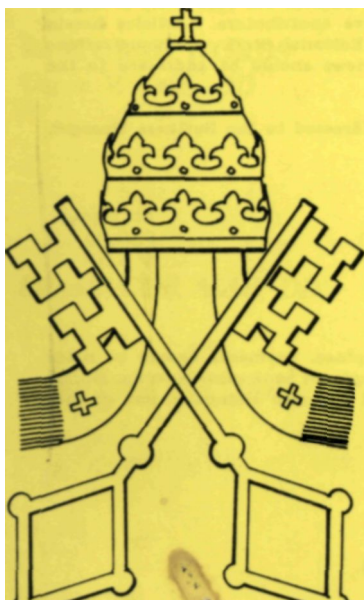


BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

THE OFFICIAL INTERDIOCESAN BULLETIN

Vol. LXXIII, No. 803

November-December 1997



MOTHER TERESA AND THE PHILIPPINES
Editorial

**CELEBRATION OF EASTER TRIDUUM
IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST**
Anscar Chupungco, OSB

**PASTORAL EXHORTATION ON
PHILIPPINE POLITICS**
Oscar Cruz, DD

**1998: YEAR OF GRACE,
YEAR OF FREEDOM**
Jaime Card. Sin, DD

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS, the Official Interdiocesan Organ, is published bi-monthly by the University of Santo Tomas and is printed at UST Press, Manila, Philippines. Entered as Second Class Mail Matter at the Manila Post Office on June 21, 1946.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned. They will, however, be given courteous and scholarly attention. Writers are reminded that the scope of this review is ecclesiastical and broadly archival. While we wish to inform the whole Church, our readership is largely clerical and this should be borne in mind by prospective contributors. Articles herein published do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Editorial Staff. Communications of an editorial nature concerning articles, cases and reviews should be addressed to the Editor.

Advertising and subscription inquiries should be addressed to the Business Manager.

Subscription Rates

	One Year	Per copy
Philippines:	P/200.00	P38.00
Foreign: (Via Sea Mail)	US\$ 30.00	\$ 6.00
(Via Air Mail)	US\$ 40.00	\$ 8.00

Subscriptions are paid In advance. In the Philippines, payments should be made by postal money order, telegraphic transfer or check with *regional bank clearing only*. Orders for renewal or change of address should include both old and new addresses, and go into effect fifteen days after notification.

Address all communications to:

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS
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EDITORIAL

Mother Teresa and the Philippines

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

87 Years. Mother Teresa enjoyed the gift of life for eighty seven years.

The convent of her first choice in Albania was not her final home. Inspired by the Spirit, she set her Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India as early as 1950. After forty years, her presence has been felt in one hundred countries.

The Philippine Church shares God's blessings given to Mother Teresa. In our country she has 14 convents (managed by 111 sisters) and 2 houses (managed by 9 brothers). The sisters and brothers will serve as echoes of Mother Teresa in their apostolate of charity for old and the dying, for the orphans, for the unwed mothers and for the poorest of the poor in general.

Mother Teresa did what she was destined to do. In the words of Chiara Lubich her life was a "magnificat". Her works give a picture of her "fiat."

"Now that she's gone," one young student asks a professor, "what will happen to her Congregation?". The teacher answered, "Mother Teresa will be a hundredfold more useful now than when she was alive."

Mother Teresa, Pray for us!

Mother Teresa of Calcutta* **(Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu)** **1910-1997**

I. LIFE-PROFILE

- 1910: Born Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu on August 26 in Skopje, of Albanian parents and in a family of three children, one brother and two sisters.
- 1928: Arrives in India to join a convent school in Calcutta.
- 1931: Takes her first vows in India's far east hill-town of Darjeeling.
- 1937: Takes her final vows in Darjeeling.
- 1946: Is inspired to set up her own home to help the poor and sick of Calcutta.
- 1948: Becomes an Indian Citizen.
- 1950: Sets up Missionaries of Charity.
- 1952: Sets up Home for Dying in Calcutta.
- 1962: India confers civilian award, Padmashri and during the same year she received the Magsaysay Award.
- 1963: The Missionaries of Brothers of Charity formed.
- 1965: Opens branch of Missionaries of Charity in Venezuela, Caracas.

* Collected by Fr. Vicente G. Cajilig, OP

- 1967: Another branch of her order opened in Colombo, Sri Lanka.
- 1968: Goes to Italy to open a branch in Rome and later in Tanzania.
- 1969: Mother Teresa is in Australia to open a center for the Aborigines.
- 1970: In Melbourne and later in Jordan to start the order there.
- 1971: Awarded the Pope John Peace Prize, Good Samaritan Award and Joseph Kennedy Jr. Foundation Award.
- 1972: Receives Templeton Foundation Prize and the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding for the year.
- 1973: Expresses desire to step down as Superior General of the Missionaries of Charity.
- 1974: Presented the Templeton Award for Progress in Religion.
- 1979: Awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.
- 1980: Bestowed India's highest civilian honor, the Bharat Ratna.
- 1983: Queen Elizabeth meets Mother Teresa during her visit to New Delhi.
- 1989: Suffers heart trouble, fitted with pacemaker.
- 1990: Asks to stand down as head of the order but is voted back in as superior general.
- 1991: Undergoes heart surgery in the United States.
- 1992: Princess Diana interrupts her flight back to London from India to visit Mother Teresa, in a hospital in Rome.
- 1993: Further surgery in Calcutta to clear a blocked heart vessel.
- 1994: Pope persuades her to continue as head of the order.
- 1996: Suffers heart failure on August 22. Her heart stops beating for around two minutes but she is resuscitated. She later has a heart attack and undergoes further surgery to clear her heart arteries.
- 1997: On March 13 Sister Nirmala is elected to succeed Mother Teresa as head of the Missionaries of Charity.
On May 16 Mother Teresa sets off on a nine-week tour of Europe and United State to introduce her successor to the Pope.
Dies in Calcutta on September 5, aged 87.

II. MOTHER TERESA'S "MAGNIFICAT

We had known one another for almost 20 years. She herself said: "We are friends and We are very united." I hope that now we are even more united.

I remember the first time we met all those years ago, in 1978. It was Mother Teresa's idea. She had heard about the Focolare Movement and wanted to meet me. The meeting took place at our centre at Rocca di Papa. We embraced like old friends. She wanted to hear about the Ideal which motivates us. I said a few words and she replied: "You do what I can't do and I do what you can't do." She repeated this sentence on various occasions over the years.

From then on we each followed our own paths, but always holding each other's hands. She loved me a lot and I tried to love her just as much in return.

Over the years we met on various occasions, such as at the Synod of Bishops to mark the twentieth anniversary of Vatican II, in 1985. We met again in 1986 in Florence when we were both speaking at the "Day for Life".

There were other occasions too, but I don't recall the exact dates. We had lunch together once with the Pope, when he invited us to take part in a big gathering in St. Peter's Square... and there were other moments too. And on each occasion I was left with a new impression of her. The first time I met her, she was already very well known. I saw in her someone who was a long way down her chosen path, someone with a very precise aim. No one could stop her.

At the Synod I was amazed by her spiritual and physical energy.

As we came out of the hall, I took her hand in order to give her a bit of support, but she soon released my grip, as if to say: "I can still manage all right."

At Florence I was amazed by her delicate and continuous love for each person. When she stopped to sign some cards for people, she didn't just put her signature, but she added: "May God bless you," and she explained to me how people like to know that they are blessed. Just before going into the huge indoor sports stadium where she could hear the thousands of people waiting to see her, she said to me: "Let's go in. The people are happy to see me!"

Recently, at the end of May this year, in New York, I had a long and unforgettable talk with her. She was in bed with very bad back pains, in a poor and simple room in the South Bronx. There, the Missionaries of Charity have a convent, in a rose-coloured apartment block, known to many because it was here too, when she had been feeling a little better, that she had welcomed Princess Diana. My meeting with her was an exception, given her poor state of health. It was held in private and was a most joyful occasion. No one, apart from the interpreter, was present. "Chiara," exclaimed Mother Teresa as soon as she saw me. She took hold of both my hands and, leaning forward from her bed, she fixed her eyes, which were so full of life, on mine. "How are you?" she asked, "Where are you staying?" "At Luminosa," I replied, "one of our little towns, not far from here." "I know the Mariapolis," she said and then she spoke to me at length. She was the founder of a work of God who was speaking to another such, albeit a much more unworthy one. She told me about all the fruits of her life: the convents of the active and contemplative life (564 altogether); the spreading of her work to 120 different countries; the projects blocked by government veto, like in China ("But we won't give up," commented Mother Teresa); 8,000 children baptized and adopted. She spoke about the fourth vow which commits the sisters to serve the poorest of the poor with all their hearts; of the dying accompanied into Paradise (more than 50,000 in Calcutta alone) "to the surprise of St. Peter," she said, "on seeing heaven being filled up by Mother Teresa with the poorest of the poor."

It was her "magnificat". The few minutes allowed by the doctor turned into twenty.

Unfortunately, we were not able to take a photograph of the Life that there was in that room, of that conversation which had the flavour of Paradise.

Then we parted with an embrace.

I will never forget that face and that joy.

We also corresponded many times by letter, over the years. The main theme of her letters is neatly summed up in a note she once wrote me and which I have kept: "Dear Chiara, be holy, because Jesus, who loves you and who has chosen you to be his, is holy. May God bless you. Mother Teresa M.C."

Now she has left this life and she has certainly left it a saint. If she invited others to become saints, it was also her own daily intention. A saint, who has arrived in heaven with her works. And how many there are!

I am happy to have known her and to have had her so close to me. I have started to pray, not so much *for* her, but *to* her, for all of us.

Chiara Lubich

III. 1988 LETTER (Work of Love, Work of Peace)

Missionaries of Charity
54 A, Lower Circular Road
Calcutta — 70016
14th February, 1988

Dear Fr. Vicente G. Cajilig,

... I will not be able to leave India, but I will pray much for you all — that you allow Jesus to use you as the Way to

the Father, as the Light to lit and the Life to be lived; as the joy to be shared and as the Loved to be loved. You know my love for all religious and priests — for they are precious to Jesus.

Rest assured of my prayers for the success of the Congress. My prayer for you all is that you let Jesus mould you so much in His likeness so that He can live His life in you and seeing this the Seminarians under your care may be drawn closer to Jesus. Let us preach the peace of Christ as He did — He went about doing good. Our works of love must be nothing but works of peace. May the peace of Christ be with you all!

God Bless You,

MOTHER TERESA

IV. 1990 LETTER (To be Loving, Praying and Humble People)

Missionaries of Charity
54 A.J.C. Bose Road
Calcutta — 70016
28 January 1990

Dear Fr. Vicente G. Cajilig,

Thank you very much for your letter of 3 January 1990 inviting me to the First Joint Colloquium of Rectors and Spiritual Directors of Asian Seminaries at the Canossa House of Spirituality in Tagaytay City.

I am sorry to have to disappoint you — it will not be prudent to travel now for some time. However, I assure you of my prayers — that all may go well for the greater honour and glory of God.

I assure all the organizers and participants of the colloquium of my prayers and those of our sisters. May these days be filled

with many graces for God has chosen us to be consecrated to Christ in order that we may help others to be loving, praying and humble people.

I wish you a New Year filled with God's blessings.

God Bless You,

MO. TERESA MC

V. MOTHER'S MEDITATION IN THE HOSPITAL (19, June 1983)

"WHO DO YOU SAY I AM"

(Matthew 16:15)

You are God.

You are God from God.

You are Begotten, not made.

You are One in Substance with the Father.

You are the Son of the Living God.

You are the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

You are One with the Father.

You are in the Father from the beginning:

All things were made by You and the Father.

You are the Beloved Son in Whom the Father is well pleased.

You are the Son of Mary,

conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

You were born in Bethlehem.

You were wrapped in swaddling clothes

by Mary and put in the manger full of straw.

You were kept warm by the breath of

the breath of the donkey who

*carried your Mother with you in her womb.
You are the Son of Joseph,
the Carpenter as known by the people of Nazareth.
You are an ordinary man without much learning,
as judged by the learned people of Israel.*

WHO IS JESUS TO ME?

*Jesus is the Word made Flesh.
Jesus is the Bread of Life.
Jesus is the Victim offered for our sins
on the Cross.
Jesus is the Sacrifice offered at the Holy Mass
for the sins of the world and mine.
Jesus is the Word — to be spoken.
Jesus is the Truth — to be told.
Jesus is the Way — to be walked.
Jesus is the Light — to be lit.
Jesus is the Life — to be lived.
Jesus is the Love — to be loved.
Jesus is the Joy — to be shared.
Jesus is the Sacrifice — to be offered.
Jesus is the Peace — to be given.
Jesus is the Bread of Life — to be eaten.
Jesus is the Hungry — to be fed.
Jesus is the Thirsty — to be satiated.
Jesus is the Naked — to be clothed.
Jesus is the Homeless — to be taken in.
Jesus is the Sick — to be healed.
Jesus is the Lonely — to be loved.
Jesus is the Unwanted — to be wanted.
Jesus is the Leper — to wash his wounds.
Jesus is the Beggar — to give him a smile.
Jesus is the Drunkard — to listen to him.*

Jesus is the Mental — to protect him.
Jesus is the Little One — to embrace him-
Jesus is the Blind — to lead him.
Jesus is the Dumb — to speak for him.
Jesus is the Crippled — to walk with him.
Jesus is the Drug Addict — to befriend him.
Jesus is the Prostitute — to remove from danger
and befriend her.
Jesus is the Prisoner — to be visited.
Jesus is the Old — to be served.

To me...

Jesus is my God
Jesus is my Spouse
Jesus is my only Love
Jesus is my All in All
Jesus is my Everything.

JESUS, I loVe you with my whole heart,
with my whole being.
I have given Him all, even my sins and He has
espoused me to Himself in tenderness and love.
Now and for life I am the Spouse of my
Crucified Spouse.

Amen.

Remembering Bro. Gregorio Hontomin*

PETER GALVIN, OP

The life and death of each us has its influence on others; if we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead we belong to the Lord.

Romans 14:7-8

None of us can pass through life without in some way influencing the lives of others, for better or for worse. Brother Gregorio Hontomin passed through this life with an influence on all of us very much for the better. In life he lived for the Lord; in death, he died for the Lord. Alive and dead, he belongs to the Lord.

My visits to the Philippines began in 1972, the year in which I was elected Provincial of the Province of the Assumption in Australia and New Zealand. It was in Manila, on February 23, 1981, during the Papal Visit for the Beatification of Lorenzo Ruiz and the other Dominican Martyrs, that I was formally appointed

* Homily preached at a Memorial Mass for Brother Gregorio Hontomin, O.P. of the Dominican Province of the Philippines, in the Chapel of Saint Catherine of Siena, Santa Sabina, Rome, August 4, 1982.

Assistant to the Master of the Order for the Asian/Pacific Region. Later in that same year I returned to Manila to carry out a Canonical Visitation of the University of Santo Tomas, to which Brother Gregorio was assigned.

It was during that Visitation that I came to know something of the marvelous and outstanding qualities of Brother Gregorio. I had met him before, but only in passing. It was during my Visitation interview with him that I began to realize that I was sitting in the presence of an extraordinary man. His humanity was obvious, his sanctity palpable, his charity a living lesson of grace. He was not well at the time, and I had offered to interview him in his room at the hospital, but he insisted on coming to me. His fortitude and will-power came through to me strongly.

Others told me about his exemplary life and his multitude of talents, which he used well in the service of the Church and the Dominican Order. He himself spoke only of what he could do for others. I myself have been the recipient of his charity, his honesty and his concern for others.

During the Visitation, Brother Gregorio asked me to look over the General Service Department of the Hospital of the University of Santo Tomas, of which he was the Director. The fact that he was the Director of a "General Service" Department struck me as being somewhat symbolic of his whole life. He was of service to everyone, a real servant of the Lord in the most widespread and general manner imaginable. Last October, in Manila, I remember talking with him about his days in HongKong, and about the renovation of the organ in the great church of Santo Domingo in Quezon City, where the General Chapter of the Order was held in 1977. As Father Garcia-Solis, Prior at the University, said in his homily preached at Brother Gregorio's *Requiem Mass* in the University Chapel, to the end of his days he was repairing watches and making Rosary beads. He was a real, living, vital and charitable "General Service Department"!

I would like to acknowledge today that I feel that I am a privileged and much better person for having known him.

In his office during my visit to the General Service Department, I remember that he proudly showed me a painting, hanging on the wall, of his home village in the Batanes. His nephew, Theophilo, brother to Raymundo, who assisted him in running the Department, courteously took me on a tour of all aspects of its activities, from cooking the large number of meals required for the Hospital every day, to the sections responsible for laundry and necessary maintenance.

Brother Gregorio was born on November 21, 1909, and died at the University on July 6, 1982. He was professed as a Brother in the Order of Preachers in the same year in which I was born. I thank God that I entered the same great Dominican Family as he did, and that towards the end of his life, our paths crossed.

Two passages from the homily of Father Garcia-Solis particularly impressed me. Father Garcia-Solis and the other members of the community at Santo Tomas, of course, knew Brother Gregorio much better than I did, but these two passages re-affirmed my own impressions of him:

"/ cannot let this occasion pass without making reference to the virtue of charity. In the past six years that I have been with him, I have never heard him speak against anyone. So much did he love everyone".

"In this world, he lived in silence and humility, in prayer and in charity, in obedience and in service, and as he lived, he died without disturbing anyone. I do hope and pray that his life will awake in all of us the spirit of God whose fruit is peace of mind and soul. He enjoyed peace because he knew that nobody could separate him from God".

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He died without disturbing anyone! What a beautiful tribute, not only to the moment of his death, but to his whole life!

Death always comes as something of a shock. Yet we know that it is not the end, but only a new beginning. In the case of Brother Gregorio, while we grieve at our loss, we also rejoice that we have a new intercessor in heaven.

This morning, as we celebrate the Eucharist here in this beautiful chapel, we have before us the famous painting of Sassoferrato. Let us pray that the three persons portrayed in this painting — Our Blessed Lady, St. Dominic and St. Catherine of Siena — will graciously receive Brother Gregorio into eternal happiness. They indeed symbolize what his life was all about.

Today was, in the old calendar, the Feast of St. Dominic. Let us rejoice that Brother Gregorio is now in his company in heaven. Like our Holy Father, he will probably be able to do even more for us from heaven than he did on earth.

To his nephew Raymundo, his sister, Sister Bibiana, of the *Pontificio Collegio Filippino* who are with us here this morning, together with members of the community of Santa Sabina and other friends, we offer our deepest sympathy, and ask them to pass this on to the members of Brother Gregorio's family in the Philippines. We thank God for having given us the privilege of knowing him in this life, and we pray that we will one day meet with him again in the next.

Brother Gregorio was one of the first Filipino Dominicans. Let us also pray that there will be many more who follow in the footsteps of his holy life, and give to all of us an example and a witness of what it means to be a son of St. Dominic and, alive or dead, to belong to the Lord.

Celebration of Easter Triduum in the Absence of a Priest*

ANSCAR CHUPUNGO, OSB

In view of the pastoral and liturgical considerations given below, the Episcopal Commission on Liturgy respectfully presents the following matters to the members of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines for their approval, without prejudice to the rights of each Local Ordinary.

1. Lay ministers, duly appointed by the parish priest, are permitted to preside at the evening liturgy of Holy Thursday, the afternoon liturgy of Good Friday, and the liturgy of Easter Vigil in remote chapels of the parish where no priest is available. In this connection nos. 18-34 of the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* should be observed where they apply. The parish priest shall decide in which chapels these celebrations will be held.

2. The Blessed Sacrament may be reposited in chapels, where the evening liturgy of Holy Thursday has been celebrated, for the adoration of the faithful and for holy communion on Good Friday. Great care must be exerted that the Blessed Sacrament is safeguarded at all times. Consecrated hosts left over from

* For the vote of the Catholic Bishops' Conference.

communion on Good Friday should either be consumed or brought back to the parish church immediately after the Good Friday celebration. The parish priest will make suitable provision for holy communion on Easter Vigil.

3. A lay minister who presides at the Easter Vigil is deputed for this occasion to celebrate baptism in the chapel, in accord with *CIC*, can. 861 #2. The baptizands and their parents and godparents should be registered in the parish beforehand. In case of a large number of baptizands, the lay minister may be assisted by other duly deputed ministers or catechists.

4. The Catholic Bishops' Conference approves the rites and texts *Celebration of Easter Triduum in the Absence of a Priest* and enjoins all concerned to use the same in translated version.

I. PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

The *Constitution on the Liturgy* states that "the Church is conscious that it must celebrate the saving work of the divine Bridegroom by devoutly recalling it on certain days throughout the course of the year. Every week, on the day which the Church has called the Lord's Day, it keeps the memory of the Lord's resurrection, which it also celebrates once in the year, together with his blessed passion, in the most solemn festival of Easter" (art. 102). Sunday belongs to the cycle of liturgical days, while Easter triduum to the cycle of the year.

The *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar* explains that "the Easter triduum of the passion and resurrection of Christ is the culmination of the entire liturgical year. Thus the solemnity of Easter [consisting of the Easter triduum] has the same kind of pre-eminence in the liturgical year that Sunday has in the week" (no. 18). For this reason the Congregation for Divine Worship in the *Circular Letter on the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feast*, which is published in 1988, stresses the need for a more solemn celebration of the Easter Triduum in all

churches by means of larger assemblies, fuller performance of the rites, and greater participation in songs (nos. 41-43).

As regards the observance of Sunday, the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1988, teaches that "the sacrifice of the Mass on Sunday should be regarded as the only true actualization of the Lord's paschal mystery and as the most complete manifestation of the Church" (no. 13). However, the *Directory* admits that "a complete celebration of the Lord's Day is not always possible" (nos. 2-6). Hence the Holy See issued the *Directory* which allows lay ministers to preside on Sunday, when Mass is not possible, at the celebration of the word of God which finds its completion, when possible, in eucharistic communion. "In this way", the *Directory* explains, "the faithful can be nourished by both the word of God and the body of Christ" (no. 20). The *Directory* adds that "in certain circumstances the Sunday celebration can be combined with the celebration of one or more sacraments and especially of the sacramentals".

In the pastoral spirit of the *Directory* should not something similar be done during the Easter triduum which "has the same kind of pre-eminence in the liturgical year that Sunday has in the week"? Should not the role of the Easter triduum in the spiritual life and formation of the faithful also be given due importance? For "Christ redeemed us all and gave perfect glory to God principally through his paschal mystery" which the Church solemnly celebrates once a year during the Easter triduum. But as happens in many instances, the faithful who live far away from parish churches are deprived yearly of the unique occasion to renew their Christian life through participation in the celebration of the Easter triduum.

The liturgy of the Easter triduum presided by lay ministers in remote chapels will never equal the liturgy presided by bishops and priests in cathedrals and churches, just as the Sunday assembly

in the absence of a priest is "not the optimal solution to new difficulties". Like the Sunday assembly, the celebration of the Easter triduum in the absence of a priest will have a "substitutional character". That is why, the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* instructs that at some point of the celebration the lay minister "should make mention of the community of the faithful with whom the parish priest is celebrating the eucharist on that Sunday and urge the assembly to unite itself in spirit with that community" (no. 42). However, given the scarcity of priests and the distance of parish churches, this form of Easter triduum is a reasonable pastoral answer to a spiritual need.

II. LITURGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

At this point it is useful to recall the principal liturgical celebrations of the Easter triduum, namely: the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the Celebration of the Lord's Passion in the afternoon of Good Friday, the Easter night Vigil, and the Mass on Easter day. In the absence of a priest and in remote chapels where there is a sufficient number of the faithful to form an assembly, these celebrations will have to be modified to suit the circumstances. The necessary adjustments are indicated in the rites laid out below.

To celebrate the *Easter Triduum in the Absence of a Priest* more fully and with greater spiritual benefit to the faithful it is useful to recall also the chief elements proper to each day.

For the planning and preparation of the different celebrations of the triduum, the parish priest and ministers are invited to read the indications below as well as the rubrical details found in each rite.

A. *HOLY THURSDAY*

On Holy Thursday the washing of the feet and the memorial of the Last Supper stand out. For the washing of the feet the *Circular Letter* mentioned above does not limit the number to twelve men (no. 51). The traditional twelve "apostles" may be retained. However, a sectoral representation might express more clearly the meaning of this rite as a symbol of the service and love of Christ for his people. Offerings for the poor of the community should mark this evening's celebration. Though there is no Mass, holy communion should be distributed in order that the faithful may experience, even in an incomplete way, the event being commemorated. Suitable arrangements should be made so that the sick who are unable to participate may also receive communion. In consideration of the people's devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, efforts should be made to repose it after the service for vigil and adoration. The reposition and adoration may be prolonged until the afternoon celebration of the Lord's passion on Good Friday.

B. *GOOD FRIDAY*

On Good Friday the proclamation of the gospel by which Christ's passion is recalled and "in some way made present to the assembly" holds primacy. The general intercessions, which are the sequel to the reading of the passion, signify the solemn response of the Church to God's word, a response expressed in prayer of intercession for the Church and all of humankind. The other elements are the veneration of the cross, which is an ancient practice for this day, and holy communion by which the faithful unite themselves with the glorious body of the Redeemer once slain for love of humankind. The *Circular Letter* instructs that "only one cross should be presented for veneration out of respect for the veracity of the sign" (no. 69). The general practice is that the cross, preferably of wood, has the image of the crucified Christ.

C. EASTER VIGIL

On this holy night, which is called the "mother of all vigils", the Church keeps watch meditating on the wonderful story of God's work of creation and salvation, and solemnly celebrates in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist the glorious resurrection of Christ.

On Easter Vigil the celebration of the sacrament of baptism and the renewal of baptismal promises by the assembly belong to the integrity of the liturgy. The Easter Vigil was instituted and ritually shaped around the celebration of baptism. The absence of baptism at the Easter Vigil weakens the experience of the paschal mystery. For the faithful, on the other hand, the solemn renewal of the baptismal promises should be considered the culmination of their lenten observance. This is expressed in the words with which the presider invites the faithful to renew their baptismal promises: "Now that we have completed our lenten observance, let us renew the promises we made in baptism". Such renewal leads to the table of the body of the risen Lord to which he welcomes his faithful people. Another principal element, which is a fitting preparation for the sacraments of baptism and holy Eucharist, is the reading of passages from the Old and New Testaments. Through them the faithful recall and reexperience the wondrous deeds of God in creation and the history of salvation. The blessing of the new fire, the procession with the Easter candle, and the Easter proclamation or *Exsultet* are other elements that impress the glory of the risen Lord on the mind of the faithful.

D. EASTER DAY

On Easter day the Sunday assembly in the absence of a priest prolongs the experience of the Easter Vigil. The *Circular Letter* suggests that the sprinkling with the water blessed on Easter Vigil replace the penitential rite (no. 97), or else it may be combined with the renewal of the baptismal promises. For the entire Easter

Season the Easter candle which should be placed by the lectern or near the altar is to be lighted for the liturgical celebrations.

E. *POPULAR DEVOTIONS*

As regards popular devotions or practices of religiosity, the *Circular Letter* directs the pastors not to ignore them, but to find suitable time for their celebration, "in such a way that the liturgical action will be shown to be far superior by its very nature to these devotions" (no. 72). Some examples are the stations of the cross, processions, seven last words, blessing of objects related to human needs, and the *salubong* or *encuentro*. In the Philippines the *salubong* is part of the entrance rite for the Mass at Easter dawn. Pastoral care and planning are needed to ensure that this lovely Filipino expression of Marian devotion does not lessen the participation of the faithful in the Easter Vigil. The rites below give suggestions on the suitable time for their celebration.

F. *REMINDERS FOR THE LAY MINISTERS*

A final liturgical consideration addresses the role of the lay ministers who are variously known in different places as lay catechists, lay presiders, and lay leaders. The following reminders from nos. 39, 40, 43, 45, and 47 of the *Directory* mentioned above are timely. First, lay ministers who lead the assembly act as one among equals. They are not to use words that are proper to the priest or deacon, such as the greeting "The Lord be with you", and are to omit rites that are too readily associated with the Mass, like the offertory procession. For the blessing they say "May almighty God bless us...", as they sign themselves. Second, the lay ministers do not use the Sacramentary, which is the altar book for the celebration of holy Mass. They wear the vesture that is suitable for their function or the vesture prescribed by the bishop or the parish priest. They do not use the presidential chair, but another chair prepared outside the sanctuary. The altar is to be used only for the rite of communion, when the consecrated hosts

are placed on it before the distribution. Third, since only a priest or deacon may give a homily, they should read the homily prepared for the occasion by the parish priest. Fourth, before or after holy communion they may recite a prayer of praise and thanksgiving which should however not take the form of the eucharistic prayer or adopt any part of it, like the preface and the *Sanctus*. Fifth, if at all possible, they bring to the chapel the hosts consecrated that same day in a Mass celebrated elsewhere.

IV. RITES OF EASTER TRIDUUM IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIEST

EVENING LITURGY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The commemoration of the Lord's Supper is the first liturgical action of the Easter Triduum. In this solemn celebration the Church commemorates the Lord's Supper during which he instituted the sacraments of the Eucharist and the priesthood, and commanded us to love one another as he had loved us.

It is celebrated in the evening at a time convenient for the full participation of the whole community. It consists of the following chief elements:

- a. Liturgy of the Word, which narrates and explains the events of the Last Supper.
- b. Washing of the feet, which reveals the nature of Christ's love expressed in humble service.
- c. Holy Communion, whereby we participate in the Lord's Supper.
- d. Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament, which invites us to watch and pray with Christ, as he commanded his disciples the night before he died.

In response to Christ's command to love and serve the poor, today all are invited to offer gifts for them.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

When the people are assembled, the lay minister together with those whose feet are to be washed and the lector, who carries the book of the Lectionary (or Holy Scripture), proceed to the altar, genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament, and bow to the altar. The lector places the Lectionary on the lectern. Meanwhile, the assembly sings an entrance song.

After the song the lay minister and the assembly make the sign of the cross, saying:

All: In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

The minister addresses the assembly in these words:

Brothers and sisters,
this evening we begin the Easter triduum of Christ's
passion, burial, and resurrection.
Let us unite ourselves with the whole Church and our
parish community
In thanking God for the gift of the Eucharist.
As we repent sincerely of our sins,
may God find us worthy of his blessing.

All: I confess to almighty God...

Minister:

May almighty God have mercy on us.
forgive us our sins.
and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

The minister intones the hymn *Glory to God in the highest*, which taken up by all present, while the bells of the chapel are rung.

After the hymn the minister recites the *Opening Prayer*.

Let us pray.

Loving Father,
on the eve of his death,
as sign of his everlasting love for us,
your Son, Jesus Christ, washed the feet of his disciples
and gave himself as food and drink.
Make us always long for the sacred banquet,
and give us sincere joy in humble service.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

Reading I: Exodus 12, 1-8, 11-14.

Response:

Our blessing-cup is a communion
with the blood of Christ.

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 11, 23-26.

Verse before the Gospel:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
king of endless glory.

I give you a new commandment:
love one another as I have loved you.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ,
king of endless glory.

Gospel: John 13, 1-15.

Homily.

Washing of Feet.

The minister goes to those whose feet are to be washed. Assisted by other ministers, he pours water over each one's feet and dries them with a towel. Meanwhile appropriate songs are sung.

General Intercessions.

HOLY COMMUNION

The people kneel. The lay minister takes the Blessed Sacrament from the place of reposition, places it on the altar, and says:

My brothers and sisters,
let us adore our Lord Jesus Christ
present among us in the Blessed Sacrament
which he entrusted to us
as a sacrament of love,
a sign of unity, and a bond of charity.

He raises the Blessed Sacrament while the people adore in silence or sing a suitable song or acclamation.

After the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament the people stand, and the minister recites the following *Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving*:

In union with the whole Church and our parish community
we come to you, loving Father, with praise and thanks-
giving.

For on this evening before he suffered and died
your Son, Jesus Christ, revealed to us the depth of
his love.

All: We praise and thank you, loving Father.

The minister continues:

He washed the feet of his disciples and bid them to do
the same,
as sign of joyful and humble service to one another.
He instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist, command-
ing the Church to celebrate it in his memory, so that his
abiding love might be experienced throughout all ages.

All: We praise and thank you, loving Father.

As we gather to commemorate the wondrous things
your Son accomplished for our salvation,
you instruct us, loving Father, with words of life,
you fill us with longing for the bread of heaven,
and you instill in our hearts loving and humble
service of one another.

All: We praise and thank you, loving Father.

Accept, O loving Father, our praise and thanksgiving
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

The minister introduces the *Lord's Prayer*, and the assembly sings "Our Father in heaven..."

After the *Lord's Prayer*, the minister invites the assembly to offer the sign of peace to each other.

Then the minister genuflects, takes a host, raises it slightly over the ciborium, and says aloud: "This is the Lamb of God..." During the distribution of holy communion appropriate songs may be sung.

After communion the people stand. The minister recites the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Loving Father,
the food that your Son left us this night
sustains our life on earth;
grant that our hunger may be fully satisfied
in the everlasting banquet of heaven.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

After the prayer the minister invites the community to offer gifts for the poor. While gifts are presented to him, the assembly sings a suitable song.

TRANSFER OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

The lay minister, kneeling, may incense the Blessed Sacrament. Then with the crossbearer and ministers carrying candles and incense he carries the Blessed Sacrament to the place of reposition within the chapel. During the processing eucharistic songs are sung.

The faithful are encouraged to adore before the Blessed Sacrament for a suitable period of time during the night and,

according to local practice, also during Good Friday until the afternoon service.

The altar is stripped, and if possible, the crosses are removed from the chapel. It is desirable to cover any crosses which remain in the chapel.

AFTERNOON LITURGY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

According to the Church's ancient tradition, the sacraments are not celebrated today or tomorrow. On this day we celebrate the Lord's Passion by recalling the redemptive act whereby he freely and completely surrendered himself to death in obedience to the will of the Father.

The celebration takes place around three o'clock in the afternoon, unless pastoral reasons suggest a later hour.

The celebration consists of three parts:

- a. The Liturgy of the Word, which is the central part of the celebration, brings back to mind the suffering and death of Christ to make us reexperience the event. We respond to God's word through the ten general intercessions provided by the Church for this occasion.
- b. The Veneration of the Cross, which is the expression of our reverence for Christ's cross and joy over his victory over sin and death.
- c. Holy Communion, whereby we are sacramentally united with Christ, as we join him in his passion and death toward the glory of his resurrection.

At any hour of the day, the sick who cannot take part in this service may be given holy communion.

The altar should be completely bare, without cloths, candles, or cross.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

The lay minister with two candle bearers process toward the altar and kneel before it as sign of reverence. All pray silently for a period of time.

Then the lay minister goes to his place and recites the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Remember, Lord, your tender mercies,
which you showed in ages past;
watch over and sanctify your servants,
for whom Christ your Son, by shedding his blood,
has established the paschal mystery.
Grant this in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

All: Amen.

Reading I: Isaiah 52, 13-53, 12.

Response:

Father, I put my life in your hands.

Reading II: Hebrews 4, 14-16; 5, 7-9.

Verse before the Gospel: Philippians 2, 8-9:

Christ became obedient for us even to death,
dying on the cross.
Therefore God raised him on high
and gave him the name above all other names.

Gospel: John 18, 1-19, 42.

On this day the Gospel may be proclaimed by different readers: a narrator, the lay minister who reads the words of Jesus, another reader who reads the other parts. The people may participate where the text permits. Some parts may be acted out, provided this is done without prejudice to the proclaimed word.

Homily.

General Intercessions.

The general intercessions conclude the liturgy of the word. The lector reads the invitation to the prayer and the lay minister says the prayer after a period of silence. The people answer "Amen". The assembly may stand or kneel throughout the intercessions.

1. Let us pray, dear friends,
for the holy Church of God throughout the world,
that God will guide it and gather it together,
so that we may worship the Father in tranquility
and peace.

Almighty and eternal God,
in Christ your Son
you revealed your glory to nation upon nation.
Safeguard the great work of your mercy.
so that your Church throughout the world
may persevere with unshakeable faith
in confessing your holy name.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

2. Let us pray also for our Holy Father, Pope N.,
that God, who has chosen him for the office of bishop,
will keep him in health and strength for the sake of
the Church
to guide and govern the holy people of God.

Almighty and eternal God,
whose wisdom orders all things,
protect with your love the shepherd you have chosen,
that the Christian people you entrust to his care
may under his leadership prosper in faith.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray also for N., our bishop,
for all bishops, presbyters, and deacons,
and for all God's holy people.
Almighty and eternal God,
by whose Spirit the Church is ruled and made holy.
Hear the prayers we offer
for those you have called to the ministry
and for your entire people,
that by your grace we may all serve you faithfully.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray also for catechumens,
that God will open their ears and their hearts
and unlock for them the gates of divine mercy,
so that through the waters of rebirth
they may receive pardon for their sins
and find new life in Christ Jesus.

Almighty and eternal God,
by whom the Church is continually blessed with new
members,
deepen the faith and understanding of all catechumens,
that, being reborn in the fount of baptism,
they may take their place among your adopted
children.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray also for those who share our faith
in Jesus Christ,

that God will gather together and keep in one Church
all who seek to live by the truth.

Almighty and eternal God,
by whom the dispersed are gathered
and kept together as one,
look lovingly on the flock of your Son,
that all who have been sealed by one baptism
may be joined together by wholeness of faith
and preserved in fellowship by the bond of love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray also for the Jewish people,
the first to hear the word of God,
that they will grow in the love of God's name
and in faithfulness to the covenant.

Almighty and eternal God,
who long ago chose Abraham and his descendants
and established them as children of the promise,
hear the prayers of your Church,
that the people you first made your own
may arrive at the fullness of redemption.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray also for those
who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ,
that the light of the Holy Spirit
will guide them toward the path of salvation.

Almighty and eternal God,
grant that those who do not believe in Christ,
but who walk before you in sincerity of heart,
may find the truth.
Make our love for each other grow
and draw us more deeply into the mystery of salvation,
that we may hear before the world

a more perfect witness to your love.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray also for those who do not believe in God,
that they will come to a knowledge of God
through their wholehearted seeking of all that is right.

Almighty and eternal God,
you implanted in the human heart
such a deep longing for yourself
that only in you can peace be found.
Grant that, despite the obstacles which stand in
the way,
all may recognize the signs of your goodness,
discern the holiness of your people,
and so gladly acknowledge you
as the one true God and Father of us all.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let us pray also for those who serve in public office,
that God will direct their minds and hearts in
accordance with his will
to ensure true peace and freedom.

Almighty and eternal God,
whose hand upholds the rights and aspirations of all,
guide those in authority,
that people everywhere on earth
may enjoy prosperity, freedom of worship,
security, and peace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Finally, dear friends, let us pray that God
will rid the world of falsehood and error,
dispel disease and famine from the face of the earth,
break the fetters of captives,
grant safe passage to travelers and those far from home,

restore health to the sick,
and give salvation to the dying.

Almighty and eternal God,
comfort of the afflicted and strength of the weary,
hear the voices of those who cry to you in distress
and grant that all may rejoice,
because your mercy attended them in their hour of need.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

VENERATION OF THE CROSS

The lay minister goes to the door of the chapel. There he takes the (uncovered) cross, and the candle bearers accompany him in procession through the aisle of the chapel to the sanctuary. Near the entrance of the chapel, in the middle of the chapel, and at the entrance to the sanctuary, the minister stops, lifts the cross up, and sings the invitation:

This is the wood of the cross.

All: Come, let us worship.

After each response all kneel and pray briefly in silence.

Then the cross and the candles are placed at the entrance to the sanctuary. The ministers and the faithful approach the cross and venerate it by a simple genuflection or some other appropriate sign of reverence, e.g. kissing the cross. During the veneration suitable songs are sung.

For large assemblies the veneration during this celebration may be limited to a number of people representing the sectoral groups of the community. The rest venerate the cross after the celebration.

After the veneration, the cross is carried to its place at the altar, and the lighted candles are placed around the altar or near the cross. The cross remains on the altar until the Easter Vigil.

HOLY COMMUNION

The altar is covered with a white cloth. The lay minister, accompanied by the acolytes with candles, takes the ciborium with consecrated hosts from the place of reposition and brings it to the altar.

The minister introduces the *Lord's Prayer*, and the assembly sings "Our Father in heaven..."

After the *Lord's Prayer*, the minister invites the assembly to offer the sign of peace to each other.

Then the minister genuflects, takes a host, raises it slightly over the ciborium, and says aloud: "This is the Lamb of God..." During the distribution of holy communion appropriate songs may be sung. The remaining hosts are consumed or are brought back to the parish church immediately after the celebration.

After communion the people stand. The minister recites the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty and ever-living God,
you have restored us to life
through the death and resurrection of your Christ.
Preserve within us the work of your mercy,
that, being united with his paschal mystery,
we may never cease to offer you faithful service.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

All: Amen.

Then he says:

Let us bless the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

The ministers genuflect before the cross and depart.

Note on Traditional Religious Practices:

Traditional religious practices may be held after the afternoon service. Examples are the Stations of the Cross, veneration of the *Santo Entiero*, and procession with the *Santo Entiero* and other Good Friday images. Other traditional practices such as the *siete palabras* may be done at some other time before the afternoon celebration. These practices should not conflict with the schedule of the liturgical services.

EASTER VIGIL

In accord with the Church's ancient tradition, this night is one of vigil for the Lord (Exodus 12:42). The Gospel of Luke (12:35ff) is a reminder to the faithful to have their lamps burning ready, and to await their master's return so that when he arrives he will find them wide awake and will seat with them at his table.

The night vigil is arranged in four parts:

- a. Service of Light;
- b. Liturgy of the Word, when the Church meditates on all the wonderful things God has done for his people from the beginning;
- c. Liturgy of Baptism, when new members of the Church are reborn as the day of resurrection approaches; and
- d. Holy Communion, when the whole Church is called to the table which the Lord has prepared for his people through his death and resurrection.

The entire celebration of the Easter Vigil takes place at night. It should not begin before nightfall nor end after daybreak on

Sunday. After the service a community "*agape*" may be held, especially to honor the newly-baptized and their families.

On Holy Saturday before the Easter Vigil, the lay minister brings the consecrated hosts to the chapel.

SERVICE OF LIGHT

All the lights in the chapel are put out. A bonfire is prepared at a suitable place outside the chapel. When the people have assembled, the lay minister goes there with the other ministers, one of whom carries the prepared Easter Candle.

The lay minister greets the congregation and briefly instructs them about the vigil in these words:

Dear friends in Christ,
on this holy night
when our Lord Jesus Christ passed from death to life,
we come together in solemn vigil and prayer
in union with the whole Church and with our parish
community,

This is the passover of the Lord:
if we keep the memory of his death and resurrection
by hearing his word and celebrating his sacraments.
then we may be confident
that we shall share his victory over death
and live with him for ever in God.

Let us pray.

Lord God,
we share in the brightness of your glory
through your Son, the light the world.
Make this new fire holy.
Through this Easter celebration,

purify our minds and inflame us with new hope,
that we may come one day to the feast of eternal light.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AH: Amen.

The lay minister lights the Easter candle from the new fire
saying:

May the light of Christ, rising in glory,
dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds.

Then he takes the Easter candle, lifts it high, and sings:
Christ our light.

All: Thanks be to God.

All enter the chapel, led by the lay minister carrying the
Easter candle. At the chapel door he lifts the candle high and
sings a second time: "Christ our light". All answer: "Thanks
be to God", and light their candles from the Easter candle. When
he reaches the altar, he faces the people, and sings a third time:
"Christ our light". All answer: "Thanks be to God". Then the
lights in the chapel are switched on, and the Easter candle is placed
on a stand in the middle of the sanctuary or near the lectern.

The lay minister or another designated person sings the Easter
proclamation (*Exsultet*) at the lectern. All stand holding lighted
candles. After the Easter proclamation, the candles are put aside
and all sit down.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

In this vigil nine readings are provided, seven from the Old
Testament and two from the New Testament. The number of
readings from the Old Testament may be reduced, for pastoral
reasons, to three or even two. However, Exodus 14, 15-31; 15,
1 is never to be omitted.

Before the readings begin, the lay minister speaks to the people in these words:

Dear friends in Christ,
we have begun our solemn vigil.
Let us now listen attentively to the Scriptures.
They tell how God saved a chosen people in the course
of history and, in the fullness of time,
sent his only-begotten Son as our Redeemer.
Let us pray that our God will bring to completion
the saving work of the paschal mystery.

The readings follow. After each reading the psalmist leads the corresponding responsorial psalm. Then the people stand. The lay minister says, "Let us pray", and recites the prayer. The people answer, "Amen".

Reading I: Genesis 1-31; 2, 1-3 or 2, 1, 1. 26-31.

Response:

Lord, send out your Spirit,
and renew the face of the earth.

Prayer:

Almighty and eternal God,
how wonderful is the work of your creation,
how wisely you establish all things in order!
Enlighten the people you have saved,
that we may perceive
the greater wonder of your new creation,
brought forth in the fullness of time,
when Christ our Passover was sacrificed,
he who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reading II: Genesis 22, 1-18 or 22, 1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18.

Response:

Keep me safe, O God;
you are my hope.

Prayer:

God and Father of all the faithful,
by the grace of adoption
you increase throughout the world the children of your
promise;
in this paschal mystery you fulfill the pledge
made long ago to Abraham your servant,
that he would be father to many nations.
Grant that your people everywhere
may respond with faith to the grace of your calling.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reading III: Exodus 14, 15-31; 15, 1.

Response:

Let us sing to the Lord;
he has covered himself in glory.

Prayer:

God of ages,
through the light of the new covenant,
you unlock for us the meaning of those marvels
you worked in ancient times:
the waters of the Red Sea
prefigure the waters of baptism,
and the Israelites you once freed from slavery
become a sign of your Christian people.
Grant that every nation by virtue of its faith
may inherit the same privilege you bestowed on Israel

and receive new birth through the gift of your Spirit.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

Reading IV: Isaiah 54, 5-14.

Response:

I will praise you, Lord,
for you have rescued me.

Prayer:

Almighty and eternal God,
for the glory of your name
fulfill the promise you made long ago
to men and women of faith,
to bless them with descendants for ever.
Increase your adopted children throughout the world.
that your Church may see accomplished
the salvation which those saints of old so firmly expected.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Reading V: Isaiah 55, 1-11.

Response:

You will draw water joyfully
from the springs of salvation.

Prayer:

Almighty and eternal God,
only true hope of the world,
through the voices of your prophets
you announced the mysteries we celebrate tonight.
Stir up the longings of your faithful people,
because we grow in holiness
only through the prompting of your grace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Reading VI: Baruch 3, 9-15. 32; 4, 4.

Response:

Lord, you have the words
of everlasting life.

Prayer:

God of life,
by calling all nations to be saved
you cause your Church to grow.
In your mercy hear our prayers
and keep for ever safe
those whom you cleanse in the waters of baptism.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reading VII: Ezekiel 36, 16-28.

Response:

Like a deer that longs for running streams,
so my soul longs for you, my God.

Prayer:

Lord God,
in both Testaments of Holy Scripture
you teach us to celebrate the paschal mystery.
Grant that we may understand the workings of your mercy,
so that the gifts we receive today
may confirm our hope of blessings to come.
We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

After the last reading from the Old Testament with its
responsory and prayer, the altar candles are lighted, and the lay
minister intones the hymn *Glory to God in the highest*, which
is taken up by all present, while the bells of the chapel are rung.

After the hymn the minister recites the *Opening Prayer*:

Let us pray.

O God,
you brighten this most holy night
with the radiance of the risen Christ.
Quicken within your Church the spirit of adoption,
so that, renewed in mind and body,
we may dedicate our lives wholeheartedly to your service.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Reading from the New Testament: Romans 6:3-11.

After the reading all rise, and the minister solemnly intones the Easter *Alleluia*, three times on an ascending pitch. It is repeated by all present. Then the responsorial psalm is said.

Response:

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel - Year A: Matthew 28, 1-10; Year B: Mark 16, 1-8; Year C: Luke 24, 1-12.

Homily.

The liturgy of baptism is celebrated after the homily. If there are no baptisms, the renewal of the baptismal promises follows the homily.

LITURGY OF BAPTISM

A vessel of water is placed in the sanctuary. The parents and godparents bring the children forward in front of the assembly.

The lay minister speaks to the people in these words:

Dear friends in Christ,
as these children approach the waters of rebirth,
let us support them by our prayers
and ask God, our almighty Father,
to sustain them with mercy and love.

Then he asks the parents and godparents together in these words:

Dear parents and godparents,
what name do you give your children?

Each family answers in turn, giving the names of the children:
N., N., N.

The minister continues:

What do you ask for these children?

All families together: Baptism.

Then he speaks to the parents:

Parents, you have asked to have your children baptized-
In doing so you are accepting the responsibility
of training them in the practice of the faith.
It will be your duty to bring them up
to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us,
by loving God and our neighbor.

Do you understand what you are undertaking?

All parents together: We do.

Turning to the godparents, the minister asks:

Godparents, are you ready to help these parents
in their duty as Christian mothers and fathers?

All the godparents: We are.

He continues:

My dear children,
the Christian community welcomes you with great joy.
In its name I claim you for Christ our Saviour by the sign
of his cross.

The minister traces the sign of the cross on the forehead of
each child, and invites the parents (and godparents) to do the same.

Then the *Litany of the Saints* is sung. All stand and answer
accordingly.

Lord, have mercy (All: Lord, have mercy)
Christ, have mercy (Christ, have mercy)
Lord, have mercy ((Lord, have mercy)
God our Father in heaven (have mercy on us)
God the Son, our redeemer (have mercy on us)
God the Holy Spirit (have mercy on us)
Holy Trinity, one God (have mercy on us)
Holy Mary, Mother of God (pray for us)
Angels of God (pray for us)
Saint John the Baptist (pray for us)
Saint Joseph (pray for us)
Saint Peter and Saint Paul (pray for us)
All holy Apostles and Evangelists (pray for us)
Saint Lorenzo Ruiz (pray for us)
All holy martyrs of Christ (pray for us)
All holy men and women (pray for us)
Lord, be merciful (Lord, save your people)

From all harm (Lord, save your people)
From every sin (Lord, save your people)
From everlasting death (Lord, save your people)
By your coming among us (Lord, save your people)
By your death and resurrection (Lord, save your people)
By your gift of the Holy Spirit (Lord, save your people)
Guide and protect your Church (Lord, hear our prayer)
Strengthen us in your service (Lord, hear our prayer)
Give new life to these chosen ones by the grace of baptism
(Lord, hear our prayer)
Christ, hear us (Christ, hear us)
Lord Jesus, hear our prayer (Lord Jesus, hear our prayer).

After the *Litany of the Saints*, the lay minister comes to the vessel of water, and invites all to pray:

My dear brothers and sisters,
let us ask God to give these children
new life in abundance through water and the Holy Spirit.

Let us pray.

Merciful Father, from the fount of baptism
you have given us new life as your sons and daughters.

All: Blessed be God.

You bring together all who are baptized in water and the
Holy Spirit
to be one people in Jesus Christ your Son.

All: Blessed be God.

You have made us free by pouring the Spirit of your
love into our hearts,
so that we will enjoy your peace.

All: Blessed be God.

You have chosen your baptized people,
to announce with joy the Good News of Christ to all
nations.

All: Blessed be God.

Come and bless this water in which these children are to
be baptized.
You have called them to the washing of new life in the
, faith of your Church,
so that they may have eternal life.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Then the minister speaks to the parents and godparents in
these words:

Dear parents and godparents,
By water and the Holy Spirit,
your children are to receive the gift of new life
from God, who is love.

On your part, you must make it your constant care
to bring them up in the practice of the faith.

If you are ready to accept this responsibility,
renew now the vows of your baptism.

Renounce sin; profess your faith in Christ Jesus.

This is the faith of the church.

This is the faith in which these children are about to be
baptized.

And so:

Do you renounce sin,
so as to live in the freedom of God's children?

Parents and godparents: I do.

Do you renounce the glamor of evil,
and refuse to be mastered by sin?

Parents and godparents: I do.

Do you reject Satan,
the author and prince of sin?

Parents and godparents: I do.

Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth?

Parents and godparents: I do.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was born of the Virgin Mary,
was crucified, died, and was buried,
who rose again,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father?

Parents and godparents: I do.

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting?

Parents and godparents: I do.

The minister invites the families to approach the front one by one. Using the name of the individual child, he asks the parents and godparents:

Is it your will that N. should be baptized in the faith of
the Church,
which we have all professed with you?

Parents and godparents: It is.

He baptizes the child in the usual way, saying:

N., I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

If there is a large number of children to be baptized, other ministers delegated to baptize, may baptize some of the children in the way prescribed above. Appropriate songs may be sung, while the children are being baptized.

Afterwards, the minister says:

My dear children,
you have become a new creation,
and have clothed yourselves in Christ.
See in this garment the outward sign of your Christmas
dignity.
With your family and friends to help you by word and
example,
bring that dignity unstained into the everlasting life of
heaven.

All: Amen.

The baptismal garments are put on the children by their parents. It is desirable that the families provide the garments.

Next the minister takes the Easter candle and says:

Receive the light of Christ.
Parents and godparents, this light is entrusted
to you to be kept burning brightly.
These children of yours have been enlightened by Christ.
They are to walk always as children of the light.

May they keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts.
When the Lord comes, may they go out to meet him
with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.

The head of one family lights a candle from the Easter candle and passes the flame to the rest. Meanwhile, the community sings a baptismal song.

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL PROMISES

All stand holding lighted candles for the renewal of their baptismal promises. The lay minister speaks to them in these words:

Dear friends,
through the paschal mystery
we have been buried with Christ in baptism,
so that we may rise with him to a new life.
Now that we have completed our lenten observance,
let us renew the promises we made in baptism
when we renounced Satan and all the work of evil,
and promised to serve God faithfully
in the holy Catholic Church.
And so:

For the renunciation of sin and the profession of faith the lay minister uses the formularies above. Afterwards he sprinkles the assembly with the blessed water, or if there has been no baptism, with holy water. Meanwhile, the assembly sings a song that is baptismal in character.

General Intercessions

HOLY COMMUNION

The people kneel, the lay minister takes the Blessed

Sacrament, places it on the altar, and says:

"My brothers and sisters,
let us adore our Lord Jesus Christ
present among us in the Blessed Sacrament
which he entrusted to us
as a sacrament of love,
a sign of unity, and a bond of charity."

He raises the Blessed Sacrament while the people adore in silence or sing a suitable song or acclamation.

After the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament the people stand, and the minister recites the following *Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving*:

We praise and thank you, glorious and powerful God,
for tonight you fulfilled your promise to redeem
the human race
by raising Jesus Christ from the dead.

All: We praise you, glorious and powerful God, alleluia!

We praise and thank you, glorious and powerful God,
for tonight you claimed us for yourself as adopted sons
and daughters
through the sacrament of water and the Holy Spirit.

All: We praise you, glorious and powerful God, alleluia!

We praise and thank you, glorious and powerful God,
for tonight you called us as a community to the table of
our risen Savior
that we may be sharers of his suffering and glory.

All: We praise you, glorious and powerful God, alleluia!

In union with the whole Church and our parish community
we raise to you, glorious and powerful God, our praise
and thanksgiving

through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

The minister introduces the *Lord's Prayer* and the assembly
sings "Our Father in heaven..."

After the *Lord's Prayer*, the minister invites the assembly to
offer the sign of peace to each other.

Then the minister genuflects, takes a host, raises it slightly
over the ciborium, and says aloud: "This is the Lamb of God..."
During the distribution of holy communion appropriate songs may
be sung. The remaining hosts are consumed or kept in a safe
place for the *Easter Day Assembly in the Absence of a Priest*.

After communion the people stand. The minister recites the
following prayer.

Let us pray.

Eternal God,
watch over your Church with unfailing care,
that we who have received new life
through the paschal mystery of Christ
may come to the glory of the resurrection.
Grant this through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

He addresses the assembly in these words:

My brothers and sisters,
now that we have celebrated the resurrection of our Lord
Jesus Christ,
let us go and proclaim the word we have heard and live

according to the spirit of the Sacrament we have received.

Making the sign of the cross on himself, he says:

May almighty God bless us,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

The ministers bow to the altar and depart.

Note on the Blessing of Various Objects

If it is customary to bless foodstuff and articles or implements of livelihood, the lay minister sprinkles them with holy water after the rite of dismissal.

EASTER DAY ASSEMBLY

On Easter Sunday the lay minister may use the following
Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving:

Father, how mighty your power, how boundless your love!
Today you raised our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
from the realm of death,
and with him you raised us up to new life by water
and the Holy Spirit.
Jesus Christ is risen, and we with him.

All: Glory and praise to you, O God, alleluia!

Father, how mighty your power, how boundless your love!
Today our risen Savior showed himself to his Mother and
the disciples,
and now he comes also to us who are gathered here in
his name.
Jesus Christ is risen and shows himself to us.

All: Glory and praise to you, O God, alleluia!

Father, how mighty your power, how boundless your love!
Today in this day of days you do not deprive us of your
love and blessings,
for you nourish us with your word and with the glorious
body of your Son.
Jesus Christ is risen and lives among us.

All: Glory and praise to you, O God, alleluia!

Father, in union with the whole Church and our parish
community
we raise to you our prayer of praise and thanksgiving
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

APPENDIX

EXSULTET

Exult and sing, O heavenly choirs of angels!
Rejoice, all your powers in heaven and on earth!
Jesus Christ our King is risen!
Sound the trumpet, song of our salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,
radiant in the brightness of your king!
Lands that once lay covered by darkness,
see Christ's glory filling all the universe!

Rejoice, O mother Church, with all your children,
resplendent in your risen Savior's light!

Let our joyful voices resound this night!

Let God's people shake these walls with shouts of praise!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is truly right and just

that with full hearts and minds and voices,
we should praise you, unseen God, almighty Father,
and your only son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

For Christ ransomed us with his precious blood
and, by nailing to the cross the decree that condemned
us, he paid to you, eternal Father, the price of Adam's
sin.

This is our passover feast,

when Christ, the true Lamb, is slain,
whose blood consecrates the homes of all believers.

This is the night

when first you set the children of Israel free:
you saved our ancestors from slavery in Egypt
and led them dry-shed through the sea.

This is the night

when Christians everywhere,
washed clean of sin and freed from all defilement,
are restored to grace and grow in holiness.

This is the night

when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death
and in triumphant glory rose from the grave.

O God, how wonderful your care for us!
How boundless your merciful love!
To ransom a slave, you gave up a Son!

O happy fault, O necessary sin of Adam
which gained for us so great a Redeemer!
How holy is this night,
which heals our wounds and washes all evil away!
A night to restore lost innocence and bring mourners joy!

O truly blessed night
when heaven is wedded to earth
and we are reconciled with God!

Therefore, Father most holy, in the joy of this night,
receive our evening sacrifice of praise,
the solemn offering of your holy people.

Accept this Easter candle.
Let it dispel the darkness of this night!
May the Morning Star which never sets
finds this flame still burning.
Christ is the Morning Star,
who rose to shed his peaceful light on all creation
and lives and reigns with you for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

The Value of Canon Law in the Pastoral Life of the Diocese*

JOHN PAUL II

"The present Code of Canon Law is the expression in canonical of the teachings of the Vatican II"

"In reality canon law is an act of the Church's *potestas legislativa*, which has the *salus animarum* as its supreme law (can. 1752). The objective of the *magna disciplina* of the Church is the good of persons and ecclesial communities. All the canons and laws of the Church always have a pastoral function for the spread of God's kingdom and for building up the Body of Christ. Far from wishing to substitute the primacy of grace, of love and charisms in the life of the faithful, canon law aims at creating in ecclesiastical society that order which enables a greater development both of persons and of the community overall. Thus the ecclesiastical discipline that originates in the present Code of Canon Law is the expression, in canonical terms, of the Vatican II Council's teaching.

Pastors must encourage obedience to Church's law

For this reason Pastors should be vigilant that priests and the People of God do not neglect ecclesiastical laws or consider them useless, extrinsic to the life of the faith or merely repressive. On this point, the price is also being paid in the Church's life of the present-day mentality that seeks to consider any type of norm contrary to human freedom and autonomy. "Obviously, it is not a matter of modifying the divine law, and still less of bending it to human caprice, because that would mean the very denial of the former and the degradation of the latter. It is rather a question of understanding the human person today, of putting him in proper harmony with the absolute demands of divine law."

On the other hand, in this demanding effort of correlation by which canon law seeks to express visibly the inner soul of that society, both external but mystically supernatural, which is the Church, "this text, ... would cease being the tool which it must be for the saving work of the Church, if those responsible did not take care to apply it with diligence." This application would always demand both the correct interpretation of the promulgated text and the spiritual good of souls. The subjects relating, for example, to the admission of candidates to the priesthood, the consideration of the errors, foreseen by canon law, which can invalidate matrimonial consent, the correct application of liturgical norms, the faculty of collective administration of the sacrament of Reconciliation in specific and very precise circumstances, not to mention other matters, require on your part a reflection which is of *graviter et onerata conscientia*, since they express reasons of justice and charity towards the faithful.

The canonical preparation of future priests

With the promulgation of the present Code, the seminary course must introduce sufficient space, in its schedule, to ensure that candidates to the priesthood become familiar with the spirit

of the present norms but also with a concrete knowledge of them and their practical application. It is necessary to be concerned about training good teachers in line with the pastoral and, at the same time, juridical thinking of our Code. It is necessary to re-examine the content and the time devoted to canon law in the school *curriculum*.

I would like to say yet another word about the ecclesiastical tribunals. They are the valid instrument of the judicial activity of the Bishop who presides over them through his Judicial Vicar. How is it possible not to see an important pastoral dimension in his activity? Without losing any scientific rigor or the faithful application of the norm and the judicial proceedings, tribunals are asked to devote themselves to various areas of the Church, from matrimonial issues to serious penal or disciplinary problems, as an expression of justice, in defense of the real rights of Christians or of the ecclesial institution itself. It is necessary that the Bishops follow with attention and interest those who on their behalf and with their authority exercise the service of justice, giving them the opportunity to have adequate training, ensuring they execute their tasks properly and providing the appropriate means for them to act with due speed."

Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics

OSCAR CRUZ, DD

Pope John Paul II has spoken of a new springtime of Christian life which will occur in the third millennium if we Christians become docile to the action of the Holy Spirit (TMA, no. 18). Looking ahead to the 2000th anniversary of our Lord's birth — the Great Jubilee — he calls for conversion, for renewal in the Gospel, for all of us. It is his prayer that God's abundant grace will be poured out on the world, come the Great Jubilee, and so he asks that we prepare ourselves for the hoped-for outpouring of His salvific love.

To help on the way of conversion and renewal, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has decided to issue each year, starting this year, a special full-length pastoral letter dealing with an aspect of Philippine life which in its view urgently needs change and renewal according to the Gospel.

This year the CBCP chose to dwell on the way we conduct politics in our country.

Since 1945, when the CBCP itself started functioning as a Conference, more than half of its pastoral letters and statements have dealt with political questions (see PL). In 1991, the Second

Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP-II) devoted a good amount of time and space in its final document to the discussion of the role of the Church in politics (see PCP-II, par. 330-53). Why has the Church been unusually pro-active in addressing the subject of politics since the end of World War II and especially since the Martial Law years and the restoration of our democracy in 1986?

There is one main reason: **Philippine politics — the way it is practiced — has been most hurtful of us as a people. It is possibly the biggest bane in our life as a nation and the most pernicious obstacle to our achieving full human development.**

But why is this so?

A. THE POLITICAL SCENE

Politics is — or ought to be — the art of government and public service. But sadly, in the Philippines, it has degenerated into an arena where the interests of the powerful and rich few are pitted against those of the weak and poor many. It interferes with the administration of justice and the equal application of the law, heavily weighed as it most patently is on the side of the politically connected. Political debts are paid with appointments to high offices of those to whom elected officials are indebted, blind loyalty counting as the most important criterion in the selection of public officials — even for government agencies mandated to be independent by the Constitution. The bureaucracy is packed with political proteges, many of whom do nothing except to collect their salaries on the middle and end of each month. Thus the well-intentioned among career officials and employees in government become demoralized early or withdraw into silence or resign altogether. And those who opt to continue despite disillusionment are only too often harassed or eventually coopted into the system.

The constitutional principles of separation of powers and of checks and balances among the three departments of government are, on the one hand, abused to create gridlock for political mileage; and, on the other hand, conveniently set aside on occasion for reciprocal advantage. Thus, for example, to entrench themselves in office or to promote their political future, those in the Executive Department cooperate with Congress in padding the government budget with all kinds of pork barrel items — the Countrywide Development Funds, for example, congressional insertions, the special funds in the public works bills — for the disposition of politicians and the discretionary funds of the President. On top of these, the resources or facilities of specialized or autonomous organizations where there is little or no public accountability — such as the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation (PAGCOR), Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Organization (PCSO), the Bases Conversion and Development Agency (BCDA) or sequestered companies — are made to be easily accessible for political ends. The system is shot through and through with opportunities for corruption, influence-peddling and the indiscriminate use of public funds for partisan or personal purposes.

When it comes to elections, the electoral process has been systematically subverted with increasingly sophisticated methods of tilting the playing field or committing fraud with the result that elections are in danger of losing their credibility as a reliable means for effecting change. The machinery for cheating is planned well in advance starting with the appointment of loyal lieutenants to sensitive agencies and positions that have to do with elections, the audit of government funds or the enforcement of the Ethics Law. This is combined with an elaborate propaganda machine, including government-controlled media, the purpose of which is to destroy the reputation of critics and political opponents. This is also to manipulate public perceptions of government performance or to simply promote the interests of those in power and of their political proteges.

People have become so cynical of government, of Congress and of the electoral process itself, that often they lose sight of the relevance of their vote to their life or future and sell it for momentary financial gain. Thus, despite the pleas of the Church and other responsible groups, election after election, for citizens to be vigilant fiscalizers of government expenditures, many have become indifferent to corruption or themselves want to have "a piece of the action." Despite too the guidelines regularly issued for the principled choice of candidates, many an undeserving man or woman still, just as regularly, gets voted into office.

If we are what we are today — a country with a very great number of poor and powerless people — one reason is the way we have allowed politics to be debased and prostituted to the low level it is in now. What we have said so far above about politics in our country does not by any means exhaust all we can say about it. We need to have a closer look then at our political culture in order to be able to do something constructive with it by way of the renewal and conversion we seek in preparation for the Great Jubilee.

B. OUR POLITICAL CULTURE

Let us begin with a typical politician's concept of public office. And even as we speak here of "a typical politician", we should soberly ask ourselves if the ideas and values, motives and acts, that we attribute to him may not be, if we are honest with ourselves, not too different from our own.

Our Constitution describes public office as a public trust meant for the good of civil society at large. Yet many a politician looks at it as a means of enrichment and a source of influence and power for self-and family-interests. It hence easily becomes considered and actually treated as some sort of private property to be passed on from one generation to another in the manner

of a feudal title — the perpetuation of power that is at the base of so-called "family dynasties." In this manner no distinction is made between public funds and private money.

What accounts for this sad state of things, for the degeneration unto evil, if we may put it as starkly as we can, rather than the transformation unto good of a person who is interested in a political career? What kind of political system have we created where base power and greed, not lofty principles of self-sacrificing service, are all too often the operative norms of conduct of public officials? For some of the answers, it would be of help to scrutinize a little more intensely one aspect of our politics: the election process. We choose to focus on it if only for the fact that it is at election time that the worst flaws of our political system and culture glaringly show themselves in their most degrading forms.

Pre-Election Day Activities. In the campaign period, the first focus of attention is on getting oneself chosen as the candidate of a party. Very early on, a candidate seeking support from the "kingmakers" is advised that he must learn to deal with "political reality" and he is supposed to do this by adopting the traditional method of political horsetrading, of promising patronage to financial supporters, of buying the loyalty of local traders. Soon enough he becomes adept in the ways of self-serving opportunism and he looks for a party that can help him fulfill his ambitions without regard to ideology and platform. Thus it is commonplace to see or hear of disappointed candidates switching party affiliations or founding their own parties. There is no difficulty whatsoever for an office-aspirant to be sworn into one party after another, no real stigma being attached to "turn-coatism".

Prospective candidates make sure they get plenty of public exposure. To have this they cultivate media people assiduously and resort to bribing journalists to make sure they land in the news. At this stage they already incur huge expenses even as

they breed corruption in the media. In turn those already in government who become afflicted with the election bug use public funds to finance "public service" messages or institutional ads that trumpet their accomplishments. With the use of government facilities, public money and the bureaucracy itself, they also jump the gun on election campaigning by organizing "inspection trips" to the most far-flung areas — with media people in tow. One cannot but wonder at the degree of moral erosion candidates must already be suffering at this point in their career.

When convention time comes, delegates are "wined, dined and womened" — as the gross but only too accurate expression cynically puts it — in order to win their votes. Here at the convention level alone, election spending gets even more heavy. If candidates spend enormous amounts of money freely in the election campaign period, everybody knows they do so in the certainty that they will be able to recoup every single item of expense and more when they assume office; and that if they eventually manage by whatever devious means to become themselves "kingpins" in their own right, they will be more than compensated for by national candidates who need the support of their political machinery.

The campaign period turns the Philippine scene into a mad circus, a vast entertainment plaza. Candidates will, during this period, do whatever their audience bids them to do — in sharp contrast to their deafness to the same people's cries for attention once they are in office. They will dance, clown, kick-box, sing, use gutter language — anything to sell themselves and heighten "name recall." In short, they do everything except educate the electorate on issues. They hire expensive advertising agencies to polish up their image, often without regard to the truth, and to produce sound-bites and one-liners that will go over well in political rallies and quick interviews on radio and television. All of which only serve to worsen our personality-oriented brand of politics.

People take advantage of the campaign period to ask donations for every conceivable "project" from the candidates who are pressured to give under pain of losing valuable votes. This in turn forces candidates to solicit or accept contributions from vested interests who expect a return after the elections. The same goes with the party in power: It misuses government funds and other resources for electioneering purposes. When later those guilty become vulnerable to prosecution, they whitewash investigations with the help of proteges previously deployed in strategic agencies, even go to the extent of legislating amendments to "decriminalize" their violations.

"Dirty tricks, black propaganda, mudslinging" — anything to weaken or destroy the opposition — these are liberally resorted to. In short, the laws of ordinary morality are suspended during the campaign period in favor of office seekers and their supporters.

Election Day Activities. Winning at any cost and by any means — this has become the paramount principle governing candidates and parties in their election bid. This translates on election day itself into vote-buying, the use of "flying voters", the intimidation of voters for the opposition, violence, even murder; and, for turning already cast votes in one's favor, into bribery of election officials, deliberate miscounting of votes, tampering with ballots and election results. The genius and imagination required for cheating are truly stupendous and are exercised to the full — one would only wish they were used for more noble purposes than achieving undeserved victories for undeserving candidates.

While election day violence has considerably diminished, there are still many places where voters are scared off by threats of violence, where voters' lists and even voting paraphernalia are purposely made unavailable in the precincts. Even in areas where the polls seem to be peaceful, there often is a strong undercurrent of tension because of a pervasive sense among the people that

if candidates and their followers — and election officials themselves — are not watched closely, something not quite above board is going to happen. The monitoring by citizens' groups of election day activities thus becomes a necessity, even if at times highly hazardous.

Except at the barangay level, it is not unusual for election results — even for local contests — not to be known at the end of election day. The slow tabulation of final results is one clear evil of our electoral process that somehow to date continues to be unaccepting of corrective measures.

The Post-Election Period. Confusion is the order of the day in many a community. And it has to be with the final canvassing of election results and the proclamation of winners, as has already been said, taking an unduly long time to happen. Every loser cries "foul!", declares himself cheated, and election results are not accepted. The COMELEC takes its own sweet time deciding on election protests so that when initial verdicts are finally overturned, cheating anomalies corrected, those belatedly declared winners are barely able to assume their seats before the new election takes place.

What follows is the whole tissue of evils in our way of conducting politics that we started detailing in the earlier parts of this letter. Thus election winners, once in, use their office for gain and the shoring up of their power. Paying political debts, recouping election expenses, making fat profits for themselves — these cannot be done without resorting to all kinds of corrupt practices. "Kick-backs" (amounting sometimes to as much as 40% of the cost of a project), rigged contract biddings for public constructions, padding of expense accounts and payrolls, nepotism, the misuse of pork barrel funds, influence peddling — all kinds of other unimaginable malpractices which often go undetected and unpunished — are spawned and proliferate egregiously.

We spoke above of the whole election process taking on the trappings of a mega-entertainment circus for the public. Yet even

while it dazzles and titillates, it already starts producing the tragic fruits that make our country one of the worst in the world in terms of skewed income distribution and among the most corrupt — these two facts are unfortunately intimately related like night to day.

The worst part of the bad scene we have been looking at is that we, the people, even if cynically, seem to accept them as inevitable and ordinary modes of proceeding of elected officials. And we have to ask what we asked above, namely, if what we described as the typical politician's mindset is not perchance — deep down — somehow ours too.

We reiterate what we have already noted about the place of faith in our political culture: It is systematically excluded. The prime values of our faith — charity, justice, honesty, truth — these are of little or no consequence at all when it comes to our practice of politics in or out of election time. True, religion is made use of: Candidates pay ostentatious courtesy calls on Churchmen; political conventions and other official gatherings are incomplete without prayers of invocation. But these are more instances of religion being used for political purposes than of religion influencing politics.

But why should this be so in a nation where the vast majority of the people are Catholic and Christian? Our faith in God has played a key role in major events of our history — even in a decidedly political matter like the People Power Revolution of EDSA. Yet politics as a whole has been, strangely, largely impervious to the Gospel. Our political culture denies, to our shame, our proud claim to the name Christian.

C. SIGNS OF HOPE

While the foregoing is an unflattering description of the dominant character of our politics, and it seems unrelievedly black,

still, there have been shining moments in our political life that give us reason to hope — and the motivation to work even harder together — for the renewal of our life as Christians and as Filipinos for the creation of a new political order.

We look at our history and we note that the Philippine electorate have more frequently removed rather than retained administration candidates and have had their judgment respected by losing candidates. We saw in the 1978 elections during Martial Law how people took the risk of speaking out with a noise barrage against the excesses and abuses of the regime.

In 1984 and 1986, volunteer citizen groups in massive numbers, unmindful of danger to themselves, courageously safeguarded the ballot against a seemingly invincible government machinery bent on thwarting the people's will. At EDSA, in the storied People Power Revolution, ordinary citizens successfully ended an entrenched authoritarian regime and restored lost democratic freedoms in a non-violent rebellion that has had repercussions all over the world for people seeking an end to oppressive governments.

We experienced the peaceful transfer of power in 1992, the first in 27 years, because of the example of a president who chose to step down graciously from power and because of the unprecedented cooperation in the conduct of the election between a revitalized COMELEC and its deputies on the one hand, and on the other, citizens' arms like NGOs (non-government organizations) and POs (people's organizations), Church groups and the media.

We have seen, in the aftermath of the 1995 elections and allegations of *dagdag-bawas*, members of the Board of Canvassers of a province (Bataan) publicly attesting through affidavits to the fraudulent acts of election officials. We have also seen the examples of (a) lowly bureaucrats in the Health Department

exposing the corruption of an appointee to the Cabinet and helping put pressure on the President to finally withdraw his nomination; (b) senior COMELEC officials risking retaliation by making public inefficiencies and irregularities in their offices; (c) government officials responsibly discharging their duties by calling attention to environmental degradation in our midst; and (d) a presidential commission braving the *ire* of Congress by releasing for the information of the public their analysis of how the people's money is wasted and pocketed by elected officials.

Some voting patterns of recent elections also give us a glimpse of what is possible: people beginning to vote more intelligently and not allowing themselves to be discouraged even when those they thought worthy turn out to be otherwise; voters choosing non-politicians over "traditional" ones, electing younger and presumably more idealistic candidates over those with money; or going for candidates of known probity and good performance instead of those supported by the usual power brokers. Many new and young faces are entering politics at the barangay and local levels and winning over very wealthy opponents and members of political clans whose heavy election spending for once is rendered futile.

We cannot discount or ignore these and many other positive developments in the nation's political life, few and far between though they may be in the face of the many negative facts we saw above. It is all the more reason then why we must treasure them and hold them up as examples to be emulated and replicated again and again, why we must engage ourselves totally against the forces that stand in the way of reform and systemic change, why we must encourage and support one another in what should be a common and concerted striving to create a less hurtful and more humane political order.

D. GOD'S CALL TO MISSION IN POLITICS

Any serious believer in God cannot allow the state of our national politics as we have been speaking of above to persist.

And in fact there is a duty for the Christian Catholic to transform politics by the Gospel. The Church, God's people, must evangelize politics. God's call to the Church is to preach the integral Gospel, the Gospel with all its social dimensions. The Gospel must influence every phase of life, every stratum of society, and "restore all things under Christ" (Eph 1:10).

Strangely, there are not a few people, even within the Church, who do not believe that to renew politics is part of the Church's mission. When Church officials praise government policies, government officials welcome such support warmly and are only too happy. But when Church officials criticize and denounce government policies, the same people immediately cry out: "Violation of the separation of Church and State! Church meddling in politics! Let the Church stick to religion!" They cite the words of Christ: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21). They say that the Church should have nothing to do with politics because Christ said to Pilate: "My kingdom is not of this earth!" (Jn 18:36). They therefore conclude that the Church should not say anything about politics and politicians.

How wrongly they interpret Scriptures and the doctrine of separation of Church and State! Quite unjustly they selectively level this charge of interference in politics against the Catholic Church, even while some other sects may be loudly intervening in the political process especially during elections.

E. THE BASIS OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION IN POLITICS

Politics Has a Religious and Moral Dimension — this is the general principle we start with. Every informed Catholic should be aware of this simple incontrovertible truth: Our Catholic faith is concerned with the religious and moral dimension of life;

but every human activity that flows from the normal processes of intellect and will has a religious and moral dimension, since it may either lead to grace or to sin. Or, as we said in the beginning, it may hurt or benefit people, it may upbuild or destroy them. Being a human activity politics has, therefore, a religious and moral dimension which our Catholic faith simply cannot ignore.

There are at least five bases for the Church's mission which explicate the above general principle.

1. The Gospel and the Kingdom of God Call the Church to Political Involvement. Christian Scripture scholars universally recognize the fact that at the center of Jesus' mission was his proclaiming of the Kingdom of God, the Reign of God. The very first words of Jesus in the Gospel of St. Mark proclaim: "The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel!" (Mk 1:15) To face the reality of the Kingdom requires a renewal of life in accordance with the Gospel. We must not only pray, "Your kingdom come" (Mt 6:10). We must also act to help bring it about: by renewing our lives, by defending and promoting Kingdom values, especially justice, peace, truth and love, freedom, mercy and reconciliation. To promote the values of the Reign of God is to do God's will. And God's will must be done in all areas of human activity especially, in our social context, in the sphere of politics where we see the values of the kingdom terribly absent. When Jesus said, "Proclaim the Gospel to all creation" (Mk 16:15), it was never his will to exclude politics. We have to proclaim the Gospel in the field of politics. We have to evangelize and renew it. The Church would be abandoning her mission if she fails to imbue politics with the light of the Gospel and the Reign of God.

2. The Church's Mission of Integral Salvation Involves the Temporal Sphere. Undeniably, the Church's mission is one of salvation. Unfortunately, many people understand salvation as

solely pertaining to the soul. They therefore wonder what the resurrection of the body has to do with salvation. Again the simple truth is that salvation has to do not only with the soul but with the total reality of the human person, soul and body, spiritual and material, eternal and temporal. This is why Jesus not only forgave sins, he also liberated people from physical sickness. This is also one basis for believing in the resurrection of the dead. Salvation has, therefore, to do not only with the after-life but also with liberation in this life, even if only initially and partially. Thus Jesus could say to Zaccheus: "Today salvation has come to this house" (Lk 19:9). For this reason the Church has always taught what Vatican II declared: "Christ's redemptive work, while of itself directed toward the salvation of all, involves the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence, the mission of the Church is not only to bring to everyone the message of grace of Christ, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the Gospel" (AA, 15).

Moreover, salvation is concerned not only with the individual but also with the community, for personal salvation depends on God's grace acting not only directly on an individual but also through a community. This is a necessary and unavoidable implication of the believing community as the Body of Christ, "a holy nation." We therefore believe that the Church is God's sign and instrument of salvation. As a consequence, the Church has to proclaim the gospel of salvation to the political community. If only for the fact that politics has such a decisive influence on the total good of human beings.

3. Salvation is from Personal and Social Sin, Including Sin in the Political Sphere. The Church's role in politics is also better understood when we consider that sin can take root in political activities. For sin is not only personal but social as well (see CFC, 1166-71). Sin is, indeed, found first of all in the human heart. But sin also extends its influence through situations and "structures of sin", such as the kind of "dirty politics" described

earlier — a politics as the popular saying goes, of "guns, goons and gold," a politics of deceit and dishonesty, of unprincipled compromise, convenience and expediency, a politics of greed. It seems almost impossible to change such established ways of politicking in our country, so tragically and deeply has sin embedded itself in them. For the Church, therefore, to be an authentic sign and instrument of integral salvation, it has to work to vanquish sin in the political order too (cf. SRS, 36-38; also RP, 16).

4. The Church has an Option for the Poor in the Field of Politics. We have seen how political forces in our society are heavily tilted against the poor. As economic power is in the hands of the elite, so is economic power. To help correct this imbalance "those who have less in life should have more in law." But sadly many laws and policies' in our country favor the rich and the powerful to the detriment of the poor. When the moment of truth comes, those who hold the reins of political and economic power look exclusively to their own interests. Examples abound but we cite just these few: the watering down of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, the growing number of exemptions from the Program, the primacy given to big business over the small farmer, the maintenance of family political dynasties that lord it over the poor. Pro-poor many politicians are definitely not despite their protestations. Thus the Church's mission to renew and transform our political institutions and activities: Unless the Church pursues this mission, politics will continue to militate against the poor.

The clear teaching and example of Christ is for every Christian believer to be pro-poor and for the Church to have an option for the poor (PCP-II, 312-14; see CFC, 1187-89). To realize this Gospel imperative of option for the poor, the Church must labor to try evangelizing and transforming our country's politics, its institution, relationships, values and behavior so that politics will work *preferentially* for the poor.

5. The Way of the Church is the Human Person Who is Affected by Politics. Indeed, politics can make or unmake the human person. It can lead the human person to the common good or it can dehumanize him by entrapping him in sinful political structures. But the mission of salvation urges the Church to collaborate with others in the development of the whole human being and of all human beings. This is why Pope John Paul II points out in his first encyclical letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, that the concrete human being living in history is the "way for the Church" (RH, 14; also CA, 53-54). The Church cannot ignore the forces that influence the person for good or ill — and politics is such a force. Were the Church to do so, she would be betraying her own mission on behalf of the human person.

The above considerations ground the Church's involvement in politics. Flowing from the Gospel, they are simple basic truths of our Catholic faith. When the Church denounces political attitudes, behavior or structures that are counter to the Gospel and to the Reign of God and militate against the integral salvation of the human person, especially of the poor, why would some, even well educated Catholics, condemn the Church for "political interference"? And why is it that no similar outcry is heard when the Church supports or praises government initiatives? To support is not interference while to denounce is? A very strange logic, indeed! We can only conclude that the basic reason is a poor understanding of the Church's mission.

F. MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TRUTHS GUIDING POLITICS

If the Church does intervene in politics on the moral and religious bases presented above, it exercises this right and duty in various ways, above all by teaching moral and religious truths that should guide and transform politics according to the Gospel. The Scriptures, the moral and social teachings of the Church supply us with these valuable principles (see CFC, 1162-63, 1193).

1. Human Dignity and Solidarity — a First Principle of Politics. The first principle is human dignity and solidarity. Human dignity flows from the fundamental reality that the human person, male and female, is created unto the image of God (Gen 1:27) and is called to share eternal life with God. In Christian belief, the fact that Jesus Christ is God-made-Man to redeem the human being from slavery to sin is an integral dimension of human dignity. This is why the Church's "contribution to the political order is precisely her vision of the dignity of the person revealed in all its fullness in the mystery of the Incarnate Word" (CA, 47).

Politics must respect and promote human dignity and the fundamental human rights that flow from such dignity. When politicians exploit their fellow citizens and deny their will in electoral processes through fraud and violence, when they promote their own vested interests through any means, fair or foul, because of greed for power or possessions at the expense of others, they thereby brazenly dismiss the human dignity of their fellow human beings.

The equal dignity of all human beings bring them into mutual solidarity. By solidarity they are brought together not through superficial human sentiments or vague feelings of the unity of humankind but through active bonds of mutual respect, love, and service. Solidarity is a "firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good, i.e., to the good of all and of each individual because we are really responsible for all" (SRS, 38). Solidarity is destroyed by the selfish competition and greedy ambitioning for power that characterizes our political culture. Is this not happening even today because of the ill-advised and divisive move to extend terms of political office by changing the Constitution? The common good is invoked for such a move. This would perhaps be a bit credible were the politicians behind such a move known to be great champions of the common good rather than officials perceived popularly as *trapos* — the very kind of politicians from whose clutches the enlightened citizenry has been trying to liberate the nation.

2. The Common Good — the Goal of Political Activity.

It is a cardinal teaching of the Church that the political community exists for the common good. This common good embraces "the good of all and of each individual" (SRS, 38), and is "the sum total of all those conditions of social life which enables individuals, families, and organizations to achieve complete and efficacious fulfillment" (GS, 74). Political activity then should be directed precisely not at the triumph of the interests of an individual, a family, a social class, or a political party, but at the attainment of the universal good of all. Unfortunately in the political history of our country, rare have been the times when the common good has been foremost as the actual goal of political parties. Indeed, in politics the common good is tragically uncommon, power and profit for self and family being the dominant ends of political engagement.

3. Authority and Power — A Divine Trust for Service.

It must likewise be emphasized that all authority and power emanate from God. This is the clear teaching of Scriptures: "There is no authority except from God" (Rom 13:1). And God gives authority only in trust. As the steward of this trust, the office holder is beholden to God and is responsible to God to whom an account must be given for his fulfillment of it. Authority is not for personal aggrandizement or domination. It is given for service (see Mk 10:45) so that the person in authority can help others grow in dignity and unity (2 Cor 10:8). To use one's office and its power only to serve one's own interests is to contradict the very nature and purpose of authority and also betray the people who rightly expect to be served. Officials who do not serve do not deserve to hold authority.

When legitimately constituted authority is exercised within the limits of its competence and in accord with the moral law, it must be respected and obeyed. But when it is used contrary to the moral law, the will of God is violated and authority loses its right to be obeyed. Clearly, no citizen is obliged to obey a

command to do what is morally wrong. In fact, all citizens are obliged to resist the wrong use of authority and to declare: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Vatican II reiterates this scriptural teaching: "It is legitimate for them (citizens) to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens against abuses of this authority within the limits of the natural law and the law of the Gospel" (GS, 74). This is the principle that impelled the Filipino people to achieve the peaceful 1986 EDS A Revolution.

4. Between the Political Community and the Church — Mutual Collaboration. Further even though the Kingdom of God cannot be equated with material progress and well being, the mission of the Church and the mission of the political community to promote the common good partially coincide. It is therefore to the interest of both Church and political community that people live harmoniously and work together for total progress. There are human needs that the political community can best serve and there are human needs that transcend temporal well-being which only the Church can meet. Mutual collaboration is therefore necessary so that the integral development of the human person and of all persons in society is realized.

But the collaboration of the Church is given through critical discernment. The higher law of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God remains the fundamental norm of the Church's collaboration. By reason of this norm the Church cannot be identified with any political community, political party or ideology. Nor can the Church canonize any one form of political regime. "The choice of the political regime and the appointment of rulers are left to the decisions of citizens" (GS, 74), guided by the principle presented above. But clearly the Church cannot accept a political regime that is contrary to the Gospel. Moreover, the Church "cannot encourage the formation of narrow ruling groups which usurp the power of the State for individual interests or for ideological ends" (CA, 46).

G. THE SPECIFIC MISSION OF THE CHURCH IN POLITICS

In the light of the above, what then is the specific mission of the Church in the political order? The answer lies in the insight of the 1971 Synod of Bishops on Justice in the World: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appears to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel". From this insight flow a number of important corollaries.

1. The Task of Integral Development — Using Politics as a Means. As part of its God-given mission, the Church has the right and duty to work for total human development, freedom and justice, respect for human rights and peace. The notion of integral human development would in fact include all the rest, since such a development is the authentic realization of all the fundamental rightful aspirations, material and spiritual, of the human person and of all persons. Such human development would also require the "creation of structures of participation and shared responsibility" (CA, 46). Precisely because of this mission, the Church has also the right and duty to teach and intervene in the political order, to participate in the common effort to make electoral processes truly democratic and fair, and so to renew the political order. Politics must become an effective means for integral development for all rather than a tool for the advancement of a privileged few.

2. The Mission of the Laity. Direct participation in the political order is the special responsibility of the laity in the Church. It is their specific task to renew the temporal order according to Gospel principles and values. On the other hand, it is the specific task of the hierarchy to teach authoritatively what the Church believes or holds concerning the political order.

Vatican II states: "The Church praises and esteems those who devote themselves to the public good for the service of all

and take upon themselves the burdens of public office" (GS, 75). It also adds this encouragement: "Those with talent for the difficult and noble art of politics, or whose talents in this matter can be developed, should prepare themselves for it, and forgetting their own convenience and material interests, they should engage in political activity" (*Ibid.*).

It is along these same lines that PCP-II states: "In the Philippines today, given the general perception that politics has become an obstacle to integral development, the urgent necessity is for the lay faithful to participate more actively, with singular competence and integrity, in political affairs" (PCP-II, 348). PCP-II strongly urged that competent and conscientious persons of integrity should become political candidates. And the laity must "help form the civic conscience of the voting population and work to explicitly promote the election of leaders of true integrity to public office" (PCP-II, Art. 8, #1).

PCP-II underlined the following truths to guide the participation of Catholics in political life:

- a. That the basic standard for participation be the pursuit of the common good;
- b. That participation be characterized by a defense and promotion of justice;
- c. That participation be inspired and guided by the spirit of service;
- d. That it be imbued with a love of preference for the poor; and
- e. That empowering people be carried out as a process and as a goal of political activity (PCP-II, 351).

We draw conclusions from the above for Catholic politicians: they are to decide and act in public life according to the principles of Catholic faith and morality; they should not separate their religion from the exercise of their public office; and while

respecting the religious freedom of others, they must not be afraid to act in public life in accordance with their faith and in true witnessing to the Gospel.

3. Plurality of Options in Political Life. We must also be aware that in the light of the Gospel and consistent with the Gospel, there are many political options open to Catholics (GS, 43). The Gospel does not prescribe only one way of being political nor only one way of political governing whether monarchical, presidential, parliamentary, or whatever. Justice, peace and integral development can be pursued through many political ways. Hence there can be no one political party nor one political program that can exclusively claim the name Catholic. That is why there is normally no such thing as "the Catholic vote." Nor can particular Catholic groups present their candidates as *the* Church's candidates. The members of the hierarchy simply set guidelines to help the laity vote wisely. Under normal circumstances, they do not endorse any particular candidate or party but leave the laity to vote according to their enlightened and formed consciences.

Given a plurality of possible options consistent with the Gospel, freedom of choice has to be a right we must especially value in a democracy. A particular political option becomes obligatory to Catholics only when it is clearly the **only** one demanded by the Gospel, even more so when it is clarified and taught authoritatively by the magisterium.

4. Partisanship in Politics. It is precisely because of the possibility of plural options in politics that Church people who hold positions of leadership in the Church do not ordinarily engage in what is called "partisan politics." Church leaders represent the entire community which they head or lead and for them to publicly and officially, as it were, push for one option over others when these are equally compatible with the Gospel and hence moral would be tantamount to claiming theirs is the only option in the Gospel to take and the people should follow their lead. This would

be disastrous for the unity of the community. Where this kind of politics is concerned, the freedom of choice that we noted above must be part of our values should by all means be the guiding principle — most especially from the pulpit.

Above we referred to what PCP-II says about the laity's responsibility to "work to explicitly promote the election of leaders of true integrity to public office." This is not at all a call to form a "Catholic Party" or to have a slate of "Catholic Candidates" that must be supported by all but an encouragement for all to be more discerning in their choice among candidates for office and to work actively for their election. It is a call for political partisanship, yes, but for partisanship that must be exercised "cleanly" — which is to say, in a way that is the direct opposite of all that we mean by the term "dirty politics". And this includes not using the Church for grossly partisan ends. This is what it is to concretely and practically evangelize politics.

H. PASTORAL ACTION TO TRANSFORM POLITICS

How do we go about changing the way politics is done in the Philippines so that, instead of being a stumbling block, it positively contributes to integral development, including the spiritual growth, of our people? How to renew politics so that it becomes a channel for our people's well being and growth in the life of grace? How to ensure that the truths about faith and politics we have presented above do not remain unattainable ideals but become reality?

1. Catechesis and Political Education. The most basic work that has to be done is catechesis on politics or Christian education in politics. At present there is a tragic dichotomy between our faith-life as a people and our political culture. This dichotomy prevents our faith from having a say in our political activities. As a result our political culture is characterized by

deception, dishonesty, fraud, violence, corruption, pay-offs, and patronage. Yet most of the participants in the political process call themselves Christians. Worse, politicians take advantage of their Christianity to promote their interests, as when they are photographed in churches before election time or act as sponsors in baptisms and weddings in order to widen their circle of supporters.

But catechesis on politics cannot have any lasting effect if done only on the occasion of elections. It should be done as part and parcel of regular catechesis in the family, in schools, in Basic Ecclesial Communities, covenant communities of lay people, religious organizations — "in season, out of season," or as the PPC-RV slogan has it, "*panghabang panahon*". Through catechesis on politics, people should be led to see the vital link between their life of faith and their political activity. They should be taught how to evaluate their options in politics to see whether or not they are in accord with the Gospel and the teachings of the Church. Catechesis should enable them to express their faith and be guided by their faith in their politics.

2. Guidelines on Choosing Political Officials. We have seen how many voters are influenced in choosing certain candidates not out of conscience but because of family relationships. We also know that the popularity of a candidate (often in another field of work such as sports, TV and movies) or the prospects of political and economic rewards, money and gifts — and a wrong sense of *utang na hob* — are strong factors in people's voting behavior. Competence, honesty, personal integrity and an acceptable program of government are not primary considerations. This is why in their campaigns politicians cater to what the voters want in terms of entertainment and gifts of cash or kind.

Political education includes increased awareness of guidelines to help people make the right choices, based on a properly formed conscience, in the election of candidates. This is the reason why,

as we adverted to in the beginning, in the 50 years of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, the Philippine Bishops have been providing such guidelines almost as a matter course everytime national elections come. Church instrumentalities at the national level, such as the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPC-RV) and NASSA-VOTE CARE, have also disseminated similar guidelines. We urge everyone to be more aware of the guidelines, reflect on them, discuss them with others, and seriously follow them on the basis of their faith commitment, their religious and moral sense, in judging the qualities or competences of candidates for office.

3. Preparation for Political Leadership. There is at present no program through which persons of integrity and political knowledge can be prepared to participate in the noble but difficult art of politics. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences have more than once called for such a preparation in the light of the Asian political situation (see 1986 Tokyo and 1990 Bandung FABC final statements). Such an agenda is especially imperative in the Philippine situation.

Possible political leaders should be schooled in the principles and practice of doing politics in a Christian way, in accord with the Gospels, the values of the Kingdom of God, the moral teachings of the Church, especially its social teachings. An implication of PCP-II's stand urging persons in responsible positions to promote actively the election of worthy candidates is the necessity of preparing these candidates for public office. If economic managers are schooled in their field, political leaders should also be formed so that they may discharge the burdens of public office with competence and integrity.

4. Conversion to New Values. The most basic pastoral action needed is conversion to new values. This should be the aim of catechesis on politics. There will be no radical change in our political situation unless we all undergo a change of heart

— conversion, therefore — in our priorities, in our values. In our society a high premium is put on power and money. Compromises are made, truth is subverted, principles are abandoned, elections are rigged, frauds are perpetrated, politicians perpetuate themselves in power, their families are placed in positions of authority, "options are kept open" — simply because of power and money, the prime values of our present political culture. That is why financial supporters invest tremendous amounts of money on candidates and the candidates themselves spend so much to be elected — not because of what they vaguely invoke as "the people's will" or "the common good" — but because of the power and the easy money they seek. Let us not be fools. As we said earlier, we know that expenses are recouped, gargantuan profits made once political victory is achieved. The conscienceless remark of a politician years ago wanting to take advantage of power remains operative even to this day: "What are we in power for?"

We need to change all this. Conversion to new values is the most basic of pastoral action. Again this points to the need for, as a first step, catechesis on politics, the need for political re-education at all levels of society and the Church, laity, religious, priests and bishops. It is noteworthy that at the level of grassroots Basic Ecclesial Communities, such a political re-education is taking place quite effectively.

At the level of Church leaders — whether clerical or lay — conversion is also imperative. By accepting special gifts and privileges from so-called *trapos*, by allowing them or their immediate relatives to take positions of authority in religious organizations, we are abetting their deeds of dishonesty and fraud, graft and corruption, and helping them maintain their power. By such conduct we allow our prophetic denunciation of political evils to lose its sharpness and credibility. We need to change our ways and be true prophets in our day.

5. Structural Change — a Goal of Pastoral Action. If personal conversion to new values is imperative, so is structural change. Many of the negative values that we have as a people are strongly embedded in some of our political processes. We spoke above of the unconscionable delays in announcing election winners. The delay is often due not only to the incompetence of election officials but also to manipulation of the electoral process by interested groups. Our electoral process is riddled with loopholes that make it possible for all sorts of evils to take place — cheating in registering, in voting, in counting and tabulating votes, in reporting results, in protesting 'against the results, in resolving protests, etc. Delays create additional evils. The notorious *dagdag-bawas* of the last senatorial election was made possible because of structural manipulation of the electoral process and because of delays. Indeed, reforms in the electoral process are necessary. A few years ago, the most trustworthy COMELEC in the past 30 years urged Congress to pass a number of electoral recommendations. By the time the very credible head of that COMELEC retired, Congress had not yet taken any action on the recommendations. Among the recommendations was to do away with political family dynasties — something the Constitution itself advocates. This was a threat to Congress. Structural changes are indeed urgent, in the electoral process especially, and hence the reform of that process must become a high priority for all of us.

6. Active Participation of Civil Society. With gratitude we consider the work of thousands upon thousands of volunteers working in non-partisan groups such as NAMFREL, PPC-RV, NASSA-VOTE CARE, Operation Quick Count, to name a few. These volunteers in NGOs and Church-based organizations have done a great service in witnessing to their conscience and faith to renew the political order, despite physical and psychological hardships and even the risk of life.

However, such heroic efforts are not enough. The whole citizenry must be awakened to the fact that the Filipino religious and moral sense is being destroyed by many factors, one of the most significant being politics. A general movement of civil society must take place to renew politics and rid it of its evil dimensions. Civil organizations, peoples' organizations, associations of lay people and religious, school associations, etc. — all have to band together in true and active solidarity for the sake of the country.

The Church is committed towards such solidarity by helping create awareness of our social ills and by conducting values education in politics through its own network of resources and means of social communications; and beyond awareness and values, by encouraging and supporting action for change.

7. Political Advocacy. Pastoral action in the political sphere should also take the form of active advocacy. Everyone should be interested in knowing what bills are being considered by Congress, what positions regarding important legislations are being taken by senators and congresspersons. In solidarity civil society must articulate their support for laws, policies, and structural changes that will improve our lives in society and our political processes. It must lobby to defeat bills that militate against the aspirations of the poor, the integral development of our people, the integrity of creation, moral values in the family, the welfare of women, children and the young. Lobbying is seen unfortunately as the exclusive turf of those with vested economic interests, who evince little concern for the common good.

It is a Christian task to work for laws that will bring about genuine prosperity, more equitable distribution of income and wealth, the promotion of the rights of the poor and of indigenous peoples. It is a Christian task to lobby for electoral reforms so that the people's will may not be subverted.

Such active advocacy and lobbying requires a long and tedious process such as research, group organizing, participation

in congressional hearings, and using various media to make the people know what is being done or not done in Congress regarding their destiny. Hence, civil society must have a strong sense of purpose, coordinated solidarity, tenacity and perseverance.

8. Organizing for Effective Change. We have two groups in the Church that have been most effective over the years in working for clean and honest elections: the PPC-RV of the Commission on the Laity and the NASSA VOTE-CARE of the Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace. At the last CBCP meeting in July this year, the proposal was made — and unanimously accepted by the bishops — that there should be a clear division of labor between the two groups, and it was decided that the PPC-RV will henceforth be the Church body that will coordinate the efforts of the various dioceses during election times; the VOTE-CARE, on the other hand, will be the Church agency for her efforts between election times to educate and conscientize people for the renewal of the social and political order. To each diocese is given the responsibility of mobilizing the two bodies and their workers for their respective tasks.

The tasks of the PPC-RV — the organizing of independent poll watchers for election day itself is one of its most important responsibilities — are quite clear from past experience. But for VOTE-CARE there will be need to get the dioceses acting in more programmatic fashion through their Social Action Centers not only for a more systematic and concerted conscientization effort at raising awareness and concern about political (and economic) problems but also for action on monitoring post-election graft-and-corruption practices at barangay, municipal and provincial levels and, as well, the performance of elected officials.

We trust these two Church bodies will become in every diocese the effective cutting edge of our efforts at doing something positive about the reform and renewal in the Gospel of our much debased political order.

9. Constitutional Change. Today we are faced with a political crisis of great magnitude. This is the attempt to change the 1987 Philippine Constitution. As Bishops we have reflected lengthily on this crisis, discussed its social, political, economic, and cultural context, and its various implications. And we are one in our stand against changing the Constitution now.

We are saddened that religious sects and well-intentioned people as well as the principles of democracy have been exploited to promote the efforts to revise the Constitution. The end result has been disastrous: the worst of traditional politics had brazenly flaunted itself, an economic crisis has been aggravated, trust and credibility in government have been broken, and people feel deceived and manipulated. There is great and righteous anger among our people.

The attempts at constitutional change demonstrate the evils of politics that we have been talking of here — deviousness, double talk, deception, manipulation, lack of transparency, the use of power to promote self-interests. All these are values that are anti-Gospel and anti-Kingdom of God. We cannot ignore these. We must move against them.

We believe that the way to unity is to unconditionally, unequivocally and irrevocably terminate all attempts to revise the Constitution **at this time**. When the time does come, let it be done with widespread participation and a unity of vision, with total transparency and serenity, with reasons unarguably directed to the common good rather than to the self-serving interests of politicians. All elected officials looking for an extension of terms must categorically state now that they will not under any circumstance accept any further nomination for office.

The task now is to rebuild trust and confidence. It will be a painstaking chore. But rebuilding trust and confidence as well as transforming politics into what is pleasing to God can surely

be done — by us, the People of God, collaborating with other men and women of good faith.

CONCLUSION

At one point of our history, we badly needed change and we got it — through People Power, without violence, at the EDSA Revolution. What we did in 1986 is an unfinished revolution. The reform of political life and processes is a necessary complement to the 1986 EDSA event. The odds we faced then were greater but we prevailed. The odds we face now are likewise formidable, but we can prevail.

We invite all of you, our Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, to join us in a common resolve to clean up and to renew what we have seen is one of the most harmful aspects of our national life — today's kind of politics.

As at EDSA in 1986, so today: We must reason together for the common good, we must pray together and act together to transform politics into a means of national renewal, a means of just and integral development for every Filipino and for all Filipinos.

As at EDSA, so today: We do not work alone. As the Psalmist reminds us: "Unless the Lord build the house they labor in vain who build it" (Ps 127:1). The work of conversion and renewal is indeed the work of God and He calls us to work with Him. This is the reason for our hope and our confidence — the grace of Almighty God. May Mary, the Mother of the Lord and of our beloved country, obtain for us from the Lord Jesus the graces we need for this momentous mission so vital for our future as a nation.

Pastoral Statement on Charter Change

OSCAR CRUZ, DD

Dear People of God in the Philippines,

Greetings of peace in the Lord!

The Supreme Court has decided to nullify recent moves to effect changes in our Constitution through a people's initiative. We are happy with this development. But we deem it still necessary in the exercise of our pastoral office to express our mind on these moves especially in view of the persistence of those who are working for the removal of the term limits for elective officials, with special focus on the removal of the term limit for the president. In these confusing times, we must be wise as serpents (Mt 10:16), for there may be people "who come to you in sheep's clothing but underneath are wolves on the prowl" (Mt 7:15).

It is clear from the main advocates for the removal of the term limit of the President that they want to see President Ramos get elected again as President, or at least to give him a chance to run again for President. The advocates insist on pushing through with the agendum despite the repeated protestations of President Ramos himself that he does not desire to run again for President and that this is his only term of office. This situation

has led many to believe that President Ramos himself is behind the moves to remove the presidential term limit, or that he has at least indicated in private to the advocates for the removal of term limits that he would be prevailed upon to run for office if they succeed in getting their proposal approved in a plebiscite. This in turn has led to fears that President Ramos will perpetuate himself in office, and that he will have recourse finally to authoritarian rule.

We wish to state our corporate stand as the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines. While individual bishops and archbishops have articulated their positions on the matter, especially as it affects the President of the Republic, we wish now to articulate the thinking of the Conference of Catholic Bishops.

First of all, we note that our present Constitution does not allow the incumbent president to run for re-election (Art. VII, sec. 4). It allows only three consecutive terms for members of the House of Representatives (Art. VI, sec. 7), two consecutive terms for members of the Senate (Art. VI, sec. 4), and three consecutive terms for local elective officials, except barangay chairpersons (Art. X, sec. 8). This setting of term limits for said officials of the land was a distinct departure from the practice allowed by the previous Constitutions. The term limits for said officials were a novel and important feature of the Constitution which our people overwhelmingly approved in the 1987 plebiscite.

The people approved these as provisions of the Constitution which should enjoy a certain stability and not be subject to change for transcient considerations such as the success or lack of success of one person in office.

We have been able to test the term limit of the President. President Corazon C. Aquino, the incumbent President during the 1992 elections did not run for re-election. She was succeeded by President Fidel Ramos. It is accepted by many that during

the incumbency of President Ramos many things have improved for our nation. In fact, those who want to see him President again after 1998 are claiming that he has done a better job than his predecessor. This is tantamount to saying that the no-re-election provision with regard to the President has worked well for our country thus far.

The question thus immediately comes to mind, if this provision setting only one term for the President has worked well and to the advantage of our country in our only experience of its implementation, why seek to change it now?

The inadvisability of seeking to change this provision of our Constitution is re-inforced when we consider that in the only instance when a President of the Republic ran for re-election and was elected, the only president so re-elected ended up by prolonging indefinitely his stay in office and would not have stepped down had he not been forced to do so by the February 1986 revolution.

As regards the term limits of the other public officials, we say only this: Why change provisions of the Constitution that have been overwhelmingly approved and have not yet been tried? Should we not at least give them a try so that our decision will have a basis in our experience, just as the decision to impose term limits was made on the basis of previous experience?

At any rate, we see no urgency in making charter amendments, especially regarding the term limits of our public officials, just now. This is a most inopportune time for such decision-making, given the suspicions and acrimony which the issue has already generated. The pursuit of charter changes at this time, especially with regard to the term limit of the President will only generate more politically destabilizing argumentation, debate and demonstrations that will hinder and perhaps halt the momentum towards economic progress which we are now beginning to

experience. Only those who believe the present President is indispensable have reason to press for charter changes before the 1998 election. But is the present President indeed indispensable? Have we become so poor and so dependent on one man that we can no longer continue with our progress unless he remains as President? The President himself, by signifying his willingness to step down in 1998 has shown his own correct belief that he is not indispensable to the further growth of our country. Indeed, the Bible tells us, "It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princess". (Ps 118:9)

Dear fellow countrymen and countrywomen, we are opposed to the holding, of a plebiscite before the 1998 elections, and to the so-called people's initiative pushing for such a plebiscite. Our opposition is not due to a belief that the 1987 Constitution can no longer be improved, nor is it because of a belief that people have no right to call for a plebiscite through a people's initiative. Our opposition is based on our assessment of inopportuneness of such a move at present and of its grave adverse effects on our political and economic situation coupled with our conviction that the people's money and energy are better devoted at this time to other more pressing needs. Given also our experience of the not so distant past, and the many shadowy elements involved in these present moves to remove or change term limits, we have every reason to be wary of signature campaigns to obtain a plebiscite.

We ask you to also assess prayerfully the situation. And if you agree with us, let us in no uncertain terms make known our united opposition to a move which will seriously endanger our nation's gains.

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless us all, and may Mary His Mother pray for us.

Statement Against Charter Change*

RICARDO CARD. VIDAL, DD

We, the Bishops of the Visayas Region, together with the priests, religious and lay, gathered for the 5th Visayas Region Pastoral Assembly held in Cebu City on September 1-4, 1997, as our continuing regional and collective response to the Holy Father's call to prepare for the celebration of the Great Jubilee of Redemption in the Year 2000. We reviewed and shared the pastoral plans of action of the various local churches of the Region. We likewise updated ourselves with the situation and concerns of the people and the Church within the Region and the whole Country.

As an assembly gathered in prayerful reflection with the humble openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, who inspires us to be sensitive to the "signs of time", to announce the truth and denounce evil, we also felt the need to address the burning and urgent issue on Charter Change.

Conscious of our God-given duty to "promote a deeper evangelization and the advance of justice and solidarity in society"

* 5th Visayas Region Pastoral Assembly, September 1-4, 1997 (Cebu City).

we hereby express our honest, humble, and vigorous opposition to any and all moves to change the present Constitution before the 1998 National Elections."

— We vehemently reject the proposal of some Senators and Congressmen to convert both Houses of Congress into a Constituent Assembly even under the guise of a democratic forum for a healthy debate. There are many other pressing socio-economic "needs of the hour" that call for such debates.

— We fear that in the Charter Change movement is a secret plan, a hidden agenda to pursue the rather arrogant ambition of certain legislators to abolish the term limits, or to give themselves and the other incumbent elected officials the opportunity to extend their stay in power without the benefit of an election.

— We consider it an insult to the entire Filipino people even to give the impression that a group of elected officials are so indispensable and irreplaceable in our form of government, such that the Constitution has to be changed in order to give them a new mandate.

— We condemn any and all intents at dangling the Pork Barrel or the Countryside Development Fund to get support for Charter Change. We further condemn any form of bribery, and other immoral means to campaign for Charter Change.

— We fear that if a Charter Change is made to happen now, this would be the tragic beginning of a new oligarchy and of another dictatorship, the two evils which we have already rejected with the 1986 Edsa Resolution.

We, therefore, in this very crucial moment of our history, commit ourselves to join hands with all our brothers and sisters in the Visayas Region and throughout the Country, and with the strength of one National Spirit we cry out once again, **"NO to Oligarchy!"** and **"NO to Dictatorship!"** And so, **"NO to Charter Change Now!"**

1998: Year of Grace, Year of Freedom

JAIME CARD. SIN

1998 will be the year of the Holy Spirit according to the three year plan laid out for us by Pope John Paul II. We will be a year closer to the Great Jubilee of our redemption, the turn of the millenium.

1998 will also mark the Centennial of the Declaration of Philippine Independence. As Filipinos and as Christians, the two big events should preoccupy and should motivate us to prepare spiritually and interiorly.

The elections in 1998 will only be meaningful from the point of view of God and from the point of view of the national interest. Cut off from the spirit of God and putting aside the national welfare, the forthcoming national elections will be another instrument for disgusting political grandstanding and the perpetuation of structures that oppress rather than serve, of public servants who are corrupt and who in turn corrupt others instead of being self-sacrificing and self-effacing government servants.

It is an accepted principle for a democracy that for it to be healthy, there must be *a* credible vigilant opposition. It must be an opposition that is born out of national interest and not of

political ambition. It must be a politics of principles and not personalities. It must be a politics of morality and not expediency. It must be a politics of platforms and not press releases. It must be a politics of action and not promises.

I appeal for morality from the opposition ranks. I appeal for moral leadership from the majority party. If politics is to serve the needs of the nation, it must always be *"Bayan muna, bago ang sarili."*

I appeal to the members of the opposition to respect consensus and the rule of majority. The opposition will be ridiculously fragmented by personages who disregard principles of majority. We should not allow the practice of forming political alliances after facing defeats in party conventions. If you lose do not cry, if you win do not brag.

I appeal to the present leadership to respect the limits of office laid down by the Philippine Constitution. If there should be changes in the term limits, let it not benefit the incumbent. Let us bring back delicadeza. Let us restore public propriety.

May our countrymen take great vigilance in the national registration of voters and in the formation of an intelligent electorate. Let us not wait until it is too late. We have suffered enough and for too long because of bad politics.

The year of the Holy Spirit challenges us to live by the light of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and truth that we so heroically showed to the world during those four grace-filled days of EDSA 1986.

Politics is good for the nation to progress. We need good politics so that we can best serve the people. Too much of it can be very harmful and hazardous to our national life.

May the Holy Spirit be our guide towards May 1998. May the love of country symbolized by the flag that was first furled in 1986 be our guiding principle in everything we do.

The Eucharist, Our Treasure

JAIME CARD. SIN

At the installation of our new pastors of parishes, I have included as part of the ceremonies, the turning over of the tabernacle key to the new parish priest with a strong admonition to take care of the Blessed Sacrament, the most valuable treasure of the Church. Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament is the treasure of the Church.

We have seen a growth in the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament among the Catholic faithful. The construction and inauguration of Eucharistic adoration chapels in many parishes is a heartwarming sign of the growth of this laudable pious devotion. The barangay of the subdivision chapels are focal points in the community life of the faithful. Birthdays, wedding anniversaries and other family gatherings are considered incomplete without the offering of Masses for special intentions.

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is indeed the treasure beyond price of every Catholic faithful and community.

While we are truly happy to see a growth in the devotion to the Real Presence of the Lord, allow me to call your attention to some areas in our pastoral life that need to improve or need some special consideration.

1. The Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament

As a matter of policy, only parish churches and chapels of religious communities may reserve the Blessed Sacrament. All other places of prayer and worship need a written permission from the undersigned. Sub-parish chapels and office oratories need this rescript from the Archbishop of Manila.

The tabernacle for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament must be made of solid opaque material, kept under key and firmly attached to a wall or pedestal. I notice that some tabernacles can be easily moved. This is considered an abuse of the right to reserve the Eucharist. The vigil light must be kept on as a sign of reverence for the reserved Sacred Species.

The sacred vessels as well as the tabernacle must be kept polished and clean at all times. It is advisable to organize lay people to maintain the cleanliness of the sacred vessels.

2. The Eucharistic Adoration Chapels

The first adorer of the Blessed Sacrament should be the priests. Our favorite place should be at the feet of the Lord, listening to His voice and heeding His holy will.

Unfortunately, there are some hours during the day or night when the faithful find hard to come and adore the Blessed Sacrament. After studying the situation and with due consultation with the people, I suggest that the adoration hours be adjusted to meet with the availability of the people. It is not right to leave the Blessed Sacrament without adorers.

In order to insure the security of the Sacred species, it is also proposed that the monstrance containing the Blessed

Sacrament be protected by a glass covering with lock and key so as to prevent thieves from stealing the Sacred Species. A person who throws away the Sacred Species or who takes them and retains them for a sacrilegious purpose incurs an automatic excommunication (*latae sententiae*) reserved to the Apostolic See.

3. The Celebration of the Eucharist

Presuming that our priests are well aware of the disciplines laid down by the Church for the valid and lawful celebration of the Eucharist, I wish to call your attention to certain abuses that have come about in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Only ordained ministers may deliver the homily during the Eucharistic Celebration.

Canon 767 — par. 1. Among the forms of preaching the homily is preeminent; it is a part of the liturgy itself and is reserved to a priest or to a deacon; in the homily the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living are to be expounded from the sacred text throughout the course of the liturgical year.

par. 2. Whenever a congregation is present a homily is to be given at all Sunday Masses and at Masses celebrated on holy days of obligation; it cannot be omitted without a serious reason.

par. 3. If a sufficient number of people are present it is strongly recommended that a homily also be given at Masses celebrated during the week, especially during Advent or Lent or on the occasion of some feast day or time of mourning.

par. 4. It is the duty of the pastor or the rector of a church to see to it that these prescriptions are conscientiously observed.

Lay people may distribute Holy Communion but only as extraordinary ministers; the deacons, priests and bishops being the ordinary ministers. The distribution of Holy Communion during the liturgy is the primary duty of the ordained ministers. It is not proper for the ordinary ministers to leave the laity to do this while the former just sit back.

As a matter of policy in the Archdiocese of Manila, no lay people may preside at bible services with Holy Communion without my written permission. God has blessed us with sufficient number of priests to attend to the needs of the people for the Eucharist.

I trust and hope that you will give these matters your very serious consideration.

The Eucharist is our treasure. Let us indeed treasure the Lord.

Message on Improving Homilies

JAIME CARD. SIN

"Receive the gospel of Christ whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach."

These words at the ordination of deacons always touch a soft spot in my heart. The recent years have seen an admirable and heartwarming interest among the people of God for quality preaching. While the liturgical preaching is not the only way of teaching the Word of God, preaching actually constitutes our most important means to let the people know what God wills for them.

As the interest of the lay people for quality preaching increases, we have also noted with great satisfaction the growing number of priests who take this serious task of preaching seriously. We have seen an increase in publications of homilies and reflections to help us understand this task.

"In order to be authentic, the Word must be transmitted without duplicity and without any dishonesty but rather manifesting with frankness the truth before God" (2 Cor 4:2). The priest will wisely avoid falsifying, reducing, distorting or diluting the

content of the divine message. His role in fact, "is not to teach his own wisdom but the Word of God and to issue an urgent invitation to all men to conversion and to holiness".

Preaching, therefore, cannot be reduced to the presentation of one's own thought, to the manifestation of personal experience, to simple explanations of a psychological or humanitarian nature; nor can it excessively concentrate on rhetoric, so often found in mass-communication. It concerns proclaiming a Word which cannot be altered, because it has been entrusted to the Church in order to protect, penetrate and faithfully transmit it." (Directory on the Life and Ministry of Priests).

May I humbly present to you some areas that need to improve with regards to our preaching task.

It is very important to prepare our homilies on our knees. Prayer is the best preparation for a homily.

It is very important too, to study and read. It is not what we think but what God and the Church think that should be the context of our preaching.

It is very important too, to know your flock. The Word of God becomes more alive if we know by experience the joys and pains, the crosses and triumphs of our flock.

Keep your homilies short and direct to the point. We can do this if we are prepared. With hardly any preparation, it is understandable that preaching can take so long.

Your preaching should follow your own type of personality. Do not attempt to be overly entertaining or coldly dogmatic. Be warm. Be sharp. Be clear.

Preaching should be the joy of every priest. May you find your happiness in this holy task and may your people find nourishment in what you do.

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Cases & Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

FUNERAL FOR MASONS

/ thank you for an answer to the case on the Church and Freemasonry, published in the Boletin Ecclesiastico, May-June, 1997, p. 276. The question I propose now is. also concerning masons.

Canon 1184 of the new Code enumerates the particular persons to whom the Church's funeral rites should be denied. Nothing is being said about members of Freemasonry. How should we deal with them?

A Parish Priest

I think we should be logical in deducing the consequences that in good reasoning follow from the teachings established by the Church. The judgment on Freemasonry held by the Church were sufficiently explained in the case mentioned by the Consultant. Let us see now what are the logical consequences which follow from those principles.

1. Canon 1240 of 1917 Code stated: "Unless they have given signs of repentance before death, the following are deprived

of ecclesiastical burial: 1°. Persons who notoriously belonged... to the masonic sect or to other societies of the same kind".

Two things were required in c. 1240 of the old Code to deprive somebody of ecclesiastical burial, i.e. a public delict committed by the person concerned and no sign of repentance before his death (cfr. Gregory XVI, letter *Officium*, of February 16, 1842).

If the priest was called by the relatives and he found the patient unconscious or already dead so that no retraction of committed errors would be possible, ecclesiastical burial could be granted, as long as the relatives assure the priest that the sick or dead person wanted before to see a priest and gave signs of repentance, as kissing the Crucifix or reciting the Act of contrition. In this case the fact of his repentance should be divulged to the faithful. Pomp and solemn obsequies should be omitted. In extraordinary circumstances the parish Priest should consult the local Ordinary (S. Congr. of the Holy Office: cfr. *CIC Fontes*, vol. IV, nn. 1054, 1056).

In any case, the body of the dead mason should not be allowed to be taken to the masonic hall or temple. In case it is proved that the deceased person himself expressed before dying his desire that his body be taken to the masonic hall or temple, or the masonic decorations or insignia be placed on his body or upon his coffin, ecclesiastical burial must be denied (S. Congr. of the Holy Office, Instruction to the Bishops of Brazil, of July 2, 1878: cfr. *CIC. Fontes*, no. 1056). Otherwise, there would exist an obvious contradiction between this desire and the signs of repentance required by the Church to give him ecclesiastical burial.

It should also be noted that canon 1241 of the old Code established: "For those who have been deprived of ecclesiastical burial no public *Requiem Mass*, no anniversary or other public service may be held". However, private Masses could be offered for them. In cases of doubt the local Ordinary should be consulted.

2. The new Codex. States in canon 1184: Church's funeral rites are to be denied to the following:... "3°. Other manifest sinners to whom a Church's funeral cannot be granted without public scandal to the faithful."

"If any doubt occurs, the local Ordinary is to be consulted and his judgment followed."

No express mention of the members of Freemasonry is made. Does it mean that its members are to be given the Church's funeral rites without any difficulty? The answer is negative.

Certainly canon 1374, which expressly deals with the associations forbidden by the Church, does not expressly mention, as the 1917 Code did, the masonic associations. We know, however, that they are included among the associations still condemned by the Church, since "the Church has not changed her views on the Freemasonry and her prohibition against masonic societies is still in full force", according to the Declaration of the S. Congr. for the Doctrine of the Faith of Nov. 26, 1983. We have explained this matter in the case entitled *The Church and Freemasonry*, published in *Boletín Eclesiástico*, May-June, 1997, p. 276.

In her Declaration, the S. Congr. for the Doctrine of the Faith said that the Church negative judgment with regard the masonic associations *remains unchanged*, due to the fact that their principles have always been considered *irreconcilable* with the doctrine of the Church, hence, *membership in them remains forbidden*. Moreover, "the faithful who enrol in masonic associations are in state of grave sin and may not take Holy Communion".

It is logical, therefore, that what is established in canon 1184 of the new Code applies perfectly to members of Freemasonry. The Church's funeral rites should be denied to masons, unless they give signs of repentance before death. Thus, the procedure demanded in the old Code, as explained above in number 1, should

also be followed in their case. Funeral Mass is also to be denied, as stated in canon 1185: "Any funeral Mass whatsoever is also to be denied to a person who has been excluded from the Church's funeral".

QUESTION ON ADMINISTRATION OF SACRAMENTS BY PRIESTS WHO HAVE ATTEMPTED TO MARRY

DANILO TAG-AT, OP

I am a catechist working in our parish. A friend of mine asked me whether it is allowed by Church law to request priests who have attempted to marry to administer the sacraments or sacramentals when there is no priest to administer them. I am not familiar with the laws of the Church regarding priests who have attempted to marry. I need to be enlightened on this matter, so I can help my fellow catechists.

A Catechist

The Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts of the Church had 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* (Can. 1394 § 1), he cannot administer the sacraments or sacramentals, even if the suspension has not been declared. To attempt even civil marriage, brings with it the irregularity to exercise sacred orders (Can. 1044 §1,3°) which is perpetual. A priest who attempted to marry cannot be invited by any person or community to exercise the sacred order, except to assist a person in danger of death (Cf. Can. 976). (See *L'Osservatore Romano*, n. 23, May 28, 1997).

For further reading please confer BEF, Vol. LXXIII, No. 802, September-October 1997, pp. 600-602.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers

January - February 1998

EFREN RIVERA, OP

January 1, 1998

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

LUKE 2:16-21

THE MOTHER OF ALL MOTHERS

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Mary is not only the physical mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; for she is also the spiritual mother of the Body of Christ, the Church — this entitles her to being called the Mother of all mothers. In both these ways of being a mother, her divine partner was the Holy Spirit.

Focus Point: V. 19 **Mary treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart.** This verse echoes Lk 1: 29, "she... considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be," a verse in the story of how Mary became the physical mother of Jesus, Son of God (and thereby, as clarified by the Ecumenical

Council of Ephesus, she became the Theotokos or Mother of God). The present verse, Lk 2:19, however, teaches us how Mary became the Mother of the Church. From the time of the Anunciation onwards, Luke insinuates, Mary showed the way to all followers of Christ how they are to live the life of discipleship. One very important habit of a disciple of Christ is to commune with the Holy Spirit to find out the deep meaning of the significant happenings (the *DEBARIM* or *WORD-EVENTS*) in one's life.

B. REFLECTION POINT
BIBLIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS,
WE LISTEN AND SHARE

We cannot imitate Mary as Mother of God, but we can certainly imitate her, in our own way, in her role as Mother of the Church. We can learn from her how to be true disciples of Jesus Christ.

Pointer for snaring: Communion with the Holy Spirit through reflection on the Word Events of our lives is necessary for growth in Christian discipleship. Are you cultivating this biblical spirituality? Example: Every Christmas celebration has something special that makes it different from that of other years. Last year my Christmas celebration was special because the parish children dramatized the reading of the Christmas Gospel. While watching them I felt like Mary "treasuring all these things and reflecting on them in her heart."

Our Lady of the Angels

Angels are pure spirits sent to the world as God's messengers and we should think of them as assistants of the Holy Spirit in bringing the Good News to people. In today's Gospel reading we are reminded that it was an angel who had given the name Jesus to Mary's child before he was conceived by Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Since Mary is the Spouse of the Holy Spirit, it is but logical that angels are often associated with her. In fact, the Litany of Loreto calls her "Queen of Angels."

Great works of art depict Mary with an angel, as in Leonardo da Vinci's Annunciation. An all time favourite is the "Madonna della Stella" of Fra Angelico, who portrayed Mary, with a star above her, holding the infant Jesus who whispers something sweet to her, and all around them are angels announcing the Good News.

The Franciscans in the Philippines call their seminary in Bagbag, Novaliches, "Our Lady of the Angels Seminary."

January 4, 1998
EPIPHANY, Cycles A, B, C

MATTHEW 2:1-12
MESSAGE OF THE STAR

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

A stanza in the cowboy song, "Home on the Range" goes thus: "How often at night / when the heavens are bright / with the light from the glittering stars, / Have I stood here amazed / and asked as I gazed / if their glory exceeds that of ours."

Long before American cowboys existed, there were people amazed by the stars and dedicated their lives to studying them. They were called astrologers, and in Persia, "Magi". Around the year 6 BC some of these star gazers were awe-struck by a very special star, which, according to their studies, could be the heavenly sign of the Jewish Messiah's birth. The rest of the story is found in the Gospel reading for this Sunday.

Focus Point. V.9-10 The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star..." Is the story of the Magi historical? Frankly speaking, we do not know. It is biblical, yes, and inspired by God, that is, written with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But in the bible we have, not only history but also pedagogical materials like parables, allegories, poems and even dramas. So, possibly the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem was historical, possibly it is something like a parable, and possibly it is a combination of both. You have your choice. Pick out the interpretation that you find most meaningful to you.

What is important here is the MESSAGE. Here again, of course, we have many choices. We shall focus on only one, namely, that **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT**, avails Himself of the world of nature or the cosmos, to teach us about our salvation.

The word "EPIPHANY" means a MANIFESTATION (OF GOD) that is characterized as being "EPI" which is synonymous with "SUPER" and "ULTRA". Today's feast is the feast of the SUPERMANIFESTATION or ULTRAMANIFESTATION of God.

Its good for us to rejoice in a very special way today, because God has revealed to us that Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, is our Savior. But this revelation will not be very meaningful to us if we are not open to God's day to day revelation of himself through the world of nature. Epiphany will not be something SUPER or ULTRA to us if we are not like the cowboy who "gazes at night, when the heavens are bright with the light from the glittering stars."

B. REFLECTION POINT

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

Once we know that God the Holy Spirit reveals himself to us in a day to day manner through the world of nature, we should commit ourselves to take care of our cosmos. It is truly ours because God has given it to us. God put the sun, moon and stars in the heavens "to divide day from night and to indicate festivals, days and years" for the human being's benefit (Genesis 1:14-15). Furthermore, God said to human beings, "Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on earth... to you I give all the seed-bearing plants everywhere on the surface of the earth, and all the trees with seedbearing fruit; this will be your food.." (Gen 1:28b-29).

Being "masters" of the cosmos does not mean doing whatever we want with our physical world. Rather, it means participating in God's creative power to preserve the world as the habitat of persons created to the "image and likeness" of God (Gen 1:26-27). We are not absolute masters but masters under God, in other words, stewards.

Pointer for sharing: Do you have any experience of a truly beautiful natural sight that has lifted you up and brought you closer to God? Example: < Once I designed a brochure for the National Catholic Bible Center using the colors dark blue, white and tangerine. I showed it to a professional, who told me it did not meet his standards, and so I was somewhat downcast. Then I took a plane that was on the sky throughout the night. As morning approached, I opened the window, and there before my eyes were the magnificent colors I had chosen for the National Catholic Bible Center: dark blue, a thin white line, and tangerine clouds announcing the coming sunrise. How glad I was, I looked out of the window instead of watching the plane's TV monitor!

Party for a Turtle

A little boy ran into the house in near hysteria announcing that his pet turtle, that he just got for the Feast of the Epiphany, had rolled over and died. He was inconsolable. Mom and dad gathered round the tearful boy, hugged him and let him cry his eyes out. They promised they would have a funeral for the turtle. Daddy would bury him in the little tin box they kept the candy in. By this time the boy was listening intently. "Then," chimed in the mother, "we can have a party afterwards. Wouldn't that be nice?"

By this time the boy was smiling. Encouraged, the father went on. "Yes, and we'll have balloons and everything."

As the boy was grinning from ear to ear, suddenly and to the surprise of them all, the turtle rolled back onto his legs and began slowly moving away. The boy looked startled and then exclaimed, "Oh, daddy — let's kill it!"

Wisely, the father said, "No, son, today must be the turtle's birthday — at least it is its Epiphany. Let's go ahead with the party to celebrate it."

January 11, 1998

THE LORD'S BAPTISM, Year C

LUKE 3:15-16, 21-22

HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

It is most appropriate that we are following the Gospel of Luke during this year of the Holy Spirit because, together with

the Acts of the Apostles, also Luke's work, the Third Gospel is, in many ways, the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.

Focus Points. (1) V.16 John said: "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's baptism in/with water is a rite that was not unique in Judaism. What made it different was that through this rite a person accepted John's invitation to repent and prepare for the coming of the Messiah. It purified people from their sins, like any true repentance does. But it had no connection to the atoning death of Jesus Christ, which is the real reason why sins are forgiven by God. It also did not give people the power to share in the resurrection of Christ, nor the zeal to spread the Good News of salvation. By contrast, all these are given by the outwardly similar but intrinsically superior rite of Christian baptism.

(2) V. 21 When all the people were baptized, and Jesus was at prayer after likewise being baptized, the skies opened... Jesus initially identifies himself with the people (in Greek, the LAOS, that is, the LAITY), and that is why he submits to John's baptism. But God will set him apart (see v. 22). First, however, Luke notes that Jesus prays. This is a touch added by Luke to the tradition he received. By adding this detail Luke suggests to his readers a) that prayer opens the skies (God's abode) and b) prayer is an appropriate activity that will go hand in hand with the life "in the Spirit" and of ministry that Jesus is about to begin.

(3) V. 22 The Holy Spirit descended on him in visible form like a dove. A voice from heaven was heard to say, "You are my beloved Son. On you my favor rests." The passage is Trinitarian because here we have the Father (the voice from heaven), the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus is set apart not only from the people/laity, but also from the prophet (and therefore

Spirit-filled man), John the Baptist. Although John himself possessed the Holy Spirit in a charismatic way like all the prophets before him, he did not have the power to bestow the Holy Spirit on others. This is one way by which Jesus Christ differed from him. Besides, never did the Holy Spirit descend on John in visible form like a dove, and never did a voice from heaven call him a beloved Son.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Water baptism is distinct from but not necessarily opposed to Spirit baptism, as some ill-informed preachers would want people to believe. The best argument against such preachers is to point out that Jesus himself submitted to water baptism, and on this occasion God sent him the Holy Spirit in the external form of a dove to mark the inauguration of his public ministry.

Pointer for sharing: Have you availed of the benefits of both water baptism and Spirit baptism or having hands laid on you so that you may be filled with the Holy Spirit? Examples: < Every year we renew our baptismal vows on Easter and we are sprinkled with holy water. < Pilgrims to the Holy Land make it a point to get wet with water from the Jordan river (to remind them of their sacramental baptism). < Charismatic people led by Fr. Pascual Adorable, S.J., laid hands on me in 1982 to mark my entry into the Catholic Charismatic movement.

2. Charismatic people — or those whose gifts of the Holy Spirit have been awakened by the laying on of hands — become very prayerful people and zealous in new evangelization.

Pointer for sharing: Have you become more spiritual because of prayer? Are you engaged in new evangelization?

Examples: ◇ My friends at the Central Bank tell me that since the time people there became charismatic, there were no more suicides. Previously, they had suicides almost every month. ◇ I know a city based charismatic community that goes to rural areas for evangelization. These same people would never have done such a thing had they not become charismatic.

3. Baptized in the Spirit, Christians can become instruments of Christ in bestowing the Holy Spirit on others. In the first place this is done sacramentally by Bishops when they confirm and ordain ministers. Secondly, ordinary Christians can pray over others to invoke healing and for other graces or charisms of the Holy Spirit.

Pointer for sharing: Have you ever prayed over lay Christian people just like you? Example: Since I joined the Charismatic movement in 1982, I have prayed over many people, mainly for healing. When I do so, other charismatic lay people pray with me.

Live Up to Your Name

Baptism, for Christians, is the occasion for giving a name to a baby. Traditional names have meanings, as for example, Peter means Rock and Sarah means Princess. Some names refer to an illustrious personage, like Caesar or Helen.

A story is told about a young soldier in Alexander the Great's army who always backed out when the fighting was fierce. The great Greek general felt insulted by this action because the soldier was also named Alexander. One day the general called the soldier over and told him, "Either stop being a coward, or change your name."

At Baptism the greatest name implicitly given to each of us is "Christian". We should either live up to this name or stop saying that we are Christians.

January 18, 1998

STO. NINO, Year C

Next Sunday is BIBLE SUNDAY

Distribute envelopes for the special

BIBLE SUNDAY COLLECTION

National Bible Week begins tomorrow

LUKE 2:41-52

PROGRESS IN WISDOM

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The child Jesus "progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men. This was most certainly the work of the Holy Spirit who was dwelling in a very special way in the holy child.

Focus Point. V. 52 Jesus, for his part, progressed steadily in wisdom and age and grace before God and men. Jesus' progress in spiritual life throughout his hidden years was due to the work of the Holy Spirit, for indeed he is the "Spirit of Wisdom" (Is 11:2 see Acts 6:3; 1 Cor 12:8)) and "of grace" (Heb 10:29).

B. REFLECTION POINT

**BD3LIARASAL STEPS 4 & 5: GOD SPEAKS,
WE LISTEN AND SHARE**

Children who were sacramentally baptized as babies sometimes show an astonishing wisdom and knowledge beyond their years.

Pointer for sharing. Do you know any child with precocious wisdom? Example: <> Not too long ago I gave a talk on "God's Plan According to the Bible" to a mixed group of adults and young people, among whom were a few children between 8 and 12. A week later, I gave a quiz to the group on my previous talk. Lo and behold, the one who got the highest score was a girl who was only eleven years old!

Baby Wisdom

A famous judge in Chicago was fond of saying this, from his wealth of courtroom experience in domestic relations, "Nine out of ten, you can rouse a man to remorse or effort by his child."

Before the judge stood a burly, raw-boned, red-haired truck driver who was being tried for lack of support of his wife and children. He stood unmoved by the tearful tale of his wife and the scorching scolding by the judge. Then suddenly Judge Goodnow in a decision like Solomon's turned to the man and commanded, "Take that baby; it is too heavy for the mother."

The father turned to take the little one. Cooing and kicking, delighted to be noticed by him, the child stretched out its arms. It cuddled up. It patted his cheek and gurgled with joy. In a moment the father broke down. Every trace of hardness was gone. He burst into tearful words, "For God's sake, judge, let me go back to my babies. I swear I'll do the right thing by them."

And he did, as the record shows.

Actually, it was not just the child who touched that father. It was the Holy Spirit that was in that child.

Adapted from Tonne and Frank Mihalic.

January 25, 1998

THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

*Today is **BIBLE SUNDAY***

*Special collection for the **Biblical Apostolate***

LUKE 1:1-4; 4:14-21

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Luke, in ch. 4:16-21 tells us about the inaugural preaching of Jesus's public ministry. He places this in the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus' own hometown in the sense that he grew up there (though he was born in Bethlehem). Jesus tells his own townmates that he is the Spirit-anointed proclaimer of the Lord's year of grace.

Focus Points. (1) V 17-18a-b When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me." Jesus did not just "cut" the book of the prophet Isaiah but deliberately looked for the passage he wanted to comment on, namely Isaiah 61:1-2. As Jesus read, his anointing by the Lord was already something accomplished and in fact it had been manifested to the people at his baptism, by John in the Jordan river. What is interesting here is, firstly, the fact that the anointing is attributed to the divine Spirit, who is permanently upon Jesus.

(2) V. 18c-19abc He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners..." The second interesting point is that, by quoting Isaiah 61:1-2, in the section that some commentators call "The Book of Consolation," Jesus deliberately

calls attention to the fact that he is the (Suffering) Servant of the Lord whose mission is directed to the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, the victims of injustice.

(3) V. 19d To announce a year of favor from the Lord. Finally, it is the mission of Jesus, as the Lord's (Suffering) Servant, to proclaim the Lord's year of grace, the *Jubilee year par excellence* (see *Lv 25:8-17*).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. In the Old Testament, anointing marked the beginning of the ministry of a prophet, or a priest, or a king. Jesus is all three, but in the context of Isaiah 61, the anointing is for his role as **PROPHET AND SUFFERING SERVANT**. < Vatican II clearly teaches us that every Christian or person sacramentally united to Christ by baptism, is, by the very sacrament of baptism, already a prophet, priest and king. The exercise of these ministries is, basically, what should make the lay Christian faithful progress in holiness.

Pointer for sharing: Have you exercised your ministry as a prophet by proclaiming God's love and care for the poor and actually caring for them? Did such activity make you a more spiritual person? Example: < When I was in school as a boy, the *madres* and *padres* taught me to give alms to the poor and to teach them catechism. Later on in life, after Vatican II, I learned that the better way was a) to be **with** them and **for** them b) and **sharing** with them the power of God's word in the Bible. It is the post-Vatican II approach that helped me become a more spiritual person.

2. If we reflect deeply on Christ's mission to the poor, we will realize that it was meant not only to alleviate their misery but to ***change their situation***, to liberate them from the injustices inflicted upon them, to enable them to lead a new life. As Jesus himself says in Jn 10:10: "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full"

Pointer for sharing: When you help the poor, do you merely want to assuage your conscience (as when you give a few centavos or even a peso to a beggar), or do you really want to be their partners so that together you can live a better life? Example: <> Instead of waiting for poor children to become street children and then helping them with alms, the NCBC subsidizes the schooling of its beneficiaries until they learn to become productive in jobs or in business.

3. The main idea of the original Jubilee or fiftieth years (see Lev. 25:8-17) was to guarantee the equitable distribution of wealth/land to all of God's Chosen People. When the people, casting aside personal greed, comply with this desire of the Lord, he will show them his kindness and make the nation as a whole prosper. Jesus, through his public ministry, death and resurrection, will push the idea to its ultimate realization. If the people fulfill their part of the bargain by showing to the Messiah the obedience of faith, God will give his people ultimate salvation. The summit does not negate the base.

Pointer for sharing: Don't you think a "(Jubilee) year of grace" should bring both temporal and transcendental blessings from God? What are your expectations for the Jubilee year 2000? Example: <> The Philippines hopes to be an "Asian Tiger" in its economy by the year 2000. We can support this endeavor but we must insist that it must go hand in hand with a renewal of Christian faith and morality, for the year 2,000, after all, marks the 2,000th birthday of Jesus Christ.

Ghost? Spirit? Wind? Breath?

"Ghost" comes from the Anglo Saxon "gast" which is also developed into "gust", and that is what it means: a violent flurry of wind.

"Spirit" derives from the Latin "spiritus", the gentle breath of life that quietly fills our lungs with air continuously throughout life.

The Old Testament Hebrew original is Ru'ah, which means both violent wind and gentle breath, Ghost and Spirit.

In a conversation with Nicodemus in Jn 3:8, Jesus said: "The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going." (Contemporary English Version).

Describing Pentecost, Luke says: "Suddenly there was a noise from heaven like the sound of a mighty wind (= *gust / gust / ghost*)\" Acts 2:2

In the case of the Spirit who anointed Jesus for his public ministry, it seems that He (She?) came in a gentle, hardly perceptible manner.

February 1, 1998

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

LUKE 4: 21-30

JESUS, THE NEW ELIJAH AND NEW ELISHA

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This Sunday's Gospel reading slightly overlaps with that of last Sunday (v. 21), but verses 22-24 actually pertain to a second visit to Nazareth, and verses 25-30 to a third visit, at the end of

the Galilean ministry of Jesus. It is made clear that Jesus, not accepted by his own people, will turn to the Gentiles, to us, who will become his new people. This turn of events make him a New Elijah and a New Elisha, prophets who, long before Jesus, extended their ministry to Gentiles.

Focus Points. (1) V. 22b Is this not Joseph's son? At this time, only Mary (and Joseph himself) knew that Jesus was only the foster son of Joseph; that he was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit (see Mt 1:20; Lk 1:35).

(2) V. 25-26 There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah... it was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but to a widow of Zarephath near Sidon. Elijah, "the prophet of fire" because he called the divine fire to descend from heaven to consume his sacrifice to the one true God (1 Kgs 18:30-38), in the third scene of his life (1 Kgs 17:8-14), was sent by God to a widow to ask her for food. She was gathering sticks to cook her last meal. Upon Elijah's request for food, she tells him that her supplies are reduced to a handful of flour and a little oil in a jug. Elijah, speaking in God's name, said, "Do not be afraid," and promises, "the jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the Lord sends rain upon the earth." The widow believes and the miracle happens. <> *Jesus is the New Elijah* because he is a prophet greater than Elijah, sent by God himself to the Gentiles after being rejected by his own people. He will promise them the great miracle of salvation, and they will believe.

(3) V. 27 Recall, too, the many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one was cured except Naaman the Syrian." Elisha is the Old Testament prophet who performed a greater number of miracles than any other prophet except Moses. Like Elijah he extended his ministry to a foreigner, whom he cured of leprosy, 2 Kgs 5:1-15. However, the miracle happened only

after Naaman obeyed the instruction of Elisha and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan river (which at first he considered inferior to the Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus). ◇ ***Jesus is the New Elisha*** because he was an even greater miracle worker. More than Elisha, too, he requires people to have faith in him.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. It is only when one has the gift of Christian faith that one can accept Jesus as the Son of God conceived by Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pointer for sharing: Jesus is not a mere man like Jose Rizal who lived in the past but is now gone from us. Jesus, by the power of the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit, continues to be alive and able to help us by words and deeds. Is the difference between Jesus and other great men of the past clear to you? Example: ◇ In High School I was taught to emulate our national heroes, some of whom studied in my own school. I knew Jesus Christ was different from them but it was only through a more intense training in the spiritual life that I learned to ***accept Jesus as someone who is inside me as a fully alive other person.***

2. God through Jesus, the New Elijah, provides us not only with spiritual life but also with all the necessities of temporal life like food, clothing, shelter, recreation.

Pointer for sharing: Many people still think that religion has to do only with spiritual things. In fact, through the eyes of faith, we should be able to see that God, through Jesus the New Elijah, provides us with all the necessities of life in ordinary as well as extraordinary times. Have you experienced being provided for by God in times of temporal necessity? Example: ◇ When

I made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1997, my baggage got lost and I did not get it until five days later. Meanwhile, a fellow priest and other kind people in our group provided me with the clothing I needed.

3. Jesus, the New Elisha is not asking us to do any extraordinary feat in order to experience a healing miracle from God. All we have to do is obey what God wants us to do, even such "ridiculous" things as being washed in baptism, confessing sins to a priest, eating the consecrated wafer of the Eucharist, etc.

Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced being healed by asking a charismatic person to lay hands on you?

Spirit and Word

**If you have the Spirit without the Word,
you blow up.**

**If you have the Word without the Spirit,
you dry up.**

**If you have both the Word and the Spirit,
you grow up.**

Don Lyon/Frank Mihalic

February 8, 1998

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

LUKE 5:1-11

IF YOU SAY SO, I WILL LOWER THE NETS

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Luke has left until ch. 5 of his book the call of the first three disciples, which Mark sets forth in the very beginning of

Jesus' ministry (see Mk 1:16-20). The passage is composite and we may distinguish three elements: (a) a detailed setting of a discourse of Jesus, vv. 1-3; (b) a miraculous catch of fish, vv. 4-10a; (c) the call of Simon, vv. 10b-11.

Focus Points. (1) V. 5-6. Simon said, "Master, we have been hard at it all night long and have caught nothing; but if you say so, I will lower the nets." Upon doing this they caught such a great number of fish that their nets were at the breaking point. The lake of Gennesaret, throughout the gospel of Luke, is more a theological than a geographical factor: it is the place of manifestations which demonstrate the power of Jesus. The present miracle witnessed by Simon, James and John came to them all of a sudden, like a bolt of lightning, and touched the very occupation in their lives in which they spent most of their time, day in and day out.

(2) V. 8-11. At the sight of this, Simon Peter fell at the knees of Jesus saying, "Leave me, Lord, I am a sinful man." ...Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be catching men." The miracle made Peter realize the gulf between him and the divinity, which, in some way, he recognized as present and working in the person of Jesus Christ. He correctly realized that the gulf was due to his own sinfulness (which was not extraordinary but was part of his humanness). In this context, Jesus' words, "Do not be afraid," imply (a) that he has the power to forgive sin and bridge the gulf between God and man, and (b) the power to enable Peter to catch men. Just as Peter, the fisherman-leader was enabled to catch the two boatloads of fish after a futile night, he will be enabled to become an apostle-leader who, together with other apostles, will bring people to the Christian faith.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Our daily occupation, done in a spirit of obedience to God, is the most probable place where we will have that encounter with God that will totally change our life.

Pointer for sharing: When did you have your first encounter with God? Example: ◇ I had my first personal encounter with God when I was dutifully going to school in grade five. My teacher, a *madre*, taught me how to be a friend of Jesus.

2. The people whom God calls to be leaders initially experience fear, which is a good sign. It means that they are aware of their limitations, and if ever they will accomplish the task being set forth to them, it will not be because of their personal abilities but because of God's hand and a personal transformation that will be a gift from God.

Pointer for sharing: Were you ever afraid to go into a great undertaking but a friend showed you the way to do it? Example: ◇ I was afraid to go into a multi-level marketing business, but a friend promised to show me how to become a "manager" in just two or three months. She herself, within just ten months, rose from being just a user of the product to become one of the multi-awarded leaders of the company.

Frustration

When you are frustrated, don't feel you're a special victim. If you could take a "frustration survey," you would feel better, because everybody:

puts time and effort into work which turns out to be useless;
runs into several snags on any undertaking;
finds his efforts undone by somebody else;
gets further delayed when he is already late;
can't find some indispensable tool or piece of paper when
he's all ready to start a project;
does a good job for which someone else is rewarded;
loses out on something which was almost in the bag;
finds an apparently simple task difficult to do;
often fails to get what he wants;
has his best-laid plans fall apart;
now and then finds everything just too much for him.

Today's Gospel Reading tells us that when we get into these frustrations, it is best to obey the Lord's word, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch."

February 15, 1998

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

LUKE 6:17, 20-26

HAPPY POOR, WOEFUL RICH

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Beatitudes are found both in Luke (6:20b-22) and Matthew (5:1-11), but in each gospel they are presented differently, though the words for the four beatitudes they have in common are almost the same. Luke's perspective is social, that of Matthew is moral and religious. For example, Luke 6:21a speaks of real hunger while Mt 5:6 speaks of hunger... for righteousness. On top of this the beatitudes in Luke should be interpreted in close relationship with the woes that reverse the beatitudes in order to underline their message.

Focus Points. (1) V. 20b & 24 Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours... But woe to you rich, for your consolation is now.

(2) V. 21a & 25a Blest are you who are hungry; filled you shall be... Woe to you who are full; you shall go hungry.

(3) V. 21b & 25b Blest are you who are weeping; you shall laugh... Woe to you who laugh now; you shall weep in your grief.

(4) V. 22-23 & 26. Blest shall you be when men hate you, when they ostracize you and insult you and proscribe your name as evil because of the Son of Man. On that day they do so, rejoice and exult, for your reward shall be great in heaven. Thus it was that their fathers treated the prophets...Woe to you when all speak well of you. Their fathers treated the false prophets in just this way.

In contrast to the reward promised in the future to disciples of Christ who are hungry now and weep now and are persecuted (now), the reward promised to the poor is good both for now and for the future. This is because the **reign of God** is a reward that is to be enjoyed initially in this life and ultimately in the next. The poor *who have become disciples of Christ and who trust in God* will be cared for by God in all their needs on earth. The disciples of Christ who may be materially better off will share their goods with them. This is indeed a very important part of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, however, it has not been too well practised by Christians because at some time in Church history, emphasis was given to the Matthean and spiritualized perspective of the beatitudes.

B. REFLECTION POINT

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

According to Luke who wrote Acts 2:44-45 and 4:32.34-35, the early Christian community of Jerusalem waged a war against poverty by sharing their goods: "All who shared the faith owned everything in common; they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed." In other words, "The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common... *None of the members was ever in want*, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any who might be in need."

Pointer for sharing. Have you experienced the blessedness of sharing material goods in a true Christian community?

Questionable Gift Giving

On the same day two local newspapers reported two different questionable cases of gift-giving. One involved a rich landowner, the other involved a bankrupt "prince".

The rich landowner previously announced to the media that he was giving away 800 hectares of his land to worker-beneficiaries, if the Land Bank will give him a minimal compensation. Now, however, 21 workers have accused the landowner of circumventing the agrarian reform law because he plans to buy back the land from the farmers at less than 10% of its value.

In the other news item, a self-styled "prince" of an Asian country got a standing ovation at a United Nations conference for promising one billion dollars in technology for Third World nations. It turns out however, that the so-called prince is a man who abandoned his wife and seven children 19 years ago, living his family in debt for thousands of dollars.

Woe indeed to people like these!

February 22, 1998

SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, Year C

ASH WEDNESDAY ON FEBRUARY 25

LUKE 6:27-38

LOVE OF ENEMIES AND LOVE OF THE BRETHREN

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This Sunday's Gospel Reading has two unequal parts. Luke 6:27-36, the longer part, is about love of enemies, while the last two verses, 37 to 38, are about practices within a Christian community showing love for the brethren.

Focus Points. (1) V. 27 & 35 Love your enemies... The double setting forth of the commandment to love one's enemies indicates Luke's desire to emphasize it. The enemies are those who injure disciples of Christ precisely because they are disciples and do this by thought (hate), word (curse) or deed (abuse). The Christian response to this is AGAPE — a love that manifests itself in action. Three aspects of it are mentioned: (a) to do good; (b) to bless; (c) to pray. Its practical guideline is the Golden Rule in verse 31: **DO TO OTHERS WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO TO YOU** (see also Mt 7:12). Its theological reason is given in verse 36: **BE COMPASSIONATE AS YOUR FATHER IS COMPASSIONATE.**

(2) V. 37-38 **Do not judge... do not condemn... pardon... give.** To these human actions God will correspond: God will not judge you... God will not condemn you... God will pardon you... God will give you **"good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over."** The principle behind these guidelines for good relationships in a Christian community is: **"THE MEASURE YOU MEASURE WITH WILL BE MEASURED BACK TO YOU."**

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. A certain man hated the Communists in China because they took away his ancestral properties and reduced him to poverty. Fortunately he was able to escape to the Philippines. There he became a Catholic Christian and was transformed. Now he does not hate the Communists anymore. In fact he is thankful to them because his flight from China to the Philippines led to his discovery of the Christian way of life.

Pointer for sharing: Has your Christian faith transformed you from being a hater to being a forgiver?

2. We ought not to pass judgment on the motives or actions of our brothers and sisters in our Christian community. And when we are injured by them, we must think of it as an honest mistake and maintain a spirit of forgiveness.

Pointer for snaring. A religious who had been a very high ranking superior in his younger days was assigned in his later years to a community of his brethren running a school. He failed to integrate himself with the young ones and he was not given much say in the community and in the school. He felt "marginalized." When the teachers organized a strike against the school manage-

ment, this marginalized former superior took up the cudgels for the strikers. As a result he was banished from that place. Would this sad story have happened if the persons concerned followed the teaching of Christ?

Nuns Would Not Harm a Murderer

In Papua New Guinea, a man murdered a nun who was trying to shield a girl from abuse. When the villagers discovered the foul deed, they wanted to lynch the murderer and pursued him. For his own safety he ran to the convent of the very nun he had murdered. He was convinced that no matter what happened the Sisters would not harm him and would not turn him over to the angry crowd.

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