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THE EASTER VIGIL PROCLAIMING
THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John Samaha

MESSAGE FOR THE XXXI
WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY

John Paul II

THE GREAT JUBILEE OF THE YEAR
JURIDICO-PASTORAL ASPECTS
OF ITS CELEBRATION

Jose Ma. Tinoko, OP

PASTORAL EXHORTATION ON
PHILIPPINE CULTURE

CBCP

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Culture of Wisdom

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

If there is anything the Church can give to the world today, something that is missing, is the Church's *culture of wisdom*. If we open our radio, television, e-mail and newspaper we have a lot of accumulated informational data. The accumulation of data does not always mean people have the right perspective.

The world today needs an analytic mind that can read the signs of the times and make proper analysis of data: sociological, economic, historical, cultural and so forth. Therefore the Church offers its help to save the media culture of information by offering her wisdom. The message of the Holy Father for the World Communications Day speaks "The Church's culture of *wisdom* can save the media culture of *information* from becoming a meaningless accumulation of facts; and the media can help the Church's wisdom to remain alert to the array of new knowledge now emerging. The Church's culture of *joy* can save the media culture of *entertainment* from becoming a soulless flight from truth and responsibility; and the media can help the Church to understand better how to communicate with people in a way that appeals and even delights. These are just some examples of how closer cooperation in a spirit of friendship and at a deeper level can help both the Church and the media to serve the men and women of our time in their search for meaning and fulfillment."

Indeed, the Church invites the people working in media to join Her in the search for God the Father.

Message for the XXXIII World Communications Day

JOHN PAUL II

*"Mass media: a friendly companion for those in search
of the Father"*

Sunday, May 16, 1999

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

1. We are approaching the Great Jubilee, the two thousandth anniversary of the Birth of Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, the celebration which will open the door to the third Christian millennium. In this last year of preparation, the Church turns to God our Father, contemplating *the mystery of his infinite mercy*. He is the God from whom all life comes and to whom it will return; and he is the One who journeys with us from birth to death as our friend and companion on the way,

I have chosen as the theme for this year's *World Communications Day* "Mass media: a friendly companion for those in search of the Father". The theme implies *two questions*: how might the media work with God rather than against him? and how might the media be a friendly companion to those searching for God's loving presence in their lives? It also implies *a statement of fact and a*

reason for thanks: that the media do at times make it possible for those who are searching for God to read in new ways both the book of nature, which is the realm of reason, and the book of revelation, the Bible, which is the realm of faith. Finally the theme implies *an invitation and a hope*: that those responsible for the world of social communications will be ever more committed to help rather than hinder the search for meaning which is at the very heart of human life.

2. To be human is to go in search; and, as I stressed in my recent Encyclical Letter, all human searching is in the end *a search for God*: "Faith and reason are like two wings upon which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth - in a word, to know himself - so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may come to know the truth of themselves" (1). The Great Jubilee will be a celebration of God who is the goal of all human searching, a celebration of the endless mercy which all men and women desire - even though they often find themselves thwarted by sin which, in the expression of Saint Augustine, is like looking for the right thing in the wrong place (cf. *Confessions*, X, 38). We sin when we look for God where he cannot be found.

Therefore, in speaking of "those who are searching for the Father", this year's theme for World Communications Day speaks of *every man and woman*. All are searching, though not all are looking in the right place. The theme recognizes the exceptional influence of the media in contemporary culture, and therefore the media's special responsibility to witness to the truth about life, about human dignity, about the true meaning of our freedom and mutual interdependence.

3. On the journey of human searching, the Church wishes to befriend the media, knowing that every form of cooperation will be for the good of everyone. Cooperation also means that we come

to know each other better. At times, relations between the Church and the media can be marred by mutual misunderstanding which breeds fear and distrust. It is true that Church culture and media culture are different; indeed at certain points there is a stark contrast. But there is no reason why differences should make friendship and dialogue impossible. In many of the deepest friendships it is precisely differences that encourage creativity and bridge-building.

The Church's culture of *remembrance* can save the media culture of *transitory "news"* from becoming a forgetfulness which corrodes hope; and the media can help the Church to proclaim the Gospel in all its enduring freshness in the everyday reality of people's lives. The Church's culture of *wisdom* can save the media culture of *information* from becoming a meaningless accumulation of facts; and the media can help the Church's wisdom to remain alert to the array of new knowledge now emerging. The Church's culture of *joy* can save the media culture of *entertainment* from becoming a soulless flight from truth and responsibility; and the media can help the Church to understand better how to communicate with people in a way that appeals and even delights. These are just some examples of how closer cooperation in a spirit of friendship and at a deeper level can help both the Church and the media to serve the men and women of our time in their search for meaning and fulfillment.

4. With the recent explosion of information technology, the possibility for communication between individuals and groups in every part of the world has never been greater. Yet, paradoxically, the very forces which can lead to better communication can also lead to increasing self-centredness and alienation. We find ourselves therefore in a *time of both threat and promise*. Nobody of good will wants the threat to prevail in a way that will lead to still more

human sorrow - least of all at the end of a century and a millennium which have had more than their share of sorrow.

Let us look instead with great hope to the new millennium, trusting that there will be people in both the Church and the media prepared to cooperate to ensure that the promise prevails over the threat, communication over alienation. This will ensure that the world of the media becomes a more and more friendly companion to all people, presenting them with "news" wedded to remembrance, information wedded to wisdom and entertainment wedded to joy. It will also ensure a world where the Church and the media can work together for the good of humanity. That is what is required if the power of the media is to be not a force which destroys but a love which creates, a love which reflects the love of God "who is Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (*Eph* 4:6).

May all who work in the world of social communications know the joy of divine companionship, so that in knowing the friendship of God they may be enabled to befriend all men and women on their journey to the house of the Father, to whom be honour and glory, praise and thanksgiving, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

24 January 1999, the Feast of Saint Francis de Sales

Recommendations on Planning and Organizing a Public Relations Office for Bishops' Conference

FABC-OSC

Based on the teachings and considerations of the Pastoral Instructions *Communio et Progressio* (Nos. 174-176), *Aetatis Novae* (No. 31), and the *Orientations and Recommendations* of the Bishops' Institute for Social Communication on "Church and Public Relations" (BISCOM I September 1-5, 1997), we, Bishops, priests, religious and lay persons involved with the works of Catholic Bishops' conferences gathered for a training seminar on "Church and Public Relations" in Manila from March 10-20, 1999.

The Office of Social Communication of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC-OSC) organized this seminar. We were 21 participants representing 12 countries: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Philippines, Korea, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam. The seminar was organized to train the participants on Public Relations. Experts and resource persons from different countries conducted sessions on: Public Relations, relations between Church and Media, Crisis Management, and Concrete planning for a Public Relations Office.

We engaged in various workshops as well as exercises on news reporting, feature Writing, conducting interviews, managing a crisis, and the dynamics of a Public Relations Office. Having realized the value of our learning, we propose similar activities for those countries, which were not represented in this 10-day training seminar.

As a result of these, we came up with practical applications of what we have learned and suggest the following design for a Public Relations Office:

Objectives

1. To build good relations with external audiences based on good communication and unity within the Church herself.
2. To provide information that is authentic, relevant and timely.
3. To respond to the issues of the times, faithfully presenting the mind of the Church in order to improve mutual understanding (cf. *Communio et Progressio* No. 174-175).

Main Task

To communicate the vision and mission of the Church in understandable language and to build good relations, especially with the general public. The office will work as a service unit of the Bishops' conference, helping other service units / commissions in dealing "with external audiences.

Audiences

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| 1. Media | 3. NGO's |
| 2. Government | 4. Internet Users |

Organization Structure

A Public Relations Officer, duly appointed by the Bishops' conference, shall direct the activities of the office.

Adequate human resources must secure the functions of a Public Relations office including:

1. Information dissemination
2. Research and Documentation

The activities shall be supported by a Crisis Management Team, Writers' pool and Legal advice.

Crisis Management Teams shall be convoked in the event of a crisis, comprising of a team leader, relevant experts and a spokesperson. Dealing with crisis situations should be set up in a Crisis Management Plan, which should be regularly evaluated.

The individuals chosen to assume these posts should be committed persons. They should be authentic, knowledgeable, truthful and sincere. They should work in harmony with other responsible persons of the Bishops' conference as well as with people outside the Church.

Activities

1. Dissemination of information through bulletins, timely press conferences and press releases
2. Responses to the press which should not only be critical but also positive
3. Collection and publication of stories about the activities and life of the Church
4. Monitoring media's coverage of the Church
5. Networking with diocesan Public Relations offices

6. Design and undertaking research programs
7. Training of Public Relations personnel.

Hardware

Appropriate machines and equipment should be provided.

Finances

Sufficient financial support should be provided for the establishment and / or operations of the office.

Location

The most appropriate location is the General Secretariat of the Bishops' conference or in the capital city.

Challenge

Possible obstacles e.g. financial constraints and non-availability of suitable persons should be overcome by those responsible within the Church through their mutual concern for a good public image of the Church and her members.

19th March 1999

Pastoral Exhortation on Philippine Culture

CBCP

He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him. But to all who did accept him He gave power to become children of God, to all who believe in the name of him who was born not of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself. The Word was made flesh, he lived among us and we saw his glory the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father full of grace and truth. (Jn. 1, 11-14)

Introduction

In accordance with the Holy Father's hopes for the renewal of the Church in his letter "On the Coming of the Third Millennium" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 1995), we issue this year our third exhortation on a crucial area of Philippine life. In 1997, we spoke on our politics; last year on our economy; this year we propose to focus on yet another aspect of our national life: our culture.

From what we have seen already about Philippine politics and economics, it is clear much of the evil as well as the good we have noted in them stem to a large extent from our culture—the

way of life distinctive of us as a people, especially the values that we live by.

In this concern with culture, we ask: How much of the Gospel has become part of our way of life? How do we let it penetrate deeper into our culture, influence our values? How do we make them—our values—more conformed to those of Christ in our interaction with one another?

In asking these questions, we presuppose the answer to a prior one: Considering the welter of regional and sub-regional cultural traditions in the country today, can we say there is such a thing as "Philippine culture?" We answer this question from what social scientists tell us about our culture, namely, that there is a common social structuring of our many and diverse peoples, whether Iloko or Tagalog, Maranao or Ilongo, Manobo or Bontok, Ibanag or whatever, and there is too a common cultural matrix underlying that social structuring. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) itself makes this reading its own:

Ours is a pluralist society and a prime factor of our pluralism is the diversity of our cultural heritage. Lowland cultures have been heavily influenced by three centuries of Spanish colonial rule, the Muslim peoples of the south by Islamic traditions, and the mountain tribes, especially on Luzon, Mindanao and Mindoro, have retained much of "their pre-Spanish characteristics.

The differences notwithstanding, we can speak of a generic Philippine culture. And we can do so if we focus on the structuring of our many social and ethnic groups and the basic values that go with that structuring. And we see that in all Philippine peoples—it does not matter whether they are upland or lowland, Christian or Muslim,

schooled or unschooled—there is a common structuring of social relations based on the family and its well-being which antedate contacts with Muslim and Christian traditions. Basic values (family itself, loyalty to family, concern for its security, stress on authority and respect for elders, among other things) are supportive of this sociological fact. The commonalities are more striking than the differences, and we can conclude there is indeed a common culture and a common social structure that we can truthfully call Filipino. (*Acts and Decrees*, no. 18 and 19)

So, we will look into that common culture and social structure. This will be the first pan of our present exhortation. Then we will go into what the Church has been saying and teaching in recent times about the importance of culture in our living of our Catholic faith. And lastly, we will try spelling out some of the implications of the two foregoing pans for the life and pastoral work of the Church today in view of the Holy Father's urgent call for renewal.

Part 1: PHILIPPINE CULTURE

There are many things we can look into when we speak of a people's culture: their art, architecture, tools, technology; their modes of behavior and social interaction; their customary laws and norms of day-to-day relationships; their systems of communication and language; their ways of thinking and symboling; their worldviews, beliefs, values.

It is the inner part of culture—the thinking, believing, symboling, valuing part—that will concern us most here. We will focus on that inner aspect and sum it all up under the rubric of values: what a people define as good, what their goals in life are,

what makes them act thus and so and not another way. Values, thus, are at the deepest level of culture—they are its heart and core. They are, for all intents and purposes, what give people their identity as a people, a distinct human society.

We will be adopting here the view of culture which sees it as a product of the interaction between social structures (macro-level institutions) and people's adaptations, response and strategies to them for living. Thus we see values as essentially dynamic because they are precisely a product of this interaction which, while structured in some way, is nevertheless always subject to the creative force of human agency.

What this perspective implies is that we can speak of a very close relationship between culture and social structure in the sense that the latter embodies aspects of the former by limiting the options available to people so that their behavior would conform with—and express—certain values. But behavior, being a complex manifestation of values and a response to the limits imposed by social structures, can also exhibit an incompatibility with either the values themselves or the social structure. Thus, for instance, an exaggerated or excessive interpretation of the value of family could end up in unacceptable nepotism; and a pro-democracy movement could arise even under an authoritarian social system.

The potency of culture precisely lies in its ability to redefine, through human agency, the fundamental values on which it is based and to confront such social structures as simultaneously reinforce and undermine those values. Thus, it is possible for us to have not only long-held, traditional values, but also emergent ones—values that are in the process of being institutionalized in social structures and interactions. We will thus have to look at both traditional and emergent values—and as well the incompatibilities (excesses especially of traditional values) that we noted are possible developments in the dynamics of culture.

Traditional Filipino Values

We begin with what we have already noted above as the most striking feature of Filipino culture: the value we put on **family** - and family both as nuclear and extended. Attachment and loyalty to one's family are a central organizing principle of Philippine social structure and behavior. We generally define our personal interests in terms of those of the family. Personal identity is very closely tied in with its good name and honor. An individual's success is regarded as the family's success, be it in business or in politics. We aspire for excellence, achievement and economic advancement for the sake of our family.

The functionality of the Filipino's family-centeredness is quite all-encompassing. Family networks facilitate the individual's access to the broader society. The family is the principal means for gaining entry into the public realm of Philippine society where both economic and political transactions are carried out, facilitated and mediated through family networks. Social alliances, whether in business or in politics, are often based on family ties too inasmuch as trust and loyalty tend to be confined to family members. A family-against-the-world mentality is often the result.

While we work hard for the sake of our families, we also expect much from them—they are after all our basic communities. The family functions as the most important provider of social welfare and security in Philippine society where state and private welfare institutions are unavailable, or if available, are generally perceived as either inaccessible or unreliable. Family members are expected to supply the material and emotional needs of their kin, the mutual sharing of favors and resources within the family reinforcing family solidarity and loyalty. In this strong sense of family solidarity and loyalty, there is at work a basic equality of the sexes which belies what often seems to be a culture that

glorifies the male excessively and relegates the female to a subordinate status.

Familism as a central value shaping social behavior also underlies, to a very large extent, our notions of authority, legitimacy and power. More emphasis is placed, however, on the vertical dimension of power relations—those elements that have to do with authority and hierarchy. There is a weak sense of power defined in terms of horizontal or intra-class alliances. In other words, authority, legitimacy and power are generally seen as emanating from those who hold and exercise them, i.e., the rulers, rather than as coming from those who give them, i.e., the ruled. Someone is seen as influential and powerful (*malakas*) by virtue of one's connections with people at the top of the economic or political hierarchy rather than by virtue of having the support of a broad-based constituency. Indeed, power of influence (*lakas*) is one of the most prominent values that we put into play in our social interaction with others.

The preponderant part patron-client ties play among us is a reflection of the tendency to define power more in terms of vertical, rather than horizontal, relationships. The tenant of a landed family or the driver of a company executive, for example, would more easily connect his own interests and status with those of his landlord or employer (*amo*) than with those of other tenants or members of the working class. Employers are sometimes seen as extensions of one's family to whom loyalty, obedience and debts of gratitude (*utang na loob*) are owed. There is little class consciousness or solidarity beyond that fostered by face-to-face interaction.

Those who hold power and wealth, however, are expected to be generous and caring towards their subordinates. *Lakas* assumes a prominently paternalistic quality but it is expected to be tempered with compassion (*awa*). The powerful are expected to protect the

weak or at least be considerate of their right to a minimum level of survival. Thus, the poor and the weak are able to find security in their dependence.

An important aspect of our concept of power is tied to the notion of hierarchy. Centuries of colonial domination only served to reinforce pre-Spanish patterns of authority and hierarchy and the political culture that flowed from them. In this manner of political culture, persons of authority, social status and wealth are rarely questioned openly. Decision-making is frequently highly centralized. The opinions of people of authority are readily accepted and followed in most institutional contexts, whether in the family, in school, or in the workplace. Even in institutions considered as modern such as business corporations, the chief executive is oftentimes the sole decision-maker. Conversely, people with low status are expected to be compliant. Processes based on consultation and consensus-building are the exception rather than the rule.

We also put a high value on hard work, patience and perseverance. Perseverance (*tiyaga*) is considered a virtue. Poverty is seen as being caused by negative human traits like laziness or vices (*bisyo*) and fate (*kapalaran*). There is a pronounced fatalism in the way we view social mobility and hierarchy. Consequently, *bisyo* and *kapalaran*—rather than any notion of exploitation—are more readily identified as explanations for poverty.

Ours is a highly personalistic culture. We rely to a large extent, for the fostering of social ties, on face-to-face interaction. Consequently, social bonds and group solidarity depend not so much on common interests as on interpersonal ties based on reciprocity and mutual trust. *Utang-na-loob*, *hiya* and *pakikisama* become operative social norms in the context of this highly personalistic culture in which social behavior is very much oriented towards keeping interpersonal relations running smoothly.

Social behavior is regulated by the need to conform to social expectations to exhibit hospitality and reciprocity in interpersonal relationships. This is manifested in the moral pressure exerted by *hiya* and *pakikisama* in sanctioning deviations from expected behavior. Being seen as lacking in these traits (*walang hiya*, **waking utang-na-loob** or *hindi marunong makisama*) is an affront to one's person and consequently diminishes one's credibility among his/her social group. These norms likewise constrain us from engaging in behavior that would jeopardize group cohesion. We may feel compelled to go along with what everyone else is doing because of shame and a desire not to ruffle feelings even when we know that the action is morally wrong. We are generally reluctant to do anything that would disrupt group solidarity.

As a people, we are also known for our strong religiosity. Dependence on the benevolence of a Transcendent Being is a deeply held value and belief among us. While this has sometimes produced a certain degree of fatalism, our religiosity provides a moral anchor to individuals when confronted with a personal crisis. *Nasa Diyos ang awa, nasa tao ang gawa* (it is God's prerogative to show compassion, it is man's to act) underscores our deep sense of the limits of human effort, even as the necessity of hard work is also recognized. Moral righteousness is often equated with being God-fearing. A person described as possessing fear of God (*takot sa Diyos*) is considered trustworthy.

Excesses and Incompatibilities

These values, needless to say, have both positive and negative aspects to them: positive when exercised within the proper context and within limits; negative when excessive or lacking. Thus, strong family ties are an important source of social support and can provide the context for inculcating the value of social cohesion and a sense of the collective good. But too much emphasis on the

same ties and loyalties can and do lead to extreme clannishness or inability to think beyond family interests and consider the good of the larger society. Familism to the extent that trust and mutual help become unduly confined to family members only, can undermine a people's sense of community. And in fact, extreme familism, when translated into our political culture, has bred a pernicious tradition of political dynasties, nepotism and corruption in the name of protecting family interests.

Patron-client relations, though often blamed for instilling a culture of dependence, have their positive value as well. The emphasis on the patron's obligation to ensure the survival needs of the weak could be an expression of solidarity with the poor. However, when taken to the extreme, it becomes, aside from the unwholesome dependence it can create, a paternalism that is exercised solely on the basis of power and this leads to abuse of authority by powerholders. In the context of weak state structures such as we have at present, the political system affords little restraint on such abuse. So far, public opinion, elections and mass education which could function as checks on possible abuse of power have had a weak, effect on exacting accountability from powerholders.

Familism and personalism, to the extent that they put a premium on face-to-face interaction as the basis for building trust and group solidarity, make forming social alliances along horizontal lines difficult. Intra-class competition has become such a common phenomenon that we often speak derisively of our so-called "crab mentality", yet we continue to pull down one another, we don't allow others to rise beyond our level. Class-based social formations like labor unions and farmer's federations have had limited success in galvanizing working class solidarity to effect changes in Philippine labor conditions. The small membership of these types of organizations compared to the large proportion of workers and

farmers in Philippine society could reflect not just the ineffectiveness of current organizing practices but also the perduring strength of the clientelist mindset.

Our electoral and political behavior likewise strongly displays this same clientelist orientation—the basis of our "politics of patronage". The ability of politicians to win votes is related more to their "approachability" and ability to deliver projects and extend personal assistance rather than to their stand and track record on policy issues. The inability to relate politics to broader policy issues is rooted in the personalistic character of our political culture. This personalism is reinforced by the general failure of the governmental bureaucracy to translate positive policies into palpable benefits which can be felt by the people.

Our concern for smooth interpersonal relations, while providing a mechanism for regulating social behavior in accordance with group norms, can likewise lead to some excesses, particularly in the context of a weak sense of the common good. Hospitality, for instance, and the desire to offer the best of ourselves to others, can lead to extravagance, showiness, excessive concern for appearance rather than substance. Compelled by *utang-na-loob*, we often choose to give more importance to returning a favor to someone than to fulfilling our duty to the bigger community. The desire to conform from *pakikisama*, if indiscriminately followed through in every instance, will lead to the abdication of responsibility for moral decision-making in favor of group expectations. The failure to curb corruption because nobody will dare speak out against a colleague and disrupt a thriving informal economy in the bureaucracy often stems from the strong influence of the ethic of *pakikisama*.

The concern for keeping interpersonal relationships on an even keel, coupled with our personalism, can also undermine our ability

to adhere to rules and legal structures. There is a tendency for us to view rules and regulations as negotiable — especially if we are in a position of strength. We negotiate and bargain for them to be adjusted or even overlooked for our advantage and convenience. Despite widespread complaints about law officers not being able to enforce the rule of law, we actually expect them to be lenient with us when we are caught violating rules ourselves—we negotiate for leniency practically as a matter of course. We enact many laws which we do not implement. Our notion of authority is so personalistic that we fail to accord laws and rules authority in themselves. Only the people who implement them matter and negotiation is always possible, even to the point of bribery and pay-offs. This is one easy opening to corruption in government that is unfortunately most flagrantly taken advantage of.

Emergent Values

The values we have termed traditional above are readily recognized by most of us as part of our culture. But they are not all we see. We are also witnessing some emergent values that have started to take root in Philippine society and now and again burst into public consciousness and play pivotal roles in our national life.

One such value is that of democracy. With the institution of formal democracy in the Philippines, we came to embrace the values as well as the institutions of a democratic polity such as elections, the separation of powers, representation in government, etc. Despite the largely elitist character of Philippine democratic politics, the value of democracy has managed to take root in our political culture. In the corruption of our democratic institutions during the painful years of military rule in the '70s and '80s, the most resented part of the new regime was its mockery of democratic values in its practice of farcical "referendum's". This

resentment, we all know, came to a head in the **People Power** uprising against the fraudulent elections of 1986. It was in a very real sense the reassertion of our democratic values against the structures of subjugation erected by the dictatorial government of those years.

The people's revolt was a cultural threshold signifying a passage—along incubating, it must be said—from a political orientation of subjugation (which for many decades was made to be consistent with formal democracy) to one of participation. The institutional expression of this politico-cultural shift was the emergence of numerous people's organizations (POs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) which began to interact with the state on critical social and policy issues. Engaging in dialogues, public hearings, and negotiations with government has become part of the repertoire of political action of the citizenry today. Participation by the people and decentralization in the sense of bringing government closer to the people have become emergent values shaping our people's political behavior and expectations of government. Thus, for example, there is today more insistence on consultative processes and transparency as a result of the impact of mass media and the advocacy of organized groups.

Human rights is another emergent value. As with democracy, awareness of this value was heightened during the martial law era because of numerous abuses, tortures, summary killings and "disappearances" which happened then. The idea that power and authority could be abused and human rights totally disregarded by the state and by those who held the reins of power sensitized us to the value of human rights.

The political assertion of this value, however, has remained generally weak. Current discussions regarding compensation for the victims of human rights abuses under the military regime has

failed to generate massive, public support for the victims of human rights abuses. And personalities who were closely connected with that past oppressive regime and profited from it have managed to stage a political comeback, thanks partly to the cohesiveness of our elite class and the still strong influence of regionalistic loyalties, but partly too to what we talked about in our **Exhortation on Philippine Politics** two years ago regarding the corruptions of the political system.

The same weakness and ambivalence in value commitment that have just been referred to above are evident likewise in the way we regard social justice or egalitarianism. While the traditional value system has mostly fostered a paternalistic value orientation, social justice and egalitarianism are beginning to redefine the way we view inter-class relations. Today we hear of certain public officials or policies of governance being described as "pro-poor" or "anti-poor," an indication that there is a growing consciousness of social inequalities and the need to do something about them. Participative processes have become an important venue for articulating these egalitarian values. But these values still have to find expression in social policies.

Since culture is in a very real sense a people's collective psyche, it can bear deeper and deeper scrutiny, and the knowledge that comes from such a scrutiny is thus a form of self-knowledge. What we have attempted to present here is by no means exhaustive and it is our hope that a more thorough analysis of Philippine cultural values—and a deeper awareness of their implications—will be spurred on by this brief and selective description of our culture. Why the task of analysis is a necessary and constant one should be clearer after we look at why we have to be more concerned about our culture from the standpoint of our faith.

Part II: CHURCH AND CULTURES

Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, saw the divorce between faith and culture in our age as "the drama of our time" (EN, 20). Pope John Paul II in 1982 would in his turn say that he "considered the Church's dialogue with culture of our time [as] a vital area, one in which the destiny of the world at the end of this twentieth century is at stake" (Letter creating the Pontifical Council for Culture, 28 June 1982).

The Problematic

The question of the relationship between faith and culture is not a new one. In a very real sense it is as old as Christianity itself. At the Church's very beginning, the Church was faced with the issue of admitting Gentiles into the Christian community without having them undergo the Jewish rite of circumcision. Since the first communities of believers came from the Jewish world where Christianity arose, they perceived their new faith as closely linked with their own ethnic conventions, cultural practices, local laws and traditions. They believed all this should be imposed upon all converts to Christianity (Acts 15, 1-30; 17, 22-28; Gal. 2, 1-4). Paul, the self-proclaimed Apostle to the Gentiles, took a dramatic stand against this conviction and even "withstood Cephas to his face" (Gal. 2, II) in opposing it.

In various forms, the same issue continued to trouble the Church well into the succeeding ages as the Church moved into Hellenic and Roman cultural areas, and in time, into the Teutonic, Gallic, Ethiopian, Iberian, Celtic, Slavic, Scandinavian, Anglo-Saxon and other areas. This question has in some ways moved to front and center in our time when the Church is being challenged to transform herself from being a predominantly European and

Western reality into a truly world Church, no longer something like "an export firm which exported a European religion as a commodity it did not really want to change but sent throughout the world together with the rest of the culture and civilization it considered superior" (Karl Rahner, *Theological Studies*, 1979, 717), but a Church truly in and of all peoples, at home in all races, nations and cultures of the world in other words, a Church truly catholic, the *catholic unitas* St. Augustine spoke of.

The way the faith-cultures question surfaces today is, admittedly, different from the way previous ages in the Church's history encountered it. Since the 19th century, there has gradually emerged a critical historical consciousness; empirical social sciences have developed in remarkable ways, heightening our understanding not only of culture itself but also of the pluralism of cultures. A single, commonly-accepted metaphysical system, deriving from classic *philosophia perennis*, has generally broken down. Today the way we understand culture is crucial to how we grasp the faith-and-cultures relationship.

We see the Christian faith as called into dialogue and interface with a large number of cultures in various areas of the world. We have moved from defining culture in its "classicist" sense, which believed "there was but one culture that was both universal and permanent" to whose norms and ideals the "uncultured" might aspire (Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 1972). There has been a shift to a more empirical, social-scientific understanding of culture, as we have defined it above, and it includes the diverse "ways of being human" found among peoples, traditions and ways of life developed over centuries; belief-, value- and symbolic-systems as well as livelihood and power systems forming integrated wholes in human communities, all of these shaping human identity. This shift from a metaphysical deductive "classicist" understanding of culture to the contemporary social-scientific concept has been

gradually taken over in official Church documents, markedly with Vatican II's *Gaudium et Spes* and in the writings of recent Roman Pontiffs and texts from the Holy See. (Cf. Herve Carrier, *Evangelie et Cultures de Leon XIII a John Paul II*, 1987.)

Inculturation

Within the last thirty years or so, one significant way the faith-and-cultures questions has come to focus is the whole issue now generally called **inculturation**. This was first taken up in mission studies under the rubric of "adaptation"—a notion already present in the Fathers of the Church. The discussion was on how the proclamation of the faith must accommodate itself, for the communication of the Gospel-message, to the demands of cultural understanding and expression of peoples to be evangelized. The notion of "incarnation" was also called upon—in analogy with the mystery of God's Son becoming human like us, entering within our human condition and situations, in order to bring his own "more abundant life" (John 10, 10).

In contemporary Roman Catholic speaking and writing, the word "inculturation" has come to be generally accepted. Given currency since the 1970s, the word first surfaced publicly in the Synod of Bishops of 1979 in interventions of Cardinal Jaime Sin and Father Pedro Arrupe (cf. Robert Schreiter, *Theological Studies*, 1989, 747), finally to enter into the text of the magisterium in Pope John Paul II's *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979). Although sometimes considered an "ungainly neologism", it has become generally received, as it has come to imply the notion of a diversity of cultures in which the Gospel, faith and Church must enter, the notion too of an on-going process which develops over time—rather than a once-for-all action or encounter. It also recalls the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God and its analogous continuation through history: a transformation carried out through a process of dialogue in life.

The word "contextualization" which is more or less equivalent and interchangeable, seems to be preferred by the World Council of Churches and in some missiological circles. It appeals to many because of its seeming social science provenance and its emphasis on the more commonly understood notion of historical and social "context" as ground for dialogue.

In our part of the world, as might be expected, the faith-and-cultures discussion—focused as "inculturation" or "contextualization" from its beginning—has captured much attention and won great, even passionate, interest. From the mid-1960s, with the ending of political colonialism and the emergence of "new nations" in Asia (after World War II), it has been seen increasingly as the task of the local Churches in Asia in the pursuit of "evangelization and mission in Asia in our time." Since the visit of Pope Paul VI to Manila in 1970, when the beginnings of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) was set in motion, the work of inculturation has been high on the agenda of the Asian Christian communities. The final statement of FABC I in Taipei (1974) has been taken as something like a "classical *locus*" of Asian Churches' thought in this matter:

To preach the Gospel in Asia today we must make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our peoples. The primary focus of our task of evangelization, then, at this time in our history, is the building up of a truly local Church.

For the local Church is the realization and the enfleshment of the Body of Christ in a given people, a given place and time.

It is not a community in isolation from other communities of the Church one and catholic. Rather it seeks

communion with all of them. With them it professes the one faith, shares the one Spirit and the one sacramental life. In a special way it rejoices in its communion and filial oneness with the See of Peter, which presides over the universal Church in love.

The local Church is a Church incarnate in a people, a Church indigenous and inculturated. And this means concretely a Church in continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions—in brief, with all those life-realities of the people in whose midst it has sunk its roots deeply and whose history and life it gladly makes its own. It seeks to share in whatever truly belongs to that people: its meanings and its values, its aspirations, its thoughts and its language, its songs and its artistry. Even its frailties and failings it assumes, so that they too may be healed. For so did God's own Son assume the totality of our fallen human condition (save only for sin), so that He might make it truly His own, and redeem it in His paschal mystery. (FABC First Plenary Assembly, *Final Statement*, nos. 9-12.)

This same thrust is most evident in the **National Catechetical Directory of the Philippines—*Maturing in Christian Faith***. In its early acceptance of the need of a catechesis that paid full attention to Philippine social realities and culture (pp. 20-41), it laid the groundwork for the strong thrust of the PCP II towards the creation of a more inculturated Church—a thrust that is also outstandingly clear in **the Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC)** and its efforts to teach the faith in a way that makes sense to our own mentality.

Inculturation and the Local Church

As will be readily seen, for the Church in Asia, for our local Churches in the FABC area, the faith-and-cultures question was encountered very concretely from the very start. It was seen within the "task of evangelization and mission" as the primary endeavour of the Church, as an urgent imperative: As the former "missions" were now becoming local Churches within "new nations"—*ecclesiae novellae* (in Vatican II language) in "new nations in the way of development" and self-realization as independent nations. The process of building up these young Churches was envisioned concretely: a fuller and more authentic presence within the lives of the people around them, taking the form of a three-fold dialogue (primarily "a dialogue of life") with their cultures, with their religious traditions (often centuries- and millenia-old), with their people's situations of poverty, deprivation and often enough, oppression. This presence was to lead, of course, to what might be called "conversation" or "sharing of life", and eventually to "solidarity" or sharing of the struggle to fuller human and social development and liberation.

It might be important to point out that for the Asian local Churches in the FABC area, the faith-and-cultures issue, the inculturation question, was not begun as a theoretical discussion, but as a complex of tasks to be done, so that the "young Church" as local Church might enter into the process of "conversation" and "solidarity", a process of transformation for what was later to be conceptualized as "building up the Kingdom of God" in the Asia of our time.

The primary meaning of inculturation, then, in the thought of the FABC and Asian Local Churches since the 1970s, was **the building up of the local Church..** This "construction process" was to be realized through what has come to be known as "the three dialogues."

These three dialogues represent three areas of major concern for all the local Churches in Asia, and the FABC statements have come back to them again and again uirough the 25 years of the FABC's life:

- dialogue with the cultures of our peoples;
- dialogue with the Asian religious traditions;
- dialogue with the poor in their search for development, justice, brotherhood and peace.

These three dialogues are not posited as diverse from or opposed to the way the proclamation of the Gospel is carried out. They are seen as "the concrete modes of proclamation in the Asian context. Inculturation is seen here broadly and yet concretely as the Local Church coming-to-be in the very working out of evangelization." (*For All the Peoples of Asia*, vol. 26. 29-33.)

Several nodal points in this discussion might thus be lined up by way of summary:

a. The Local Church is the **acting subject** of inculturation. The Local Church here—by way of description, not of definition—refers to small eucharistic communities, parishes, dioceses, or various groupings of Churches understood as possessing a common socio-cultural particularity. Communities and dioceses within a nation or part of a nation under a bishop (or bishops) or under an episcopal conference, sharing a common socio-cultural particularity, could also be, in this perspective, a Local Church.

b. As concretely understood in much Asian theological writing on this issue, inculturation would explicitly include two areas for (1) "entrance into" or "conversation with" and (2) mutual exchange and transformation:

1. Culture in the sense of belief-, value- and symbol - systems bound together by a certain unity in a given way of life, and
 1. Culture as involving livelihood- and power-systems in a given community, thus explicitly including economic and political patterns and relationships, i.e., social structure.
- c. Thus the task of inculturation would involve the dialogue between the Gospel and faith meanings and values on the one hand and, on the other, all personal and societal life areas of a community bound together by common socio-cultural realities.

At this point a fuller definition of inculturation can be given:

Inculturation is a process by which an ecclesial community lives its Christian faith and experience within a given cultural context, in such a way that these not only find their expression in elements of local culture, but also become a force that animates, reshapes and profoundly renews that culture, so as to create new patterns of communion and communication within that culture and beyond it.

... The process of inculturation is an ongoing one, because of the dynamic character of each living culture and because of the "ever-newness" of the Christian experience, [and thus] every local Church is continuously involved in various inculturative processes. ..[T]he main task of inculturation is not to salvage cultures of the past, but through a proper appropriation of past gains, to prepare Christians to live out their faith in a cultural context which is continuously changing. (*Christ and*

The Theology of Inculturation

As we move to a more explicit theology, of inculturation, it is important to indicate that in this process we are not to look on Gospel faith and life (one pole of the inculturation dialogue) as constituting a "platonic universe" existing in a pure *a priori* state "up there" somewhere, and, which can be brought down, like Jerusalem descending from above, into a given people and culture. There is no pure "essence of Christianity" existing in an abstract state waiting, as it were, to be applied. Every existent Christianity is in fact an "inculturated Christianity", (Thus some theologians prefer to speak of "interculturalism.")

Firstly, hence, Christianity is said to be a "concrete historical universal" which is successively "incarnated" through out history in different communities, people and cultures, first by "transplantation", and then by endogenous development consequent to its first implanting. In this process, we must hold on to this first and basic point: Christianity, the Christian faith, is the person of Jesus Christ crucified and risen, "sitting at the right hand of the Father" **and** living today; and His message or Gospel—and the Christ-life in the spirit—is present and "received" within persons and communities (the Church in a given place and time. It is then transmitted through the sum-total of the tasks of evangelization, and "realized"—made real, actual—within communities and persons of another culture, another time and place. As one theologian (Theoneste Nkeramihigo) put it, "Christianity is the singular particularity of the man Jesus of Nazareth who has a universal destiny because by the power of His cross and resurrection He can break through all other particularities".

Thus is the *catholica unitas*—catholic unity—progressively realized and enlarged in history in **the** expanding communion of local Churches within the unity of the one, holy and apostolic Church. Thus does the unity of the Church, already virtually and potentially universal at Pentecost, become in reality and in actualization totally Catholic. This is, therefore, the final objective of inculturation: a communion of Churches within a communion of peoples, realized within the world and the cosmos redeemed by Christ and indwelt in its unity-in-diversity by the Trinitarian life and blessing.

Secondly, as has already been indicated above, inculturation is not setting Christian faith and life somehow side-by-side with the culture of a people in merely peaceful co-existence. Inculturation always involves a process of interface and interaction between faith and culture. There has to be a critical and ongoing mutual questioning, mutual responding, between the dialogue partners in every succeeding period of time.

This interaction will necessarily bring about transformation—a mutual transformation. Aspects and elements of the "inculturated Christianity" which is now in interaction with a local culture will have to yield place to other expressions of Christian faith and life which comes from the local culture, and aspects and elements of the local culture which are incompatible with the Christian faith and life must yield to the meanings and values of the Gospel and Christian life. This of course calls for necessary and ongoing discernment, one of the most exacting demands of the process of inculturation, which can only be: carried out through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It must be noted that Church documents are insistent that the dialogue of inculturation will necessarily demand critical interaction (even confrontation) and transformation, and without this transfor-

mation, faith does not become a force which animates, reshapes and profoundly renews a people and its culture, so as to create new patterns of communion and communication within that culture and beyond it. For, as the understanding of inculturation itself demands, a new creation results when Christian faith and life become realities and these realities transform a people and culture, remaking them into a new people, a new culture.

We can now sketch very briefly a theological perspective on inculturation.

The primary paradigm of inculturation is the mystery of the incarnation understood in its totality, comprising, firstly, **Incarnation**; secondly, **Cross-and-Resurrection** (Paschal Mystery); and thirdly, **Pentecost**.

The Incarnation of the Son is about the creative coming together of God and humanity in Jesus of Nazareth, at a particular point of history, in a particular culture. It is this unique and once-for-all entering of the divinity into humanity and human history, and it is the interchange and interaction between the divine and human in Jesus, which provides the groundwork for our understanding the relationship between faith and culture.

In the mystery of the Incarnation, God's own Son—one of the Trinity—became man, took flesh in the one particular person of Jesus of Nazareth, with all the historical and socio-cultural particularity of one human being. This is often called "the scandal of particularity" which attaches to the mystery of the Incarnation and continues to exist in an analogous way in the inculturation of Christian faith and life in various cultures throughout the ages and in our own time. Pope Paul VI spoke of the need of an African Christianity. And John Paul II said in 1980 to the bishops of Africa: "Not only is Christianity relevant to Africa, but Christ, in the

members of the Body, is Himself African" ("The African Bishops' Challenge", no. 6, 1980).

The Incarnation further involves the twofold movement of God becoming human and the human becoming divine in Jesus. God's assumption of humanity in Jesus is a divine initiative—God's gift—but it evokes the perfect response of the human in Jesus (the human task). Jesus embodies in His being and life as man "the unity of God's descent into the human and the ascent of humanity into the life of God. The Incarnation enlightens our understanding not only of God but also of the human." Pope John Paul II again and again stresses this truth: We do not truly and fully understand what the human is, what the human vocation and reality are, without Jesus Christ.

Thus, when the faith is incarnated in a given people with its own culture, what is already present of the divine within that culture through creation and history is lit up, fostered, brought forward to fullness. It can enable and empower that given culture to realize creatively and dynamically its full potential. Thus Inculturation can creatively reshape human cultures, transforming them, filling them with the Spirit. Human persons and communities realize their fullness only in Christ as we witness most evidently in the saints.

Finally, the insertion of Christian faith and life within a given people and culture so weds God and humanity, divine life and human living, that the God revealed in Jesus and by Jesus, present in all things through creation, present through all humanity and all human history, becomes so present within the "new creation" (i.e. a people and a culture interpenetrated by the Christ-life of the Spirit) that culture mediates faith and the Christ-life itself. Culture thus is given potential theological significance by the Incarnation, and what this means simply is that the dialogue between faith and culture is a two-way dialogue.

This brings us to our last point: The newness of Jesus Christ and all that He brings with Him is the "gift"—the whole finality—of Incarnation, Evangelization and Church. It is also the point of inculturation. The crucified-and-risen Christ so enters into the life and culture of a people as fully as possible (thus did He enter into the Jewish culture of His time), to assume it, and to summon it to the way of life of the kingdom of God. This summons is to enter into the integral pattern of the Christ-life, which includes growth, passion and death, the realization of the law we call the Paschal Mystery.

Thus inculturation follows the law of the Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery and its manifestation at the Pentecost. These three stages, which are not usually chronologically distinct, trace the theological pattern and trajectory of the process of inculturation:

a. Incarnation: Jesus' invitation to enter the way of the Gospel is a vocation in grace to the people and culture to whom the word is preached and the gift of faith and the Christ-life is given.

b. Cross-and-Resurrection: The Word and the Spirit of Jesus summons us to conversion, to purification from sin and self-seeking, to elevation of human living in grace. Every human person and every culture are touched by sin. The Gospel passes judgment on the idolatries and egoisms, the pride and *hubris*, the inhumanity and hardness of heart present in all human cultures and individuals. Hence from the very beginning inculturation demands critical attentiveness and discernment regarding what is "contra-human" and "contra-Gospel" within the culture. As the Gospel enters more fully into all the dimensions of a people's way of life, the counter-cultural may assume an increasing role.

c. Pentecost: This third stage is not really distinct from, but rather manifests, the Paschal Mystery come to term in the "new

creation" constructed from each culture assumed and purified. Each people and each culture emerges in its own fulfilled identity (its own human identity assumed in faith and grace to become truly part of the communion and participation of the *catholica unitas*—the universal unity of the Church.

When these three principles or stages are held together, the transformation that the Gospel brings changes the culture, but: in an organic way. It helps the culture become more truly itself, more truly alive, more redolent of the image of God that it was meant to be. The culture thus grows into a fuller realization of the Kingdom of God and the explicit manifestation of the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. It becomes the dwelling place of God. (cf. Schreiter, *op. cit*)

Thus inculturation moves towards catholicity, the unity-in-diversity, the Catholic Communion which is, in a true sense, what the Church is meant to be. Each people, each culture, are called to Church and ultimately to Kingdom, realizing its own fulfilled identity, not so that it can construct higher walls of isolation from others, but so that it can grow into its fullest capacity for communion, for participation, for service.

Thus, too, the process of inculturation is not an end in itself, but precisely a call to realizing the catholicity of the *una sancta*, the "recapitulation of all things in Christ". It is in this sense too, we might add in passing, that the mystery of the Eucharist is real-symbol of the eschatological banquet to which all peoples are called.

Part III: THE CHURCH OF THE PHILIPPINES AND FILIPINO CULTURE

From all that has been said above about faith and culture and the huge enterprise of putting them together into an integrated

whole, we see there are a number of points to highlight and tasks to begin doing.

1. If, as Paul VI put it in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, "the drama of our times" is the divorce of faith from culture, then it is incumbent on us, the Church of today, to mink of **our evangelizing work** in terms of putting faith and culture together—and indeed of putting them together into an ever integrated whole. And this integration will also be the heart of the renewal of the Church that John Paul II is calling us to in preparation for the next millennium. But as we have seen above, integrating our faith and our culture is exactly what inculturation is all about. So we can define our renewal as a Church in terms of inculturation, all the more so when we consider that, at its deepest level, inculturation is the integration of the values of our culture and the values of the Kingdom—a veritable process of *metanoia* or conversion into the Christ-life—which in turn must impact on all other personal and social relations.

2. In the brief analysis of Philippine cultural values that we started out with, we can honestly say that our values are, in their unvitiated state, high human ideals, and to the extent that the authentically human is also authentically divine, we can in all truth say too that our values as a people are reflections of the divine, are seeds of the Gospel already present in our culture. So the work of conversion, both personal and social, that we speak of here, if we are faithful to the best of our own native values and conscientiously act from them, has already firm grounding in our culture.

3. There is another kind of grounding of faith in culture—and *vice versa*, of culture in faith—that we can point to: We have been a Christian people, by and large, for the past four hundred years. And that bare historical fact has had a lot to do with the kind of people—and Church—we now are. So, when we look at

the Church as it has developed in the Philippines over all those years, we cannot but come to the conclusion that it is much, much more a "local Church" (in the sense the term has developed since Vatican II) than we think. There is a **truly Filipino Church**. There has been a real wedding of faith and culture as we have been defining inculturation here and their integration is quite substantial. Thus, when we consider our people's deep religiosity and its manifestations in popular devotions, rituals and celebrations, we see that enough integration of our faith and our culture has taken place. And this only means the work of inculturation is quite advanced.

4. But saying that does not mean nothing more need be done. The work of evangelization, conversion, inculturation, renewal of Christian living—this admits of degrees, of growth, of ever greater depth and intensity, and there is much more that can be done, has to be done. Our task is to make our cultural values become ever more attuned to and configured with those of the Gospel. And this means we will have to work harder to correct such excesses and defects in them as we have adverted to above that make them less of the Kingdom, that in fact transmogrify them to our shame, into debasing and destructive disvalues. Inculturation, as we have seen, is a **transformative** process, and if those same excesses and defects have become part of our way of life, have taken on the nature of values, we may have to be counter-cultural at times. Hence, the disturbing but ever pressing question: how bring the values of the Kingdom into such aspects of our life as lack their saving power: our politics, our economics, our family and other social relations?

5. The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines, that great landmark in our journey as a Church, points out the way we have to go. It proposes that we look at ourselves as a "Church of Communion", even more specifically, as a "Community of Disciples". Such a Church asks that we all strive to be real and faithful

followers of Christ—that is what discipleship means. But it also asks that we do so as community, and this demands that we all **participate** as responsible members of the community of faith that is the Church—and, indeed, taking "community" to embrace all levels of Church life. But when we do, we must participate as we are, as Filipinos, as bearers of our culture. And this means we necessarily have to bring our culture, our way of life as Filipinos, into our living of the faith, our following of Christ; we allow—rather, we make—that same faith to permeate our culture, to bring the values of Christ to bear on it, transforming our values into ever more authentic forms of themselves and correcting whatever is inauthentic about them. In this manner culturally participative living of the faith, the inculturation we have been talking of here will take place practically by itself and a truly local Church is built up.

6. A genuinely local Church is an "engage" Church—a society-leavening Church. Above we spoke of a constellation of "emergent values" that have been strengthening in recent years in the life of the nation. A closer look at them—at the values of democracy, people power, people participation in political life, human rights, social justice, etc.—will bring out the fact that they are, by and large, the self same values that the social doctrine of the Church has been promoting and urging on us and all other people of goodwill. So we see in papal encyclicals and other documents that have been issued in recent years, especially since Vatican II, and in our own PCP II and its understanding of the preaching of a liberating message as part of the task of a renewed evangelization. (See *Acts and Decrees of the PCP II*, nn. 238 and following.) This is the reason we, the bishops of the Philippines as a Conference, have decided, in the run-up to the coming of third millennium this series of annual pastoral exhortations on what we see are crucial aspects of our life as a nation and as a Church.

7. But more than simply being engaged, a Church that takes seriously the task of inculturating itself must be above all a **discerning** Church—and at all levels, from top to bottom. This discerning spirit must be seen in its adaptation of liturgical practices to cultural demands, in its developing of indigenized theologies and spiritualities, in practical applications of Gospel morality to culturally weighted situations. Inculturation is not a once-and-for-all happening. It is a process, like culture itself, like the Christ-life too that is the end-result of inculturation, and hence the discernment that is integral to it must be on-going too—a never-ending process of faith-reflection on life and on the way of life that a culture is. We note here that the approach of this discerning mode is pretty much what Vatican II says about the need of a "signs-of-the-times" mode of theologizing and the reading of the signs of the times cannot be done without much prayer.

8. For this kind of discernment—for the work of inculturation as a whole, for that matter—the best vehicle available to us at his time in the pastoral work of the Church of the Philippines seems to be **the basic ecclesial community** or **BEC** or at least a BEC-type Church or organization, society, movement, etc. Much of what has been said above about inculturation are already significant hallmarks of the more developed forms of BECs. Thus, the conscious attempt by a whole community at integrating faith and life, the facing up to social problems and the acting in concert on them, the participatory ethic which entails the involvement of not just the clergy and hierarchy but of the rank-and-file laity in the Church's life and evangelizing mission, the painstaking "analysis of situation" and prayerful reflection that accompanies every community decision and action—these are all "standard operating procedures" in the conduct of BECs. In truth it can be said that BECs are **the** local Church writ small, but for all their smallness are nonetheless living models of how the larger Church should go if it is to go at all in the direction of fully inculturating her faith.

9. Needing special discernment in our communities in these times of great change is the place of women in our society. Earlier we noted how there is a basic equality between men and women in traditional Philippine culture - an equality that is quite unsurpassed by most other cultural traditions elsewhere in the world.

This egalitarian quality of our culture is something that is sometimes forgotten in the feminist call for greater equality. Yet, even as we note the high place of women in our society, we cannot but be greatly disturbed by its eroding under the impact of uncontrolled media and the exploitation of women not only in the sex trade but in the workplace as well. Female overseas contract workers (OCWS) come to mind especially, but so do many of their sisters right here in the Philippines. (Is rape on the rise or is this just an impression we get from media sensationalizing?) Their exploitation - is often attributed to the bad economic situation of the Country. Whatever its cause, we must discern on the problem and come up together with answers befitting our faith and culture.

Conclusion

One final point about the question of faith and cultures needs to be made here. When we come down to basics, we cannot avoid me conclusion that inculturation is really nothing more, nothing less, than a **continuing dialogue** between people of faith (the local Church) and the Holy Spirit. This is so not only because the discernment that we have been saying all along is of prime necessity in the process of inculturation requires contact with the Spirit for guidance and help in the same process; but even more basically because the very nature of culture and faith, the two poles in the inculturative process, demands it: Culture is the historic way of life of a people—it is their creation; faith, on the other hand, is the gratuitous gift of the Spirit—it is the creation of the Spirit of

God. So, when we talk of inculturation as the putting together of faith and culture, we see immediately that the main actors in the process are or should be—the people who own the culture and the Spirit who gives the faith. The implications of this little fact are many and deep. We propose only one for further reflection: If the people and the Spirit are indeed the principal agents of inculturation, then the dialogue between them must by all means be promoted and greater trust be shown them in our ordinary pastoral approach and Church governance. A truly pneumatic Church—this is the call of the times and we see we can be such by simply becoming a fully inculturated Church.

In doing inculturation, we get in touch with the collective inner spirit of our people: our *kalooban*—as Tagalogs put it—our inner self, a high value in itself. And we do so not as individuals only but above all as a people, a community. But we do the same too with the Spirit of God, God's *kalooban*. Inculturation, then, is this double and deepest inferiority, God's and ours, becoming one. With it, we come, in the innermost part of our cultural being, into Communion with the God head. If it is our continuing dialogue with the Spirit, it is too our continuing Pentecost.

We pray that as Mary, our Mother, was with the Apostles at Pentecost, she will be with us too in ours we can go forth, renewed, to renew our nation, our world, our Church.

Indigenous Peoples and the Church Journeying Towards the Great Jubilee

CBCP

As we approach the Great Jubilee 2000 we are overjoyed with the call of the Lord of Creation to implement the spirit of Jubilee: 'the *strengthening of faith and of the witness of Christians*. It is therefore necessary to inspire in all the faithful a *true longing for holiness*, a deep desire for conversion and personal renewal in a context of ever more intense prayer and of solidarity with one's neighbor, especially the most needy.' (TMA 42)

In the context of the Philippine situation we are made aware, among other things, of the deprivation of the lands suffered by the Indigenous peoples which comprise 10% of our population. In a Pastoral Statement in 1993, "the Church deplores and condemns the present treatment by government and big business of the indigenous peoples in their disregard of the latter's rights to their ancestral domain".

Our concern here must be to actively support, promote and accelerate the process of law on their behalf, and be on their side so that their ancestral domains, their cultures, rights and the integrity of their environment be defended, preserved, and promoted. (PCP II, 379)

We are happy that in 1997 the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) was signed into law to rectify the unjust situation. Though not perfect, the law offers a good start for the IPs to secure their ancestral domains and protect their culture and identity.

We are now alarmed that some groups are working against IPRA.

We recall the statement of Pres. Joseph Estrada on December 10, 1998 on the Protection of Human Rights. *"Isa sa mga prayoridad ko ay ang kapakanan ng may sampung milyong katutubong Pilipino o indigenous peoples na nabibilang sa hanay ng mahihirap sa ating bansa. Ipatatupad ko nang lubusan ang Indigenous Peoples Rights Act or IPRA na kumikilala sa kanilang karapatan sa mga ancestral lands...* We are committed to protect these rights through the implementation of the IPRA and the ratification by the Senate of ILO Convention 169, or the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention."

We call all the Indigenous Peoples to unite and fight for their rights. We call on all people of good will who take to hearts the spirit of Jubilee to help the Indigenous Peoples regain their distinct place in our nation. The full joys of the Jubilee will never be ours unless we restore justice to the Indigenous Peoples.

Pastoral Letter on Human Rights

CBCP

To all our Catholic Faithful and all People of Good Will:

One hundred years ago, on June 12, 1898, we as people declared our independence from three hundred years of colonial rule. Fifty years later, on December 10, 1948, the United Nations approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "one of the highest expressions of the human conscience of our time" (John Paul II, Address to the United Nations, no. 2, New York, 5 October 1995). These two historic and momentous events most certainly have far-reaching significance to our life as a nation, contemporary and future.

How have we behaved as a nation in quest of genuine freedom, social justice and development — the basic human yearnings for which our gallant foreberas fought and gave up their lives? How have we promoted the human dignity and fundamental rights of each and every Filipino?

Since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights we have gone through successive political regimes, each one promising the realization of Filipino aspirations. Yet each regime could not

adequately deliver. We even agonized through the darkest political period of our history as a free people. The bitter regime of Martial Law forcibly denied us our basic human rights and freedoms and violently suppressed every significant dissenting voice with arrest without warrant, arbitrary detention, torture, and extra-judicial killing—all in the name of national security and development.

It is now twelve years since those heroic days when the non-violent force of People Power, mobilized by the prophetic calls of Church leaders, liberated us from abject inhumanity. It was a brief flash of collective brilliance by a tiny nation but it astounded a whole world and became a lesson that would be repeated in other places.

But today we ask ourselves, what have we to show to God and to the world?

The Human Person, the Image of God: the Basis of Human Rights

"So God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27).

In Christian reflection, the truth of the human person created in the image of God is at the basis of human dignity and of all human rights. Undeniably, "... there are indeed universal human rights, rooted in the nature of the person, rights which reflect the objective and inviolable demands of a *universal moral law*" (John Paul II, *ibid.*, no. 3).

This moral principle of human dignity finds ultimate confirmation in the biblical revelation of Jesus who commanded what is seemingly a human contradiction: "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those

who abuse you" (Lk. 6:27). The simple logic of such a startling statement rests in his words: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Lk. 6:31). But beyond the practical motive of being treated well by others is the fact that every human person is truly ennobled and loved by God: "Consider the ravens, they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds!" (Lk. 12:24).

In a less faith-oriented statement, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights echoes this truth. It affirms "the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family." It declares that the recognition of this truth "is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (Preamble). Thus the very first of the 30 Articles of the Declaration states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

The truth of human dignity and freedom is an ethical teaching common to all the great ancient religions of the world. From this common ethical basis, the Declaration presents two broad sets of human rights: (1) civil and political rights; and (2) economic, social and cultural rights. Two separate documents in 1976 would later address these rights: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Both sets of rights aim to extend to all peoples "freedom from fear and want". Further, in 1986 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Right to Development which unequivocally declares; "The human person is the central subject of development and should be the active participant and beneficiary of the right to development" (An. 2, no. 1).

The 1948 Universal Declaration ends with the warning: "Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act at the destruction of any of the rights and freedom set forth herein" (Article 30). It is clear that in a holistic understanding of human rights, the responsibility of protecting human rights belongs not only to the State but also to every person or group. In the recent past, some Philippine human rights groups maintained that only the State can violate human rights. This is not correct and has since been discredited. It is clear that individuals and groups other than the State, such as rebel groups, do violate human rights and have to be accountable.

The Philippine Bishops on Human Rights

In the movement of Filipinos to promote human rights in the past 30 years, we are particularly proud of and thankful for the outstanding deeds of thousands of lay people, clergy and religious. Many of them were victims of human rights abuses. To this cause of justice the Catholic bishops have made a modest contribution as Pastors of the Catholic faithful. We wrote many pastoral statements on human rights, especially during the harshest times of Martial Law. We issued statements on such issues as arbitrary arrests and detention, "liquidation and salvaging," secret marshals, para-military forces, writ of *habeas corpus*, persecution of lay leaders, killings of church personnel, ministers, and journalists, the national security state ideology as well as the ideology of violence.

We presented concrete cases. We dialogued with government officials locally and nationally. Our prophetic role as pastors culminated in our 1986 pre-EDSA statement on the immorality of a government that gains power by fraudulent means. We are thankful to the loving God that this most significant statement helped mobilize many of our people to support justice and truth

in the succeeding days. Many others all over the world considered the statement courageous and historic.

But we were also aware that the issue of human rights was being used to advance political and even ideological interests. We, therefore, issued a pastoral statement in 1987 denouncing the manipulative use of human rights. Today this 1987 statement continues to have value. Many governments and lobby groups use the issue of human rights as a political and ideological tool. They apply it with a double standard, making it a "conditionality" for some countries that need aid while conveniently ignoring the issue for other countries for the sake of their own national or political interests. Others inveigh against the human rights abuses of their ideological enemies, while conveniently ignoring the abuses of their own groups. But to us, truth and justice and not political or ideological interests must always be at the basis of human rights.

The Situation of Human Rights Today

We appear to have progressed significantly regarding civil and political rights since the days of Martial Law. Yet when we survey our country today we are gravely disturbed and dismayed by seemingly unending violations of human rights. It is a long litany of injustice against civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, including the right to development.

We name some major violations: kidnappings, disappearances, deep-seated and rampant corruption, electoral frauds, *de facto* disenfranchisement of voters, arbitrary arrests, detention in secret places, torture and other inhuman treatment, extra-judicial killings by both government and rebel forces, abuses of CAFGU (Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Units) and other armed groups. In the judicial sphere, there are demoralizing judicial inaction and delays, denial of fair public trial due to personal and professional rela-

tionships between judges, individuals and corporations, withdrawal of key witnesses because of threats, resort to "amicable settlements" when justice would have been vigorously pursued.

Despite a negotiated cease-fire, government and MILF forces trade accusations of human rights violations. On the other hand, civilians, politicians, policemen, former members and leaders of the NPA are condemned without due process by insurgents before so-called "people's courts" and executed. And today more than 10,000 victims of human rights abuses during the Marcos regime continue to wait for long-delayed indemnification.

Hundreds of families see their homes demolished because of economic projects and are not provided with substitute housing. Sexual harrassment, rape of women and domestic violence are very serious recurring problems, aggravated by a "macho culture" and by a sense of shame to report incidents. When perpetrators are powerful, justice for the victims is dim. We also consider government policies regarding population control and their manner of implementation as highly objectionable in light of religious freedom and freedom of conscience. Family rights are violated as well as the rights of unborn children.

Many Overseas Filipino Workers are exploited and abused. In some countries, Filipino Christian risk severe punishment, including death, when they practice their faith in accordance with the freedom of religion. In such cases, our government is rendered helpless, and its appeal is based on humanitarian reasons rather than on the issue of justice and religious freedom, assured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ironically, a country such as ours that has restored the death penalty has to beg for mercy before the courts of otlier countries when our citizens are imposed a similar penalty. Those same countries serenely enjoy freedom of religion in other countries while denying it to others. It is the task of the international

community to correct this egregious violation of fundamental human rights.

Poverty hinders thousands of children from going to school and forces many of them to work, thus inhibiting their proper development. Indigenous peoples face the loss of their ancestral lands and the destruction of their cultures, as projects of development aggressively attack their traditional environment. Their rights to meaningful participation and development are often ignored. They suffer greatly from lack of basic services, health, and education.

As the economic situation worsens, the rights of workers to association, to strike, to security or to bargain collectively are increasingly being restricted, legally and illegally. "Labor only" subcontracting is sometimes used by employers to evade their obligations to workers and to break unions. On the other hand it is popularly believed that many union leaders, for their own self-interests, have enriched themselves and have exploited their own members. Further, the right of farmers and other agricultural workers to development is neglected or, at best, has been subordinated to the drive toward industrialization and global economic competitiveness. Many tenants suffer, as in the case of the MAPALAD Bukidnon farmers, because of contrary claims to land by powerful people and because of massive land conversions in the name of development. In such cases, true agrarian reform is deliberately ignored. Large scale fishing, often by foreign companies, considerably deprives small fisherfolk of their only means of livelihood. Irresponsible media reporting is known to have destroyed the fundamental right of persons to their good name.

The above situation of human rights today calls for our strong moral denunciation. We call upon our government to do everything that it can legally do to bring to justice those who violate human

rights, to correct the social structures that allow human rights violations to be perpetrated especially against the poor, the indigenous peoples, women and children, and to make sure that violations are not committed by our own security forces.

Meeting the Challenge of Human Rights: Convictions, Social Solidarity

Indeed, the injustices committed against human dignity and human rights today make our celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights almost farcical.

Yet the situation is truly a challenge to all of us. We need to pursue the task of defending and promoting human rights with the following convictions:

1. Human rights are, indeed, universal and indivisible. They are based on the inviolable transcendental dignity of the human being and do not arise from democratic opinion surveys or from "politically or ideologically correct" beliefs, which change from time to time. Neither can one set of rights be put aside and ignored while priority is given to another. Unfortunately some developed countries, attempting to preserve their position of power, urge civil and political rights on peoples and governments of developing countries while ignoring the latter's economic, social, and cultural rights. On the other hand, some leaders of developing countries suppress civil and political rights for the sake of promoting of economic development. They even cite cultural differences as a further reason. It is our belief that differences in cultures and religions complement rather than reject the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

2. Human rights are God-given and we, as members of the same human family, have to forge a strong network of "*social solidarity*" (John Paul II, *ibid.*, no. 4. "A decisive factor in the success of those non-violent revolutions was the experience of *social solidarity*: in the face of regimes backed by the power of propaganda and terror, that solidarity was the moral core of the *power of the powerless*") with one another to protect and defend human rights, especially of the "least of our brethren," as an imperative of human growth—in community.

%. There are human rights that need to be recognized and further promoted. Among these are women's and children's rights together with those of the unborn, the rights of communities and indigenous peoples, the right to culture and self-identity. The promotion of such rights is especially urgent in the Philippines when the cultures of indigenous peoples are constantly threatened by so called "development aggression." Furthermore, there is a need to develop the rights of nations, as Pope John Paul II pointed out (Address to the United Nations, 1995, no. 6). Finally with the rise of biotechnologies we also need to be cautious about the move to provide commercial patents or intellectual property rights for the use of indigenous knowledge and skills to provide food, such as patenting various varieties of rice, and maintain health systems. Such a move would give control of these to corporations and limit the access of the poor to them. The move would also allow corporations to have property rights over life forms and its parts, in effect to tamper with life through genetic engineering for the sake of profit.

4. Violations of human rights today are not simply done by individuals or groups but are already — in the form of social sin — built into social structures, policies and laws that

discriminate against other persons and other groups, especially against the lower sectors of society. The cases of agrarian reform, the recent Mining Act, and widespread endemic corruption are illustrative examples.

5. Li the final analysis, die foundation stone on which we must build a society diat is respectful of human rights is the virtue of love. This, after all, is die traditional and treasured name of die value of human solidarity. There is no genuinely full respect for human dignity, no respect for human rights unless all peoples, irrespective of race, religion, gender, tribe, or class, truly love one another, In the Christian Scriptures such love is expressed as the second of the greatest commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And the first, on which ail righteousness and justice depends, is: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:36-38).
6. Therefore, in the struggle to defend and promote human rights there has to be a constant need to commend our efforts to the Almighty God, the Creator of human dignity and the Liberator and Redeemer of the human community from every form of sin, including social sin. Without prayer, all effort at social transformation will come to no avail.

Conclusion: Commitments

On die occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights we gratefully acknowledge the heroic contribution of many individuals and groups to the cause of human rights in our country. Thousands of people, from all religious persuasions, singly or in cause-oriented organizations, church-related or otherwise, have been at the vanguard of the human rights movement in the country from the inception of Martial Law, through its dismantling, and up to the present.

Today people of good will need an even stronger solidarity with one another. The indivisibility of human rights makes the task of defending and promoting them more complex and difficult. The freedom to speak and the freedom to worship according to one's conscience are inextricably bound up with the right to development. And so the interconnectedness of other human rights.

Moreover, the forces of manipulation and oppression are many, both local and global. We need to discern their faces more clearly. The all-pervasive process of globalization is promoting economic, political, social and cultural values that invade our consciousness subtly through mass media and other technological advances. New forms of freedom and rights without any moral moorings are being erected.

As we face the future, we humbly offer to all peoples of good will in our country a vision of society where respect for human dignity and human rights prevails: a social order "founded in truth, built on justice, and enlivened by love," and growing "in freedom towards a more humane equilibrium" (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 26).

Towards this vision, we commit ourselves and our diocesan social action centers to link hands with one and all in morally legitimate action for human dignity and human rights. We commit our parishes, Basic Ecclesial Communities, religious organizations, pastoral programs and educational institutions to do their share in educating the Filipino to justice, peace and human rights.

This we do, asking the intercession of Mary, the Mother of the Lord Jesus, who demonstrated his own human dignity by the unique way in which he loved and served others, especially the downtrodden.

Philippine Episcopology — Addenda-Corrigenda, 1998

CHARLES BRANSOM, JR.

The following list updates entries in the "Philippine Episcopology" previously published in the *Boletin* and continues the "Episcopology" with the details of the episcopal ordinations of those bishops consecrated subsequent to the final installment and the previous lists of Addenda-Corrigenda.

- N. 76 **Martin Garcia y Alcocer, O.F.M.Disc.** - resigned as Bishop of Cebu 17 July 1903.
- N. 77 **Arsenio del Campo y Monasterio, O.S.A.** - resigned as Bishop of Caceres 7 April 1903.
- N. 79 **Jose Hevia y Capomanes, O.P.** - resigned as Bishop of Nueva Segovia 12 June 1903.
- N. 81 **Andres Ferrero Malo, O.A.R.** - resigned as Bishop of Jaro 12 June 1903.
- N. 126 **Flaviano Ariola** - born 4 July 1905.
- N. 127 **Teopisto Alberto y Valderrama** - born at Bagamanoc.

- N. 153 **Mariano Gaviola y Garces** - died 13 October 1998 at Cebu.
- N, 169 **Porfirio R. Iligan** - resigned as Bishop of Masbate 14 February 1998.
- N, 181 **Raphael Lim y Montiano** - died 10 September 1998.
- N. 184 **Celso N. Gueyarra** - resigned as Bishop of Balanga 8 April 1998.
- N. 185 **Philip Francis Smith, O.M.I.** - resigned as Archbishop of Cotabato 30 May 1998.
- N. 222 **Orlando Quevedo, O.M.I.** - Archbishop of Cotabato 30 May 1998.
- N. 264 **Osvaldo Padilla** - Apostolic Nuncio to Nigeria 22 August 1998.
- N. 275 **Precioso D. Cantillas, S.D.B.** - Bishop of Maasin 20 January 1998.
- N. 280 **Jesse Mercado y Eugenio** - born 6 June 1951.
- N, 283 1998, 6 January, at Rome, Saint Peter's Basilica Pope John Paul II assisted by Msgr. Giovanni Battista Re, Titular Archbishop of Vescovio and by Msgr. Jorge Maria Mejia, Titular Archbishop of Apollonia consecrated Msgr. **Angelito Lampon, O.M.I.**, Titular Bishop of Valliposita, Vicar Apostolic of Jolo, born at Mlang (Cotabato) 1 March 1950; priest 1 April 1977; named 21 November 1997,

- N. 284 1998, 6 January, at Cebu City, Metropolitan Cathedral Cardinal Ricardo J. Vidal, Archbishop of Cebu, assisted by Msgr. Emilio Bataclan y Layon, Bishop of Iligan and by Msgr. Christian Vicente F. Noel, Bishop of Talibon consecrated Msgr. **John Du**, Titular Bishop of Timici, Auxiliary of Cebu, born at Bantayan (Cebu) 18 October 1954; priest 1 June 1979; named 21 November 1997.
- N. 285 1998, 13 January, at Doilo City, Cathedral Msgr. Gian Vincenzo Moreni, Titular Archbishop of Turris in Mauretania, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Alberto Piamonte y Jover, Archbishop of Jaro and by Msgr. Fernando Capalla, Archbishop of Davao consecrated Msgr. Jose S. **Palma**, Titular Bishop of Vazari-Didda, Auxiliary of Cebu, born at Dingle (Jaro) 19 March 1950; priest 21 August 1976; named 28 November 1997.
- N. 286 1998, 25 March, at Legazpi City, Cathedral of Saint Gregory the Great Msgr. Gian Vincenzo Moreni, Titular Archbishop of Turris in Mauretania, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, assisted by Msgr. Leonardo" Legaspi y Zamora, Archbishop of Caceres and by Msgr. Jose C. Sorra, Bishop of Legazpi consecrated Msgr. **Joel Z. Baylon**, Bishop of Masbate, born at Polangui (Legazpi) 20 January 1954; priest 8 October 1978; named 14 February 1998.
- N. 287 1998, 18 June, at' San Fernando, Cathedral of the Assumption Cardinal Jaime Sin y Lachica, Archbishop of Manila, assisted by Msgr. Paciano Aniceto y Basilio, Archbishop of San Fernando and by Msgr. Celso N. Guevarra, Bishop emeritus of Balanga consecrated Msgr. **Honesto F. Ongtioco**, Bishop of Balanga, born at San Fernando 17 October 1948; priest 7 December 1972; named 8 April 1998.

The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000: Juridico-Pastoral Aspects of its Celebration

JOSE MA. TINOKO, OP

The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 is practically on us. Three years after the publication of the encyclical letter *Tertio millennio adveniente* of Pope John Paul II, the universal Church has limited and terminated the theological preparations through prayers, catechesis and pastoral actions of various kinds. Three year of preparation for the Jubilee has been placed under the sign of the Most Holy Trinity: through Christ - in the Holy Spirit - to God the Father.

Recently, the Holy Father issued the bull of indiction of the Great Jubilee Year - *Incarnationis mysterium* - where the purpose and desired results of the Jubilee as well as the manner of attaining them are concretely delineated. The Holy Father instructed that the high point of the Jubilee is "the encounter with God the beginning and path of man's healing as well as the necessary condition for man to recover what he can never attain by his own strength, namely, God's friendship and grace, the supernatural life which alone can bring fulfillment of the deepest aspiration of the human heart." (*Mysterium incar.*, 2)

The Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 will begin on Christmas Eve of 1999. During this time, the holy door of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican will be opened. A few hours later, inaugural celebrations will commence in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, since the Holy Father has decreed that the two singular centers for celebration shall be Rome and the Holy Land. The door of the other Patriarchal Basilicas in Rome will be opened after the opening of the holy door of St. Peter's Basilica.

The Holy Father has also decreed that in the particular Churches (i.e., dioceses, territorial prelatures, territorial abbaties, apostolic vicariates, apostolic praefectures, and stably erected apostolic administrations), the Jubilee will begin on the day of Christmas with a solemn Eucharistic liturgy presided over by the diocesan Bishop in the cathedral. In the co-cathedrals, the bishop may delegate another bishop or priest to preside at the celebration. Since there cannot be a rite of the opening of the holy door in the various cathedrals around the world because this rite is proper of the Vatican Basilica and the other Patriarchal Basilicas, the Holy Father deems it proper that the start of the Jubilee in the indicated local Churches be done by having a station in one church and a procession from there to the cathedral or its equivalent, by liturgical reverencing of the Book of the Gospels and a reading of a part of the bull of indiction, *Incarnationis mysterium*, and following the directives of the *Ritual for the Celebration of the Great Jubilee in Particular Churches*. The closing of the Jubilee year will occur on the Epiphany of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the 6th of January 2000.

Throughout the history of its celebration, the institution of the Jubilee has been characterized and enriched by signs which attest to the faith and foster the direction of the faithful. The Pope points to pilgrimage, the holy door and indulgence as signs through which the celebration of the Jubilee is made manifest by the christian people.

A. *PILGRIMAGE*

Since the condition of man is that of a *homo viator*, Scriptures often attest to the significance of setting out to sacred places. The ancient Israelites of the OT traditionally went to pilgrimages to the place where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, or made a visit to the shrine of Bethel, or the shrine of Shiloh. In the NT, Jesus went with Mary and Joseph as a pilgrim to Jerusalem. Pilgrimages evoke the believer's personal journey in the footsteps of the Lord. It is considered an exercise preparation and change of heart. As the pilgrims progress along the path of christian perfection through vigils, fasting and prayer, they strive to attain this perfection with the support of Gods grace.

B. *THE SIGN OF THE HOLY DOOR*

The sign of the holy door occurred for the first time at the Lateran Basilica of the Most Holy Savior during the Jubilee of 1423. This act evokes the passage of every christian from sin to grace. It serves to strengthen the faithful in Christ in order to be able to live Christ's new life in us. It is in his spirit that the Holy Father will pass through the holy door of St. Peter's Basilica at midnight between the 24th and 25th of December 1999. By crossing the threshold of the basilica, he will show to the Church and to world the Holy Gospel, the life and hope for the coming 3rd millennium. By passing through the door, we shall be led more deeply into the heart of the Church - the Body and Bride of Christ.

C. *INDULGENCE*

One very familiar sign of the Jubilee to the faithful is the indulgence. It is considered one of the constitutive element of the Jubilee because through it the fullness of the Father's mercy is offered to everyone since it expresses His love and forgiveness of

sins. Normally, God grants pardon for sins through the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. However, reconciliation with God does not mean that there is no enduring consequence of the sin committed for which one must still be purified. It is precisely in this context that the indulgence becomes important. With the indulgence the repentant sinner receives a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin already forgiven as regards the fault.

The Holy Father, through the bull *Incarnationis mysterium* indicates how the faithful properly prepared can fully enjoy throughout the Jubilee year the indulgence by following certain norms.

1.- The indulgence can also be applied in suffrage to the dead and not only for the intention of the living.

2.- The rule that a plenary indulgence can be gained only once a day remains in force during the entire Jubilee year. (*Ench. indulg.*, 21, p> 1}

3.- Since the high point of the Jubilee is the encounter with God the Father through Jesus Christ present in the Church and in the sacraments in a special way, the whole Jubilee journey starts and concludes in the celebration of the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist. Thus, after worthily availing of the sacrament of confession which must ordinarily be individual and complete (*Can. 960*) each faithful, having fulfilled the required conditions, can receive or apply the gift of plenary indulgence during a suitable period of time, even daily. Nevertheless, it is fitting that the faithful should frequently receive the grace of the sacrament of Penance in order to grow in conversion and purity of heart.

4.- The two culminating moments of confession and communion must be accompanied by the witness of communion with the

Church manifested by prayer for the intention of the Roman Pontiff and likewise, by acts of charity and penance.

5.- For the Jubilee year, confessors are empowered to commute both the works prescribed and the conditions required on behalf of those legitimately impeded from performing them. Thus cloistered men and women religious, the sick and those who by whatever reason cannot leave their abode, can carry out in lieu of a visit to a certain church, a visit to the chapel of their own house. If even this is not possible, they can gain the indulgence by Spiritually uniting themselves with those carrying out the prescribed work in the ordinary manner by offering to God their prayers, sufferings and discomfort.

6.- As far as the required conditions for the faithful to be able to gain the Jubilee indulgence are concerned, the ff. are stipulated:

a.- IN ROME the faithful can gain a plenary indulgence by

1) making a pious pilgrimage to the Patriarchal Basilicas, i.e., the Basilica of St. Peter in the Vatican, the Archbasilica of the Most Holy Savior at the Lateran, the Basilica of St. Mary Major and the Basilica of St. Paul outside the wall at the Ostian way. During this visit, the pilgrim should take part devoutly in a Holy Mass or another pious exercise like the stations of the Cross, the rosary, or the recitation of the *Akathistos* Hymn in honor of the BVM.

2) Furthermore, if they visit as a group or individually, in any of the 4 Patriarchal Basilicas, and spend some time in Eucharistic adoration and pious meditation, ending the same with the prayer of the "Our Father", the Creed in any approved form and a prayer to the BVM, the plenary indulgence is also gained.

3) The plenary indulgence can also be gained in Rome by visiting, under the same conditions as indicated in numbers 1 and 2, Basilica of the Most Holy Cross in Jerusalem, the shrine of Our Lady of Divine Love and the christian catacombs.

b.- IN THE HOLY LAND the faithful may also gain the Jubilee indulgence if, keeping with the same conditions mentioned in letters a) and b) as indicated above, they visit the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem or the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem or the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth.

c- IN OTHER ECCLESIASTICAL TERRITORIES, the indulgence of the Jubilee may also be gained by making a sacred pilgrimage to the Cathedral church or to any church or places designated by the Ordinary and there assist devoutly at a liturgical celebration or other pious exercise such as mentioned above in letter a) nn. 1 & 2. In addition, if the faithful visit in group or individually, the Cathedral church or a shrine designated by the Ordinary and in the same place spend some time in pious meditation ending the same with the prayer of the "Our Father", the Creed in any approved form and prayer of the BVM, the indulgence can also be gained.

d.- IN ANY PLACE. 1) the Jubilee indulgence is likewise, gained if the faithful visit for a suitable time their brothers and sisters in need or in difficulty (ex. gr., the infirm, the imprisoned, the handicapped, the elderly living alone) making the visit as though a pilgrimage to Christ present in them. The fulfillment of the spiritual and sacramental conditions as well as the recitation of the usual prayers should accompany this pilgrimage. If the faithful can repeat these visit throughout the period of the Holy Year, they should do so since on each occasion the plenary indulgence can be gained once a day following the usual conditions.

2) The Jubilee indulgence can also be gained through actions which express in a practical and generous way the penitential spirit which is the heart of the Jubilee. These acts would include ex. gr., abstention from unnecessary consumption for one whole day (ex. gr., from smoking, alcohol, by fasting or by practicing abstinence according to the general rules of the Church and the norms set down by the Bishop's Conference), donating a proportionate amount of money for the poor, supporting through a generous contribution works of a religious or social nature (ex. gr., trouble, the elderly in need, or foreigners seeking better living conditions), devoting a suitable portion of one's personal freedom to activities benefiting the community, or any similar forms of personal sacrifice.

The signs and practices have long been apart of the traditional celebration of Jubilees. The faithful should not forget or fail to recognize in them the signs of purification, of mercy, of charity, of conversion of heart, and of the truth of Christ's love. As faithful we should avail of these chances of grace during the coming Jubilee year so that with renewed strength we can raise our voices of thanksgiving to the Father, of gratitude to the Son and of love to the Holy Spirit.

The Easter Vigil: Proclaiming the Light of the World

JOHN SAMAHA, SM

From the outset the Easter Vigil, originally and more appropriately called the Paschal Vigil, has been celebrated at night. In the beginning it was a very plain ceremony — an assembly that ended with the breaking of the bread and an *agape*. One or more days of fasting preceded the Easter Vigil.

As the Easter Vigil developed in Rome and in places where the Roman rite was followed, this tradition added a baptismal rite, the ceremony of the *lucernarium*, a blessing of the new fire, and a candlelight procession.

As it developed the Vigil became more and more meaningful. At first the celebration took place at night like the weekly Eucharist, because most of the faithful could not assemble during the day. However, the evangelists situate the discovery of the tomb "as the first day of the week of dawning" (Mt 28:1), "very early" (Mk 16:2; Jn 20:1), "at dawn" (Lk 24:1). The thrust emphasizes that Jesus is the "light of the world" that came into the world as a "revelation to the Gentiles" (Lk 2:32).

In baptism the believer passes from death to life (Col 2:12). Ritually and really the neophyte is plunged with Christ into death so as to come to new life with the one who "was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Rom 6:4). For this reason baptism is call "illumination" (in Biblical Greek, *photismos*) and the baptized, "illuminated"

In our day, thanks to electricity, we can have as much light as we want whenever we want it. This was not the case in the past, when lighting the lamps in the evening was a rite. This was generally a happy occasion, when many lamps were lit as for a banquet at the beginning of the sabbath on Friday evening. Christians understood this light that drives away the darkness as a symbol of the Christ-light. The procession led by the Paschal Candle represents the journey of God's people no longer led by a bright cloud but by the glorious light that shines on every person coming into the world (Jn 1:9). This rite is most solemn in the context of the great night illuminated by the resurrected Christ. This was eloquently explained in the solemn proclamation of the Lord's resurrection that we now call the *Exultet*.

Because all lights are extinguished on Holy Thursday evening, it is necessary to light a new flame in order to celebrate a liturgy at night. And so the ritual developed: the blessing of a new fire and the procession into the church led by the Paschal Candle as the celebrant intoned "Light of Christ !" and the faithful responded "Thanks be to God!"

Over the centuries this celebration underwent some problems and waned in significance. As late as the thirteenth century the liturgy was still not entirely structured. Since the seventh century there had been a general decline, and this event was celebrated early in the day on Holy Saturday. When Pope Pius V reformed the Missal in the sixteenth century following the Council of Trent,

he forbade the celebration of the Eucharist after midday. Consequently on Holy Saturday morning in churches brightened with sunlight and a barely perceptible flame on the Easter Candle, the celebrant sang "O night truly blessed!" In addition very few people were able to attend this long liturgy on Holy Saturday morning. This added to its diminished significance.

The Biblical, patristic, theological, and liturgical renewal that began to swell in the 1920s indicated the unacceptability of this condition and the impoverishment of the Easter celebration. In 1951 Pope Pius XII authorized the celebration of the Easter Vigil during the evening hours of Holy Saturday, and revised the rites to foster greater congregational participation. Then in 1955 he decreed that the Easter Vigil must take place at night.

In our day we follow the "Missal of Pope Paul VI" promulgated in 1969 following the Second Vatican Council. The Easter Vigil celebration has four parts: the blessing of the fire, procession of the Easter Candle, and the chanting of the *Exultet*; the Liturgy of the Word; the baptismal liturgy, which includes at least the blessing of the water and a renewal of baptismal vows; and culminates in the Eucharistic liturgy. This solemn celebration of the Lord's resurrection is the zenith of the liturgical year, "the solemnity of solemnities."

While the spoken word is very important in the liturgy, we are called to be more alert to the symbolism, both in things and in actions. We are asked to approach with a receptive attitude, ready to be engaged in a way that appeals both to the mind and to the heart, to one's whole being. We are invited to listen carefully and to look attentively on the realities present in signs that cannot be fully captured in words. This is how we are called to participate fully in the Easter Vigil.

Fides Et Ratio: A Hymn to Faith and Reason by John Paul II

FAUSTO GOMEZ, OP

On October 15, 1998, and after twelve years of preparation, the 13th Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, entitled *Fides et Ratio*, or *Faith and Reason*, was presented to the world. It was the eve of John Paul II's 20th Anniversary as Pope. It is undoubtedly a major authoritative papal document, that follows in the footsteps of *Veritatis Splendor*, or the *Splendor of Truth*, the 10th Encyclical Letter of the Pope.

As an *Encyclical Letter*, that is, an important pontifical letter on significant matters, *Faith and Reason* is addressed to the Bishops of the Church. It is also directed to philosophers and theologians, and "to all those who are searching" (F&R, no. 6). Therefore, FR is addressed to all: to the peoples from East and West, and to all men and women. This important Letter, then, is also addressed to all of us, all seekers of the truth. As human persons, we are all philosophers in some way, seeking the answer to the radical questions of life. As believers, we are all theologians, for we have to reflect upon our faith and its expression in love.

The theme of *Faith and Reason* is put forward in no 6: "I wish to pursue that reflection (the one of *Veritatis Splendor*) by

concentrating on the theme of *truth* and of its *foundation* in relation to *faith*." FR is like a universal human journey to truth, a never-ending journey to fuller truth: "Every truth attained is but a step towards the fullness of truth" (no. 2).

We make this journey with the light of faith and reason, the two partners in the pilgrimage. This Encyclical is a profound philosophical/theological reflection on the constant human quest for truth aided by faith and reason. John Paul II begins his Encyclical thus: "Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth." F&R studies thoroughly the relationship between faith and reason, theology and philosophy, and the Gospel and cultures.

The title of the Introduction of the Encyclical is *Know Yourself*, which is the admonition carved on the temple portal at Delphi and represents like a minimal norm for the seekers of truth. This advice from Greek philosophy implies radically the search for the truth regarding the fundamental questions of the life of men and women through the ages: *Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?*

In the continuing search for the truth, all cultures and peoples have contributed their share, for "every people has its own native and seminal wisdom" (no. 3). Radically, all human beings share a basic commonality regarding *fundamental human truths*: the principles of contradiction, finality and causality; the concept of the person as a free and intelligent subject, with the capacity to know God, truth and goodness; a certain common spiritual heritage. On the universal journey of truth, the Holy Father writes, "human beings are astonished to discover themselves as part of the world, in a relationship with others like them, all sharing a common destiny" (no. 4). After all, there is only one cause of truth, for,

as Saint Thomas Aquinas said, "Whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Father respects the autonomy of philosophy and science; but, not an impossible absolute autonomy. He speaks positively of the great achievements of science, which continue "to amaze" him, but cautions against a scientific mentality that is leading many to think that "if something is technically possible it is therefore morally admissible" (no. 88). Facing the issues involved in human cloning and the apparent disregard of some scientists for human embryos (human beings), the following words of the Holy Father are most relevant: "If the technology is not ordered to something greater than a merely utilitarian end, then it could soon prove inhuman and even become potential destroyer of the human race" (no. 81).

John Paul II wrote *Fides et Ratio* to fulfill his duty as Shepherd of the Church, which includes the *diacholia of truth*. He also wrote it because there is today a *crisis of reason* (and philosophy) that needs to be addressed by the Church, Mother and Teacher. In our postmodern age, it would seem that "everything is reduced to opinion; and there is a sense of being adrift" (no. 5). Thus, one of the greatest threats of our time - permeated by nihilism, or the meaningless of life - is the temptation to despair.

In this new Encyclical Letter, the Pope makes a strong argument towards the recovery of the basic unity and harmony between faith and reason: as *faith* - an authentic faith that finds its expression in love - is helped by reason to understand the mysteries of life, *reason* is strengthened and purified by loving faith. In particular today, philosophy - closely linked to relativism, and pragmatism - needs to go back to its ancient passion for ultimate truth; faith, for its part, ought to move reason to opening up to all that is beautiful, good and true. In this context,

inculturation (the enriching dialogue between cultures and faith) represents a highly positive development in the ongoing philosophical/theological dialogue.

A creative and dynamic *dialogue* between faith and reason will lead humanity to the finding of solutions to the pressing issues facing our world, such as ecology, peace, and the co-existence of different races and cultures. We need, then, "a clear and honest collaboration between Christians and the followers of other religions and all those who, while not sharing a religious belief, have at heart the renewal of humanity" (no. 104).

John Paul II's 13th Encyclical has been hailed as an outstanding encyclical of an outstanding professor - and Pastor-, as a great song, even a passionate song of the dialogue between faith and reason, that has been written in a score of seven movements, or seven chapters, 108 numbers, and around 150 pages. I have just finished reading the 13th Encyclical of the Holy Father. I tell you in all honesty, it was a hard but fruitful and inspiring experience. The Encyclical is dense, profound, positive, basically optimistic, most logical and convincing. It is very readable, but it has to be read slowly. Try it. You will not regret it - I hope!

THE JOURNEY TO FULLER TRUTH

The Encyclical's chapter one is entitled *The Revelation of God's Wisdom*. Through the history of salvation, God has spoken in many ways through the prophets to his people; in the last days, He spoke to them - to all humans - by his Son Jesus Christ, revealer of the Father (cf. Heb 1:1-2). Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help the believers deepen their knowledge of God, which comes through faith aided by reason, and feel God's presence in us and in our lives: "God comes to us in the things of our everyday life, apart from which we cannot understand ourselves" (no. 12).

What can reason do before the mystery of Revelation? Our vision of God is always limited and fragmentary. Indeed, faith alone can imperfectly unveil the mystery - a faith helped by reason, which is aided to understand the mystery by signs that contain hidden truth, in a particular way the Eucharist, in which Christ is truly present and alive and working through his Spirit. John Paul II presents faith as an obedient and free response to God's gratuitous gift - to God the Father, whose love unveils also the human person to himself and his supreme calling, that is, to share in the divine mystery of the life of the Blessed Trinity.

F&R's chapters two and three develop, respectively, two traditional theological sayings, namely, "credo ut intellegam," or I believe so that I can understand, and "intellego ut credam," or I understand so that I can believe. The Pope opens chapter two by reflecting upon the scriptural text *Wisdom knows ail and understands all* (Ws 9:11). Faith in God is a light which helps believers, as it helped the People of Israel, to journey by the truth and answer life's fundamental questions. Reason and faith aid each other in the journey of truth. Faith is not opposed to reason. In fact, it liberates reason, which is autonomous but wounded by sin, and must respect its own rules: to realize that the search for human knowledge is a task without rest, that the path of truth is not for the proud, and to recognize, in the "fear of the Lord," that God is the loving creator of the world.

Reason illumined by faith understands also genuine wisdom, that is, the Wisdom of God, *the Wisdom of the Cross*. In section two, John Paul II speaks of *reason in the face of the mystery*. By it's own powers, reason can see the presence of God in creation. But it is faith that will help reason to go a step forward: creation leads men and women to the Creator.

In chapter three, the Pope faces this question: *What may the human person do by his reason in the quest for truth?* The journey of truth that begins with a desire to know - to know the truth, and develops into critical search for the truth; not only through speculative and scientific research, but also through practical and moral research. The moral search of reason is the search for the truth of what is good - for true values -, and its ethical practice that "sets foot upon the path to happiness and moves towards perfection" (no. 25).

The search of reason ought to be a search for meaning - for ultimate meaning! Through life, reason asks: *What is the meaning of the apparent meaninglessness of life?* John Paul II writes: "Whether we admit it or not, there comes for everyone the moment when personal existence must be anchored to a truth recognized as final, a truth which confers a certitude no longer open to doubt" (no. 27). Reason does have a capacity to move towards the infinite - towards God. As Saint Paul the Apostle accentuates, "in the far reaches of the human heart there is a seed of desire and nostalgia for God" (no. 24).

As the human person journeys to more truth, he finds *different modes to approach truth*, such as the scientific, the philosophical and the religious, and, in all modes, a pervading element: the social dimension. As social beings, we humans start walking by the path of truth by -accepting - believing - the truths transmitted by our family, our culture, our religion or faith. As we progress, and when we become adult persons, we evaluate critically and accept personally the truths of our life. Our growing knowledge of truth is not only abstract knowledge but a concrete knowledge that implies openness to the others, with whom we can have a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving. The search for the truth is the search for the person to whom we might entrust ourselves: Jesus Christ, the Truth who satiates our nostalgia for God. In this context, the martyrs, are the best witnesses to the truth of life.

ENCOUNTER BETWEEN THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY

In chapter four, John Paul II studies *the relationship between faith and reason*, and, therefore, between theology, or reflection from faith, and philosophy, or reflection from reason. The Pope presents to us here the *important moments of the encounter of faith and reason*, of theology and philosophy. From the beginning of Christianity, the fundamental harmony between faith and reason was presented by its great theologians and philosophers critically and dynamically. Highlights of the fruitful dialogue between faith and reason are the Fathers of the Church, above all Saint Augustine, and outstanding theologians, in particular Saint Anselm and Saint Thomas Aquinas.

The synthesis of Saint Augustine has remained for many centuries *the most exalted form of philosophical and theological speculation known to the West*. Saint Anselm, for his part, developed in a deep manner not only the significance of reason to know the faith, but also the importance of love to increase in the knowledge of faith; "the intellect must seek that which it loves; the more it loves, the more it desires to know" (no. 42).

In the second section of chapter four, the Pope underscores *the enduring originality of the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, who is presented by the Pope as a master of thought, a model of the right way to do theology, an apostle of truth, a man of dialogue. In his philosophy and theology, the Angelic Doctor underlined the harmony between faith and reason, between philosophy and theology: the light of faith and the light of reason come from God; hence, there can be no contradiction between them and, therefore, faith should not be afraid of reason, but seek reason out and trust it. Faith then builds upon and perfects reason. An illuminating text from Saint Thomas: "Whatever its source, truth is of the Holy Spirit" (I-II, 109, 1 ad 1).

In the final section of chapter four, John Paul U considers *the drama of the separation of faith and reason*. Not long after Saint Thomas, from the late period of the Middle Ages on, the movement of a fateful separation of faith and reason began, a movement which found its high point in the last century. With this separation, the Pope affirms with sadness, both faith and reason were impoverished: deprived of Revelation, reason takes side-tracks and thus risks losing sight of the final goal; deprived of reason, faith stresses feeling and experience and thus runs the risk of no longer being a universal proposition, of withering into myth or superstition.

THE CHURCH'S TEACHING ON PHILOSOPHY

Chapter five analyses *the Magisterium's interventions in philosophical matters*. It begins with an interesting assertion: "The Church has no philosophy of her own nor does she canonizes any one particular philosophy in preference to others" (no. 49). Moreover, the Church respects the autonomy of philosophy which, in turn, is asked to respect the data of revealed truth. Through her teaching, the Church has spoken positively of philosophy, when it is opened to transcendence and to questions of ultimate meaning. She has spoken also negatively of philosophy, when criticizing or even condemning certain philosophical doctrines or errors. Thus the First Vatican Council spoke against *fideism* (which does not recognize the importance of rational knowledge and philosophical discourse for the understanding of faith) and *rationalism* (which leads some theologians to accept uncritically philosophical opinions, even to the point of making them normative for theological research). Unfortunately, the Pope comments, these two false doctrines have made a comeback in our age.

In our century, the Church has made pronouncements against modernism (Pius X), the Marxist philosophy and atheistic communism (Pius XI), mistaken interpretations linked to evolutionism, existentialism and historicism (Pius II), and against some liberation theologies for adopting uncritically the Marxist methodology (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 1984).

Through the centuries, the Church has shown particular interest in philosophy (cf. Leo III's *Aeterni Patris*, the closest precedent of *Fides et Ratio*), underlined also by Vatican II, that teaches that the study of philosophy is required for the candidates to the priesthood, for theological and pastoral studies, for Christian education in general.

Through F&R, John Paul II makes a strong appeal to recover, while respecting their autonomy and distinction, the basic unity there is between philosophy and faith: philosophy needs to go back to its ancient passion for ultimate truth, while faith must stir up reason to open to all that is beautiful, good and true. In this aspect, *inculturation* represents a positive element in philosophical/theological revival today.

It has been said that chapters six and seven constitute, in a sense, the core of the Encyclical *Faith and Reason*. Chapter six discusses *the interaction between philosophy and theology*. Theology as a systematic reflection on faith implies first the *auditus fidei*, or hearing about faith, and, second, the *intellectus fidei*, or the understanding of faith. In both cases, philosophy helps theology. With the help of philosophy, the different theological disciplines contribute to reach some understanding of the mysteries of faith, in particular *fundamental theology* (which studies the basic truths that are knowable by reason and given fullest meaning by Revelation), *dogmatic theology* (which studies revealed truth, including the conception of the human person, the world, and the

economy of salvation), and *moral theology* (which speaks of the journey of the human person to God by the path of Jesus and must tackle today problems like peace, social justice, the family, the defence of life and the natural environment - cf. no. 98).

DIALOGUE BETWEEN FAITH AND CULTURE

To be faithful to its identity, theology needs not only the help of philosophy but also of the sciences and of *cultures and religious traditions*. One of the most innovative points of *Fides et Ratio* refers to cultures and the inculturation of faith. John Paul II speaks of the need that faith has of cultures - to be incarnated and lived -, and also of the need that cultures have of faith - to be liberated from the darkness of sin and for fuller truth. Thus, the Gospel is not opposed to any culture, but sound inculturation must be underscored, particularly in Africa, and Asia, and most particularly in the East - in the great cultures of China, Japan and India. Focusing especially on India, John Paul II states that Christians there have to draw from its rich heritage "the elements compatible with the faith, in order to enrich Christian thought" (no. 72).

In this chapter, the Pope presents the relationship between theology and philosophy as a circular relationship, which is his favorite presentation in other encyclicals, too. He mentions then the great models of that relationship, including the ones closer to us, for instance, from the West, John Henry Newman, Jacques Maritain and, Edith Stein - recently canonized -; and, from the East, Bladimir Soloviev, Peter Chaadaev and Bladimir Lossky.

In the second section of chapter six, the Holy Father presents different stances of philosophy. First stance: *a philosophy completely independent of the Gospel's Revelation*, which is not opened to the fuller truth and, therefore, incomplete, because although

philosophy is autonomous, it cannot be absolutely independent. Second stance: *Christian philosophy*, which merely indicates a Christian way of doing philosophy in a dynamic union with faith. And third stance: *when theology itself calls upon philosophy*, for theology - as a work of critical reason in the light of faith - requires a well-formed and properly educated reason that knows how to argue.

The Pope concludes chapter six with a wish: "It is to be hoped therefore that theologians and philosophers will let themselves be guided by the authority of truth alone so that there will emerge a philosophy consonant with the word of God" (no. 78).

Current requirements and tasks is the title of chapter seven, considered by some commentators as the most important. It takes up the theme of the Sacred Scriptures in relation to philosophy, what John Paul II calls *the indispensable requirements of the word of God*. Sacred Scriptures, that reject relativism, materialism and pantheism, speaks of God as the only Absolute, of the created and dependent world, and, in particular, of the human person as *imago DeU* or the image of God. It presents sin as the most tragic of the forms of evil. Jesus Christ is the full meaning of life and the central point of reverence to understand God, the world and human beings. The word of God challenges philosophy and evaluates philosophies. To be consonant with the word of God, philosophy has to fulfill three requirements, namely, its *sapiential dimension*, focused on the search for the ultimate meaning of life; its capability to know *objective truth*, defined classically as *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, or coincidence of the thing and the intellect; and its need of *a genuinely metaphysical range*, particularly concerning ethical knowledge, or the knowledge to know the moral good, which is ultimately rooted in God, the Supreme Good. The Pope invites powerfully philosophers and theologians to move from *phenomenon to foundation*, to consider not only experience, which is important, but also speculative thinking.

THE WORD OF GOD AND PHILOSOPHY

Current philosophies must take their place within the great tradition of philosophy. Among the errors found in some philosophical and theological currents today, John Paul II mentions *eclecticism* (which uses individual ideas taken from different philosophies, without concern for their internal coherence, their place within a system or their historical context), *historicism* (which implies that a certain philosophical truth is only true for a particular period of history, but without having enduring validity), *scientism* (which entails the refusal to accept forms of knowledge beyond those of the positive sciences), *pragmatism* (which evokes an attitude of mind that makes choices based not on basic ethical principles or values, but on practical consequences regardless of those principles/values), *nihilism* (which rejects the very meaningfulness of the human being, of God, of true freedom and, thus, objective truth).

Nihilism is the most dangerous of modern philosophical errors. It is partly found in what is called *postmodernism*, an ambiguous term that may mean the collapse of rational optimism, a time of uncertainty (someone has defined *postmodern* as incredulity towards metanarratives), of meaninglessness, of despair. According to the Pope, the temptation to despair is one of the greatest threats in our time (cf. no. 91).

CURRENT TASKS OF THEOLOGY

Facing a postmodern world, *what are the tasks of theology?* Theology's prime task is to look to the ultimate truth presented by Revelation, the Truth that is Jesus Christ, the universal truth, which is opposed to any kind of intolerance and calls for an authentic dialogue in the common journey towards the full truth. The prime commitment of theology is *the understanding of God*

as *kenosis*, drawn from the texts of Sacred Scriptures and the living Tradition of the Church.

Another task of theology is its commitment to the task of renewing its specific methods so that it can be more effectively at the service of *evangelization*. Thus, theological work ought to be at the service of the proclamation of the Good News - a proclamation which is a call to conversion. It includes *catechesis*, whose teaching must help to form the person in a way that it links teaching and living.

Faith and reason then are autonomous but deeply related to each other and mutually supportive. John Paul II closes his Encyclical number 13th, indeed an outstanding papal document, with some encouraging words to theologians and priestly formators, to philosophers and teachers of philosophy, and also to scientists (the Pope says admiringly that the achievements of the scientists, especially in this century, "never cease to amaze me").

The Pope then asks everyone to look more deeply at the human person, whom Jesus saved in the mystery of love, and at the human being's constant search for truth and meaning. He closes *Fides el Ratio*, as he usually does in all encyclicals, by invoking the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Seat of Wisdom*.

AN INVITATION TO READ *FAITH AND REASON*

A superficial reading of *Faith and Reason* might incline some to think of it as too speculative or a sort of intellectual gymnastics. As faith is helped by reason to understand the mysteries of life, that is, an authentic faith which is truly expressed in charity, reason is strengthened and purified by living or loving faith.

Before closing, allow me to invite you, dear reader, my co-pilgrim on the journey of truth, to read this Encyclical. It will not be an easy reading; but, I am sure, it will be as it was for me - a very fruitful and even inspiring reading. *Fides et Ratio* is excellently constructed, as a solid bridge between the cities of faith and reason. Its author, Pope John Paul II shows himself here at his best as a great professor of philosophy and theology, and as an apostle of truth. If we try to make of its reading a dialogue with him, we shall feel the Pope's hopeful and joyful commitment to unveiling and addressing courageously and profoundly today's significant issues regarding the relationship between faith and reason, theology and philosophy, and the Gospel and cultures.

I wish to close my modest presentation with a great text of Saint Bonaventure, from his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, or the *Itinerary of the Mind to God* (cf. FR, no. 105.), where he invites his readers to realize "the inadequacy of reading without repentance, knowledge without devotion, research without the impulse of wonder, prudence without the ability to surrender to joy, action divorced from religion, learning sundered from love, intelligence without humility, study unsustained by divine grace, thought without the wisdom inspired by God."

Christian Humanism and the Mosaic of Asian Cultures

VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Thirty four participants from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Netherlands, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, United States and from the Pontifical Council for Culture gathered at Baan Phu Waan (the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center), Bangkok, Thailand on Jan. 31 - Feb. 3, 1999. The meeting which was under the Presidency of Most Rev. Paul Cardinal Poupard, had this objective:

"Looking forward to the more mature presence of Christianity in Asia in the Third millennium, and in accordance with expressed wishes of the Asian Bishop in many FABC documents and most recently of the Special Synod of the Bishop for Asia, namely to deepen the dialogue in Asia between the Gospel and the Culture, so that faith is inculturated and culture is evangelized, the convention was held to reflect on major elements of the richness and variety of Asian cultures towards identifying and promoting an authentic Christian Humanism for the peoples of Asia, bearing in mind that man and woman fashioned in the image and likeness of God which reaches its fullness in Jesus Christ, the God-man, who reveals not only who God is but who we are in our totality. Jesus Christ is at the very heart of Christian Humanism.

There were five major talks which were followed by floor discussions. Workshops were done after plenary assemblies resulting to the following:

Asian Religio-cultural Situation: Great world religions and cultures originated in Asia, side by side with indigenous religions. While Christianity and Islam originating in West Asia, spread over the centuries throughout the continent, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism are present in large areas of Asia, forming the Religio-Cultural values in their adherents. While all these religions are prevalent in large areas in Asia, in recent times science and technology are making disturbing inroads despite their positive contribution. It is into this multi-religious and multi-cultural context that the Church is called by the Spirit to dialogue and proclaim Jesus Christ in Asia and to foster Christian Humanism.

Faith and Inculturation: *Christian Living and inculturation are two important ways to bring about Christian Humanism among the peoples of Asia. First of all, Christians in Asia are called to a more authentic Christian life, so that by living their faith they are able to effectively proclaim Jesus Christ and propagate the Gospel. Secondly, as the Church comes into contact with other religions, faith is inculturated and culture evangelized. Inculturation embraces life, doctrine, tenets and rituals. Inculturation calls for a firm rootedness in the Christian faith, a sincere knowledge of the faith of the other for a new self-understanding, leading to enrichment of both through a respectful and living encounter. The unique personhood of Jesus Christ as both divine and Human, his total communion with the Father and with Humanity, and salvation and Glory in the Cross leading to the resurrection are key elements in this encounter with different human values and beliefs. The positive elements of Asian ways and forms of Mediation can be profitably channeled to bring about communion with God and with Humanity, leading to a civilization of love and a culture of peace.*

Youth and Education: Education is the great vehicle for the formation of mind and heart in the cultural and spiritual values of life. A large number of the population of Asia are young. An effective education program at all levels is necessary for the Christian formation of our young people who need to be equipped with genuine understanding of the deeper values of their own faith and culture, as well as that of other faith, so that thus formed they are able to enter into meaningful dialogue with them. There is a need to better educate the faithful as to the fundamentals of their belief.

Spirituality in Asia: Asian cultures are very much influenced by a life of the Spirit. In the face of growing misuse of technology, which challenges religious and spiritual values, the church is called to witness to a greater spiritual presence through prayer and dialogue.

Christian Humanism and Indigenous Religions: The church takes cognizance of the spiritual and cultural values present in indigenous religions. Among these value deserving special mention are the spirit of communion with God and nature, simplicity and openness to the Gospel. The church is called to promote and purify as necessary the cultural values of indigenous peoples.

Mass Media: Given the increasing influence of Mass Media today on religious and cultural values, the church discerns the media's advantages and disadvantages, availing of the positive elements found therein for the proclamation of the Gospel.

The Church has recognized the beauty of the Mosaic of Asian Cultures which depict certain forms of humanism. But the Gospel which illuminate these forms of humanism make them more beautiful. Indeed the Pontifical Council for Cultures, the Office of Education and Student Chaplaincy of FABC, the Assumption

University of Bangkok together with the Archdiocese of Bangkok did not fail in its objective. Further future meetings in local level would help find more points of convergence between the goodnews of Jesus and Asian cultures.

Thoughts and Reflections on Priestly Life

VERGS RAMOS

After my priestly ordination (June 16, 1990), I told myself: "bed of roses here I come." I thought I was through with the storms of my life since I had weathered the troubles and hardships in the seminary. But I think I spoke too soon. Boy, did I speak too soon? If my memory serves me correct, all I wanted was to be happy and to make other people happy.

Loneliness? I try to put that out of my vocabulary. Is there such word? Let's put it this way. I am physically human and a man. I have my needs. Admittedly, there are times when I try to see myself as a happy husband with a wife on my side and three little kids around. When I don't feel well and when my muscles ache, I wish that there's somebody who will massage and caress me. But more often than not, I end up laughing oh, 'no way' wives nag, little babies bother. After all, I am a "Father." My children is the whole community. I pamper them with prayers and sacraments. I am caressed by no less than the Holy Spirit and through that I make myself happy. To have God is to have everything. What's mere left to ask for? I surely do not know nor intend to do so.

As regards my seminary assignments, (June 1992 - April 1996) I hope God will understand if I would admit that it was with a heavy heart that I accepted my appointment as a formator. I was no doubt overwhelmed by human emotions, things may be difficult but nevertheless, so alive in the Parish. I had attachments that I wouldn't let go of. The thought of going back to the "academe" was no less than "boring" for me. I rationalized that I had enough of that teaching stint before.

The almost mechanical tedious lesson preparation was enough to consume my patience. It was difficult. But indeed, God allows things to happen for a purpose and furthermore, God works tremendously in my life. God, in his amazing way, worked his way thru my heart, and it is so great that I couldn't resist. Lesson preparation had become a part of my life and not just a monotonous activity. God had started to reveal Himself to me so openly thru the seminarians' queries and insights. Teaching and seeing young followers of Christ grow had become sources of my happiness beyond descriptions. More so, I also started growing again in faith with Christ through moments spent in him thru seminary activities. The richness of the Gospel had started delighting me unendingly. My one-on-one talk with the seminarians had become a union of love, of faith, of trust. Attachments, NO. I call it COMMITMENT. A soaring commitment towards the MAN who may be 2,000 ft. above the grounds but I know he holds and watches me just a strand of hair away from his heart. And I know in the silence of my heart, in the tranquillity of my soul that apart from God's great love I never would have made it in the seminary if I wasn't the seed planted on the rich soil.

My life has always been full of surprises. Eventhough there have been rough times in my parochial assignments (June 1990 -1992, as Asst. Parish Priest, 1996 - up to the present, as Parish Priest), it could never be denied that there are numerous moments

where in I feel I am on top of the world. It is when things are going exactly the way I want them to be. It is the great and unexplainable joy to be accepted by a community composed of total strangers. Happiness overflows when suddenly a stranger gives you a bundle of bananas or simply "crabs." They may appear to be trivial but they are not. It is a display of concern and honest-to-goodness sharing. It is a different joy hearing your name being called; your hands being kissed; your shoulders being pat by people whose faces reveal simple joys of just being near to you. It is a different feeling when people come to you and unload their pains with trusting hearts believing that you could do something about it. And in each moment, I feel that God is really so good. For with Him, I know no loneliness, no solitude.

Yes, bringing Christ to the community is the greatest joy of a priest, also seeing Christ touch people's lives the way Christ touched ours. We bring Christ each time we say mass even to the farthest and most humble chapel of our parish. We bring Christ each time we anoint the sick in their shanty houses. We bring Christ each time we are called at the middle of our *siesta* to bless rosaries, *bancas/boats*, or even houses. A priest knows no schedule; parishioners do. And a simple "Thank You" make our day! *Mababaw?* yes, because in little and simple things, great miracles do happen. For me, bringing Christ to the community is a great miracle of love.

God's will is indeed a great challenge. Precisely, the words of Jesus in today's Gospel reading: "If anyone wants to come with me, he must FORGET himself, TAKE UP his cross every day, and FOLLOW me."

Following God is no picnic. It will suffice to say them that God's will is no picnic either. But knowing that once one's faith has been renewed or one's burning love for God has been re-lived

make the sacrifice really worth it. It's so hard to coin words that would best described my joy of doing God's will. But to put it simply, I have a sign if I've done my job well. That's when I retire at night and have a good night sleep after performing taxing activities. That's when I feel God is happy and so am I.

Again, as I've said a while ago, I never would have made it this far in my priestly ministry if I wasn't the seed planted on the rich soil. The divine roots of faith in the pillars of my *alma mater*, UST stood firm, and runs deep in the veins of my being.

. . . Thanks to all of you, my formators, my professors, that I would be much more comfortable to call my brothers in Christ. In my heart, in my soul, in my faith, I am so humbly grateful.

CONSULTATIVE WORDS

Cases & Inquiries

EXCELSO GARCIA, OP

FORGIVENESS IN THE LORD'S PRAYER

/ am assigned to teach religion in a public school. There is something I do not understand very well concerning the fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sinned against us."

The grammatical construction of this petition seems to show that we ask God to forgive us in the same way we forgive those who offended us. I do not think, however, that such interpretation is correct. Can we show God how He will forgive us or should we forgive our offenders so that God will forgive our sins? Can you elaborate a little so that I will be able to enlighten my pupils, if I am asked for an explanation of this petition.

A Religious Sister

We read in the Gospel that a Pharisee asked the Lord: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment of the law"? Jesus said to him:

'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it : You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law and the Prophets too' " (Mt 22:35-40).

The Lord Himself says also to all of us: "This is My Commandment: love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12). Unfortunately our human nature is inclined to sin. "I was born guilty, a sinner from the moment of conception" (Ps 51:7). "Not one of them is right, not a single one" (Ps 14:3). We commit sin everyday by thoughts, words, deeds and omission. Our need for God's forgiveness is obvious. Hence, we must ask Him to forgive us, like the Publican of the Gospel: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Lk 18:13). Rightly the Lord included this petition in the prayer He taught us: "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sinned against us."

We, members of the Mystical Body of Christ, are all sinners. We commit sins against God, against the Church, against our neighbour, against ourselves and even against nature. God tells us clearly through the Prophet Ezekiel: "I do not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in the conversion of the wicked who changes his ways and saves his life" (Ez 33:11). The Son of God took our human nature to save us sinners: "I came to call not the upright, but sinners" (Mk 2:17). "For our sake He made the sinless one a victim for sin, so that in Him we might become the uprightness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). "It is in Christ and through His blood that we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins" (Eph 1:7).

We Christians, therefore, should be conscious of our obligation to ask forgiveness from God and from our brothers whom we offend. St. Paul invites us to do so: "Bear one another, forgive

whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive, as God has forgiven you" (Col 3:13). God forgives our sins as long as we are truly sorry. "I forgive their sins and never more call their sins to mind" (Jer 31:34). "A broken, contrite heart you never scorn" (Ps 51:19). The history of the People of God is full of human infidelities and God's forgiveness. God is infinitely merciful.

In the fifth petition in the Lord's Prayer we ask forgiveness from God, and also courage, sincerity and generosity to forgive and forget offenses we have received from our brothers. Let us not misinterpret, however, this petition as some people do, who think God will forgive us in the way and measure we forgive our offenders. It is just the contrary: we should forgive our brothers as God forgives us. St. Paul tells us: "Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same" (Col 3:13). In other words, we must imitate God's kindness and mercy in forgiving one another. God does not imitate us in the way we forgive. St. Augustine says: "When we say: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sinned against us', we are reminding ourselves of what we must ask and what we must do in order to be worthy in return to receive" (cfr. *Liturgy of the Hours*, XXIX Week or Ordinary Time, Tuesday).

Therefore, if we want God to forgive our sins we must forgive whatever offenses we received from our neighbour. Jesus Christ tells us clearly His teaching in the parable of the merciless official. "A king decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents. He had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this the servant threw himself down at his master's feet, with the words: 'Be patient with me and I will pay the whole sum'. And the servant's master felt so

sorry for him that he let him go and canceled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow-servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him, saying: 'Pay what you owe me'. His fellow servant fell at his feet and appealed to him saying: 'Be patient with me and I will pay you'. But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow-servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for the man and said to him: 'You wicked servant, I canceled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'" (Mt 18:23-35).

Christ's teaching is clear: "If you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either" (Mt 6:15). To forgive without forgetting entirely the offenses, harboring instead evil feelings against the offender, is merciless and hypocritical. The Lord says: "Be compassionate, as your Father is compassionate... Pardon and you shall be pardoned... For the measure you measure with will be measured back to you" (Lc 6:36-38). And again: "My heavenly Father will treat you exactly the same way, unless each of you forgive your brother from your heart (Mt 18:35).

The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer requires, therefore, a holy disposition on our part, which should always be alive, not only rejecting any evil thoughts and desires against our offenders, but keeping and improving our good relationship with them. God

will forgive us, if we forgive our offenders from our heart. Moreover, God will hear our prayers only when we show this holy disposition. "If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Mt 5:23-24).

All biblical texts we have quoted above prove eloquently that we have to be in good terms with our brothers and sisters, if we want God to forgive our offenses.

For a complete and excellent doctrinal explanation of this petition, as well as of the whole Lord's Prayer, we highly recommend the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 2761-2853.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers **July - August 1999**

EFREN RIVERA, OP

JULY 4, 1999

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

ZECHARIAH 9:9-10

MEEK AND PEACEFUL KING, JUST SAVIOR

MATTHEW 11:25-30

FATHER REVEALED BY GENTLE AND HUMBLE SON

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The prayer of Jesus in today's Gospel Reading "expresses the depth of his heart, his adherence to the Father's 'good pleasure,' echoing his mother's *fiat* at the time of his conception and prefiguring what he will say to the Father in his agony. The whole prayer of Jesus is contained in this loving adherence of his human heart to the mystery of the will of the Father" (CCC 2603).

This prayer is the best expression of Jesus' humility, prefigured in the Old Testament by Zechariah's image of a meek and peaceful king riding on an ass.

Focus Points. (1) Zp 9:9b-10b See, **your king** shall come to you; a **just savior** is he/ Meek, **and riding** on an ass, on a **colt, the foal of an** ass./ **He shall banish the** chariot From **Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem;**/ **The** warrior's bow **shall be banished, and he shall proclaim** peace to the nations. The Messiah will be a king, a "just savior," meek (like Moses, see Nu 12:3) and lowly (one of the *anawim*). In the prophet Zephanaiah, the *anawim* take on a moral and eschatological significance, see Zp 2:3. They obey God's commands and seek "integrity." In the day of God's anger they will be spared. In v. 10a-b, the Messiah King of the *anawim* will banish violence and proclaim peace, fulfilling his role of being a "just savior."

(2) Mt 11:25 Jesus spoke **thus: "Father, Lord** of heaven and earth, to you I offer praise; **for** what you have hidden from **the learned and the** clever you have revealed **to** the merest **children."** In this passage Jesus uses the image of "children" as a substitute for what the prophets called *anawim*. He does this because the pharisees, who are the descendants of the *anawim*, had distorted the prophetic image. Besides, at this point when Jesus is teaching about revelation, the image of littleness and humility are more relevant than poverty. He tells us that the Father reveals himself through Jesus Christ to humble or "little" people. His disciples have to be a "little flock" not so much in number as in humility. Every true follower of Jesus Christ must become and remain spiritually a child. The reason is simple. The basic message of Jesus Christ is that God is his Father in a very unique way, but because of the Father's love, he was given the power to make humble people his brothers and sisters — children of God — and share with them in a finite manner, his dignity as Son of God.

(3) Mt 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The NAB NT 1986 translation is used here and compared to the 1970 translation it uses "you who labor" instead of "you who are weary," and "yourselves" instead of "your souls." Jesus has a preferential option for the poor and those he calls to himself are first of all those who labor as poor people, using their hands and their back and sweat it out the whole day. Jesus is also not only for the poor but *with the poor ~ together **they share the same yoke***, which Jesus makes easy and light because he carries the greater weight.

More on Mt 11:25-30 in Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers (HBP), 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (SOT), A, 1996.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. PREFERENTIAL OPTION FOR THE POOR. See the Catechism for Filipino Catholics (CFC) 1187-89, 1213. According to PCPII the preferential option for the poor "takes on great urgency in our country where a very great number of our people wallow in abject poverty and misery, while tremendous social privileges and deference are accorded the rich and powerful" (PCP II 312). Modern Popes, like the prophet Zephaniah of old, look at this option for the poor as something pertinent to social justice, see for example, Pope John Paul IPs *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42 (CFC 1189).

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Since Zechariah's announcement of the coming of the Messiah King, who is Meek, Poor, and a Bearer

of Peace and Justice, is done in a context of *rejoicing* (Zp 9:9a), small groups should share on their experience of "preferential option for the poor" relating it to whether or not it has given them joy.

2. HUMILITY AND PRAYER, see CCC 2559, 2628, 2631, 2706, 2713; HUMILITY OF JESUS, see CCC 525, 559. Humility is the foundation of prayer. When we pray, our sentiments should come from the depths of a humble and contrite heart (see Ps 130:1). Our humility has to be patterned to that of Jesus, as St. Paul says in Ph 2:6-11. We must look to Jesus as the Number One "Little Child," the Number One among the *Anawim*.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: There is much that we can learn from the poor, especially when we join them in prayer. Have you experienced becoming a humbler — and therefore better — Christian by joining the poor in a prayer meeting? Share your experience with your small group.

3. SPIRITUALITY OF WORK (See CFC 1186.) PCP II proposed a "Christian spirituality of work." *First*, through work we "*share in the activity of the Creator*, and, within the limits of our own human capabilities, continue to develop and perfect that activity. *Second*, "by enduring the toil of work in union with Christ, we collaborate with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity." With reference to this second aspect, we can use words from today's Gospel Reading and say: we take the yoke of Christ.

3.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you experienced the kind of work which is a collaboration with the Son of God for the redemption of humanity? Share your answer with your small group.

Humble Winner

In a night of surprises and upsets (March 21, 1999) the romantic comedy, "Shakespeare in Love" won seven Academy Awards ("Oscars") including best picture and best actress for Gwyneth Paltrow.

One of the surprises, is the humility with which Miss Paltrow received her award. "I don't feel very deserving of this in your presence," she said, sobbing, as she named her fellow nominees. She had never been nominated before. Overnight, she became a major Hollywood star at the young age of 25.

Followers of Jesus Christ rejoice every time they observe people — especially celebrities — who, consciously or unconsciously, imitate his humility.

JULY 11, 1999

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

ISAIAH 55:10-11

GOD'S WORD RETURNS FRUITFUL

MATTHEW 13:1-23

PARABLE OF THE SOWER

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

There is power in rain. There is power in water. There is power in the word of God. This was the insight of Isaiah 55:10-11. *Dei Verbum*, the Constitution on Divine Revelation of Vatican II, reworded this insight so clearly that the Catechism of the Catholic Church does nothing more than quote it: "such is the force and power of the Word of God that it can serve the Church as

her support and vigor and the children of the Church as strength for their faith, food for the soul, and a pure and lasting font of spiritual life" (CCC 131).

There is power in a seed. But it must be awakened and developed by the sun, soil, water. Moreover, if a grain of wheat is to bear fruit at least thirty-fold, adverse forces like birds and thorns must not be allowed to interfere. The Church, following Christ, brings all this to our attention because, as Luke 8:11 clearly says, "the seed (in the parable-allegory of the Sower), is the word of God" (see also Mk 4:14)

Focus Points. (1) Is 55:10-11 Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down/ And do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful,/ Giving seed to him who sows and bread to him who eats,/ So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth;/ It shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it. This is one of the texts of the Old Testament that prepare the Johannine teaching that "the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14). The Bible is the Word of God only in the third place. The first place belongs to the Son of God and the second place to the prophetic word that takes the form of events (*debarim*), symbolic actions or oral preaching and teaching.

(2) Mt 8:3 He addressed them at length in parables... Biblical criticism distinguishes between the pure parables that came from Christ himself (*ipsissima verba Christi*) and the allegorization done by the Christian communities as they applied the teachings of Christ to their situations. The Parable of the Sower as read in the Gospels certainly contains many allegorical elements. For example, the birds represent "the evil one," the thorns represent "worldly anxiety and the lure of money." These elements are important for the application of the parable, which is the task of

the Church from the first generation of Christians until our time. But it is also important to get the original message. To do so, one has to temporarily set aside the allegorical elements and get to the "point" (only one) of the story. It seems that the original "point" of the Sower parable is that, in spite of the seeds wasted by the wayside, among rocks and thorns, the seeds on the good ground yield such a bountiful harvest that the farmer's effort is far from wasted. It is an exhortation not to get discouraged because of setbacks in apostolic work.

More on Mt 13:1-23 in HBP 15th SOT, A, 1996.

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

1. THE CONTEXT OF REVELATION IN THE PHILIPPINES. CFC 64: Perhaps few countries in the world can compare to the Philippines when it comes to trying to make God known. Newspapers, radio, TV and movies are filled with new preachers, religious celebrations, public devotions and never-ending appeals for new chapels and churches. Faith healers abound in every community. Self-proclaimed *mediums* claim to lead their gullible devotees in mysterious ways to supposedly closer contact with God, or the Sto. Nifio, or the Blessed Virgin Mary. With so many different people claiming to reveal God, who can we believe? How does the one true God actually reveal Himself to us today?

1.1 Pointer for sharing: The question just asked is not a new one, and Jesus answered it long ago. He said, "by their fruits you shall know them." Do you have any experience of discerning true revelation from false revelation "by the fruits" that resulted? Share your answer with your small group.

2. GOD'S SELF-REVELATION TODAY. CFC 73: Filipino Catholics experience God's Self-revelation today. *First*, God shows Himself in the *natural signs* of the beauty and abundance of our natural resources and our rich Filipino culture. *Second*, the *biblical signs* in God's inspired Word in Scripture, the book of the Church, reveal him. *Third*, through the Church's *liturgical signs*, we encounter the Risen Christ in the Sacraments. *Finally*, God makes Himself known to us through the *ecclesial signs* of the Church's proclamation of the *Creed* and in her *moral teachings* and *commitment to service*.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: The media continue to present many stories to us from which we can learn something about the desire of God to teach his people and lead them to salvation. Do you avail yourself of these stories to get a deeper understanding of God's ways? Share your answer with your small group.

VISIT TO ISRAEL AFTER 31 YEARS

I lived in Jerusalem, at the *Ecole Biblique*, from September 1963 to April 1965. At that time, the ancient walled city of Jerusalem as well as the *Ecole Biblique*, which is at Nablus Road, was in Jordanian territory. The present king of Jordan, Abdullah, was a baby. I remember using postage stamps proclaiming how King Hussein finally had a male son from his English wife, Toni Gardiner.

We enjoyed a big measure of peace, which, however, had to be enforced by the United Nations. From time to time we heard machine gun or rifle fire, but that was no news at all. We certainly did not spend our day dodging bullets nor our nights fearing that bombs might drop any time. We slept soundly.

When I left Jerusalem, I resolved to come back in a few years' time, thinking that in five years or so the problem of Israel and the Palestinians will be solved. When war broke out between Israel and the Arabs, I knew I had to wait some time before peace would finally triumph.

But peace did not come even after thirty years. I got tired of waiting in 1996 and joined a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Since then, I've been going there every year. If you ask me why, the answer is simple. The land where Jesus lived continues to make his parables and other teachings, not to mention his miracles, alive and meaningful to me.

JULY 18, 1999

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

WISDOM 12:13, 16-19

GOD, POWERFUL AND JUST, IS KIND

MATTHEW 13:24-43

PARABLE OF THE WEEDS

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

The first execution by lethal injection after the reimposition of the death penalty in the Philippines produced a spate of debates that divided Church people into two camps. One called itself "pro-life." The other, while not being anti-life, was characterized by adherence to law and order and consideration for surviving victims of rape committed in a heinous manner. Both camps have much to learn from today's Scripture texts.

Focus Points. (1) Wis 12:16, 18, 19 Your mastery over all things makes you lenient to all... though you are master of

might, you judge with clemency, and with much lenience you govern us...you taught your people, by these deeds, that those who are just must be kind. These descriptions of God are from a page of the Old Testament and belie the popular belief that the God of the Old Testament is a vengeful, tyrannical God, at least as far as sinners or criminals are concerned.

(2) Mt 13: "Pull up the weeds and you might take the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest..." When this parable was allegorized, the harvest was interpreted to mean the end of the world — something that the first generation of Christians thought of as happening in their lifetime.

More on Mt 13:24-43 in HBP 16th SOT, A, 1996.

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

1. DEATH PENALTY OR NO DEATH PENALTY. In 1994 the Catechism of the Catholic Church said: "The traditional teaching of the Church has acknowledged as well-founded the right and duty of legitimate public authority to punish malefactors by means of penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime, *not excluding, in cases of extreme gravity, the death penalty*" (CCC 2266). *"If bloodless means are sufficient to defend human lives against an aggressor and to protect public order and the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person"* (CCC 2267).

When the Catechism was revised in 1997, the treatment of the death penalty was transferred from no. 2266 to no. 2267 and

punishment by "non-lethal means" (instead of "bloodless") was reinforced with the following observation which uses a quote from Pope John Paul II's *Evangelium Vitae*: "Today, in fact, as a consequence of the possibilities which the state has for effectively preventing crime, by rendering one who has committed an offense incapable of doing harm — without definitively taking away from him the possibility of redeeming himself — the cases in which the execution of the offender is an absolute necessity 'are very rare, if not practically non-existent,'"*

It is a mistake, however, to say that the Church has rejected its traditional teaching because even the revised Catechism says: "Assuming that the guilty party's identity and responsibility have been fully determined, the traditional teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty, if this is the only possible way of effectively defending human lives against the unjust aggressor" (CCC revised 2267). This way of being pro-death penalty (or anti-unjust aggressor) is at the same time pro-(innocent) life.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: The Pope is an example of a man who is powerful, just and kind (in imitation of God). In his 1999 visit to St. Louis, Missouri (USA), he obtained the commutation of the death penalty to life imprisonment without parole for a condemned man because of his personal intercession with the state's governor. What lesson can you get from this story? Share your answer with your small group.

2. HUMANE PUNISHMENT. "Punishment has the primary aim of redressing the disorder introduced by an offense. When it is willingly accepted by the guilty party, it assumes the value of expiation. Punishment then, in addition to defending public order and protecting people's safety, has a medicinal purpose: as far as possible, it must contribute to the correction of the guilty party...

(Hence it should not) definitely take away from him the possibility of redeeming himself..." (CCC revised 2266-67). This is in line with the insight of the field owner in today's parable: "Pull up the weeds and you might take the wheat along with them. Let them grow together until harvest..."

2.1 Pointer for sharing: Some criminals repent and become exemplary citizens (see story). What lessons can you get from the story, "Lay Dominican Executed?" Share your answers with your small group.

Lay Dominican Executed

Jonathan Wayne Nobles, a man convicted of a heinous crime, was sent to the State Prison of Texas, USA, and put on death row. In 1986, when Jonathan was 25, while he was high on drugs, stabbed to death two young women Mitzie Johnson-Nally, age 21, and Kelly Farquhar, age 24. He also stabbed Ron Ross 19 times, causing him to lose an eye.

While living in Huntsville Prison, Jonathan underwent a conversion and joined the Catholic Church. He also became interested in the Dominican Laity, since a group of these led by Anthony Chinh Dao, then Provincial Promoter for the Dominican Laity, visited the prison regularly and became friends with him. In 1991 Jonathan made his permanent commitment to the Dominican Order. By that time he prayed the Rosary consistently and he said that he felt the presence of St. Catherine of Siena. Three months before his death, Jonathan appeared on TV and announced that he wished to donate his kidneys, *"because I want to do something good before I die."*

Jonathan was executed on October 7, 1998, Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. On that day, he fasted. When the time arrived

for the traditional last meal, he asked the local bishop only for the Holy Eucharist. The Bishop said, *"He called it 'spiritual food for the journey home.' It was all that he wanted; it was all that he would have. That's a profound statement of faith."*

In the execution chamber that evening, Jonathan recited prayers and read Scripture passages, and began singing *Silent Night*. At 6:25 pm he was pronounced dead. At his funeral Mass he was dressed in the Dominican habit and had a rosary in his hands. He had himself selected the readings and the music for the Mass.

The execution of Jonathan confirmed the corporate stance of the Dominicans in Texas, which they formulated in 1986:

"While recognizing the right of the state to administer punishment, and aware of the need of aggressive measures to deal with crime, and to assist its victims, nevertheless, we the Friars of the Southern Province of St. Martin de Porres, in solidarity with the National Council of Catholic Bishops, voice strong opposition to capital punishment."

JULY 25, 1999

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

/ KINGS 3:5, 7-12
GOD, GIVER OF A WISE HEART

MATTHEW 13:44-52
WISE SCRIBE IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Wisdom is needed to lead a good life. We can obtain this wisdom through prayer as King Solomon did, or with the guidance of the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament (see CFC 441-448) and the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament, especially his parables.

Focus Points. (1) 1 Kgs 3:7, 9: I am a mere youth, not knowing at all how to act... Give your servant, therefore, an understanding heart to judge your people and to distinguish right from wrong... Wisdom, in the Bible, is not speculative knowledge. It requires "an understanding heart to distinguish right from wrong" and a determination to do what is right. "The *Psalms* and the *Wisdom literature* present how the faithful can discern the presence of God in their daily lives" (CFC 441).

(2) Mt 13:52 Every scribe who has been instructed in the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old. It is possible that the Gospel according to Matthew was written by just such a man — a scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven and possessing the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit that enable him to blend the new and the old.

More on Mt 13:44-52 in HBP 17 th SOT, A, 1996.

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

1. THE COUNSEL OF THE WISE. CFC 441 - 443. xxx
There is much to learn from the counsels of the wise... On work and leisure... On relating to people... Some advice "liberates" by exposing evils that enslave... Other provide something like today's "value clarification."

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you availed yourself of the Wisdom Literature of the Bible in your daily living? Share your answer with your small group.

2. WISDOM, A GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. "The moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord..." (CCC 1830-1831).

2.1 Pointer for sharing: The gifts of the Holy Spirit "make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations" (CCC 1831). Have you experienced these gifts in your life? Share your answer with your small group.

TGIO?

It's graduation time. In an attempt to attract the attention of new graduates, a store says: TGIO (Thank God It's Over!).

Trying to be modern, that store only shows its ignorance of the tradition that calls a graduation a "commencement" — not an ending. Upon graduation, youth starts to learn the stark realities of life. Hunting for jobs, or undergoing training given by companies that hire them, many young people find out that their schools did not really equip them to solve the everyday problems of the business and professional world. There are many things they mislearned, that they now have to unlearn!

Specially where human relations are concerned, most young graduates have to begin from square one in learning the attitudes and habits they need to succeed in their careers.

What we learn after we think that we know everything is what really counts in life!

AUGUST 1, 1999

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

ISAIAH 55:1-3

LIFE FROM GOD... GRATIS

MATTHEW 14:13-21

FIVE LOAVES FOR 5,000

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Where there is water, there is life. To symbolize God's free gift of life, Isaiah offers free water to thirsty people. God's gift of life, however, is given in superabundance. It is life for the body and the spirit, life in this world and everlasting life. To symbolize this, Jesus feeds 5,000 men from just five loaves.

Focus Points. (1) Is 55:1, 3 All you who are thirsty, come to the water!/ xxx Come to me needfully, listen, that you may have life./ I will renew with you the everlasting covenant, the benefits assured to David. This everlasting covenant is spelled out in Is 59:21: "This is the covenant with them which I myself have made, says Yahweh:/ My spirit which is upon you and my words that I have put into your mouth/ Shall never leave your mouth, nor the mouths of your children/ Nor the mouths of your children's children from now on and forever, says Yahweh." (See also Is 61:8). Jeremiah calls it the "New Covenant:" "I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know Yahweh. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says Yahweh, for I will forgive their evil-doing and remember their sin no more" (Jer 31:33b-34).

(2) Mt 14:19b - 21 Taking the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he said the blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over — twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children. Traditionally, the bread miraculously given to the people has been understood to symbolize the Eucharist. The words and gestures here and at the Last Supper are practically the same: "Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples..." Mt 26:26. Nevertheless we should add that, just as the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees are referred to as bread (see Mt 16:12), so also the teaching of Jesus is symbolized by the bread given to the crowds.

More on Mt 14:13-21 in HBP 18th SOT, A, 1996.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. THE NEW LAW OR THE LAW OF THE GOSPEL. CCC 1965: "The New Law of the Law of the Gospel is the perfection here on earth of the divine law, natural and revealed. It is the work of Christ and is expressed particularly in the Sermon on the Mount. It is also the work of the Holy Spirit and through him it becomes the interior law of charity: 'I will establish a New Covenant with the house of Israel... I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people' (Jer 31:31-34)."

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Being a Christian and therefore a member of the people with whom God made a New Covenant, have you ever turned to the law written in your heart to guide you in life? Share your answer with your small group.

2. "DAILY" BREAD (IN THE "OUR FATHER"). CCC 2837; "*Daily*" (*epiousios*) occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. Taken in a temporal sense, this word is a pedagogical repetition of "this day," to confirm us in trust "without reservation." Taken in the qualitative sense, it signifies what is necessary for life, and more broadly every good thing sufficient for subsistence. Taken literally (*epi-ousios*: "super-essential"), it refers directly to the **Bread of Life**, the Body of Christ, the "medicine of immortality," without which we have no life within us,

2.1 Pointer for sharing: When you pray for "daily bread" outside of Holy Mass (where the prayer is a preparation for the Holy Eucharist), what do you think of? Share your answer with your small group.

God's Free Gift of Water (Life)

For the people of the Bible the sustenance of life is synonymous with bread and water. When God gives bread and water, he sustains life.

In God's provident plan safe water is to be available *gratis* to all human beings and other creatures in need of it. Today, however, because of ecological sins of commission and omission, there are 1.4 billion people, mostly in poorer countries, who do not have easy access to safe water. This can easily jump to 2.3 billion people by the year 2025, unless poor and rich people all over the world join in solidarity and solve the water problem.

Already, a child dies every eight seconds from a water-related disease and 20 percent of freshwater fish species are near extinction because of contaminated water, United Nations studies show. Half of all people on earth lack adequate sanitation.

Current world investment in providing safe water to those who need it is \$8 billion per year. That represents a \$15 billion to \$17 billion shortfall over what is needed for the next eight to ten years. Is it possible to solve the problem? Most certainly. Just think of this: the amount needed is roughly equal to annual pet food purchases in Europe and the USA, the UN analysis found.

AUGUST 8, 1999

NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

1 KINGS 19:9, 11-13
GOD, A WHISPERING BREEZE

MATTHEW 14:22-33
THEY WORSHIPPED... AFTER THE STORM

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Elijah is presented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as a man of prayer as well as a prophet calling people to conversion of heart: see CCC 2581-2583. That is also how today's First Reading presents him.

Jesus is the New Elijah inasmuch as, like the prophet of old, he performed outstanding miracles of healing and of power over nature. This is how he is presented in today's Gospel Reading.

Focus Points. (1) **I Kgs 19:9, 11-13** Elijah came to a cave (from the mountain of God, Horeb,) where he took shelter, xxx Then Yahweh said, "Go outside and stand on the mountain before Yahweh; Yahweh will be passing by." A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing the rocks... After the wind there was an earthquake... After the earthquake there was fire... After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave. This story shows that there is progress in God's revelation of himself. In Exodus 19 God used the symbols of storm, earthquake and lightning to reveal himself. Now he uses the whispering breeze. The message conveyed is that God is a SPIRIT (not a force of nature) and a

man who follows his will (like Elijah) can have an intimate or quiet encounter with him.

(2) Mt 14:22-33 Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." The text, as it is, is an explicit recognition of the divinity of Jesus Christ. When the original event happened, however, this belief was only implicit in the disciples' growing suspicion that Jesus was the Messiah.

More about Mt 14:22-33 in HBP, 19th SOT, A, 1996.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. THE IMPLICATIONS OF FAITH IN ONE GOD. CCC 222-227: Believing in God, the only One, and loving him with all our being has enormous consequences for our whole life. *It means coming to know God's greatness and majesty... It means living in thanksgiving... It means knowing the unity and true dignity of all men... It means making good use of created things... It means trusting God in every circumstance...*

1.1 Pointer for sharing: Have you been impressed by different images of God at different stages of your life? Share your answer with your small group.

2. JESUS CHRIST — "MEDIATOR AND FULLNESS OF ALL REVELATION." CCC 65-67. The Catechism quotes from Vatican II *Dei Verbum* (4): "The Christian economy, since it is the new and definitive Covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ." It then adds: Yet even if Revelation is already complete, it has not been made completely explicit; it

remains for Christian faith gradually to grasp its full significance over the course of the centuries.

2.1 Pointer for sharing: People grow in their understanding of the MYSTERY OF JESUS CHRIST. Have you experienced this growth? Share your answer with your small group.

Day-end Rosary

In the pilgrimage organized by the Goodnews International Travel in November 1998, the group visited 58 places or shrines in just seven days. The pace, however, was not hectic. The secret was in three rules that the group adopted. First, get up early for Mass in selected places like the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, the Basilica of the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, and the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. (2) Second, plan the itinerary well so that places near to one another could be visited in one sweep; consult schedules of shrines so that the group will be there before closing time. (3) Third, no free day or half day for shopping! Souvenirs can be bought only during extra time after the planned visits to places are done.

There was ample time for Bible Reading and appropriate prayer in the holy places visited. Then there was a recap in the bus when the sun was going down. The recap took the form of the Rosary, which Pope Pius XII said, writing to Filipinos, was a "Gospel Prayer."

The Rosary proved to be the best day-end prayer as the bus carrying the pilgrims ferried them from Mt. Carmel to Nazareth, from the Mt. of Beatitudes to the hotel, from the Dead Sea to Bethlehem, and so on. The Rosary provided the pilgrims with many opportunities to encounter God in the Holy Land he had given to his Chosen People, the Land where Jesus and Mary lived, the land where the Mysteries of the Rosary took shape.

AUGUST 15, 1999

SOLEMNITY OF OUR LADY'S ASSUMPTION

REVELATION 11:19; 12:1-6, 10

A WOMAN CROWNED WITH TWELVE STARS

LUKE 1:39-56

GOD LIFTED UP THE LOWLY

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

An Italian confrere dedicated to promoting the Rosary once had a conversation with me. He insisted time and again that the mystery of the Assumption is the same as the mystery of the Coronation of Mary in Heaven. He said the two were distinguished just so that the complete Rosary would have 150 Hail Marys, corresponding to the 150 Psalms. Maybe we could add that the distinction is maintained so that we could celebrate a Feast of the Assumption as well as a feast of the Queenship of Mary.

Focus Points. (1) Rev 12:1, 5 A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars... She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations with an iron rod... The woman clothed with the sun is, in the first place, the people of God, from whom the Messiah came. But a people can not in reality give birth to a child. A particular woman had to do this, and that particular woman was Mary. Hence there is scriptural basis for thinking of Mary as the "woman clothed with the sun." The "crown of twelve stars" makes this reading appropriate for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, which is also her coronation in heaven.

(2) **Lk 1:52 He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.** The "lowly" or "*tapeinoi*" (Lk 1:48, 52; 14:11; 18:14; Mt 23:12; 18:4) are synonymous with the "poor in spirit" for whom Jesus taught the Beatitudes (Mt 5: 2-10). They are the "little ones" as opposed to the "great" in Lk 9:48 (see also Lk 17:10; Mt 19:30; 20:26). Next to Jesus God was most pleased with Mary for her "lowliness", and next to Jesus, she is the one he exalted most. Thus Jesus and Mary are the King and Queen of all created beings.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. FILIPINO DEVOTION TO MARY. CFC 45-47: "Accepting Jesus Christ as responding to five essential Filipino traits (family oriented, meal-oriented, *Icundiman-orientado*, *bayani-orientado*, and spirit-oriented) has historically come about and continued in a typical "Filipino" manner. The outstanding characteristic of the Church in the Philippines is to be a "*pueblo atnante de Maria*" — a people in love with Mary... As Z?ayam-oriented, we have Mary as our Queen, the loving mother of Christ our King..."

1.1 Pointer for sharing; To you, as to the majority of Filipino Catholics according to the Catechism for Filipino Catholics, has Jesus come "through Mary" or "with Mary?" Share your answer with your small group.

2. FRUITS OF DEVOTION TO MARY. CFC 48: "Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Ang Mahal na Birhen*, has greatly helped many simple Filipinos to remain Catholics. Their deep devotion to the Mother of God has been the strongest force keeping their faith alive. Mary has been and remains the central inspiring force in bringing about a deeper evangelization of the masses of

our people, "the safeguard for the preservation of our Catholic Faith, and the principle of deeper and fuller evangelization."

2.1 Pointer for sharing: How has devotion to Mary affected the Christ-centeredness of your faith: for better or for worse? Share your answer with your small group.

Visits to the Dormition Basilica

What we and other Christians of the Latin tradition call the Assumption of Mary, the Greek Christians call her Dormition. What strikes me is that the Dormition Basilica on Christian Mt. Sion in Jerusalem is owned by Latin Benedictine monks, and every time I visited it in 1996, 1997 and 1998, there were Greek Christian visitors.

In 1996 and again in 1998, the Dormition Basilica was the last shrine our group visited as part of our pilgrimage. I pointed out to the groups how appropriate that was as the end point of our visit to the Holy Land, especially since, geographically, the Basilica was the highest point we reached in Jerusalem.

Every time I visited with a pilgrim group, I pointed out the mosaic at the upper part of the apse of the Basilica. I tell them to look at the faces of Jesus and Mary. I ask them: "Have you seen those faces during your pilgrimage?" Invariably, they enthusiastically say, "YES." They are the faces of Arab and Israeli children and young women we met in quite a number of places we visited during the seven days of our pilgrimage. It is a good way Of reminding them that Jesus and Mary may have gone to heaven, but in a way, they are still very much with us on earth.

AUGUST 22, 1999

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

ISAIAH 22:15, 19-23
FATHERLY TASK

MATTHEW 16:13-20
PETER - A FATHER TOO

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

Customarily we think of Peter as the Vicar of Christ, and since he is the holder of the keys of the kingdom, ordinary folk think of him as a kind of *mayordomo*. However, if we look for a common thread in both the First and Gospel Readings for today, we find **that** like Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, Peter can be seen as a "father" because of his authority over a "house" (which is the Church).

Focus Points. (1) Is 22:20-22 Eliakim... shall be a Father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judas. I will place the key of the House of David on his shoulder; when he opens, no one shall shut, when he shuts, one shall open. The Fathers of the Church, following Rev 3:7, see in Eliakim a foreshadowing of the Messiah, By capitalizing "Key" in the phrase, "Key of the House of David," it becomes a Messianic title used in the Advent Liturgy (*O Clavis*).

(2) Mt 16: 18-19a "And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." The giving of the keys of the kingdom is parallel to the building of the Church on rock, but we should not make the mistake of identifying the Church with

the Kingdom, As the Catechism says, the Church is only the "seed" and **the** "beginning" of the Kingdom (see CCC 669). Another mistake we should avoid is identifying the giving of the keys to the power of binding or loosing. The latter power is shared by the disciples (see Mt 18:18), whereas Peter alone was given the keys. Truly, therefore, this passage tells us how Peter was given the Primacy over the other apostles. However, this is not the only text about Peter's Primacy; we should, for example, also take account of Jn 21:15-19.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. CHRIST, HEAD OF THE CHURCH. CCC 669: "As Lord, Christ is also head of the Church, which is his Body. Taken up to heaven and glorified after he had thus fully accomplished his mission, Christ dwells on earth in his Church. The redemption is the source of the authority that Christ, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, exercises over the Church. "The kingdom of Christ (is) already present in mystery," "on earth, the seed and the beginning of the kingdom." <> Some ignorant people, including journalists, think that St. Peter founded the Catholic Church (just as Luther founded the Lutheran Church), and worse, that St. Peter is the Head of the Church. Worst is the mistake that the Pope is the Head of the Church.

1.1 Pointer for sharing: We call the Pope "Pontiff from the Latin word "Pontifex" which means a "bridge builder." He is not the terminal but just the bridge. It is to Christ to whom we owe our obedience because, as the Catechism says, he is the one who redeemed us. The Pope's role is to help us give this obedience to Christ. Has the Pope helped you obey Jesus Christ? Share your answer with your small group.

2. THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM. CCC 553: "Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...' The 'power of the keys' designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: 'Feed my sheep.'"

2.1 Pointer for sharing: If you belong to the "house of God" which is the Church, you should think of the Pope, the successor of Peter, as a kind of father to you. Is this true? Share your answer with your small group.

Where Have All the Fathers Gone?

Modern life has not been very conducive to fostering the role of fathers. Many people today rightly ask: Where Have All the Fathers Gone? (Paraphrase of the title of a popular song).

It is not enough for a man to sire a child to become a father. He must know how to "bond" with his child. He has to learn the art of "fathering" that child not only during the tender years but until the child becomes an adult and even beyond.

A priest for his parish community or a bishop for his local church, must also learn the art of being a "father." Through his authority *exercised with kindness*, and his loving, provident care, he should be, for his people the PRINCIPLE OF UNITY.

AUGUST 29, 1999

TWENTY SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

JEREMIAH 20:7-9
THE TRIALS OF GOD'S PROPHET

MATTHEW 16:21-27
HE MUST GO TO JERUSALEM... TO SUFFER

A. STUDY OF THE TEXT / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

By a coincidence that could be called a DABAR or "Word-Event," today's Scripture Readings about the trials of God's prophet, Jeremiah, and about the destiny of Jesus to suffer in Jerusalem, falls on Philippine National Heroes' Day. Each and every one of our National Heroes, men and women, had to cope with trials and suffer — many of them to the point of death — out of love for their country. Their heroic lives help us understand better, in a way, just what was the life of Jeremiah like, and understand too, what heroism Jesus showed to redeem us.

Focus Points. (1) Jer 20:7b, 8b All day long I am an object of laughter; everyone mocks me... The word of the Lord has brought me derision and reproach all the day... It is quite normal for prophets to experience trials and rejection but these were specially painful to Jeremiah because of his sensitive **nature**.

(2) Mt 16:21 From then on Jesus (the Messiah) started to indicate to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem to suffer greatly there at the hands of the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and to be put to death. The Poems of the Servant of Yahweh foretold the sufferings of the Messiah but before they were fulfilled the apostles were unaware of these prophecies. The

adopted the popular idea that the Messiah will be a conquering King who will cover himself with glory by routing his enemies by some miraculous way.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

1. EXPERIENCE OF SUFFERING. CCC 164-165: "Now, however, 'we walk by faith, not by sight'; we perceive God as 'in a mirror, dimly' and only 'in part.' Even though enlightened by him in whom it believes, faith is often lived in darkness and can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith. Our experiences of evil and suffering, injustice, and death, seem to contradict the Good News; they can shake our faith and become a temptation against it. It is then we must turn to the witnesses of faith: to Abraham... to the Virgin Mary... 'to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.'"

1.1 Pointer for sharing: In times of trial and suffering were you helped by turning to witnesses of faith like Abraham, JEREMIAH, Mary, and Jesus Christ? Share your answer with your small group.

2. JESUS, THE SUFFERING SERVANT. CCC 601 xxx "In particular Jesus' redemptive death fulfills Isaiah's prophecy of the suffering Servant. Indeed Jesus himself explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God's Suffering Servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles."

2.1 Pointer for sharing: The Church sometimes experiences a period of "triumphalism" as from ca. 1950 to 1960, before the

Second Vatican Council. During such times it's convenient to relegate the prophecies of the Suffering Servant to the background and avoid calling Jesus a "Servant". What is your personal feeling about this title of Jesus? Share your answer with your small group.

Prophetic Suffering

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, 1991 Nobel Peace Prize awardee, is a devout Buddhist, but her travails rival those of the biblical peace advocates, the prophets. After studying in Britain and getting married to an Oxford scholar, Michael Aris, with whom she has two sons, Alexander and Kim, she returned to Myanmar (Burma) in early 1988 to nurse her dying mother. When a military junta took over the government, Suu Kyi became the leader of the opposition party, the National League for Democracy. To curb her work for her people, the military put her under house arrest for six years (1989-1995). Her party won an overwhelming victory in elections in 1990 but the junta has refused to hand over power.

Before getting married in 1972, she made a pact with her husband to leave him and their two children in Britain if ever her people will need her and she has to return to her country. Michael visited her in Myanmar in 1995, but for the next three years the Myanmar government refused to grant him a visa, even when he was terminally ill of prostate cancer that had spread to his spine and lungs. In spite of her natural instinct to go to her dying husband's bedside, Suu Kyi refused to leave her people, knowing that the government will not allow her to come back. Her absence would mean more reprisals and arbitrary arrests of people working for human rights and democracy.

Michael died on March 27, 1999 on his 53rd birthday, without the comforting presence of his wife. That was the price they had to pay so that Suu Kyi could continue her prophetic work for peace among her people.