *Negative* to the first, *affirmative* to the second.

Response	April 29, 1987
Papal approval	June 20, 1987
Promulgation	AAS, LXXIX (1987) 1249.

### **Canon 700**

Q. - a) Whether the decree of dismissal issued by the supreme moderator according to c. 700 is to be notified (to the person dismissed) before its confirmation by the Holy See, or after its confirmation?

R. - *Negative* to the first part; *affirmative* to the second.

Q. - b) Whether the authority competent to receive the suspensive recourse against the dismissal of a member is the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, which will confirm the decree, or the Supreme Tribunal of the *Apostolic Signatura*?

R. - *Affirmative* to the first part; *negative* to the second.

Response	March 21, 1986
Papal approval	May 17, 1986
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVIII (1986) 1323-1324.

### **Canon 705**

Q. - a) Whether a religious bishop enjoys active and passive voice in his own institute?



R. - *Negative.*

Response	April 29, 1986
Papal approval	May 17, 1986
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVffl (1986) 1323-1324.

Q. - b) Whether religious, appointed judges of the *Roman Rota*, are to be considered exempt from the religious Ordinary and from the obligations deriving from religious profession, as in the case of religious raised to the episcopate.

R. - *Negative* to both except in what concern the exercise of their office.

Response	January 19, 1988
Papal approval	May 23, 1988
Promulgation	AAS, LXXX (1988) 1818-1819.

### **Canon 767, §1**

Q. - Whether the diocesan bishop is able to dispense from the prescription of c. 767, §1, by which the homily is reserved to priests or deacons.

R. - *Negative.*

Response	May 26, 1987
Papal approval	June 20, 1987
Promulgation	AAS, LXXIX (1987) 1249

### **Canon 830, §3**

**Q. - Whether the permission which is mentioned in c. 830, §3, is to be printed in published books, indicating the name of the one giving the permission, the date and place of the grant of permission.**

R. - *Affirmative.*

Response	April 29, 1987
Papal approval	June 20, 1987
Promulgation	AAS, LXXIX (1987) 1249

### **Canon 910, §2**

Q. - Whether the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion, deputed in accordance with cc. 910, §2, and 230, §3, can exercise his or her supplementary function even when ordinary ministers, who are not in any way impeded, are present in the church, though not taking part in the Eucharistic celebration.

R. - *Negative*.

Response	February 20, 1987
Papal approval	June 1, 1988
Promulgation	AAS, LXXX (1988) 1373

### **Canon 917**

Q. - Whether, according to c. 917, one who has already received the Most Holy Eucharist may receive it on the same day only a second time, or as often as one participates in the celebration of the Eucharist?

R; - *Affirmative* to the first; *negative* to the second.

Response	June 26, 1984
Papal approval	July 7, 1984
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVI (1984) 746-747.

### **Canon 951, §1**

Q.- Whether the Ordinary referred to in c. 951, §1, ought to be understood as the Ordinary of the place where the Mass is celebrated or as the proper Ordinary of the celebrant?

R. - *Negative* to the first part; *affirmative* to the second, except for a pastor or parochial vicar in which case the Ordinary of the place shall be understood.

Response	February 20, 1987
Papal approval	April 23, 1987
Promulgation	AAS, LXXIX (1987) 1132.

## Canons 1066-1067

Cf. Authentic interpretation can. **1686**.

## Canon 1103

Q. - Whether the defect of consent referred to in c. 1103 can be applied to marriages of non-Catholics?

R. - *Affirmative*.

Response	November 25, 1986
Papal approval	April 23, 1987
Promulgation	AAS, LXXIX (1987) 1132

## Canon 1263

Q.- Whether external schools of religious institutes of pontifical right are included under the words of c. 1263, "public juridical persons subject to his authority"?

R. - *Negative*.

Response	January 24, 1989
Papal approval	May 5, 1989
Promulgation	AAS, LXXXI (1989) 991.

## Canon 1398

Q. - Whether abortion, mentioned in c. 1398, is to be understood only as the ejection of an immature fetus, or also of the killing of the same fetus in whatever way or at whatever time from the moment of conception it may be procured.

R. - *Negative* to the first part; *affirmative* to the second.

Response	January 19, 1988
Papal approval	May 23, 1988
Promulgation	AAS, LXXX (1988) 1818-1819.

### **Canons 1522-1525**

Q. - Whether, when an instance is finished through peremption or by renunciation, if someone wishes to introduce or pursue the cause 1525 again, must it be resumed in the forum where it was first treated, or can it be introduced before another tribunal which is competent in law at the time of the resumption?

R. - *Negative* to the first part; *affirmative* to the second.

Response	April 29, 1986
Papal approval	May 5, 1986
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVII (1986) 1324

### **Canon 1673, 3°**

Q. - Whether the judicial Vicar whose consent is required according to the norm of c. 1673, 3°, is the judicial Vicar of the diocese in which the respondent has a domicile, or the judicial Vicar of the interdiocesan tribunal?

R. - *Affirmative* to the first, and *ad mentem*.

The mind of the legislator is that if in a particular case there is no diocesan judicial Vicar, the consent of the Bishop is required.

Response	February 28, 1986
Papal approval	May 17, 1986
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVIII (1986) 1323-1324.

### **Canon 1686**

Q. - Whether, in order to prove the state of freedom of those who, although bound to the canonical form, attempted marriage before 1067 a civil official or a non-Catholic minister, is the documentary process mentioned in c. 1686 necessarily required, or does the prenuptial investigation dealt in cc. 1066-1067 suffice?

R. - *Negative* to the first; *affirmative* to the second.

Response	June 26, 1984
Papal approval	July, 7, 1984
Promulgation	AAS, LXXVI (1984) 746-747.

**Canon 1737**

Q. - Whether a group of faithful, lacking juridical personality and even recognition envisaged in c. 299, §3, can legitimately make hierarchical recourse against a decree of its own diocesan bishop.

R. - *Negative* as a group; *affirmative* as individual members of the faithful acting either singly or together, provided that they really have a grievance. However, in estimating the grievance, the judge must be allowed suitable discretion.

Response	April 29, 1987
Papal approval	June 6, 1987
Promulgation	AAS, LXXX (1988) 1818

**On Women's Ordination (cf. Can. 1024)**

Q.- Whether the teaching, according to which the Church has not the faculty to confer the priestly ordination to women, proposed in the Apost. Letter "*Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*" is to be considered as definitive, that is, as belonging to the faith depositum.

A.- In the *affirmative*.

This doctrine demands a definitive assent since, founded in the Word of God, written and constantly kept and applied in the Tradition of the Church from the beginning, has been proposed infallibly in the ordinary and universal magisterium (cf. *L.G.*, 25,2). Therefore, in the present circumstances, the Roman Pontiff, in the exercise of his own ministry of confirming his brethren in the faith (cf. *Lc* 22, 32) has proposed the said doctrine with a formal declaration, affirming explicitly that what must be held always, everywhere and by all the faithful as pertaining to the faith deposit. {*Answer from the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith*}.

Papal approval	October 28, 1995
Promulgation	AAS, LXXXVII (1995) 1114.

## [ACKNOWLEDGMENTS]

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### ***For the Philippine Norms:***

F. Testera, OP, *Canon Law Digest of the Philippine Catholic Church. A Text and Commentary*. (UST, Manila, 1995).

### ***For the Authentic Interpretations:***

The English translation of the answers has been taken from E. Caparros, M. Theiiault, J. Thorn, (ed.), *Code of Canon Law Annotated*, (Montreal, 1993), Appendix II, pp. 1284-1299, except the answer to Canon 230 §2, which has been translated from the original Latin text by Fr. Jesus Ma. Merino, OP; from the University of Santo Tomas, Manila.

# **Roots and Shoots of Eco-Feminism: Sign of Hope\***

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**HAZEL D 'LIMA, DHM**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The subject of our Conference centre round a compound word: Eco-Feminism about which much has been written and spoken over the past few years and about which there are varied ideological under pinnings. Our purpose here is not to stop at mere analysis of concepts but to find in these concepts a deeper meaning for our lives and a motivation for action to better the quality of human life. It is significant that the two movements: Feminist and Ecological are emerging important as global concerns at the same time. It is also significant that both these movements have drawn the attention of the world not because of the initiative of political or academic leadership but because of people who shared closely the lives and struggles of those who suffered and had the courage and conviction to speak out.

No doubt the UN did declare a woman's decade and held the largest ever international meeting of women at Beijing many countries have initiated action in favor of women, yet statistics concerning violence against women hardly shown any sign of abatement in most countries.

\* Keynote address delivered during the Eleventh Asian/Pacific Meeting of Religious (Amor XI).

The same holds true of ecological destruction. Despite international conferences and warnings about global warming and the disastrous effects of pollution on the environment for future generations, we continue to play the fiddle while Rome burns. Many of our so called mega development projects which are privatising the "commons" and many micro projects which add to the contamination of the air and water of cities are allowed to continue on their destructive course because commercial profit takes the priority.

Mahatma Gandhi said: "We cannot have an ecological movement designed to prevent violence against nature unless the principle of non-violence becomes central to the ethos of human culture". (Quoted in Manavi Newsletter, October-November 1994 volume 3, Issue 4; p -) One could say the same with regard to women or with any other oppressed group in society.

The principle of non-violence is actually a principle of respect and caring for the other. It is not just preventing an attack on but fostering the growth of the other.

## **HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF ECO-FEMINISM**

The word eco-feminism was used by a French writer Francoise d'Eauboune in 1974 to describe women's potential to effect environmental change. Over the past 20 years the women's peace and ecological movements have influenced our thinking and action around the concept.

Women activists in their observation and analysis of the impact of the development process on women were led to describe the feminisation of poverty. It meant that women were left behind in the race for development, confined as they were to unskilled and poorly paid occupations, mostly in rural environments labeled as backward regions. Such rural environments which had once rallied local communities together in an agricultural economy with a shared pattern of life on the "commons" were now either neglected or exploited for large scale business purposes. Such invasion of the rural habitat resulted in displacement of the local people with consequent impoverishment and deprivation on all sides. In the process, while men migrated to the city in search of a livelihood, the women remained in their rural milieu to



care for the family, for elders and to care for whatever could still provide subsistence to the family. Thus it was seen that women work close to nature, preserving what was precious in the natural habitat. Women thus became the protectors and defenders of the natural environment. Their nurturing role and the nurturing of nature were in greater communion. Traditional taste, for women in rural areas obliged them to be responsible for the 3'fs food, fodder, fuel and water all of which are to be found in the natural environment. The largest number of women workers in India are in agriculture and this may be true of women in Asia which is still largely agricultural.

The difficulties faced by women in their rural environment were compounded by the onslaught on nature perpetrated by the greed of powerful political forces resulting on destruction of forests, land slides, lowering of the water table, drying of wells,- rivers, desertification of land as well as floods. Such destruction of nature has adversely affected the lives of the rural poor but, very specially the tribal population whose very being draws sustenance from the vibrates with the rhythm of nature in her forests, mountains, hills and rivers. Tribal woman depend much more on survival of what is called minor forest produce—hence the destruction of nature around their habitat exposes them to terrible hardships in life.

## **THE PRINCIPLE OF DOMINATION IN DEVELOPMENT**

Mechanisation, industrialisation, technological progress have given rise to a euphoric sense of power among us, specially among men who already have power in their hands. They feel that this power gives them a license over the resources of our earth. We are really today living the law of the jungle where might is right. Of course projects are applied for, sanctioned by authority, funds are obtained through regular channels but who are the parties engaged in such dialogues? Whose voices get heard when decisions regarding the use of the environment are made?. Surely not those whose lives are inevitably affected by such plans and projects. This is happening again and again in all our countries despite national legislation and international conventions.

Industrialisation, urbanization and now globalisation are sweeping over the world and we cannot stop their onward march. We cannot be the type of on looker who shouts "Wolf at everything that is happening

because there are things that are good and there are things that are dangerous for us and for future generations.

One of these dangerous trends is the unbridled greed for power, unrestrained desire to manage and control everything as though decision making is only a one sided affair. Since decision making in our world is largely in the hands of men we call it male domination which is one of the most salient aspects of the patriarchal mind-set. The lust for power leads to a fear of losing power and hence one tries aggressively to be in command of persons, relationships, decisions, resources. Anyone who becomes a threat must be eliminated or kept firmly in check. When such a principle of domination holds way, then the other becomes an object to be controlled and used according to the design of the one in command. In such a world, women and nature are reduced to the status of objects, goods, commodities to serve the "productive" purpose of the men in power.

The continued violence against women and the abuse of the natural environment are manifestations of the operation of this principle of domination in the world.

The reactionary protests of women's movements and environmentalists are only drawing our attention to the dangers of such a development but unless we evolve a new way of looking at women, a new way of looking at nature, a new way of envisioning development we will go on playing with some short-term preventive measures. We have to look for an alternative model with a new spirit to animate our structures.

For instance, merely passing a law to say that the rape of a woman is punishable offense does not by itself uphold the dignity of woman. Infact it often happens that to go through the legal procedures involved becomes even more humiliating for the woman concerned. Again, merely making a National Conservation Strategy and Policy Statement on Abatement of Pollution is not in itself going to improve the lot of our displaced tribal or urban populations. Such measures may signify the desire to do something but unless these steps become part of new model or vision of development, they remain an eyewash.

## THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF FEMINISM AND ECOLOGY

The agenda of four UN conferences held over the past five years shows that certain subjects are becoming more and more intertwined: there was the International Environment Conference in Rio in 1992, The World Population Conference of 1994 in Cairo, followed by the UN Conference on Social Development in Copenhagen and the World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995. It is evident that women-environment-population-development-women, is a tape that we cannot stop playing.

Ecological concerns and women's issues are threads woven into the same cloth. Both are intimately connected. Bernice Mary Daly — in an article entitled "Eco-Feminism; Sacred Matter/Sacred Mother" (Teilhard studies number 25; Autumn 1991) speaks of the first law of ecology as: everything is understood as connected to everything else. This consciousness that everything and everyone is connected to everything and everyone else will allow us to recognise ourselves as we really are and not cling to the protection of patriarchal domination. In a truly interconnected world in a "creation union", of person community and planet that Teilhard du Chardin advocated global issues and social justice issues would be mutually related.

I quote from a report from AWS IX (Asian woman's section); which reflected on the subject of Eco-Feminism 1992. "In traditional Asian thinking life energy is called KI, the breath of life that thrives in the harmony and interconnectedness between sky, earth and people. When there is any division or any separation KI cannot flow and this leads to the illness of all living beings - human, animal, plant and sealife. This means breaking down walls of division, untying the knots so that KI can breathe and flow in harmony.

In such a perspective each part has a value, each has a power of its own and yet each contributes to the wholeness of the whole. The part may be distinct but equal; difference does not make for superiority or inferiority. The value of each is to be respected for itself and for its relationship with the whole.

In this perspective of the interconnectedness of the earth and the human species no part can dominate over other parts without deflecting

the movement of the whole towards the fullness of creation. Hence even though today the patriarchal principle of domination has become the norm towards which even we subscribe in many ways, such continued domination can result only in self destruction, as well as the destruction of the planet earth. The balance has to be restored so that the inner life giving principle can energise and integrate nature and humanity into the purpose of God's creation.

Eco-feminism affirms the value of what is called the feminine principle in nature that is life giving, nurturing, caring as against the principle of domination which in a wider perspective is not just anti-woman but anti-life. The eco-feminist movement which has taken off from the concerns of women entwined with the concern of ecology, is actually a plea for life on our earth. It is not life in the cold dimension of the gross national product but life as it unfolds in our homes, our fields, our villages, our tribal hamlets, our proliferating slums, our urban populations gasping for breath to live.

Our cities today are growing into torture chambers for thousands of migrants who flock for survival. What do they receive? Some daily work to earn some money but living conditions that make for death. Our cities are growing so rapidly that no planning can keep apace. For instance whereas the State of Karnataka as a whole registered a population increase of 20.69% during the 1981-91 decade, the population of Bangalore urban agglomeration rose by 41.38%, twice as fast as the State. Half of all the Industries in the State are located in the city. The open area in Bangalore came down from 19.2% in 1952 to 10.2% in 1987.

We are investing in elaborate systems of health care with sophisticated machinery and expensive tests (out of the reach of the poor), to make a diagnosis, yet thousands of our people drink water that is not potable and breathe a polluted air daily. Public services for hygiene and sanitation are so poor even next to our dispensaries and hospitals. The individual is helpless in this situation. One can truly say that in the search for life, we encounter death. Our progress is a vicious circle — we invest in development projects which so destabilize human living as to make our very development effort the cause of our impoverishment.

The world today appears to be closer than ever. Globalization does make us feel our interconnectedness, but how? Today I can breakfast in Bombay, lunch in Rome and have supper in Chicago. With my fax

or Max I can be in touch with any part of the world. We find ourselves more glued to our TV's with multiple channels bringing us news, views, cultures from all over the world. Do we glory in this kind of interconnectedness — a connectedness of cables, gadgets, market — relationships which too often lead to more consumerism, aggressive individualism and a superficial sense of progress.

Eco-feminism is a call to an awareness of life in and around us, to an interconnectedness of persons who can vibrate to one another, beyond the barriers of gender, race, religion or culture. We are engaged in life-giving not life-destroying relationships. The stress on the inner life-giving principle enables us as to build mutual relationships to recognise one another's uniqueness without feeling superior or inferior. Eco-feminism is the recognition of each one's capacity for growth and fulfillment in joint endeavor-human effort hand in hand with nature.

### **ECO FEMINISM:** A way of Life

Eco-Feminism is a call to woman to express her inner power with that of nature to build the inner dynamism of our planet earth.

The strength of our planet is not merely in institutions and technology. These exist for persons not persons for technology. We are not engaged in a mere fight against patriarchal domination; we are engaged in promoting a quality of human life in community and in communion with our natural environment.

It is a call to believe in the power we bear in ourselves. We are not objects to be used but persons gifted with life giving power to be expressed for the building up of the human family. We women religions belong to fairly large families where the collective strength of womanhood can be experienced, expressed and witnessed to in a male dominated world. How far do our religious structures help the expression of the inner dynamism of the spirit in our sisters? Do we not often allow ourselves to be led by a patriarchal mind-set which extinguishes the creative energy within our own religious families?

In our desire to live in harmony with our ecology let us opt for ways of living that are less mechanistic and more in tune with our natural environments. In our food habits, in finding more natural ways of keeping good health, treating our daily ailments, spending moments of leisure and relaxation, in our ways of beautifying our homes, institutions and neighbourhoods.

In the way we envision the development of our works, let us beware of a materialistic orientation which sets store by the size of our institutions rather than by infusing an inner spirit which makes for the strength and empowerment of those who work with us. Religious congregations find it difficult to collaborate on common platforms on issues of larger social concern. We too often prefer to be exclusive, burning our own little flame in a corner rather than creating together a force of light as a sign for our times.

Development projects today are encroaching on human habitats of weaker sections of people without considering the extent of destruction and the need for adequate compensation. The destructiveness adversely affects people in the totality of their being; nature is destroyed and the continuing emission of toxic substances endangers both people and the environment. We need to be more informed about movements which resist such high handedness in decision making and support the courageous efforts of those who dare to raise their voice and suffer in protest.

Such conflicting positions often cause tensions in our families, communities, the social milieu we have to generally deal with. Yet we have to believe in our selves and in the causes for which we claim to stand. Let us dialogue with one another, discern before the Lord and act according to our commitment.

Educated and brought up in urbanised setups for the most part let us learn to look with greater love and admiration toward our Mother Earth who in the silence and hiddenness of her womb nurtures life in its varied form, colour and beauty, finally to enrich the quality of our human lives. Reflecting deeply on the growth that she sustains, we can learn much about our own life-giving role; we can learn to praise God not just from meditation books with which we stuff our pews in the chapel, but praise Him from the book of nature around us if we have eyes to see and sense the touch of the divine.

Eco-feminism ask us to celebrate life-yes, to celebrate life as the Good Shepherd did when he found the sheep that was lost; as the parent and son who were separated by the son's delinquent behavior, but who could still be reunited in the joy of life lived together; as the poor widow who gave her mite but who gave much more than the rich other.

In the words of Isaiah,

Yahweh shaped the earth and made it  
He did not create it to be chaos  
He formed it to be lived in ...  
I shall plant my law writing it on their hearts (Jeremiah)

The Power to live and to love is written deep within us. No one can take it away. Let us believe in it and help our sisters, the woman who work with us, the woman who suffer to believe that they have power within them, that we all share the power to build a human community of faith and confidence in each other.

MAY WE THUS FULFILL OUR ROLE TO BE SIGNS OF HOPE!

## Cases & Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

### ANTICIPATED MASS

*The new Code of Canon Law allows to anticipate the Holy Mass of Sundays and Holidays of obligation to the previous evening in order to help the faithful to fulfill their obligation to hear Mass. When a Holiday of Obligation falls on Saturday or on Monday, two questions may be raised.*

*The **first question** is: If the Holiday falls on Saturday, will the faithful who hear Mass on Saturday afternoon fulfill the obligation to hear Mass on that Holiday as well as the obligation attached to Sunday, since the Mass is an anticipated Sunday Mass? Or must they hear one Mass for the Holiday (either on Friday afternoon, or morning or afternoon of the Holiday); and another Mass for Sunday (on Saturday afternoon or on Sunday morning or afternoon)?*

*The same question applies when the Holiday falls on Monday. Will the anticipated Mass of the Holiday be sufficient to hear the Mass on Sunday afternoon to fulfill the obligation attached to Sunday and to the Holiday falling on Monday? Or there are two Masses to be heard, one for Sunday and another for the Holiday?.*

*The **second question** is: Can a priest for his own convenience alone anticipate the Sunday or Holiday Mass, celebrating the Mass privately without congregation?*

A Priest



In order to answer the two foregoing questions with precision, we should consider first what the law states on the matter. Canon 1247 establishes: "On Sundays and other Holidays of Obligation the faithful are bound to participate at the Mass." And Canon 1248, §1 says: "The obligation of participating at Mass is satisfied wherever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic rite either on a Holiday itself or on the evening of the previous day". The official Latin text says: "*vel vespere didpraecedentis*," meaning **both afternoon and evening**.

On March 1, 1967 the Holy See granted the Philippines the privilege to comply with the Sunday and Holiday precept by hearing Mass on the evening of the previous day of the Holiday or on Saturday evening (Cfr. Boletín Eclesiástico, 1967, p. 657). What was granted then as a privilege is now a common law in the universal Church for the convenience of the faithful everywhere, facilitating them to fulfill the Sunday and Holiday of obligation.

The anticipation of the Mass of Sundays and Holidays to the afternoon of the previous day is in perfect conformity with the liturgical norm which prescribes that the liturgical celebration of Sundays and solemnities begins on the evening of the previous day. And this is the reason why the liturgical text of the anticipated Mass is the one assigned to the Sunday or Holiday of Obligation, with the proper homily and prayers of the faithful. Those who participate in the anticipated Masses should be told that the anticipated celebration should not diminish or obscure the meaning and significance of Sunday or of the Holiday concerned.

It should be noted also the difference existing between the precept contained in the 1917 Code and in the one contained in the new Code. The old law established: "On Holidays there is an obligation *to hear Mass*", while the new law reads: "On Sundays and other Holidays of Obligation the faithful are bound *to participate at the Mass*." Obviously, the words "*to hear Mass*" of the old Code convey a different significance from the one meant by the clause used by the new Code: "*to participate at the Mass*". The Constitution on the Liturgy points out accurately this difference:

"The Church earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at the Eucharistic celebration, should not be there as strangers or silent

spectators; on the contrary, through a good understanding of the rites and prayers they should take part in the sacred action conscious of what they are doing, with devotion and full participation. They should be instructed by God's Word and be nourished at the table of the Lord's Body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him they should also learn to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever more perfect union with God and with each other, so that finally may God be all in all" (n. 48). And n. 49 of the same Constitution adds: "For this reason the sacred Council, having on mind those Masses which are celebrated with the assistance of the faithful, especially on Sundays and Feasts of Obligation, has issued various decrees on several matters in order that the Sacrifice of the Mass, even in the ritual forms of its celebration, may become pastorally efficacious to the fullest degree."

The new law on the anticipated Masses does not limit the number of Masses that may be celebrated on the previous afternoon of the Holiday of Obligation, nor does it determine the time of their celebration. Logically the number of anticipated Masses as well as the hour of their celebration should conform to the needs and convenience of the faithful, bearing always in mind that the anticipation of the Holy Sacrifice to the previous afternoon should not in anyway diminish or obscure the significance of Sunday and Holiday of Obligation.

"Sunday has been considered in the Church at all times as the day dedicated to the Lord, celebrating the paschal mystery. Hence on Sundays Christ's faithful gather together in the church so that by having the Word of God and taking part in the Eucharist, they call to mind the Passion, Resurrection and Glorification of the Lord. It is the original feast day and should be proposed to the piety of the faithful. Likewise, the following Holidays are to be observed in the universal Church: the Nativity of Our Lord, the Epiphany, the Ascension of Christ, Corpus Christi, the feast of Mary the Mother of God, the Immaculate Conception, the Assumption, the feast of Saint Joseph, the feast of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul and the feast of all Saints" (can. 1246, §1).

However, leaving intact all Sundays as the Lord's Day, the Bishops Conference of the Philippines, following the norm established in the new

Code and with the approval of the Holy See has kept the following feasts as Holidays of Obligation for the whole Archipelago: The Motherhood of Mary (January 1), the Immaculate Conception (December 8) and the Nativity of the Lord (December 25). All other feasts mentioned in canon 1246, §1, are transferred to the nearest Sunday, preceding or following the feast concerned.

The answer to the *first question* of our consultant Priest is given by Fr. Testera in his *Canon Law Digest*, Manila, UST Press, 1995, p. 112. He says: "When a Holiday falls on Saturday or on Monday, there are two obligations to fulfill, one for the Holiday and one for Sunday. The obligation for each day can be observed by participating in the Mass in the afternoon before or on the day itself. The two obligations cannot be satisfied by just attending Mass once either in the afternoon of Saturday or Sunday".

Hence, if the Holiday falls on Saturday the Holiday's obligation can be fulfilled on Friday afternoon (anticipated Mass) or on Saturday (morning or afternoon). The Sunday's obligation can be fulfilled on Saturday afternoon (anticipated Mass) or on Sunday (morning or afternoon). In case the faithful want to fulfill both obligations on Saturday afternoon, they have to hear two Masses on Saturday afternoon. By attending only one, only one obligation is fulfilled, not the two.

The same happens when the Holiday falls on Monday. There existing two different obligations, one for Sunday and another for the Holiday falling on Monday, the faithful can fulfill both obligations as follows: the Sunday obligation can be fulfilled by attending the anticipated Sunday Mass on Saturday afternoon or on Sunday (morning or afternoon). For the Holiday falling on Monday they can hear Mass on Sunday afternoon (Holiday's anticipated Mass) or on Monday (morning or afternoon). But they cannot fulfill both obligations by hearing only one Mass on Sunday afternoon. The fulfillment of two obligations require to hear two different Masses.

The *second question* raised by our consultant Priest is: Can a priest for his own convenience alone anticipate to the preceding afternoon the celebration of Sunday or Holiday Mass, celebrating it privately without congregation of faithful? There are some who reason out this way: if

the priest can anticipate the Sunday or Holiday Mass for others' obligation, he can do it also to fulfill his own obligation: he is bound to hear Mass on those days, too. However, if we consider the reason motivating the Church to grant in the past the privilege to anticipate the Sunday and Holiday Mass and to incorporate the same in the new Code, we can easily see that it was a *pastoral reason*, namely to facilitate the faithful the fulfillment of the serious obligation to participate in the Sunday and Holiday Mass.

The petition of our Bishops to the Holy See in 1967 for the privilege to anticipate the Sunday and Holidays' Mass reads as follows:

"... The petitioner in the name of their Excellencies, the Bishops of the Conference, beg of Your Holiness the faculty, *so that the faithful could comply with the obligation of hearing Mass on the afternoon of Saturday*". Response: "The Sacred Congregation of the Council, taking into consideration what has been submitted, benignly grants the Bishops of the Philippines the requested faculty". Likewise, the present Code of Canon Law, after stating that "on Sundays and Holidays of Obligation the faithful are obliged to assist at Mass" (can. 1247), states in canon 1248, §1: "*The obligation of assisting at Mass is satisfied whenever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic rite either on a Holiday itself or on the evening of the previous day*".

It is clear, therefore, that the purpose of anticipating the Mass of Sundays and Holidays is to facilitate the faithful to *fulfill their obligation* to participate at Mass on those days, not to foster their devotion only.

In the case of the priest who celebrates the anticipated Mass for the benefit of the faithful there is no doubt whatsoever that in doing so he exercises his priestly ministry for the benefit of the congregation: there is a truly *pastoral ministry*, lacking in the case of a priest who only for his own convenience anticipates the Mass without congregation. This does not mean, of course, that we deny that he might have a good intention in doing so. The only aim and purpose of allowing to advance the Holiday's Mass is to facilitate the faithful to fulfill their obligation to hear Mass.

The priest who anticipates the Holiday's Mass should also bear in mind that he is not bound after all to *celebrate* Mass on Sundays and

Holidays; he is only bound to *hear* Mass as a Christian. The Church's law says: "Priests are to celebrate frequently. Indeed daily celebration is earnestly recommended" (can. 904). There is no obligation imposed upon him to celebrate. Moreover, if he has already celebrated in the morning, he cannot binate: "A priest may not celebrate more than once a day", states canon 905, §1. Bination is also allowed for *pastoral reasons* only. At any rate, the priest who needs to anticipate the fulfillment of his obligation to hear Mass on Sundays or Holidays of obligation, can fulfill this obligation by hearing the anticipated Mass together with the congregation of faithful. Moreover, if the priest has to travel the whole Holiday, he should know that he is not even bound to hear Mass on that Holiday. How can he justify his private anticipation of the Holiday's Mass?

We hope that the two questions raised in the case are already answered.

## ON "MARRIED PRIESTS" ISSUE

**DANILO TAG-AT, OP**

This article is written through the urgings of a Dominican priest who was disturbed by what he read in the TODAY newspaper, dated July 17, 1997, concerning the ***word war over celibacy*** between the group of "married priests" and a Bishop.

We ask the first question: Are these "priests" validly married or not? If they are not validly married, we cannot talk about them as if they are married; but they have attempted to marry civilly or even ecclesiastically. The only thing that they can do according to the 1983 Code of Canon Law is to assist a person who is in danger of death, and nothing else.

A priest can only be said to be validly married when he has obtained the dispensation of the Holy See from all duties flowing from his sacred ordination and from the religious vows, if he was a religious priest. The obligation of keeping the law of sacred celibacy is also dispensed.

This is what we read in one dispensation granted by Pope Paul VI, which we suppose are contained in all dispensations of the Holy See up to the present: To each priest who has been allowed by the Holy See to be reduced to lay state and dispensed of all priestly duties, it is forbidden:

- a) To perform any function of sacred order, except that stated in Canon 976 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law (Canon 882 of the

1917 Code of Canon Law); i.e., to assist any person in danger of death;

- b) To take part in any liturgical celebration before the people ... and to preach ever the homily;
- c) To exercise any pastoral office.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law clearly states that, "Those who are in sacred orders invalidly attempt marriage" (Canon 1087). The impediment of sacred orders is related to the obligation of clerics (deacons, priests, bishops) to observe clerical celibacy, and therefore renders invalid a marriage attempted by them.

The 1983 Code of Canon Law also ordains that, "Without prejudice to the provisions of Can. 194, §1 3°, **a cleric who attempts marriage, even if only civilly, incurs a *latae sententiae* suspension.** If after warning, he has not reformed and continues to give scandal, **he can be progressively punished by deprivations, or even by dismissal from the clerical state** (Can. 1394, 1).

Marriage attempted by a cleric is a grave violation of an obligation proper to the clerical state (cf. canon 1087 CIC and canon 804 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches) and therefore creates a situation of objective unsuitability for exercising the pastoral ministry in accordance with the disciplinary requirements of ecclesial communion. Such an action, in addition to being a canonical crime which causes the cleric to incur the penalties listed in canon 1394, §1. This irregularity is perpetual (cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, n. 23, May 28, 1997).

According to Canon 277, § 1, "clerics are obliged to observe perfect and continual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven, and are therefore bound to celibacy". This requirement of law is reinforced by the undertaking of the obligation of celibacy at ordination to the diaconate (see Can. 1037), and of course sacred orders constitute a diriment impediment to marriage (Can. 1087). Should a cleric attempt to marry, either civilly or canonically, he is guilty of an offense, known as attempted marriage: a civil marriage would be invalid due to lack of form, and a canonical marriage due to the diriment impediment of orders.

A cleric who is guilty of this offense incurs a *latae sententiae* suspension. The law makes further provision: if after warning, the cleric persists in his conduct and gives scandal, the competent authority may add further penalties, *including that of dismissal from the clerical state*. Reference is also made to Canon 194 §1, 3, which provides for the automatic removal from ecclesiastical office of a cleric who attempts marriage, provided only that the reason for the removal be supported by a declaration of the competent ecclesiastical authority (Canon 194 §2).

As we have seen, the 1983 Code of Canon Law contains penal provisions, and that invalidly "married priests" are under ecclesiastical censure.

The Pontifical Commission for the interpretation of Legislative Text has declared on May 19, 1997 that the attempt of a priest to get married is a serious violation of an ecclesiastical law. Hence, being suspended *Latae Sententiae*, he cannot administer the sacraments or sacramentals even if the suspension has not been declared, except when he assists a person in danger of death (canon 976). To attempt even civil marriage, brings with it the irregularity to exercise sacred orders (cf. canon 1044 §1, 3°).



# **Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers**

## **November - December 1997**

**EFREN RIVERA, OP**

**November 2, 1997**  
**All Souls**

**JOHN 14:1-6**  
**DO NOT LET YOUR HEARTS BE TROUBLED**

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

In John chapter 14 Jesus prepared his disciples for his departure. In the biblical context, (a) this departure comprises his death and resurrection as well as his ascension, and (b) it is not a total departure because in a very real way Jesus will remain with his disciples until the end of time.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 1 Do not let your hearts be troubled. Have faith in God and faith in me.** Although Jesus distinguishes himself from God, he asks his disciples to give him that same faith they give to God. When this happens, their hearts will cease to be troubled.

**(2) Y. 2-3 In my Father's house there are many dwelling places... I am going to prepare a place for you.** Jesus is going to

heaven, his Father's house. Once there, (a) he will prepare "rooms" for his disciples (verse 3) and (b) he will empower them to do "greater works" than he himself had done on earth (see verse 12).

**(3) V. 6 I am the way, the truth and the life.** Jesus is the Way to the Father, but we should not think of him as a mere bridge, at the end of which we reach the Father. For he is not only the Way. He has in him the Father's Truth, that he reveals to us, and the Father's Life, that he shares with us. He is the Way because people — his disciples — had known him as a human being like us, and he thereby made it easier for us to go to the Father.

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

**1. It** is natural for our hearts to be troubled when a dear one passes away. But peace returns quickly if we have faith in Jesus, who is the Resurrection and the Life.

**1.1 Pointer for sharing.** Have you been challenged in your faith because of the death of a loved one? How did peace return to you? Share your experience with your small group.

**2.** Our departed relatives and friends will not remain in Purgatory for ever. Once they are purified, their souls go to heaven. Once there, it is their turn to help us, their loved ones who continue struggling on earth.

**2.1 Pointer for sharing.** Have felt the influence of a departed loved one giving more power to you in your struggle for a better life on earth? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

**3.** The memory of Jesus' human life on earth makes it easier for people to go to the Father. To some extent, too, the memory of the good things done on earth by our beloved departed dead, makes it easier for us to lead a better life.

**3.1 Pointer for sharing.** Has the good memory of a beloved dead person inspired you? Share your experience with your small group.

## **BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH**

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** Sharing, in group dynamics, is a revelation of oneself to a trustworthy small group. We see this in Jn 14:1-6. Jesus reveals himself as "the Way, the Truth and the Life" and as the Father's abode on earth. The disciples to whom he reveals himself form an intimate group of friends who are not afraid to ask him questions. < We must strive to make our Basic Ecclesial Community or Small Groups more and more like the "community of disciples" centered on Jesus at the Cenacle after the Last Supper. < From the ecclesial viewpoint, sharing is what we call "communion" and since this goes beyond the tomb and it includes those in Purgatory and those in Heaven, we speak of a "Communion of Saints".

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Our gospel passage shows how Jesus cared for the spiritual needs of his disciples. First, they needed to cast off anxiety from their hearts. Responding to this need, Jesus urges them to have faith in him and he promises to always care for them. Moreover, their lack of understanding about his teachings needed to be remedied. Jesus therefore uses plain language for his self-revelation. < Each of us is bound to show to others the caring that Jesus has shown to us.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** Jesus affirmed his disciples (a) by implying that each of them is worthy of a room in his Father's house and (b) by openly telling them that they will be able to do the works he has been doing, and indeed "greater works." < Do we see the worth of our sisters and brothers as heirs of heaven? In particular, husbands should remember the prayer made during the nuptial blessing of the marriage ceremony (immediately after the Our Father): "may her husband put his trust in her and recognize that she is the equal and the heir with him to the life of grace."

**4. FORGIVENESS.** Jesus forgave Thomas and Philip for not understanding his teaching. This is the kind of forgiveness we should also show to one another.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** Let us rejoice in our belief that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life.

### **C. STORY: Remembering Princess Diana**

After the fatal car crash that killed Princess Diana of England, somebody said that "she was born a lady, become a princess, and died a saint."

We may not totally agree with this statement — certainly Princess Diana will never be beatified, much less canonized. But it goes to show that one's shortcomings can be overlooked because one has shown himself or herself to be a caring person.

Diana, who was the daughter of the Earl of Spencer, was already the heiress of a sizeable fortune when she decided to be a kindergarten teacher, so as to be able to help children. This was the work she was doing when Prince Charles courted her and asked her to marry him.

Princess Diana's fairy-tale wedding turned into a nightmare when Prince Charles, even after being married to Diana for several years, refused to give up the mistress he had been visiting since before his marriage.

Upon hearing the news of Diana's tragic death, President Clinton said, "We admired her work for children, for people with AIDS, for the cause of ending the scourge of land mines in the world. And her love for her children, William and Harry."

Mother Teresa, who met Diana several times in connection with her own work for the poor, said the princess was "very concerned for the poor," and added, "That is why she was so close to me."

**November 9, 1997**

**Solemnity of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica**

**JOHN 2:13-22**  
**ZEAL FOR GOD'S HOUSE**

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

The Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome bears an inscription proclaiming it as "HEAD AND MOTHER OF ALL CHURCHES". This is due to the fact that Constantine, the first Roman Emperor who became a Christian, donated the Lateran basilica to Christians so that they could openly worship God. Previously, they held their liturgy "underground," in the catacombs or in secret places where they could avoid persecution. From the time the Lateran basilica became a Christian Temple, Christians could build churches to proclaim their worship of the one true God who sent his Son to save the world. The importance of today's feast gives it precedence over the Sunday liturgy.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 13 As the Jewish Passover was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem.** Jews never simply say they "go" to Jerusalem. The standard term is to "ascend" or "go up" to Jerusalem.

**(2) V. 16-17 "Stop turning my Father's house into a marketplace!" His disciples recalled the words of Scripture: "Zeal for your house consumes me."** One of the reasons why the Jewish authorities wanted to get rid of Jesus was their perception that he was against Temple worship. Ironically, Christ's cleansing of the Temple — which showed his high regard for the worship of God in that place — led to his arrest and condemnation by the Jewish authorities. < > The disciples did not necessarily remember the words of Scripture "on the spot". They did so long after the event, when they could look at it in the light of the passion and resurrection of Christ.

**(3) V. 21 He was talking about the temple of his body.** The one true Temple for Christians is the Body of Christ, understood in a double sense, namely: (a) the physical body of Christ both in its pre-

resurrectional (earthly) and post-resurrectional (glorious) state, and (b) the Church or the community of all the followers of Christ.

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

1. Today, even when people travel by planes that bring them much higher than the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, pilgrims continue to say that they "go up" to Jerusalem. This signifies the spiritual attitude of going to a level higher than ordinary life when one disposes oneself to worship God.

*1.1 Pointer for sharing.* Do you pray better when you prepare yourself externally and internally for your acts of worship? Share the outcome of your reflections with your small group.

2. The Vatican II reform of the Liturgy has been misunderstood by some quarters — for example by the people who agitate for the restoration of the Tridentine Latin Mass — in much the same way that Christ's cleansing of the Temple was misunderstood by the Jewish authorities.

*2.1 Pointer for sharing.* What has been your attitude towards liturgical reforms in the Church? Share your reflection with your small group.

3. It is true that God is everywhere, but his presence in the physical body of Jesus Christ is something unique. We who profess that Jesus is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity should see an infinite superiority of Christ's physical body over the material structure of the Jerusalem Temple.

*3.1 Pointer for sharing.* No matter how intimate with Jesus Christ we might imagine ourselves to be, we must always admit that he remains a "mystery" to us. We must always bow before the Mystery of Jesus. Reflect on this and share your reflection with your small group.

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** The disciples were confirmed in their faith in Christ when they started sharing with one another what they believed and felt about him (see v. 22). Similarly, our faith grows when we share our faith experiences.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Apparently, Christ did not care about the people who were merely trying to eke out a living by selling merchandise in the Temple. It can be pointed out, however, that Christ did not care less about them, but he cared more about the worship that was acceptable to God. The lesson, then, is about having a right sense of priorities even in the matter of caring.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** Jesus was affirmed in his action of cleansing the temple not by merely human words but by the words of Scripture (see verses 17 and 22). We must try to get this kind of affirmation when we make important decisions. On such occasions, we should discern the proper thing to do with the help of Scriptures.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** We can see from today's gospel passage that the big mistake of the Jewish authorities consisted in their refusal to forgive what they perceived to be a transgression on the part of Jesus. We must, at all cost, avoid falling into this kind of mistake.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** Let us rejoice because Jesus, through his Resurrection, actually raised up the Temple of his Body after it was destroyed by his Crucifixion.

### C. STORY: Build My Church

At the plaza in front of the Lateran Basilica in Rome, one finds a famed bronze sculpture of St. Francis of Assisi. There is a message in this providential juxtaposition of the "Head and Mother of all churches" and the statue of the man commissioned by God to build His Church after it fell into ruin.

The story goes that Francis was at prayer in the ruined Church of San Damiano after his conversion. He heard a voice from the crucifix saying, "Francis, build my church." Giving some thought to such a project, Francis calculated that it would take a tidy sum of money. How could he ever raise that much money? He had a bright idea. He remembered that his father had a warehouse of textiles from France, which, when sold, would amount to just about the sum needed to repair the church of San Damiano. In his father's absence, Francis opened the warehouse, sold the textiles, and raised enough funds to make the ruined church once more functional.

Trouble broke out, however, when the textile owner returned from his trip to France. He hailed his own son, Francis, before the Bishop, and asked that restitution be made of the loss he incurred when Francis used the money from the textiles to rebuild San Damiano. It was then that Francis took off his clothes, and gave them to his father, saying, "From now on, I have no father except the one in heaven!"

What is more important, however, is that Francis came to the realization that God wanted him to rebuild the spiritual building which is the Body of Christ, the Church, rather than the walls and roof of San Damiano. After gaining this insight, Francis embarked on his life-work of restoring the Church — ironically ruined by wealth — to its pristine commitment of preaching the Good News to the poor.

**November 16, 1997**

**THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Cycle B**

**MARK 13:24-32**

**HE WILL GATHER HIS CHOSEN ONES**

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

The "apocalyptic sermon" of Jesus in Mark 13:5-37 concerns not the end of the world but the end of the Old Testament symbolized by the Temple of Jerusalem (see 13:2). Its message is not one of fear but of hope. When the Temple of Jerusalem is destroyed, it will signal



the beginning of the new era in which GOD WILL REIGN THROUGH THE GOSPEL.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 24 During that period after trials of every sort the sun will be darkened, the moon will not shed its light, stars will fall out of the skies, and the heavenly hosts will be shaken.** If, as we said, the words of Christ are not about the end of the world but about the destruction of Jerusalem, the image painted in v. 24 must not be taken literally. None of these things happened literally when the Temple was destroyed in AD 70. The figurative language, borrowed from the prophets (see Is 13:10; 34:4; Ez 32:7-8; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15), do indicate a time of CRISIS — a time of great danger as well as great opportunity, depending on how one copes with the situation.

**(2) V. 26 Then people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.** This description of the Son of Man is a symbol of victory and triumph drawn from Dan 7:13-14. It is not, therefore, to be taken literally, as a description of Jesus' return at the end of the world. Originally, in Daniel, the "son of man" was a symbol of "the saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:18), that is, the faithful Jews who resisted the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. The meaning of the vision (Dan 7:13-14) is that these Jews will triumph over their persecutor and "receive the kingdom". In Mark, however, the symbolism is radically changed. The "Son of Man" is Jesus, the Holy One of God (see Mk 1:24), and the "saints of the Most High" are the followers of Jesus. Thus, the "coming of the Son of Man" (Mk 13:26) is a symbol of victory not just for Jesus as an individual but also for his "members", the Church.

**(3) V. 27 He will dispatch his angels and assemble his chosen from the four winds, from the farthest bounds of earth and sky.** Apocalyptic language continues in this verse, which is not about the last judgment of all men but about the entry of non-Jews into the Church. These non-Jews, coming from all over the world, will now be part of the NEW CHOSEN PEOPLE.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. The transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament did not happen in just one moment: not at the birth of Christ, not even at his death and resurrection nor at Pentecost. For the New Testament Church these events were indeed "foundational" in character, but no single moment can be pointed to as the moment when the "torch was passed" from the Old to the New. A crisis had to arise which would make people realize that a **PROCESS OF TRANSITION** was taking place. That crisis was the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by the roman army in the year AD 70. Jesus warned his disciples about this coming crisis and exhorted them to look at it as a time of great opportunity.

*1.1 Pointer for sharing.* How do you respond to a crisis? Are you afraid of the danger it brings, or do you keep yourself alert to avail of the opportunities it offers? Reflect and then share your reflection with your small group.

2. The "coming of the Son of Man" is not an event to be feared but a victory to be longed for. It is not only Jesus, but his followers too, who will be given great power and glory. Their power will not be used to crush people, since the enemy of God's kingdom is Satan. Satan will be routed.

*2.1 Pointer for sharing.* Power should be used against evil, not for selfish aims. Have you experienced this use of power for a good cause? If so, share your experience with your small group.

3. In God's plan people and nations are not chosen so that they can selfishly enjoy privileges that are denied to others. They are chosen to be instruments to bring God's salvation to all people, to be servants of the Number One Servant, Jesus Christ.

*3.1 Pointer for sharing.* When you think of yourself as a "chosen one" of God, is this in terms of selfish privileges or in terms of service to be rendered to others? Reflect and share your reflection with your small group.

## **BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH**

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** The privileges of the old Chosen People are to be shared with the new Chosen People, the Church comprising the followers of Jesus Christ. This shows that "sharing" is one of the operative principles of God's plan for our salvation. The more our lives are lived in the spirit of sharing, the more we cooperate in God's plan.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Our commitment to care for one another must be activated especially in times of crisis.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** To be at the peak of our abilities in times of crisis, we need to affirm one another in a special way at such times.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** When people do not forgive, they become specially cruel in times of crisis.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** At the rightful time, Jesus will come with great power and glory to save his people.

### **C. STORY: Crisis Transforms Soldiers**

A British battalion of soldiers stationed in India took life very easily. This was specially true in their practice of religion. They came to their religious service on Sunday only because their officers were watching them. They sang only the hymns they liked, listened to the preacher if they found him interesting, and forgot religion once they stepped out of church.

But one day a big earthquake shook the place where they were stationed. Many people were buried alive in debris. The battalion went into action, working day and night even without food just to save as many people as they could.

Their rescue worked impressed a Brahmin so much that he got converted to the Christian faith. What the missionaries could not do for

about twenty years was achieved in just a week's time by the example of selfless service shown by that battalion of soldiers during a time of crisis.

**November 23, 1997**  
**CHRIST THE KING, Cycle B**

**JOHN 18:33-37**  
**KING OF TRUTH**

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

Pilate's interrogation of Jesus is the occasion for explaining in what sense Jesus is King. His Kingship, firstly, is not "of this world." Secondly, he is a shepherd king who leads people by appealing to their inner orientation to the truth.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 36 "My kingdom does not belong to this world."** Jesus does not lead people by exercising political power over them.

**(2) V. 37 Pilate said to him, "So, then, you are a king?" Jesus replied: "It is you who say I am a king. The reason why I came into the world, is to testify to the truth. Anyone committed to the truth hears my voice."** People are already created in the truth. They have within them an orientation to the truth. Hence they can recognize it when they experience it in Jesus. <> "Truth" would have more meaning for a Jew than for a non-Jew like Pilate. For the Jews the Mosaic law was "truth" (Ps 119:160), just as it was the "way" (Ps 119:1) and the "life" (Ps 119:37). In this connection we must remember that Jesus presented himself as the fulfillment of the law: "I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE" (John 14:6). Indeed he is the law or the WORD of God in person.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Political power is given to human rulers so that they can provide for the good of people in a "*polis*" or state. It is not something Jesus ever aspired for, although, after his resurrection and ascension all power in heaven and on earth was conferred upon him by God (see Mt 28:18). In other words, when Jesus stood before Pilate, his kingship was limited to the spiritual sphere. But because of his sacrifice on the cross, God rewarded him by granting him power also in the temporal sphere. In other words, from the post-resurrectional viewpoint, Jesus Christ also has power over temporal and political affairs. For this reason, the Church or the community of Christ's followers have the right to involve themselves in temporal and political affairs to insure that Christ's post-resurrectional authority in these matters will be upheld.

**1.1 Pointer for sharing.** For the furtherance of Christ's kingdom, is it good for the Church to involve itself in temporal and political affairs? Answer this question by drawing on your experience, and share your answer with your small group.

2. We must not confuse the truth brought by Jesus Christ with the mere statement of facts we find, for example, in popular magazines that may claim to tell the "truth" about this and that celebrity. Nor is it mere scientific truth, as when scientists say that dinosaurs lived more than 65 million years ago. The truth that Jesus brought with him is that which pertains to our salvation: the truth about God and about his plan for the human race. **IT IS THE TRUTH ABOUT THE MEANING OF HUMAN LIFE.**

**2.1 Pointer for sharing.** Have you ever reflected on the meaning of your life? Have you ever asked: What am I in this world for? Share your answer with your small group.

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** Gossiping is totally different from sharing. In Jn 18:34, Jesus rejected gossip when he said to Pilate: "Are you saying this on your own, or have others been telling you about me?" We must practice sharing, not gossiping. Sharing is baring one's heart to others, not transmitting a bit of information whispered to our ears.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** To be committed to others is to care for their welfare. In this light, Jesus Christ, the King, is the most caring person who ever lived in this world. We should imitate him.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** One of the greatest tragedies that occurred in this world is the fact that, at the appointed time, the Jewish people failed to affirm Jesus Christ as their king. We may say that this is the greatest sin of omission that has ever transpired. We must take care lest, by failing to affirm our brothers and sisters, we may also fail to affirm Jesus Christ in them.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** It is easy to forgive Pilate's ignorance of the "truth" because he was not privy to the revelation given to the Jews; but it is difficult to forgive the failure of the Jews to see the truth in the teachings of Jesus Christ. On our part, let us forgive those who make honest mistakes, but let us reproach those who transgress when they should know better.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** Christ's proclamation of Truth is the answer to the questionings found in the hearts of all people who have goodwill.

### C. STORY: Power Through Charisma

Jesus never wore a crown nor occupied any religious or political position during his life on earth, yet because of his charisma, his authority was felt and accepted by the people. "He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all... All spoke well of him, and wondered at the

gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth..." (Lk 4:15, 22). "They were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves saying, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee" (Mk 1:27-28). When he died on the cross, the Roman centurion was so impressed with what he witnessed that he exclaimed, "Truly, this man was the Son of God" (Mk 15:39; see Mt 27:54; Lk 23:47).

We, too, in our own way, can influence other people even if we have no official power nor public position. This was illustrated recently by the reaction of people at the news of the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales. At her death she had already been stripped of her title, "Her Royal Highness", yet she was acknowledged as the "Queen of Hearts", and the "People's Princess" because in her own way, she touched the lives of people. After Diana and Prince Charles parted ways, she wanted to be an official goodwill ambassador of Britain but Queen Elizabeth denied her this wish. So, instead, she embarked on humanitarian missions in her own name and she was able to do more for the British people and needy citizens of other countries, than the entire royal household.

The secret to power that touches the lives of people for the better, then, is not in titles or positions but in being a caring person. In the light of this Sunday's gospel we should add: it is also in being totally committed to the Truth.

***Preparation for the year 2000***  
***1998 Theme: The Holy Spirit as the Principal Agent***  
***of Evangelization***

• "The "focus of 1998 is the HOLY SPIRIT who is the 'principal agent of evangelization', the Counselor whom the Father will send in Jesus' name and who will teach us all things (cf. Jn 14:26). The path of the Holy Spirit leads us to the promotion of Vatican II's ecclesiology and the appreciation of our Confirmation as impelling us to the apostolate

of the laity. Genuine evangelization is undertaken by truly spirited, spirit-filled, 'spiritual persons' (PCP-II 215), just as it was 'in the power of the Spirit' that Christ carried out his evangelizing work. To hasten the advent of the Kingdom in our midst, the fruits and the gifts of the Holy Spirit must be manifested in poverty alleviation, environmental concerns, cooperative developments as well as socio-economic and political reforms."

CBCP Pastoral Letter. "The Advent Season Before the  
Great Jubilee" II, 2.

•"**PCP-II** sees the whole process of renewed evangelization as centered or focused on Christ. Yet the role of the Holy Spirit in it is highlighted. The work of evangelization is a Trinitarian activity within the Church. Furthermore, 'This new evangelization is aimed (a) at fostering an integrated Christian spirituality among the faithful; and (b) at building a truly local Church in communion with the Apostolic See' (PCP-II Decrees, no. 1). We find therefore a happy blending of (the Pope's Encyclical) *Tertio Millenio Adveniente* and PCP-II for the second year. *Tertio Millenio Adveniente's* overriding focus is the *Holy Spirit who is the principal agent of evangelization*, while **PCP-II** enjoins us to engage in renewed evangelization."

A Filipino Vision for the Third Millennium  
by the CBCP National Committee for the Great Jubilee 2000.

**November 30, 1997**

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**Beginning of Cycle C**

**LUKE 21:25-28, 34-36**

**YOUR LIBERATION IS NEAR AT HAND**

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

Today's gospel reading is taken from Luke's presentation of what Jesus had to say about the end of the world. From Luke's viewpoint this will coincide with the visible parousia of the Son of Man.



**Focus Points. (1) V. 25-26** There will be signs in the sun, moon and the stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish, distraught at the roaring of the sea and the waves. Men will die of fright in anticipation of what is coming upon the earth. Here we have apocalyptic language partly taken from Is 13:10 and Ps 65:8, that Luke applies to his description of the end of the world (note that Mark 13:24-27 had applied them to the end of Jerusalem). It should be stressed that the language is figurative although it can harmonize with the astronomical phenomena which, according to scientists, will mark the end of planet earth.

**(2) V. 27** After that, men will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with great power and glory. This is a fulfillment of Dn 7:13f. We should note, however, that the "Son of Man" in Daniel was a symbol of the chosen people of God. In the New Testament, the "Son of Man" is Jesus Christ himself. This can be harmonized with Daniel by admitting that Jesus, aside from being an individual, is also the "corporate personality" of all God's chosen ones. Shifting to pauline language, we say that he is the Head of the Church, his Body. The main idea in v. 27 is that the ultimate victory belongs to Jesus and his Church, although throughout human history they have to struggle against the enemies of God's Kingdom.

**(3) V. 28 & 36b** When these things begin to happen, stand up straight and raise your heads, for your ransom is near at hand... Pray constantly for the strength to escape whatever is in prospect, and to stand secure before the Son of Man. Christ taught his disciples to see the end of the world as a time of trouble for all people (see v. 35). This trouble will swirl around them but they need not be engulfed in it if they *watch and pray* (v. 36a). For non-believers the end of the world will be a horrible time, but for the followers of Christ it will be a time of "ransom" or liberation. Stricken with guilt, non-believers may have reason to flee from the Son of Man, but believers should "stand secure" and welcome him like a long-awaited friend.

## B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. We must be careful not to confuse figurative language with scientific language even when there could be harmony between the two. The Bible is not a book of science. What is of interest to the writer, and therefore, logically, to the reader, is the spiritual message, which in the present case is still to be stated in verses 27-28. Verses 25-26 form only a preparatory statement.

*1.1 Pointer for sharing.* A fundamentalist, always literalist, interpretation of Sacred Scripture pretends to simplify Bible study but ends up by confusing people. If you have any experience in this regard, share it with your small group.

2. Chances are, the end of time will not happen in our own days. Yet, it is important for us to know that, in spite of all the struggles that the followers of Christ have to undergo, theirs is the ultimate victory. Having this victorious mind-set is important for us. It gives us the reassurance that our problems are not irremediable. We should look at them as *challenges* to become better, more forceful, more creative or innovative.

*2.1 Pointer for sharing.* Rather than being defeatists, Christians should have a victorious mind-set. Reflect on this point and share your reflections with your small group.

3. There is nothing to fear but fear. We should realize that this is the teaching of the Bible with regard to the attitude believers should take vis-a-vis the end of the world. Instead of fear, the recommendation of the Bible is *watchfulness and prayer*.

*3.1 Pointer for sharing.* Fear saps our energies. Watchfulness and prayer strengthens us. Have you learned this from experience? If so, share your wisdom with your small group.

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** Spending our time in sharing exercises is one way of keeping watch, as recommended in Lk 21:36.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** If we show ourselves to be truly caring persons, even if we die suddenly (see v. 34) in the prime of youth, people will remember us. This lesson was brought home to us by the example of Princess Diana of England.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** Jesus affirmed his disciples when he said: "stand up straight and raise your heads" (v. 28). We should similarly affirm our sisters and brothers.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** When we are reminded of praying (v. 36) we must think of the Lord's Prayer, which contains a petition for pardon. Implied in this petition is the additional petition to pardon or forgive.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** "Your ransom (liberation) is near at hand", (v. 28).

### C. STORY: Unsurvivable Crash

For people who are unprepared, what will happen at the end of the world is like what happened to Princess Diana when the Mercedes S-280 car she was riding in smashed against a concrete pillar in a tunnel and bounced to the wall. The front of the car folded like an accordion up to the front seats, and the top was crunched to the waist level of the passengers. A spokesman of the Mercedes company said: "We are of the opinion that such an accident was not survivable."

It was calculated that the car was traveling at about 167 kph (100 mph). The Mercedes spokesman said that passengers in a car that crashes into immovable concrete at 100 kph (60 mph) "are subjected to such pull and pressure that their inner veins and other organs burst." Princess Diana did not die on the spot. After she was extricated, she was brought to a hospital but by the time she was brought to the

emergency room she had already suffered cardiac arrest. Expert surgeons working with modern equipment did all they could for at least two hours but by 4:00 a.m. on Sunday, August 31, 1997, the princess was dead.

**December 7, 1997**

**SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Cycle C**

**LUKE 3:1-6**

**A HERALD IN THE DESERT**

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

The land of Israel is the "desert" where John the Baptist preaches, but his message is for the salvation of all humankind.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 1-2a In the fifteenth year of the rule of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, Philip his brother tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas...**The purpose of Luke's great pains to provide us with the exact date of John's ministry is actually to date the beginning of our Lord's public life. His elaborate synchronization sets the gospel events in the framework of world history and describes the political- situation in Palestine. If we follow the Syrian calendar, the 15th year of Tiberius' reign would be from Oct 1, AD 27 to September 30, AD 28. It seems, then, that we can put the preaching of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' ministry in the *autumn of AD 27*.

**(2) V. 2b ...the word of God was spoken to John son of Zechariah in the desert.** John, who had already been marked as a prophet, now solemnly actualizes his mission. The word of God is spoken to him inwardly and he speaks it out to the people. The mention of the desert connects him with the prophecy of Isaiah 40:3-5.

**(3) V. 4-6 A herald's voice in the desert, crying, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, clear him a straight path... and all mankind**

**shall see the salvation of God.'** Luke, unlike Mark and Matthew, continues the quotation of Isaiah 40 on to v. 5 and so introduces a universalist note ("all mankind") to John's preaching.

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

1. The preaching of John and the gospel of Jesus Christ are not abstract philosophical treatises but constitute, together, A CALL TO SALVATION in a definite framework of world history and in a particular political situation.

*1.1 Pointer for sharing.* Our place in history and our political situation have to be taken into consideration when we attend to our eternal salvation. What insights have you gained from experience regarding this particular matter? Share them with your small group.

2. John belonged to a priestly family but it was not the temple that equipped him for his mission of preparing the way for the Messiah. It was in the desert that he listened to the word of God in scriptures as well as to the word of God in human experiences. This was the DABAR or Word-Event that he first heard and felt in his heart and to which he will later give utterance.

*2.1 Pointer for sharing.* Are you attentive to Word-Events in your life? Share one or two of your Word-Events with your small group.

3. Luke wrote his gospel for people converted to Christianity from the non-Jewish cultures. He takes pains to show that salvation is for all nations and cultures, in every clime, place and time.

*3.1 Pointer for sharing.* The INCULTURATION of the faith is one of the concerns of the Church today. This means that Christians must identify what in good in their culture even before the coming of Christian missionaries, and learn to integrate the perennially good elements into Christian living. Are you aware of have inculturated your faith? Share your experience with your small group.

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** John first interiorized the word of God spoken to his heart, and only later did he speak this out in his preaching to the people. This is the kind of sharing we should practice in our communities.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** John cared for people and this was the reason why "he went about the entire region of the Jordan proclaiming the baptism of repentance which led to the forgiveness of sins" (v. 3). We should imitate this kind of caring.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** John was affirmed by the people who accepted baptism from him, and that is why he continued in his ministry. Let us affirm our brothers and sisters so that they will persevere in their God-given mission.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** As the preaching of John shows, forgiving others and being forgiven by God is something basic in salvation. We must attend to this basic element.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** "All humankind shall see the salvation of God" (v. 6).

### C. STORY: Mother Teresa's Prophetic Vocation

The "word of God spoken to John in the desert" must have been very similar to the "call within a call" that a Sister of the Congregation of Loreto, Agnes Bojaxhiu (later to be known all over the world as "Mother Teresa") heard while in a train to Darjeeling, India. "The message was clear," she explained. "I was to leave the convent and help the poorest of the poor while living among them. It was an order."

The call occurred on September 10, 1946. In response to it, Mother Teresa began on the pavements of Calcutta, where there were 100,000 homeless. It was among them that she started doing "something beautiful for God."

Her work developed in three directions. First, in Kalighat, she opened a hospice for the dying in the grounds of a Hindu temple. Even with the help of Sisters who became her followers, Mother Teresa could take care of only about 600 dying persons in a year. They were the most abandoned.

Next came Sishu Bhavan or children's home. Stories about babies being rescued from dustbins are not false. But more usually they were found abandoned in doorways or outside convent gates. Then a home for lepers was opened. It can take 200 — admittedly a mere fraction of India's two million lepers.

After Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, the congregation she founded in 1951, the Missionaries of Charity, were invited to many parts of the world, including the Philippines. However, not everything was a triumph. The Sisters were thrown out of Colombo and Sri Lanka and snubbed in Belfast. Latin America in general, due to the influence of liberation theologians, thought of their work as something superficial since it is the unjust structures of society that have to be changed.

Mother Teresa, who died September 5, 1997, compared herself to "God's pencil — a tiny bit of pencil with which He writes what He likes."

**December 8, 1997 <> Monday**

**SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION**

**LUKE 1:26-38**

**Year of Jesus Christ: YOU SHALL GIVE HIM THE NAME JESUS**

**Year of the Holy Spirit: THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL COME UPON YOU**

**Year of God the Father: THE LORD IS WITH YOU**

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

We can reflect on the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady both from the viewpoint of the Year of Jesus Christ (1997) and the Year of the Holy Spirit (1998 but which liturgically started on the First Sunday of Advent 1997).

**Focus Points. (1) Year of Jesus Christ: V. 31 You shall conceive and bear a Son and give him the name Jesus.** It was by God's initiative, not man's that Mary was chosen to be the mother of Jesus Christ. In God's plan the humanity of Christ will not be taken from a human couple but from a virgin mother, and that is why more than any other woman (see Gn 16:11 and Is 7:14) she will have the prerogative to give him a name. She will act through Joseph, who will have the legal right of giving a name to his foster child, his spouse's child. <> The name Jesus means "Yahweh saves". It is a prophetic name that concretizes the mysterious name "Immanuel" ("God is with us") given to the child of the mysterious "maiden" in Isaiah 7:14.

**(2) Year of the Holy Spirit: V. 35 The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; hence, the holy offspring to be born will be called Son of God.** "Holy Spirit" and "Power of the Most High" are synonymous terms: the Spirit is the Divine Power. The text of Luke is to be understood in a Trinitarian sense that gives a new meaning to Is 11:2 which says that the Spirit of Yahweh will rest on the Messianic prince. Here the Holy Spirit (second person of the Trinity) will come upon Mary who will be the mother of the Messiah. <> Possibly, the "overshadowing" of the Spirit alludes to (a) the Spirit of God that hovered over the waters as a prelude to the great work of creation. The implication is that by overshadowing Mary, the Holy Spirit is about to perform a new and wondrous creation, a conception that occurs by the direct action of God. Then, (b) in Exodus 40:35 a cloud representing God "overshadows" the tent of meeting where the Ark of the Covenant was kept. In a sense, therefore, Mary can be identified as the New Ark of the Covenant that makes God's presence among people a visible reality.

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

There are two themes in the Mass of the Immaculate Conception: a christological one which relates the Immaculate Conception to Christ and the Divine Maternity, and an ecclesiological one which relates the Immaculate Conception to the Church and to us. Thus we recall that



Mary was kept free from sin from the first moment of her conception in order to be a worthy Mother of the Son (opening prayer) and we pray that we be set free from sin (opening prayer, prayers over the gifts and after communion). The two themes are interwoven in the preface:

You allowed no stain of Adam's sin  
to touch the Virgin Mary.

Full of grace she was to be a worthy mother of your Son,  
your sign of favor to the Church at its beginning,  
and the promise of its perfection as the bride of Christ, radiant in  
beauty.

Purest of Virgins, she was to bring forth your Son,  
the innocent lamb who takes away our sins.

You chose her from all women to be our advocate with you  
and our pattern in holiness.

By reflecting on the text of the Annunciation, Lk 1:26-38. Christians through the ages acquired insights that led to the definition of the Immaculate Conception. It was observed that Mary is addressed as "Full of grace" (following the Greek, this is now translated as "highly favored" with the sense that what was begun in the past is continuing into the present) instead of by her own name. So, "Highly Favored" is almost a new name for Mary; it describes her state and mission. It is a principle of God's dealings with humanity that he is always faithful; he will give grace for each task to which he calls a person. She is assured of God's protection and care: *The Lord is with you*. Mary is presented as being *deeply disturbed by these words*, and the angel says *Do not be afraid; you have won God's favor*. Fear before the divine is normal and it is a regular motif in biblical apparitions. Mary is reassured. The Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit long meditated on this text as it pondered the holiness of Mary and the consequences of the divine choice of her as Mother of the Eternal Word. Seeing Mary here and in relation to her Son, the Church gradually came to realize that where Mary was concerned there could never have been a taint of sinfulness.

*Pointer for sharing.* In the Immaculate Conception we can see the redemption fully at work. We can say that through this gift Mary

is the fully healed one: she never had the spiritual flaws that hold us back from total love of God. Thus the Immaculate Conception allowed Mary's yes at the Annunciation to be limitless, without any unconscious restriction. What is the quality of our yes when we say "yes" to God? Reflect on this and share the results of your reflection with your small group.

## **BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH**

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** It is through the sharing of insights on biblical texts, practiced by Christians through many centuries, that led to the definition of the Immaculate Conception in 1854. By continuing this kind of sharing Christians can contribute to the definition of other Marian dogmas, for example, that Mary is the Mediatrix of human salvation.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** God cared for Mary's salvation and redeemed her preventively, that is, before sin touched her. As the saying goes, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We, too, can show our caring for our brothers and sisters by preventing harm from reaching them.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** Mary was conceived without original sin but her parents did not know about it and she herself remained in ignorance of it until it was revealed to her. Such a revelation was, for Mary, an affirmation. Similarly, people sometimes do not know that they have special qualities — a kind heart, an unselfish attitude, a humble demeanor, etc. — until someone tells them so. Affirming them does them a lot of good.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** Although Mary did not need forgiveness because she never committed any sin, she needed redemption, that is, she needed the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ so that she would be conceived without sin. All other "children of Eve" (Christ does not belong to this category) need forgiveness from God and from one another.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** In Mary, the Immaculate Conception, we see the "most excellent fruit of redemption" (Vatican II, Const. on the Liturgy, 103).

## **C. STORY: Megadikes Prevent Destruction by Lahar**

God prevented sin from ever touching Mary through her privilege of Immaculate Conception. This privilege is like the megadikes built by the Philippine Government to prevent lahar from destroying the town of San Fernando, Pampanga. Not too far from it is the town of Bacolor, where houses and even the Church has been ruined by lahar because a dike could not be built on time. Some people tried to save their houses by putting them on stilts. Still, there is no better way of fighting the lahar than by changing its course through dikes.

**December 14 1997**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - "GAUDETE" - Cycle C**

*(On Tuesday, December 16, the Aguinaldo Masses begin).*

**LUKE 3:10-18**

**WHAT OUGHT WE TO DO?**

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

Today's gospel reading begins with passages peculiar to Luke (v. 10-14 & 15), but the concluding portion (v. 16-18) has parallels in Mark (1:7-8) and Matthew (3:11-12). It is a section of the gospel where Luke presents John the Baptist's preaching as touching on the concern for equity and justice that society must foster.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 10-14. The crowds... tax collectors... soldiers... asked John, 'What ought we to do?'** This passage explains the character of the repentance required as a preparation for the kingdom. Whatever may be their occupation or position in life, people need thorough-going conversion. They need to turn away from selfishness and observe the commandments as well as engage in works of justice and charity. By teaching in this vein, John the Baptist continues the exhortations of the prophets of the Old Testament and goes one step farther. V. 11 suggests the sharing of property that will be practiced in the early Christian community of Jerusalem (see Acts 2:4ff). The recommendation to tax collectors (v. 12-13) and soldiers (v. 14) is more specific in view of the special temptation of their way of life.

**(2) V. 16-17 I am baptizing you in water, but there is one to come who is mightier than I. I am not fit to loosen his sandal strap. He will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire...** John declares himself unworthy to be a slave of the coming Messiah. He also explains that his water baptism is only a preparation for the baptism that will come from the Messiah since the Messiah's baptism, (which will be conferred by his disciples after his resurrection,) will bestow the Holy Spirit. The word "fire" is added to prepare readers for the Lucan description of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Luke will say: "Tongues as of fire appeared, which parted and came to rest on each of them. All were filled with the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 2:4).

**(3) V. 18 Using exhortations of this sort, he preached the good news to the people.** Evangelization or the preaching of the Good News need not always make people smile and feel contented. In fact John the Baptist preached the Good News by challenging people to become better than they already were, in a word, to change. What gives a silver lining to this kind of preaching is that it gives people HOPE FOR A BETTER OR FULLER LIFE. As Jesus will say later, "I came that they might have life and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10).

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

**1.** Everybody needs conversion. When we are born into this world we are self-centered beings. As we grow and are properly trained or educated we learn to care for others. However, some children are spoiled by their parents and teachers. Or the social environment contaminates us with its biases and wrong values. Even good people like Saul, the future St. Paul, need to make a turn-around in their lives to make it Christ-centered. Then, since God is always inviting us to go higher, we need to examine ourselves periodically to find out whether we are generous enough in responding to God's call.

*7.7 Pointer for sharing.* When were you converted to the Lord? How did it happen? Share your experience with your small group.

2. It is clear that "baptism in the Holy Spirit and in fire," that is to say, Christian baptism, is the door to a better life than that which John can promise to those who were baptized by him.

**2.1 Pointer for sharing.** As a convert to Christianity or as a renewed Christian, is your life really better than before? Share your answer with your small group.

3. "God's Word — Hope for a better world." This is what Luke seems to be expressing in v. 18.

**3.1 Pointer for sharing.** What is your honest evaluation of the society of which you are a part today. Does it have a hope for a better life, a fuller life? Share your reflection with your small group.

## **BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH**

**7. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** Sharing is expressly encourage in v. 11: "Let the man with two coats give to him who has none. The man who has food should do the same".

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Caring underlies the exhortations of John in verses 13-14.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** The people affirmed John's prophetic mission when they went to him for advise.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** By preaching a reconciliation with God and with one another, John equivalently taught that the forgiveness of sins is a prerequisite for advancement in the Kingdom of God — an advancement that Jesus will take care of.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** The prospect itself of the coming of the Messiah is Good News for all the world.

## **C. STORY: Female John the Baptist**

If there is anyone in our times who is similar to John the Baptist in the prophetic role he undertook vis-a-vis his contemporaries, it is a woman in the person of Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

First of all, like John the Baptist, Mother Teresa had a low opinion of herself. When she was awarded the Nobel Peace prize, she said, "I am not worthy." Later she said she is "God's pencil — a tiny bit of pencil with which He writes what He likes."

Like John the Baptist, too, Mother Teresa believed society can be changed with little acts of love and by doing one's duty honestly. She believed it is worth all the trouble a missionary endures when a poor person who previously felt unloved by anybody, lights up with gratitude because of a missionary's caring presence.

Liberation theologians think otherwise. They think they should deal with the unjust structures of society first. Charitable works are only palliatives with no lasting effects. By contrast, Mother Teresa insisted that, to change society, one must start in the slums, where the poorest of the poor hunger not only for food, but even more for love.

The tribute paid to Mother Teresa by people from all walks of life when she died on September 5, 1997 is the best proof that she was right.

**December 21, 1997**

**FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Cycle C**

**LUKE 1:39-47**

**BLESSED ARE YOU AMONG WOMEN**

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

The fourth Sunday of Advent is its MARIAN Sunday. Before Jesus comes to the scene, people should focus their attention on Mary. This idea is picked up in the "belen" you can see in Filipino churches where statues of Mary and Joseph are already on the scene from December 16, but the "Santo Nino" is brought to its place only at the singing of the "Gloria" during the Midnight Mass.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby stirred in her womb. Elizabeth was filled with**

**the Holy Spirit...** At Mary's greeting Elizabeth felt the infant move in her womb (see Gn 25:22). At that moment she received the gift of prophecy from the Holy Spirit and understood that the infant leaped for joy at the presence of the mother of the Messiah (see below, v. 44). Thus, with the help of the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth was able to perceive a special significance in a occurrence that she would otherwise have regarded as merely fortuitous. Some commentators in the past exaggerated when they say that the unborn babe enjoyed the use of reason or that he was then cleansed of original sin.

**(2) V. 42 ... and cried out in a loud voice: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb."** Elizabeth's praise of Mary, "blessed are you among women," is a Hebraism (see Jdt 13:18). An alternative Semitic phrase would be "Mother of all women," but this might have an undesired connotation. The Holy Spirit chosen phrase that Elizabeth used calls attention to the reason for Mary's blessedness, namely that she has become the Mother of the Messiah, the awaited Savior.

**(3) V. 43 But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?** "Lord" in this context is the infant in Mary's womb, recognized as the Messiah. Elizabeth's inspired phrase, therefore, is not quite a recognition of the divinity of Mary's child. At this point we are still about three centuries away from proclaiming that Mary is THEOTOKOS — MOTHER OF GOD. It should not escape our attention, however, that here, the seed for THEOTOKOS is already sown, because in the Bible, "LORD" is the usual substitute for YAHWEH.

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

**1.** Luke associates joy with the Holy Spirit, as Paul does in Ga 5:22, "The fruit of the spirit is ... joy..." In this "Year of the Holy Spirit," when we sing the Christmas carol, "Joy to the world," let us remember to ask the Holy Spirit to come with Jesus and the Father to give to the world its long awaited joy.

**1.1 Pointer for sharing.** What do you understand by "joy" when you find the word in Christmas carols? Do you think of food, music, fun, etc., or do you think of salvation? Share the fruits of your reflection with your small group.

2. According to the book of Genesis, it is by God's blessing that sea creatures, birds, animals and finally human beings were empowered to be fertile and multiply (see Gn 1:22, 28). In Luke 1:42 God's blessing is ministered through Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit. This blessing does not empower Mary to incarnate God's Word, since this has already been done, but it empowers her to be a prophetess proclaiming her sentiments of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord because a new creation has taken place in her womb.

**2.1 Pointer for sharing.** Do you feel empowered in some way when you receive a blessing, as for example at the end of Holy Mass?

3. The Lord recognized by Elizabeth is not the divinity to whom the homage of adoration is due, but the Messiah who has come to save his people. Similarly, Mary is recognized not as the THEOTOKOS to be placed in a pedestal — this will come about three centuries later — but as the woman who will assist God more than any other being to bring the long-awaited SALVATION to the people. Mary's role, as she said, is that of being the Lord's HANDMAID (Lk 1:38) — HIS LOWLY SERVANT (Lk 1:48).

**3.1 Pointer for sharing.** Is your tendency to extol Mary (v. 42) or to take her hand so that she can guide you in the way of the Lord and you, like her, can call God your Savior (v. 47)?

## **BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH**

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** Joy is one of the best things we can share. Like Mary, Elizabeth and Elizabeth's infant did.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Mary's visit to Elizabeth is one of greatest examples of caring for others. Let us try our best to be as caring as she was.



**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** Elizabeth's greeting to Mary, "Blest are you among women and blest is the fruit of your womb" (Lk 1:42) is among the best instances of affirmation in the Bible.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** God is our Savior (Lk 1:47) especially because he forgives our sins.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** Mary, "proceeding in haste into the hill country" (Lk 1:39), literally fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, 52:7: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the person who brings glad tidings..."

### **C. STORY: Mother Teresa Visits the Philippines**

After the Missionaries of Charity were established in the Philippines in 1981, Mother Teresa of Calcutta visited them every year until 1995, when she became too ill to make her customary visit. These visits did a lot of good to the country, although Mother Teresa would not do anything except give a retreat to the Sisters who were going to profess their vows. All the Missionaries of Charity now working in the Philippines have been personally formed in the religious life and in dedication to the poor by Mother Teresa herself. In a sense, this is her best gift to the Philippines.

On one such visit, the director of the Catholic Bible Ministry School suggested to Mother Teresa that she give a talk also to future Lay Ministers of the Word. She said, "It is against our policy for me to go to other groups aside from my Sisters, but they can come and join us in our daily holy hour, and after that I can chat a while with them."

That hour and a half spent with Mother Teresa, first in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and then in friendly conversation, is one of the most cherished legacies from her to Lay Ministers in the Philippines.

**December 25, 1997**  
**CHRISTMAS - A B C**

**Midnight: LUKE 2:1-14**  
**TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY**

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

After fixing the birth of the Savior on the calendar of world history by mentioning the census ordered by the Roman Emperor Augustus (30 BC to 14 AD), Luke goes back to the little corner of the earth where the Savior was born. He says that poor shepherds were the ones to whom the good news was first proclaimed, although the tidings of great joy is to be shared by the whole people.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 7 She gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the place where travelers lodged.** If readers keep in mind the law prescribing the consecration of the firstborn male to God (Ex 13:12; 34:19; see Lk 2:23), they will realize that *an only son is a "firstborn" in the technical sense*. There is therefore no solid basis for claiming that Mary had other children after Jesus. <> It was common practice in olden times to wrap a baby in swaddling clothes, but Luke's words in v. 7 suggests that it is unusual for the mother herself to do this work, and therefore there was something miraculous about the baby's birth. This would be Luke's way of telling us that Mary kept her virginity even while giving birth to Jesus. <> Through the mention of a "manger" we learn that Jesus, Mary and Joseph are in a stable of some sort, and according to a tradition transmitted by Justin Martyr in the second century, it was in a cave. <> These circumstances emphasize the lowliness and poverty that surrounded the birth of Jesus. As St. Paul would put it, "he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men" (Phil 2:7).

**(2) V. 8-12 There were shepherds in the locality, living in the fields and keeping night watch by turns over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them, as the glory of the Lord shone**

around them, and they were very much afraid. The angel said to them: "You have nothing to fear! I come to proclaim good news to you — tidings of great joy to be shared by the whole people. This day in David's city a savior has been born to you, the Messiah and Lord. Let this be a sign to you: in a manger you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes." One of the signs given to the Baptist whereby he might know that Jesus was indeed the Messiah was that "the poor have good news preached to them" (Lk 7:22). This was true from the very beginning, when Christ was born, as evidenced by the announcement of Christ's birth to simple shepherds. They were poor and humble, despised by the orthodox Jews as non-observers of the Law. Yet they are the ones who will accept the revelation which the leaders of Israel will reject.

**(3) V. 13-14 Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests."** What the angels express saying, "Glory to God" is not a wish ("let God be glorified") but a statement, a recognition of the significance of the moment, an acknowledgment of the saving act of God. < Both the Vulgate based translation, "peace to men of goodwill" and the Christmas carol version, "peace on earth, goodwill to men" should be set aside in favor of the new translation: "peace on earth to those on whom his (God's) favor rests." The correct translation emphasizes that human "goodwill" does not earn PEACE. Rather, this is a GIFT from God. It is given to people with the same act of divine benevolence whereby Jesus is given to people. The only thing people should do to enjoy peace is to let God's favor rest on them.

## **B. REFLECTION POINTS**

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

1. He became like us so that we might become like him.

**1.1 Pointer for sharing.** What gift would Christ accept from you? Reflect on this and share the result with your small group.

2. If Jesus were to be born today as he was born about 2000 years ago, would you be among the first to whom the news will be given?

**2.1 Pointer for sharing.** Reflect on the question and share your answer with your small group.

3. What does PEACE mean to you, in your life, today? Is God offering it to you? What is He asking you in exchange?

**3.1 Pointer for sharing.** Answer the questions and share your reflection with your small group.

## **BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH**

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** The angel's tidings of great joy is "to be shared by the whole people." Are we helping in spreading the Good News?

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** Mary immediately cared for her son by wrapping him in swaddling clothes and laying him in a manger. She did what she could to make him comfortable, given the circumstances of his birth. Do we do as much for him (as we see him in our poor brothers and sisters)?

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** "You have nothing to fear!" (Lk 2:10). How often do we say this to our brothers and sisters in the Lord?

**4. FORGIVENESS.** Peace (Lk 2:14) follows forgiveness.

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** "This day in David's city a savior has been born to you, the Messiah and Lord" (Lk 2:11).

## **C. STORY: Christmas Flower**

In a competition with the Poinsettia, which has a long history in Christmas folklore, the Sampaguita will not be accepted by most people as the Christmas flower. But if you think of the Sampaguita as the flower

of the poor, and Christmas as the season for helping the poor, then the Poinsettia should give way.

When Mother Teresa of Calcutta, "the Saint of the Gutters" was laid to rest, her open casket was decorated with garlands of Jasmine (the Sampaguita of Filipinos). A big cross of Jasmine flowers covered the front of the vehicle that pulled the gun carriage bearing the revered nun's remains.

A few days after Mother Teresa's burial a Philippine newspaper published the picture of a poor six-year old girl helping her family make ends meet by stringing Sampaguita flowers in leis for sale. At her tender age, by force of necessity, she had already become adept in this meticulous task.

On Christmas day itself you might find it hard to buy a Sampaguita lei from a poor vendor, for the poor do take a day off to celebrate Christmas. But you can make almost every day a Christmas day for some poor people if you resolve to buy a Sampaguita lei from your poor *suki* as often as you can.

**December 28, 1997**  
**HOLY FAMILY - C**

**LUKE 2:41-52**  
**HE WAS OBEDIENT TO THEM**

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

The incident of the boy Jesus lost and found in the Temple (Lk 2:41-50), finds its climax in the pronouncement of Jesus in v. 49, which we can paraphrase thus: "Where would you expect a child to be but in his father's house?" However, the liturgy for the Feast of the Holy Family includes verses 51 to 52. For this reason the focus shifts to three points, namely, the obedience of Jesus to his human parents, Mary's growth in faith through reflection on word-events, and Jesus' growth in mind and body.

**Focus Points. (1) V. 41-42** The parents of Jesus used to go every year to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover, and when he was twelve they went up for the celebration as was their custom. The Jewish Law obliged all men who had reached the age of puberty to go to the Temple three times yearly — for the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Ex 23:14-17; 34:23f; Dt 16:16). Women and children were not bound by this law and the law itself was not literally observed by those at some distance from Jerusalem (like the people of Nazareth): an annual journey to one feast sufficed in practice.

**(2) V. 46-50** On the third day they came upon him in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligence and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished, and his mother said to him: "Son, why have you done this to us? You see that your father and I have been searching for you in sorrow." He said to them: "Why did you search for me? Did you not know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not grasp what he said to them. It was customary for the rabbis to teach in the surroundings of the Temple as the pupils sat on the ground at the feet of their teacher. But the passage we now have before us presents something special, that is, a discussion among a group of rabbis at which the boy Jesus intervened. Possibly, one of the rabbis was impressed with his questions and encouraged him, because rabbis "loved to discover among the young the promise of future teachers of Israel" (M.-J, Lagrange). < Luke portrays Mary and Joseph as having been in anguish at the loss of Jesus (v. 48b; see Lk 2:35a) ; they therefore heaved a sigh of great relief upon finding him (v. 48a). Mary's words of reproach is a window that lets us see the relationship between Jesus and his human parents as something normal, something you see in every human family. < The answer of Jesus implies that, while he did not intend to leave home for good, he had some urgent business to attend to among the rabbis in "his Father's House." When the business is over, he could join a caravan and find his way home. At the level of a common human occurrence, what happened was simply a case of communication failure. However, it is also an occasion for Luke to teach his readers that, at the threshold of puberty, Jesus was awakening to his mystery as Son of God, a mystery that even Mary and Joseph did not really grasp at that time.

**(3) V. 51-52 He went down with them then, and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother meanwhile kept all these things in memory. Jesus, for his part, progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and people.** Nazareth is built up in this verses as the place where Jesus practiced obedience to his human parents, Mary grew in the understanding of God's revelation through word-events (Greek "RHEMA", Hebrew "DABAR"), and Jesus grew in his awareness of his divine Sonship while inculturating himself to the cosmos and to people. Joseph disappears from the scene and Mary is left as the one who will give Jesus his human culture and education.

**B. REFLECTION POINTS**  
**BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS, WE LISTEN**  
**AND SHARE**

**1.** The Holy Family is presented in today's gospel as a family that followed religious law and custom.

**1.1 Pointer for sharing.** Has religious law and custom helped your family to be a happy family? Share your experience with your small group.

**2.** In the Holy Family we find a combination of sublime Mystery and commonplace Normalcy. It is a combination that is perpetuated, in a sense, in the Christian Sacrament of marriage — a human reality that is raised to the divine realm.

**2.1 Pointer for sharing.** (For married Christians:) Have you experienced the mysterious working of the Sacrament of marriage in your life? Share on this with your small group.

**3.** Has your home been a Nazareth where your physical, psychological, mental and spiritual growth has been nurtured? ,

**3.1 Pointer for sharing.** Reflect on the question and share your answer with your small group.

## BIBLIARASAL STEP 6: SEARCH

**1. CAN OUR SHARING BE IMPROVED?** Mary and Joseph shared their customs with the boy Jesus. This was a vital part of his human education. Following their example, we should share time-tested traditions and customs with growing children, making their participation more and more meaningful as they advance in age.

**2. CAN OUR CARING BE IMPROVED?** There was no question of Jesus, Mary and Joseph caring for one another, yet their good relationship was strained in today's gospel episode due to lack of communication. This teaches us that we must improve our communication skills if we want to minimize strains in our personal relationships.

**3. CAN OUR AFFIRMATION BE IMPROVED?** Jesus affirmed Mary and Joseph by being obedient to them.

**4. FORGIVENESS.** In the encounter of Mary and Joseph with Jesus at the Temple, there was mutual forgiveness from the two sides (although no sin, in the proper sense, was previously committed).

**5. THE GOOD NEWS.** The earthly family was brought to its apex by the Holy Family at Nazareth.

### The Mystery of Procreation

The rite, "Pag-hinan ni Tuhan" among the Badjao people is one of the most interesting practices described by Fr. Bruno Bottignolo in his book, "Celebrations with the Sun". Commenting on its meaning, Fr. Bruno says:

The Paghinan ni Tuhan (God in the Badjao language) is mainly an epiphany announcing that a woman is pregnant for the first time. The importance of this event stands most of all on the fact that it is the first time. It recognizes that the woman has the capacity to procreate — something that was only presupposed before. Afterwards, were she to get pregnant again, it would no longer be news because one already knows she can procreate.



To procreate is an extraordinary capability, a privilege not possessed by all women. It is an extraordinary endowment not merely as a human realization that comes naturally with physical maturity. The Badjao religious man cannot but help perceive supernatural intervention. It is truly a gift, a work of Tuhan, precisely as the name of the rite asserts.

It is the capacity to procreate, therefore, that is the work of Tuhan. The fetus reveals it. The rite recognizes and announces it.

Sadly, a rite like "Paghinan ni Tuhan" no longer exists among modern people. This just goes to show that modern people have lost the awe and reverence for the power of procreation which, Genesis 1:28 says, was conferred on humankind by God's blessing.

Perhaps a special rite of blessing parents on the Feast of the Holy Family could help us recover what we have lost due to centuries of neglect.