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John Paul II

TRUST IN THE FILIPINO

Corazon Aquino

CONFERENCE OF ASIAN MISSIONARY
SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE (ASAL)
FABC

ON UNITY IN THE COUNTRY

Jaime Card. Sin

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO DE FILIPINAS

The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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1998
Year of the Election
Year of the Holy Spirit

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

1998 is the Election Year. This early, the intramurals taking place among the politicians (within and outside their respective parties) are rather alarming. Issues are created to destroy the opponents. Media are used to spread half-truths and half-lies. There are instances of vote buying within parties. But such are denied by doers. However, it is a common knowledge that money talks. This is a rather ugly picture of Philippine politics.

Archbishop Oscar Cruz of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) already indicated in his Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Politics that such things are bound to happen during the pre-election day activities. (Cfr. *Boletin Eclesiastico de Filipinos*, vol. LXXIII, no. 803, November-December 1997, p. 706).

More dubious activities are expected to happen during, and even after, the election. Alarmed by this, individuals and groups are exerting effort to deter any disrespect to the right of the voters and any manipulation of the election results. We encourage all of them to do the utmost they can to protect the sanctity of the ballots.

Our country is in crisis: the plummeting of economy, drug addiction, graft and corruption, abuses by the military, organized syndicates for kidnapping, carnapping, etc. We must pray for a leader who would be able to handle this situation. The present regime has not effectively acted on these in over five years. Let us pray for a president who would be law abiding, one with integrity and strong in morality.

1998 is at the same time the Year of the Holy Spirit. It is a welcome celebration of the workings of the Third Person of the Trinity in the realm of past and present history.

The Holy Spirit is the source of strength and the source of light for all. Candidates and voters are exhorted to appeal for His help: *his light*, in order to eliminate the darkness of deception during the election; *his strength*, in order to counter-act any weakness that will endanger the sanctity of the election.

Come Holy Spirit... Be with our people!



Divini Amoris Scientia

JOHN PAUL II

SAINT THERESE OF THE CHILD JESUS AND THE HOLY FACE IS PROCLAIMED A DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

1. THE SCIENCE OF DIVINE LOVE, which the Father of mercies pours out through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, is a gift granted to the little and the humble so that they may know and proclaim the secrets of the kingdom, hidden from the learned and the wise; for this reason Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, praising the Father who graciously willed it so (cf. Lk 10:21-22; Mt 11:25-26).

Mother Church also rejoices in noting that throughout history the Lord has continued to reveal himself to the little and the humble, enabling his chosen ones, through the Spirit who "searches everything, even the depths of God" (1 Cor 2:10), to speak of the gifts "bestowed on us by God ... in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language" (1 Cor 2:12, 13). In this way the Holy Spirit guides the Church into the whole truth, endowing her with various gifts, adorning her with his fruits, rejuvenating her with the power of the Gospel and enabling her to discern the signs of the times

in order to respond ever more fully to the will of God (cf. *Lumen gentium*, nn. 4, 12; *Gaudium et spes*, n. 4).

Shining brightly among the little ones to whom the secrets of the kingdom were revealed in a most special way is Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, a professed nun of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, the 100th anniversary of whose entry into the heavenly homeland occurs this year.

During her life Therese discovered "new lights, hidden and mysterious meanings" (*Ms A*, 83v^o) and received from the divine Teacher that "science of love" which she then expressed with particular originality in her writings (cf. *Ms B*, 1r^o). This science is the luminous expression of her knowledge of the mystery of the kingdom and of her personal experience of grace. It can be considered a special charism of Gospel wisdom which Therese, like other saints and teachers of faith, attained in prayer (cf. *Ms C*, 36r^o).

2. The reception given to the example of her life and Gospel teaching in our century was quick, universal and constant. As if in imitation of her precocious spiritual maturity, her holiness was recognized by the Church in the space of a few years. In fact, on 10 June 1914 Pius X signed the decree introducing her cause of beatification; on 14 August 1921 Benedict XV declared the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, giving an address for the occasion on the way of spiritual childhood; and Pius XI proclaimed her blessed on 29 April 1923. Shortly afterwards, on 17 May 1925, the same Pope canonized her before an immense crowd in St. Peter's Basilica, highlighting the splendour of her virtues and the originality of her doctrine. Two years later, on 14 December 1927, in response to the petition of many missionary Bishops, he proclaimed her patron of the missions along with St. Francis Xavier.

Beginning with these acts of recognition, the spiritual radiance of ThSrese of the Child Jesus increased in the Church and spread throughout the world. Many institutes of consecrated life and ecclesial movements, especially in the young Churches, chose her as their patron and teacher, taking their inspiration from her spiritual doctrine. Her message, often summarized in the so-called "little way", which is nothing other than the Gospel way of holiness for all, was studied by theologians and experts in spirituality. Cathedrals, basilicas, shrines and churches throughout the world were built and dedicated to the Lord under the patronage of the Saint of Lisieux. The Catholic Church venerates her in the various Eastern and Western rites. Many of the faithful have been able to experience the power of her intercession. Many of those called to the priestly ministry or the consecrated life, especially in the missions and the cloister, attribute the divine grace of their vocation to her intercession and example.

3. The Pastors of the Church, beginning with my predecessors, the Supreme Pontiffs of this century, who held up her holiness as an example for all, also stressed that Thdrese is a teacher of the spiritual life with a doctrine both spiritual and profound, which she drew from the Gospel sources under the guidance of the divine Teacher and then imparted to her brothers and sisters in the Church with the greatest effectiveness (cf. *Ms B*, 2v^o-3^o).

This spiritual doctrine has been passed on to us primarily by her autobiography which, taken from three manuscripts she wrote in the last years of her life and published a year after her death with the title *Histoire d'uneAme* (Lisieux 1898), has aroused an extraordinary interest down to our day. This autobiography, translated along with her other writings into about 50 languages, has made Th6rese known in every part of the world, even outside the Catholic Church. A century after her death, Therese of the Child Jesus continues to be recognized as one of the great masters of the spiritual life in our time.

4. It is not surprising then that the Apostolic See received many petitions to confer on her the title of Doctor of the Universal Church.

In recent years, especially with the happy occasion of the first centenary of her death close at hand, these requests became more and more numerous, including on the part of Episcopal Conferences; in addition, study conferences were held and numerous publications have pointed out how ThSrese of the Child Jesus possesses an extraordinary wisdom and with her doctrine helps so many men and women of every state in life to know and love Jesus Christ and his Gospel.

In the light of these facts, I decided carefully to study whether the Saint of Lisieux had the prerequisites for being awarded the title of Doctor of the Universal Church.

5. In this context I am pleased to recall briefly some events in the life of Theiese of the Child Jesus. Born in Alençon, France, on 2 January 1873, she is baptized two days later in the Church of Notre Dame, receiving the name Marie-Francoise-TheYese. Her parents are Louis Martin and Z6lie Gu6rin, whose heroic virtues I recently recognized. After her mother's death on 28 August 1877, Th6rese moves with her whole family to the town of Lisieux where, surrounded by the affection of her father and sisters, she receives a formation both demanding and full of tenderness.

Towards the end of 1879 she receives the sacrament of Penance for the first time. On the day of Pentecost in 1883 she has the extraordinary grace of being healed from a serious illness through the intercession of Our Lady of Victories. Educated by the Benedictines of Lisieux, she receives First Communion on 8 May 1884, after an intense preparation crowned with an exceptional experience of the grace of intimate union with Jesus. A few weeks later, on 14 June of that same year, she receives the sacrament of Confirmation with a vivid awareness of what the

gift of the Holy Spirit involves in her personal sharing in the grace of Pentecost. On Christmas Day of 1886 she has a profound spiritual experience that she describes as a "complete conversion". As a result, she overcomes the emotional weakness caused by the loss of her mother and begins "to run as a giant" on the way of perfection (cf. *Ms A*, 44v^o-45v^o).

ThSrese wishes to embrace the contemplative life, like her sisters Pauline and Marie in the Carmel of Lisieux, but is prevented from doing so by her young age. During a pilgrimage to Italy, after visiting the Holy House of Loreto and places in the Eternal City, at an audience granted by the Pope to the faithful of the Diocese of Lisieux on 20 November 1887, she asks Leo XIII with filial boldness to be able to enter Carmel at the age of 15 years.

On 9 April 1888 she enters the Carmel of Lisieux, where she receives the habit of the Blessed Virgin's order on 10 January of the following year and makes her religious profession on 8 September 1890, the feast of the Birth of the Virgin Mary. At Carmel she undertakes the way of perfection marked out by the Mother Foundress, Teresa of Jesus, with genuine fervour and fidelity in fulfilling the various community tasks entrusted to her. Illumined by the Word of God, particularly tried by the illness of her beloved father, Louis Martin, who dies on 29 July 1894, Therese embarks on the way of holiness, insisting on the centrality of love. She discovers and imparts to the novices entrusted to her care the little way of spiritual childhood, by which she enters more and more deeply into the mystery of the Church and, drawn by the love of Christ, feels growing within her the apostolic and missionary vocation which spurs her to bring everyone with her to meet the divine Spouse.

On 9 June 1895, the feast of the Most Holy Trinity, she offers herself as a sacrificial victim to the merciful Love of God. On 3 April of the following year, on the night between Holy Thursday and Good Friday, she notices the first symptoms of the illness

which will lead to her death. Therese welcomes it as a mysterious visitation of the divine Spouse. At the same time she undergoes a trial of faith which will last until her death. As her health deteriorates, she is moved to the infirmary on 8 July 1897. Her sisters and other religious collect her sayings, while her sufferings and trials, borne with patience, intensify to the moment of her death on the afternoon of 30 September 1897. "I am not dying; I am entering life", she had written to one of her spiritual brothers, Fr. Belliere (*Lettres* 244). Her last words, "My God, I love you", are the seal of her life.

6. Therese of the Child Jesus left us writings that deservedly qualify her as a teacher of the spiritual life. Her principal work remains the account of her life in three autobiographical manuscripts (*Manuscripts autobiographiques* A, B, C), first published with the soon to be famous title of *Histoire d'une Ante*.

In Manuscript A, written at the request of her sister Agnes of Jesus, then Prioress of the monastery, and given to her on 21 January 1896, Therese describes the stages of her religious experience: the early years of childhood, especially the time of her First Communion and Confirmation, adolescence, up to her entrance into Carmel and her first profession.

Manuscript B, written during her retreat that same year at the request of her sister Marie of the Sacred Heart, contains some of the most beautiful, best known and oft-quoted passages from the Saint of Lisieux. They reveal the Saint's full maturity as she speaks of her vocation in the Church, the Bride of Christ and Mother of souls.

Manuscript C, composed in June and the first days of July 1897, a few months before her death and dedicated to the Prioress, Marie de Gonzague, who had requested it, completes the recollections in Manuscript A on life in Carmel. These pages reveal the author's supernatural wisdom. Therese recounts some sublime

experiences during this final period of her life. She devotes moving pages to her trial of faith: a grace of purification that immerses her in a long and painful dark night, illuminated by her trust in the merciful, fatherly love of God. Once again, and without repeating herself, Therese makes the light of the Gospel shine brightly. Here we find the most beautiful pages she devoted to trusting abandonment into God's hands, to unity between love of God and love of neighbour, to her missionary vocation in the Church.

In these three different manuscripts, which converge in a thematic unity and in a progressive description of her life and spiritual way, Therese has left us an original autobiography which is the story of her soul. It shows how in her life God has offered the world a precise message, indicating an evangelical way, the "little way", which everyone can take, because everyone is called to holiness.

In the 266 *Lettres* we possess, addressed to family members, women religious and missionary "brothers", Therese shares her wisdom, developing a teaching that is actually a profound exercise in the spiritual direction of souls.

Her writings also include 54 *Poesies*, some of which have great theological and spiritual depth inspired by Sacred Scripture. Worthy of special mention are *Vivre a"Amour! ... {Poesies 17}* and *Pourquoi je t'aime, 6 Marie! {Poesies 54}*, an original synthesis of the Virgin Mary's journey according to the Gospel. To this literary production should be added eight *Recreations pieuses*: poetic and theatrical compositions, conceived and performed by the Saint for her community on certain feast days, in accordance with the tradition of Carmel. Among those writings should be mentioned a series of 21 *Prieres*. Nor can we forget the collection of all she said during the last months of her life. These sayings, of which there are several editions, known as the *Novissima verba*, have also been given the title *Derniers Entretiens*.

7. From careful study of the writings of St. Therese of the Child Jesus and from the resonance they have had in the Church, salient aspects can be noted of her "eminent doctrine", which is the fundamental element for conferring the title of Doctor of the Church.

First of all, we find a *special charism of wisdom*. This young Carmelite, without any particular theological training, but illumined by the light of the Gospel, feels she is being taught by the divine Teacher who, as she says, is "the Doctor of Doctors" (*Ms A*, 83v^o), and from him she receives "divine teachings" (*Ms B*, 1r^o). She feels that the words of Scripture are fulfilled in her: "Whoever is a little one, let him come to me... For to him that is little, mercy shall be shown" (*Ms B*, 1v^o; cf. Prv 9:4; Wis 6:6) and she knows she is being instructed in the science of love, hidden from the wise and prudent, which the divine Teacher deigned to reveal to her, as to babes (*Ms A*, 49r^o; cf. Lk 10:21-22).

Pius XI, who considered Therese of Lisieux the "Star of his pontificate", did not hesitate to assert in his homily on the day of her canonization, 17 May 1925: "The Spirit of truth opened and made known to her what he usually hides from the wise and prudent and reveals to little ones; thus she enjoyed such knowledge of the things above — as Our immediate Predecessor attests — that she shows everyone else the sure way of salvation" (AAS 17 [1925], p. 213).

Her teaching not only conforms to Scripture and the Catholic faith, but excels ("eminent") for *the depth and wise synthesis it achieved*. Her doctrine is at once a confession of the Church's faith, an experience of the Christian mystery and a way to holiness. Therese offers a mature synthesis of Christian spirituality: she combines theology and the spiritual life; she expresses herself with strength and authority, with a great ability to persuade and communicate, as is shown by the reception and dissemination of her message among the People of God.

Therese's teaching expresses with coherence and harmonious unity the dogmas of the Christian faith as a doctrine of truth and an experience of life. In this regard it should not be forgotten, that the understanding of the deposit of faith transmitted by the Apostles, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, makes progress in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit: "There is growth in insight into the realities and words that are passed on ... through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19 and 51). It comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience. And it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth" (*Dei Verbum*, n. 8).

In the writings of Therese of Lisieux we do not find perhaps, as in other Doctors, a scholarly presentation of the things of God, but we can discern an enlightened witness of faith which, while accepting with trusting love God's merciful condescension and salvation in Christ, reveals the mystery and holiness of the Church.

Thus we can rightly recognize in the Saint of Lisieux the charism of a Doctor of the Church, because of the gift of the Holy Spirit she received for living and expressing her experience of faith, and because of her particular understanding of the mystery of Christ. In her are found the gifts of the new law, that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit, who manifests himself in living faith working through charity (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theoi*, I-II, q. 106, art. 1; q. 108, art. 1).

We can apply to Therese of Lisieux what my Predecessor Paul VI said of another young Saint and Doctor of the Church, Catherine of Siena: "What strikes us most about the Saint is her infused wisdom, that is to say, her lucid, profound and inebriating absorption of the divine truths and mysteries of faith ... That assimilation was certainly favoured by the most singular natural

gifts, but it was also evidently something prodigious, due to a charism of wisdom from the Holy Spirit" (AAS 62 [1970], p. 675).

8. With her distinctive doctrine and unmistakable style, Therese appears as an *authentic teacher of faith and the Christian life*. In her writings, as in the sayings of the Holy Fathers, is found that life-giving presence of Catholic tradition whose riches, as the Second Vatican Council again says, "are poured out in the practice and life of the Church, in her belief and prayer" (*Dei Verbum*, n. 8).

If considered in its literary genre, corresponding to her education and culture, and if evaluated according to the particular circumstances of her era, the doctrine of Therese of Lisieux appears in providential harmony with the Church's most authentic tradition, both for its confession of the Catholic faith and for its promotion of the most genuine spiritual life, presented to all the faithful in a living, accessible language.

She has made the Gospel shine appealingly in our time; she had the mission of making the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, known and loved; she helped to heal souls of the rigours and fears of Jansenism, which tended to stress God's justice rather than his divine mercy. In God's mercy she contemplated and adored all the divine perfections, because "even his justice (and perhaps even more so than the other perfections) seems to me clothed in love" (*Ms A*, 83v^o). Thus she became a living icon of that God who, according to the Church's prayer, "shows his almighty power in his mercy and forgiveness" (cf. *Roman Missal*, Opening prayer, 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time).

∴ Even though Therese does not have a true and proper doctrinal corpus, nevertheless a *particular radiance of doctrine* shines forth from her writings which, as if by a charism of the Holy Spirit, grasp the very heart of the message of Revelation

in a fresh and original vision, presenting a teaching of eminent quality.

The core of her message is actually the mystery itself of God-Love, of the Triune God, infinitely perfect in himself. If genuine Christian spiritual experience should conform to the revealed truths in which God communicates himself and the mystery of his will (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 2), it must be said that TheYese experienced divine revelation, going so far as to contemplate the fundamental truths of our faith united in the mystery of Trinitarian life. At the summit, as the source and goal, is the merciful love of the three Divine Persons, as she expresses it, especially in her *Act of Oblation to Merciful Love*. At the root, on the subject's part, is the experience of being the Father's adoptive children in Jesus; this is the most authentic meaning of spiritual childhood, that is, the experience of divine filiation, under the movement of the Holy Spirit. At the root again, and standing before us, is our neighbour, others, for whose salvation we must collaborate with and in Jesus, with the same merciful love as his.

Through spiritual childhood one experiences that everything comes from God, returns to him and abides in him, for the salvation of all, in a mystery of merciful love. Such is the doctrinal message taught and lived by this Saint.

As it was for the Church's Saints in every age, so also for her, in her spiritual experience Christ is the centre and fullness of Revelation. Th6rese knew Jesus, loved him and made him loved with the passion of a bride. She penetrated the mysteries of his infancy, the words of his Gospel, the passion of the suffering Servant engraved on his holy Face, in the splendour of his glorious life, in his Eucharistic presence. She sang of all the expressions of Christ's divine charity, as they are presented in the Gospel (cf. *PN 24, Jisus, mon Bien-Aime, rappelle-toi!*).

Therese received particular light on the reality of Christ's Mystical Body, on the variety of its charisms, gifts of the Holy Spirit, on the eminent power of love, which in a way is the very heart of the Church, where she found her vocation as a contemplative and missionary (cf. *Ms B*, 2r^o-3v^o).

Lastly, among the most original chapters of her spiritual doctrine we must recall Therese's wise delving into the mystery and journey of the Virgin Mary, achieving results very close to the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council in chapter eight of the Constitution *Lumen gentium* and to what I myself taught in the Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater* of 25 March 1987.

9. The primary source of her spiritual experience and her teaching is the Word of God in the Old and New Testaments. She herself admits it, particularly stressing her passionate love for the Gospel (cf. *Ms A*, 83v^o). Her writings contain over 1,000 biblical quotations: more than 400 from the Old Testament and over 600 from the New.

Despite her inadequate training and lack of resources for studying and interpreting the sacred books, Therese immersed herself in meditation on the Word of God with exceptional faith and spontaneity. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit she attained a profound knowledge of Revelation for herself and for others. By her loving concentration on Scripture — she even wanted to learn Hebrew and Greek to understand better the spirit and letter of the sacred books — she showed the importance of the biblical sources in the spiritual life, she emphasized the originality and freshness of the Gospel, she cultivated with moderation the spiritual exegesis of the Word of God in both the Old and New Testaments. Thus she discovered hidden treasures, appropriating words and episodes, sometimes with supernatural boldness, as when, in reading the texts of St. Paul (cf. 1 Cor 12-13), she realized her vocation to love (cf. *Ms B*, 3r^o-3v^o). Enlightened by the revealed Word, Therese wrote brilliant pages

on the unity between love of God and love of neighbour (cf. *Ms C*, 11v^o-19r^o); and she identified with Jesus' prayer at the Last Supper as the expression of her intercession for the salvation of all (cf. *Ms C*, 34r^o-35r^o).

Her doctrine, as was said, conforms to the Church's teaching. From childhood she was taught by her family to participate in prayer and liturgical worship. In preparation for her first Confession, first Communion and the sacrament of Confirmation, she gave evidence of an extraordinary love for the truths of the faith, and she learned the *Catechism* almost word for word (cf. *Ms A*, 37r^o-37v^o). At the end of her life she wrote the Apostles' Creed in her own blood, as an expression of her unreserved attachment to the profession of faith.

In addition to the words of Scripture and the Church's doctrine, Therese was nourished as a youth by the teaching of the *Imitation of Christ*, which, as she herself acknowledges, she knew almost by heart (cf. *Ms A*, 47r^o). Decisive for fulfilling her Carmelite vocation were the spiritual texts of the Mother Foundress, Teresa of Jesus, especially those explaining the contemplative and ecclesial meaning of the charism of the Teresian Carmel (cf. *Ms C*, 33v^o). But in a very special way, Therese was nourished on the mystical doctrine of St. John of the Cross, who was her true spiritual master (cf. *Ms A*, 83r^o). It should cause no surprise, then, if she who had been an outstanding pupil in the school of these two Saints, later declared Doctors of the Church, should later become a master of the spiritual life.

10. The *spiritual doctrine of Therese of Lisieux has helped extend the kingdom of God*. By her example of holiness, of perfect fidelity to Mother Church, of full communion with the See of Peter, as well as by the special graces obtained by her for many missionary brothers and sisters, she has rendered a particular service to the renewed proclamation and experience of Christ's

Gospel and to the extension of the Catholic faith in every nation on earth.

There is no need to dwell at length on the *universality of Therese's doctrine and on the broad reception of her message* during the century since her death: it has been well documented in the studies made in view of conferring on her the title of Doctor of the Church.

A particularly important fact in this regard is, that the Church's Magisterium has not only recognized Therese's holiness, but has also highlighted the wisdom of her doctrine. Pius X had already said that she was "the greatest saint of modern times". On joyfully receiving the first Italian edition of the *Story of a Soul*, he extolled the fruits that had resulted from Therese's spirituality. Benedict XV, on the occasion of proclaiming the Servant of God's heroic virtues, explained the way of spiritual childhood and praised the knowledge of divine realities which God granted to Therese in order to teach others the ways of salvation (cf. AAS 13 [1921], pp. 449-452). On the occasion of both her beatification and canonization, Pius XI wished to expound and recommend the Saint's doctrine, underscoring her special divine enlightenment (*Discorsi di Pio XI*, vol. I, Turin 1959, p. 91) and describing her as a teacher of life (cf. AAS 17 [1925], pp. 211-214). When the Basilica of Lisieux was consecrated in 1954, Pius XII said, among other things, that Therese penetrated to the very heart of the Gospel with her doctrine (cf. AAS 46 [1954], pp. 404-408). Cardinal Angelo Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII, visited Lisieux several times, especially when he was Nuncio in Paris. On various occasions during his pontificate he showed his devotion to the Saint and explained the relationship between the doctrine of the Saint of Avila of her daughter, Therese of Lisieux (*Discorsi, Messaggi, Colloqui*, vol. II [1959-1960], pp. 771-772). Many times during the celebration of the Second Vatican Council, the Fathers recalled her example and doctrine. On the centenary of her birth, Paul VI addressed a Letter on 2 January 1973 to the

Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux, in which he extolled Therese's example in the search for God, offered her as a teacher of prayer and theological virtue of hope, and a model of communion with the Church, calling the attention of teachers, educators, pastors and theologians themselves to the study of her doctrine (cf. AAS 65 [1973], pp. 12-15). I myself on various occasions have had the joy of recalling the person and doctrine of the Saint, especially during my unforgettable visit to Lisieux on 2 June 1980, when I wished to remind everyone: "One can say with conviction about Therese of Lisieux that the Spirit of God allowed her heart to reveal directly to the people of our time the *fundamental mystery*, the reality of the Gospel... Her 'little way' is the way of 'holy childhood'. There is something unique in this way, the genius of St. Therese of Lisieux. At the same time there is the confirmation and renewal of the most *basic* and most *universal* truth. What truth of the Gospel message is really more basic and more universal than this: God is our Father and we are his children?" (*Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, vol. III/1 [1980], p. 1659).

These simple references to an uninterrupted series of testimonies from the Popes of this century on the holiness and doctrine of St. Therese of the Child Jesus and to the universal dissemination of her message clearly express to what extent the Church, in her pastors and her faithful, has accepted the spiritual doctrine of this young Saint.

A sign of the ecclesial reception of the Saint's teaching is *the appeal to her doctrine in many documents of the Church's ordinary Magisterium*, especially when speaking of the contemplative and missionary vocation, of trust in the just and merciful God, of Christian joy and of the call to holiness. Evidence of this fact is the presence of her doctrine in the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nn. 127, 826, 956, 1011, 2011, 2558). She who so loved to learn the truths of the faith in the catechism

deserved to be included among the authoritative witnesses of Catholic doctrine.

Therese possesses an exceptional universality. Her person, the Gospel message of the "little way" of trust and spiritual childhood have received and continue to receive a remarkable welcome, which has transcended every border.

The influence of her message extends first of all to men and women whose holiness and heroic virtues the Church herself has recognized, to the Church's pastors, to experts in theology and spirituality, to priests and seminarians, to men and women religious, to ecclesial movements and new communities, to men and women of every condition and every continent. To everyone Therese gives her personal confirmation that the Christian mystery, whose witness and apostle she became by making herself in prayer "the apostle of the apostles", as she boldly calls herself (*Ms A*, 56r°), must be taken literally, with the greatest possible realism, because it has a value for every time and place. The power of her message lies in its concrete explanation of how all Jesus' promises are fulfilled in the believer who knows how confidently to welcome in his own life the saving presence of the Redeemer.

11. All these reasons are clear evidence of how *timely* is the Saint of Lisieux's doctrine and of the *particular impact* her message has had on the men and women of our century. Moreover, some circumstances contribute to making her designation as a Teacher for the Church of our time even more significant.

First of all, Therese is a *woman*, who in approaching the Gospel knew how to grasp its hidden wealth with that practicality and deep resonance of life and wisdom which belong to the feminine genius. Because of her universality she stands out among the multitude of holy women who are resplendent for their Gospel wisdom.

Therese is also a *contemplative*. In the hiddenness of her Carmel she lived the great adventure of Christian experience to the point of knowing the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love (cf. Eph 3:18-19). God did not want his secrets to remain hidden, but enabled Therese to proclaim the secrets of the King (cf. *Ms C*, 2v^o). By her life Therese offers a witness and theological illustration of the beauty of the contemplative life as the total dedication to Christ, Spouse of the Church, and as an affirmation of God's primacy over all things. Hers is a hidden life which possesses a mysterious fruitfulness for spreading the Gospel and fills the Church and the world with the sweet odour of Christ (cf. *LT* 169, 2v^o).

Lastly, Therese of Lisieux is a *young person*. She reached the maturity of holiness in the prime of youth (cf. *Ms C*, 4r^o). As such, she appears as a Teacher of evangelical life, particularly effective in illuminating the paths of young people, who must be the leaders and witnesses of the Gospel to the new generations.

Therese of the Child Jesus is not only the youngest Doctor of the Church, but is also the closest to us in time, as if to emphasize the continuity with which the Spirit of the Lord sends his messengers to the Church, men and women as teachers and witnesses to the faith. In fact, whatever changes can be noted in the course of history and despite the repercussions they usually have on the life and thought of individuals in every age, we must never lose sight of the continuity which links the Doctors of the Church to each other: in every historical context they remain witnesses to the unchanging Gospel and, with the light and strength that come from the Holy Spirit, they become its messengers, returning to proclaim it in its purity to their contemporaries. Therese is a Teacher for our time, which thirsts for living and essential words, for heroic and credible acts of witness. For this reason she is also loved and accepted by brothers and sisters of other Christian communities and even by non-Christians.

12. This year, when the centenary of the glorious death of Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face is being celebrated, as we prepare to celebrate the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, after receiving a great number of authoritative petitions, especially from many Episcopal Conferences throughout the world, and after accepting the official petition, or *Supplex Libellus*, addressed to me on 8 March 1997 by the Bishop of Bayeux and Lisieux, as well as from the Superior General of the Discalced Carmelites of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel and from the Postulator General of the same order, I decided to entrust the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, which has competence in this matter, with the special study of the cause for conferring the title of Doctor on this Saint, "after hearing the opinion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding the eminent doctrine" (Apost. Const. *Pastor Bonus*, n. 73).

After the necessary documentation had been collected, the two above-mentioned Congregations addressed the question in the meetings of their respective consultors: the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on 5 May 1997, with regard to the "eminent doctrine", and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on 29 May of the same year, to examine the special "Positio". On the following 17 June, the Cardinals and Bishops who are members of these Congregations, following a procedure approved by me for this occasion, met in a plenary interdicasterial session and discussed the cause, giving a unanimously favourable opinion on granting the title of Doctor of the Universal Church to St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face. I was personally informed of this opinion by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and by the Pro-Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, Archbishop Alberto Bovone, titular Archbishop of Caesarea in Numidia.

In view of this, on 24 August last, during the Angelus prayer in the presence of hundreds of Bishops and before a vast throng of young people from around the world, gathered in Paris for the

12th World Youth Day, I wanted personally to announce my intention to proclaim Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face a Doctor of the Universal Church during the celebration of World Mission Sunday in Rome.

Today, 19 October 1997, in St. Peter's Square, filled with faithful from every part of the world, and in the presence of a great many Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops, during the solemn Eucharistic celebration I proclaimed Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face a Doctor of the Universal Church in these words: **Fulfilling the wishes of many Brothers in the Episcopate and of a great number of the faithful throughout the world, after consulting the Congregation for the Causes of Saints and hearing the opinion of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith regarding her eminent doctrine, with certain knowledge and after lengthy reflection, with the fullness of Our apostolic authority We declare Saint Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, virgin, to be a Doctor of the Universal Church. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.**

This having been duly enacted, We decree that this Apostolic Letter is to be religiously preserved and to have full effect both now and in the future; furthermore, it is thus to be judged and defined as right, and whatever to the contrary may be attempted by anyone, on whatever authority, knowingly or unknowingly, is null and void.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter's under the Fisherman's ring, the 19th day of the month of October in the year of the Lord 1997, the 20th of the Pontificate.

On the Occasion of the Death Centenary of St. Therese of Lisieux*

JAIME CARD. SIN

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Sometime ago, a seminarian gifted a young girl with a picture of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus. Months later, when the two met again, the seminarian asked the girl how she liked the *Stampita*. The girl very innocently, exclaimed: "I like it and each time I look at the picture of that Saint, I find intriguing the way she smiles at me."

That smile, the somewhat bashful mirth that comes from a young Carmelite's face continues to touch the imaginations of peoples everywhere. It is a smile that radiates peace and joy, almost betraying a beatific contentment with her life. That trademark smile has been the key that attracted so many souls to turn to God in prayer and conversion.

But lest we forget, St. Therese did not smile externally because her life was all too full of comfort. She was not in the

* Homily delivered by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal sin, Archbishop of Manila, on the occasion of Holy Eucharist for the Death Centenary of St. Therese of Lisieux, at the Mt. Carmel National Shrine, Broadway, on October 1, 1997, at 6 pm.

best of physical and spiritual upliftment. Rather, she lived a dedication to Christ that was remarkably punctuated by so much pain and suffering. These sufferings, through her constant openness to the Holy Spirit, brought her salvation. It led to a holiness which the entire Catholic world generously attributed to her silent and obscure life.

Today we commemorate the centenary of the death of Saint Therese. One hundred years after, we attest to the living legacy of this hidden soul whose humility flashed about the world the radiance of the face of God. Saint Therese began her journey to the bosom of the Godhead at an early age. Her intensified sense of mission started too early, she needed dispensation on age requirement before she could enter the Carmelite monastery.

In that monastery, as a rose bud, she slowly blossomed into the most fragrant and most attractive flower on the altar of God and the Blessed Mother. She worked her way through a faithful routine that made her one with the rest of struggling humanity. Inside the monastery, she was cloaked in the mantle of ordinariness.

St. Therese was so ordinary that her religious pilgrimage was not dotted with ecstasies, visions, interior locutions or prophecies. Nothing esoteric about her. Rather, she was everywhere she needed to be — at the laundry, in the kitchen, garden, cloister, and chapel. Here in this chapel, she frankly confesses that many times, at prayer, she fell asleep.

This is perhaps St. Therese's greatest appeal. She is the patron of everyone, because she is like every Christian trying to find meaning in life. Holiness means primarily doing God's will every moment of our waking days. A driver can be holy. A cook can be holy. A teacher can be holy. A *lolo* and *lola* can be holy. A sick person can allow God to transform pain into saving sacrifice for sins and for others. That is what Therese

did for us. She exposed to us her "little way," the ordinary road to eternal joy.

If the personal example of this saint astounds us, then we can say that her message propels her higher into the altars of the Church and of every Christian heart. She did not write treatises, just simple letters, notes and a candid autobiography. But the reverberating message that pierces our hearts is the fact that she revealed to us a different face of God.

For St. Therese, God was not a judge, not a stern teacher, not a regal king nor fearful dictator. God was simply a loving father. She experienced how it is to be His child. She unraveled the mystery and shared it with us. To us who need a guide and a friend in our desperate need for direction, God is present. God is present in all we do, in all situations we find ourselves. Like a little child, the disposition of Therese, we can if we wish, grab the Father's hand and walk without fear.

This is the most beautiful of Therese's spiritual inheritance and she has bequeathed it to us for the past 100 years. Its effects, like a flowing dam, can never be stopped. Thanks be to Jesus for a gift like Therese.

We look for miracles. We search for apparitions, visions and messages. Today, God gives us the miracle. The miracle is not a vision, but a person. A person we can follow. There is no miracle in Saint Therese. She herself is our miracle. And this we believe. Jesus loves you all.

Trust in the Filipino*

CORAZON AQUINO

Twenty-five years ago, the President of the Philippines blew out the light of democracy and covered the nation in darkness. Congress was padlocked and the Supreme Court put under the gun. Journalists were picked up, newspapers were shut down. The public was blindfolded and gagged, and the country was robbed. Robbed for 14 years without let-up or hindrance, without limit or shame. Some of the best and brightest of our youth disappeared.

Why? Because the President of the Philippines then wanted to change the Constitution so he could stay in power beyond the legal term.

Fourteen years later, millions of Filipinos gathered in a massive act of civil disobedience to send a single short message from this place: *tama na, sobra na...* never mind the rest. One week later, His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin called on those millions again to form a human shield around Fidel Ramos and

* Speech of Former President Corazon C. Aquino, Prayer Rally, Luneta, September 21, 1997.

Juan Ponce Enrile, because they had joined our fight for democracy.

The flame of freedom burned again.

Today, there is a dark wind blowing across our country again... the wind of ambition, a gathering storm of tyranny. We are here to shield that flame so that the light of democracy will not go out in our country again.

Tulad po noong kapanahunan ng mungkahi tungkol sa Charter change upang magkaroon ng term extension. 5a Kongreso, sa Lower House, nakita natin kung papaano minamanipula ang pag-uusap tungkol sa Charter change — pinasusulong at pinatitigil na para bang robot o puppet ang karamihan ng Congressmen.

Buo po ang aking paniniwala na kung siguro meron nang people power noong 1972, hindi na sana nagkaroon ng martial law. Hindi na sana kailangan pang magbuwis ng libu-libong buhay, magsara ng diyaryo, radyo at TV, mandakip at magkulong ng walang warrant of arrest, manakit at magpahirap ng dimabilang na kabataan at propesyonal, manakot ng milyun-milyong Pilipino upang manatili lamang ang isang Pangulo sa Malakanyang.

That is why we are here — to tell the people who want to stay in power, by martial law or Charter change; no way and never again. Do your worst, we will do our best to stop you. And we, the people will prevail.

Hindi po sa tumututol tayo basta sa pagpapalit ng ating Saligang Batas. Kung sa kapasiyahan ng karamihan ay kailangang may dapat palitan sa ating Konstitusyon, palitan po natin.

But not now — *hindi ngayon*. And not to profit the people in power today. Not by fake initiatives and not by congressional resolutions favoring the last-term congressmen who made those self-serving resolutions.

Dapat siguro noting ipaalala sa ating mga Congressmen at iba pang pulitiko na ang kapangyarihang hawak nilang pansamantala ay dapat gamitin lamang sa kabutihan ng bayan, hindi sa pansariling kapakanan.

But we are here not only to fight Charter change for term extensions, we are here also to fight the amnesia that will let the old enemies of democracy ambush it again. This is the amnesia that Cardinal Sin, the godfather of Filipino freedom, warns us against.

Pero parang kulang naman kung puro protesta, at madilim na paggunita lamang ang ating gagawin dito. Noon pong nagpupulong ang organizing committee tungkol sa rally nating ito, mayroon pong nagtanong: Ano raw po ang nararapat na mood ng raling ito? Should the mood be sad for the day democracy died 25 years ago? Or should the mood be happy because we are free to commemorate that tragic event in freedom again?

Akin naman pong naisip: Saan ba kayo nakakita ng mga Pilipinong nagtipun-tipon — ke rebolusyon, piyesta o burol man — na hindi tayo nagsasaya? Marapat lamang naman na tayo ay magsaya at magdiwang. Dahil meron pa tayong kalayaan, marami tayo na nagkakaisa ang diwa. At dahil sa diwa naman nating ito, wala na sigurong susubok na sirain na naman ang ating Saligang Batas para sa pansariling kabutihan ng iilang pulitiko lamang. Let us therefore celebrate the unity that makes people power.

We are many, we are free, we are committed, and we are strong. We are people power once more. We triumphed over tyranny before; tyranny cannot triumph over us again — not while we are many, vigilant and united.

And that is how we must remain. The price of liberty is eternal vigilance because the hunger of tyranny is never satisfied. We cannot give an inch, because tyranny will take a mile. We

cannot yield one right or compromise one freedom, because dictatorship, tasting one, will want it all.

Nobody likes a fight, nobody wants trouble. Filipinos are a peaceful, loving people. Tomorrow we want to return to work and make up what we lost by devaluation. But if we were not here today, we would need to be here every day thereafter because there will be no peace, no life, no work and no hope. Cardinal Sin and I, and all who are here, must hope that this rally is all it will take — to stop Charter change and let the people pick the successor of President Fidel Ramos in 1998.

But if it is not enough, we are prepared.

Hangga't ako ay nabubuhay, lalaban ko ang bawa't makikita kong tangkang pagwasak sa ating demokrasya. Naranasan ko na ang maging biyuda dahil sa pulitika. Wala na sanang kahit na isang maybahay pa na kailangang tangisan ang pagkawala ng kanyang asawa upang maibalik lamang ang demokrasya. Bago pa humantong diyan sa ganyang pakikibaka, magsalita na tayo, magdasal na tayo, mag-ingay na tayo, magmartsa na tayo. Sabihin natin, hindi na tayo papayag na mawala pang muli ang ating kalayaan na pinagbuwisan ng maraming buhay.

The Filipino people paid for democracy with blood, sweat and tears. They will not accept the false article of self-serving popular initiatives as a real example of democracy.

We are here again as we were in EDSA in 1986. People-Prayer Power 1986 and People-Prayer Power 1997. We want to impress upon the leaders of today and tomorrow, that we will come here as often as needed to remind them that they are the servants, not the masters, of the people.

Let us take this occasion to warn the Presidentiables of the greatest danger they will face when they succeed in their quest. Power intoxicates; too much power is addictive. And there will

always be power drug dealers who will feed your habit as President.

They will say you are right, when you are wrong. They will say you are successful, when you fail, and will insist you are indispensable, although you are just one of 70 million Filipinos who gave you the rare privilege to be their servant but only for your elected term. They will say that nobody can take your place, when what they mean is that they do not want to give up their places.

Let me tell you now, the Presidency is so great an honor, no one deserves to have it again. It imposes a duty so important — to guide a whole country and protect a whole nation — that you must do it well. And if you did it well, you won't deserve to do it again. Doing your job well was your duty and not a special favor to the country.

There is a secret I would like to share. The honor of the Presidency is so great, no one needs to have it more than once. The honor sticks to you. A president is never forgotten, whether he is good or bad. Better to be remembered as a good one.

Kung sa inyong puso ay mayroong pagnanasang tumagal pa sa kapangyarihan, magiging baluktot ang tingin ninyo sa katotohanan. Gagamitin kahit anong dahilan, gagawin kahit anong paraan, manatili lamang sa inyong puwesto. Kaya po sa pagpapasya, ang conflict of interest ay talagang dapat iwasan.

Let this be the litmus test of all who seek to be President: an oath—here and now — that nothing they do shall benefit themselves, whether running the country, upholding the laws or changing the Consitution when necessary.

We the citizens must therefore make sure that we demand these from our leaders.

Bukod pa rito mahalaga rin ang mapangalagaan natin ang proseso ng halalan. Ang dapat lamang pangambahan ay ang dayaan at dagdag-bawas. We should respect the people's choice.

Finally, to the man I supported in 1992, my friend, our President, Fidel V. Ramos, I say:

No work is ever finished, and good work is hard to let go. But you made your name in history even before you became President, when you joined the people's fight for democracy, and stood by me in its defense.

You will be remembered for the stability you established, for the economic progress you achieved; above all, for the confidence you restored in our country throughout the world. The downturn of the economy will pass, but the gratitude of the nation will abide for the man who raised it up and held it there.

Marami ka nang nagawa, kaibigan kong Presidente. Marami ka nang maaaring ipagmalaki.

I think we both know that the real saviors of this country are the people and not any one of us.

Trust the good people of our country to continue your good work. I trusted in you when my term was over. Trust in the Filipino.

Movements of Hope — Signs of Hope in our Contemporary Church

JAVIER GONZALEZ, OP

"I had no idea nor experience of the Holy Spirit," I heard a woman saying one day during a sharing. Those present reacted with face of surprise. But in the end most of them equally confessed that neither had they an experience of the Holy Spirit and, furthermore, that they had not missed him much in their Christian lives!

Yet, whether noticeable or not, whether experienced or not, the Spirit had been and is there... giving life. True, there have been times in the history of the Church when the presence of the Spirit (translated into strong charismatic manifestations) seem to have been very low, or at least hardly felt.

This is not though the case of the XXth century, during which the Holy Spirit has blown with an extraordinary intensity. This century has brought in fact a sudden and unexpected surge of new charisms in the life of the Church; charisms which in their own time became landmarks of hope. The people of God needed them. And this necessity is precisely one of the great signs of our time.

John XXIII, before the Second Vatican Council (1963-1966) addressed a prayer to the Holy Spirit in which he asked the Spirit

"to renew his wonders in our time, *as in a new Pentecost.*" Such prayer, often repeated by the Liturgy of the Hours, has been seen partially fulfilled in three particular events which I consider as great *Signs of Hope* in our contemporary Church: (a) *First*, the unprecedented proliferation of new Christian Movements; (b) *Second*, the "new way of thinking" brought about by the Second Vatican Council; and, (c) *Third*, the awakening/restoration of Lay Ministries in the life of the Church.

The Proliferation of New Movements

The XXth century will be remembered in history as the century of the great Christian Movements. A countless number of them have sprouted along the years, like mushrooms on a fertile soil. Marked by the style of faith lived at the moment of their birth, these movements were constituted around a fundamental charism, sometimes of a contemplative character (e.g. Taizé); more often, of a pastoral orientation. But the most distinctive characteristic of these Movements is *their being constituted almost exclusively by lay people*. This fact alone, apart from creating a new dynamism in the life of the Church, presupposes a 'theology of perfection' very different from the one existing in other epochs.

- The ***Catholic Action*** sprouted on the first two decades of the century. It was an attempt to prolong, through the laity, the apostolic work of the hierarchy, trying to conquer and evangelize sectors until then pastorally overlooked.
- The ***Legion of Mary*** made its appearance in 1921, founded by Frank Duff, in Dublin. It had the purpose of "sanctifying its members through prayer and an active cooperation in the work of Mary" reaching out to the most abandoned.

- The *Opus Dei*, by Bl. Jose Maria Escriva de Balaguer, born towards the end of the second decade, tried to promote among its members the sanctity in the world through professional work.
- The *Hermandades del Trabajo*, founded by Sir Abundio Garcia Roman in the forties, were an apostolic and social organization intended to promote the working sector.
- The *Focolari*, whose origin goes back to 1943. As children of the feminine sensitivity and spiritual inspiration of Chiara Lubich, they wanted to live the Gospel from the perspective of unity through an oblation love capable of accepting others as they really are.
- *Taizé* came into the picture the following year, 1944. Roger Schutz had founded a community of monks in that French little town, where year after year thousands of young people gather together in prayer and an ecumenical search for unity.
- The *Cursillos de Cristiandad*, promoted by Msgr. Hervas, Bishop of Mallorca, Eduardo Bonin and Sebastian Gallan together with a group of young people, were born in 1949. Their purpose was fostering groups of Christians willing to transform the world they moved in through witnessing and the spreading of Christian values.
- *Comunione e Liberazione* saw the light in 1954. By inspiration of the priest Luigi Giussani, the movement was founded having as objective its own insertion among student circles through a living experience of Jesus Christ in community.
- The *Neo-Cathecumenal Way* was born in 1964. Kiko Argiello and Carmen Hernandez, called by the Lord to live out their faith among the poor of the squatter area

of Palomeras Altas (Madrid), were the first to be surprised by the fruits of the "way" they themselves had founded. "The Way" (as it is nicknamed) soon became an evangelizing and renewing movement, rooted in the tripod: *kerigma* (proclamation of the powerful Word of God), *community* (born from such proclamation) and *liturgy* (their celebration).

- The ***Charismatic Renewal*** could be the last to cut short an endless list. Born in 1967, it has been defined by some as a "Movement" (because of its innovating impulse), but considered by others as "the Church itself in movement." Known at the beginning for the raising of their hands in praise, soon "the charismatic" became popular also for other features of their celebrations: baptism in the Spirit, prophecies, speaking in tongues, healing, etc. Faith and Baptism are the keystones of this new experience, set to take to the last consequences the process of Christian initiation.

These are but a few among the most influential Christian Movements that have appeared in the contemporary Church. The list, however, could be endless: hundreds of similar groups or communities have made their appearance all over the world in recent years. Some of them have done it in odor of multitudes, like the ***El Shaddai***, in the Philippines, under the umbrella of its charismatic leader Brother Mike Velarde. An evaluation of it is not yet possible, since it has to be done from its fruits, and these latter need some time to ripe. But *ubi caritas, Deus ibi est*. And where God is there is hope.

The "New Way of Thinking" of Vatican II

On December 8, 1965, the Second Vatican Council was solemnly closed. I was a teenager then, but adult enough to realize

of the "new way of thinking" and of the authentic revolution that the Council had brought about. The work carried out in it by the Holy Spirit would have seemed impossible and indeed unthinkable merely a few years earlier. The eyes of the participants to the Council were widely opened in amazement at the documents they themselves were approving. Surely, the Spirit had flooded the Church with fresh air through the doors and windows that had been providentially opened.

A "new way of thinking," a new theological mentality was in the air, which, to a certain extent, looked 'natural' and was even taken for granted! Goodness and, therefore, salvation were not any more simply in piety or in some privileged sectors of the Church. Goodness was there, in the world: in life itself, in the daily work, in the family, in the relations with others... Nothing — the earthly reality included — was strange to God's plan. The Church, therefore, had not to attract the world towards her in order to save it, but on the contrary, she had to make herself the servant of the world. The Kingdom of God was not identified with the Church but rather with the whole mankind, healed by the power of Jesus Christ and saved by His resurrection. The Decree *Gaudium et Spes* affirmed that although the Kingdom of God and the earthly reality are two different entities, the latter becomes, in a mysterious way, part of the former.

At the bottom of this change of mentality there was a new idea and experience of salvation. Salvation was not simply something that will take place after physical death, making of the present life a mere test; salvation was something that *has already started* to take place, a phenomenon that somehow embraces the whole human reality, heals and transforms it, 'suffers' and 'rejoices' with it, and finally takes it to completion in Christ. (Sin, in this context, is not only an impediment for salvation in the next life, but a tragic historical reality that means rupture with God since, in harming the communion and love among men, it destroys His plan). In short, the "next life" is not something

disconnected from human history, but rather the full transformation and eschatological realization of the latter. This vision, far from removing value to the present world, gives an authentic meaning and consistency to it: the *autonomy* of the earthly realities and the respect for the secular task would become but just two logical consequences of it...

These *revolutionary* concepts automatically rendered *obsolete* some of the existing apostolic movements — even religious Orders and Congregations —, which were forced to revise their mentality and structures. Understandably, there were also some excesses on this phase of *aggiornamento*, coming from radical circles.

But little shadows cannot in any way prevent the immense majority of the People of God from enjoying the dazzling sunshine brought by this Council to the life of the Church. It was the work of the Holy Spirit, who "continually rejuvenates the Church." The celebration of the Second Vatican Council meant indeed an injection of youth given by the Spirit to the Church, whom He wanted to become the salt of the earth, the yeast in the dough and the light of the world but without losing her own identity in the process. We are the privileged ones who have started tasting its fruits!

The Reawakening of Lay Ministries in the Church

As 'prophetic' has been considered "the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit in making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibilities and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances" (AAA).

Such awareness brought with it the *empowerment* of the laity. On its part, the eagerness to serve was soon translated into a variety of ministries. What was unthinkable not so many years ago is now a reality: The laity, the vast majority of the People

of God, after centuries of lethargy, have started taking active part in the mission and in the ministry of the Church. Even the very expressions "lay ministers" or "lay ministries" have become familiar to us nowadays. In fact, we find *normal* seeing lay people performing various liturgical functions, such as reading at Mass, commentating, leading prayers and prayer-meetings, distributing Holy Communion..., even presiding in special cases at weddings and funerals. Likewise, we cherish the presence of throngs of lay persons, men and women, directly involved in the Church apostolate: catechists, preachers, missionaries, theology teachers, etc. And finally we see with hope the mixing up of competent lay persons in Church affairs, such as sitting in the various governing bodies and councils at all levels, serving at marriage tribunals, etc.

What has happened? Is this just an emergency solution prompted by the scarcity of priests? Is it perhaps a manifestation of the democratic spirit of our times? Not at all; something else than that. Definitively the laity are not mere *substitutes* of priests in their apostolate. "The apostolate of the *laity derives from their Christian vocation* and the Church can never be without it," solemnly stated the Second Vatican Council.

If so... Why is it that the incorporation of lay ministers in the life of the Church is of recent creation? Well, this deserves an explanation. The image of the Church as composed not only of clergy but also of laity is not actually new. What has happened is that, for centuries, the laity had been considered as a sort of second-class citizens, paternally cared for by the clergy, with specific obligations but hardly any right in the governance of the Church. This was precisely one of the factors that prompted the Second Vatican Council to issue an urgent call for the restoration of the old practice (SC. 14). The new proliferation of lay ministers and ministries has been the response to that urgent call issued by the Council. That is why the whole matter appears to be a "recent creation." Certainly, the awakening and restoration of the functions of the laity within the Church are something new.

The 'theology of the laity' behind this development is beautiful indeed. Incorporated into Christ through baptism, every member of the Church, whether cleric or lay, man or woman, is entitled to take an active role in the mission of the Church: "For this reason they participate *in their own way* in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ. They are called, each *according to his or her particular condition*, to exercise the mission which God entrusted to the Church to fulfill in the world" (c.204). True, there are technical distinctions here that have to be properly understood. But the thread is that all Christians, without exception, share the dignity of Christ and his mission of humble service to others.

One cannot help it but seeing with great joy the emergence in the Church of a mature, well-prepared, responsible lay people, committed and directly involved in carrying out the mission entrusted by the Lord to his followers. It is a providential development; a blessing from God; a great sign of hope!

An unprecedented proliferation of new Christian Movements..., the celebration of the Second Vatican Council..., the reawakening and restoration of Lay Ministries... Who does not see in these modern phenomena the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of a *New Pentecost*? "Look, I'm making all things new. Don't you see it?" The Gospel words continue to find here their realization: *The Lord has sent his Spirit and the face of the earth is continually being renewed!* They have already become landmarks, movements of hope — signs of hope in our contemporary Church.

Conference of Asian Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life (ASAL)

FABC

The Office of Evangelization of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences organized a colloquium for the representatives of the Asian born missionary societies and those others working in Asia, at the Redemptorist Center Pattaya, Thailand, from April 2-6, 1997 to study their common commitment to the announcement of the Gospel on this vast continent at the dawning of the 3rd millenium. Twelve Societies of Apostolic Life (SAL) were represented.

The participants of the colloquium expressed their gratitude to God for the great vocation that their institutes had received in sharing the mission of local churches in the proclamation of the message of Christ to other peoples, establishing and nurturing to maturity Christian communities in different parts of Asia and beyond. They rejoiced at the growing vitality and dynamism of many of the local churches in Asia that had already become mission-sending churches.

In keeping with the teachings and lived traditions of the older missionary societies, the new ones too joyfully affirmed that their commitment was to taking the gift of the Gospel to those who had not yet heard about Christ, crossing the boundaries of nations,

cultures and every other form of barrier. They accepted it as a lifelong commitment (therefore, AD GENTES, AD EXTEROS, AD VITAM).

They realized the importance of profound convictions about the theological foundations on which their calling was based and the strong spiritual motivations that would continue to inspire them.

They looked forward to stirring up missionary zeal both in the local churches and among the members of their own institutes, and raising up active young members with genuine missionary qualities: prayerfulness, charity and generosity, detachment, austerity of life, adaptability, respect for peoples, religions and cultures, availability, courage and optimism, simplicity of manners and authenticity.

They gratefully accepted the offer of the FABC to help them by establishing a desk of ASAL under the FABC Office of Evangelization, to facilitate relationships among their societies.

Reaffirming their commitment to mission and evangelization and their unique SAL identity and with the goal of enhancing the proclamation of the Gospel in the Asian context in a coordinated way, the participants expressed their hope that several of the following would be achieved.

1. Continued communication of mission experiences, methods, opportunities, and resources; this could partially be accomplished through an ongoing newsletter for all Asian SALs; this newsletter would be edited by the ASAL societies themselves and be published twice a year.
2. Regularly scheduled meetings and Colloquiums; yearly gatherings would be held:
 - (a) in odd-numbered years on an Asia-wide basis;
 - (b) in even-numbered years on a world-wide basis with all SAL groups.

3. Ongoing reflection on the unique SAL charism of *ad gentes* mission. This would include mission spirituality, mission theology, and careful selection of apostolates.
4. Sharing of personnel resources among SALs, particularly those qualified in areas of spirituality and missiology.
5. Mutual cooperation of SALs in implementing concrete responses to mission needs in the field and undertaking common *ad gentes* mission in needy places.
6. That ASAL will assure proper representation at both national and continental levels so that the unique charism of SALs will be understood and appreciated.
7. The continued relationship of SALs indigenous to or working in Asia with the ASAL group.
8. Continued mutual relationship between ASAL and FABC.
9. A renewed commitment of SALs to mission animation and promotion in both the local churches of origin and of current apostolate. This calls for a close relationship with our Church of origin. It also demands a sensitivity to the missionary and pastoral plans of the dioceses where they are serving.
10. That as an expression of the missionary nature of each church, Bishops' Conferences explore the possibility of establishing similar mission organizations or institutes in those places where presently none exist.

PASTORAL WORDS

On El Niño Clean-up Program*

JAIME CARD. SIN

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

"Oh most High Almighty, good Lord God, to you belong all praise, glory, honor and all blessings. Praised by my Lord God, with all His creatures, and especially our brother the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light: Fair is he, and he shines with a very great splendor. O Lord, He signifies us to you!

Praised be my Lord for our sister the moon, and for the stars, which He has set clear and lovely in the heaven. Praised be the Lord for my brother and wind, and for air and clouds, calms and all weather, by which you uphold life and all creatures...praised be the Lord for our sister water, who is very serviceable to us, and humble and precious and clean."

This morning Lord, we address you first with the words of Saint Francis of Assisi, friend of God and friend of all creation. He stood before you in praise for the undiluted purity of your

* Prayer delivered by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, on the occasion of Ecumenical Prayer for the El Niño Clean-Up Program at the Malacanang Palace, Manila on November 7, 1997 at 8:30 am.

gifts in the world. He recognized your presence in the elements that emanate from your dexterous divinity.

In contrast, we lift our voices to you Lord, with the contrition that cannot now restore the beauty of your original design for our land. We have devastated the earth through the human folly of greed and pride. We have damaged beyond repair the integrity of your gifts. And we feel now the pains and sufferings that our negligence has brought about.

But since you are the Lord of creation and the God of order, we also come with optimism. Your creative power endures. And you inspire people to make reparations for the death our human hands inflict on our environment and our neighbor.

Bless all our humble efforts to avert the disasters that we predict will envelop the earth with the onslaught of the El Nino and global warming phenomena. We can still save the remaining waters from pollution. The remaining woods and forests we can still rescue from denudation. The pure, fresh air of the countryside we can still prevent from the noxious effects of pollutants. We can still encourage the people, especially the young and those in authority, to preserve the earth for the coming generations of human beings for whom the earth and its riches are also your enduring promise and patrimony.

Lord, with your inspiration all is not lost. Give us courage to continue dreaming of a world in conformity with your will. A world where people care for each other and for Mother Earth. A world where caring is expressive of respect for You, the author of all life and blessings.

Equip us today and always with an enlightened heart to realize that the environment on which our earthly lives depend, now in turn depends on us for succor and protection.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus Christ Your son who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

On Unity in the Country*

JAIME CARD. SIN

We come to you loving God, with praise and thanksgiving. How beautiful it is when brothers and sisters live in unity and pray in unity. We believe Lord, that we have power at this very moment because we are one with you in our midst.

We pray to you loving God, make our nation one. Our many dialects, our seven thousand islands set us apart from one another. Let not these natural boundaries be obstacles for our unity as a nation. Our material resources apart the rich from the poor. Let not money divide us. Our political ideologies and parties are breaking our nation apart. Let not politics stand along the way of our communion as a nation. Our many different churches and religions are becoming sources of disharmony. Let not our differences in faith become walls to divide us from one another.

Lord, make our nation one. In unity, there is power. In prayer, there is strength. Make us one in mind and heart so that we can work together for the welfare of your beloved poor. Make

* Homily delivered by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, on the occasion of Malacafiang Prayer Breakfast on November 10, 1997, at 7am.

us united in pursuing the total development of every human person on earth. Make us one in praying and working together to lessen the devastating effects of the drought that is threatening our world.

Lord, may all be one. Send the spirit of unity to our leaders in government and ministers of the various churches so that they may all work in unity for the alleviation of poverty, for the restoration of morality and for the pursuit of the common good. Let not our inability to see eye to eye prevent us from working hand in hand for the welfare of the people.

Lord, make us one, as You are One: Father, son and Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

Pro-Life National Convention*

JAIME CARD. SIN

My dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I remember that as a young priest, I was once asked a question not commonly encountered at the time: What is more important, the date of birth or the moment of conception? Knowing how happy and memorable birthday parties are, my immediate reaction was to say, the birthday, of course! We were already present when our mothers gave birth to us, and every birthday celebration after that; but we were barely present upon that moment of conception. I would find out later how shallow my answer was.

Allow me to go straight to the heart of what Saint Paul, in the first reading, is telling us. He is telling us that — "The spirit of Christ is love. The love of Christ is a divine person. The divine Spirit is Holy. And thus it is a Holy Spirit. And the Spirit of Christ therefore is none other than the Holy Spirit." Paul is telling

* Homily delivered by His Eminence Jaime L. Cardina Sin, Archbishop of Manila, on the occasion of Holy Eucharist for the Pro-Life National Convention, Sportslink M. Adriatico St., Manila, on October 25, 1997, at 3 pm.

us that we must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and motivating us.

The human person is composed of a physical body and a power that keeps that body whole and alive: we call that power the soul. Human beings are not souls alone. Nor are we made up of the bodies alone. We are spiritual powers that have been enfolded: this is what happens at the moment of conception. That marvelous moment in time is when God created you and created me — nine months before our birthdays, for those who are normal (some of us were born ahead of our time — prematurely — but that is alright because, anyway, our God is a God of remedies and they ended up normal, anyway, thanks be to God!)

That is why the day of your conception is radically more important than your birthday. When you were born, you only changed your place of residence. But when you were conceived, you came into existence — from nothingness! God called you, animated you in the flesh, in order to live according to his Holy Spirit, whose other name is Love.

It was God who called us out of nothingness into existence. It was he who called us, not to be plants or animals, but to be human beings, intelligent and free, in His own image and likeness (Cf. Gn 1:26). It was He who called us to be male or female (although for some, this call seems to have been distorted by circumstances, fortunately for them our God is a God of remedies). It was He who called us to be the children of those two persons who, because of their love for each other — whether they were rich or poor, sick or healthy — cooperated with God to bring us into existence and raise us for His Kingdom (eventhough some couples may not have been truly in love or conscious of God's hand in procreation). From nothingness and imperfection, He constantly calls us, and He even sent His Son Jesus to remind us to respond to that call (Cf. Mt 5:48). I gather that is why

you are all here to see how we can improve and make our lives and the lives of God's children in the Philippines more abundant; to see how we can love with a more perfect even those who are imperfect.

Indeed, Pro-Life Philippines is one of God's most potent remedies in this part of the world today! This is so because it is at the forefront of building what Pope John Paul II calls a "civilization of life" that is based on love. And I tell you, this is not an easy task. Many Pro-Lifers have come to me exhausted, almost de-animated. And I say to them, I am also almost de-animated myself. But we cannot give up the will to live. I do not exaggerate when I say that only love can sustain us. This is the secret of what I call "sustainable advocacy." I assure you, you will not persevere even if your soul is animating your body. For as long as the Holy Spirit is not in turn animating your soul; for while the souls is the life of the body, the Holy Spirit is the life of the soul.

As I have said in a previous message, we are up against formidable forces before which we must not lose hope. We must act decisively in love, otherwise the Church in Manila and for that matter, the Church in the Philippines will pay dearly. Let us not be caught sleeping. It is time to rise and engage these challenges with gusto and a will to win. For the love of God, we cannot afford to lose!

Anything that is anti-life is anti-love, and vice versa. The way to victory is to win over everyone to the side of Christ. We cannot afford to hate the anti-life, otherwise we ourselves, by being anti-love, would become anti-life. We must pray for them and evangelize them. It is not sufficient to defend ourselves from those who set themselves against us. We have to take the offensive in areas where we have superior strength. They will become less of the "enemy" each time that they come closer to the Lord; each time they see a ray of light that they, who are in darkness, cannot

deny. Victory for us does not mean merely the defeat of those who are against us. It means their conversion. Victory may come inch by painstaking inch, but if we keep fighting for their conversion, we shall obtain it in full. For our God is a God of remedies! I look now to the God of remedies and ask for victory!

The parable of the fig tree reminds us not to be sterile; not to postpone bearing fruit. Let us not be sterile in our personal lives; let us bear fruit in the children planned by God. Let us not be sterile in our socio-economic life; let us bear fruit by hard work and productivity, with a sense of fairness and compassion for those who have less. Let us not be sterile in our political life; let us grow up and cast our naivete aside once and for all. Remember however, that bearing fruit alone is not good enough; the fruit must be good. A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down... (Mt 7:18-19). Find out who they really are inside as persons and what their priorities in life are. The warning against sterility runs true and clear for all of us: "You will all come to the same end unless you reform." (Lk 13:1-9).

As a matter of principle, it is not necessary for our leaders in society to be Catholic. It is enough that they recognize this principle and for them to be honest and fair in respecting the rights of all; and in doing this, our officials should remember that the right of faith and moral belief has priority over economic rights and goals. For the Lord Himself has said "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." (Mt 6:33).

Choosing a Catholic for public office does not *per se* guarantee the respect for moral beliefs and religious rights of Catholic citizens — as is proven in our National History. However, without doubt, the last few years have seen the government running roughshod over religious values, especially in the promotion of sterilization, contraception, and by fostering a culture

that would gradually be open to abortion. The claim by some that "Catholics do not listen to their Church anyway" smacks of a bandwagon campaign violative of constitutional rights, that invites believers to formally rebel against the pro-life and pro-family principles articulated by Pope John Paul II. Therefore as a matter of prudence and expediency, we must delve anew into a process of discernment.

While it is clear to us what we are against, let me end this reflection with a remembrance of what we are for: We are for a civilization of the life based on love; and the other name of love is the Holy Spirit, who must reside in every person, in every married couple, in every family, in every community, in every nation — including the Philippines.

May Pro-Life Philippines not only spread love, let it rather be love! *Mabuhay tayong lahat sa pag-ibig ng Diyos.*

Women of Faith and the Future of the Nation*

JAIME CARD. SIN

You have honored me with your kind invitation to address the National Congress of Women as it comes together on this occasion to reflect on the theme: *Women of Faith Today Shaping the Nation's Future*. In a global situation where injustice done to women *as women* is being seriously addressed, in a national situation where the over-domination of men in social and political decision-making is gradually more-readily conceded *and regretted*, and in our own awareness of the role the Christian community, especially in the Philippines', must play in enhancing the participation of women in social transformation, the theme that you have chosen to reflect on is as important as it is urgent. As the Third Millennium approaches, and as all women and men are being asked to recommit themselves to the faith and the transformation of society according to the grace of Christ's Incarnation 2000 years ago, women especially must consider playing a more active role in shaping human history according to the God-given genius that is theirs as women.

* Address of Jaime Cardinal Sin, D.D. to the National Congress of Women.

Yours therefore is an important Congress for women in our nation. I am pleased that you have not considered my being a man and my being a celibate obstacles to your inviting me! I come as a brother in our shared faith in and love for Jesus Christ, who, when he walked our earth, himself "transcended the established norms of his own culture" to show to women "openness, respect, acceptance and tenderness" (W, 3).

Gratitude to Women

If in our shared love for Jesus Christ we are to speak initially about women, with Pope John Paul II, as he once expressed in his Letter to Women on the Eve of the Fourth World Congress of Women in Beijing in 1995 (W), we wish first to express anew our gratitude to women.

We thank you women who are mothers! You shelter human beings within yourselves in joy and travail. You are God's own smile upon the new-born child. You guide your child's first steps, help it to grow, and are its anchor as it makes its way along the journey of life.

We thank you who are wives! You join your future to that of your husbands in a relationship of mutual giving at the service of love and life.

We thank you daughters and sisters! You bring the richness of your sensitivity, your intuitiveness, your generosity and fidelity into the heart of your family and your society.

We thank you, women who work! You are present and active in every area of life — social, economic, artistic and political. Your contribution to culture is indispensable for the advancement of human history.

We "thank you, every woman, for the simple fact of being a woman! Through the insight which is so much a part of your womanhood you enrich the world's understanding and help to make human relations more honest and authentic" (W,2).

Apology

Yet, even as we thank you for the richness you bring to the human family we are conscious of the suffering and degradation that women as women over the years have had to suffer not only in the world in general, but also in our Catholic Philippines, sometimes within our own neighborhood, our own circle of friends, or even within our own family. As women, you are perhaps more aware of this than I. You know of the conspiracy of customs and cultural conventions which keep women in the country a second sex to the male. You know how the female child take second priority to the male child in matters of education, how the female child is taught to defer to the often-spoiled male. You know how women are exploited in the work place, and for equal work often do not enjoy equal pay. You know how women who work, even in more sophisticated circles of society, are discretely reduced to objects for sexual gratification, an easy targets of sexual harassment and unscrupulous male exploitation. You know how the bodies of women have been exploited as sex objects in the media, and are bought and sold on an international scale. You know of the thousands upon thousands of our women who, driven by poverty, have left family and home to seek more rewarding livelihood abroad, and how many, alienated from their culture, are heartlessly abused in the workplace as well as in the bedroom. You know that as our people imbibe the culture of global competitiveness, the duties of the woman in the family compete with the duties of professionalism and career in the workplace: the woman who chooses motherhood is virtually punished by a still male-dominated work culture. Is there any

wonder why it is often said that exploitation in the Third World has a feminine face?

With Pope John Paul it is also imperative for us to say: "Women's dignity has often been unacknowledged and their prerogatives misrepresented; they have been relegated to the margins of society and even reduced to servitude. This has prevented women from truly being themselves and it has resulted in a spiritual impoverishment of humanity. Certainly it is no easy task to assign the blame for this, considering the many kinds of cultural conditioning which down the centuries have shaped ways of thinking and acting. And if objective blame, especially in historical contexts, has belonged to not just a few members of the Church, I am truly sorry" (W, 3).

I am truly sorry if even in our Christian Philippines we have not been sensitive enough to the suffering that women as women undergo. The time, certainly, has come, first, to become more sensitive to these problems as they are more and more clearly articulated by women's groups such as your own. The time has come to listen to women as women, made equal in dignity to man in the image and likes of God, to hear them as they desire to be heard, and to allow them finally to participate more fully in shaping our society according to the genius that is theirs as women.

Women of the Faith In Society

In this congress, however, you have focused not only on the role of women but explicitly on the woman *of faith* in shaping the future of our nation. You specify women of faith possibly because of your own faith. Much can be said about this: I wish to stress only four points:

First: If woman as woman is made in the image and likeness of God, the woman of faith is baptized into Christ through the

Spirit and is called to share his mission to establish the Kingdom of God on this earth. This mission is very actual today. In our country it involves the hopes of our people for sustainable development, freedom from poverty, respect and recognition in the international community; it involves our yearning for a society that is just, humane and worthy of the children of God. It involves all our sordid day-by-day experience of corruption, deceit, human exploitation, violence and sin. It is in this world that the Kingdom of God is to be established. In this mission, the woman of faith has an undeniable role.

Second: This is a mission which she carries out in the manner that God's grace unfolds to her in her own individual life. Though all women of faith are called to collaborate in the mission of the Lord, not all are called to collaborate in the same manner. Some are called to religious life, others to family life. Some are called to the quiet of family counseling, others to excitement of corporate planning. Some are called to research and writing, others to the challenges of political life.

Third: Whatever role the woman is called to, if she is married and has a family, her essential and critical role in the family cannot be denied. Pope John Paul, in his Papal Message on Women's Conference in 1995 (PMWC), stresses, "No response to women's issues can ignore women's role in the family or take lightly of the fact that every new life is totally entrusted to the protection and care of the woman carrying it in her womb." That trust and care continues after the child is born, and is raised to maturity. Society must therefore work to erase the artificial opposition that now arises between the mother in the family and the woman in the workplace. Instead of punishing women in their careers for bearing and raising children, "A mother's presence in the family, so critical to the stability and growth of that basic unit of society, should instead be recognized, applauded and supported in every possible way. By the same token society needs to call husbands and fathers to their family responsibilities..." (PMWC, 3).

Finally: Especially in the light of the theme of your national conference, it may now be stressed: the woman of faith, indeed, the woman as woman, ought no longer to be confined to the family. She must take her place shoulder-on-shoulder with men to reshape society according to her best thoughts, insights and energies. Where men in the past have counseled war, perhaps she will counsel peace; where men have counseled competition, perhaps she will counsel harmony; where men have counseled destruction, perhaps she will counsel nurturance; where men have counseled evil, perhaps she will counsel good. Where men have written history almost alone with hard rationality, power and vengeance, women are now asked to write history too — with the inner strength of mothers and the inner instincts of loving wives. Pope John Paul says, "... a greater presence of women in society will prove most valuable, for it will help to manifest the contradictions present when society is organized solely according to the criteria of efficiency and productivity, and it will force the systems to be redesigned in a way which favors the process of humanization which marks the 'civilization of love'" (W, 4).

The Pope says furthermore: "It should in fact be clear that when women are able fully to share their gifts with the whole community, the very way in society understands and organizes itself is improved. This is a recognition of *the unique role which women have in humanizing society* and directing it towards the positive goals of solidarity and peace. ... Without detracting from their role in relation to the family, the Church recognizes that women's contribution to the welfare and progress of society is incalculable, *and the Church looks to women to do even more to save society from the deadly virus of degradation and violence* which is today witnessing a dramatic increase. There should be no doubt that on the basis of their equal dignity with men, women have a full right to become actively involved in all areas of public life..." (PMWC, 5).

Expanded Role for Women Necessary

It is undeniable that women have played important roles in the shaping of Philippine history. Gabriela Silang (1731-63) led the Filipino rebels in battling the Castillian oppressors at a time when no strong man had emerged to lead the rebel movement in Ilocos. Melchora Aquino (1812-1919) supported the Katipuneros, opening her house and supplying them with food during the crucial phase of the national struggle for freedom. At the outbreak of World War II, Josefa Llanes Escoda (1898-1945), embarked on the most dangerous type of "social work," alleviating the sufferings of soldiers, internees and civilians, finally leading the Japanese to arrest, torture and execute her. More recently, Corazon Aquino, in the wake of her husband's martyrdom in his fight against the dictatorship, restored constitutional rule and democracy to the country.

Still, it can also riot be denied that the role that women play in shaping our history and so in shaping our future ought to be expanded. It is this expanded role, certainly, that your National Congress of Women is invited to ponder — not only by me, but by the Pope and the entire Christian and Human Community.

Tertio Millenio Adveniente

As we prepare ourselves to celebrate the Great Jubilee, we focus especially this year on the Holy Spirit, "the principal agent of New Evangelization" (TMA, 58). That is the Spirit of Love, who gives us life, and convinces us of sin. That is the Spirit of forgiveness, the Spirit that is Fire. As the Lord said, "I come to bring Fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled" (Luke 12, 49). I pray that you, united with the Fire of the Spirit, help today's world discern the difference between right and wrong, true and false, good and evil. I pray that as women you help set the world on fire with His love. And may will all be beneficiaries of his Peace!

The Vocation of Shrines

JOHN SAMAHA, SM

Shrines have a special vocation in salvation history. Just as God calls each of his creatures to a specific mission in this life, so does he designate shrines through his Church for a particular purpose.

The lives of many saints and great servants of the Lord both known and unknown were renewed and re-directed by pilgrimages to shrines both known and unknown.

From time immemorial all cultures and religions have revered significant places as shrines. The three great monotheistic religions hold their shrines in high regard, and their faithful visit them regularly.

The Meaning of Shrine

A shrine is a church or other sacred place visited by the faithful as pilgrims for special devotion. A pilgrimage is a journey by the faithful to a shrine, a place made sacred. The concept of pilgrimage is gaining ascendancy in this postconciliar time. We have a heightened awareness that we are a pilgrim people en route

to our eternal destiny. Vatican Council II reminded us that we are a pilgrim Church.

Only in the postconciliar period has any thought been given to defining the concept of shrine or to developing official criteria about shrines. We find no reference to shrines in the 1917 Code of Canon Law, in the writings of Vatican II, or in Pope Paul VI's instruction on proper devotion to Mary, *Marialis Cultus*.

Paul VI's Initiative

Pope Paul VI remedied this situation emphatically, and called for serious reflection on the role of shrines in the life of the Church. At the first meeting of rectors of Marian shrines in Italy, Paul VI urged them to "lift their voices and let their existence be known in the Church." In the annual addresses to the rectors of Marian shrines, meetings which he initiated, Paul VI was concerned with the meaning of shrines and their place in the liturgical and pastoral life of the Church. He described shrines as "spiritual clinics" (1965), "testimonies of miraculous deeds and of a continual wave of devotion" (1966), luminous stars in the Church's sky ... centers of devotion, of prayer, of recollection, of spiritual refreshment" (1970). He recommended that shrines have a full program of sacramental and pastoral activity, and that they be centers of genuine religious intensity. He made it clear that devotion is an extension of liturgy and a preparation for it, that all Christian worship leads to Christ.

Previously, academic theology gave no consideration to shrines. The former Code of Canon Law, Vatican Council II, and papal instructions did not mention shrines. Shrines has no formal or canonical Church recognition.

Then Paul VI rose to the occasion and instigated the legislation on shrines contained in the 1983 Code of Canon Law which now guides the Church. Canons 1230-1234 define shrines

as sacred places of pilgrimage, animated centers of intense Christian life which foster liturgical and sacramental practice and cultivate sound devotion.

John Paul II and the Marian Year

In his Marian Year encyclical *Redemptoris Mater* (Mother of the Redeemer, 1987), Pope John Paul II spoke of the "geography of faith" and Marian devotion in regard to shrines. He asked for a qualitative approach to liturgical and devotional practice.

The Central Committee for the 1987-1988 Marian Year issued an instructional letter on the mission of Marian shrines. Among its directives the instruction encouraged shrines to present in the Eucharistic celebrations "a genuine image of the nature of the Church and of the Eucharist" and "reveal the fullness of the paschal mystery, communion with the universal Church, and the presence of Mary in word and symbol." Further, it encouraged shrines

- * to cultivate the *via pulchritudinis*, that is, a sense of God's beauty revealed in Mary;

- * to provide an atmosphere for discerning and responding to vocation as a gift of God; for, a shrine is a sign of this mysterious relationship between God's call and the person's response;

- * to be associated with or to sponsor a work of charity, such as a home for the sick, a school for the disadvantaged, a retirement center;

- * to foster ecumenical prayer, encounters, dialogues.

The CMBVM

Marian shrines are a particular expression of devotion to Mary. In the last quarter-century especially, they have made enormous strides in promoting the liturgical and pastoral life of

the Church. It was this concern for a richer liturgical life that spawned the composition of the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. Many shrines and religious congregations had proper Masses particular to their respective shrine and religious family histories. The rectors of shrines petitioned the Holy See to gather the best of these Masses and to compose new Masses in honor of our Blessed Mother. The result was the *Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary* published in 1986 in two volumes, a Sacramentary and a Lectionary. This collection of forty-six votive Masses is wonderfully crafted in the spirit of the conciliar liturgical renewal, and contains an abundant tradition of Marian veneration, with texts drawn from numerous historic and contemporary sources. The CMBVM may be used almost any day by those on pilgrimage. This initiative by the shrines has enriched the liturgy of the whole Church, for the use of these special Marian Masses is extended to all parishes and communities seeking various votive Masses for a Saturday commemoration of Our Lady or for a special occasion.

The Meaning of Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage or visit to a sacred place honoring a significant event is intended to be an action both profoundly human and religious. Millions each year frequent the great historical locations where their country's grand events were forged. The concept of pilgrimage is prominent in all of the world's major religions: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist.

The spirit of the early and medieval Church inspired pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, to the tombs of the apostles and martyrs, to the holy places of Rome, and to churches and shrines holding relics of saints. Internationally famous for pilgrimage in the Middle Ages were *Santiago de Compostela* in Northwestern Spain and Canterbury in England.

The Mission of Shrines

The Marian apparitions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at Paris, Lourdes, La Salette, Knock, Beauraing, Fatima, and other places created noted centers of prayer and renewal. Pilgrims came to find healing and spiritual courage, to experience for themselves the miraculous event which had occurred, and this devotion revitalized the spirit of pilgrimage in the Church.

In the Catholic world of today about eighty percent of all shrines are dedicated to Mary. Annually the vast majority of pilgrims are destined for Marian shrines. For example, about ten million go to Guadalupe in Mexico, six million to Lourdes in France, five million to Czestochowa in Poland, four million to Aparecida in Brazil.

Shrines are not intended to be a sightseeing stop on a vacation trip; they are places of pilgrimage. Though most need to travel considerable distances and use vacation time to reach the shrines, pilgrimage is not a vacation-time visit, but rather an action of spiritual renewal.

Pilgrimage is an effort of the great journey of human life toward God. The life of the Christian person is a pilgrimage. Ours is a pilgrimage Church. Ordinarily pilgrims endured privations in joining with others en route to a common goal. They unite with pilgrims of the past in prayer and in gratitude for a hallowed place.

All the actions of a pilgrimage are meant to be symbolic and instructive and transforming: the preparation, joining together with other pilgrims, the welcome at the shrine, the visit to the sanctuary, the celebration of the Eucharist, the return home. The purpose of the pilgrimage is to guide the pilgrim "to the essential: Jesus Christ, the Savior, the end of every journey, and the source of all holiness."

Vatican Council II spoke of Mary's "pilgrimage of faith." She precedes and encourages us in our own pilgrimage of Faith. Marian shrines are one expression of Mary's presence among us, the Church. John Paul II in *Mother of the Redeemer* referred to a "geography" of faith and devotion to Mary which includes those special places of pilgrimage where the People of God find the one who first believed and a strengthening of their own faith.

In today's world with millions of refugees and displaced persons, shrines are becoming gathering places for people uprooted from their homes and churches. At the first World Congress on Shrines and Pilgrimages in 1992 sponsored by the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Itinerant People, John Paul II expressed the desire that "persons whom life has treated harshly, the poor, the people who are distant from the Church" may find a welcome at shrines.

Hospitality extended to migrants and to all pilgrims at Marian shrines is an expression of the Virgin Mary's welcoming of God's word. Her example reminds all people that we come together in the great pilgrimage of life on this earth to everlasting life in our permanent home with God.

Cases & Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

INDULGENCES

/ am a professor in a Catholic School. One day during our Holy Retreat our conversation was about the reception of the Sacrament of Penance. Two of my companions expressed their opinion that Confession, although necessary, should not be too much inculcated and emphasized, since we can also resort to our gaining indulgences, that have practically the same effect as Confession. They were so persistent in defending their viewpoint that I tried my best to clarify the difference between the indulgences and confession. My efforts were of no avail. May I request you to write something in the Boletin, so as to explain their differences.

A Professor

The treatise on Indulgences is to be considered as complementary to the study on the Sacrament of Penance.

Two different things are to be considered in sin, which is the matter and object of confession, namely: Its *guilt* or culpability for having offended God and the *punishment* due to such offense. Confession is the means of obtaining forgiveness of sin's guilt, both mortal and venial sins. They can also be forgiven by an

act of perfect contrition. Venial sin can be remitted besides (unless the soul is in mortal sin) by an act of attrition, by the use of certain sacramentals, by prayer and by good works.

When mortal sin is forgiven the eternal punishment due to it, is also remitted, but the temporal punishment frequently remains. Likewise, in case of venial sins (remitted already as explained above), the temporal punishment is not condoned. It has to be paid for by satisfactory acts of penance, or by suffering in Purgatory after death.

The above remaining temporal punishment, due to forgiven sins, is the proper object of indulgences granted by the Church. In granting indulgences the Church exercises the power to bind and to loose given to her by our Lord Jesus Christ, when He said to Saint Peter: "I will entrust you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you declare bound on earth shall be bound in Heaven; whatever you declare loosed on earth shall be loosed in Heaven" (Mt. 16:19). This power granted to Peter is used in the Sacrament of Penance forgiving the guilt of sin as well as in granting indulgences condoning or wiping out the punishment due to sins forgiven.

This temporal punishment due to forgiven sins is the object of Indulgences. Paul VI gave us in his Apostolic Constitution on Indulgences, of January 1, 1967 the precise concept of what indulgence is, namely: "the remission before God of the temporal punishment due for sin already forgiven as far as their guilt is concerned, which the faithful, properly disposed and following certain conditions, acquire through the intervention of the Church." At this point we prefer to quote what the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says about their nature and purpose.

"The doctrine and practice of indulgences in the Church are closely linked to the effects of the Sacrament of Penance. An indulgence is a remission before God of the temporal punishment

due to sins whose guilt has already been forgiven, which the faithful Christian who is duly disposed gains under certain prescribed conditions through the action of the Church which, as the minister of redemption, dispenses and applies with authority the treasury of the satisfaction of Christ and the saints" (n. 1471).

"To understand this doctrine and practice of the Church it is necessary to understand that sin has a double consequence. Grave sin deprives us of communion with God, and therefore makes us incapable of eternal life, the privation of which is called "eternal punishment" of sin. On the other hand every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the "temporal punishment" of sin. These two punishments must not be conceived of as a kind of vengeance inflicted by God from without, but as following from the very nature of sin. A conversion which proceeds from a fervent charity can attain the complete purification of the sinner in such a way that no punishment would remain" (n. 1472).

"The forgiveness of sin and restoration of communion with God entail the remission of the eternal punishment of sin, but temporal punishment of sin remains. While patiently bearing sufferings and trials of all kinds and, when the day comes, serenely facing death, the Christian must strive to accept this temporal punishment of sin as a grace. He should strive by works of mercy and charity, as well as by prayer and the various practices of penance, to put off completely the 'old man' and to put on the 'new man'" (n. 1473).

A sinner who is reconciled with God in the Sacrament of Penance has an excellent means of paying the debt for his sins during his life by gaining indulgences. The merit of private penitential works freely undertaken is inferior to the merits gained earning an indulgence. The former receive their value from the

individual fervor of the penitent, while the indulgence's effect is drawn from the superabundant treasury of merits of Christ, of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the Saints, administered by the Church. This is a real sharing of spiritual goods in the Communion of Saints. An indulgence is partial or plenary, depending on whether it removes either part or all the temporal punishment due to sin. Both partial and plenary indulgences can be applied to the living or to the dead.

From what we have said above, especially from what we have quoted from the Catechism of the Catholic Church it is clear that Indulgence and Confession are entirely different. They have different effects. The two professors mentioned in the case need to review and rectify their knowledge of Catholic doctrine. An indulgence does not have the effect of Confession. An indulgence does not grant the forgiveness of the guilt of sin.

Finally, let us say that an indulgence does not give immunity from temptations, as some believe. It does not assure the person who gains an indulgence that he/she will be free from Purgatory; it does not condone the punishment of sin not yet forgiven.

CONVENTUAL MASS AND DIVINE OFFICE

The Constitutions of my Congregation has the following norm: "In convents properly so-called, the conventual Mass is to be celebrated for the deceased brothers, sisters, etc., once every week. In this Mass 'the Prayer of the faithful' with its supplications is to be said for the dead. Where, however, the conventual Mass cannot be said, one Mass is to be applied for the dead."

May I ask you, Father, whether this weekly conventual Mass to be applied for the dead is the de Requiem Mass or the ordinary Mass corresponding to the day.

A Religious Priest

The weekly Mass to be applied for the dead as established in the Constitutions mentioned by our Consultant is not the *de Requiem Mass*, but the ordinary conventual Mass corresponding to the Office of the day. The norm of the Constitutions of the Congregation clearly states that: "In this Mass, 'the Prayer of the faithful' with its supplications is to be said for the dead".

To further clarify this matter, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* has the following norm: "Communities obliged to choral office are bound to celebrate the Office in choir everyday, in *addition to the conventual Mass*" (n. 95). On the other hand, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says in n. 76: "The conventual Mass is a part of the daily Office". If the conventual Mass is a part of the daily choral Divine Office, it would be liturgically wrong to have the daily Office of the. Liturgy of the Hours corresponding to the calendar of the day while the conventual Mass is *de Requiem Mass*: both would not belong to the same Divine Office. As the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says: "The conventual Mass is a part of the daily Office".

This is the reason why the Constitutions of the Congregation says: "In this Mass the 'prayer of the faithful' with its supplications for the dead is to be said". Thus, if the Liturgy of the Hours is Ferial, the conventual Mass should also be Ferial. When the conventual Mass is to be applied for the dead according to the said Constitutions of the Congregation the 'prayer of the faithful' with its supplications is to be added for the dead.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers

March-April 1998

EFREN RIVERA, OP

March 1, 1998

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR C

Migrants' Day

LUKE 4:1-13

TEMPTED WHILE LED BY THE SPIRIT

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The Holy Spirit that had descended on Jesus at the moment of his baptism (Lk 3:22) to mark the inauguration of his public life is the Spirit that led him to the desert to be tempted there for forty days by the devil. The Holy Spirit does not lead Jesus to temptations to which he will succumb. Instead he instills in Jesus a desire to test his personal resolve to live as "Son of God" and "Servant of Yahweh". In Luke's presentation, the temptations of Jesus are tests or situations of duress from which he emerges as a stronger and better person.

Focus Points. (1) **V. 1 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit...** The fact that the expression, "full of the Holy Spirit" occurs only in

this passage and in Acts 6:5 and 7:55 (applied to Stephen, a man of faith) and in 11:24 (applied to Barnabas, also a man of faith), suggests that Jesus is the model of Christians who have resolved in their hearts to remain faithful to the destiny appointed to them by the Lord, come what may.

(2) V. 3-4 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to turn into bread." Jesus answered him, "Scripture has it, 'Not on bread alone shall man live.'" Matthew speaks of numerous stones because he is thinking of the temptations of Christ as symbolizing the temptations of the people of Israel in the desert, but this perspective is absent in Luke, who presents the temptations of Christ as his personal tests that will strengthen his resolve to live as the "Son of God" and the "Servant of Yahweh." Jesus did not need a miracle to provide himself with food, for he could simply end his fast and get food as others do. The fast that he freely undertook was meant to be an experience of how God sustains his life even when the ordinary means of sustenance are absent. By contrast, to do do what the devil was suggesting was to assert himself as his own master, independent from the Father. By quoting Dt 8:3, *Jesus passes his first test by asserting the superiority of spiritual values over material concerns or physical needs.*

(3) V. 5-8 Then the devil took him up higher and showed him the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. He said to him, "I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms; the power has been given to me and I give it to whomever I wish. Prostrate yourself in homage before me, and it shall be all yours." In reply, Jesus said to him, "Scripture has it, 'You shall do homage to the Lord your God; him alone shall you adore.'" Logically, this temptation is more serious than the third one in Luke's order but Luke distorts the logical order so that Jerusalem would be the setting of the last temptation, thus emphasizing his theological interest in the holy city. The idea behind the second lucan temptation is that, perhaps, the incentive

of immediate relief from hunger is not a very good reason for swaying Jesus from his resolve to undertake all the responsibilities placed in his hands by his heavenly Father, but maybe the prospect of enjoying *political power and glory here and now* can change Jesus' mind. Jesus rejects the offer by quoting Dt 6:13, and in so doing condemns it as a *pragmatic godlessness*. In this second victory Jesus asserts himself as the Servant who does not desire to be served but to serve.

(4) V. 9-12 Then the devil led him to Jerusalem, set him on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for Scripture has it, 'He will bid his angels watch over you'; and again, 'With their hands they will support you, that you may not stumble on a stone.'" Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" This is a temptation to practice *false religion*, that is, a) one that depends on a literalist meaning of scripture, and b) one that would put God in a position of being blamed for anything and everything that goes wrong in human endeavors. Reacting to these suggestions, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy for a third time (Dt 6:16), making it clear that the way to combat the devil is to avail oneself of God's word not in a literalist fashion but as something breaking forth from His people's reflection on what He has done in salvation history. In the case of the quotations from Deuteronomy, the reflections are based on events in the book of Exodus. Once more Jesus shows himself as faithful to his calling to be Yahweh's Servant. A servant does not search Scripture for priveleges but for indications of God's will or plan for one's life of service.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. A situation of duress could be something that we voluntarily impose upon ourselves as when we undertake fasting

or dieting in order to reduce weight, or it could come from developments over which we personally have no control, as when there is a financial crisis in the country. In either case, if we are "full of the Holy Spirit," it is a chance for us to emerge stronger in our faith, that is, in our resolve to be faithful to God's plan for our life-work as his children and servants.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Are you presently in a situation of duress? Do you feel you can cope with the situation since you are "full of the Holy Spirit"? Share your feelings with your small group.

2. A situation of duress in which Christians constantly find themselves is when material concerns or physical needs threaten to erode one's commitment to spiritual values. It is the perennial battle between the spiritual and the material. Jesus, in his personal life, also experienced this tension.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: How strong is your commitment to spiritual values? Has this been tested? Share your answer with your small group.

3. Quite often people go into business or politics with the avowed intention of serving the people or the nation, but once they have "power" and "glory" their personal interests become paramount. This is certainly the case of people who manipulate the law or the economic situation just to stay in power. It is the case, too, when western or "first world" politicians and businessmen manipulate the economies of asian countries by granting or withholding loans subject to onerous interest rates. The root cause is the desire to play God or pragmatic godlessness. For if a politician or a businessman is truly god-fearing he will always think of himself as a servant of God and not as a master of people.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: How can a politician or a businessman remain an authentic god-fearing person in the midst of political or economic success? Do you have an experience to share in this field?

4. True religion is in the middle of two extremes. One extreme is what we, today, call "fundamentalism" which unfortunately, in our times, can be seen in movements within all religions, Christian or non-Christian, Protestant or Catholic. The other extreme consists of the errors of "popular piety" especially those based on the belief that man can somehow manipulate God.

4.1 Pointer for sharing: Should one think of oneself as a "servant" of God's Written Word (Scripture) or as a "master" of it? Do you have any experience to share in answer to this question?

Offering a Price

It can be said that the devil's definition of temptation is offering a price or a prize to undo a person's resolve to abide by his conscience. This is illustrated by the following story.

During the Civil War in America it was illegal to trade in cotton. Nevertheless, many greedy dealers tried to buy cotton in the South and run it through the Union lines, and sell it at great profit in the North. One of these profiteers approached the captain of a Mississippi steamboat and offered him \$100 if he would run his cotton up the river. The captain refused, reminding the cotton merchant that it was against the law.

"I will give you \$500," said the merchant.

"No," thundered the captain.

"I'll make it \$1,000," went on the dealer.

"No," the captain repeated.

"What about \$3,000?" the merchant insisted.

At that the captain drew his pistol, pointed it at the tempter and shouted, "Get off this boat! You are getting too near my price."

Tonne / Frank Mihalic

March 8, 1998

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR C

LUKE 9:28b-36

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS CLOUD

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

In all the three Synoptic Gospels, the Transfiguration of Christ happens after the first prophecy made by Jesus himself about his coming passion, death and resurrection in Jerusalem (see Lk 9:22). In keeping with this tradition, the Liturgy dedicates the second Sunday in Lent to this mystical experience witnessed by three disciples on a mountain (Tabor?) with Christ. The climax of the theophany is Trinitarian in the sense that it speaks of the Father's Voice, the divine cloud (Holy Spirit) and Jesus as God's Son.

Focus Points. (1) V. 28b-29 Jesus took Peter, John and James, and went up onto a mountain to pray. While he was praying, his face changed in appearance and his clothes became dazzling white. Christ is presented by Luke as setting the example of prayerfulness that should mark the life of a Christian. It was while praying that Christ was transfigured. We should also remember that it was while praying that the disciples received the transforming Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:14; 2:1 ff).

(2) V. 30-31 Suddenly two men were talking with him — Moses and Elijah. They appeared in glory and spoke of his

passage which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem. Luke alone speaks of the coming events in Jerusalem as the special "exodus" (translated here as "passage" of Jesus.) In the exodus of God's people, the abiding presence of the divinity with the chosen people was signified by a cloud by day and a fire at night (see, for example, Ex 13:22).

(3) V.34-36 While Peter was speaking, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and the disciples grew fearful as the others entered it. Then from the cloud came a voice which said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him." In Mark it is the transfiguration itself that caused awe or fear (Mk 9:6), in Matthew it is the voice speaking from the cloud (Mt 17:6), while in Luke it is the engulfment by the cloud. The cloud is certainly a symbol of the divinity and since there is mention here of a voice which clearly belongs to the Father speaking about his Son, the cloud could well stand for the Holy Spirit for readers who are already acquainted with the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. In the Third Gospel Luke brings prayer and the Holy Spirit together not only at the Transfiguration but initially at Christ's Baptism (Lk 3:21-22), and eventually in Jesus' teaching about prayer (Lk 11:1-13). In Acts, the Spirit comes at Pentecost after the disciples spend nine days in prayer (Acts 1:14; 2:1 ff), and subsequent comings of the Holy Spirit happen in a context of prayer or its gesture of the laying on of hands (Acts 4:31; 8:14-17; 9:17; 13:2-3; 19:5. Paul teaches: 'The Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us with groans that cannot be put into words; and he who can see into

all hearts knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God." (Rm 8:26-27).

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced transformation through spirit-filled prayer? Share your experience with your small group.

2. The exodus of the Israelites from Egypt in the Old Testament transformed an enslaved people into a free nation, and the personal exodus of Jesus through his passion, death and resurrection transformed him from a Servant of Yahweh into the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you also need a personal exodus from some form of slavery (to drugs, sexual immorality, greed, anger or hatred, etc.) to the freedom of the children of God? Share your answer with your small group.

3. It is customary to speak of the Holy Spirit as a fire (see Lk 3:16; Acts 2:3) but people have to get used to thinking of the Holy Spirit as a cloud. Two biblical texts could help people get used to this symbolism. In the Old Testament, the divine presence manifested itself as "a cloud by day and fire by night" (see Ex 13:22). In the lucan story of the Annunciation to Mary, the angel tells her that "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you..." that is, like a cloud (Lk 1:35).

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced the Holy Spirit as an engulfing fog or cloud? Share your experience with your small group.

Transformed by the Spirit

The Charismatic Movement in the Philippines, perhaps better than the Cursillos in Christianity" that preceded it, has transformed the lives of millions of Filipinos.

The usual way of joining the movement is by undergoing a "Life in the Spirit Seminar" (LSS). All Charismatic groups offer this kind of seminar at least once a year. The high point of the seminar comes at the laying on of hands when the participant, surrounded by "prayer warriors" with hands extended, asks for the activation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit already received in the sacrament of Baptism. We are talking about Catholic seminars of this kind, and a priest is usually the leader in praying over the participant and laying hands on him or her.

As a rule, people feel something special during the laying on of hands. Some are "slain," that is to say, they feel weak all over and slump down. In such cases the attendants usually let the people rest until they feel like getting up. "Slain" people hardly ever lose total consciousness. They get a special feeling of peace.

Some people feel goose pimples all over their bodies. Others feel very cold or very hot. Some feel like being up there in the clouds. This writer felt as if he was expanding and expanding like a balloon while everything around him got brighter and brighter.

Some people speak in tongues while others see visions. Quite often, people just get a great feeling of being changed — transformed.

March 15, 1998

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR C

LUKE 13:1-9

REFORMATION THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Today's gospel reading consists of Christ's comments on two events that were reported to him, and a parable about an unproductive fig tree for which a gardener intercedes so that it would not be cut down.

Focus Points. (1) **V. 1-3** At that time some were present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices. He said in reply: "Do you think that these Galileans were the greatest sinners in Galilee just because they suffered this? By no means! But I tell you, you will all come to the same end unless you reform." Quite possibly, the news of the tyrannical act of Pilate was relayed to Jesus in the hopes that he would lead his fellow country men, the Galileans, to revolt against the Romans. To the surprise of the rebellion-inclined people, Jesus rises above the situation to teach people about their need to reform their lives. He is not a Rebel. He is a Prophet sent by God to invite the nation, and not just individual sinners, to repentance.

(2) **V. 4-5** "Or take those eighteen who were killed by a falling tower in Siloam. Do you think they were more guilty than anyone else who lived in Jerusalem? Certainly not! But I tell you, you will all come to the same end unless you begin to reform." Any death because of an accident is tragic but popular belief usually interprets the death of people (Galileans?) visiting in a holy place (Siloam is in the holy city of Jerusalem) as a punishment for some hidden, horrible sin. Jesus rejects this popular

belief but he points out that events that jolt people are SIGNS OF THE TIMES that invite them to rethink and purify their relationship with God.

(3) V. 6-9 (The parable of the unproductive fig tree). Through Jesus' last year of ministry God gives the Chosen People with whom he has a covenant of love, and biblically symbolized as a fig tree, one last chance to bear fruit by accepting Jesus as the Messiah. It is an act of God's HESED or COVENANT LOVE, and something that Christian readers can ascribe to the Holy Spirit.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Some people would like to convince us that Jesus was a revolutionary, but this term can be misleading. He was a spiritual revolutionary, not a political one. It is better to recognize him as a prophet sent by God to give the Israelite people one last call to repentance. Rejecting partisan politics, Jesus does not take the victims' side nor the tyrant's side but rises to point out God's design that certain events should be a reminder that people should turn to God.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: The Israelite people have been set aside (temporarily, according to St. Paul, see Rm 11:11-32) from being God's favored people, and the invitation to repentance is now directed to Christians as a Church or assembly. Each of us, individually, are part of this church we should understand the invitation to repentance as being also directed to each of us personally. In what way will you give your response? Share your answer with your small group.

2. Vatican II invites Christians to be sensitive to the SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you learned to discern the SIGNS OF THE TIMES? Share your answer with your small group.

3. Since the Israelite people as such did not heed Christ's invitation to repentance, his prophecy that they will perish — or, in parabolic language, that they will be "cut down" — was fulfilled inasmuch as the Romans destroyed their nation. Paul, however, teaches us that even after rejecting Christ, Israelites can still claim a special place in God's love (see Rm 11:16-24) and we should also think of the first Christians as the "remnant" from the Israelite nation, the "remnant" that, according to prophecy, would be spared from the consequences of the nation's rejection of the Messiah (see Rm 11:1-10).

3.1 Pointer for sharing: In our times as in the past, it is the Holy Spirit, God's Love, that urges us to escape from the consequences of our unfruitfulness or our sins. Do you have experiences to share regarding this truth?

Signs of the Times

Not even a year ago we all heard the news of an earthquake in Italy that partly destroyed the basilica of St. Francis at Assisi, and when some Franciscans were inspecting the damage to the basilica there was an aftershock and they were killed.

Then, for a number of weeks asian newspapers were full of bad news about asian economies. The graphs of stock markets and currency exchange rates dropped down appallingly.

There was also the news in the Philippines of a Cabinet Secretary who, to all appearances was hale and hearty, but within 48 hours after being brought to the hospital, he was pronounced dead of an infection for which no local medicine was available.

These recent happenings and many more echo today's Gospel Reading, and hopefully help us realize that the Gospel message is for us, just as it was for the people of ages gone by.

March 22, 1998

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR C

Laetare Sunday / Prodigal Son

LUKE 15:1-3. 11-32

WE CELEBRATE RECONCILIATION

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The story of the Prodigal Son is one of the golden pages of the Bible. Cardinal Sin once told this story to a group of young people from Japan belonging to the Rissho Kosei Kai, a Buddhist Renewal sect, and in the end they were all in tears. Those were not tears of sorrow. Rather, they manifested that the young buddhists were deeply touched by the message of God's fatherly love.

Focus Points. (1) V.17-18 Coming to his senses at last, he said: "How many hired hands at my father's place have more than enough to eat, while here I am starving! I will break away and return to my father..." This illustrates how the Holy Spirit works on people who have reached their lowest point. He turns their desperate situation into a DABAR, a revelatory and invitational word so that they can return to their Father.

(2) V. 20b While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was deeply moved. He ran out to meet him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. In this story the Father's emotion and loving gestures were not caused by the pitiful condition of his son but by the fact that this son

was returning home. A reconciliation with God is a coming home to one's loving and forgiving Father.

(3) V. 32 We had to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead, and has come to life. He was lost, and is found. Reconciliation is a cause for celebration.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Sermons that are not Word-Events — happenings through which the Holy Spirit strikes people at the core of their being — do not have the power to make persons "come to his senses."

1.1 Pointer for sharing: When was the last time that you experienced a Word-Event, that is, a happening that made you think deeply about your situation with regard to God, your Father? Share the experience with your small group.

2. True Christian life is living in our heavenly Father's house. Unfortunately, not all Christians today have experienced such a life because they have not been properly formed in the life of faith. When they get mired in the misery of a sinful life, they have no memory of a happier life and a loving Father to which they can return. They have no home to go back to. However, the Christian evangelist, by using Scripture and invoking the Holy Spirit, can create a substitute for that home. And the Father will not wait for the sinner to reach him. Instead, he will "run out to meet him."

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Did you ever feel like having made one little step towards God and then God made two giant steps towards you? If so, share your experience with your small group.

3. Christian reconciliation calls for a celebration. So that people may appreciate this, Vatican II and the post-Vatican II Church emphasize that the Sacrament of Penance should be experienced in a context of celebration.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Has the Sacrament of Penance ever been for you an experience of coming home to your loving Father? If so, share your experience with your small group.

Laughter Softens Up Hearts

A young priest was supposed to preach in the prison. Preparing for the big event, day after day he tried to find some message or formula that would move hard hearts, but he was not sure he really found one.

The big day finally came and as he entered the chapel, he shuddered under the stares of crime-hardened faces. He said a silent prayer for help from the Holy Spirit as he walked up to the pulpit. He stumbled on his second last step and rolled head over heels right down to the floor. The audience broke out into laughter.

It turned out, however, that that spill was the help given to him by the Holy Spirit. For a brief minute he remained motionless because of pain and shame. Then the Holy Spirit worked on him. He got an idea, jumped up, took the steps two at a time and laughed right back at his captive audience, telling them, "Men, that's exactly why I came here today: I wanted to show you that a man can stand up again after he has fallen flat on his face."

Adapted from Willi Hoffsuemmer and Frank Mihalic

March 29, 1998

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT, YEAR C

JOHN 8:1-11

LEAVE CONDEMNATION TO GOD

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

God's merciful love towards his people was exemplified in the Old Testament by the love of the prophet Hosea towards his wife, whom he took back after she had become a prostitute. In the New Testament Jesus shows this love, which we can also call compassion, towards the woman whom the Jewish leaders wanted to stone because she was caught in the act of adultery.

Focus Points. (1) V. 2b-3 When the people started coming to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The Scribes and Pharisees led a woman forward who had been caught in adultery. They made her stand there in front of everyone... The incident is presented as an interruption of Jesus' verbal teaching. What Jesus does in this story is something more important than his words.

(2) V. 7b "Let the man among you who has no sin be the first to cast a stone at her." With these words Jesus equivalently declares that sins of greed, injustice, hatred, envy, and especially lack of compassion are just as serious or even more serious when compared to adultery.

(3) V. 10-11 Jesus finally straightened up again and said to her, "Woman, where did they all disappear to? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she answered. Jesus said, "Nor do I condemn you. You may go. But from now on, avoid this sin." Following the principle set forth in v. 7b, Jesus, being sinless, could stone the woman. Instead, he has not only defended her but, out of compassion, waives his right to condemn her.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Actions speak louder than words. Jesus interrupts his verbal teaching in order to teach by his actions.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced the greater power of actions rather than words? Share your experience with your small group.

2. Quite a large sector of the Christian populace, especially the young, are under the impression that the number one enemy of a life pleasing to God are sins against the sixth and ninth commandments. Some even think that the prime concern of a spiritual person is to stamp out impure thoughts. It is time for them to learn from today's Gospel reading that the practice of compassionate love is what pleases God most, and lack of compassionate love is as serious a sin as adultery.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you examine your conscience on your practice of compassionate love as rigorously as you examine it on your practice of chastity? What can you share with your small group regarding this topic?

3. Jesus came not to condemn sinners but to save them.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Did you ever experience compassionate love when you expected condemnation? If so, share your experience with your small group.

Unexpected Compassion

A soldier narrates the following experience.

I was with an infantry platoon standing at ease at the railroad siding in the Suez Canal zone during World War II. The blistering

tropical sun frayed our tempers and we were harrassed by a group of barefoot ragged children who milled about begging for candy, a stick of gum, or anything.

Suddenly, the youngsters propelled an urchin forward, jeering in broken English, "He got six toe; he got six toe."

The embarassed boy tried to hold back, ashamed. A corporal whom I had always thought insensitive and hard as nails, suddenly cried out, "Everybody with six toes gets a reward!" and proceeded to press some candy into the hands of the surprised youngster.

Swiftly other men followed his lead and the grateful boy's hands were filled with dimes and gum and candy. His tormentors, suddenly quieted by this unexpected turn of events, trailed after their gift-laden friend, begging for his favor.

Sidney Robbins (Guideposts) and Frank Mihalic

April 5, 1998

PALM / PASSION SUNDAY, YEAR C

Gospel Reading at Mass: The Passion of the Lord,

Lk 22:14—23:56 / 23:1-49 (s.f.)

The Homily is on the Gospel of the Lord's Entrance

LUKE 19:28-40

THE DISCIPLES REJOICED AND PRAISED

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Palm Sunday is also Passion Sunday. It combines two celebrations which are different in character: one is joyful, the other somber. This homily / Fjibliarasal guide is about the joyful celebration.

Focus Points. (1) V. 28 Jesus went ahead with his ascent to Jerusalem. Jesus continued to implement the plan of God for himself, which he had accepted. As early as in ch. 9 of Luke, it was already noted that, "As the time approached when he was to be taken from this world, he firmly resolved to proceed toward Jerusalem..." (Lk 9:51).

(2) V. 35-38 Then they led the animal to Jesus, and laying their cloaks on it, helped him mount. They spread their cloaks on the roadway as he moved along; and on his approach to the descent from Mount Olivet, the entire crowd of disciples began to rejoice and praise God loudly for the display of power they had seen... The "display of power" over which the disciples rejoiced were the exorcisms and miraculous cures performed by Jesus. It was not the first time the disciples rejoiced over this and in their own participation in the "power" given to Jesus. When the seventy-two disciples returned from their mission, they did so "in jubilation saying, 'Master, even the demons are subject to us in your name' He said in reply: 'I watched Satan fall from the sky like lightning. See what I have done; I have given you power to tread on snakes and scorpions and all the forces of the enemy, and nothing shall ever injure you...' (Lk 10:17-18). The Christian reader can see the Holy Spirit at work in the exorcisms and miracles of Jesus, since Luke says in 4:14: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee and his reputation spread throughout the region..."

**(3) V. 38 "Blessed be he who comes as king
in the name of the Lord!
Peace in heaven
and glory in the highest."**

The people accept Jesus as their king, and they shout words similar to those said by the angelic choir when Jesus was born in Bethlehem (see Lk 2:14).

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Jewish pilgrims "ascend" to the holy city of Jerusalem with joy. More than any of them Jesus ascended to Jerusalem with special joy to fulfill his Father's plan for himself as Savior of humankind.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Was there ever any occasion in your life when you felt special joy in doing God's will? Share the experience with your small group.

2. The Holy Spirit worked with Jesus whenever he exorcised evil spirits from people or cured people from illness. After Pentecost, the disciples took the place of Jesus and through them the Holy Spirit continues the "display of power" over which people had rejoiced according to today's Gospel reading.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you ever been the benefactor or the beneficiary in the Holy Spirit's "display of power"? Share your experience with your small group.

3. The Lord's Entrance to Jerusalem is like a combination of the Feast of Christ the King and Christmas.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Has your day-to-day living been affected by the thought that Jesus is your King and that he is the Prince of Peace? Share your answer with your small group.

3000 Years Old

David began his royal career as king of the Judahites in Hebron, where he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months. When the other tribes of Israel also accepted him as their king, he needed a new capital city. For this, he conquered the

Jebusite City then known as the Citadel of Zion, see 2 Samuel 5:6-12. This happened around the year 1000 B.C. For this reason, Jerusalem as the City of David has celebrated 3000 years of continual existence. It is in fact much older, since the name Jerusalem is attested as early as 2000 BC. It is mentioned in the Bible for the first time together with its priest-king Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18.

The Holy City of Jerusalem, according to Luke, was the scene of the presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple (Lk 2:22-38). He returned to it when he was a child of twelve years (Lk 2:41-50). Henceforth, following the tradition of pious Jews, he went to the Temple every year.

In the Synoptic narrative of the public ministry of Jesus, he goes to the Temple only once. His entrance to the city was a joyous celebration for the people who considered him as the promised descendant of David who will bring Jerusalem to its greatest glory.

APRIL 12, 1998

E A S T E R

In afternoon Masses, Lk 24:13-35

(See our Homily for the Third Sunday of Easter, Year A)

The following Homily / Bibliarasal guide is for the Easter Vigil, Year C

LUKE 24:1-12

FULL OF AMAZEMENT

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Sometime between sunset on Saturday, and sunrise on Sunday, probably on April 8-9 in the year 30 AD (or on April 4-5 in the year 33 AD), Jesus rose from the grave and became the Risen, Living Lord of heaven and earth. Traditionally, on this holy night, the Church keeps vigil to celebrate its most holy feast,

the central event that makes, (if it is true), or unmakes, (if it is false), the Christian religion.

Focus Points. (1) V. 1-6a On the first day of the week, at dawn, the women came to the tomb bringing the spices they had prepared. They found the stone rolled back from the tomb; but when they entered the tomb, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were still at a loss what to think of this, two men in dazzling garments appeared beside them. Terrified, the women bowed to the ground. The men said to them: "Why do you search for the living One among the dead? He is not here; he has been raised up..." On the Sunday morning after his death on the Cross, Jesus Christ is already referred to as "the Living One". Later, in the second kerygmatic discourse in Acts, Peter reproaches the Jewish people for having killed "the Prince / Leader of life" but God raised him from the dead "and to that fact we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15). "The Living One" is a title given by the Bible to God to emphasize that he is not like the pagan idols that do not have life: "We have come with good news to make you turn away from these empty idols to the living God who made sky and earth and sea and all that these hold" (Acts 14:15); "you turned to God from idols, to serve him who is the living and true God" (1 Th 1:9). In this light, when Jesus Christ is called "THE LIVING ONE" he is put on the same level as God.

(2) V. 9-11 On their return from the tomb, the women told all these things to the Eleven and the others...but the story seemed like nonsense and they refused to believe them. The Resurrection of Christ, including its palpable proof, the "Empty Tomb" was a totally unexpected event for the apostles. This is the best argument against claims of unbelievers that the Apostles played tricks (like stealing Christ's body from his tomb and narrating vision stories) so that a popular belief in the Resurrected Jesus would arise and grow.

(3) V. 12 Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. He stooped down but could see nothing but the wrappings. So he went away full of amazement at what had occurred. Only Luke among the Synoptic evangelists, and John following a separate tradition (Jn 20:1-10) highlight the role of Peter in bringing the apostolic group to believe in the resurrection of Christ. Peter's own faith started with the "amazement" spoken of in this verse. The Christian reader should understand this "amazement" as a stirring of grace brought about by the Holy Spirit.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Christ as "THE LIVING ONE" has the fullness of the Holy Spirit, and so Paul could write to the Corinthian Christians: "You are a letter of Christ which I have delivered, a letter written not by ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh in the heart" (2 Cor 3:3). In many texts of St. Paul "Life" and "Spirit" go together: "the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6); "if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you" (Rm 8:11 see Gal 6:8). **o** Christ "THE LIVING ONE" gives life to those who believe in him: "As sin's reign brought death, so grace was to rule through saving justice that leads to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rm 5:21); "the gift freely given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rm 6:23); "the law of the Spirit which gives life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rm 8:2); "when Christ is revealed — and he is your life — you, too, will be revealed with him in glory" (Col 3:4).

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Do you appreciate the fact that the Christian life of grace that you now possess is a participation

in the resurrected life of Christ? Share your answer with your small group.

2. The resurrection of Christ is like a tapestry with two sides: one beautiful and one puzzling. Its beautiful side is the Mystery of Jesus Christ becoming alive again, never to die anymore but instead given the power to rule heaven and earth and give eternal life to people. This side can be appreciated only with the eyes of faith. No amount of "proof and indeed God's grace alone can bring people to believe this beauty. The puzzling side is the "Empty Tomb". This can be proven, and witnesses like the women and the apostles can give evidence (as they did, and their witness is recorded in Sacred Scriptures).

2.1 Pointer for sharing: When you celebrate Easter, which side of the tapestry of the Resurrection grabs you more: the beautiful side or the puzzling side? Share your answer with your small group.

3. God's "amazing grace," an action of the Holy Spirit, propelled St. Peter and the apostolic group to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Has God's "amazing grace" touched your life? Share your answer with your small group.

Amazing Grace

"Amazing Grace" by John Newton, was a hymn that used to be sung only by Protestants, but is now also a favorite among Catholics, especially those in the Charismatic movement. Both the words and the melody are very touching although they come from way back in the 18th century (ca. 1779).

John Newton received little education as a boy, since his father was captain of a merchant ship and took his son into service.

When he was older he was pressed into naval service but when he saw an opportunity he tried to escape. He was captured, degraded in rank, and treated severely. As soon as he could quit, he joined a ship that engaged in slave trading. He eventually became the master of a slave-trading ship that made many voyages to Africa. This means that he would buy captured africans and bring them to England or America to be sold as slaves. It was while he was engaged in this depraved business that he got converted by God's grace.

In his "resurrected life" John Newton studied Greek and Hebrew, and asked for ordination as a Christian minister in 1758 but he was refused. Fortunately, this was granted to him in 1764 and he became curate of Olney, where he wrote hymns with the help of the poet, William Cowper.

The following are the words of the hymn:

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a
wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but
now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace
my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear the hour I first
believed!

Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have
already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace
will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me, His word my
hope secures;
He will be my shield and portion be as long as life
endures.

And when this flesh and heart shall fail, and mortal
life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the veil, a life of joy and
peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years, bright
shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise than when
we'd first begun.

April 19, 1998

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR C

Dominica in albis

**JOHN 20: 19-31
RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

There are two theologians of the Holy Spirit among the evangelists, namely Luke and John. Each of them takes a different approach to the topic. For example, Luke seems to postpone the giving of the Holy Spirit to the disciples to fifty days after the resurrection, that is, on the day of Pentecost. As we understand it, this is the giving of the Holy Spirit in the form of charisms or gifts for the building up of the Church rather than for the personal life of the individual. John, for his part, thinks of Christ as giving his disciples a participation in his new life by sharing with them, on the day itself of his resurrection, the Vital Force that was within him throughout his earthly life but which he could now also bestow on believers.

Focus Points. (1) V. 21-23 "Peace be with you," he said again. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Then he breathed on them and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive men's sins, they are forgiven them; if you hold them

bound, they are held bound." Peace, as understood in the Bible, is the core and pledge of all the good things that God can give his people during their stay on earth. Wishing peace to others is the usual Jewish greeting. But on resurrection day, Jesus transforms this traditional greeting into an effective bestowal of the benefits of the resurrection on his disciples present before him. They need the benefits of the resurrection in order to become his effective missionaries just as he was an effective missionary of the Father. Coming to something specific, he bestows the Holy Spirit on them. It is given to them so that the Peace which is already theirs could be shared with others in the form of the forgiveness of sins. Their sins have already been forgiven by Christ and now they are also given the power to forgive the sins of others so that everyone can enjoy Peace.

(2) V. 24-29 It happened that one of the Twelve, Thomas (the name means "Twin"), was absent when Jesus came... A week later, the disciples were once more in the room, and this time Thomas was with them. Despite the locked doors, Jesus came and stood before them. 'Teace be with you,' he said... Did the apostle Thomas also receive the Holy Spirit as the power to forgive sins? The Scripture does not expressly say so, but we can make this conclusion from the purpose of Christ's second appearance to his disciples when Thomas was present. It was to make Thomas truly a witness of the resurrection (see Acts 1:22) and fully an Apostle (a man with a mission from the Risen Christ). One cannot be fully an Apostle without receiving the Holy Spirit as all the other Apostles did.

(3) V. 29-31 Jesus said to him: "You became a believer because you saw me. Blest are they who have not seen and have believed." xxx These have been recorded to help you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name. One sure sign that the apostle Thomas received the Holy Spirit is his profession of faith, "My Lord and my God!" (v.28). One cannot

make such a profession of faith unless one has received the Holy Spirit. The words of Scripture can sow the seed of faith, but one needs the sunshine and warmth of the Holy Spirit to make that seed sprout, grow, bloom and bear fruit.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. The Risen Lord's presence (see v. 19 ff). Peace. Joy (see v.20). Mission. Holy Spirit. Forgiveness for oneself and for others. All these come in a package as Christ's Easter gift to his disciples.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: What, do you think, is the best Easter gift you have ever received? Share your answer with your small group.

2. The Apostles as well as we Christians of later ages are witnesses of the Resurrected Christ but in different ways. The Apostles were witnesses because they had earthly contact with the glorious body of Christ, that is, through their senses of sight, touch, and hearing functioning normally. That is why the appearance of the Risen Christ to the Apostle Thomas was something crucial to his being an Apostle. On our part, we are witnesses to the Resurrected Christ in as much as we share in his glorious life by being born again through faith and the Holy Spirit, with his charisms bestowed on us at our sacramental Baptism.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you done any witnessing for Christ that is similar to the witnessing done by the original Apostles? If so, share your experience with your small group.

3. We are among those who have not seen the Risen Christ but have believed in him. We are therefore entitled to the happiness spoken about in v. 29.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced the "blessedness" (beatitude) of being a believer in Jesus? Share your answer with your small group.

How Lucky We Are

I was waiting for the bus in the dark one night, standing there in the rain. Up comes this drunk, uneasy on his feet. Tapping me on the chest with an empty beer bottle, he asks with beer on his voice, "Do you believe in God?"

What a question from a drunk at this awkward moment! Was it a joke? Was he putting me on? I didn't want to say a word, figuring it was useless. But the fellow's face was practically pressed against mine and there was no way out... So without a second thought I said, "Yes."

At this I was prepared for the worst, a question like, "Well, then show him to me," or something of the sort.

But he just stood there trying to maintain his balance, looked me in the eye and said, "Man! Are you ever lucky!"

It is due to the Risen Christ and his Holy Spirit that we have that luck highly regarded by that "spirited" man.

Adapted from Ludolf Ulrich and Frank Mihalic

APRIL 26, 1998

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR C

Short form of the Gospel: John 21: 1-14

The Homily is focused on the long form

JOHN 21:1-19

**LOVE — THE HOLY SPIRIT IN CHRIST'S
DISCIPLES**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The story of the miraculous catch of fish is the short form of today's Gospel. The long form includes the story that is sometimes called "Peter's Primacy", which actually concerns his love for Jesus. In observance of the "Year of the Holy Spirit" we are focusing on this second story, because love comes from the Holy Spirit.

Focus Points. (1) V. 15 When they had eaten their meal, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter said, "You know that I love you." The commonplace viewpoint about Peter's Primacy, at least among Catholics, is that it has to do with his Teaching Office or Magisterium. Here, however, it is presented as something that has to do with LOVE. Jesus makes Peter the Chief (Visible) Shepherd because he loves more than the others.

(2) V. 15c, 16c, 17c "Feed my lambs" xxx "Tend my sheep" xxx "Feed my sheep." Tender loving care for the little ones (lambs) is what concerns Jesus most, and therefore his Vicar also has to give priority to this. Tending sheep includes protecting them during the day by keeping a watchful eye for wolves and pitfalls, and shielding them at night by bringing them to the sheepfold. All these a shepherd of people can do only with the help of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit was given in a special

way to Peter so that in turn he could help the other Apostles in consonance with Christ's assurance, "I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered, you in turn must strengthen your BROTHERS" (Lk 22:32).

(3) V. 19b When Jesus had finished speaking he said to Peter, "Follow me." John's presentation makes us understand that the other disciples were within earshot during the dialogue about Peter becoming the Chief Shepherd of the Flock after the departure of Jesus (see v. 15). Afterwards, it seems that Jesus also wanted a private talk with Peter. However, we must admit that "Follow me" means much more than this. For example, it also means that Peter's love for the Christian flock must approximate that of Jesus. Peter must share in the same Spirit of Love that Jesus possessed when he cared for his flock during his life on earth.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. Love is the greatest Christian commandment. It should also be the number one asset of each and every Christian leader.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced tender loving care from your Christian superiors? Share your answer with your small group.

2. Christians must be protected by their superiors and leaders not only from doctrinal errors but from the Evil One. "Our battle is not against human forces but against the principalities and powers, the rulers of this world of darkness, the evil spirits in regions above" Eph 6:12. Christians, especially those who are superiors and leaders, must draw strength from the Lord and his power (see Eph 6:10), that is, from the Holy Spirit.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Has protection been extended to you by your Christian superiors? Share your experience of this with your small group.

3. Our following of Christ must be shown in our life of service to our brothers and sisters, since Christ said that he "came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45; see Lk 22:27).

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you been served by your Christian superiors and leaders, or did you have to serve them? Share your experience with your small group.

Call Me Brother / Sister

A famine was on the land. A beggar on a street corner reached out to the great Russian writer, Tolstoy, who was passing by. Tolstoy stopped, searched for a coin but found none. With real sorrow, he said, "Don't be angry with me, my brother. I have nothing with me."

The beggar's face lighted up as he replied, "But you called me brother — that is a great gift."

When Christian superiors call their subjects "brothers" or "sisters" and this comes from the heart, the Spirit of Love is at work in the superior and is giving a gift to the subject.

Adapted from Lovasik and Frank Mihalic