

BOLETIN ECLESIASTICO de FILIPINAS

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LETTER TO PRIEST

John Paul II

THE CHALLENGES OF A PASTORAL APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENT

Orlando Quevedo, OMI

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE OF OUR LADY OF PENAFRANCIA

Rodel Cajot

ON THE PHENOMENON OF PREGNANT BRIDES

Jaime Card. Sin, DD

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The Official Interdiocesan Bulletin

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Mary of the Bicolandia
VICENTE CAJILIG, OP

Through the course of three years — while celebrating the Father, Son and Holy Spirit — the Church in the Philippines has always set a place for Mary. We can say that the jubilee has provided a Marian corner.

The agenda for the great jubilee of redemption has presented in tabulated form part of the pastoral program plan in the Philippines rooted in the Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II).

AGENDA FOR THE GREAT JUBILEE OF REDEMPTION
Implementing Tertio Millennio Adveniente (TMA)
and the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II)

	1997	1998	1999	2000
FOCUS	JESUS CHRIST	HOLY SPIRIT	GOD THE FATHER	BLESSED TRINITY
Mary, as Model	Divine Motherhood Model of Faith	Docile to the Holy Spirit Woman of Hope	Obedient to the Father Model of Love	Consecrated for the Work of Redemption

Our issue carries one article about Mary as venerated in Bicol entitled: *The Diamond Jubilee of Our Lady of Penafrancia*. It accentuates the role of *La Virgen* in the lives of the Bicolanos. The said article deals with Marian devotion in the context of diamond jubilee.

May the focus of the Virgin Mary especially for the month of October also bring to our readers a renewed mariological awakening.

DOCUMENTATION

Letter to Priests* **JOHN PAUL II**

My Dear Brother Priests!

1. Jesus, "having loved his own who were in the world, loved them to the end" (*Jn* 13:1). Here in Jerusalem, in the place where according to tradition Jesus and the Twelve were present for the Passover Meal and the institution of the Eucharist, I am deeply moved as I read once again the words with which the Evangelist John introduces the account of the Last Supper.

I give praise to the Lord for enabling me, in this Jubilee Year of the Incarnation of his Son, to trace the earthly footsteps of Christ, following the paths which he took from his birth in Bethlehem to his death on Golgotha. Yesterday I spent time in Bethlehem, in the cave of the Nativity. In the days to come I will visit various places associated with the life and ministry of the Saviour, from the house of the Annunciation to the Mount of the Beatitudes and the Garden of Olives. Finally on Sunday I will be at Golgotha and the Holy Sepulchre.

* Letter of His Holiness Pope John Paul II to Priests for Holy Thursday, Jerusalem, 23 March 2000.

Today, this visit to the Upper Room gives me an opportunity to survey the entire mystery of the Redemption. It was here that Christ gave us the immense gift of the Eucharist. Here too our priesthood was born.

A letter from the Upper Room

2. From this Upper Room I would like to address this letter to you, as I have done for more than twenty years, on Holy Thursday, the day of the Eucharist and "our" day *par excellence*.

I am indeed writing to you from the Upper Room, thinking back to all that took place within these walls on that evening charged with mystery. Spiritually, I see Jesus and the Apostles seated at table with him. I think of Peter especially: it is as if I can see him, with the other disciples, watching in amazement the Lord's actions, listening with deep emotion to his words and, for all the burden of his frailty, opening himself to the mystery proclaimed here and soon to be accomplished. These are the hours of the great battle between the love which gives itself without reserve and the *mysterium iniquitatis* which is imprisoned in hostility. The betrayal of Judas appears emblematic of humanity's sin. "It was night", observes the Evangelist John (13:30): the hour of darkness, an hour of separation and of infinite sadness. Yet in the emotion-filled words of Christ the light of dawn already shines forth: "I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (*Jn* 16:22).

3. We must never cease meditating anew on the mystery of that night. We should often return in spirit to this Upper Room, where we priests especially can feel in a sense "at home". With regard to the Upper Room, it could be said of us what the Psalmist says of the peoples with regard to Jerusalem: "In the register of peoples, the Lord will write: These were born here" (*Ps* 86:6).

In this holy room I naturally find myself imagining you in all the various parts of the world, with your myriad faces, some younger, some more advanced in years, in all the different emotional states which you are experiencing: for many, thank God, joy and enthusiasm, for others perhaps suffering or weariness or discouragement. In all of you I honour the image of Christ which you received at your consecration, the "character" which marks each of you indelibly. It is a sign of the special love which every priest has come to know and upon which he can always rely, either to move ahead joyfully or to make a fresh start with renewed enthusiasm, in the hope of ever greater fidelity.

Born of love

4. "Having loved his own who were in the world, Jesus loved them to the end". In contrast to the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John does not relate the institution of the Eucharist, of which Jesus had already spoken at length in Capernaum (cf. *Jn* 6:26-65); instead it dwells upon the washing of the feet. Even more than an example of humility offered for our imitation, this action of Jesus, so disconcerting to Peter, is a revelation of the radicalness of God's condescension towards us. In Christ, God has "stripped himself, and has taken on "the form of a slave" even to the utter abasement of the Cross (cf. *Phil* 2:7), so that humanity might have access to the depths of God's very life. The great speeches which in John's Gospel follow the washing of the feet and are in some way commentaries upon it, serve as an introduction to the mystery of Trinitarian communion to which we are called by the Father who makes us sharers in Christ by the gift of the Spirit.

This communion must be lived in compliance with the new commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you" (*Jn* 13:34). It is not by chance that the priestly prayer is the culmination of this "mystagogy", since it shows us Christ in his oneness with the Father, ready to return to him through the sacrifice of himself, and

wanting only that the disciples come to share his unity with the Father: "As you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they too be one in us" (*Jn* 17:21).

5. From the small group of disciples who heard these words the whole Church was formed, growing through time and space as "a people gathered together by the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (Saint Cyprian, *De Orat. Dom.*, 23). The profound unity of this new people does not mean that there are not different and complementary tasks in its life. Those whose task it is to renew *in persona Christi* what Jesus did at the Last Supper when he instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice, "the source and summit of the entire Christian life" (*Lumen Gentium*, 11), are thus linked in a special way to those first Apostles. The sacramental character which distinguishes them by virtue of their reception of Holy Orders ensures that their presence and ministry are unique, indispensable and irreplaceable.

Almost two thousand years have passed since that moment. How many priests have repeated what Jesus did! Often they were exemplary disciples, saints, martyrs. How can we forget, in this Jubilee Year, the many priests who have witnessed to Christ by their lives, even to the shedding of blood? Such martyrdom has accompanied the entire history of the Church; it has also marked the century just passed, a century characterized by different dictatorial regimes hostile to the Church. From the Upper Room, I wish to thank the Lord for the courage of these priests. Let us look to them and learn to follow them in the footsteps of the Good Shepherd who "lays down his life for his sheep" (*Jn* 10:11).

A treasure in earthen vessels

6. It is true that in the history of the priesthood, no less than in the history of the whole People of God, the dark presence of sin is also found. Many times, the human frailty of priests has made it hard to see in them the face of Christ. Here in the Upper Room

why should this amaze us? Not only did the betrayal of Judas reach its climax here, but Peter himself had to reckon with his weakness as he heard the bitter prediction of his denial. In choosing men like the Twelve, Christ was certainly under no illusions: it was upon this human weakness that he set the sacramental seal of his presence. And Paul shows us why: "We bear this treasure in earthen vessels, so that it might be clear that this extraordinary power comes from God and not from us" (2 Cor 4:7).

For all the frailties of their priests, then, the People of God have not ceased to put their faith in the power of Christ at work through their ministry. How can we fail in this regard to recall the splendid witness of Saint Francis of Assisi? Humility led him not to seek the priesthood, but in his Testament he expressed his faith in the mystery of Christ present in priests, declaring that he would turn to them even if they had persecuted him, taking no account of their sin. "And I do this", he explained, "because the only thing I see of the flesh of the most high Son of God in this world is his most holy Body and Blood which they alone consecrate and they alone administer to others" (*Fonti Francescane*, No. 113).

7. From this place where Christ spoke the words instituting the Eucharist, I invite you, dear priests, to rediscover the "gift" and the "mystery" which we have received. To go to the heart of it, we must reflect upon the priesthood of Christ. Certainly, the entire People of God participates in this priesthood by Baptism. But the Second Vatican Council reminds us that, in addition to the participation proper to all the baptized, there exists another specific, ministerial participation which, although intimately linked to the first, nonetheless differs from it in essence (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 10).

In the context of the Jubilee of the Incarnation, we can approach the priesthood of Christ from a particular perspective. The Jubilee invites us to contemplate the intimate link between Christ's

priesthood and the mystery of his person. The priesthood of Christ is not "incidental", a task which he might or might not have assumed: rather, it is integral to his identity as the Son Incarnate, **as** God-made-man. From now on, the relationship between mankind **and** God passes wholly through Christ: "No one comes to the Father, except through me" (*Jn* 14:6). This is why Christ is a priest endowed with an eternal and universal priesthood, of which the priesthood of the first Covenant was a prefigurement and a preparation (cf. *Heb* 9:9). He has exercised it fully from the moment he took his seat as High Priest "at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven" (*Heb* 8:1). From that time forth, the very nature of human priesthood changed: now there is but one priesthood, that of Christ, which can be shared and exercised in different ways.

Sacerdos et Hostia

8. At the same time, the meaning of sacrifice, the priestly act *par excellence*, was brought to perfection. On Golgotha, Christ made his own life an offering of eternal value, a "redemptive" offering which has reopened for ever the path of communion with God which had been blocked by sin.

The Letter to the Hebrews casts light upon this mystery by placing on the lips of Christ the words of Psalm 40: "You desired neither sacrifice nor offering, but instead you prepared a body for me... Here I am... I come to do your will, O God" (*Heb* 10:5-7; cf. *Ps* 40:7-9). According to the author of the Letter, these prophetic words were spoken by Christ when he first came into the world. They express his mystery and his mission. They begin to be accomplished from the very moment of the Incarnation and reach their completion in the sacrifice of Golgotha. From that time forward, every priestly offering is but a representing to the Father of the one offering of Christ, made once for all.

Sacerdos et Hostia! Priest and Victim! This sacrificial aspect is a profound mark of the Eucharist; it is also an essential dimension

of the priesthood of Christ and, therefore, of our own priesthood. In the light of this, let us read once again the words we speak every day, words which echoed for the first time here in the Upper Room: "Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my Body which will be given up for you... Take this, all of you, and drink from it: this is the cup of my Blood, the Blood of the new and everlasting Covenant which will be shed for you and for all, so that sins may be forgiven."

These are the words we find in the Evangelists and in Paul, with largely converging redactional forms. They were spoken in this Room in the late evening of Holy Thursday. By giving the Apostles his Body to eat and his Blood to drink, Jesus declared the deepest truth about what he would do shortly thereafter on Golgotha. For in the Bread of the Eucharist is present the very Body born of Mary and offered on the Cross:

*Ave verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine,
Vere passum, immolatum in cruce pro homine.*

9. How can we not return ever anew to this mystery, which contains the entire life of the Church? For two thousand years, this Sacrament has given nourishment to countless believers. It has been the source of great river of grace. How many saints have found in it not only the pledge, but as it were the foretaste of Heaven!

Let us allow ourselves to be carried along by the contemplative impulse, rich in poetry and theology, which inspired Saint Thomas Aquinas to sing of the mystery in the words of the hymn *Pange Lingua*. Today, in this Upper Room, these words come to me as an echo of the voice of so many Christian communities throughout the world, of so many priests, consecrated persons and lay faithful, who each day pause in adoration of the Eucharistic mystery:

*Verbum caro, panem verum verbo carnem efficit,
fitque sanguis Christi merum, et, si sensus deficit,
ad firmandum cor sincerum sola fides sufficit.*

Do this in memory of me

10. The mystery of the Eucharist, which proclaims and celebrates the Death and Resurrection of Christ until he comes again, is the heart of the Church's life. For us it also has a very special meaning, for it stands at the centre of our ministry. Our ministry is not of course limited to celebrating the Eucharist: it is a service which includes the proclamation of the Word, the sanctification of the faithful through the Sacraments, and the leadership of God's People in communion and service. But the Eucharist is the point from which everything else comes forth and to which it all returns. Our priesthood was born in the Upper Room together with the Eucharist.

"Do this in memory of me" (*Lk 22:19*): although addressed to the whole Church, the words of Christ are entrusted as a particular task to those who carry on the ministry of the first Apostles. It is to them that Jesus hands on the action which he has just performed—changing bread into his Body and wine into his Blood—the action in which he appears as Priest and Victim. It is the will of Christ that henceforth his action should also become sacramentally the action of the Church through the hands of priests. In saying "Do this", he refers not only to the action, but also to the one who is called to act; in other words, he institutes the ministerial priesthood, which thus becomes one of the essential elements of the Church.

11. This action is to be done "in his memory": these words are important. The Eucharistic action celebrated by priests will make present in every Christian generation, in every corner of the earth, the work accomplished by Christ. Wherever the Eucharist is celebrated, the bloody sacrifice of Calvary will be made present in an unbloody manner; there Christ himself, the Redeemer of the world, will be present.

"Do this in memory of me". Hearing these words once again within the walls of the Upper Room, it is natural to try to imagine what

Christ felt. These were the dramatic hours which preceded the Passion. The Evangelist John evokes the intensity of the Master's words as he prepares the Apostles for his departure. What sadness was in their eyes: "Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts" (*Jn* 16:6). But Jesus reassures them: "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (*Jn* 14:18). Although the Paschal Mystery will take him from their sight, he will be more present than ever in their life, "always, to the close of the age" (*Ait* 28:20).

A memorial which makes present

12. Christ's presence will be expressed in many ways. But of these his Eucharistic presence will certainly be supreme: no mere remembrance, but a "memorial" which makes present what it commemorates; not a symbolic evocation of the past, but the living presence of the Lord in the midst of his own. The enduring guarantee of this will be the Holy Spirit, constantly poured out in the Eucharistic celebration so that the bread and wine may become the Body and Blood of Christ. He is the same Spirit who on the evening of Easter, in this Upper Room, was "breathed" upon the Apostles (cf. *Jn* 20:22), and who found them here still, gathered with Mary, on the day of Pentecost. It was then that he came upon them as a strong wind and fire (cf. *Acts* 2:1-4), and impelled them to go to the ends of the earth to proclaim the Word and gather together the People of God in the "breaking of the bread" (cf. *Acts* 2:42).

13. Two thousand years after the birth of Christ, in this Jubilee Year, we especially need to remember and ponder the truth of what we might call his "Eucharistic birth". The Upper Room is the place of this "birth". Here began a new presence of Christ for the world, a presence which constantly occurs wherever the Eucharist is celebrated and a priest lends his voice to Christ, repeating the sacred words of institution.

This Eucharistic presence has accompanied the two thousand years of the Church's history, and it will do so until the end of time. For us it is both a joy and a source of responsibility to be so closely linked to this mystery. Today we want to become more deeply aware of this presence, our hearts filled with wonder and gratitude, and in this spirit to enter the Easter Triduum of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ.

What the Upper Room hands on to us

14. My dear brother priests, who on Holy Thursday gather in the Cathedrals around your Pastors, just as the presbyters of the Church in Rome gather around the Successor of Peter, please accept these reflections, my meditation in the evocative setting of the Upper Room! It would be hard to find a place better able to stir thoughts of both the Eucharistic mystery and the mystery of our priesthood.

Let us remain faithful to what the Upper Room "hands on" to us, to the great gift of Holy Thursday. May we always celebrate the Holy Eucharist with fervour. May we dwell long and often in adoration before Christ in the Eucharist. May we sit at the "school" of the Eucharist. Through the centuries, countless priests have found in the Eucharist the consolation promised by Jesus on the evening of the Last Supper, the secret to overcoming their solitude, the strength to bear their sufferings, the nourishment to make a new beginning after every discouragement, and the inner energy to bolster their decision to remain faithful. The witness which we give to the People of God in celebrating the Eucharist depends in large part upon our own personal relationship with the Eucharist.

15. Let us rediscover our priesthood in the light of the Eucharist! Let us help our communities to rediscover this treasure in the daily celebration of Holy Mass, and especially in the more solemn Sunday assembly. Through your apostolic labours, may love for Christ present in the Eucharist grow stronger. This is a particularly important goal in this Jubilee Year. I think of the International

Eucharistic Congress to be held in Rome from 18-25 June, which has as its theme *Jesus Christ, the one Saviour of the World, Bread for new Life*. It will be a highlight of the Great Jubilee, which is meant to be "an intensely Eucharistic year" (*Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 55). The Congress will emphasize the profound link between the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word and the Eucharist, the Sacrament of Christ's Real Presence.

From the Upper Room, I embrace you in the Eucharist. May the image of Christ surrounded by his own at the Last Supper fill each of us with a vibrant sense of brotherhood and communion. Great painters have employed their finest gifts in depicting the face of Christ among his Apostles in the scene of the Last Supper: how can we forget Leonardo's masterpiece? But only the Saints, by the intensity of their love, can enter the depths of this mystery, leaning their head, as it were, like John, on the Lord's breast (cf. *Jn* 13:25). Here in fact we come to the height of love: "having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end."

16. I would like to conclude these thoughts, which I affectionately entrust to your meditation, with the words of an ancient prayer:

"We thank you, our Father,
for the life and the knowledge
which you have revealed to us
through Jesus, your servant.
Glory to you through the ages!
As the bread we have broken
was scattered far and wide upon the hills,
but when harvested becomes one,
so may the Church be gathered
into your Kingdom
from the farthest reaches of the earth...
Lord almighty, you created the universe
for the glory of your name;

you gave men food and drink
to strengthen them,
that they might give you thanks;
but to us you have given
spiritual food and drink,
and eternal life through your Son...
Glory to you through the ages!"
(*Didache* 9:3-4; 10:3-4).

From the Upper Room, dear brother priests, I embrace all of you
in spirit and I cordially impart my blessing.

The Diamond Jubilee of Our Lady of Penafrancia

RODEL CAJOT

The ecclesiastical province of Caceres rejoiced in its annual celebration of the feast of Our Lady of Penafrancia last September, the last in the present millennium. It was indeed a great jubilation because 1999 is the 75th anniversary of the canonical coronation of the venerated image proclaiming the Blessed Virgin Mary under the title, "Our Lady of Penafrancia", as the Patroness of the Bicol Region.

Devotion to Our Lady of Penafrancia began in Bicol during the tenure of Most Rev. Andres Gonzales, O.P, bishop of Caceres (1685-1709). It started with the request of the *cimarrones* for a chapel for their own religious observance. The *cimarrones* generally refer to the people residing in the outskirts of the city of Nueva Caceres at the foot of Mt. Isarog. The bishop entrusted their care to his vicar general, Fr. Miguel Covarubbias, who constructed a bamboo-and-cogon chapel near the present site of old Penafrancia Shrine, alongside the Naga River. A fervent devotee of Our Lady of Pena de Francia, he placed the newly constructed chapel under the patronage of Our Lady. Later, he commissioned a native to carve a statue of Our Lady according to the picture of the same image uncovered by Simon Vela at the steep slopes of *Pena de Francia*

— the highest peak (1,723 m) in the area called *Sierra de Francia*, south-central part of the Castillian province of Salamanca, and incidentally, along the northern border of the Extremefio province of Caceres.

Since that time, devotion to Our Lady of Penafrancia became popular, not only among the *cimarrones*. It extended to the whole diocese of Nueva Caceres due to the miracles attributed to the venerated image of our Lady. Fr. Covarrubias later related our Lady's many wonders, the most well-known of which is the coming back to life of the dog, whose blood was used to color the pale wooden image. The carcass of the dog was dumped at the nearby Naga River, but the dog swam across and ran to its master's house to the amazement of witness, among whom were three Dominican Friars. Likewise, Fr. Covarrubias himself was a beneficiary of our Lady's help. Once he lost completely the sight of his left eye, and recovered it suddenly at the touch of our Lady's holy picture.

The increase in the number of devotees that come to Naga (then Nueva Caceres) for the yearly feast of Our Lady of Penafrancia prompted the bishop, Most Rev. Manuel Grijalvo, O.S.A. (1848-1861), to transfer the celebration of the novena from the tiny cogon chapel by the river to the Cathedral. The first days of the novena were held in the Cathedral from Saturday to Thursday, while the remaining days in the Shrine. This occasion is cited as the origin of the present-day practice of the *traslacion* procession that brings the image of Our Lady from her Shrine (or from the Basilica since 1983) to the Cathedral. Today's practice of holding the novena at the Cathedral until Saturday, when in the afternoon the image is returned to the Shrine in a fluvial procession through Naga River, was actually a modification introduced later by of Most Rev. Francisco Gainza, O.P. in 1864.

After almost two centuries of the Bicolanos' piety and ardent devotion to Our Lady of Penafrancia, the bishop of Caceres, Most

Rev. Arsenio Campo Monasterio, O.S.A. (1887-1903) obtained through the Sacred Congregation of the Sacred Rites a pontifical rescript declaring and designating Our Lady of Pefiafrancia as principal patroness of Nueva Caceres. The rescript, granted by Pope Leo XIII, was dated June 10, 1895 and signed by the Cardinal Prefect Aloisi Masella. It also assigned Our Lady's feast day on the first day of July, with additional instructions on the liturgy to be used.

Barely a month after the aforesaid pontifical rescript was issued, another rescript was issued on July 8, 1895 by the Sacred Congregation on Indulgences and Sacred Relics, granting plenary indulgence to the faithful, who repents of his/her sins, goes to confession, receives communion, and visits the church where the image is kept and there prays to God for the intention of the pope, as long as these were done from the first day of the novena to the last day of the octave of the festivity. And in less than a year the same congregation granted the same indulgence already given in the earlier rescript with another rescript dated February 4, 1896. At closer scrutiny, however, the two rescripts are actually different. While the first rescript grants indulgences to the faithful who perform the requirements in the Shrine of Our Lady of Pefiafrancia during the period of time stated, the second rescript mentions about the *traslacion* of the image to the Cathedral, and in effect, includes the Cathedral as a venue for obtaining indulgence while the image is kept there for the novena.

According to the rescript of June 10, 1895, the feast of Our Lady of Pefiafrancia was assigned to the first Sunday of July. It also provided for the permanent transfer of the Office of *Corpus Christi* to the Saturday after the octave of Sts. Peter and Paul, in order to avoid overlapping of festivities. Perhaps, it was for this reason that the future first Filipino bishop, Fr. Jorge Barlin, then

apostolic administrator of the diocese *sede vacante* (1903-1905)', petitioned Pope Pius X to permanently transfer the festivity of Our Lady of Penafrancia from the first Sunday of July to the Sunday after the octave of the Birth of the Virgin Mary. The petition was granted through a decree issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites on April 8, 1905.

Another feature of the Penafrancia festivity that is worth mentioning is the regional devotion to the *Divino Rostro*, the Holy Face of Jesus imprinted on the cloth with which Veronica wiped his face at the *via crucis*. The devotion started in 1882, when the epidemic *cholera morbo* ravaged Manila and began to spread to the region. The incumbent bishop was Most Rev. Casimiro Herrero, O.S.A. (1880-1886). His vicar general, Fr. Pedro de la Torre, remembered that his native town of Osa de la Vega (Spain) was spared by a similar epidemic through the people's devotion to the *Divino Rostro*. The bishop approved his vicar's suggestion to enshrine at the Cathedral the image of the *Divino Rostro*, which he had earlier brought from Spain. In addition, the bishop ordered the image of Our Lady of Penafrancia to be brought to the Cathedral so that the people could pray for her intercession. When the threat was dispelled, the two images were carried together for the first time in procession from the Cathedral to the shrine. Since then, the two images were brought together to the Cathedral for the annual Penafrancia fiesta.

¹ *De facto*, the see of Caceres has been vacant since June 9, 1898, when Bishop Campo left the Philippines for Barcelona and for his *ad limina* visit to Rome. While he was away, the Philippine Revolution erupted ending Spain's sovereignty over the islands, and later, transferring the rule to the America. Bishop Campo designated his vicar general, Fr. Roman Gonzalez, O.S.A., as administrator in his absence. But, due to the resentment of the Bicolanos towards the Spaniards at the time of the revolution, Fr. Gonzalez remained a figurehead. The Bicol clergy gravitated around the vicar forane of Sorsogon, Fr. Jorge Barlfn.

During the incumbency of the only American bishop of Caceres, Most Rev. John Bernard MacGinley (1910-1924), a petition for the solemn coronation of the image of Our Lady of Pefiafrancia, patroness of Bicolandia, was sent to Rome. What prompted Bishop MacGinley to have the image of Our Lady of Pefiafrancia canonically crowned?

It has been the practice of the Church to crown sacred images of the Blessed Virgin Mary that are renowned for their antiquity and miracles. The image is adorned with a crown of gold to honor the Mother of God for the greater glory of the Most Holy Trinity. From the document, it is clear that the sacred congregation requires two things so that an image of the Virgin Mary could be conferred this honor — antiquity and miracles.

In a meeting held at St. Peter's on May 2, 1920, the members of the Sacred Congregation of the Fabric decided that the image of Our Lady of Pefiafrancia fulfilled the requirements. In the case of antiquity, the image itself was by then about 200 years old. It was the same image hewn, on orders of Fr. Covarrubias, by a native from a santol tree and colored by the blood of the dog that was miraculously brought back to life. Moreover, the devotion itself is as old as the image. Regarding miracles, Fr. Covarubbias himself was a witness to and even a beneficiary of Our Lady's maternal care. In addition, there were many instances and stories of healing, both physical and spiritual.

The content of Bishop MacGinley's letter of petition could be gleaned from the coronation document itself. It makes mention of the "famous image of Our Lady, the ever Virgin ... venerated under the title of Our Lady of Pefiafrancia." It further mentions that "the inhabitants of the same city and those of the neighboring towns render veneration with a profound devotion and piety because of its venerably long established cult and abundant wonders and graces which the loving Mother has poured into her devotees."

Consequently the said congregation favorably approved the petition with its decree issued on May 13, 1920. The document ordained that "the image of Our Lady of Penafrancia be solemnly crowned with a crown of gold." It conferred on Bishop MacGinley "the task of executing this coronation on whatever day you please" and "the authority to subdelegate the coronation to another bishop in the event that for one reason or another you are unable to do it personally."

The coronation document was issued in 1920. The actual crowning, however, was held four years later, on September 20, 1924, at the Naga Cathedral grounds, during a *sede vacante*. The see of Nueva Caceres became officially vacant in March 1924, when Rome announced Bishop MacGinley's transfer to the newly created see of Monterey-Fresno in California. His vicar general, Fr. Francisco Reyes, administered the diocese until his election as the next bishop (1925-1937). It was under his leadership that on that historic day the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, Most Rev. Guglielmo Piani, solemnly crowned the venerable image of Our Lady, 28 years earlier than the original image in Salamanca, which was crowned only on June 4, 1952. Thus, the declaration and designation of Our Lady of Penafrancia as patroness of Bicolandia, already granted by the rescript of Pope Leo XIII, was reaffirmed on that occasion.

One may wonder why there is a gap of four years between the issuance of the coronation document and the actual coronation rites. This musing can be answered only by conjectures of varying plausibility. The backward means of communication between Rome and Naga could be cited as an explanation. But four years are too long a delay, unless the diplomatic pouch of the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines was sent somewhere!

Here is a more plausible scenario. Maybe, the document arrived in Naga several weeks after it was issued. But, when it

reached the hands of Bishop MacGinley, he was too occupied with other more pressing concerns in the diocese. Then, when he deemed it opportune to execute the decree, his transfer to Monterey-Fresno derailed plans and preparations. Consequently, once the transfer of diocesan administration was put in order, Fr. Reyes, with the assistance of Fr. Casimiro Lladoc, could resume with the preparations and actual celebration. Whatever was the reason for the four-year interval will remain as one of the unsolved mysteries in the story of Bicolandia's devotion to Our Lady of Penafrancia. Or was it not the design of divine providence?

Today, after the grandiose reenactment of the coronation officiated by Most Rev. Antonio Franco, Apostolic Nuncio to the Philippines, one dares to believe that it was providential for the canonical coronation to take place in 1924 so that the 25th (Diamond) anniversary be held this year, 1999, at the threshold of the new millennium. During the reenactment of the coronation, Our Lady of Penafrancia was once again proclaimed regional patroness of Bicolandia. Then, in the act of re-consecration, the Bicolanos, led by their spiritual father, Most Rev. Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., Archbishop of Caceres, renew their pledge of allegiance and filial piety to their Queen and *Ina*.

Is it not theologically significant that such a momentous event take place in 1999, just as the new millennium approaches? Through this occasion, the Bicol Church marches into the third Christian millennium together with Mary, and assured of her constant guidance and protection. With Mary's Son, the *Divino Rostro*, the Bicolanos empowered by the Holy Spirit continues with ardor its journey home to the Father. Like a child who finds security and peace in the bosom of its mother, the Bicol Church will traverse the future, confident of *Ina's* maternal care, which it has always experienced in its life as a Christian community struggling to be the sacrament of her Son in this part of the world. *Viva la Virgen! Se siempre la Reina de nuestra region!*

Building a Culture of Peace by Respecting Life and Human Rights*

CBCP

As we cross the threshold of the third millennium at the beginning of this Jubilee Year, it is well for us to briefly look back at the life of the Filipino nation and the Catholic Church in the Philippines in the past hundred years. We discern some lights and shadows coming to the fore.

First is our intense aspiration for life and its fullness, in stark contrast to the waste of lives lost in wars, criminality, and chronic poverty. Second is our unflagging struggle for independence and human rights against colonial powers and authoritarian regimes, as exemplified by the EDSA People Power Revolution. And third is our continuing search for lasting peace and development in the face of the fragmentation of our society along ethnic and class lines and its exacerbation by armed groups.

It is in this context that we enter the third millennium with a call to all Filipinos to help build what the Holy Father has called a Culture of Life, a Culture of Human Rights, and a Culture of Peace.¹

* A Pastoral Statement of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

¹ Cf. Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January 1999.

I. Building a Culture of Life

"See, today I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster... I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of Yahweh your God..." (Deut. 30: 15-16.19)

Moses' final discourse to the Chosen People presents the alternatives between a Culture of Life and a Culture of Death. It is addressed not only to the world of the ancient Hebrews but also to ours in these modern times — where abortions are silently counted in the millions, mercy-killing is being tested out in courts, and capital punishment is still resorted to as the "final solution".

It is in this regard that Pope John Paul II has pleaded time and again on the "Gospel of Life". He does so once more in the Asian context. "The life of every person, whether of the child in the womb, or of someone who is sick, handicapped or elderly, is a gift for all," stresses the Holy Father. And he concludes: "We are therefore guardians of life, not its proprietors."²

The Culture of Death and Violence extends to the spread of drugs and the AIDS epidemic, the commercialization of sex, the proliferation of pornographic materials, and the growing permissiveness of a society that no longer heeds the love nor ways of Yahweh.

All forms of violence are an attack on the integrity and fullness of life. "To choose life," states the Holy Father, "involves rejecting every form of violence: the violence of poverty and hunger, which affects so many human beings; the violence of armed conflict; the violence of criminal trafficking in drugs and arms; the violence of mindless damage to the natural environment."³ A more insidious

² *Ecclesia in Asia*. (EA), no. 35, Vatican City, 1999.

³ Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January 1999.

form of violence is the widespread corruption in public office that compounds the other forms of violence in our society today.

Who then are the victims of violence in our society today? They are the street children and child laborers we see around us. They are the small farmers and tribal communities driven away from the lands they till. They are the refugees fleeing areas of armed conflict and the urban poor in dire need of decent living space. They are the drug addicts, the victims of rape and kidnapping, the countless young and old preyed upon by petty and big-time gambling syndicates.

Instead of moving us on a course towards the fullness of life, our laws and public institutions seem to be doing the opposite in their ineffectiveness before the various forms of individual or structural violence that demean the very meaning and quality of life. It is in this light that the value of human life and the dignity of the human person have to be protected by the recognition of rights and responsibilities.

II. Forging a Culture of Human Rights

Through her Social Teachings, the Church has been in the forefront of the struggle for Social Justice. She bases her stand on the intrinsic dignity of every human person and the demands of the common good. She has promoted the rights of workers as well as of property holders. More recently she has spoken out on the right of communities to a clean environment and the right of indigenous peoples to their own culture. And she has also upheld the right of freedom of conscience and of religious belief for all peoples.

The world has rapidly become much more complex and interdependent; the globalization in communications and in the world's market economy is now a virtual reality^ Because of this, there is all the more reason for governments as well as for the

Church to articulate the rights of the most vulnerable groups, such as children, women, and indigenous peoples.

In the spirit of the Great Jubilee, we are ready to work with other religious groups in promoting a biblically-based agenda for human rights promotion in the Philippine context today, summarized in five R's:

- **Release of prisoners**, and all those in contemporary slave-like conditions;
- **Return of the land**, and other means of production to their original or rightful owners;
- **Recall of debts** unjustly imposed upon the poor;
- **Rest for the earth** and conservation of the natural environment; and
- **Restoration of harmony among women and men**, based on their respective roles, rights, and equal dignity.

Moreover, over the past three years in preparation for the Jubilee Year, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) has issued pastoral exhortations on Philippine Politics, Economy, Culture, and Spirituality, highlighting the rights and* responsibilities of Filipinos in the conduct of our political, economic, and cultural-spiritual institutions.⁴ In particular as regards a Culture of Human Rights, they have stressed the principles of democracy as well as the rights of the economically vulnerable sectors of our society to their basic needs.

The ultimate basis for this preferential option for the poor is pointed out by Pope John Paul II and the Synod of Bishops for Asia: "The poor of Asia and of the world will always find their best reason for hope in the Gospel command to love one another as Christ has loved us (cf. *Jn* 13:34)." With this in mind, the Church

⁴ CBCP, Pastoral Letters on Politics, 1997; Economy, 1998; Culture, 1999; Spirituality, 1999.

herself is challenged to "become a Church of the poor and for the poor."⁵

III. Creating a Culture of Peace

Like concentric circles spreading out from the core value of Human Dignity, a Culture of Life gives rise to a Culture of Human Rights, which in turn brings forth a Culture of Peace. There can be no true peace without respect for life itself and the human rights of every person. *Opus Justitiae Pax*, (Is 32:17) the motto of Pope Pius XII, highlights this intimate relationship: Peace is the work and fruit of Justice.

Indeed, peace itself is seen as one of the rights a community can lay moral claims on. In his latest message for the World Day of Peace, the Holy Father calls our attention to "two indivisible and interdependent rights: the right to peace and the right to an integral development born of solidarity."⁶ Thus, a Culture of Peace includes the development imperative as well as a sense of solidarity among communities, nations, and peoples of one world.

In a pluralistic society with diverse cultures and religious traditions, this sense of solidarity can only come about through dialogue — the kind that leads to mutual understanding and respect.

In Mindanao, over the past three years, Catholic and Protestant bishops have entered into dialogue with their religious counterparts, the Muslim *ulama*, to reinforce the peace process, based on the spiritual traditions of both religions. They are also starting to include leaders of the indigenous peoples' communities in this dialogue of life, of common action, and of religious experience. Last November, the Bishops-Ulama Forum sponsored a Mindanao-wide Week of

⁵ EA, no. 34.

⁶ Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January 2000, no. 13.

Peace to highlight the common aspirations of all cultural communities to put an end to the fighting.

There are other initiatives for peace being worked at by other peace advocates — NGOs and POs — that over the years have been persistently hammering away at the deep-seated obstacles to peace among our people. The campaigners for a gunless society are one such group. So too are those dedicated men and women thanklessly working with our basic sectors to lessen government's neglect of them.

Ten years ago, the CBCP had already issued a pastoral letter to "Seek Peace; Pursue It". Today we ask our government officials to resume or continue peace talks with armed groups to arrive at a comprehensive and honorable peace for all. We are ready to collaborate in this noble effort.

Peace-making and rejecting all forms of violence are some of the building-blocks for a Culture of Peace. This work for peace starts with the individual, the family, and the local community and reaches out to include inter-cultural solidarity and care of the environment. It is with these sentiments that Pope John Paul II challenges the young of today: "peace within you and peace around you, peace always, peace with everyone, peace for everyone."⁷

The Church's "mission of dialogue", according to the Synod Fathers of Asia, is "grounded in the logic of the Incarnation" and partakes of "the Father's loving dialogue of salvation with humanity."⁸ Through this ongoing dialogue, Christians help bring about "a culture where openness to the Transcendent, the promotion of the human person and respect for the world of nature and shared by all."⁹ All this is what we mean by a Culture of Peace.

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 22.

⁸ EA, no. 29.

⁹ Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January, no. 2.

V. Looking Back and Looking Beyond

As we recall the five R's for observing the Year of Jubilee, we can preface these with another set of R's — **Renewal and reconciliation**. In the spirit of the Jubilee Year, we must first start with a process of self-examination and renewal with an eye to reconciling with those we have sinned against by asking forgiveness.¹⁰

For we cannot close our eyes to the shortcomings that we of the faith have been guilty of in the past. The name "Christian" of "Catholic" has at various historical periods been invoked to foment wars against minority groups, or to acquire landholdings and other forms of wealth, or even to justify the continuation of unjust regimes. Both as an institution and as a community of believers, we acknowledge with deep sorrow these failings, for they are a betrayal of authentic Gospel values that manifest the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

In terms of reconciliation, the Holy Father spells out what this means: "For the Catholic faithful, the commitment to build peace and justice is not secondary but essential. It is to be undertaken in openness towards their brothers and sisters of other Churches and Ecclesial Communities, towards the followers of other religions... with whom they share the same concern for peace and brotherhood."¹¹

A threefold Culture of Life, Human Rights, and Peace thus provides us with a common agenda for collaborative action among Christians, other faith communities, governments and secular institutions as we enter the third millennium. Let this too be our dream and our hope in the spirit of the Jubilee Year for a shared future with all men and women of good will so that together we may

¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, no. 33, Vatican City, 1994.

¹¹ Message for World Day of Peace, 1 January 2000, no. 20.

add a final R at the end of our pilgrimage on earth: **Return to our Father's house.**

May the spirit of the Risen Lord enable us to share with everyone his resurrection greeting, "Peace be with you." (*Jn 20:19*) And may Mary, our Mother of Life and Queen of Peace, be the guiding star in our journey through this new millennium.

Pastoral Statement on the Defense of Life and Family

CBCP

"That They May Have Life, And Have It Abundantly"
(Jn 10:10)

The Special Assembly of Bishops for Asia held on 18 April to 14 May 1998 at the Vatican City prepared for the celebration of this Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 by reflecting on the words of Jesus: *"That they may have life, and have it abundantly"* (Jn 10:10). As we celebrate the two thousand years of Christ's message of life and love, we now focus on the family, where life and love are nurtured.

Human life in all its richness is transmitted in the family. *"The family"*, Pope John Paul II in his Apostolic letter to the Church in Asia says, *"is the normal place where the young grow to personal and social maturity. It is also the bearer of the heritage of humanity itself because through the family, life is passed on from generation to generation."*

Just as human life is nurtured in the family, our Christian life which is the life of communion with the Triune God, is also

¹ *Ecclesia in Asia*, no. 46.

primarily transmitted through the family. Hence, as a challenge, the Holy Father exhorts that *"Christian families are today called to witness to the Gospel in difficult times and circumstances, when the family itself is threatened by an array of forces."*²

We find grave threats to the family in the Philippine setting these days.

Precarious Situation Foreseen

In recent months legislative Bills have been filed in Congress that could undermine the Filipino Christian family by gradually eroding pro-life and pro-child values. These proposals are influenced by social, political and economic pressures. The models for these proposed laws are the materially prosperous countries. But in adopting them we may fail to separate the chaff from the grain, and exchange apparent gains for the huge moral toll they would exact on our society.

We therefore, register our strong opposition to these Bills in the light of the Church's moral teaching. At the same time, we remind all Filipino Catholics of their duty to influence society by working for true human and Christian values.

We refer to the following House Bills (HB):

1. **HB 6993** called the "divorce bill" seeks to legalize absolute divorce.
2. **HB 6343** on the legalization of abortion has been replaced with **HB 7193** on the protection of the reproductive rights of women, a United Nations language which includes "termination of pregnancy" and artificial contraception even to teens.
3. **HB 7165** on "lesbian and gay rights" is now called "domestic partnership act" which deals with same-sex unions.

² Ibid.

4. **HB 8110** calls for an "integrated population and development policy" in order to strengthen its implementing structures and to appropriate funds to the tune of PHP 1.5 billion every year for the population programs that promote immoral means of demographic regulation.

Noticeably, in the face of widespread opposition, some of these proposals have been withdrawn, only to resurface under different names, often filed by the same person(s).

All these proposals go against the moral law and the human rights of many of our citizens. Once enacted as laws, they will not contribute to the moral good. We therefore remind everyone that the **natural law** *"provides the indispensable moral foundation for building the human community... it provides the necessary basis for the civil law with which it is connected ..."*³ Hence, legislative proposals must always be based on morally sound principles.

These proposed pieces of legislation become even more incongruous when we consider that our country is faced with critical problems such as poverty, peace and order, and gross social inequalities that need to be more urgently addressed by our elected representatives.

Why We Oppose These Bills

These Bills are often presented as solutions to difficult situations faced by individuals and society. We recognize these situations and we extend our hands to those whom they promise to help. We, however, must insist that the solutions to difficult situations cannot involve the violation of the moral order.

We know the difficult situations that face many married couples, and we deeply sympathize with them. But dissolving the marriage bond as a form of relief from marital difficulties as a

³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1959.

license to remarry goes against the very nature of the marriage covenant and will only undermine the very institution of marriage. The **legalization of absolute divorce** will violate the rights of other married couples to contract an indissoluble marriage and will, in practice, add difficulties to the obligation of marital fidelity. The ones most severely affected by the irreversible breakdown of a family, as brought about by divorce and remarriage, will be the children. Divorce violates the rights of children to a stable family.

For this reason, we likewise express our strong disapproval of practices that operate against the stability of the family, such as the *querida* practice in our country.

As pastors of the Church we also view with the greatest concern the situation of homosexuality. We recognize that there are people with homosexual tendencies. To have such tendencies is not a sin but to engage in homosexual acts is morally wrong. We firmly believe that persons with homosexual tendencies "*must be accepted with respect, compassion and sensitivity.*"⁴ However, we are also gravely concerned about legislative moves to **legalize same-sex unions, i.e., between men, or between women.** To legalize same sex union would, actually be a disservice to the persons involved. It would abandon them to a situation of objective disorder. It would legitimize what is objectively morally reprehensible. It would be tantamount to an utter lack of hope of personal conversion.

We as Pastors of the Church are also very concerned about the plight of women who may be bearing a child they did not desire or who is incurably ill. But whatever "**reproductive rights**" a **person may claim** to have, there is an overriding claim of the primordial right that every human being, especially the baby in the womb, has to live. This is why the Church through her institutions (such as shelter houses for women and orphanages for babies),

⁴ See CCC, no. 2357-2359; *Catechism for Filipino Catholics*, no. 1113-1114.

offers practical and time-tested solutions that will ensure the dignified and respectful care for the mother as well as the future of the child.

Finally, while the state may *"intervene to orient the demography of the population," nevertheless "the state may not legitimately usurp the initiative of spouses, who have the primary responsibility for the procreation and education of their children."* Furthermore, *"it is not authorized to employ means contrary to the moral law."*⁵ The latest House Bill version of the **population program (HB 8110)** is asking for a yearly appropriation of PHP 1.5 Billion, to be employed in a program that has often shown itself in the past to be coercive and partial to immoral means (such as, contraception and sterilization) which go against the teaching of a church to whom 80% of the population belong.

Our Responsibilities as Catholics

Unfortunately, many people confuse legality for morality. They think that if something is allowed by civil law, then it is necessarily good or at least indifferent.

On the contrary, what is legal may still be bad and immoral. But we should remember that since civil laws should be based on the Divine Law as its expression or application, then these laws tend to have an educational dimension. Hence, we all have a duty to work for civil laws that are in consonance with moral principles.

What a grave moral burden rests on the consciences of our legislators! The Second Plenary Council of the Philippines (PCP II) reminded us that *"Catholics who are given a charge of public life (must) faithfully abide by the Gospel and by the moral and social teachings of the Church, given the parameters of religious liberty."*⁶ Catholic legislators are morally bound to follow the

⁵ CCC, no. 2372.

⁶ PCP-II Acts and Degrees, no. 351-352.

teachings of the Church in their law-making activities. They should not set aside the teachings of the Church when formulating and voting on laws.

We have recently written that *"everyone should be interested in knowing what bills are being considered by Congress, what positions regarding important legislators are being taken by senators and congresspersons. In solidarity, civil society must articulate their support for laws, policies, and structural changes that will improve our lives in society and our political processes. It must lobby to defeat bills that militate against the aspirations of the poor, the integral development of our people, the integrity of creation, moral values in the family, the welfare of women, children and the young."*¹ Hence, we wish to commend and encourage Catholics who have shown their Christian spirit by volunteering their time and services to the cause of life and the defense of the family and family-related values.

We know that you have written to your Congress representatives, affixed your signatures to campaigns, spent time at rallies or dialogue sessions, conversed individually with our leaders and above all, prayed to the Lord of Life to continue blessing our country. Keep up your struggle. You can always count on the support and guidance of your bishops.

Our Catholic educational system can give a substantial contribution to the youth in their formative years toward the formation of right conscience. After the family, our schools serve as stable formators of values.

The celebration of the Great Jubilee Year is a privileged occasion for moral renewal. This is true not only on the personal level (as in our efforts to be converted in relation to gaining the Jubilee Indulgence) but also on the social level. Our individual

¹ *Pastoral Exhortation on Politics, H-7.*

conversion should flow into works of charity, which are among the great signs of this Jubilee Year⁸. There is a saying that "*charity begins at home*." We can apply this adage, albeit in an oblique way, to all our efforts to defend and promote the sanctity of the home against the incursions of anti-family and anti-life forces.

May Mary, our loving Mother, the Mother of Life and Patroness of our beloved country, protect us and guide us in respecting life, as we journey towards our final destination, eternal life with God in heaven.

⁸ See Bull of Indiction, *Incarnationis Mysterium*, no. 12.

The Challenges of a Pastoral Approach to the Environment

ORLANDO QUEVEDO, OMI

Pre-Note: In the past few days we have reflected together on ecological problems at the global level, articulated social moral principles to address them, and expressed many pastoral concerns. The overriding pastoral question seems to be: How do we translate the global concern on ecology into a pastoral strategy? Or perhaps the more important question: How do grassroots people look at the environmental problem and how have they as a community responded to it?

By describing how a small Christian community responded to its ecological problem, this presentation hopes to serve as a starting point of discussion on the challenges of a pastoral approach to the environment. The pastoral approach of the grassroots community serves to highlight some major challenges that every Christian community confronts.

1. A Pastoral Scenario¹

In a poor rural parish in the southern Philippines, the problem began with debts. One day representatives of farmers from the Basic Ecclesial Communities requested their parish priest to mediate a restructuring of their debts with the town's money lenders. The parish priest was happy to help them and did it successfully. In fact the question of debt was the wrong question. The real question was about farm productivity. The parish priest sent information to his Bishop about the farmers' problems. The Bishop in turn instructed the Archdiocesan social action program to assist the farmers.

In a subsequent general parish assembly to plan the parish pastoral thrust for the next five years, the archdiocesan social action team helped the farmers in a workshop on social issues. The farmers analyzed the possible causes of the debt problem. They could not pay their debt for the pesticides and fertilizers because they had poor harvests. Their harvests were poor because of several flashfloods and then a drought. These destroyed their rice and corn farms. A lot of top-soil drained down the rivers. Sand and gravel flowed down the mountains and covered some of their farms. The health of the children was affected by lack of food. Poor income made it difficult for children to go to school.

Culturally, the farmers had attributed their situation to "natural disaster," a product of God's own mysterious will. With social and cultural analysis, the farmers began to think of other causes.

They looked at the mountains and saw them becoming more barren. A big logging company owned by people in Manila

¹ This presentation actually telescopes the cases of two rural parishes into one. For the purpose of the presentation, the details of one case regarding deforestation in the Diocese of Bukidnon and of the other regarding the construction of a hydro-electric plant in the Archdiocese of Nueva Segovia have been integrated into one. The situation in Bukidnon serves as the main case.

continued to cut timber, even in the watershed areas, in defiance of forest laws. The company was paying off personnel in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The wood would meet demands in Japan and Taiwan.

1. The Pastoral Challenge of Social Analysis

Based on the example of the farmers, a pastoral approach to the environment begins with a discernment of social realities. The realities regarding the environment are complex, local and global. They cover the gamut of human life, social, economic, political, cultural, and religious. These are interconnected. With the help of the Archdiocesan social action team, the farmers began to see the connection between their debts and flash floods, drought, worsening soil fertility, dwindling water supply, declining children's health, crop failures, the connivance of local and international companies, graft and corruption, depleted forest covers, and their own grinding poverty.

For a church community, pastoral discernment of environmental realities has to be communitarian. This community dimension is both fundamental and imperative for the Church *as* Church. It also makes a pastoral program on the environment viable and sustainable. Pastoral discernment of realities has to make use of reliable tools of social and cultural analysis, but always from the optic of faith. Otherwise, social analysis simply deteriorates into ideology.²

There are many challenges here. Among them: the need for training in the use of social analysis, the need to be aware that

² A good process to follow is the "Pastoral Spiral" developed by the Office for Human Development (OHD) of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in 1986. It is a refinement of the method "see-judge-act," and consists of: discerning the situation, reflecting from the viewpoint of faith, making pastoral decisions, planning the implementation of decisions, putting the plan into action, evaluating the whole process. From this, another spiral begins.

social analysis, unless subordinated to faith, can become an ideological tool, the need for a whole faith-community to be familiar in the use of social analysis, the need to look at the cultural as well as global dimensions of local social realities. The farmers were able to meet these challenges.

With social and cultural analysis, the farmers were able to go to the roots of the debt problem. At the heart of the problem was the issue of deforestation and rampant logging.

In other places, the social issues may be different. They may be about the exploitative processes of mining, oil explorations, and geothermal projects that affect the lives of indigenous peoples, their cultures, and environment. Or the issue may be about commercial fishing methods that destroy the support system of marine life. Or the dumping of nuclear waste.

In other countries, there may be more sophisticated issues such as pollution of the environment and the destruction of the ozone layer, nuclear threats to the environment, genetic threats to human life and human ecology, or the inordinately disproportionate consumption of the world's resources in North and South. Perhaps the issue lurking behind all other issues is the dominant philosophy and model of development. Is it a "development with a human face"?³

The situations and responses may differ from place to place, but the process of social discernment remains a common imperative. Ultimately, the pastoral challenge of social reality comes down to this: How are parish communities able to come to a level of consciousness regarding their environment as to be committed and involved in solidarity to care for it?

³ See Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, *Pastoral Exhortation on the Philippine Economy*, 1998.

2. Reflection-in-Faith

This is a second step in a pastoral approach. The farmers of the parish in our case said, "Enough is enough! Let us do something about the logging problem." Before they could act as a church community, they had to reflect further on the connection between action and faith. The social action team and the parish priest, therefore, facilitated a process of "reflection-in-faith." The farmers used the Bible, some recent papal writings, documents of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and the landmark pastoral letter of the Philippine Bishops on the environment "What is Happening to our Beautiful Land?" (1989).

Reflection-in-faith goes beyond the data of social analysis by subjecting them to the process of spiritual or faith discernment. The word of God in the Scriptures and in the Church is the norm. It asks questions such as: What do Scriptures and the Church say about the environment? What do I, as a faith-person, say about the particular ecological problem that besets the community? What does the reality say to the faith-life of the community? Does God in the Scriptures or in the Church tell me to condemn or defend and promote?

There are many challenges here. Among them: the challenge of faith formation, the formation of a social conscience, the need to be familiar with the Scriptures and the social teachings of the Church, the need for dialogue between faith and reality, the need for the faith-community to be organized as a discerning community, the need for pastoral action to be based on the word of God. In our case, the farmers again successfully met these challenges.

3. The Challenge of a Pastoral Vision

An essential part of faith reflection is the drawing up of a pastoral vision based on the Word of God and on the social teachings of the Church, a vision that is not abstract but responds

to existing social realities. Any pastoral approach has to have a vision, a perspective, a framework that guides the formulation of a pastoral program of action. A faith community, for instance, cannot be a participatory Church or a Church of the Poor unless it has a vision of Church.

a. Vision of Creation

On the environment, a pastoral vision has to be based on a scriptural, theological understanding of Creation, Redemption, and the Reign of God interfacing with all of creation. The vision would include a belief in the totally gratuitous and loving creative act of God. It would include the meaning of creation as an act of God's love, the place and role of the human person in creation, the symbolism of "man" taken from the "earth" and molded like clay, a steward, God's co-creator. One should not forget that creation has a value in itself, and not simply because it is at the service of the human person. Jesus' redemptive act has a meaning for all of creation, "to bring all things under Christ" as the one head (Eph 1:10), to reconcile all things in and with him (2 Cor 5:18ff). "Groaning" as it awaits salvation (Rom 8:22), creation has a destiny intimately connected with the vision of the "new heavens and new earth."

Facilitated by the parish priest and the archdiocesan social action team, the farmers went through a process of faith discernment and came up with a parish vision of creation and the environment.

b. Vision of Church

But the farmers also had to have a vision of themselves as a believing community confronted by the realities of the environment. They did not wish simply to be just

another cause-oriented environmentalist group. Their religious faith had to be a basic motive of action.

Therefore, a pastoral approach to the environment does not only flow from a vision of creation but also from a vision of Church. Essential to this vision is the Church as communion, the people of God in communion with the God of Life, in communion with one another, and in communion with creation. Thus the farmers learned that as people of God, they are co-responsible for the care of the earth. As Church, the community is itself a seed of the Reign of God. The parish has to cooperate with God in making the vision of the Reign of God and of the new heavens and new earth a closer reality, though the vision will not be fully realized until the Lord returns in glory.

The parish has to be a community in solidarity with all peoples, with all cultures, and faiths in "loving tenderly, acting justly, walking humbly before God" in the care of earth. It is on this point that the farmers realized the necessity of inviting the Muslim farmers in the area to join them in action for solidarity. The Muslim farmers were more than willing. They had the same problems, they were less united than the Christian farmers, they wanted to be a force for change.

There are many challenges here to the process of faith reflection. Faith reflection has to be simple enough for people to follow. It has to be faithful to the teachings of the Scriptures and the social doctrine of the Church and avoid simplistic sloganeering. Faith-reflection cannot be the community's, if only two or three are doing the process and merely leading everyone else, and perhaps manipulating them toward a predetermined action. Social teachings have to be contextualized and the manner of applying them has to be liberating, with the full involvement of people. Here again, the farmers were able to meet the challenges.

4. Pastoral Decision and Planning to Implement the Decision.

The fruit of social, cultural analysis and faith-reflection is a decision on the issue. The community reaches the conclusion that the ecological issue either has to be defended and promoted — or rejected and denounced.

The farmers in our case reached consensus. They had to act against the continued degradation of their forest and against illegal commercial logging. They invited the Muslim farmers to join them in action of solidarity. They came together to plan. They planned to conduct a concerted and systematic campaign of letter writing to their congressman, the governor and several mayors, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. They planned to make use of the radio stations and asked the priests of several parishes to give homilies on the problem. They planned to dialogue with the logging company and government authorities.

The decision and the plan seemed simple enough. But there were in fact many challenges. Illegal logging had been going on for years. Behind it is the structure of injustice in Philippine society. The criminal systematic destruction of forests is perpetrated by the rich and powerful, dominant and entrenched, motivated by short-term gains fueled by global needs and able to make laws and courts of justice pliable to their interests or to manipulate others through graft and corruption.

In such a situation the need for solidarity among the poor who are without power is absolutely necessary. Correspondingly, the Church has to shed off its image of being allied with the rich and powerful. It has to be a prophet on the side of the poor. It has to be "the rock" on which the poor can stand firmly and courageously. In the southern Philippines, one priest has been killed because of his persistent and prophetic voice against illegal logging. The Church has to move beyond the level of abstract teaching about justice and option for the poor. By itself this is already a formidable challenge, involving *metanoia*.

5. The Challenge of Action

With the failure of the dialogue and letter writing campaign, the Christian and Muslim farmers moved into a second phase of action.

Assisted by the parish priest and the parish organizations, the farmers pitched tents along the logging road and prepared for a long haul. They blocked the logging road and stopped all logging trucks from passing through. They faced the heavily armed security guards of the logging company. Soldiers who were directed by the government to maintain peace and order seemed to favor the loggers. The farmers were threatened with bodily harm as well as court cases. They stood their ground. Day and night, shift after shift of farmers' families, including their children, manned the barricades.

Soon other parish communities and members of civil society went to the support of the Muslim and Christian farmers, providing them with food and other necessities. The local Bishop wrote a pastoral letter on the issue and asked other bishops to demonstrate their solidarity.

Finally the small group of farmers and their cause landed in the national newspapers, radio, and television. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources had no other course but to declare a moratorium on the logging operation and announce an investigation of the company's operations.

Rightly skeptical of so called "investigations," the farmers and their support groups continued to press the government for the actual start of a genuine investigation. As of today, the farmers and their barricades remain on that remote logging road in a small rural parish. Once just a dot on the geographical map, the parish and its people were suddenly catapulted into the national spotlight because of their faith commitment to the environment.

We see here several challenges to pastoral action. There is a need for consistency and persistence, the need to sustain the community's commitment through difficult and critical periods, the need for the support of other communities, and the continuing presence of the church.

But we see tremendous changes in the farmers' community through the use of this particular pastoral approach. The community passed from an attitude of passivity/fatalism to a healthy critical attitude toward reality; from a critical attitude to pastoral action; from helplessness to human solidarity (also with people of another faith). In the process the farmers reached a greater level of social consciousness and faith maturity that at first they thought impossible to reach.

It is a pastoral approach to the environment that needs to be replicated, surely with necessary adaptations, by every faith community. And doubtless there are many other examples of such a pastoral approach. One little candle of faith commitment and courage in the hand of every community can light the world. Do you think this can be done in your own small communities?

Pastoral Message on the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children

JAIME CARD. SIN. DD

Circular No. 2000-31

We Filipinos love children. They are signs of God's blessing. In the words of the Holy Father, "a child represents the joy not only of its parents but also the joy of the Church and the whole of society." They represent the springtime of life and hope. They are the builders of our nation's future.

Sadly though, countless Filipino children are suffering. With business advancement and the rise in tourism, they are being commercially sexually exploited and abused by adults, the very same people who are supposed to safeguard and promote their well-being and development. There are other contributing factors to this unfortunate phenomenon: massive poverty, inequitable socio-economic structures, broken or violent families, lack of education, growing consumerism, urban-rural migration, and a dilating sensual culture. All these factorsacerbate the vulnerability of our girls and boys.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is a direct violation of children's rights. The dignity and worth they receive from God are threatened to the point of destruction. The commercial sexual exploitation of children constitutes a form of coercion and violence

against children, and even amounts to forced a labor and a contemporary form of slavery.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children leads to a number of severe consequences. Children are treated as sexual and commercial objects. Their health is endangered since they become more susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases. They eventually suffer from low self-esteem that leads to self-destruction, self-mutilation or suicidal tendencies. There is an inability for these children to enter the mainstream of society since ostracism and discrimination torment them. Moreover, those who exploit and patronize also violate their inherent worth, dignity and vocation as a human person. They also debase themselves. In the end, all are losers.

Thus, I call on all government agencies and non-governmental organizations working for the welfare of children to join hands with the Church in this crusade against the commercial sexual exploitation of children. Let us protect our children. Let us enact and enforce pro-children laws. Let us rescue those who have fallen to the insidious traps of greedy people. In whatever way possible, let us support institutions that shelter and rehabilitate these poor little ones. All of us are called to participate in this precious undertaking.

Jesus Himself cherishes and values the worth of children. His love for them is all-embracing and indiscriminate, that is why in Holy Scriptures He says, *"Let the children come to me, do not hinder them... for to such as these belong the kingdom of God."* (Mk 10:14). But to those who plan to harm and defile them, our Lord warns: *"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea."* (Mt 18:6)

As I pray for the welfare of our children, I implore our dear Santo Nino, the Christ Child to raise His powerful and loving hand on these helpless and innocent ones. May His benediction banish

evil forces and empower our children to respond to the noble vocation they are called to. During this Jubilee Year, may our children be truly set free from this new form of slavery.

Lastly, I entrust all children to the protection of Mary, the Mother of every Filipino child. May she always place them under her maternal care. May she enlighten and purify the minds of those who are supposed to enrich the lives of the little ones, so that the springtime of our life and hope may reach its fulfillment and completion.

On the Phenomenon of Pregnant Brides

JAIME CARD. SIN, DD

Circular No. 2000-46
Villa San Miguel
April 4, 2000

1. SITUATIONER.

We observe in the recent years an emerging phenomenon of pregnant brides. While there may not be accurate statistical data due to the confidentiality of the canonical prenuptial interviews and the seal of confession, it can be safely assumed that the number of pregnant brides is increasing and that the blushing girl a la "Maria Clara" who puts a premium on virginity till the wedding day belongs to a diminishing tribe, considered by some as a vestige of old-fashioned conservative mores.

Brides in this condition enter marriage for a number of reasons, either as reluctant persons caught in an unwished-for circumstances or by choice.

A scenario unfolds wherein young people barely out of their teens, who having figured in sexual misadventures, are prevailed

upon to get married. Abetted by Filipino socio-cultural conventions which frown upon unwed motherhood, parents dread the prospect of adversely hearing what other "decent" people would say about the situation. Regular church goers and members of parish organizations would consider it a living reproach to their religiousity and leadership if they harbor within their home a daughter or relative who would become a parent outside of wedlock. Compounding the matter is the expectation of our Filipino culture that a male who made a woman pregnant will be man enough to stand by his responsibility and marry her. Because of this perceived social stigma, schooling is aborted, dreams for a successful career prematurely shattered and plans to seek greener pastures abroad frustrated. These pressured marriages have eventually spawned broken conjugal unions which ended up in separations and in irregular relationships with new partners while some reached the matrimonial tribunals.

On the other side of the spectrum are women who march down the aisle in this condition by choice.

Not unheard of are some women, who being traumatized by broken marriages in the family or among friends, are afraid to enter into a permanent commitment with partners whom they are not very, very sure of. They opt initially for a live-in arrangement, sort of a trial marriage, until such time that they are more or less satisfied with the relationship. When they finally tie the knot in a marriage ceremony, they either are already pregnant or are already mothers.

Others entertain the mistaken belief that an agreement and arrangement of a wedding date already give them the liberties to engage in premarital sex. The assurance that they will be future husband and wife is taken as a reason in the relaxation of some inhibitions in the ordinary male-female relationship.

Not rarely do we encounter in the ministry, couples who after a civil ceremony already live together as husband and wife. When

they subsequently have the marriage ratified in church, the woman may already be conceiving.

Still others are dillydallying in their decision to get a church wedding under the belief that a civil marriage already produces marital ties, even stronger than those which the church wedlock creates. Little do they consider the fact that while there are civil marriages which are subsequently ratified in the church, rarely, if at all, have we heard of church weddings being ratified in civil ceremonies. This goes to show that for catholic couples there is still something wanting in the civil marriage. Civil ceremonies produce only civil effects while the canonical marriage establishes both civil and juridical bonds.

2. SOME DOCTRINAL NOTES ON SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE.

Man is called to love and to self-giving in the unity of body and spirit. Every form of love will always bear this masculine and feminine character. Femininity and masculinity are complementary gifts, through which human sexuality is an integrating part of the concrete capacity for love which God has inscribed in man and woman.

Human sexuality is thus a good part of that created gift which God saw as being "very good", when he created the human person in his image and likeness, and "Male and female he created them."¹ Genesis seemingly situates sexual union within the context of marriage when it places the phrase "and they become one flesh" subsequent to the words: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife."²

"Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality, one of its modes of being, of manifestation, of communicating with others,

¹ Genesis 1:25.

² Genesis 2:24.

of feeling, of expressing and of living human love."³ This capacity for love as self-giving is thus incarnate in the *nuptial* meaning of the body, which bears the imprint of the person's masculinity and femininity. "The human body, with its sex and its masculinity and femininity, seen in the very mystery of creation, is not only a source of fruitfulness and procreation, as in the whole natural order, but includes right from the beginning the *nuptial attribute*..."⁴.

To this *married love, and to this love alone*, belongs sexual giving, realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and woman commit themselves totally to one another until death...⁵.

The *only "place"* in which this self-giving in its whole truth is made possible is *marriage*, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God himself.⁶

It is very clear therefore in the Church's teaching that sexual union is legitimate only in the context of marriage.⁷ That is why it is right that the total giving of self in sexual intercourse is reserved for this state of marriage as permanent covenant bond of personal love. For only within such a communion does sexual union take on its full meaning and become truly human and creative.⁸

³ Congregation for Catholic Education, *Educational Guidance in Human Love*, Nov. 1, 1983, 4: L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, Dec. 5, 1983, p. 5.

⁴ John Paul II, Gen. Audience, Jan. 16, 1980, 1; L'Osservatore Romano, English Edition, Jan. 21, 1983, p. 1.

⁵ cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, [hereinafter referred to as FC], Nov. 22, 1981, 11; AAS 74 [1982], p. 105.

⁶ *Gaudium et Spes*, 48.

⁷ Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics, [Dec. 29, 1975], no. 7; Faithful to Each Other Forever, p. 33.

⁸ Catholic Faith Catechism, Part II, 1990:88.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church recalls: "*In marriage* the physical intimacy of the spouses becomes a sign and pledge of spiritual communion.⁹ For only within such a communion does sexual union take on its full meaning and become truly human and creative.¹⁰

St. John in the Apocalypse cautioned the bishops of his day from compromising the faith by tolerating the errors espoused by agnostics who considered themselves free to fornicate. John and Paul took the same position that anyone who relapses into pagan practices as fornication would find himself estranged from Christ, since the abstinence from sexual activity outside of marriage is one of the marks of a true christian.

The Thirteenth Ecumenical Council at Lyon under Innocent IV in 1245 decreed: "But concerning fornication, which an unmarried person commits with another unmarried person, there is no doubt that it is a mortal sin, since St. Paul asserts that fornicator as well as adulterer are excluded from the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:9)."¹¹ Pius XI reiterated in his encyclical *Casti Connubii* on Christian Marriage in 1930: "Every use of the faculty given by God for the procreation of new life is the right and privilege of the married state alone, by the law of God and of nature, and must be confined absolutely within the sacred limits of that state." The recent *Declaration on Sexual Ethics* by the Sacred Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith once more reconfirms the position of the Church that "sexual union is only legitimate if a definite community of life has been established between the man and the woman."

3. NEGATIVE INFLUENCES.

As with the whole of the person's life, love is exposed to the frailty brought about by original sin, frailty experienced today in

⁹ cf. CCC, 2360.

¹⁰ CBCP, 1997 Catechism for Filipino Catholics, 1086.

¹¹ Cor. 6:9.

many socio-cultural contexts marked by strong negative influences, at times deviant and traumatic.¹² In greater part of society, both in developed and developing countries the decline of traditional models has left children deprived of consistent and positive guidance.¹³

Today the task of giving moral and adequate formation to the children outside the home encounters a particular difficulty with regard to the dissemination of pornography, through the means of social communication, instigated by commercial motives and breaking down adolescent sensitivity.¹⁴ Unfortunately, in some countries there are many shows and publications abounding in all sorts of sex and violence with a kind of bombardment of messages that undermine moral principles and make it impossible to achieve a serious climate in which values worthy of human person may be transmitted.¹⁵

The CBCP warns that with pornography, the dignity of the human person is debased. Tabloids attract attention not only because of their sensational headlines, but also on the seductive poses of girls on their front pages. Movie ads and films project nudity and sexually explicit scenes to command higher commercial patronage.¹⁶ With the advances made in technology such as the Internet and the increase of the number of cable TV companies, the problems become more aggravated.¹⁷

¹² Pontifical Council for the Family, *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, (hereinafter referred to as HS) Dec. 8, 1995, no. 3.

¹³ Ibid., no. 1.

¹⁴ HS.45.

¹⁵ John Paul II, Address to the participants in meeting organised by the Pontifical Council for the Family and Pontifical Council for Social Communications on "The Right of the Family and Means of Social Communication", June 4, 1993, 3 and 4: L'Osservatore Romano, English edition, July 14, 1993, p. 10.

¹⁶ CBCP, Pastoral Letter on Pornography, in Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas, Nov-Dec 1999, pp. 704-708.

¹⁷ Ibid.

4. PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS.

Taking up the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, the Catechism of the Catholic Church says: "It is imperative to give suitable timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families, about the dignity of married love, its role and its exercise."¹⁸ The family is therefore the principal school of the social virtues which are necessary to every society".¹⁹ Parents are the first and most important educators of their children; they are educators because they are parents.²⁰ In what might be regarded as the domestic church, the parents by word and example, are the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children.²¹

It is important to give suitable and timely instruction to young people, above all in the heart of their own families so that they will be able to engage in honourable courtship and enter upon marriage on their own. Unfortunately, even in Christian societies today parents have reason to be concerned about the stability of their children's future marriage. Nevertheless, in spite of the family, they should respond with optimism committing themselves to give their children a deep christian formation to make them able to overcome various difficulties.

Among the means at hand to curb the plague of premarital liberties is the formation of the right conscience. It requires the enlightenment about "God's project of love for every single person, the positive and liberating value of the moral law, and the awareness both of the weakness caused by sin and the means of grace which strengthen us on our path towards the good and towards salvation."²²

¹⁸ CCC, 1632; also cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 41.

¹⁹ Letter to Families, *Gratissimam sane*, 16.

²⁰ *Lumen Gentium*, 11.

²¹ cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 49; HS 94.

²² HS, 95; cf. also *Gaudium et Spes*, 16, and CCC 1777-1778.

When the family is providing real educational support and encouraging the exercise of all the virtues, education for chastity is made easy and lacks inner conflicts, even if at the certain times young people can experience particularly delicate situations.

Educating children for chastity strives to achieve three objectives: (a) to maintain in the family a positive atmosphere of love, virtue and respect for the gifts of God²³, (b) to help children to understand the value of sexuality and chastity in stages, sustaining their growth through enlightening word, example and prayer, and (c) to help them understand and discover their own vocation to marriage.²⁴

Sexuality is such an important good that it must be protected by following the order of reason enlightened by faith: "The greater a good, the more the order of reason must be observed in it."²⁵ From this it follows that in order to educate in chastity, "self-control is necessary, which presupposes such virtues as modesty, temperance, respect for self and for others, openness to one's neighbor."²⁶

Certainly "the changes that have taken place within almost all modern societies demand that not only the family but also society and the Church should be involved in the effort of properly preparing young people for their future responsibilities."²⁷

For this reason the Church is firmly opposed to an often widespread form of imparting sex information dissociated from moral principles.²⁸ The difference and complementarity of man and

²³ cf. *Evangelium Vitae*; 97.

²⁴ HS, 22.

²⁵ cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, p. 153, a. 3.

²⁶ Educational Guidance in Human Love, 35; Pilar Corazon Ilada-Andres, "Guidelines in Preventing the Practice of Premarital Sex", Phil. Values Digest, cited by Ismael Ireneo Maningas, *Filipino Christian Morality*, 1998, pp.150-151.

²⁷ cf. FC, 66.

²⁸ FC 37; HS, 64.

woman are not only in the physical and biological being, but they reach down to the depth of the person's moral and spiritual being.²⁹

5. JURIDICAL IMPLICATIONS.

A marriage is brought into being by consent which no human power, even that of parents, family, state or church, can supply.³⁰ Hence matrimonial consent is to be elicited as an act which a contracting party can truly say as his/her own.

A pregnant girl, fearful of the censure of society which disapproves of single motherhood and other sexual misdeeds, scared of what other people would say about her situation, and concerned about the pain and shame she would inflict on her family, would be deprived of internal freedom to decide for herself whether to enter or not into marriage in that particular point of time with that particular partner. The validity of the conjugal covenant entered thereto will be questionable on the ground of grave lack of marital discretion.

On the other hand, though parents have the right to advise their daughter on serious matters, like matrimony, they should not impose their parental authority on her to enter into marriage which she may not want yet or is still not prepared to contract. In the Filipino culture gross disobedience to parents could create guilt feelings and fear of "Karma" in the children. The threat of being disowned is perceived to be tantamount to casting a curse on the offspring. Consent to marriage thereby given may be impaired due to reverential fear.

Furthermore, parents and youth must be educated regarding the canonical form of marriage, that for catholics ordinarily the wedding can be juridically considered valid only if solemnized in the Catholic Church according to the prescribed rites, notwithstand-

²⁹ CCC, 2333.

³⁰ cfr. 1983 010, can. 1057, #1.

ing a previous civil marriage. Only then may the catholic couple relate to each other as husband and wife.

While not condoning the premarital misadventure of their daughter, parents should create an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding in the home to let her feel that no matter what, she is still their daughter. It is precisely in this time of great confusion and crisis that she desperately needs solace and strength from her loved ones. With the proper understanding of marriage, the parents may assure their daughter that she may not wed the man if she does not want to. What has been done can no longer be undone.

Priests in the parish should personally interview the contractants in the prenuptial investigation and, with prudence and pastoral concern, determine the freedom of the parties to enter into marriage. Pastors, while recognizing the fundamental right of the person to get married, should dissuade a girl or a boy from marrying if the sole reason is the incidence of premarital pregnancy. Priests might unwittingly be assisting at an invalid wedding or a potentially disastrous marriage.

One wrong cannot be corrected by doing another wrong. Rushing to marriage to solve a present socially loaded problem may sow the seeds of future broken relationship, separation, divided loyalties of children, and, for some, painful nullity litigations in matrimonial courts.

Let us invoke the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit, to provide inspiration of moral uprightness to our catholic girls as they prepare themselves to walk down the aisle to the altar of matrimony.

The Priestly Function of Mary's Mission

JOHN SAMAHA, SM

Situating the Question

Every priest is a mediator between God and humans,¹ but our principal and proper mediator is Christ. Catholic theology indicates that Mary participates in a secondary manner in the mediation of Christ. Consequently it is fitting that she should also participate in his priesthood. In what function does this sacerdotal quality of her mission consist? For this is a function of the Mother of the Messiah and not a privilege, an integral part of her mission.

Very little of substance has been written on this subject, yet there is ample basis for this truth. The two best treatments that I found in my research are these intriguing sources: *Marie, l'Eglise et le Sacerdoce* by Rene Laurentin,² and *Marie et Notre Sacerdoce* by Emile Neubert, S.M.³

¹ Heb 5:1; 8:6; 9:5; 12:24.

² Rend Laurentin, *Marie, l'Eglise et le Sacerdoce*, Paris: Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1952.

³ Emile Neubert, S.M., *Marie et Notre Sacerdoce*, Paris: Editions Spes, 1954. See also *Marie dans le Dogme*, Paris: Editions Spes, 1953, by the same author.

The focus of this presentation is *Maria, Mater et socia Christi sacerdotis*.

A balanced approach is essential. The ecclesiastical representation of the mystery of Mary should not overshadow the Christotypical. One aspect should not diminish the other. This is not an either-or situation, but one of both-and. It is a matter of particular emphasis on the subject under consideration.

The Evidence of Tradition

This question has seldom been studied in a theologically scientific manner. It is specifically the subject of Laurentin's masterful work previously mentioned, the result of his doctoral thesis.

In the early ages of Christianity scarcely anyone searched for a quality specifically sacerdotal in the functions of the Mother of Jesus. "The use of a sacerdotal vocabulary in reference to Mary arrives slowly, and, as it were, by exception...The theological themes answering to this use are little developed; the idea of an oblation by Mary, which should suggest her sacerdotal role in the clearest manner possible, had not been conceived."⁴ Preaching and the hymns of the seventh to ninth centuries witness to "a tendency to confer sacerdotal titles on Mary," but do not indicate "the existence of the idea of a Marian priesthood."⁵

The idea of Mary's oblation first appeared in the subsequent period, which lasted until 1600.⁶ St. Bernard, in the twelfth century, had already clearly expressed this idea.⁷ In the next century writings attributed to St. Albert the Great considered this oblation sacerdotal. Later it was determined that a still unidentified Pseudo-Albert was

⁴ Laurentin, p. 94.

⁵ *ibid*, p. 95

⁶ *ibid*, p. 132 ff.

⁷ *ibid*, p. 140.

responsible for these ideas. Employing the principle that Mary possesses all the graces and prerogatives of other rational creatures to a superior degree, Pseudo-Albert proposed to show that she had received with a unique fullness all that belongs to the various offices in the Church's hierarchy.⁸ His successors take the view, and noted that in this position the comparison is made between Mary's sacerdotal role and that of ordained priests.

In the seventeenth century, Salazar and other Spanish theologians compare her role with that of Christ and identify it with her redemptive mission.⁹

In the same century, another line of thought associated with Berulle and the French School of Spirituality appeared, and continued throughout the eighteenth century. While its inspiration originates in the Spanish school, this new line of thought overshadows Salazar's interpretation due principally to Olier and the seminary of Saint Sulpice. In the French school, Mary was invoked and contemplated as the model of the priest, and honored as "*Virgo sacerdos*, the Virgin Priest."¹⁰

In the nineteenth century the Marian writings of the early decades are vacuous and sentimental. By the middle of the century a rebirth is detected. Theologians begin to restore to Mariology its theological content, and to connect again with the movements of the seventeenth century. Once again mediation, coredemption, and

⁸ *ibid*, p. 172; In 1954 the *Mariale super Missus Est*, originally thought to be the work of St. Albert the Great, was correctly identified as the work of a Pseudo-Albert. Among the valuable and valid insights in this work, the most important is that of Mary as *socia*, Associate of Christ. This idea is elaborated as never before. Pseudo-Albert's insights regarding Mary's part in the Redemption continued and spread: "...helper and associate, partner in the kingdom who was partner in the sufferings for the human race...." Cf. Michael O'Carroll, C.S.Sp *Theotokos*, Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1983, pp. 298-99.

⁹ *ibid*, p. 232 ff.

¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 341 ff.

the sacerdotal aspect of Mary's mission gain ascendancy in their studies.¹¹

Around 1870 the idea of living as a victim began to gain popularity among a number of generous souls, especially women religious, who proposed to assist the priests through their prayers and sacrifices. They thought naturally of Mary praying and offering herself for and with her Son, and they loved to consider her as the sacerdotal virgin or the Virgin Priest. This devotion aroused great enthusiasm, and was at times expressed in formulas scarcely theological.¹²

In 1873 Blessed Pius IX approved a book written by Msgr. van den Berghe entitled *Mary and the Priesthood*. In it the author employs the term "Virgin Priest." The pope justified its use by the fact of Mary's role in the sacrifice of Jesus as *divini sacrificii socio*. In 1906 Saint Pius X granted an indulgence for a prayer containing the invocation, "Mary, Virgin Priest, pray for us." Pius X explained this designation by stating with Saint Antoninus of Florence that, although Mary had never received the sacrament of Holy Orders, she nevertheless possesses as much dignity and grace as are found in the priesthood.

But during the reign of Pius X, the Holy Office issued a decree stating that "the representation of Mary clothed in sacerdotal vestments was disapproved." In reality, the representation in question was that of an *orante*, which some persons mistook for Mary vested as a priest. In 1926-1927 the Holy Office again opposed the propagation of devotion to the "Virgin Priest." Even though only the picture and the spread of this devotion have been forbidden, Rome is evidently unfavorable to the title of "Virgin Priest," since it might lead poorly instructed Catholics to believe that Mary had received the sacrament of Holy Orders. Yet these

" *ibid*, p. 393.

¹² *ibid*, pp. 402-508.

decrees of the Holy Office in no way affect the pronouncements of Popes Blessed Pius DC and Saint Pius X that Mary was "an associate of Divine Sacrifice," and that she was enriched with "as much dignity and grace as are found in the priesthood."¹³

These interventions by Rome are rather negative because, from the viewpoint of the sacerdotal quality of Mary's functions, they determine what the Blessed Virgin is not; namely, the equivalent of an ordained priest. On the positive side, the exact notion of what the sacerdotal quality of her activity is continues to be the topic at theological discussions. Progress can be noted in a clear understanding of this question.

The search for what is properly sacerdotal in Mary's mission must be directed to an immediate examination of two of Mary's prerogatives: that she is the Mother of Christ, our High Priest, and that she is the Associate of Christ, in his sacrifice.

Mary the Mother of Christ, Our High Priest

The Son of God became incarnate to be the mediator between God and people, to be our High Priest. Every priest is taken from among men.¹⁴ Christ is not a priest in virtue of his divine Sonship, for how could he be mediator between himself and people? Christ is a priest in virtue of his human nature, which is hypostatically united to his divinity.

Christ received his human nature from Mary, who, in giving it to him, contributed to the establishment of the Son of God as our High Priest. Christ's priestly vocation was received from his Father; his sacerdotal anointing is the grace of the hypostatic union, the gift of his Father, or more exactly of the Holy Trinity. What enables the Son of God to be our High Priest, namely his humanity, came to him through Mary.

¹³ *ibid*, pp. 509-538.

¹⁴ Heb 5:1.

Mary furnishes the material cause. But she does not supply it blindly. By *her fiat* she accepts that the Messiah, whose Mother she is to become, is to be the High Priest of a new priesthood. "Like Melchizedek you are a priest forever."¹⁵ Her willingness to cooperate in God's plan indicates that the priesthood of Christ depended on her reply, and therefore she is a fully conscious, free, and responsible cause of that priesthood. Mary becomes the Mother of God, of our Creator, of our Lawgiver, of our Rewarder. Had she refused the invitation of Gabriel, the Son of God would still be our God, Creator, Lawgiver, and Rewarder, but not our Savior and our Priest.

Mary, the Associate of Christ, Our High Priest

Christian tradition informs us that Mary participated in the prerogatives and in the functions of Christ according to the measure and insofar as her condition as creature and woman permitted her to share in these privileges of an incarnate God.¹⁶ She is, according to the expressive phrase of Pseudo-Albert, the *soda Christi*, who has been given to him as a helper like to himself, *adjutorium simile sibi*. This is her role in the work of the Redemption, in the distribution of grace, in the kingship of Christ. Such also is her role in regard to Christ's priesthood. Therefore, the study of this office of the Virgin Mother must be made in reference to the priesthood of Christ rather than to the ministry of ordained priests.

The general elements that make a person a priest, as mentioned specifically in the Letter to the Hebrews, are these:

- the priest is taken from among men;
- by a special vocation;
- with a consecration or anointing;
- to be a mediator;

¹⁵ Ps 110:4.

¹⁶ Neubert, *Marie dans le Dogme*, "Introduction."

- between God, who is to be appeased,
- and human beings, who are to be reconciled to him;
- by the offering of a sacrifice.

Many Christians, especially those consecrated to God, possess several of these elements. Yet they are not priests because they are unable to offer the Sacrifice of the New Law. The power to offer this Sacrifice constitutes the distinguishing trait of the Christian priest.

A sacrifice is any oblation made to God in recognition of his sovereignty. Understood in this sense, anyone can offer sacrifices to God. "Through him let us continually offer God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have; God is pleased with sacrifices of that kind."¹⁷

Moreover, a sacrifice may consist of something entirely internal: "A burnt offering you would not accept. My sacrifice is a broken spirit; God does not spurn a broken, humbled heart."¹⁸ A sacrifice may also be something both external and internal, in which the external element signifies internal disposition of the one making the sacrifice.¹⁹ In sacrifices offered to God in the name of the people by a man designated to represent them as their mediator, as a priest, these two elements are always present. Such a sacrifice is more in harmony with human nature and is necessary if the people are to participate in the sacrifice. If the interior element is absent, God will reject the material offering as he did so many times when speaking to the Jews through the prophets.

The Christian dispensation is no longer based on the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law. Now God recognizes only the Sacrifice of

¹⁷ Heb 13:15-16.

¹⁸ Ps 51:18-19.

¹⁹ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 85, a. 1.

Christ. "For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in.' Then I said 'As it is written of me in the scroll, behold I come to do your will, O God.'"²⁰

Now apply these general notions to the priesthood of Christ and to the actions of Mary insofar as she cooperates in his Sacrifice.

Christ is a priest because he is the Man-God, our necessary Mediator. He has been called to this office by the Most Holy Trinity, and consecrated in it by the grace of the hypostatic union to appease God's wrath toward human beings, and to bring them pardon and the grace of adoption. Christ accomplished this by his Sacrifice on the cross. He did not immolate himself by his own hands, but he voluntarily abandoned himself to the hands of his executioners, who, without realizing it, were the instruments of his priestly oblation. It is this immolation (material element) lovingly willed (spiritual element) which comprises his sacerdotal act. *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit.*

The Blessed Virgin Mary was also taken from among the human race. She was destined from all eternity to be associated with Christ in the work of our Redemption. She was consecrated to this work by the grace of her Divine Maternity, and made Mediatrix of all grace at the side of the Mediator of Justice. Finally, she contributed with him and through him to the appeasement of God and the securing of grace for us by her presence at the foot of the cross (material element), and by the abandonment of her maternal rights over the body of Jesus and by the union of her will and her sufferings with the will and sufferings of her Son in his sacrifice (spiritual element). Note well that in abandoning her maternal rights over the body of Jesus was to immolate him, just

²⁰ Heb 10:5-10.

as for Jesus to abandon his body to his executioners was to immolate himself. *Oblatus est quia ipse voluit*. "She with her dying Son endured suffering and almost death itself; she renounced her maternal rights over her Son, and to placate Divine Justice to the degree dependent on her, she immolated her Son so that it can be truthfully said of her that, with her Son she redeemed all mankind."²¹

Mary is the perfect Associate of Christ in the offering of this redemptive sacrifice, both in the material element (her presence at the Sacrifice of Calvary) and in the spiritual element (the abandonment of her maternal rights over the life of her Son and the complete union of her will and sufferings with those of Jesus).

Consequently, her cooperation can certainly be termed sacerdotal.

How can this be said of Mary's cooperation since she did not receive the priestly character? This objection would be serious if Mary's role were compared to that of the ordained priest. However, in considering this question Mary is compared to Jesus, not to the ordained priest. Jesus did not receive the sacerdotal character of the ordained priest. By the grace of the hypostatic union he received the sacerdotal anointing which made him the Priest of the New Dispensation: *Tu es sacerdos in aeternum*. Now at this same instant the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary making her the Mother of the Son of God as well as his Associate in all his functions, including his Priesthood. As Christ is a priest forever by his hypostatic union which is eternal, so Mary by her Divine Maternity, which will always be hers, is forever associated with Christ the High Priest.

On the one hand this intimate relation between Mary's association with Christ our Redeemer, and on the other with Christ our High Priest, enables us to determine with precision the

²¹ AAS, vol. X, 1918, p. 182.

sacerdotal nature of Mary's part in the sacrifice of Calvary, especially since her role as Coredemptrix is the subject of many recent studies.

We know that Mary's role as Coredemptrix is not identical with that of the Redeemer; it is merely analogous to it. Moreover while her role is necessary, it is so not in itself but only as the loving decree of God. Hers is a secondary role performed not in her own right, but in dependence on the role of Jesus. It is not separate, but is united both in its execution and in its effects with that of the Son. Accordingly the sacerdotal office of Mary, the cause of her action in the Redemption, is necessary only in view of the will of God, and is subordinate to and dependent on that of Jesus, to which it is united in its accomplishment and its results. Together Jesus and Mary offered the Sacrifice which redeemed us, Christ as second Adam and Mary as *adjutorium simile sibi*.

Recalling the principle stated at the beginning of this section dealing with Mary as Associate of our High Priest, the difference between the prerogatives of Christ and those of Mary flows not only from her being a creature but also from her being a woman.

It was Mary's Maternity which conferred this sacerdotal quality on her mission. Her Maternity in relation to Christ made her an Associate in all his functions and permitted her to offer a victim which belonged to her. Her Maternity in relation to us was possible only because she obtained for us the supernatural life through the Sacrifice of her Son. Mary's sacerdotal role is marked with a feminine and maternal nuance, as are all her other functions.

Though all the constitutive elements of Christ's priesthood are found in Mary, nonetheless it is not proper to say that she is a priest, for the elements are not in her in an absolute and independent way. She would have been a priest if she had been the only one to offer herself with him and by a title equal to his. But it was Christ who primarily offered himself. She only united herself to

his oblation. Christ's merit was infinite. Mary's was necessarily limited, however great it might have been. According to great Marian apostles like Saint Louis de Montfort and Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, all that Mary is, she is in reference to Jesus.²² This is so in her priestly function and in her role as Coredemptrix. She depends fully on Christ, and receives all her efficacy from him. She is not a priest, but is fully priestly; just as she is not a redeemer but is fully Coredemptrix. She is not God, but is fully partaker of the divine life.

Naming Mary's Sacerdotal Role

If the name "priest" cannot be fittingly applied to Mary, by what name should she be called?

Mary occupies a unique place between Christ and the rest of the human race. Philosophers tell us whatever is individual is inexpressible. This presents the difficulty of expressing the various functions of Mary in precise words. History records instances when only after long discussions and multiplied distinctions was agreement on certain proposed formulas attained. For the uninitiated the expression "Mother of God" would signify quite normally that Mary gave birth to the Holy Trinity; or the word "Coredemptrix" would indicate that she redeemed us by a title equal to Christ's. It is not surprising, then, that a formula sufficiently clear to everyone and capable of stating exactly Mary's role in Christ's priesthood has not been discovered.

Since Mary's priestly role cannot be explained either in the terms of the priesthood of Christ nor in terms of the ordained minister of the altar, some writers fall back on the "royal priesthood" mentioned by Saint Peter. In comparing the disciples of Christ with

²² Chaminade is insistent on Mary's maternal role, that she is Mother of the Church and the special Mother of priests. Cf. William Joseph Chaminade, *Marian Writings*, edited by Jean-Baptiste Armbruster, S.M., vol.1, nn. 230-234 (especially 231 and 233), Dayton, Ohio: Marianist Resources Commission, 1980.

unbelievers, Saint Peter tells them: "You are a chosen race a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own."²³ This royal priesthood enables all the faithful to offer God "spiritual sacrifice acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."²⁴ This concerns sacrifices in the broad sense of the term, and not with the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. In virtue of their union with Christ in the Mystical Body, all the faithful participate in his perfections and in his priesthood. They share in his priesthood inasmuch as they offer to God the Divine Victim, whom the words of consecration uttered by the priest, make present on the altar. They also offer themselves as victims in union with Christ. But they do not participate in it by immolating the Divine Victim, an act possible only to the ordained minister of Christ at the time of consecration. It is this royal priesthood exercised in the highest degree, these writers conclude, that must be attributed to Mary.

But Laurentin and Neubert ask how anyone can subscribe to such an abasement of the sacerdotal role of her who was called by God to be Christ's Associate in the Divine Sacrifice. Those writers reduce Mary's role to a common category and forget that she is absolutely unique in her functions. These functions are not identical with those of Christ; they are analogous to them. But neither are they identical with those of other persons Mary's are of a transcendent order.²⁵

What term, then, can express this unique function of Mary? The best and clearest is the phrase derived from the term *socia*

²³ 1 Pt 2:9.

²⁴ 1 Ft 2:5. Cf. Pius XIFs *Mediator Dei* for precise notions.

²⁵ AAS, May 5, 1916. Because Rome disapproved devotion to the Virgin Priest, some who were moved by an unwarranted concern for orthodoxy believed they were carrying out the wish of the Holy Father in applying to Mary only the priesthood common to all the faithful. It was not the first nor the last time that, in a spirit of blind submission, writers have overreached the intent of Rome and tried "to be more Catholic than the pope."

Christi, applied to her by Pseudo-Albert; that is, the Associate of Christ, our High Priest (*socia Christi sacerdotis*).

The word *socia* in itself is not clearer than the word *consors* or *particeps*, and could indicate an equality in the priesthood of Christ and of Mary. Some associates are able to occupy the same rank. However, since the time of Pseudo-Albert, the expression *socia Christi* has a clearly defined meaning in the history of theology. It designates a secondary action, analogous and united to that of Christ, the action of a "helper like himself." It is equivalent to the phrase employed by Blessed Pius IX, *divini sacrificii socia*.

The feminine form *socia* and the allusion to Eve, the first woman and the mother of the living, refer to a priestly role performed by a woman, by a mother. The sacerdotal aspect of Mary's mission consists in being *mater et socia Christi sacerdotis*.

Mary's Sacerdotal Role Superior to That of the Ordained Priest

Mary's superiority is manifested in many ways. Mary formed the substance of the Victim, the body of Christ; the priest gives him only an accidental form, a transitory form, the Eucharistic form.

Mary played an important part in the sacrifice of the cross, a part uniquely sorrowful and loving, and lasting thirty-three years. But in the Sacrifice of the Mass the priest is content to lend his hands and tongue to Jesus, the true priest.

Pius X taught that Mary "associated by Christ in the work of salvation, merits for us *de congruo* what Christ merited for us *de condigno*." The priest merits nothing for us in re-enacting the mystery of the Redemption. He simply applies a part of the grace already merited by Jesus and by Mary.

In each Mass the priest renews the offering of the Divine Victim. Christ offered himself directly and but once on Calvary; but he renews the offering each day through the ministry of the

priest. Mary, like Jesus, offered the Divine Victim directly and only once on Calvary. But in heaven Mary renews it at each Mass, since each Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross. By God's will, Mary fully cooperated in the sacrifice of the cross. The Mass would be only a truncated sacrifice of the cross, and not the same, if Mary's mystical cooperation were absent.

Furthermore, in heaven at the side of the Lamb of God, Mary remains the Associate of his immolation throughout all eternity. The priest must renew the Eucharistic sacrifice each day, and that sacrifice will cease with the end of time.

When God calls a person to a particular office in the Church, he gives that person the necessary corresponding grace. God gives the priest the special grace he needs for his work. But to Mary he gives more graces than to all priests together.²⁶

Conclusion

Pseudo-Albert summarizes the question when he explains that Mary is set above all members of the hierarchy, even the most distinguished, not only by her Divine Maternity, but also by being at the side of Christ, our High Priest. Pseudo-Albert states: "All members of the Church are members in view of a ministry. But the Blessed Virgin was not chosen by God for a ministry, but to be an Associate and helper, *in consortium et adiutorium*, as Scripture says, 'Let us make a helper like unto him.' The Blessed

²⁶ Neubert invites our attention to other relations and similarities between Mary and the priest; e.g., in regard to vocation, to the offering of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to the care of souls, to their respective graces, to their dignity. On these and similar questions, cf. *Marie et Notre Sacerdoce*.

Virgin is not a substitute; she is a helpmate and an Associate. *Beata Virgo non est vicaria sed coadjutrix et socia.*"²¹

²⁷ *Mariale*, q. 42, t. 37, 81B. Until 1954 the *Mariale super Missus Est* was erroneously attributed to St. Albert the Great. The current evaluation of this work of some Pseudo-Albert diminishes its importance and authority, but its special value is assigning the role of *socia Christi* to Mary. Although St. Albert did not use that expression, he certainly considered Mary as type (*figura*) of the Church, and was probably the first to incorporate Marian theology in Christology. Cf O'Carroll, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

Cases & Inquiries

BENILDUS MARAMBA, OSB

ANTICIPATED MASS TO FULFILL SUNDAY OBLIGATION

Three weeks before the start of the novenario for our Annual Patronal Fiesta, I together with our formation Team visit the different barangays accessible to the parish church, bringing with us the image of our patron Saint., The "visita patronal" culminates with a mass in the evening. When it falls on Saturdays, the people usually request me to celebrate anticipated mass to fulfill their Sunday obligation. I consistently deny their request with explanation that the holding of the "visita" is for them to prepare spiritually for the coming fiesta and not to facilitate the celebration of anticipated mass. I usually use the Proper for the saint for the Eucharistic Liturgy.

Aside from the above explanation, I made a policy that anticipated and Sunday masses are to be celebrated only in the parish church as the center of the parish Community.

Am I canonically and pastorally right in my decision? I asked this question to some priests but they offered me different answers. I am more confused. Will you please enlighten me with your theologico-canonical answer as well as your pastoral insights.

Thank you.

A Parish Priest

The case above raises several questions. I would like to approach the questions from four different aspects: Historical, Canonical, Liturgical and Pastoral.

I. Historical

In 1967, the Philippine Bishops sent a petition to the Holy See requesting the faculty, "so that the faithful could comply with the obligation of hearing Mass on the afternoon of Saturday."

The response dated March 1, 1967 was affirmative: "The Sacred Congregation of the Council, taking into consideration what has been submitted, benignly grants the Bishops of the Philippines the requested faculty."¹

On May 25, 1967, The Sacred Congregation of Rites issued an Instruction, *Eucharisticum Mysterium*, on worship of the Eucharist, no. 28 of said document states:

"When an Indult of the Apostolic See permits fulfillment on the preceding Saturday evening of the obligation to participate in the Sunday Mass, pastors should carefully teach the faithful the meaning of this favor and should take steps to prevent its lessening in any way, the sense of what Sunday is. This concession is meant to enable the faithful in today's condition to celebrate more easily the day of the Lord's resurrection."

"All concessions and contrary customs notwithstanding, this Mass may be celebrated only on Saturday evening, at hours to be determined by the local ordinary."

"On the Saturday evening, the Mass is to be celebrated as assigned in the calendar for the Sunday and the homily and general intercessions are not to be omitted."

¹ *Boletín Eclesiástico* (1967), p. 657.

"All these points apply also to the celebration of Mass that, for the same reason, is anywhere allowed on the evening before a Holyday of obligation."²

On 14 February 1969 Paul VI issued a *Motu Proprio, Mysteriori Paschalis*, in which no. 3 states: "The liturgical day runs from midnight to midnight, but the observance of Sundays and solemnities begins with the evening of the preceding day."³

From the above documents, several points should be noted:

1. The privilege of complying with the Sunday and Holydays of obligations by participating in the Mass celebrated on the evening of the previous day is granted through an indult or concession from the Holy See.
2. The hours at which Mass could be celebrated would have to be determined by the local Ordinary.
3. The Mass to be celebrated would be that "assigned in the calendar for the Sunday and the homily and general intercessions are not to be omitted."
4. When the celebration of Mass is also allowed on the evening before a Holyday of obligation, all the points cited above also apply.
5. The liturgical day of Sundays and Solemnities begins with the evening of the preceding day.

II. Canonical

When the new code of Canon Law was promulgated in 1983, the privilege granted to some of complying with the Sunday

² SC Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticwn Mysteriori*, 25 May 1967 (AAS 59 [1967] 539-373; Note 3 (1967) 225-260; DOL no.179.

³ Paul VI, *Motu Proprio, Mysteriori Paschalis*, 14 February 1969 (AAS 61 [1969] 222-261; Note 5 (1969) 159-162; DOL no. 440.

and Holydays of obligation by participating in the Mass celebrated on the evening of the previous day became common Law in the universal church.

Can. 1247 states: On Sundays and other Holydays of obligation, the faithful are obliged to assist at mass.

Can. 1248 states: The obligation of assisting at Mass is satisfied wherever Mass is celebrated in a Catholic Rite either on a Holyday itself or on the evening of the previous day.

Fr. Excelso Garcia, OP translated the Latin text: *Vel vespere diei praecedentis* as meaning both afternoon and evening."⁴

Fr. Florencio Testera, OP on his commentary on Canon 1248 §1 states: "the duty is observed by attendance at Mass in the afternoon before or on the day itself, that is, any time past twelve noon from the previous day or on Sunday or the Holyday itself."⁵

Diocesan regulations vary concerning the time the Masses on the preceding day may be celebrated. In the archdiocese of Manila, 4:00 in the afternoon.

Fr. Testera further writes: "Participation in any Eucharistic celebration — including funeral and nuptial Masses — in a Catholic rite fulfills the obligation. It is the celebrant's responsibility to choose the place where he can legitimately celebrate."⁶ The burden of determining whether the Mass is legitimately celebrated or not, is not the responsibility of the faithful. The fact that the faithful participate in a Eucharistic celebration fulfills the obligation.⁷

⁴ *Boletin Ecclesiastico* (1997), p. 595.

⁵ Testera, Florencio, OP, *Canon Law Digest of the Philippine Catholic Church* (UST, Manila, 1995) 111-112.

⁶ Testera, F. *Ibid.*

⁷ Coriden, James et. al. *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary* (Paulist Press, New York, 1985), 854.

In the October 1984 issue of *Notitiae* (p. 603-605), the Congregation of Divine Worship published a *Reply* to a *Dubium* and states that the Mass to be celebrated on the previous evening is the Sunday Mass or the Mass of the Holydays of obligation: *praecedentia semper danda est celebrationi, quae est de praecepto servanda, independenter a gradu liturgico duarum celebrationum occurrentium.*

From what has been cited and said, two things are clear:

1. When the faithful participate in a Mass celebrated in a Catholic Rite on Sunday or a Holyday of obligation or on the evening of the day before, they satisfy their obligation of fulfilling the precept stated in canon 1247: "participation at the Mass on Sundays and other Holydays of obligation."
2. It is the responsibility of the priest presiding at the Eucharistic celebration to know when and where he can legitimately celebrate and what Mass he should celebrate.

III. Liturgical

Since the document *Mysterii Paschalis* of Paul VI already establishes that "the observance of Sundays and Solemnities begins with the evening of the preceding day," we cannot any more speak of an "anticipated Mass" or better: a Mass celebrated in anticipation of the Sunday Mass or the Mass of a Holyday of obligation. Since the liturgical observance of Sunday starts already on Saturday afternoon (as evident with the celebration of Evening Prayer I or First Vespers) of the following Sunday, the Mass celebrated is the Mass already of the day. So, again, the liturgical day is not being anticipated, it has already begun and the Mass of the evening before is already the Mass of the liturgical day that has already begun.

This is confirmed by the reply of the Congregation for Worship as quoted above.⁸

IV. Pastoral

It is evident from the history of the law that this concession, at first given as a privilege, was later extended universally to the whole Church in 1983 when the new Code of Canon Law was promulgated "to enable the faithful in today's condition to celebrate more easily the day of the Lord's resurrection."⁹

The proper mass on Saturday afternoon and evening is the Sunday Mass because the liturgical day of Sunday has begun. The Mass of the proper for the Saints is only a votive Mass since it is not the feast of the Saint. Certainly the Mass of Sunday has precedence over this votive Mass. Even if, for pastoral reasons, the bishop allows the celebration of the votive Mass of the Saints, when celebrated on Saturday evening, the faithful fulfill their obligation as stated in Can. 1248.1.

I would suggest a more flexible policy on where and when Saturday afternoon or evening Mass could be said and not have a restrictive policy of having it only at the parish church. There are no restrictions set by the law (Can. 1248.1) on the number of Masses (the time they can be celebrated being regulated by diocesan norms), or even the places where they can be celebrated, provided Mass is already allowed to be celebrated there. Canon 1248.1 should be interpreted in favor of the needs of the faithful as is evident from its history. In interpreting the law, let us always have in mind the last words of the code: "always observing canonical equity and keeping in mind the salvation of souls, which in the Church must always be the supreme law."

⁸ This reply is cited in Caparros, E. et. al., *Code of Canon Law Annotated* (Wilson and Lafleur Limitee, Montreal, 1993), 770.

⁹ *Eueharisticum Mysterium*, no. 28, as cited above.

ERRATUM

Document: CASES & INQUIRIES (PRESUMED DEATH OF SPOUSE)

Issue: July-August 2000, Vol. LXXVI, No. 819

Second paragraph of page 513 should read:

1. In the first two lines you seem to imply that the marriage of Merell to Philip was invalid because of lack of the necessary freedom on Merell's side (she "had to" marry Philip, her parents' choice). Well, even if such was the case, we should remember that "Marriage enjoys the favor of the law." Consequently, in doubt, the validity of a marriage must be upheld until the contrary is proven." (**Can. 1060**). Thus the marriage of Merell to Philip was in principle valid, since the opposite would have to be proven before the competent ecclesiastical tribunal. So if Merell thinks that her first marriage was null and void she may seek for an annulment (declaration of nullity) of her marriage before an ecclesiastical tribunal. For such procedure, the absence of her husband would not be an insurmountable obstacle, for such cases can be pursued even in the absence of the other spouse.

Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers For November-December 2000

EFREN RIVERA, OP

<Q JUBILEE YEAR Q> 45*) NOVEMBER 5, 2000

JUBILEE OF PVBUC SERVANTS AND PROFESSIONALS

31TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B

**Theme 1: THE GREATEST OF ALL COMMANDMENTS
(Dt. 6:2-6; Mk 12:28-34)**

**Theme 2: CHRIST THE EVERLASTING PRIEST
(Heb 7:23-28)**

*** adjusted**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Fr. Regino Cortes, O.P. in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 530, p. 635-636, modified (abridged).

The Greatest of All Commandments

There is a golden thread which runs across the Old and New Testaments and unites them so cogently. It is the commandment of love forcefully expressed in Deuteronomy and in the gospel of St. Mark (cf. also Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-28), the first and third readings respectively of today's Mass.

Dt 6:4 is the opening phrase in the Jewish prayer called the *Shema'* a Hebrew term translated into English as *Listen!* which is the first word in this prayer. As a whole the *Shema'* is made up of Dt 6:4-9; 11:13-21, and Nu 15:37-41. It is the customary morning and evening prayer of a pious Jew. It is not therefore surprising that the scribe agreed wholeheartedly with Jesus' answer.

In his answer Jesus combined two Old Testament texts. The love of God in Dt 6:4 and love of neighbor in Lev 19:18. But our Lord gave a new interpretation to the word "neighbor." It is not as the Jews understood the term, applying it only to their "fellow countryman." It embraces all people whether they are Jews of Gentiles, Greeks or Barbarians. This was the point of the story in the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37): a Samaritan helping a Jew who was not of his kindred but even an avowed enemy of his people.

Love of neighbor (as meant by Christ), we could truly say, is the hallmark of an authentic Christian.

Christ the Everlasting Priest

In contrast to the temporal character of the levitical priesthood transmitted from generation to generation and confined to only one tribe, the priesthood of Christ is unchanging since he himself remains forever. He is thus our eternal Savior, our eternal Intercessor.

The culmination and perfection of the priesthood was once and for all realized in Christ: "holy, innocent and uncontaminated, beyond the influence of sinners, and raised up above the heavens." He offered the one perfect sacrifice that is infinitely acceptable to the Father, different from the sacrifice of the Old Testament priesthood which had to be repeated year in and year out during the feast of the Atonement. The Mass is not a repetition of Christ's sacrifice which could not be repeated any more but an actualization of the same sacrifice.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointers for sharing. Until now many people have not understood that the greatest commandment, the one we must attend to all the time, is the Commandment of Love. Many people are obsessed with the Sixth and Ninth Commandments, that have to do with Adultery and Sexual Lust. In your spiritual journey, have you come to realize that Charity is greater than Chastity? If so, how did you arrive at this point? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. In the present Philippine context it is important to emphasize that Muslims including extremists like the Abu Sayyaf, are our "neighbor" according to the teaching of Christ. They are people whom we must love. This is easier said than done. To comply with this commandment, we need the Power of the Kingdom of God, a transforming power. We must ask God to so transform us that we can love even those who have taken advantage of us or even cruelly treated us.

2. It is a good Filipino Catholic practice to have Mass celebrated on one's birthday or on a significant anniversary. Through the Holy Mass, Christ becomes present to us both as our eternal Priest and our eternal Offering most pleasing to God.

<0 **JUBILEE YEAR** {}> 46)NOVEMBER 12, 2000

32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B

**Theme 1: The Tale of Two Widows (1 kgs 17:10-16;
Mk 12:41-44)**

Theme 2: Christ's Sacrifice is Final (Heb 9:24-28)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Fr. Regino Cortes, O.P. in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 530, p. 636-637, slightly edited (abridged).

Holy Scripture has generally shown a special predilection for widows. Because of their unstable economic situation bereft of someone to suport them they need protection from want and oppression. They are classed among the strangers and orphans according to that stereotyped expression: "the stranger, the orphan and the widow." Because of their poverty, widows were closer to God than the rich, more honest and virtuous than those who pride themselves as doctors of the law.

When drought came to Israel foretold by the prophet Elijah as a punishment for King Ahab's idolatry introducing the cult of Baal to Israel, due certainly to the influence of his Phoenician wife Jezebel, the prophet was told by Yahweh to go to Zarephath, a Sidonian town. There according to Yahweh's promise a widow would give him food until the end of the drought.

In the gospel another widow was the object of our Lord's praise. He did not praise those rich people who contributed a great deal to the temple treasury, but the poor widow who only placed two *lepta* (the smallest copper coin during the Roman times weighing about 1.5 grams — usually translated in English as "mite"). Our Lord saw not the amount but the faithfulness of the giver to her Covenant duty and her trust in God's promise to take care of people like her.

Christ's Sacrifice Is Final

Once again the epistle to the Hebrews makes a glaring contrast between the priesthood of Christ and the priesthood of the Old Testament. Christ by his sacrifice entered not a man-made sanctuary, referring to the Holy of Holies, which the Jewish high priest customarily entered once a year during the Day of Atonement, but heaven itself. Similarly, the Jewish High Priest only went to the presence of God symbolically; Jesus went to God's presence in the most real and intimate way possible.

B, REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointers for sharing. The widow's two copper coins given as an offering were a symbol of giving up everything for God, which in turn is a sign of fidelity to the demands of the Covenant with God, and trust in the fulfillment of God's promise to take care of his Covenant-partners. Do you think of yourself as a Covenant-partner of God? Is your trust in God so complete that you are ready to give up everything for his sake? Share your answers with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. Worry about food, clothing, shelter, jobs, success in examinations, success in love-life, etc. still plague most of our Catholic faithful. It seems that they have never heard about Christ's Sermon on the Mount where he tells us that we are not to worry about these things. They are pagan worries. We are to seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and all these things will be given to us. In other words, Christ has invited us to make a Covenant with him. On our part, all we have to do is to seek to live in the Kingdom of God and practice Christian Righteousness; on his part Christ will provide for all our needs — he will take care of us. <> Christ saw in the widow who offered all she had to God a person who, in spite of the difficulties of poverty, was still faithful to her Covenant with God. In her faithfulness, she outstripped the rich people in generosity. Going one step further, one can say that she was better off than the rich people. The rich people have only themselves to take care of their needs. The widow had God to take care of her. Unbelievers, of course, will say this is ridiculous. But for almost 2000 years now, numerous good Christians, faithful to their Covenant with Christ, have proven the Wisdom of Christ's teaching.

2. The New Testament teaches that the period of time between the Resurrection of Christ and his Parousia is the penultimate ("second to the last") era of Salvation History. This means that almost all the foreshadowing prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled. One such foreshadowing prophecy-in-action is the office of the Jewish High Priest. Whatever it symbolized has been translated into reality by Jesus Christ. We Christians should rejoice that we belong to this penultimate era, not to the era of the not-yet-fulfilled-prophecies.

<0 JUBILEE YEAR {}> 47) NOVEMBER 19, 2000

JUBILEE OF THE AGRICULTURAL WORLD. <> THANKS-
GIVING FOR THE GIFT OF CREATION, o JUBILEE OF
THE MILITARY AND THE POLICE.

33RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR B

**Theme 1: DOUBLE PROPHECY OF COMING DESTRUC-
TION (Dan 12:1-3; Mk 13:24-32)**

Theme 2: ATONEMENT BY CHRIST (Heb 10:11-14. 18)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Fr. Regino Cortes, O.P. in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 530, p. 638-639, slightly edited.

Double Prophecy of Coming Destruction

Two prophecies seem to be intermingled in marcan passage for this Sunday (see also Mt 24:29-36; Lk 21:25-33). The passage indeed speaks of the coming of the "Son of Man and the signs that will accompany it. In verse 30, however, the allusion seems to be pointing to the fall of Jerusalem which occurred in the year AD 70, since our Lord said that "before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place." Certainly many of those who were listening to him witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem which in the beginning of the chapter, 13:2, he foretold, saying, "not a single stone will be left on another; everything will be destroyed."

Christ's prophecy of the coming of the Son of Man is clothed in apocalyptic language reminiscent of the visions of Daniel, 7:9-14 and 12:1-3. It does not actually mean that the portents mentioned in the gospel will happen literally — that the "sun will be darkened,

the moon will lose its brightness, the stars come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken." Rather, symbolic language is used. The meaning is that God will take a hand in both events. Besides, in the Parousia of Christ, God will manifest himself to the world in all his glory and majesty, to give joy to his holy ones and fear to the wicked.

Atonement by Christ

In the Old Testament there were different kinds of sacrifices for different purposes. None of them, however, was capable of taking away sins. In contrast Christ had only one sacrifice, done only once and not to be repeated. And yet it had the capability of *expiating or atoning* for the sins of all mankind from the beginning of the human race to the end — Jesus himself excluded because he had no sin, nor was he included in the curse stemming from sin.

Holy Mass is not a repetition of the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. When Masses are celebrated, they only "commemorate," or "represent," or actualize for the worshippers the one and only Sacrifice of Jesus Christ at Calvary. Masses only "apply" to the needs of the worshippers the fruits of the one and only Sacrifice of Christ on Mount Calvary.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointer for sharing. At the time when the Gospel of Mark was written, most Christians thought the end of the world will happen in their life-time. In such a situation they wanted to know the "signs" of the coming destruction. What complicates matters is that they linked the destruction of Jerusalem with the destruction of the world. In the very least, they thought of the destruction

of Jerusalem as a kind of "dry run" of the destruction of the world. Today, only hyper-excited Christians believe that the end of the world will happen in their lifetime. Yet, it is essential to the Christian outlook on life and on the world in general to look forward to the Parousia of Christ. Why? Because it is the completion of Christ's work. A true Christian must want Christ's work to be completed. What is your personal feeling about the Parousia of Christ? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. If your sermon will be directed to agriculturists, or to police, or to military men and women, preach about the relevance of the Jubilee year.

To the agriculturists, point out that one of the purposes of the Old Testament jubilee year is to make the land more fruitful. In the olden times they achieved this by letting the land rest. In our times, we make the land yield more through irrigation and fertilizers. But chemical fertilizers have bad side-effects. It is better to use compost. Chemical pesticides, too, as much as possible, should be avoided. It is better to use herbal pesticides or to keep the balance of nature in one's farming region.

To the police and military men and women, point out that the sooner they can "turn their spears into ploughshares" the better. They need not become jobless. They can do civic projects. They can promote peace without guns.

2. *Thanksgiving for the gift of Creation.* Urge people to visit Ecology Education centers. An excellent example is the ***Mary knoll Ecological Sanctuary, #27 N Sto. Tomas Rd., Campo Sioco, Baguio City***, Tel. (074) 442-4602; Tel/Fax (074) 442-4926. Sr. Peg Dillon, MM, can give you excellent information.

<{} **JUBILEE YEAR** {}> 48) NOVEMBER 26, 2000

SOLEMNITY OF CHRIST THE KING, YEAR B

**Unified Theme: Christ Our King (Dan 7:13-14;
Apoc 1:5-8; Jn 18:33-37)**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Fr. Regino Cortes, O.P. in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 530, p. 639, edited (abridged).

Christ, attributing to himself the title "Son of Man," indicated that he gives a messianic interpretation to the vision of Daniel 7:13-14. In Daniel's prophecy the Son of Man is conferred "sovereignty, glory and kingship." It is therefore most appropriate for a celebration of Christ as King.

The passage from the Apocalypse is also appropriate for the liturgical celebration because it refers to Christ as "ruler of the Kings of earth" (v. 5).

Christ before his passion proclaimed to Pilate that he was king, but his kingdom is not of the worldly type. He is not, therefore, a king like Tiberius nor the other emperors. In no way does his kingship compete with the emperors and he is not guilty of treason. His kingdom is of the truth and those who are on the side of truth are his subjects. Unfortunately, Pilate excluded himself from this realm.

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

Pointers for sharing. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ is not a territory... nor a system of government... nor a "force" that imposes

itself whether people like it or not. It is a realm that one enters through a *spiritual rebirth, for which God's Word and his Spirit is needed. These are the two arms with which God embraces us.* Have you been embraced by God? Has He taken you into his Kingdom? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

The papal exhortation *Ecclesia in Asia* tells us that we have to proclaim Jesus Christ as the one and only Savior of the whole human race. This is done easily enough in the Philippines, but it is a big problem when the proclamation is to be done in places hostile to Christianity, as is the case in many countries in Asia today. Let preachers follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

<{ **JUBILEE YEAR** {> 49) DECEMBER 3, 2000

ADVENT I, YEAR C

Theme 1: SALVATION THROUGH THE MESSIAH
(Jer 33:14-16)

**Theme 2: CHRIST'S PAROUSIA — AN INCENTIVE
TO HOLINESS (1 Th 3:12 - 4:2)**

**Theme 3: CHRIST'S PAROUSIA — THE HOUR
OF REDEMPTION (Lk 21:25-28, 34-36)**

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P. in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 531, p. 687-88, edited and abbreviated.

Salvation Through the Messiah

The author calls attention to a very solemn proclamation he is about to make, namely, that of the "righteous branch." This

expression became a classic term for the Messiah. All of Israel will share in the blessings of the covenant promised by God — the peace and righteousness in the holy land. The word "righteousness" should be understood to include a) God's presence and b) God's action to save.

Salvation will be realized through the Messiah whose coming will bring about a new era. The future happiness is fixed not so much at the end of time as at the end of a particular time that has turned bad. Jeremiah and his disciple (to whom we owe the passage in its present form) predict the restoration of David's dynasty.

We Christians who know Salvation History more fully see that Jesus fully accomplished this hope.

Parousia — An Incentive to Holiness

The Second Reading contains an invocation of Paul who is conscious that his apostolate includes the duty to pray for his converts. He made two requests: (1) an increase of love among the Thessalonians; (2) the attainment of the goal of Christian life — holiness. In both of these, Jesus is considered the source and author. He is the one who increases love for one another (v. 12); he it is who establishes our hearts in holiness (v. 13). Holiness here refers to likeness to God. Israel was called a holy people in as much as they belonged to God and bore a likeness to him.

Parousia — The Hour of Redemption

The glorious parousia of the Son of Man is described in terms largely taken from Old Testament apocalyptic passages. The cosmic disturbances are a conventional part of Old Testament imagery, which should not be taken in a crass literal sense. They are standard biblical expressions symbolizing great sorrows that are usually associated with the approach of God's judgements on the wicked or the enemies of his chosen people.

What Luke wanted here was to describe the manifest vindication of the Son of Man as something endowed with **POWER** and **GLORY**. Faith in the **ESCHATOLOGICAL VICTORY** of Jesus offers strong support to persecuted and suffering Christians of every age. Jesus' final victory brings about the definite achievement of his mission, which is **REDEMPTION**. This word is rooted in the Old Testament idea of **LIBERATION** by God of his chosen people from distress by means of his powerful acts.

Luke concludes his description of the parousia with an exhortation to **VIGILANCE**. Sudden trials will hit everyone, hence the need for individual watching. Everyone, too, will have his day in court in the parousia, sⁿce how a person lives now will determine the way he will "stand before the Son of Man."

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointers for sharing: The end of the world will be a frightening experience for everybody, Christians and non-Christians alike. But the attitude of real Christians should distinguish them from the rest. It is not an attitude of fear, but courage. It is not an attitude of saving one's own skin but of helping others share in the **FULFILLMENT... REDEMPTION... LIBERATION...** that will come from Christ. Of course even a real Christian should not take judgement day as an ordinary event, nor should he presume that he will be found faultless. But the thought of judgement should not trigger panic. It should lead a Christian to trust in the **MERCY OF GOD** and it should lead him to seek a share in the **VICTORY** of Jesus Christ. What really counts is that in the present, we should live our lives **VICTORIOUSLY** are people united to Jesus Christ. Are you living your life victoriously? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. We should not forget that even today, Christians are being harassed and even killed simply for being Christians. This happens in a special way in Asia and Africa. Every year, ***more than 30,i)00 Christians (Catholics and Evangelicals) die for their faith.*** That means about 100 Christians are martyred ***every day!*** It's shocking, but it is true. For churches in extremely stressful situations, the message of today's Gospel is indeed timely. Christians who live in more normal circumstances are called upon to learn the meaning of COURAGE and FIDELITY from their persecuted brethren. And let them not forget to pray for them.

2. Advent has four Sundays, and the first three belong to the first part; only the fourth Sunday belongs to the second part, that is, bur immediate preparation for Christmas. The First Sunday of Advent presents to us the scenario of the end time, and reminds us of the GOAL of Christ's Incarnation and Ministry on earth. The Second and Third Sundays recall how John the Baptist, by his personal example as well as by his preaching, prepared for the ministry of Jesus, which itself was done through life-witness and saving deeds as well as by preaching. Advent is a time of special grace, particularly during this year of the great Jubilee. Let us open our hearts to God's hundredfold blessing as we approach the climax of the Jubilee year, the ***2000th BIRTHDAY OF JESUS CHRIST, THE CENTRAL POINT OF HISTORY.***

<{} JUBILEE YEAR {}> 50) DECEMBER 10, 2000

ADVENT II, YEAR C

**Theme 1: GOD WILL RESTORE THE GLORY
OF JERUSALEM (Bar 5:1-9)**

**Theme 2: PREPAREDNESS FOR THE DAY
OF CHRIST (Phil 1:4-6. 8-11)**

**Theme 3: A VOICE ANNOUNCING THE GLAD
TIDINGS (Lk 3:1-6)**

Note >» Saturday, December 16:

- a) is the beginning of the Aguinaldo Masses;*
- b) it is also our National Youth Day.*

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Msgr. Mario BaUazar, O.P. in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 531, p. 691-93, slightly edited (abridged).

God Will Restore the Glory of Jerusalem

Baruch is the composite work of a number of unknown authors. They write a history in verse to interpret their people's past (the Babylonian exile) for men of their day (well after that painful period) so that people of the present could learn from the past. The people being addressed are the Jews of the Diaspora. The authors explain to them why the distress of the exile was in fact needed by the people, why the people were eventually redeemed from it, and what God has planned for the restoration of Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem to be restored is not the Jerusalem after the Return from Exile, but the NEW JERUSALEM OF THE END OF TIME. The return from exile in the year 538 B.C. was the foreshadowing and guarantee of the great event to come.

The crown that Jerusalem is told to put on (v. 2) has inscribed upon it the sacred name of God, while the conferring to Jerusalem of a new name (v. 4) in a context such as the present one denotes not only the giving of the name but also the bestowal of the attributes therein mentioned.

Preparedness for the Day of Christ

Paul is in prison and he writes to his friends at Philippi, the Christian community that has been his "joy and crown". Among other things, he proposes the Parousia as a motive of Christian ethical conduct.

Paul also prays for the progress of his friends and their growth in union with Christ. This brings about an increased personal knowledge of the Christian mystery-reality (God's plan centered on Jesus Christ).

Uprightness before God is not achieved by one's unaided efforts but is a gift of God to those who cooperate with him day after day. Uprightness is not static but dynamic.

A Voice Announcing the Glad Tidings

"The word of God fell upon John in the desert." Luke considers John as continuator of the prophet Jeremiah's role, on whom also the word of God "fell," who was consecrated before his birth, announced the eschatological judgement and messianic glory, and predicted the new and final covenant available even to the least of humankind. The Evangelist also brings in the Old Testament theme of desert spirituality: the wilderness is the place where the Lord led Israel, and there — alone with his people — he formed with them a covenant akin to the marriage bond.

John preaches a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sin — a baptism that does not give the Spirit that only Jesus can give and only after his Resurrection — but a cleansing that will prepare people for the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Finally, Luke depicts John as realizing the dreams expressed in Isaiah 40:3-5, "A voice of one calling..." The Evangelist will point out that the "new desert" will be no other than Jesus' trial and suffering.. Jesus (corporately representing the people of Israel) will traverse this desert and through his Resurrection-Ascension human-kind will gain the promised land and the New Jerusalem.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointers for sharing. People who prepared for the ministry of Jesus as John the Baptist invited them to do, later accepted him as their Lord and Savior. Those who refused to prepare (the Jewish leaders as a group) eventually rejected what they purportedly wanted: justification and salvation. Our minds and hearts are to be "conditioned" so that they will open up to Jesus. Have you experienced this process — maybe in your "Life in the Spirit Seminar"? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. In just fifteen days, we will reach the climax of *the Great Jubilee — the celebration of the 2000th Birthday of Jesus Christ*. It is true that we have been preparing for this for at least four years already. Some say we have been preparing for this since the Second Vatican Council in 1962-65. But are we truly prepared for the celebration? Are our minds and hearts now truly open to the Good News of Our Lord Jesus Christ? This is the last call. *On Saturday, December 16, will be the start of the Aguinaldo Masses. IT IS ALSO OUR NATIONAL YOUTH DAY.*

2. The *Great Jubilee 2000* is a call to the practice of Righteousness and Godliness. Preach on the following stanza of the Jubilee Song:

"It's a time to touch, a time to reach
Those hearts that often wander, a time
to bring them back to God's embrace."

<§ JUBILEE YEAR §> 51) DECEMBER 17, 2000

JUBILEE OF THE WORLD OF ENTERTAINMENT

ADVENT III (GAUDETE), YEAR C

**Theme 1: THE LORD'S COMING TO SION FILLS
HER WITH JOY (Zeph 3:14-18a)**

Theme 2: THE LORD IS VERY NEAR (Phil 4:4-7)

Theme 3: DEEDS OF REPENTANCE (Lk 3:10-18)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.R. in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 531, p. 694-95, edited (abridged).

The Lord's Coming to Zion Fills Her with Joy

Zephaniah announces the coming of the Day of the Lord — a day full of dear for all, including the chosen people because of their failure to practice obedience, humility and repentance. A "remnant," however, will survive to enjoy the fruits of salvation.

Our First Reading is an invitation for Zion to rejoice because her salvation is at hand. Having as leader the Lord himself, the nation need fear no enemy from inside or outside. The Lord will be the bridegroom, Jerusalem will be his bride, on whom he will shower his affection. His coming to the city will be marked by joyous shouts and dancing.

The Lord Is Very Near

Paul hopes to see the Lord's Parousia. He shares his hopes

with the Christians at Philippi, stating that the Lord's appearance should be the basis of their forbearance.

The peace of God which the ordinary mind of man cannot comprehend, or which surpasses all human efforts to attain it, and therefore must be prayed for, is like a sentinel that stands guard over the hearts and minds of Christians.

Deeds of Repentance

Luke presents a sample of John's preaching, his good news. The evangelist does not fail to point out the universal aspect of redemption in the Baptist's apostolate.

To the publicans and their bodyguards, John proposes a practical spirituality and not a high mysticism. He acknowledges the superiority of Jesus' baptism over his own. Jesus is the great liberator in the war against Satan. The word "mighty" is often used in Scripture for the leader of the struggle against evil.

Regarding John's statement about Jesus baptising with the Holy Spirit and fire, it is difficult to decide whether fire (a prominent biblical theme) should be identified with the Spirit's purifying action or, instead, adds a new dimension of eschatological judgment.

The image of winnowing wheat is again a familiar biblical usage to signify segregation (purification) and fiery judgment. The Palestinian farmer separates the grain from the chaff by tossing the crushed stalks of wheat into the air. The chaff is then gathered and later burned.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointer for sharing. The seventh and last petition of the Lord's prayer in Matthew (6:13b) is: "deliver us from the evil one,"

that is, from Satan. This deliverance or liberation is to be done by the one "mightier" than John the Baptist, Jesus Christ. He alone has the capability to win the struggle between good and evil that began with the heavenly rebellion that transformed Lucifer from an angel of light to an angel of darkness expelled from heaven by Michael and the good angels (see Apocalypse 12:7-9). Are you in the camp of Jesus Christ together with the Archangel Michael and the good angels, or are you in the opposite camp? Do you possess that Righteousness that characterizes a Christian, and are you struggling against evil? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. The *Great Jubilee 2000* is focused on Jesus Christ who is the same yesterday, today and for ever (Heb 13:8). On this Sunday it is appropriate to preach about him as the Mighty Liberator people of all times and all places who have struggled against the evil one, Satan.

2. Today being *Gaudete (Be glad) Sunday and the Jubilee of the World of Entertainment*, it is appropriate to preach about 'he joy of Christian living. Take your cue from Zeph 3:17-18. The Lord, your God, is in your midst/ a mighty savior;/ He will rejoice over you with gladness,/ and renew you in his love./ He will sing joyfully because of you,/ as one sings at festivals./" The image you could have in mind and which you will try to convey to your audience will be that of Jesus playing a guitar.

<{} JUBILEE YEAR {}> 52) DECEMBER 24, 2000

ADVENT IV (The Marian Sunday of the season), YEAR C

Theme 1: THE MESSIAH COMES FROM BETHLEHEM
(Mic 5:2-5a)

Theme 2: HE CAME TO DO GOD'S WILL (Heb 10:5-10)

Theme 3: THE BLESSEDNESS OF MARY *THEOTOKOS*
(Lk 1:39-45)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P., in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 531, p. 695-96, abridged and modified.

The Messiah Comes From Bethlehem

Micah foretells that the Messiah will spring from the royal line of David. He delineates the qualities of the future monarch. Until the new king brings deliverance, Israel will be subject to other nations. The Israelites awaiting anxiously to be redeemed are likened to a woman in labor. They are extremely confident that, with the Messiah leading them, they will overcome their enemies.

He Came To Do God's Will

The anonymous author of Hebrews attributes to the Son at his Incarnation the words of Ps 40:7-9a. The meaning of the psalm is that God prefers obedience to sacrifice: it is not a repudiation of the ritual but a statement of its relative value. The author, bringing out the "fuller sense," applies the psalm to Jesus who, by voluntarily offering himself in a sacrificial death, showed his obedience to God's will.

In verse 9 the author proceeds one step farther. Not only was the Old Testament cult of relative value, it has now been totally

superceded by the sacrifice of Jesus which alone is the source of the forgiveness of sin and of salvation.

The Blessedness of Mary Theotokos

Mary visits her kinswoman because she learned of her old-age pregnancy from the angel of the Annunciation. She is presented as an example of a caring woman, ready to serve. At the sound of her greeting, the infant in Elizabeth's womb leapt for JOY and she herself was filled by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the blessedness of Mary and the child in her womb.

The implication is that in her journey over the Judean hill country, Mary was like the Ark of the Covenant bearing the divine presence inside her. Equivalently this passage of scripture presents Mary as *Theotokos*, which means "God-bearer."

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

Pointer for sharing. Quite often our separated brethren think that the "hyperdulia" (not worship!) shown to Mary by Catholics is an invention of the Roman Catholic Church. A careful reading of Luke's Infancy narratives shows that it is not any human force but God himself who gives privileges and honor to Mary. In today's Gospel reading it is the Holy Spirit, filling Elizabeth, who declares *Mary-Theotokos* (God-bearer) blessed together with the child in her womb. It is Sacred Scripture itself that speaks of the blessedness of Mary and Jesus in one breath! Do you unite yourself with Elizabeth and in fact with the Holy Spirit in declaring Mary "blessed" together with Jesus her child? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. Today is the Marian Sunday of Advent and it falls on the last day of the Aguinaldo Masses which are an immediate preparation for the climax of the Great Jubilee — *in fact, tonight is Christmas Eve of the the Great Jubilee 2000!* It is most appropriate to preach on Mary as the *Theotokos*. Technically this title was given to her at the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus. It literally means "God-bearer" although the usual English translation is "Mother of God" following the Latin "Mater Dei." The Greek term, however, has a nuance that preserves the insight of Luke's narrative of Mary going to the "hill country of Judea" in a journey that culminates with her being declared by Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit, as "**BLESSED**" in the same breath as the Child in her womb. She is truly the **NEWARK OF THE COVENANT WHO BEARS THE DIVINE PRESENCE INSIDE HER.**

2. *The Prayer to the Mother of Christ* in the papal exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia* (51) can be the basis or culmination of a homily on Mary:

O Holy Mary, Daughter of the Most High God,
Virgin Mother of the Savior and Mother of us all,
look tenderly upon the Church of your Son
planted on Asian soil.
Be her guide and model
as she continues your Son's mission
of love and service in Asia.
You fully and freely accepted the Father's call
to be the Mother of God,
that we too may be filled
with the Holy Spirit from on high.
You pondered the mysteries of God's will
in the silence of your heart;
help us on our journey

to discern the signs of God's powerful hand.
You went quickly to visit Elizabeth
and help in her days of waiting;
obtain for us the same spirit of zeal and service
in our evangelizing task.
You sing the praises of the Lord;
lead us in joyful proclamation of faith
in Christ our Savior.
You had compassion on the needy
and spoke to your Son on their behalf;
teach us never to fear
to speak of the world to Jesus
and of Jesus to the world.
You stood at the foot of the Cross
as your Son breathed his last;
be with us as we seek to be one
in spirit and service with all who suffer.
You prayed with the disciples in the Upper Room;
help us to wait upon the Spirit
and to go wherever he leads us.
Protect the Church from all the powers
that threaten her.
Help her to be a true image
of the Most Holy Trinity.
Pray that through the Church's love and service
all the peoples of Asia may come
to know your Son
Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world,
and so taste the joy of life in all its fullness.
O Mary, Mother of the New Creation
and Mother of Asia,
pray for us, your children, now and always!

<{} JUBILEE YEAR {}> DECEMBER 25. 2000

CHRISTMAS (Mass on the day)

Theme 1: ALL THE EARTH SAW GOD'S SALVATION
(Is 52:7-10)

Theme 2: GOD SPOKE TO US THROUGH HIS SON
(Heb 1:1-6)

Theme 3: THE WORD BECAME FLESH (Jn 1:1-18)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P., in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 531, p. 700-702, edited.

All the Earth Saw God's Salvation

The throne room of God, Jerusalem, is assured of salvation to be accomplished by her king. While her enemies scorn her as no better than a dead corpse, a shout rings out from the mountain ridges. A messenger runs telling the good news that the Lord himself has come to save Jerusalem from her sufferings.

This shout is repeated by the watchmen who guard the ruined walls of Jerusalem. As the message is absorbed by *the people and the land*, they see directly before their eyes the Lord restoring Zion.

God Spoke To Us Through His Son

The passage presents a contrast between God's speaking to people in the past, and his speaking to people in the final age. While the Old Testament revelation was predominantly a prophetic interpretation of certain events of Israel's history as acts of God, the revelation of God by his Son is primarily the manifestation of God's saving purpose for humankind. This revelation is the same

as the coming of Jesus and his work of redemption through his death. God showed his approval by exalting Jesus.

By his exaltation Jesus inherited a more excellent name than the angels. The reason for introducing the superiority of Jesus to the angels is connected with the purpose of the letter to the Hebrews: the addressees are in danger of falling away from the faith. The consequences of that would be more fearful than what the Hebrews suffered in disobeying the mosaic revelation. The former was revealed by the Son, while the latter employed the ministry of the angels. The Son, through whom the final word of God was spoken, is superior to the angels who were mediators of the old Law.

The Word Became Flesh

John begins his gospel with a "genealogy," like Matthew, but here it is a history of divine, not human origins. He goes on to show that Jesus is truly the creative Word of God who already existed at the beginning of time. The Word existed along with God: a distinction in Godhead is asserted. Unlike created things, of which John is about to speak, there never was a time when the Word did not exist.

Through the Word all things came into being. Creation, in distinction to the Word, came into being, and the Word is the cause for its existence. Life and Light are the other attributes of the Word.

John now reaches the climax of his Prologue in relating the ultimate manifestation of the Word. And what a paradoxical climax! The Word of God manifests itself in what at first glance seems incompatible with God, namely, "flesh" which implies all that is transitory, mortal, imperfect. John had deliberately chosen a term (flesh) connoting man in his concrete, fallen state, to express the mystery of incarnation and redemption, by which the Word became man in the fullest possible sense, except sin.

The mission of the Word-become-flesh into the world is to enable people to become God's children, to share in the divine life. Although the Law, in which God revealed himself, was God's gift through Moses, the fullness of God's revelation has come only through Jesus Christ. And although God was an invisible God and could not be seen by man, yet in the incarnate Word God has been revealed completely. Only the Son sees the Father; through the Son, we, too, see God with the eyes of faith.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointer for Sharing. As the Jubilee Song says, "It's a time of prayer, a time of praise,/ A time to lift our hands to God,/ A time to recall all our graces." What are the greatest graces you have received in your life thanks to Jesus Christ? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILTES

1. 2000 years ago, more or less, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." We never claimed to know exactly when Jesus was born: what year, what month, what day. December 25 is just a day set aside to mark our Lord's Birthday by sheer convenience. It's just three days away from the Winter Solstice (December 22), when many indigenous people of Europe used to celebrate how the sun reached its lowest point in the sky and started it's "rebirth," that is, its climb to its highest point. The rebirth of the sun-god was a very popular pagan feast and the early European Christian converts from paganism had a nostalgia for it. To counteract this nostalgia, the Church instituted the feast of the Birthday of Jesus Christ. He is the *Sol Justitiae* — *the Sun of Justice (Righteousness)*. As for the year of Christ's birth, it could not have been in the year 1 AD = year 754 of the ancient Roman

calendar counting years from the foundation of Rome. By that time, we now know from historical documents, King Herod the Great was already dead, whereas Matthew clearly tells us that he was alive when Christ was born. The monk, Dennis the Little (who died in AD 540), who made the calculations that became the basis of the Christian calendar, did not have this information. He just made an "educated guess." Many scholars think Jesus was born in 4 BC or in 6 BC. Hence, for them, the Great Jubilee should have been celebrated in 1996 or 1994. But Pope John Paul II decided to follow the tradition that is traced to Dennis the Little, since the difference is not too big and it is not worthwhile to mess up with a calendar we have been following for about 1,500 years already.

2. The Birth of Jesus Christ is considered by the Eastern Church as one of the 3 Great Epiphanies of Our Lord (the other two being his Baptism at the Jordan and the Miracle of Changing Water into Wine). In deference to this tradition, the Year of the Great Jubilee includes the Feast of the Epiphany 2001.

<{} **JUBILEE YEAR** {}> **DECEMBER 31, 2000**

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY, YEAR C

Theme 1: HONOR YOUR PARENTS TO HONOR GOD

(Sir 3:3-7. 14-17a)

Theme 2: FAMILY LIFE IN THE LORD (Col 3:12-21)

Theme 3: THE BOY JESUS IN THE TEMPLE (Lk 2:41-52)

A. STUDY OF THE TEXTS / BIBLIARASAL STEP 3

This portion (A) is a reprint of the Biblical Notes for Homilies written by Msgr. Mario Baltazar, O.P., in BEF vol. XLVII, no. 531, p. 702-703, edited (abridged).

Honor Your Parents To Honor God

Among the particular virtues implied in the service of God, ben Sirach, the author of the passage, gives precedence to duties towards parents. In a truly moralistic way, he comments on the commandments of Ex 20:12 concerning the honor due to parents, and goes beyond Exodus by promising atonement for sin. The traditional blessings for one who keeps the fourth commandment are enumerated by ben Sirach.

Family Life in the Lard

This passage offers for consideration the general principles for life in Christ and certain applications of the same for the Christian home. The passage could very well have been an early baptismal instruction in compendious form. The "puttin on" of the new man, representing the life of Christ himself, suggests a baptismal symbolism. The passage describes the Christian community life which a member embraces through his baptism.

Christians must recognize Jesus as Lord in both word and in action. In words, they will show this recognition best when they call upon him in prayer as Lord. In action, by personal engagement to him, by conforming one's life to the pattern that he has left.

The Boy Jesus in the Temple

The Law prescribed a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the three major feasts of the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Custom, however, excused those who lived at a distance for all feasts except Passover. In these pilgrimages entire villages would join.

Luke relates the incident in a reserved and unassuming manner showing how Jesus acted as any normal boy would act in similar circumstances. He stresses likewise the connatural condition accompanying the growth of the boy not only in his physical stature but also in his spiritual qualities, singling out in particular his obedience to his parents.

B. REFLECTION POINTS

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

Pointer for Sharing. God wants people to be saved as a community, and in the first place as a family. Contrary to this is the idea that religion is just a matter between an individual person and God or his conscience. Such a principle is just an invention of proud, individualistic human beings. The Word of God gives us the real thing. Do you think of your salvation as something to be achieved with your family? Share your answer with your small group.

POINTERS FOR HOMILIES

1. When catechists teach the Fourth Commandment, they give the impression that it is a commandment for little children. As it is stated in the Bible, however, it is, like all the other commandments, a commandment for adults to observe. In this context, "honoring" does not mean only doing something like the Filipino "*mano po*." Rather, it means principally taking care of the needs of one's elderly parents.

2. Why did Jesus spend about 30 years at home in Nazareth and only three years of public ministry? Many reasons can be given. Perhaps one of the most important reason is the priority he gives to the sanctification of the home than to other concerns. Another reason could be the fact that his life of holiness at home in Nazareth is the powerhouse from which he drew the charisms that made him such an effective Prophet during his public ministry.

To all those who have followed these "Homiletic and Bibliarasal Pointers" in the Boletín Ecclesiástico for the past five years (since January 1996): THANK YOU! Maybe sometime in the new millenium the author will be able to write in these pages again. I will appreciate feedback from you. My e-mail address is ustefri@yahoo.com